

Persistent Prayer

“These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication...”
(Acts 1:14).

“Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto
God for him”
(Acts 12:5).

The Apostle Paul admonishes us to “Pray without ceasing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:17) He also practiced what he preached. “For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers” (Romans 1:9).

Prayer is so important that the Apostles’ said, “But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word” (Acts 6:4). Edward Payson understood this when he wrote, “Prayer is the first thing, the second thing, the third thing necessary to a minister. Pray, then, my dear brother, pray, pray, pray.” Prayer helps us to see God’s view of things. It also strengthens our relationship with God. Prayer meetings produce God meetings. That is why they are aptly called, “prayer meetings.” It is here that we meet with God. Man was created to desire communion with God. This communion goes beyond “asking” into the realm of “seeking.”

Often prayer is treated like a market. We bring our list of shopping needs with us and trust that Jesus will fill all of the needs. We can move beyond just asking, into seeking the Lord, and even extend into intercession.

“And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none” (Ezekiel 22:30).

“Moreover, as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way” (1 Samuel 12:23).

Many times the answer to prayer involves a lot of waiting. None of us like to wait. It has been said, “Patience is a virtue that carries a lot of wait.” It is not something that we do well. Spurgeon said that by perseverance “the snail reached the ark.” We know that God answers all prayers. He gives three responses, “Yes, No, or Wait.” We must continue to pray until we receive an answer or until we receive the assurance from the Holy Spirit that our prayer has been heard and the answer is on its way. Andrew Murray says, “God’s giving is inseparably connected with our asking.”

Let Go and Let God

As children bring their broken toys
With tears for us to mend,
I brought my broken dreams to God,
Because He was my Friend.
But then, instead of leaving Him
in peace to work alone,
I hung around and tried to help
with ways that were my own.
At last I snatched them back and cried,
“How can you be so slow?”
“My child,” He said, “What could I do?
You never did let go.”
(Author Unknown)

EXPECT A MIRACLE

Don't give up! Your miracle is on its way!

Prayer is to be continual, unceasing, like a nonstop flight; not landing until it reaches its destination. “...Men ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Luke 18:1). Dutch Sheets in his book “Intercessory Prayer” explains that this does not mean, “it would be a good idea to pray. It is declaring that it is absolutely necessary-binding upon you - that you pray.”

As we continue to pray our prayers are stored in heaven. “...And golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints” (Revelation 5:8). This is what happened to Cornelius in Acts 10. Because he was a devout man who feared God and prayed always, his prayers came up as a memorial before God (Acts 10:2, 4). God considers our prayers a sacrifice to Him, and they remind Him of our perseverance.

Dutch Sheets writes, “It sort of reminds me of the mouse and the elephant who were best friends. They hung out together all the time, the mouse riding on the elephant’s back. One day they crossed a wooden bridge, causing it to bow, creak and sway under their combined weight. After they were across, the mouse, impressed over their ability to make such an impact, said to the elephant, ‘We sure shook up that bridge, didn’t we.’ Kind of reminds me of some of the advertisements and testimonials. You’d think He (God) was the mouse and we were the elephant. (Maybe that’s why we don’t shake many bridges)...Rise up! Better still, allow your Helper to rise up in you! Together, you can shake any bridge! Just make sure you know who the mouse is.”

As we begin to intercede (stand in the gap in prayer) then Jesus also will work with us and accomplish the work.

“And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen” (Mark 16:20).

Prayer must be persistent in order to be effective. This is what we see in the story of the Persistent Widow (Luke 18:1-7). This story begins with a command to “always to pray, and not to faint” (give up). The judge in the story finally answered her because her “continual coming” would make him tired. Jesus then assures us that God will also answer “His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though he bear long with them.” Don’t give up. God will answer you if you persist.

One day, Winston Churchill was addressing a group of students and all he said was, “Don’t ever, ever, ever, give up!” The mighty oak tree was once a little nut that held its ground. (It never gave up!)

As long as Moses persevered in prayer with his hands lifted up, the people of God were winning the battle (Exodus 17:11). As Moses lifted his hands towards God he was showing his dependence on God to win the battle. When the prayer of Moses ceased, the flow of the divine power to the people also ceased.

No Prayer, No Power!
Less Prayer, Less Power!
Much Prayer, Much Power!

This principle of persistence in prayer is also seen in the story of the Friend at Midnight (Luke 11:5-13). This story appears immediately after the disciples asked Jesus, “teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1). This verse appears immediately after Jesus says to Martha “one thing is needful” (Luke 10:42). “Ask, Seek, Knock” were the instructions that Jesus gave. They seem to suggest that we must keep asking, keep seeking, and keep knocking. When we continue to ask the Lord for something in prayer, we are allowing Him to know that we have a need we can’t fill on our own and strengthens the conviction that God does hear and answer prayer. The man at midnight kept knocking on the door until his friend finally got up and provided whatever he needed.

The Church Gets Desperate

In Acts 12 Peter is in jail waiting for the death sentence to be carried out. While he was chained between two guards, sleeping, the church was desperately interceding for a miracle. They were praying without ceasing. Heaven heard and the miracle happened. Peter went to a place “...where many were gathered together praying” (Acts 12:12). He “knocked” (Acts 12:13) and the door was answered by a shocked girl who shared the miraculous news with an unbelieving group of prayer warriors. Peter “kept knocking” (Acts 12:16). Keep praying until your answered prayer keeps knocking at your door.

P. U. S. H.
Pray Until Something Happens

Study Questions

1. What does Paul tell us in 1 Thess. 5:17? _____

2. What did the Apostles' decide in Acts 6:4? _____

3. What is the first, second, and third thing necessary to minister? _____

4. Why do we call it "prayer meetings"? _____

5. How do we treat prayer like a market? _____

6. God wants us to stand in the gap through _____.
7. What is the quote about "patience" in this lesson? _____

8. What three responses to prayer does God give us? _____

9. God's giving is connected with what? _____

10. In "Let Go and Let God" what was the reason why God did not fix the problem? _____

11. What happens to our prayers as we continue to pray? _____

12. What did Sheets say about Luke 18:1? _____

13. What story in the Bible proves that prayer must be persistent in order to be effective?

14. Why did the Judge answer the Widow's petition? _____

15. What three instructional words did Jesus give in Luke 11? _____

16. What was Winston Churchill's advice to the students? _____

17. Can you think of any testimonies of an answer to persistent prayer in your life or in the life of someone that you know? _____

18. What does P.U.S.H. stand for? _____

19. What did Peter do in order to get into the house where people were praying in Acts 2?

20. What did the friend needing help do in the "Friend at Midnight" story? _____

21. What is the quotation in this lesson concerning no prayer, less prayer, or much prayer?

Additional Notes
