

From Part 1 it was noted that God indeed does hear and answer prayers of many people. As we come to him in faith he hears and answers us – always.

The power of God is available to us, and prayer draws upon that power. Joshua drew upon this power many times. One notable example is recorded in Here's one example:

The Lord was helping the Israelites defeat the Amorites that day. So, about noon, Joshua prayed to the Lord loud enough for the Israelites to hear:

***“Our Lord, make the sun stop
in the sky over Gibeon,
and the moon stand still
over Aijalon Valley.”
So, the sun and the moon
stopped and stood still
until Israel defeated its enemies.***

Joshua 10:12-13

Anyone who says prayer doesn't make any difference, or that prayer doesn't matter needs to change their thinking on this!

There is power in prayer, but let's keep it straight as to what the nature of that power actually is. Prayer doesn't have power because of our determination, dedication, or commitment. Prayer is effective because it draws upon the power of God. Since God is omnipotent, his power has no limit. That's a lot of power we can draw upon.

That power is never dependent on our obedience or performance as a Christian. The power from prayer is given to us because God is gracious. If prayers were only answered when we were at the top of our game, then we are undone. Is it not when we are at our worst that we need God's help the most? It's when we have stumbled, fallen, erred, sinned, been unrighteous, lax, afraid and doubting that we need God the most. If those things disqualified our prayers our boat is surely sunk! That's why Part 1 was entirely about confidence in prayer. We pray in the confidence that the Lord will hear and answer us with his power because he promises the same and deals with us in his mercy.

While Joshua drew upon the power of God to make the sun stand still, our needs may be a bit more everyday in their scope. Let me cover a few ways the power of God in prayer can benefit us regular folks.

Prayer Makes Things Holy

One thing prayer has the power to do is set things apart for the Lord – to make them holy. Paul talks about this in his first letter to Timothy:

For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer. 1 Timothy 4:4-5

So, there we are – a nice little formula for blessing things. We know there are curses placed upon things using special incantations and magic words. Here is the positive side of that. We can remove curses and bless things by speaking the word of God and adding a prayer.

When my wife and I visited Maui, I found some really cool small rocks I wanted to bring home for the boys to use in the backyard sandbox. I heard a lot about curses placed upon the land by witch doctors and if anyone removed any rocks from the island they would be followed by bad luck. At first this all sounded scary. However, I got to thinking, what power do I not have at my disposal that can't outdo some mumbo-jumbo from some grass-skirted shaman? Besides – those people over there are very happy for us to take their macadamia nuts off the island along with all the trinkets carved from Hawaiian wood and stone. So I laid the interesting rocks out on the bed in our hotel room, cited something like Psalm 24, "The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein," and then prayed a blessing upon the rocks in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Curse be gone. I had no fear to bring these souvenirs home. My plane landed safe back in Pittsburgh and everything! The exact same technique can be used to make everything holy and set apart for God: Motorcycles; Cars; Houses; Bedrooms; Kitchens; Yards; Boats; anything. You see us doing this here in church when we add something new to worship or when we dedicated the new kitchen last fall. We combine word and prayer to bless people at baptism, confirmation, weddings, and the like. If you want to make sure something is set apart for the Lord and has his touch, then make it holy with word and prayer. Any one of you can do this.

Prayer Brings Understanding of Scripture

Another power you can receive from prayer is the gift of understanding scripture. Never read the bible without first asking God to open your mind to receive the teachings and truths he has for you in what you are about to read. We cannot understand one word of scripture without the Holy Spirit interpreting it for us. That's why so many people read it and come away with nothing. Others try to use mere human reasoning and then often misunderstand, misapply, and misrepresent the word of God. Here's an example of how the Lord helps us understand the bible better:

Then he [Jesus] said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. Luke 24:44-45

If you want to get most out of your bible reading, pray first. Martin Luther teaches this in his famous formula for spiritual development: Prayer; Study; Experience. Notice Dr. Luther put prayer first!

Prayer Brings Divine Protection and Deliverance

Protection and deliverance are an area that we all can use every day. Who does not need protection? We are taught the devil is on the prowl as a lion, seeking whom he may devour. His minions, the demons, assist him in sniffing out the easy prey and taking part in the kill. Not to fear, as we are found on the more powerful side, with more than enough back-up to get us through any situation. We remember Jesus' words to his disciples when Peter drew his sword against those who came to arrest Jesus in Gethsemane:

Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? Matthew 26:53

A Roman legion at that time numbered 6000 soldiers. So, 12 legions are an exceptionally large number of angels. I would guess the literal ratio of angel-to-arresting soldier in Gethsemane was probably 700-to-1 or better. That is, IF the angels had been dispatched to help the Good Lord out, which they were not. Either way, Jesus here illustrates there is more than enough help to protect us from the assaults of the evil one and deliver us out of his hands. Notice how Jesus said he could receive the help of the angelic host? He said he could appeal to his Father. That means ask or pray to him that the angels be sent. When we ask God for protection and/or deliverance from evil, we do so in the certainty that help is ours.

Prayer Energizes Life in the Spirit

So far, I've covered the power of prayer to make things holy, open and enlighten our minds to get the most out of scripture, and also to bring protection and deliverance. Let me cover just one more way – perhaps the most important way – in which prayer has the power to help us. Prayer helps us live good and Godly lives. Jesus teaches this in Luke:

What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" Luke 11:11-13

Our lives as God's people revolve around repentance and faith. Repentance doesn't just mean being sorry for sins committed. Repentance means to turn from a life of sin to righteousness, from doing evil to doing good, from serving ourselves and the prince of darkness to serving the Lord. The only way this is possible for us is by the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus says that without the help of his Spirit we cannot do any of this. The Spirit gives us the gifts of God, the chief of which is saving faith. The Spirit also works God's love in our lives, which produces all the fruits of the Spirit. So how do we get the Holy Spirit? We ask for it in prayer! Jesus is truly clear here that when we ask for the Spirit, God will give it!

I hope that this brief treatment on the power of prayer reminds you of God's help that is available to you, and having been reminded of it that you are encouraged to pray more often and for more kinds of help. When word and prayer make things holy and blessed, why would you not use it? When prayer brings more meaningful and powerful Bible reading, why wouldn't you practice that? When prayer can call in reinforcements from heaven and lead us in the way of Christ, would we not be fools indeed if we did not call upon the name of the Lord for his aid? Satan hates it when we pray and tries his best to distract us from it and talk us out of it. Jesus prayed often and set the example for us to follow. He wants us to pray. He says that if you ask, you will receive. He also says we do not have what we need because we do not ask. Commit yourself today to be a person of prayer, asking God for everything we need and drawing upon all his power to help you.

In the next weeks I hope to cover the content of our prayers, different forms we can use for prayer, and the importance of rhythm in our life of prayer. Until then, the peace of God guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus as you believe and trust in him. Amen.