

PRAYING TOGETHER

Jon Macon

James 5:16 tells us that “the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” The next two verses remind us of when God stopped the rain in Israel for three and a half years in response to the prophet Elijah’s prayer, and then later brought an end to the famine at another of his prayers. Joshua asked the Lord to make the sun and moon stand still so that Israel could complete their victorious battle against the Amorites, and God made it happen. Joshua 10:14 says, “And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man.” In Mark 11:23-24, Jesus said, “Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.” Prayer is part of the “whole armor of God” that has the power to make us stand against the devil (Eph 6:10-18). The power that is available in praying to God is amplified when Christians pray together. “Again I say unto you, That *if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*” (Matt 18:19-20).

Conditions to have our prayers heard

The first step in having our prayers heard is *to pray*. James 4:2 says, “Ye have not, because ye ask not.” Christ’s apostles failed to cast a devil out of a child because they did not have enough faith to first pray and ask God to perform that miracle (Matt 17:14-21). The Lord says, “Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full” (John 16:23-24). God is *pleased* to hear our prayers and answer them. Revelation 5:8 describes heaven containing “vials full of odors, which are the prayers of the saints.” Revelation 8:3-4 describes these prayers being offered with incense upon a golden altar before God’s throne.

Answering our prayers through Christ brings glory to the Father (John 14:13-14). To have our prayers “avail much,” we must first pray, but we must also be righteous (Jas 5:16). “For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil” (1 Pet 3:12). In Psalm 66:18, the psalmist says, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” The blind man healed by Christ understood that “God heareth not sinners” (John 9:31). God no longer heard Saul’s prayers after he forsook Him (1 Sam 28:15-16). The same thing happened to the entire nation of Israel when she departed from God (Isa 59:2). We are taught in 1 John 3:22 that “whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.” Jesus said, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall

PRAISING TOGETHER

(continued)

ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you” (John 15:7). Again, when God’s saints pray together, this blessing is multiplied.

The power of our collective prayers

When king Solomon dedicated the temple, he anticipated the great impact of the collective prayers of God’s faithful servants. On that great occasion, he asked the Lord to have His eyes open “unto the supplication of thy people Israel, to hearken unto them in all that they call for unto thee” (1 Kgs 8:52). “What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, *or by all thy people Israel*, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands toward this house: then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men;) that they may fear thee all the days that they live in the land which thou gavest unto our fathers” (1 Kgs 8:38-40). When righteous Jehoshaphat was king of Judah, Moab, Ammon, and Edom gathered together as one against the Lord’s people (2 Chr 20:1-2). At that time, the king “feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask help of the Lord: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord” (2 Chr 20:3-4). Jehoshaphat reminded God of Solomon’s request that He would hear the prayers of His people when they gathered together at the temple, and they all prayed together for deliverance from their enemies (2 Chr 20:5-12). On that day, “all Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives, and their children” (2 Chr 20:13). God indeed heard their prayers and destroyed their enemies without Israel having to fight at all (2 Chr 20:14-30). In the New Testament, God heard the prayers of the disciples when they prayed for Judas’ replacement as an apostle (Acts 1:21-26). He heard the apostles when they prayed together for boldness to speak His word in spite of the persecution against them (Acts 4:23-31). The church began praying together from the first day of its existence and continued in that practice thereafter, as we continue to do today (Acts 2:42). We need to appreciate and take very seriously this aspect of our assemblies. We also see examples of special gatherings of God’s church for the purpose of making a request to God. For example, when Peter was imprisoned by Herod with his execution imminent, “prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him” (Acts 12:5). At the moment the church was gathered together in prayer for him, God sent an angel to release him from prison (Acts 12:6-17). May we always utilize the powerful weapon God has given us to pray to Him both as individual Christians, and also together as the body of Christ.