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Prayer - The Benefits And Purposes

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Sometimes we do not realize the importance of prayer, it's benefits and purposes, but as believers we have a responsibility to pray. What happens when we pray: do things change, do we realize how our prayers will influence things around us and people that we come in contact with?

James was a praying pastor and in the following scriptures, he was exhorting his people the importance of prayer, how to pray and what would happen when they did.

James 5:15-17 " And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. 16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. 17 Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months ." KJV

James 5:15-17 " And the prayer [that is] of faith will save him who is sick, and the Lord will restore him; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. 16 Confess to one another therefore your faults (your slips, your false steps, your offenses, your sins) and pray [also] for one another, that you may be healed *and* restored [to a spiritual tone of mind and heart]. The earnest (heartfelt, continued) prayer of a righteous man makes tremendous power available [dynamic in its working]. 17 Elijah was a human being with a nature such as we have [with feelings, affections, and a constitution like ours]; and he prayed earnestly for it not to rain, and no rain fell on the earth for three years and six months." AMP

These scriptures are speaking of a righteous man praying and what will be the results or benefits of his praying.

The church must be a praying church. The church was birthed in the book of Acts by praying people, 120 gathered together. It is important that the church have prayer in operation, for over the years it has been an established fact that prayer was necessary in order to see the operation of the gifts working and people being saved and helped. D.L. Moody, Charles Finney and others testify that had it not been for people praying, their meetings would not have been successful.

Eph 6:18 "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;" KJV

Paul is asking the people to pray for him and that he would have utterance. Utterance being a message from God delivered with an anointing on it and that he would be bold.

James 5:17-18 "Elijah was a human being with a nature such as we have [with feelings, affections, and a constitution like ours]; and he prayed earnestly for it not to rain, and no rain fell on the earth for three years and six months. 18 And [then] he prayed again and the heavens supplied rain and the land produced its crops [as usual]." AMP

Elijah was a person just as we are; he was a prayerer who got results to his prayers. The following scripture tell his story regarding the prayer he had prayed and the results that he had because of that prayer. Earlier scriptures tell how he had challenged the false prophets and the result of that challenge. Then the anointing came upon him and he prayed for the rain, warning King Ahab of what was going to happen. His prayer was "dynamic in its working" getting extraordinary results. He was persistent in what he was doing, knowing what he had spoken would come to pass.

1 Kings 18:41-44 "And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain. 42 So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees, 43 And said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times. 44 And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down that the rain stop thee not." KJV

Faith principles are always intertwined in any successful story that we read in the Bible. God will do nothing, unless someone prays and asks Him.

That same power that Elijah had is available to the church; however, the church is not tapping into that power. Prayer is so important to the kingdom of God.

Matt 21:12-13 "And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, 13 And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves." KJV

Jesus cleansed the temple, stating that it was to be a "house of prayer". He later taught the disciples how to pray the "Lord's Prayer" and the importance of the prayer for the church. As individuals we will benefit from prayer, but there is an importance for the local church, for the pastor to have the signs and wonders, the anointing, souls being saved, being filled with the Holy Spirit, deliverance from demonic influences and realizing what is really important.

The following scriptures relate how three different kings in the Old Testament called out to God in prayer and how they were instructed of what they needed to do in order to have the deliverance and help that they and their people needed at the time. Kings Asa, Hezekiah and Jehoshaphat were facing death until they began to seek the Lord and pray regarding their situations. Not only did they pray, but they encouraged their people to do so also.

2 Chron 14:11 "And Asa cried unto the Lord his God, and said, Lord, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O Lord, thou art our God; let no man prevail against thee." KJV

Asa in his later days became proud and forgot about God, became sick and died. He never humbled himself.

Isaiah 38:1-6 "In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live. 2 Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the Lord, 3 And said, Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore. 4 Then came the word of the Lord to Isaiah, saying, 5 Go, and say to

Hezekiah, Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years. 6 And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city. " KJV

This encounter is also told in 2 Kings 20 and 2 Chronicles 32. Hezekiah became proud, thinking that he was the one who had gained all the wealth and honor, forgetting that God was the one who had bestowed everything upon him. He became sick, but he realized his mistake, humbled himself, prayed and was given 15 years extra time before he died.

2 Chron 20:2-3 "Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea on this side Syria; and, behold, they be in Hazazontamar, which is Engedi. 3 And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah." KJV

Jehoshaphat was facing three different armies who wanted to defeat him and his people, he realized that he was not equipped to handle such a situation and sought outside help. However, he because he was fearful, he began to seek the Lord and proclaimed a fast for he and his people. He didn't prepare for defeat; his people were willing to do what was asked of them. God gave Jehoshaphat a plan, the armies turned on themselves and when everything was over, there was much plunder for Jehoshaphat and his people.

We may have impossibilities facing us today, but those impossibilities are nothing when we seek Him in prayer. Because prayer makes tremendous power available and is dynamic in its working. God is not a respecter of persons, if we will apply Biblical principles, prayer will work. Jesus gave us the authority and it is up to us what the outcome will be.

A challenge to the church, to seek on purpose through prayer, would be to see souls saved and filled with the Holy Spirit, deliverance, healing and be set free, this is what Jesus came to do for us. We cannot let these things appear to be impossible; through prayer a change can be made.

Acts 12:5-19 "Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him. 6 And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison. 7 And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. 8 And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. 9 And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision. 10 When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him. 11 And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews. 12 And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying 13 And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda. 14 And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate. 15 And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel. 16 But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished. 17 But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go shew these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place. 18 Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter. 19 And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded

that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judaea to Caesarea, and there abode. " KJV

Prior to this event, James had been killed by Herod, there had been no prayer by the believers for him, but when Peter was taken, because Herod saw that it pleased the Jews, he decided to kill Peter also, however, much prayer was given by the believers and he was delivered supernaturally.

Eph 6:12 "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." KJV

The church is needed to influence our country and unsaved people, but this can only be done through prayer, the prayer that "makes tremendous power available and is dynamic in its working". We must as a church begin to hold up our country, our schools, and our leaders in prayer. This country was founded on prayer and Godly principles. Pray for our homes and families, for leadership in our churches and that each of us would have "a mantle of prayer" resting on our lives. Prayer makes everything possible.