

A Praying Church

Acts 12:1-16; 16:16-34

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Thursday's Lesson

Intro: Ever wonder about things that resemble a mature Christian? Surely we could all generate a list of holy traits that personifies such a person. For example, we would expect to see evidence like one who is a good student of God's Word. Jesus responded to the Devil this way, "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God". Jesus was actually quoting God's Word when He offered that response (Mt.4:4; Dt.8:3). We might expect to see a person who makes good choices that honors God. The apostle Paul was so disappointed with the Christians from Corinth who made choices that only the world would approve of rather than God (1Cor.3:1-4). What about prayer? The Bible is full of examples of faithful and mature Christians who were prayer warriors.

I. Prayer

A. Who are we praying to?

1. "For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ..."

(Eph.3:14).

2. This is unlike the pagans (Isa.44:17; 45:20).

3. We pray to God because there is no other (Isa.45:22).

B. Who are we praying through?

1. "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus" (1Tim.2:5).

2. A mediator is simply a "go between". Man has access to God through Christ.

C. Why are we praying?

1. It is because we have a need or needs and God cares (Jm.4:8; 1Pt.5:6-7).

2. Praying for things that do not conform to God's Will is worldly (Jm.4:3).

II. Examples of Prayer

A. The Church Prays for Peter (Acts 12:5-19).

1. Herod Agrippa I, the great grandson of Herod the Great, ruled from 41-44 BC.
2. Herod executed James, the brother of John; he then arrested Peter (Acts 12:1-4).
 - a. Imagine living in such a time as this.
 - b. Persecution against the church has always fanned the flame of faithfulness (Acts 8:1-4).
3. "Constant prayer" was offered to God by the church (Acts 12:5).
 - a. The apostle Paul instructs the saint to "pray without ceasing" (1Thes.5:17).
 - b. Do you find yourself constantly talking to God?
4. Peter was heavily guarded by Roman soldiers, but God released him (Acts 5:6-10).
 - a. Would you conclude that God answered the Christians prayers?
 - b. What prayers have you prayed to God, and He has answered?
5. When Peter arrived at the home of Mary; this is where the saints gathered to pray for him, we learn some valuable lessons (Acts 12:11-16).
 - a. The church was big on prayer, but small on faith (vv.13-15).
 - b. The church was astonished that Peter was released (v.16).
 - c. What does Jesus teach us about prayer (Mk.11:24)?
 - d. Jesus was and is astonished at the lack of faith of some (Lk.18:8).

B. Paul and Silas (Acts 16:22-39).

1. Paul and Silas were traveling evangelist who arrived in the city of Philippi.
2. They were encountered by a possessed slave girl who correctly declared their mission; "these men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim the way of salvation" (Acts 16:17).
 - a. Based upon Jesus' statement in John 14:6, who were they preaching about?

- b. Based upon all previous examples of conversions to Christ, how was one saved (Acts 2:38-41; 8:12,38; 9:18; 10:46-48; 16:15; 22:16)?
3. Paul commanded the spirit of divination (demonic spirit) to depart from the slave girl (v.18).
4. When the spirit departed the girl, her master's way of profit ended.
5. The girl's master complained to the city officials and had Paul and Silas beaten and arrested (vv.20-24).
6. We learn some valuable lessons by Paul and Silas' example while they were in prison (vv.25-30).
 - a. We see Paul and Silas praying (v.25). What do you suppose they said in their prayers to God?
 - b. We see them singing (v.25). Paul and Silas revealed their faith in God and worshipped Him.
 - c. We see others observing their faith in God (v.25). Do others see your faith in God?
7. An earth quake shook the prison doors open allowing for an opportunity for the prisoners to escape (v.26).
8. The prison guard was aroused from his sleep, drew his sword and planned to end his life. His penalty for a prisoner who escaped would have been execution.
9. Paul informed him that all the prisoners were accounted for and he pleaded with the guard to do himself no harm. What lessons do we learn from this exchange?
 - a. The guard valued Paul because Paul valued the life of the guard (vv.29-30).
 - b. How does this conform to Jesus' teaching (Mt.5:43-48)?
 - c. What question did the guard ask Paul revealing his concern for his soul (v.30)?

- d. When others see your faith and good works, what question might they ask you?
10. Paul and Silas were invited to the home of the jailor, where they shared the gospel; the jailor and his family was baptized into Christ (vv.33-34).
11. What impact do you suppose “prayer” had to do with the release and conversion of the jailor?
- a. Do you think God wanted the jailor to become a Christian?
 - b. Do you think that Paul and Silas wanted the jailor to be saved?
 - c. Are you praying for others to be saved?
 - d. Just like Paul and Silas, you are an answer to prayer so other may be saved!

Conclusion: Prayer is powerful because God is powerful! In this lesson we have learned who to pray to, who to pray through, why and what we should be praying for.

We have also learned by way of a praying church and two evangelists, Paul and Silas that prayer is constant and offered up in faith. God hears our prayers and answers according to His Will.