

Calling the Bride



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“And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free” – John 8:32

PRAYER POWER

...the effectual fervent prayers of a righteous man avails much. – James 5:16

A hurricane was barreling toward the east coast of the United States. It was predicted to hit at precisely the same time that a Christian music festival was taking place at a retreat in Massachusetts.

The retreat manager had to make the decision to ask those who were camping there in tents to leave for their safety. He stepped onto the stage during a pause in the music and made the announcement that a hurricane was on the way. Then he told the audience which direction the storm was coming and asked everyone to raise their hands in that direction and pray that the Lord would have the hurricane make “a sharp right jog out to sea.”

Everyone prayed. Shortly afterwards he turned on the radio and heard the weatherman say that the storm was not going to make landfall as expected because it had made “a sharp right jog out to sea.” He used the exact same words that the retreat manager had used; God’s way of letting everyone know that He had heard and answered their prayers. Needless to say the music festival continued without interruption.

This incident, which was told to me by the retreat manager, reminded me of another weather prayer that was answered years earlier when I was living in California.

A large storm was approaching and the sky was smothered by an ominous black canopy of clouds. I had never seen a sky that black before. We were living in a vulnerable little camper and we looked at the approaching storm with a great deal of anxiety. We prayed in Jesus’ name for God to dissipate whatever it was that was headed our way. Then we watched as the clouds slowly disappeared, relinquishing its position above our heads in submission to a lovely non-threatening blue sky.

The storm had been clearly visible on the radar and people were being warned, then nothing happened. I checked the radio and heard the weather reporter say, “Mother nature is playing tricks on us.”

We knew we weren’t the only Christians praying, and we were rejoicing that we had been spared from whatever was about to pounce on us from that threatening sky.

God hears the prayers of His people. He wants us to have the faith to believe that whatever storms that are headed our way, weather related or otherwise, we have been given the power through prayer and faithful obedience, to avert or diminish impending disasters.

The Apostle James assures us that *“...the effectual fervent prayers of a righteous man avails much. Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit” (James 5:16-18).*

We need to have the faith to believe that God can and will answer our prayers as long as what we ask is according to His will (1 John

5:14). Jesus told His disciples that, *“Whatever you ask the Father in My name, He will give it to you” (John 16:23).* This promise would also be bound within the perimeters of the will of God.

Jesus made this promise to His disciples; people who had committed themselves to following and obeying Him. They had submitted their wills to His will, therefore He could trust them to petition God for those things that would help them advance His kingdom and benefit others. The Apostle Paul bemoaned the spiritual condition of the churches he had observed and commented, *“For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s” (Philippians 2:21).* Could this be the reason that so many prayers go unanswered? Is the pathway of our prayers to God cluttered by goals and objectives that are not in alignment with His will and purposes?

Jesus promised in Matthew 6:33, that if we seek the kingdom of God first; that is, if we make saving souls and doing His will our priority, then everything else we need will be provided. Our prayers for those things will be answered. - But you seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.

He wants us to know that the same power in prayer that He granted to Elijah is ours as well. Elijah was a faithful servant of God, and the Lord answered his prayers to punish those that were in rebellion against God with the tribulation of a three and one half year drought. Likewise, God’s faithful today can also effectively pray to thwart the devices of the wicked, shut down sex trafficking operations, expose drug dealers and other evils, bind demonic activity; and most of all save souls. If we pray with faith, believing He will answer those prayers, He will answer them because it is also in His will to combat the deeds of the wicked... *“To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written: this honor have all His saints. Praise ye the LORD” (Psalm 149:8,9).* This privilege is accomplished through prayer.

Jesus told His disciples *“That whoever shall say to this mountain, ‘You be removed, and you be cast into the sea;’ and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he says shall come to pass; he shall have whatever he says (Mark 11:23).* He means that we must approach the impossible as if it is possible, and those mountains of wickedness, those pinnacles of evil, as well as any obstructions that are hindering our ministries will be removed.

In order for our prayers to be effective we must be in a state of humility and repentance ourselves and make sure any sin we harbor has been dealt with.

There is a mountain called the tribulation looming before us in the distance, and we may already be standing in its foothills. Some of the devastations that will be commencing during that time may also be the result of God answering the prayers of the just Elijah’s who have been praying for justice. We can all be part of this army of prayer warriors, those instruments that the Lord

will use to accomplish His purposes to rescue the afflicted and bring the wicked to justice and repentance.

Let's change our focus from the things we want, to actively seek what God wants for ourselves and the future that God's word has described.

I've since learned it's important to be aware of what's happening in the climate around me, in the world and in the sky. I pray accordingly and expect results when I do.

God's word shows us that His people have something in common with the prophet Elijah – we're human with flaws, but God hears the prayers of His children.

What is God showing you to pray for today? Have faith and pray.

Miracles Happen When You Pray without Ceasing

Pray without ceasing. – 1 Thessalonians 5:17

One of the pastors I knew related this account to me. He was watching the news coverage of the Los Angeles riots years ago. A reporter was on the scene. She seemed reluctant to relate what she had witnessed and the news broadcasters had to coax her to speak. "There was a building on fire across the street," she finally began. "A police car drove up. The officer got out of the car, got down on his knees and prayed. Then a large cloud came over the building and began to rain on it and put out the fire."

She was quickly cut off the air and the pastor told me he never saw her on the news again.

A couple we knew were on their way to participate in an art show when their car broke down in the desert. It was the transmission. The wife sat down on a rock and prayed, even though her husband thought it was hopeless. She continued praying, then she told him to try and start their car again. He didn't see the point, but he did it just to humor her. The car started and he began to drive. It was working perfectly and they were able to get to their destination.

When they got home after the event, the husband took his aging vehicle to a repair shop to see what was going on. After it was inspected the husband was dumfounded when the repairman told him that his old car had a brand new transmission.

We have a friend who is a surgeon. He was working in the emergency room when a young man was rolled in on a stretcher. He had been shot in a gang-related gun fight and he was unconscious in critical condition. My friend laid his hand on the boy's shoulder as he was rolled in and prayed for him. The boy died on the operating table, but they were able to bring him back. Afterward the boy told my friend. "I was on the ceiling watching you guys work on me. I received the Lord Jesus and He let me come back into my body."

I met a godly woman several years ago when I was traveling in the south who related her awesome testimony to me. Her first-born daughter was born without eyes. She was totally convinced that someday Jesus would put eyes in her little girl and she never stopped praying for her. One day as she was bathing the baby, Jesus came into the room and came up behind her. She suddenly felt very weak and had to set the baby down. She could feel the Lord's arms around her and she heard Him say, "This baby will have brown eyes." When she opened her eyes, two brand new brown baby eyes were staring back up at her.

Pray without ceasing.

Never Give Up

And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we do not lose heart. - Galatians 6:9

Ever feel like giving up? Sometimes the events that tackle us on our sojourn through life can be overwhelming. When we've been pinned to the ground by our circumstances, we can focus on the dirt, or we can force our gaze upward and maintain our hope in the Lord.

No one had more reason to quit than the apostle Paul. In 11 Corinthians 11, verses 23-27, he lists the afflictions he encountered during his mission to preach the Gospel and oversee the Lord's church. He experienced prison, (verse 23); he was beaten five times, "forty stripes save one," (verse 24). Three times he was beaten with rods. He was stoned once and left for dead (Acts 14:19); shipwrecked three times, and "a night and a day I have been in the deep" (verse 25). "*In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by my own countrymen, in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness*" (verses 26,27).

In all this he never let any of these things stop him from his "care of all the churches" (verse 28).

On top of the persecutions and other perils he endured, he was also afflicted with an eye disease that the Lord refused to heal saying, "My grace is sufficient for you: for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (11 Corinthians 12:9).

Instead of being discouraged that his healing was denied, Paul rejoiced because he was promised he would receive more of the Lord. – "*Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, I am strong*" (11 Corinthians 12:9,10). "*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*" (Philippians 4:13).

Through it all, the apostle Paul kept his focus on his Lord and refused to surrender in defeat to his circumstances.

When he was offered a choice to save his life, or continue his ministry in an area where he could face death, (Acts 21:10-14) he did not choose the easy route. Motivated by his calling and love for God, he marched onto Rome where he would be imprisoned and eventually executed by beheading. He was faithful to the very end of his life leaving us with a shining example to follow.

Our lives here are like a marathon runner who strains to finish well. If we are enabled to reach just one soul for Jesus during our run, it's worth it all. And someday we will hear our Lord say, "*Well done, you good and faithful servant: you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things: enter into the joy of your Lord*" (Matthew 25:21).

Never give up.

"But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24).