

Prayer: Apart From Prayer We Can Do Nothing

by David Smithers

The Law of Asking and Receiving

Did you know that the Kingdom of God will not come apart from PRAYER? The unreached will never hear the sweet name of Jesus without the labor of someone's Spirit-led prayers. Regardless of how things may appear on the surface, nothing of eternal value is ever released without somebody, somewhere PRAYING. Because prayer by its nature is often a HIDDEN work, being done in the SECRET closet, many come to false conclusions. Often credit is given to the more obvious and outward ministries of preaching or administration for what has actually been accomplished through prayer.

In spite of appearances, prayer is one of God's primary means of GRACE to achieve the desires of His heart. Our Lord has sovereignly chosen to govern His Kingdom by the simple law of asking and receiving. Prayer is not some human contrivance or scheme, it is the anointed strategy of God. King Jesus bids us, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives" (Matt. 7:7-8).

Today the Church and the world are both sin-sick and suffering because those who call themselves believers have not taken these promises seriously. "We have not because we ask not" (James 4:2). Hell is larger today than it was yesterday, because many of us have not prayed.

God has ordained that ALL believers everywhere should expand His Kingdom through the WORK of prayer and intercession. Jesus has emphatically instructed us ALL to pray for His Kingdom to come. (Matt. 6:10) We may not all be called to go to the ends of the earth and preach, but every one of us have been called to GO to the closet and PRAY!

Prayer that Makes a Difference

Yet what kind of prayer does God require from us? Are all prayers as equally effective? Does a mechanical two minute prayer truly usher in the Kingdom of God? The Epistle of James teaches us exactly what an effective, Kingdom prayer looks like. James writes, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit" (James 5:16-18). Effectual prayer claims the promises of God by FAITH with FERVENT and UNRELENTING passion.

James 5:18 says that Elijah prayed again and the heavens gave rain. That has to be one of the biggest understatements in the whole Bible. I Kings 18:41-45 tells us that Elijah prayed not once, not twice, but seven times before the fruitful rains of revival came. Prayer that truly affects the world around us is extremely intense and persistent. Like everything that God requires of His children, prayer must be done with ALL of our heart, ALL of our soul and ALL of our strength (Deut. 4:29, Deut. 6:5).

The Prayer life of Jesus

Lest some should think that such prayer is only for the faithless or legalistic, let me remind you that Jesus also gave us an example of this kind of intense and fervent prayer. In Hebrews 5:7, the scriptures tell us that, "During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears..." Jesus consistently gave Himself to the practice of agonizing and fervent prayer. Did Jesus weep and pray with such an intense fervency because of a lack of faith or because He was experiencing condemnation? Certainly Jesus had nothing about which to be condemned. Unlike us, He spent hours in prayer every day and never used any of that time to mourn over sin or a lack of faith.

Without question, Jesus prayed as no one else has ever prayed. The fervent prayer life of Jesus was driven by His unlimited vision of ETERNITY (Prov. 15:11). Jesus was consumed with the sight of multitudes of lost souls, past, present and future, all rushing into the ever growing mouth of HELL. (Is. 5:14) I believe that it was this vision that gripped His heart as He knelt and prayed with broken cries and hot tears streaming down His face. Is there any other kind of prayer consistent with such an overwhelming view of eternity? Our lack of fervent prayer is the direct result of our blindness to the realities of an eternal HEAVEN and an everlasting HELL. Many of us are still motivated far too much by the temporal and sensual realm, the things we can personally see, taste and touch. "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Prov 29:18). Where there is no vision of ETERNITY, there is no prayer for the PERISHING.

Embracing the Broken Heart of Jesus

Prayer opens prison doors and preaching doors. Prayer binds the enemy and opens the heavens. Prayer is the plow that breaks up the fallow ground for the Gospel seed. Prayer ushers in the manifest glory of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. Therefore, is there really any such thing as a Christian who genuinely LOVES the souls of men who fails to passionately pray for them? Can anyone truly preach about the world's unreached millions and then fail to fervently pray for them? NO, of course they can't, but I am afraid that's exactly what MANY are doing. Many, out of a false sense of accomplishment are talking and writing and preaching, while never FERVENTLY praying!

Today God the Father will witness the death of every lost man, woman and child as they slip into a burning HELL. He will observe every brutal act of child molestation, incest, murder and rape. Today His heart will be broken and tormented by every vile act of sin that happens on the face of the earth. Yet does He turn His head or hide His eyes? No, He purposely sees it all and WEEPS and grieves.

Today the heartbroken cries of Jesus are echoing throughout the heavens. Have you ever heard that haunting cry? Do you ever embrace the broken heart of Jesus? He longs for His Bride to enter into His BROKENNESS through fervent and loving prayer. The Spirit of God is crying out to each of us today, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore PRAY..." (Matt. 9:37,38).

Follow-Up Questions

1. What is the relationship between prayer and missions?
2. Outline your personal prayer life?
3. Describe how your prayer life has changed through this study?
4. How can you make your prayer life more God-centered?