

The Power Of Prayer

Introduction. One of the greatest assets God's children possess is prayer. From its first mention in Genesis 20:17 as Abraham prayed for Abimelech to Revelation 8:3 with the prayers of the saints, prayer is an integral part of the Bible — it is mentioned over 500 times! "Let him pray" is the command (James 5:13). Tremendous good has been accomplished and tremendous evil averted because of prayer. I would rather be able to pray than to be a great preacher; Jesus Christ never taught His disciples how to preach, but only how to pray (Luke 18:1).

I. Important Observations About Effective Prayer

- A. Effective prayer depends on our heart and attitude.
 - 1. Prayer has to be offered in faith (James 1:5-6).
 - 2. The humble heart of the tax collector pleased God (Luke 18:9-14).
- B. Effective prayer depends on our awareness of the nature of our relationship with God.
 - 1. God is our Father, not our servant — our words to Him should reflect love and appreciation for His holiness.
 - 2. Even though we say the Lord's prayer alone, it reminds us that we are not alone — that is the point of the words "our" and "us" that run through it (Matthew 6:9-15).
 - 3. Even when you pray alone, you are reminded that you are part of a community — in particular, a group that honors Christ, that prays to Him regularly, and also, from time to time, says the prayer He taught.
- C. Effective prayer depends on our submission to God's will.
 - 1. We have to ask according to His will (1 John 5:14).
 - 2. We have to be righteous (1 Peter 3:7-12).

II. Hannah Is An Example Of The Power Of Prayer

- A. Hannah was one of Elkanah's two wives.
 - 1. Peninnah, Elkanah's other wife, used the trip as an opportunity to gloat that she had children and Hannah did not.
 - 2. This moved Hannah to prayer (1 Samuel 1:8-18). God remembered her and she conceived the child, Samuel (1 Samuel 1:19-20).
- B. She was not like one of the nine lepers (Luke 17:11-19), for she thanked God when He blessed her with Samuel (1 Samuel 2:1-10).

III. Christians Have This Power Today

- A. Matthew 7:7-11.
 - 1. The three balancing clauses in each of these verses add up to a strong exhortation to earnest and persistent prayer (Luke 18:1-8).

2. Every prayer, asked appropriately, will be answered. God does not always give everything for which we ask, but He gives what is better.

B. Romans 8:26-28.

1. Paul gives encouragement to Christians in Rome who are enduring suffering and the inevitable discouragement it brings.
2. There is no power superior to God's. Nothing can defeat Him. How can we doubt that He will answer our prayer when He allowed Jesus to die for us (vss. 31-32)?

C. Ephesians 3:20-21.

1. The superlative "exceeding abundantly" effectively means that you cannot have a need or make a request that exceeds God's power to be of help.
2. Furthermore, God will help us more than all we can desire in our prayers, even more than all we can conceive (cp. 1 Corinthians 2:9).

D. Hebrews 4:14-16.

1. We can boldly approach or draw near though prayer to His throne in order to seek His grace and favor (Philippians 4:6-7).
2. "Boldly" means "undoubting confidence of Christians relative to their fellowship with God" (cp. Ephesians 3:12; Hebrews 3:6; 10:35).

Conclusion. Heaven is full of answers to prayers for which no one ever bothered to ask. The people who have most fully illustrated Christ in their character, and have most powerfully affected the world for Him, have been those who spent much time alone with God. Do not pray for a bigger house, car, or bank account. Pray that your heart will be ignited and inspired to accomplish tasks of eternal consequence. Turn your eyes from the temporal, the physical, and the menial to the eternal, the spiritual, and the noble.