

God Listens to the Cries of the Desperate

“Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him” (Acts 12:5).

The believers in the New Testament handled desperate situations and persecutions with strong, unceasing prayer. In Acts 12:5, it looked as if Peter was in an impossible situation. James had been killed and Peter was put into the hands of sixteen prison guards. However, our God majors in working through impossible situations in the lives of His people. “The things which are impossible with men are possible with God” (Luke 18:27). The missing link between our questions and God’s answers is persistent prayer. “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16). As the people persistently prayed over Peter’s situation their prayer was soon answered (Acts 12:6-7).

Jesus proclaimed, “My house shall be called a house of prayer” (Matthew 21:13). When the church was established in Acts they continued daily in prayer. It has been said, “Right decisions repeatedly done will eventually achieve compound success.” This is true in the area of prayer because as we continue to ask, seek, and knock the answer comes to us. “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Matthew 7:7).

Corporate, Group Prayer in Acts

- Acts 1:14
- Acts 2:42
- Acts 4:24-31
- Acts 12:5, 12
- Acts 13:2

An old story is told of a turtle and rabbit. The rabbit was fast on his legs but the old turtle could not run and was slow. All he could do was crawl. However, the turtle could persevere, was disciplined, and determined. Both were put into a race. When the race began the rabbit leaped from the starting place, and zoomed past his competitor. He left the turtle far behind and decided to stop and rest for a while. He would continue to run and then rest for a while. The turtle kept crawling along until he passed the rabbit sleeping near the finish line and eventually won the race. When we pray persistently we can expect God to help us reach the finish line with His answer. Persistent, daily prayer is more beneficial than those who choose to pray when they have an urgent need.

In the Early Church, prayer was so important that the Apostles decided to leave waiting on tables. They said,

“We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word” (Acts 6:4).

“And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force” (Matthew 11:12). It is interesting that the *NIV* translation says, “was forcefully advancing and forceful men lay hold of it.” Men and women are pressing their way into the kingdom of heaven (Luke 16:16).

Rev. J. P. Hughes, an International Bible Instructor cited four reasons why the desperate get their prayers answered.

1. The desperate do not care what others say. The lady with the issue of blood (Matthew 9:20) and Blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46), were desperate and it did not matter to them who knew it.

Prayer

- 2. The desperate do not care what they are going to do has never been done before. We are creatures of habit but people who are desperate will try anything, even though it has not been done that way before. One man said, "What is popular is not always right, and what is right is not always popular." Esther did not let the fact that she had not been called before the King stop her from interceding for her people (Esther 4:14; 16; 5:1-3).
- 3. The desperate don't care how impossible the request is to be fulfilled. They pray and believe anyway! One time a man prayed, the world stopped, and the sun stood still (Joshua 10:12-13).
- 4. The desperate do not care if they must endure physical pain or hardship to get what they want. Can you picture the lady with the issue of blood struggling to get through the crowd? What about Jacob wrestling with the angel for a blessing (Genesis 32:24-28)?

"A person who makes time to pray will find a God who takes time to answer."

A missionary named Dan Crawford was returning to his village mission in Africa after furlough. Deep in the jungle he came across a flooded river that made it impossible to pass over. No boats were available to cross; and it was dangerous to swim. They decided to camp there and prayed the Lord would show them a way to get across. During the night a huge tree fell into the water and in the morning he saw his prayer had been answered. The tree was their bridge to the other side. Your prayers serve as the bridge between your questions (needs) and God's answers.

The words of a hymn seem appropriate for this lesson:

"Got any rivers that seem to be uncrossable? Got any mountains you cannot tunnel through? God specializes in things that are impossible. And He will do what no other friend can do."

"Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice" (Psalm 55:17).

Study Questions

1. Who was the first Apostle to be killed because of the Gospel? _____

2. Give one Scripture that shows that God majors in working out the impossible. _____

3. Jesus said that the church was to be called what? _____

4. How do you know that the Apostles believed that prayer was very important? _____

5. What does Matthew 11:12 mean? _____

