

“ . . . You do not have because you do not ask” (James 4:2).

# The Power Of Prayer

by J. Wayne Kilpatrick

**D**AVID said, “Power belongs to God” (Psalms 62:11). But all that belongs to God the Christian can have for the asking. God holds out His hands and says, “Ask, and it shall be given to you; . . . If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!” (Matthew 7:7, 11). The poverty and powerlessness of the average Christian finds its explanation in the words of James, our Lord’s brother, “You do not have because you do not ask” (James 4:2).

Many Christians make such poor progress in their Christian lives because of a lack of prayer. Many discouraged preachers have little fruit in their ministry because of the neglect of prayer. Many Christians have little power in their lives and service because of a failure to pray.

God has provided for a life of power and a work of victory for every child of His. He has put His infinite power at our disposal. He has proclaimed over and over, in a great variety of ways in His Word, “Ask and you shall receive.” Thousands upon thousands have taken God at His word in this matter and have always found Him to be true to His Word. What power Peter and John had in their lives and work! (Acts 4:1-31). Do you remember the power of Elijah concerning the rain for three years during the reign of

Ahab? (1 Kings 17—18:46). Think about the power and success of the early church:

Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved (Acts 2:47).

But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand (Acts 4:4).

And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number (Acts 5:14).

And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own; but all things were common property to them. And with great power the apostles were giving witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, . . . (Acts 4:32, 33).

Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word (Acts 8:4).

So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord (Acts 11:19, 21).

The reason for such success and power is found in Acts 6:4 and 2:42. It was prayer!

God delights to answer prayer. God says, "And call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will rescue you, and you will honor Me" (Psalms 50:15). Our strength is renewed in the presence of the Lord: "Yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary" (Isaiah 40:31).

How little time the average Christian spends in prayer! We are too busy to pray; thus, we are too busy to receive power. We have a great deal of activity but accomplish little. We have many services but few conversions. We have many committees and ministries but few results. The power of God is lacking in our lives and work.

How much time do you spend daily in prayer? The devil is perfectly willing for us to have all kinds of programs if we will only give up praying. The devil is not afraid of machinery; he is only afraid of God. Machinery without prayer is machinery without God.

I believe that when Christians pray in the way the Bible teaches, prayer accomplishes as much as it ever did. Prayer can do as much as it ever could. Prayer can do anything God can do; for the arm of God responds to the touch of prayer. All the infinite resources of God are at the command of prayer. Prayer is the key that opens wide the inexhaustible storehouses of divine grace and power. "Ask, and it shall be given you," cries our heavenly Father as He swings open wide the doors of the divine treasure house. Prayer has only one limit: the limit of God's power! But all things are possible with God. Therefore, prayer, in a sense, is omnipotent! Christian history and Christian biography demonstrate the truth of what the Word of God teaches about prayer. All through the history of the church, men and women have arisen in all ranks of life who believed with simple, childlike faith what the Bible teaches about prayer. They have asked and they have received; they have prayed and God has answered.

### **I. PRAYER HAS POWER TO MAKE US SEE**

Oh, how essential that we know ourselves—our needs, our weaknesses, our sinfulness, and our selfishness. Lives of power have usually begun with a revelation of the utter powerlessness and worthlessness of self. It was so with Isaiah

(Isaiah 6:1-9), Moses (Exodus 3:2, 5, 11; 2:11-15), Job (Job 42:5, 6, 10, 12), and Peter (Luke 5:1-11).

Prayer helps us get a view of ourselves as we really are. David said, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts" (Psalms 139:23). He will do it. This prayer needs to be repeated daily by every Christian.

### **II. PRAYER HAS POWER TO MAKE US CLEAN**

The Bible says:

Be gracious to me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness; according to the greatness of Thy compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin (Psalms 51:1, 2).

Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much (James 5:16).

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

Many a man has fought for days, months, and years against some sin that has been marring his life and sapping his spiritual power. At last he went to God in prayer, and he came out of the place of prayer a victor. Sins that seem unconquerable have been laid in the dust. The secret sin that the sinner himself has barely detected through prayer has been discovered in all its hideousness and rooted out.

### **III. PRAYER HAS POWER TO MAKE US VICTORIOUS**

David said, "My steps have held fast to Thy paths. My feet have not slipped" (Psalms 17:5). Jesus said, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation" (Luke 22:40). The disciples did not heed this command, and when temptation came in a few hours they failed miserably. Jesus spent the night in prayer, and the next day when the fiercest temptations that ever beset a man swept down upon Him, He came through gloriously triumphant. We can come off victorious over every temptation if we will prepare for the temptation and meet it with prayer. Many of us are led into defeat and denial of our Lord, like Peter, by sleeping when we ought to be praying.

Have you ever noticed how much easier it is to defeat temptation when you spend much time in prayer regarding that particular sin. If you are tempted to use vulgar language, then pray about it. If you are tempted to be dishonest, then pray about it. If you are tempted to be immoral, then pray about it. If you are tempted to be stingy, selfish, and greedy, then pray about it. Paul said, "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able; but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it" (1 Corinthians 10:13). The way of escape is most often found on our knees. Prayer has so much power in it to help us.

#### **IV. PRAYER HAS POWER TO MAKE US GRACIOUS**

I have known many Christians who were kept from greater service because of unruly tongues. They have learned by bitter experience the truth of the words of James: "But no one can tame the tongue" (James 3:8). While man cannot tame it, God can, in answer to prayer. Ponder these words from David: "Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips" (Psalms 141:3). God will do it. Many an unruly tongue has been brought into subjection in this way. Tongues that were as sharp as the piercings of a sword have learned to speak words of gentleness and grace. True prayer can tame the most unruly tongue by which man or woman was ever cursed because true prayer brings into play the power of Him with whom nothing is impossible.

#### **V. PRAYER HAS POWER TO MAKE US WISE**

James said, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5). No promise could be more explicit than this promise. We can have wisdom, the wisdom of God Himself, at every turn of life. He puts His infinite wisdom at our disposal. All he asks is that we ask in faith (James 1:6, 7).

Many of us are stumbling on in our own foolishness, instead of walking on in His wisdom, simply because we do not ask. He greatly desires us to know His way, and is willing to

make it known upon our asking. Oh, the joy of knowing and walking in God's way!

#### **VI. PRAYER HAS POWER TO MAKE US UNDERSTAND**

In Psalms 119:18 we read, "Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Thy law." It is wonderful how the Bible opens up to one who looks to God in earnest, believing prayer. Difficulties vanish, obscure passages become clear as day, and old familiar portions become luminous with new meaning.

Prayer, in a sense, will do more than a college degree in Bible to make the Bible an open book. Have you not known men of old who had a marvelous grasp of the eternal truths of God's Word who had never been to college a day in their lives? Have you not known men who have Bible degrees from Christian colleges who seem unable to arrive at truth? I am convinced that only a man of prayer can understand the Bible. Prayer makes the heart receptive to God's truth. It puts us in the right frame of mind for the study of God's Word.

#### **VII. PRAYER HAS POWER TO MAKE US POWERFUL**

When the early church saw themselves confronted by obstacles that they could not surmount, "They lifted their voices to God with one accord" (Acts 4:24). "And when they had prayed" the power came that swept all obstacles before it (Acts 4:31-33; 5:14). Do you desire the power of God in your Sunday school class, in your personal work, in your preaching, in the training of your children, in your marriage? Then pray for it! Jesus said, "They ought to pray and not to lose heart" (Luke 18:1). We can all have power in our work and lives, if we will only believe God's promises regarding prayer, meet the conditions of prevailing prayer, and lay hold upon God with an importunity, a holy boldness, that will continually pray.

#### **VIII. PRAYER HAS POWER TO MAKE US HELPFUL**

John wrote, "If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death" (1 John 5:16). Prayer avails for the salvation of others where

every effort for their salvation fails. Prayer will bring blessings upon a church. It will settle church quarrels, allay misunderstandings, and root out heresy. It will also bring down gracious revivals from God.

### CONCLUSION

One of the greatest needs of the hour is for God's children to devote themselves to calling upon God until He visits this land again with peace, prosperity, and spiritual blessings. No great revival has ever taken place without much prayer. Prayer will bring wisdom and power to ministers of the gospel. Paul was a matchless

preacher and worker, but he so deeply felt the need of the prayers of God's people that he asked for them from almost every church to which he wrote. It has been demonstrated again and again that prayer can transform a poor preacher into a good one.

The power of prayer reaches across the sea and around the earth. We can contribute to the conversion of the heathen and the evangelization of the world by our prayers. Doubtlessly, more men and more money are needed for mission work, but the greatest need of foreign mission work is prayer. True prayer takes time and thought, but it is the greatest timesaver.

©Copyright, 1986, 2005 by Truth for Today  
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED