

The Power Of Prayer

Daniel Bailey

The books of the New Testament, and especially the Acts of the Apostles, reveal that the first Christians were men and women of fervent and constant prayer. For instance, in Acts 2:41-42, those who heard the gospel of Jesus Christ, and furthermore gladly received and obeyed that message, “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” The inspired writer goes on to state in verse 46 of that same chapter that those first Christians devoted time to spiritual things every single day (cf. Acts 17:11). Later on in the book of Acts, at chapter 4:23-31, Peter and John were arrested, threatened, and released by the Jewish Sanhedrin. After faithfully braving through this ordeal, they met with their brethren and immediately began to pray. They prayed for strength and boldness. They prayed that God would bless their efforts in preaching the gospel, and confirm their message. As God’s children they understood that, even with the best of intentions, they could not hope for success in any spiritual effort without the power of the Father behind them – divine power and support that must be requested in humble and worshipful prayer.

However, the early Christians not only recognized the power of prayer in the spiritual efforts of the church, they also realized and relied upon the power of prayer in beseeching the Father for physical blessings. Read Acts 12:1-19. This chapter in the book of Acts begins with a shocking description of the grave dangers faced by the

1st century Christians in Jerusalem. Herod the king, with the authority of the Roman Empire behind him, “stretched out his hand to harass some of the church” (Acts 12:1). The king executed the apostle James, the beloved brother of John, a man who walked with Jesus Christ from the earliest days of His earthly ministry. This murder pleased those of the Jews who wished to stamp out the church, so Herod went further to arrest the apostle Peter, and made plans to execute him also. Imagine the horror and the fear felt by the members of the Lord’s church during these events. The situation was dark and desperate, even hopeless. What could the seemingly insignificant and powerless family of Christians do to free Peter and ensure his safety? How could they possibly combat the military might and supreme authority of Rome? What hope could there be when even the Lord’s apostles were targeted for slaughter? From a worldly standpoint, thinking in carnal terms of power and victory, the children of God didn’t have a chance. But in the Lord, armed with “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Eph 1:3), Peter’s spiritual family had hope and unimaginable power – in prayer!

“Peter was therefore kept in prison, but **constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church**” (Acts 12:5).

Those Christians prayed constantly, evidently without even stopping to sleep (cf. Acts 12:6,12). They prayed with assurance,

for Jesus Christ made a promise that surely the apostles recalled and taught – “Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you” (John 16:23). They prayed in firm belief that “with men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (Matt 19:26). They prayed, and God heard them: Peter was freed by an angel of the Lord!

Brothers and sisters in Christ, there are members of the church that face daily trials just as dark and desperate as the physical threat Herod made against Peter’s life. Countless numbers of our friends and brethren struggle with cancer and other deadly diseases and maladies, many of whom have been given no chance for recuperation or survival. The world is plagued and scarred by war, hatred, and pestilences that affect us all, directly or indirectly. But even in light of the enormity of these problems, God’s children have hope and power if we will but live godly lives and make time to pray to the Father!

We read passages like James 5:13-18 and note that **“the effective prayer of a righteous man avails much”** – the Scriptures are filled with literally hundreds of examples of the answered prayers of righteous men and women who walked with God before us so that we might have faith

that such wonderful statements are true! The statistics and forecasts made by the brilliant minds around us – scientists and doctors, etc. – are important, but they are not the final word for Christians because they are based only on physical data. God does not operate in terms of physical strength or probability: ALL things are possible with the one true and living God (Matt 19:46; Mark 14:36; etc.). And while the exact outcome that we desire is not guaranteed, even by prayer, we rest assured knowing that our supplications are never overlooked by the Lord who is able to make “all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Rom 8:28). **No worldly ruler, scientist, doctor, military commander, or any other mortal has power even approaching that of faithful Christians who freely exercise their unrestricted access to the very ear of the great God of this universe!**

Realizing the power of prayer, both as individual Christians and as congregations of the Lord’s people, let us pray without ceasing, placing our every care and concern into the hands of God who alone is wise. “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16).