

Building a Prayer Memorial

“And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him,
Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God”
(Acts 10:4).

The subject of “prayer” has been addressed in other levels of Acts: God’s Training Manual for Today’s Church. Some topics because of their value keep returning in each level. Such topics include: Prayer, Fasting, Doctrine (Truth), Evangelism, Gifts of the Spirit, Church Growth, Giving, and Leadership. This is intended.

You may recall the words of the Apostle Paul, “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe” (Philippians 3:1).

Certain things are repeated for our protection. They are worth repeating. It is important that we learn these lessons. They mean a great deal in our Christian walk. Even though the matter of prayer has been discussed in the past, let us look at “building a prayer memorial.”

(Anthony Polotzola, Webmaster for PBSI preached a message while visiting Africa entitled, “Building a Prayer Memorial.” His message motivated the formation of this lesson.)

Our lesson begins with a centurion named Cornelius. Centurions were the backbone of the Roman army. They held the office that would be like “Captain” in the army today. They had control over at least 100 men and reached their rank by proving to be strong, dependable, and responsible. Cornelius’ greatest strength was in his reliance on God. More than just being a good soldier, he was a devout man, who loved God, gave money, and prayed to God always. Let us not miss that point. Cornelius prayed to God constantly.

It is attention-grabbing that God spoke to both Cornelius and Peter at their prayer times. God speaks to us when we pray!

Pray Until Something Happens

“Pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). It is important that we continue to pray until the Lord gives us an answer. Sometimes He will say, “Yes,” sometimes “No,” and sometimes, “Wait.”

“But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4). Continuous prayer was the ministry’s priority in the early church.

“These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren” (Acts 1:14). Continuous prayer preceded Pentecost. They prayed until Pentecost happened.

“And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). After Pentecost the early church continued in prayers.

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

What Are Memorials?

A memorial is a way of observing the memory of a person, thing, or event. It is a reminder of something. In the Bible a memorial is “an object or activity intended to help God’s people identify with God’s historic acts or words. Throughout the Old Testament and New Testament, ceremonies, words, acts, and physical objects were used to commemorate various ways in which the Lord and His people interacted.” (The Revell Bible Dictionary) Memorials helped God’s people remember what God had done both for their fathers and them as well.

Before we look at a small number of memorials mentioned in the Bible, let’s look closer to home. What type of memorials do you have in your city or country? What are the memorials called? What are they intended to get you to remember?

Joshua’s Memorial

Twelve stones were collected from the middle of the Jordan River. A memorial was built to remind generations to come that the waters had been cut off so the Israelites could pass over.

Passover Memorial

The Passover Feast was a memorial of God sparing the firstborn of Israel in Egypt. It reminded God’s people of how He delivered them out of captivity and oppression (Exodus 12:12-14).

Mary’s Memorial

The act of Mary anointing Jesus’ feet was to be spoken of as a memorial of her (Mark 14:9).

The Lord’s Supper

Communion is another memorial that we observe. Jesus said, “This do in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19).

Paul told the Corinthians: “And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come” (1 Corinthians 11:24-26).

Back to Cornelius' Memorial

In Cornelius' case his prayers built a memorial that was remembered by God.

Our prayers ascend to the Lord. He takes note of each appeal. Although God may not answer all of our prayers right away, it seems that He sets them aside for a proper time of fulfillment.

Scripture does not clearly exposed how God records our prayers. However, He does, and He remembers. God will answer. He always does!

“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not” (Jeremiah 33:3).

Revelation repeatedly mentioned the prayers of the saints. In this case, it appears the prayers are stored in golden containers. These prayers come up before God like incense.

“And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints” (Revelation 5:8).

“And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand” (Revelation 8:4).

In the Jewish temple priests entered into the Holy Place to burn incense and offer prayers of intercession for the nation. This duty was given to the priest by lottery, and he could be chosen only once in his lifetime. (Reference: The Son by E. L. Towns) In the Tabernacle, the incense was a type of prayers and praises to God.

Our Prayer

“LORD, I cry unto thee: make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee. Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense” (Psalms 141:1-2).

His Promise

“For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister” (Hebrews 6:10).

Study Questions

1. Why do some topics keep returning in each level of Acts: God’s Training Manual for Today’s Church? _____

2. What were Peter and Cornelius both doing when they received a message from God? _____

3. What are memorials? _____

4. Why are memorials used in the Bible? _____

5. Provide two examples of memorials (in the Scriptures). _____

6. According to Revelation, where are prayers stored? _____

7. In the Tabernacle what was incense a type of? _____

Additional Notes

