

## Prayer

Since Pentecost we have been looking at the first Church in Acts. The anointing of the Holy Spirit brought a huge transformation as their numbers swelled. Daily the new Christians committed themselves to learning from the teaching of the Apostles, to fellowship, to communion and to prayer. This is the first instalment on prayer.

### **In The Beginning**

Genesis 1:27-28

"So God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them.

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number;  
fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea  
and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

God created Humans to be like Him, in His own image. He blessed them, and chose to give them authority to manage, govern and watch over the world that He had created. God completely and trustworthily gave His authority, thus, completely limiting Himself to work on earth through man. Have you noticed that every action taken by God on Earth required the involvement of a human being?

- To rescue humanity in the Flood, He needed Noah.
- For the creation of a nation, He needed Abraham.
- To lead the nation of Israel out of slavery, He needed Moses.
- To bring back Israel from captivity, He needed Daniel.
- To defeat Jericho, He needed Joshua.
- For the preservation of the Hebrews, He needed Esther.
- For the salvation of mankind, He needed to become a man and give His sinless life to death upon the cross.

The consequence of God's choice was that whatever was about to happen, for better or for worse, depended on Adam and his offspring. I am jealous how God and Adam often walked and talked together. They prayed together in the garden of Eden. I am sure God was teaching Adam how to use his God given authority. However, despite this, Adam gave his authority away to Satan when he took a bite of the forbidden fruit. Hear what Satan states to Jesus in Luke 4:5-7:

The devil led Him (Jesus) up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to Him,

"I will give you all their authority and splendour, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. So if you worship me, it will all be yours."

Jesus Himself called the Satan 'the ruler of the world': John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11. Through Adam's actions Satan was given authority over God's creation, and the relationship with God and Mankind has broken. We no longer can walk with Him in the Garden of Eden. However, God has continued to limit Himself to work through and with Mankind. Thus, He chose you to do His work on Earth and it starts in prayer.

## **The Church of Acts**

Jesus limited by His humanness, prayed. He often went to a solitary place to spend time with God, and at other times met to pray with His Disciples. He taught them the Lord's prayer which has been handed down to us. I love the fact that the first thing that the followers of Jesus did after His resurrection was to come together in fellowship to pray. They put into practice what Jesus had taught them. It was in this atmosphere of gathered prayer that the church was born and dramatically grew.

Acts 1:14

They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers."

Note these two verses:

Acts 1:8 Jesus stated,

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you;  
and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria,  
and to the ends of the earth."

Acts 5:28 The High Priest said,

"We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said.  
"Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and  
are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood."

In Acts 5 the High Priest accuses the disciples of fulfilling a great portion of the Great Commission. What is amazing about this accusation was that it was only a few weeks after Jesus had left them. At a rapid rate, people were adding to the numbers daily, and Christianity grew in Jerusalem and beyond. With all the work and organisation that was needed as the church grew they never stopped praying (Acts 4:3-31, 9:40, 10:9, 12:5,12, 16:25, 20:28,36, 21:5, 28:8). They "shared in the deep devotion of prayer and praise, in total dependence on their Sovereign Lord and perfect trust in His Sovereign purpose. With them there were no haphazard, accidental events. They regarded everything as being disposed to and directed by the Divine predestined order and operation. Great power, great grace and great reverence were known in holy reality."<sup>1</sup>

## **What is Prayer?**

"Prayer is essentially a partnership of the redeemed child of God working hand in hand with God toward the realization of His redemptive purposes on earth." Jack Hayward

Anyone can pray, anywhere, anytime. We can all come to God with our shopping list, but that is not what God intended for our relationship with Him. To be powerful in our prayers we need to first prepare our hearts so we can truly enter God's presence. To take us to that place where Adam once met God. To be in relationship and communion with Him, walking, talking, listening, and gaining insight, wisdom and understanding. It is there that we discern God's will and purposes for our life and the world. It is there that we are filled with the power of the Holy spirit and activated with boldness to pray effectively with the knowledge that God has revealed.

Matthew 6:9-10

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,

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<sup>1</sup> Neil, *Aid Us In Our Strife*, 22

your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Prayer is calling forth what God has already purposed and predestined, thus, enabling Him to continue His work of creation and the establishment of His plans for the Earth. Therefore, the key to effective prayer is understanding God's purpose for your life, those around you and the world.

But what happens if no-one is listening and praying for God's will and purpose? What if we are not willing to stand before God and pray His heart for a friend or nation?

Ezekiel 22v30-31

"I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none. So I will pour out my wrath on them and consume them with my fiery anger, bringing down on their own heads all they have done, declares the Sovereign LORD."

We can see from the story of Esther how she stood in the gap for her people. If she had not, would the Jews have then been wiped out? Wagner states, "'can ones petition determine the actions of God?' "The answer is yes. This is the way the Almighty God chose to design the World and to structure our relationship with Him. The correct presumption is that if Esther had not interceded the Jews would have been destroyed"<sup>2</sup>

Prayer is not an option. It is a necessity. For a Christian it is as necessary as breathing is for the body. Jesus clearly teaches that if we do not pray then He cannot interfere in Earth's affairs. It is imperative that we take responsibility and determine what happens here on Earth through our prayer lives.

### **Prayer is not ...**

The church has the answer to the problems of the world, "The answer is the presence and power of God through an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. But many in the Church seek His presents rather than His presence. They seek the power of God rather than relationship with the God of power. The Church is generally powerless. ... We are unable to do the works Jesus did, let alone the greater things He claimed we would and could do. He told us that (Jh 14v12) so why aren't we doing them? (1 Cor 2v4).<sup>3</sup>

James 4v2-3

"You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures."

If we ask for things that are contrary to God's will and purpose, we will be frustrated. We must constantly seek His presence and His control of our lives by fervent prayer. Without God's wisdom, insight, and knowledge as the basis of our prayers then they are based merely on our opinions, desires, and feelings. Such prayers are powerless to effect change.

### **Determining God's will**

Listening to God is as important as us talking to God. It takes practice to discern God's voice through the power of the Holy Spirit. As we are all different, the Holy Spirit tends to talk to us all differently. For some the Holy Spirit lifts verses off the page of the Bible bringing God's word alive, some have dreams, others have pictures, some hear an audible voice, for some it is more of a sense, a touch. The more we act upon what God is saying and see Him at work, the more we

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<sup>2</sup> C. P. Wagner, *Prayer Shield*, 23-24.

<sup>3</sup> *New Bible Dictionary*, 949

will be able to discern His voice speaking to us. I believe if we are walking down the wrong path God will eventually close the door and turn us in the right direction, unfortunately, this can be painful but we trust God knows best.

When God called me to go to Italy I was sitting in an auditorium of 2,000 people. From the front a call went out for ordained Ministers to join BMS as a Missionary. The words hit me like a bullet, my heart started pulsating and an overwhelming presence of the Holy Spirit filled my heart. That night God certainly confirmed that I was to pursue this new path that was opening before me through two other people.

Whilst, this morning in my quiet time with God, I found myself using various devotionals and prayer aids which led me to look at various pieces of Scripture. They seemed unconnected, but then I suddenly noticed that there was a link, they all had the command to listen. God used these unconnected devotionals to speak to me, I was to listen to Him. I did and it led to some special verses which then God confirmed by yet another seemingly unconnected way. Both these verses had the same promise from Him. Now I need to heed the promise, hold it, and trust Him for the promise.

What a tremendous gift the Word of God is to us. It is our sword to use in prayer against Satan. It gives us the power to know what God's will is and to fulfil it. It enables us to pray with certainty and boldness in all situations, and the power to know that God hears us when we pray according to His will. We always must ensure that what we feel God is saying agrees with the Bible. If it goes against His teachings we can be sure we are not hearing correctly. In addition, waiting upon God for confirmation of His word is important, this will aid us from getting carried away which our earthly selves are so good at doing.

### **Unanswered prayers**

"Prayerful, Jesus centred people can make an impact for God almost anywhere, prayer less people do mess things up for God almost everywhere!" Stephen Gaukroger

Without prayer we are often inactive or see little fruit. However, once we seek God, and are filled with the power of the Holy Spirit we are activated with such boldness that we cannot be silenced. But have you ever thought about the fact that powerful prayer is willingly being the answer to your prayers? Unfortunately, a missionary once received this letter from a little girl,

"We are praying for you, but we're not expecting an answer."

This story reveals the importance of giving ourselves in prayer:

When it became known among the friends of a certain gentleman that he was going to go abroad, they came in great numbers to see him, each one with a commission for him to execute. A lady wanted him to buy her a real Paris bonnet; a scientific friend wanted a microscope, and so on with all who came to see him.

When they had gone away, he looked over the list and found, to his dismay, that if he made all these purchases he would have no money with which to meet the expense of the trip. Of all the number, only one had brought the money with which to purchase what he wanted.

When the man returned, his friends gathered around him eager to see what he had brought back. To their surprise, they found that he had made but one of the purchases he had been asked to make. "One day, as I sat upon the deck, looking over your lists, a breeze came and blew them all away except this one," he explained. "But how could that be?" someone questioned. "Ah!" was the reply, "his order was weighted down. It had coins wrapped up in it."

True prayer must have the absolute best offering of yourself wrapped up in it. When you pray for the relief of the poor, which is scriptural, is your prayer anything more than words? Are you willing to offer your finances in response? Or when you pray earnestly for a colleague at work to become a Christian are you willing to be the means for God to touch that person's life? Are there any coins wrapped up in your prayer?

## **Conclusion**

John Wesley states,

"It seems God is limited by our prayer life –  
that he can do nothing for humanity unless someone asks him."

Legg concludes,

"If that's the case, let's ask him to intervene in situations, in very specific ways."<sup>4</sup>

The church in Acts came together daily and prayed. They were taught Jesus' teachings by the Apostles. They sought to understand the will of God for their lives and beyond. They were filled with the Holy Spirit. All of which enabled them to pray bold, confident, expectant Spirit filled, God ordained prayers, with their openness to be the answer of their prayers and obedience. As a result, they saw miracles daily. In just a few weeks the whole of Jerusalem was talking about Jesus and His teachings.

How would you describe Boyn Hill Baptist Church prayer life? When we come together at prayer meetings do we pray bold, confident, expectant, Spirit filled, God ordained prayers? Are you willing to be an answer to the prayers as we pray into God's will for our church and beyond?

Dr. Myles Munroe states -

"I am convinced that prayer is one of the most misunderstood arts of the human experience. Prayer is not just an activity, a ritual, or an obligation. Nor is it begging God to do what we want Him to do. It is communion and communication with God that touches His heart. When you understand the principles of the art of prayer, you will begin to communicate with God with power, grace, and confidence.

Prayer is meant to be one of the most exciting aspects of a life of faith. It has the power to transform lives, change circumstances, give peace and perseverance in the midst of trial, alter the course of nations, and win the world for Christ."

I look forward to seeing you all Sunday night at 7.30pm for our weekly prayer meetings. Let's come expectant to meet with God, listen to His heartbeat, and pray bold, confident, expectant prayers, thus, releasing His power and Sovereign control over Boyn Hill Baptist Church and beyond.

Lord, Your will be done. Amen

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<sup>4</sup> S. Legg, *The Ultimate Guide To Sharing Your Faith*, 121.