

Praying According to God's Word



Ruling by Prayer (Part 1)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again at the beginning of a new week, sharing with you out of truths that life has taught me, truths that have made the difference between success and failure in my life, and can do the same for you. First, let me say "thank you" to those of you who have been writing to me. Before I finish this talk we'll be giving you a mailing address to which you may write. Feel free to share with us your personal needs, your problems, your prayer requests.

The past two weeks I've been sharing with you on a theme of tremendous practical importance to all of us, "How to Pray and Get What You Pray For." This week I'm going to continue with this theme of prayer. I'm going to build on some of the truths I shared last week. My intention is to enlarge your horizons, to open up for you some of the limitless possibilities of believing prayer.

To begin with, let me remind you of three main truths I've shared over the past two weeks. First, God has made us a kingdom of priests. As such, our responsibility is to rule by prayer. The Bible reveals that this world is not really ruled by kings and presidents and governors and dictators. They only seem to rule. The people who really rule the world are those who know how to pray.

Second, to be effective, our prayers must be both directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Without the help of the Holy Spirit we cannot pray effectively.

Third, the Spirit of God and the Word of God always work together. The power of the Holy Spirit only works through our prayers in so far as they are in line with the word of God, the Bible. This means that to pray effectively we must know what the Bible says.

For an example I'm going to go back to one that I took at the close of my talk last week, the example of Elijah. This is what the Bible says about Elijah in James 5:17-18:

> "Elijah was a man with a nature like ours... [That's emphasized right at the beginning. Elijah was not a different kind of person. He had the same nature, the same problems, the same weaknesses. Elijah was a man

> with a nature like ours] and he prayed again, and the sky poured rain on the earth for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the sky poured rain, and the earth produced its fruit." (NAS)

There was a man with a nature like ours, and yet for three and a half years Elijah controlled the rainfall over the land of Israel. If there's one thing that normally is not under the control of man, it's rainfall. Scripture indicates again and again that God keeps the rainfall under His sovereign control. But at this point in the history of Israel, Elijah took over the control of the rainfall for three and half years. What was his secret? His secret was that he knew and applied the truths of God's word. His prayer had that amount of power and effectiveness because in his prayer he was applying the truths of God's word.

Let's look briefly at the truths of God's word on which Elijah's prayer was based. In the book of Deuteronomy 11:16-17, before Israel ever entered the land of their inheritance, Moses warned them that they were not to turn aside after other gods and become idolatrous. And he warned them that if they did God would shut up the heavens and there would be no rain.

Here is what Moses actually said to them before they actually entered the land:

> "Beware, lest your hearts be deceived and you turn away and serve other gods and worship them. "Or the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you, and He will shut up the heavens so that there will be no rain and the ground will not yield its fruit; and you will perish quickly from the good land which the Lord is giving you.'" (NAS)

Notice the warning. If you turn aside after other gods, God will shut up the heavens and there will be no rain. That's just what Israel had done. They had turned aside after other gods and so on the authority of God's word, Elijah shut the heavens so that there was no more rain. But then when Israel turned back to God there was another promise in the word of God that Elijah was able to claim. This was something that was said by Solomon at the dedication of his temple. In 1 Kings 8:35-36, Solomon says this:

> "When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain, because they [that's Israel] have sinned against Thee, and they pray toward this place and confess Thy name and turn from their sin when Thou didst afflict them, then hear Thou in heaven and forgive the sin of Thy servants and of Thy people Israel, indeed, teach them the good way in which they should walk. And send rain on Thy land, which Thou has given Thy people for an inheritance." (NAS)

So there's the opposite side, that's God's mercy when His people turn and repent. His word declares that He will then send rain again. So when there was evidence that Israel was turning back to God, Elijah had the right, based on the promises of God's word, to claim that God would send rain again upon the land; so that the effectiveness of Elijah's prayer was due to the fact that it was based directly on the clear promises of scripture. That's the secret that we need to bear in mind that our prayers are effective when they're right in line with the statements and the promises of God's word, the Bible.

Remember what I said last week, in Psalm 33:6:

> "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, And by the breath of His mouth all their host." (NAS)

In other words, the entire created universe was brought into being by two things working together: the word of the Lord and the spirit of His mouth. When God's word and God's Spirit work together, all His creative power and effectiveness is in them, and that applies to our praying. When God's word and God's Spirit work together in our prayer, then the same power that brought the universe into being is flowing through us. Let me say that once more. When God's word and God's Spirit work together in our prayers, then the same power that brought the universe into being is flowing through us.

Now I want to take an example of the power of prayer from the New Testament. In this case I'm going to speak about just now, it was not the prayer of a single individual, but it was the corporate prayer of the Church in Jerusalem. That's the thing that we need to bear in mind. Sometimes God will not work merely through the prayer of an individual. It takes the corporate prayer of a group of believers praying together. This is an incident in Acts 12. King Herod who ruled in that area at that time had James executed and then he had Peter imprisoned and he was proposing to put Peter to death, but he was waiting until after the Passover season was over. This is what it says in Act 12:1-11:

> "It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. When he saw that this pleased the Jews,

> he proceeded to seize Peter also. [This happened during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Passover] After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover. [That's what we would call maximum security prison, four groups of four soldiers each watching one man in the inner prison.] So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him. [Notice that but, the church was earnestly praying to God for him. That but changed the course of events.] The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. 'Quick, get up!' he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists. Then the angel said to him, 'Put on your clothes and sandals.' And Peter did so. 'Wrap your cloak around you and follow me,' the angel told him. Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gates leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him. Then Peter came to himself and said, 'Now I know without a doubt that the Lord sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were anticipating.'" (NIV)

So you see there that the united corporate prayer of the church opened the way for the intervention of an angel who came from God and delivered Peter out of the prison. We need to understand something about the ministry of angels. This is explained for us in Hebrews 1:14:

> "Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?" (NIV)

That's a tremendous thought. The angels are to be our servants. They're to come help us, we who are the heirs of salvation. But, the thing we need to bear in mind is it takes our prayers to bring angelic intervention. That's not the end of the story. Right at the end of the 12th chapter of Acts, we read this:

> "On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. They shouted, 'This is the voice of a god, not of a man.' Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died. But the word of God continued to increase and spread." (NIV)

See again the outworking of the prayer of the church. Everything that had been resisting the word and the purpose of God was overthrown and Herod died a very miserable and agonizing and shameful death and he has again been struck by an angel. Notice, it was the intervention of the angel that terminated the career of Herod. What brought the intervention of the angel? The prayer of the church.

So we ask ourselves in light of all that, who was really ruling? Was it Herod or the church? The answer is Herod sat on the throne, but the church ruled by prayer.

Do you believe that kind of thing can happen today? One problem of many of us Christians is we are too self-centered. Somebody once quoted this as the typical prayer of the average church member, "God bless me and my wife, my son John, and his wife; us four, no more. Amen." That kind of prayer is not going to get the kind of results we're talking about.

I want to ask you this. Will you let God enlarge your horizons as we continue for the rest of this week with this theme of "Praying According to God's Word"?

Now, our time is up for today but I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be speaking about an obligation placed upon us by God's Word, yet one that many Christians overlook, "The Obligation to Pray for Our Government."

Radio Program

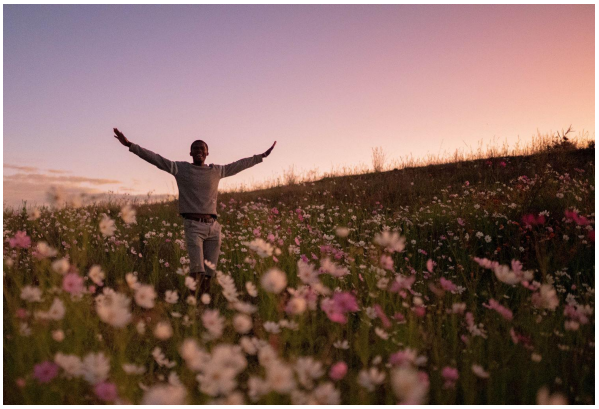
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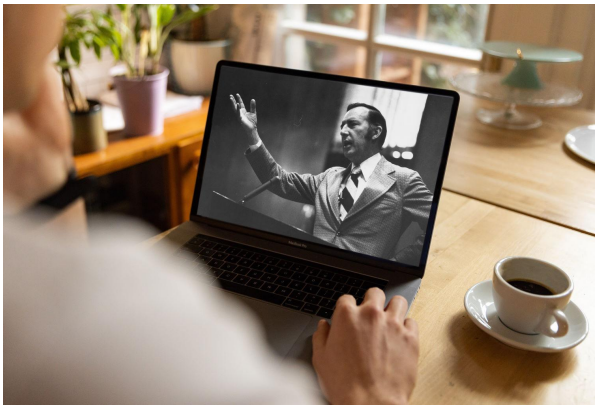
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