

SUNDAY 21ST AUGUST 2022.

**THE POWER AND POTENTIAL
OF PRAYER**

Philippians 4:6-7 and 1 John 5:14

What is prayer and why is it so important? We know that it was very important to Jesus – He would pray alone; with one or two others; in large groups; short and long prayers.

It is so important that Jesus taught His disciples how to pray as it is essential for everyone. If we want to fulfill our unique purpose in life, then we need to maintain an intimate connection with God.

This week and next week we are looking at prayer and how it should always be our first choice, not our last resort.

Prayer is our instant connection with the power of heaven. It is our **open line** to the throne and God tells us to come boldly to find grace to help us in times of need.

Notice it is our **open line**. When we come before Almighty God we don't hear a recording saying: Thanks for calling God. Your call is important to us and will be answered by the next available Angel. We apologise for the delay but have had more sinners seeking help than usual.

We are not asked to leave a message either, like press 1 to leave a message for God, the Father, press 2 for Jesus Christ and press 3 for the Holy Spirit. To hear this message again, press hash to return to the main menu. If no answer, please try again tomorrow. This office is open 9-5 weekdays but closed on weekends.

God is never too busy or tired. His telephone to glory is open 24/7.



How did this instant access to God through prayer come about?

The Most Holy Place within the temple in Jerusalem was where the presence of God was and no-one could just walk in there to chat to God. It was separated by a huge and heavy curtain. Once a year the High Priest could enter with a blood offering. Anyone else at any other time risked being struck down by God.

At the exact time of Jesus' death, this heavy curtain was torn from top to bottom. What did that mean? It meant that the death of Jesus on the cross opened up the opportunity for all of us to accept God's invitation to come to Him directly in prayer. God waits to hear from each of us personally. He wants to act on our behalf.

God loves it when we take the time to pray and especially when we do it together with another person or a group. Unfortunately, most of us do not pray often enough or as God asks us to. We are good at making excuses – too much to do; too little time; too tired and the list goes on and on.

Consider **Martin Luther** - he had more pressures and responsibilities than we ever will have yet he said: "I am so busy now that if I did not spend three hours each day in prayer, I could not get through the day."

And he said: "If I should neglect prayer but a single day, I should lose a great deal of the fire of faith."

Why pray? Prayer is about an ongoing conversation we have with God leading to a dynamic relationship with Him. When we pray, we can claim the promises of God. As we focus our attention on God and not ourselves, we see He is bigger and more powerful than any of our concerns. And as we see God answer our prayers, our faith deepens.

Prayer changes things but most of all prayer changes us.

Rick Warren says: faith is the key that unlocks the door to God's power.

The same Bible that predicted the coming of Jesus and the same God who raised Jesus from the dead has issued promise after promise about answered prayer.

Philippians 4:6-7 says: Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

I have a handout that lists just a few of the 7000 promises God has given us in the Bible which has the answers to our needs and problems.

God says – ask and it will be given to you...and whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive. But God is not some kind of genie who instantly gives us what we want. Think how people lack social skills when they are given whatever they ask for and do not have to work or take responsibility for their lives.

God always answers our prayers and sometimes Christians pray for different outcomes, even though they are praying about the same thing. Which prayer is God going to answer?

1 John 5:14 tells us “We are sure that God hears us if we ask Him for anything THAT IS ACCORDING TO HIS WILL.

That is how Jesus prayed - not my will but Thine be done. We are to ask God in line with His will for us. God makes no mistakes when He answers our prayers.

The Potential of Prayer:

If we consider the facts in the Bible about prayer we realise how powerful it is.

It was prayer that shut the mouth of the lions when Daniel was thrown into their den. Daniel 6:22.

It was prayer that delivered the Israelites from slavery. Exodus 3:7.

It was prayer that freed Peter from prison. Acts 12:5.

It was prayer that restored Job's fortunes. Job 42:10.

It was prayer that saved the crew of a shipwrecked vessel that Paul was on. Acts 27.

It was prayer that fed 5000 people with a boy's lunch. Matthew 14:19.

We should not underestimate God's:

Power – A literal rendering of James 5:16 says – ***the effective prayer of a righteous person accomplishes much.***

Providence – God answers prayers providentially. Paul prayed to go straight from Jerusalem to Rome, the Lord did get him to Rome but through a different route, 2 years of imprisonment and an ill-fated voyage.

We shouldn't be surprised when the Lord answers our prayers in a different way than what we want.

Plans – God has an overarching plan for this world and for each of us. How He merges His plans, our prayers and His ultimate purposes for us – is in the realm of a marvellous mystery, but we should not

underestimate it. God makes no mistakes when He answers our prayers.

Prayer changes things, but there's something even greater - prayer changes us.

It is the window that funnels the atmosphere of heaven into our hearts as we await His glorious coming.

Closing Prayer: Father there are so many times I forget to ask for what I truly need and wisdom is on top of the list.

I am so grateful for Your Word, Inspired Scripture and the promises it holds.

Thank You for being so generous and willing to give me the wisdom I need in my everyday circumstances.

God I want to live by the promises and principles in Your Word – not by the world's standards.

Teach me to boldly ask for wisdom daily so I can navigate life according to Your will and for Your glory.

I ask this in Jesus' precious name. Amen.