

Lesson 9

Prevailing Prayer

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. As soon as one mentions prevailing prayer, perhaps other subjects flash into the mind, such as fasting, healing, praying through, etc. The power of prevailing prayer includes more than just fasting, healing and praying through. Prevailing prayer is persevering in prayer until one has a definite answer from God.
- B. The danger of speaking on prevailing prayer is to get off on some tangent or associate it with what are thought of as radical Christian groups. Prevailing prayer is a biblical subject and must be dealt with in detail.

II. FASTING AND PRAYER

- A. The importance of fasting is seen in both the Old and New Testaments. The greatest saints of God throughout the Bible often fasted. Moses fasted forty days on Mount Sinai, and Christ fasted forty days in the wilderness. NOTE: It is very important to observe that fasting was done by the Church (Acts 13:1-3; 14:23; 1 Cor. 7:5; 2 Cor. 6:5; 11:27). Apparently fasting has been so little taught and less practiced that it has become a lost art among modern Christians.
- B. The spirit of fasting means that one, for a short period of time, is willing to abstain from otherwise normal and proper duties or pleasures that he may give himself wholly to the business of prayer. It is setting aside the strongest drives of the body, food, rest and sex, for complete concentration upon God. NOTE: Fasting cannot be emotionally whipped up but must come when there is some special crisis and God needs to be entreated.
- C. Christ gave one exhortation to those who chose to fast and that is not to fast to impress men but do it to impress God (Matt, 6:16-18). NOTE: A person who boasts about his fasting is not Spirit-filled, for the Spirit-filled Christian fasts and tells no one except God, who already knows about it.
- D. A failure to fast today may show the lack of real spiritual concern on the part of Christians. There is a great need today for Christians to give themselves to concentrated prayer.

III. HEALING AND PRAYER (James 5:14-16)

- A. God can and does, at times, heal individual Christians from sickness. If God does heal, it is accomplished according to His own sovereign will.
- B. The steps in the healing process are given in James 5:14.
 - 1. Call the Elders (14a): If there is a serious illness, the person who is sick or those closely connected with him are to contact the elders of the local church. NOTE: The initiative in visitation rests with the sick, not the elders. This eliminates the common criticism, "The pastor never called on me when I was sick."
 - 2. Elders Are to Pray (14b): The elders are to pray for and with the sick person, seeking God's will in the matter,
 - 3. The Sick One Is to Be Anointed (14c): This oil is not medicine, but any type of oil which is symbolic of the Holy Spirit who can do a miracle of

healing if He chooses to do so. There is nothing mystical in the oil, but it is a symbolic aid to help the sick, and the elders remember that God must do the healing. NOTE: This verse does not say that doctors are not to be used. God may use doctors to heal or not. Nowhere in this verse does it say how God is going to heal. It just says He is going to heal.

- C. It is the prayer of faith by the elders and the one being prayed for that shall physically deliver the sick. NOTE: This verse does not say that just because we have faith, God is going to automatically heal. If a person is to be healed, it is entirely up to the sovereign working of God (1 John 5:14-15).
- D. POINTS TO PONDER
 - 1. It appears that healing is almost always connected with prayer. While prayer is not the cause for healing, it is the means God uses to bring about healing.
 - 2. God does heal today. There are people today with the gift of healing, but that gift must be used according to the Scripture and controlled by the sovereign purposes of God (1 Cor. 12:9). God also does heal through natural means, through doctors, and occasionally by direct miracle. Whatever means He uses, it is all supernatural.

IV. PRAYING THROUGH AND PRAYER

- A. There are some, especially among the holiness groups, who believe that to be saved a person must pray through to God; that is, after hours of weeping and struggle a person will find God.
- B. The whole concept of praying through is false because (1) The Bible teaches the only condition for salvation is faith in Jesus Christ; (2) There is no incident in the Bible of anyone praying through to get saved; and (3) There are a number of biblical examples of people who were saved without praying through. NOTE: The prayer of the “Persistent Widow” teaches that men ought always for pray and not give up quickly (Luke 18:1-4). She kept on asking and the judge finally gave in to her request. We need to keep petitioning God until He gives us a definite “no.” Most Christians give in too easily and give up too quickly in praying to the Heavenly Father.

V. PERSEVERANCE AND PRAYER (Acts 12:1-17)

- A. Introduction: Prevailing prayer is prayer offered in a persevering attitude. The Christian is told to persevere in prayer and never to give up until God gives an answer (Matt: 7:7).

Prevailing prayer is that wonderful instrument provided by God to meet the needs and the difficulties, the trials and adversities, the temptations and dilemmas of life beyond the specific commands, exhortations and doctrines that the believer has from the Word of God (R.B. Theime, The Power of Prevailing Prayer).

The importance of prevailing prayer is taught so very clearly in Acts 12:1-17. This portion of Scripture has many vital lessons for the Christian.

- B. The Sovereign Will of God: God permitted James to die and allowed Peter to live when both had similar circumstances. As a result of taking James and leaving Peter, the church had an awakening through an important prayer meeting.
- C. Crisis Activates Christians: The church at Jerusalem was passive about the death of James but came alive when Peter was about to die. Crisis brought the church to prevailing prayer. It may be implied that they failed to pray effectively for James.
- D. The Peace in Believing God: The night before his scheduled execution, Peter slept because he was without worry or concern for his own problem. The church prayed and Peter slept, for there is a time to pray and a time to rest in God.
- E. God Performs Those Things Which Man Cannot Do for Himself: It was God who supernaturally delivered Peter, but Peter had to put on his clothes and walk out of the prison. Christians must observe natural law but God can and does work the supernatural. Believers are to carry out the natural functions while God supplies power for the spiritual needs.
- F. Every Answer to Prayer Is by God's Grace: Prevailing prayer was answered in spite of the doubting participants. They did not deserve the answer, but received it, which of course is pure grace.

VI. CONCLUSION

- A. Prevailing prayer is persevering prayer until one gets an answer from God. The answer may be yes or no or wait awhile, but the one praying gets a definite conviction that God has answered the request.
- B. The great need of the Christian church today is a return to the Bible and a return to prayer. There must come a new conviction that God works in supernatural ways.