

THE POWER OF PRAYER

Int.

1. Aim: To explain the power of prayer by showing many examples from the Bible.
2. Jas. 5:16b "...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."
 - a. Prayer is a powerful thing
 - b. It availeth much
 - (1) Avails = has great force
 - (2) Much = more than a little
 - c. "When a person is right with God, the power of his sincere prayer is tremendous!"
S.E.B.
3. Many Christians do not pray as they should. One reason could be that they do not feel that it will do any good. But the Bible declares that prayer is powerful.

Discussion

I. EXAMPLES FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

- A. Abraham - Gen 20
 1. Abimelech was the King of Gerar
 2. Abraham said that Sarah, his wife, was his sister.
 3. So Abimelech planned to take Sarah to be his wife.
 4. God warned Abimelech in a dream that he would die if he took Sarah for she was Abraham's wife.
 5. He immediately returned her to Abraham and gave him gifts
 6. During this time his wife had been barren as well as the others of his household.
 7. Gen. 20:17 "So Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and they bare children."

8. Healed = suggests that there had been a physical cause
9. The Prayer of Abraham was answered and they were healed.

B. Hannah

1. I Samuel 1
2. Elkanah had two wives - Hannah and Peninnah
3. Hannah was barren and so prayed to God for a child - I Sam. 1:9-11
4. Eli thought she was drunken but when she explained he said "...Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou has asked of him." I Sam. 1:17
5. She conceived and bare a son named Samuel.
6. She named him Samuel because she said "I have asked him of the Lord."
7. She gave him the name as a memorial of the hearing of her prayer.
8. God heard her prayer and answered it. Prayer is powerful.

C. Elijah

1. I Kings 17:17-24
2. A widow woman and her son were living in Zarephath
3. He got sick and died
4. Elijah prayed to God and he was revived.
5. His prayer was powerful enough to restore this young man to life.

D. Elisha

1. II Kings 4:1-37
2. Man & Woman of Shunem built a spare bedroom for Elisha to use.
3. They had no children. Elisha told them that about this time next year they would have a son, which came true.
4. While a young man he got sick and died. V. 18-20
5. She placed his body on the bed of Elisha and went for him to come there.
6. When Elisha came he prayed to God and the boy was brought back to life. V. 33-37
7. God answered his prayer! Prayer is powerful!

E. Hezekiah

1. II Kings 20
2. He was going to die with some sickness
3. Told to set his house in order.
4. Hezekiah prayed to God to spare his life.
5. He was given an extension of 15 years of life.
6. Isaiah told Hezekiah of the good news. But Hezekiah wanted a sign to show that it was really going to happen.
7. The shadow returned backward 10 degrees on the sun dial.
8. Hezekiah lived for 15 more years as God answered his prayer.

F. Joshua

1. Joshua 10:12-14 Sun Stood still
2. Israel was in a battle with the Amorites
3. Joshua prayed to God for the Sun and Moon to stand still so they could avenge their enemies - v.13
4. God Answered his prayer. The sun & moon stood still about a day!

G. Moses

1. Num. 21:4-9
2. The people murmured against Moses and God - They became discouraged on their journey
3. God sent fiery serpents among the people as punishment. Many of the people died
4. They asked Moses for help
5. Num. 21:7 "Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people."
6. Make a serpent of brass and put in on a pole. When they look on this they shall live.
7. God answered his prayer.

H. Elijah

1. Jas. 5:17-18 I Kings 17
2. Because Ahab and Jezebel were worshiping Baal Elijah prayed to God that it would not rain.
 - a. The long drought opened the door for a contest between Elijah and the false prophets of Baal
 - b. After the contest the people would be able to clearly see who was God.
3. Then when Elijah prayed to God to allow it to start raining again, it did.
4. This was powerful praying because prayer is powerful.

I. These are just a few of many examples of how prayer is powerful.

II. PRAYER DOES AVAIL MUCH - Jas. 5:16

- A. We may feel that we are inferior to all these people who prayed such powerful prayers.
1. It is true that we are not an Abraham, Elisha, Hannah, Hezekiah, Joshua, Moses or Elijah.
 2. But James explains that Elijah was an ordinary man.
 3. "Elias [Elijah] was a man subject to like passions as we are,..." Jas. 5:17a
 - a. Elijah was possessed of the same human frame with its sorrows, emotion, joys, that we have.
 - b. In spite of Elijah's great faith he was like all the rest of us in his feelings, sorrows, temptations, weaknesses.
 - c. "Elijah was a man with a nature like ours." Jas.5:17a NKJV

- d. Term - "of like passions" is used in Acts 14:15 -- Paul and Barnabas were trying to make sure the people of Lycaonia did not make gods of them for they were "men of like passions."
4. God wants his people to have confidence in him, and to know that he is willing to hear their prayers.
5. If we have the proper kind of life [righteous] and the proper motives then God will answer our prayers.

B. Jas. 5:16

1. The effectual fervent prayer
 - a. Persistent
 - b. Effectual - denotes active, powerful in action
2. Righteous man
 - a. A just man - one who keeps the commandments of the Lord
 - b. One who does right
 - c. I Jn. 2:29 "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him."
 - d. I Jn. 3:7 "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous."
 - e. A righteous man is one who keeps the commandments
 - f. We must keep the commandments of the Lord if we are to expect answers to our prayers.

3. Avaieth much
 - a. Has great force
 - b. The prayer of a man who keeps the commandments keeps on having great force.
 - c. Much is a comparative term - it means more than a little
 - d. The effect of a prayer by a good man or woman is great:
 - (1) Cures barrenness
 - (2) Raises the dead
 - (3) Prolongs life
 - (4) Stops the Sun and moon
 - (5) Heals the sick
 - (6) Stops or starts rain

4. Other translations of this phrase in Jas. 5:16
 - a. Moffatt: "The prayer of the righteous have a powerful effect
 - b. Phillips: "Tremendous power is made available through a good man's earnest prayer."

- C. John 9:31 "Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth."

Conclusion

1. "Pray without ceasing." I Thes. 5:17
 2. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." Mt. 7:7-8
 3. Prayer is a powerful privilege for Christians.
 4. "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of."
 5. If you will live as you ought [righteous] and pray as you should [without ceasing and according to God's will] then your prayers will be powerful. Prayer changes things.
 6. "Prayer is the most powerful force on the face of the earth."
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Sermon by Arthur Pigman - Oct. 8, 2006 PM
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