

Do Our Prayers Really Make a Difference? – Part 2

Third, because the Bible gives clear testimony to the life-changing impact of prayer

1. We see clearly that God has purposed to work on the earth in response to the prayers of His people.
2. God's will is accomplished, only as God's people pray.
 - Is it God's will that His Word be declared to the world? We know that it is, yet we are told to pray for it to happen. **2 Thessalonians 3:1**
 - Is it God's will that people surrender to labor in His harvest field? We know that it is, yet we are told to pray for it. **Matthew 9:38**
 - Is it God's will for individuals to be saved? We know that it is (**1 Timothy 2:4**), yet Paul realized that if it was to happen, it would happen in answer to prayer. **Romans 10:1**
 - Is it God's will to establish Israel's kingdom on earth one day? We know that it is, yet Israel was instructed to pray for its establishment. **Matthew 6:10**
 - Either God is playing games with mankind or He truly needs our prayers and involvement.
3. Let's look into God's Word at some clear examples of the life-changing impact of prayer.
 - **1 Kings 18** - This is the story of Elijah praying for rain after 3 1/2 years of drought.
 - According to verse 1, whose idea was it to send rain? Whose will? Whose initiation? Clearly, it was God's.
 - Yet it's interesting that Elijah had to pray seven times before God sent the rain (vs. 42-45). Elijah didn't just walk up the mountain and say, "Let it rain." He labored and travailed in prayer.
 - Was it a coincidence that the rain came **after** Elijah prayed? Absolutely not! We are told in **James 5:17-18** that the rain came in direct answer to his prayers.
 - But why did Elijah need to pray? It is because God has chosen to work through people!
 - Even when it was God Himself initiating and wanting to do this, He still needed a man to pray and ask.
 - **Ephesians 3:20** teaches that God is able to do amazing things, but His power works **in us**. God has chosen to work in and through human beings on this earth.
 - **Exodus 32:7-14** - This is the story of Moses returning to Israel's camp and finding them in gross idolatry.
 - God knew it and saw it and told Moses about it. vs. 7-8
 - What was God's decision? vs. 9-10
 - Moses immediately begins to intercede on behalf of Israel in verses 11-13.
 - What was the result of his prayers? Moses' prayer changed the mind of God towards Israel (vs. 14). cf. **Psalms 106:23**
 - Without Moses' prayer, Israel was doomed - they were dead meat!
 - **2 Kings 20:1-6** - This is the story of King Hezekiah of Judah.

- Verse 1 clearly says, *"Thus saith the Lord..."* This was God's decision and it was given through Isaiah - *"Thou shalt die, and not live."*
- Hezekiah responds with passionate prayer. vs. 2-3
- How did God respond to his prayer? God said He would heal him and add 15 years to his life. vs. 4-6
- Had Hezekiah not prayed, what would have happened?
- **Jonah 3:1-10** - The story of Jonah and the wicked city of Nineveh.
 - God's decision was to destroy Nineveh in 40 days. vs. 1-4
 - How did the people respond to God's Word? They believed God (vs. 5) and they cried out to God in prayer (vs. 8-9).
 - What was the result of their prayers and repentance? God changed His mind and what God said He would do unto them, **He did it not.** vs. 10
- **1 Chronicles 21:14-17** - David had sinned against God, and God is sending judgment.
 - God sends an angel to destroy Jerusalem (vs. 15a). This was God's decision, but in the midst of carrying out God's orders, God stops the angel, changes His mind, and says, "That's enough."
 - Why did God do this? According to verse 15, *"The Lord beheld."* What did God behold? What did God see that made Him stop the angel from carrying out His orders?
 - God saw David and the elders of Israel on their knees praying. vs. 16-17
- **Ezekiel 22:30-31** - Ezekiel was a captive in Babylon who prophesied of Jerusalem's total destruction.
 - What is God saying in this sobering passage? He is saying, "While my justice demanded judgment, my love wanted forgiveness."
 - Had God been able to find a man among the people of the land (vs. 29) to simply seek His face and stand in the gap in prayer, God could have spared this city. It would have allowed God to show mercy.
 - God needed **a man**. God said, *"I sought for a man."* Because there was no man to intercede for this city, God's judgment fell.
 - What does this passage teach us? Many times there are things that God **could do** and **would do**, but He will **not** do, because there is no man to stand in the gap before Him.
- **Philippians 1:19; Philemon 22** - The apostle Paul was in prison, but was released after his first imprisonment.
 - According to Paul, why was he released? Through the prayers of the saints.

In Conclusion:

1. Does God need our prayers? According to the Bible He does! God made a choice of His will at creation to work on the earth in and through human instrumentality.
2. So firm was God's decision, that when it came time to provide a redemption plan for sinful mankind, God Himself was made in the likeness of men.
3. Your prayers are vital to the accomplishing of God's will on the earth.
Revelation 5:8 and **8:3-5** are mind-boggling passages that vividly depict the throne room of heaven and how essential the prayers of the saints are.
4. Christian, as Paul said, *"Pray without ceasing."* **1 Thessalonians 5:17**

5. Like Epaphras, labor fervently in prayer. **Colossians 4:12**
6. Satan will try desperately to convince you that your prayers have no impact and they make no eternal difference, but may we end this lesson with a statement from **James 5:16**:
"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."