

The Prayer of Faith

Trusting the Power of His Word

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Jesus came to this world with a mission. Among his tasks was the announcement and establishment of the kingdom of God, and with this, the destruction of the works of the devil. We as disciples, in covenant with Christ and of the body of Christ, are to carry on this mission of advancing the kingdom and destroying the works of the devil, and we are to be absolutely assured that Christ has equipped us with ample power and ability to do so – therefore, we have the responsibility to do so.

The primary passage to be examined is Mark 11.20-26, but first I will briefly describe the context:

Jesus, riding a colt, had earlier entered Jerusalem to shouts of “Hosanna.” This was a declaration of his kingship, for he had entered Jerusalem in the manner of Solomon when he was anointed king (1Kings 1.33-34); thus, Jesus was declaring the inauguration of his reign as king in the Kingdom of God on earth. The next day, en route to the temple, he came upon a fig tree on which he expected to find fruit, but because the tree proved unfruitful, he cursed it. The fig tree represented Israel and its religious establishment who were entrusted with the kingdom but had proved unfruitful with it. We should note how the story of the fig tree is intertwined with the story of Jesus’ confrontations in the temple; this is done to show the connection between the two. Immediately following the cursing of the fig tree, Jesus entered the temple, only to find it in a state of dysfunction – for it has failed to function as God’s house of prayer, a place where everyone could come to have their prayers heard by God. So, Jesus drove out the merchants and money changers who, displacing the activity of prayer, had denied the people an opportunity to be heard by God.

Mark 11. 20 – 26:

- 20 Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.
21 And Peter, remembering, said to Him, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree, which You cursed, has withered away.”
22 So Jesus answered and said to them, “Have faith in God.
23 “For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.
24 “Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.
25 “And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.
26 “But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.”

We need to recognize what Jesus is truly saying, for this fig tree can be seen as a clear symbol of the temple and the religious establishment which failed to produce and has thus been declared dead. In this connection between the fig tree and the temple, it is also interesting to note a reversal of signs as the Levitical priesthood of the temple, whose authority was first recognized when a lifeless rod sprouted, blossomed and bore fruit like a living tree (Numbers 17.1 – 11), had its authority withdrawn and transferred to Christ as a living tree became like a lifeless rod. So we see the kingdom and the priesthood being given to God's true Israel, Christ and the kingdom he has inaugurated. Those in covenant with Christ are citizens of his kingdom, and it is these citizens, disciples of Christ, who are being addressed here.

Christ is not only foretelling the destruction of the temple, but he is assuring his disciples, the citizens of his kingdom, the church, that even though the temple will be no more, in the new kingdom of the true Israel, we are as living temples and our prayers are heard. For when Solomon constructed the first temple, he had God's assurance:

2 Chronicles 7.15 (2 Chron 6.20, 40)

15 Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to the prayer offered in this place.

Jesus is giving his assurance that Jerusalem and the temple shall be replaced with something much better, for Christ, the king, the priest, and the true Israel, has given to his kingdom, the church, great power to continue the tasks of his mission – advancing the kingdom and destroying the works of the devil. Citizens of the kingdom, members of the church, have access to his great love, grace and power through prayer. It is not the physical location which determines whether or not God hears and answers, but faith – our trust and confidence in the word of God.

1 John 3.22 – 23

22 And whatever we ask we receive from Him because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

23 And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.

1 John 5.14

14 Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

When we love one another, we keep covenant with Christ, and in so doing, we are citizens of his kingdom. As citizens of the kingdom, we receive from God whatever we ask. Note, we have mentioned several key stipulations that go with the prayer of faith, and they are:

- 1) In covenant with Christ: love God and one another – with animosity toward no one, having forgiven all.
- 2) Ask according to God’s will – for we are to serve God, not ourselves.
- 3) Have complete trust and confidence in God – know in your heart that your prayer is answered, even if physical or worldly evidence is yet to be seen. This is faith, believing beyond physical evidence, by relying on God’s word, which is spirit.

Jesus has given us all the power we need to prevail against the works of the devil and to advance his kingdom.

Matthew 18.18 – 20

- 18 “Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.
- 19 “Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.
- 20 “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”

We should also note the corporate nature of this power. When we are united as a fellowship of disciples (the body of Christ), we have available to us unimaginable power to serve the will of God. This corporate dimension is also evident in the passage of Mark 11.20 – 26, for it is the praying community that replaces the temple. Communal prayer is but one expression of an unselfish love for one another, love that binds us together as the body of Christ.

We have cause to be absolutely certain that the power to do mighty works is ours through Christ, for our prayers are answered. Accordingly, we walk not by the evidence of what is seen by physical light and physical senses, but according to the glory of God and the unfailing truth of his word. We see by the light of his Word, that divine light that was created on that first day (Genesis 1.3 – 5), for the faith of our hearts is not confined by the light of that fourth day (Genesis 1.14 – 19).

Proverbs 3.5

- 5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding.

When we trust in the Lord, we walk by the light of his Word, for God revealed himself to us through his Word and through Christ. His divine power is available to those true disciples who keep covenant with Christ, for the same trust that leads to faith, leads also to obedience. We must truly trust his word to obey his word.

Expanding our exploration of the prayer of faith, we should also be certain that the power of God's word is available for healing. One of the stipulations of prayer is that it is done in accordance to the will of God. We do not have to wonder about God's will when praying for healing, for as God was revealed, so was his will. We need only examine his Word and the teachings and works of Christ.

It is plainly evident that God never intended for us to experience "bad" for he had forbidden Adam to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Bad; this is verified in the Book of Revelation when in the eternal kingdom, there is no experience of "bad" as there are no tears, no death, no sorrow, no crying, and no pain (Revelation 21.4). Sickness and disease is an experience of bad which God never intended for us; it is not within his will. However, since the fall of man and the coming of the kingdom, God will permit us to experience this "bad" if we permit it – and I say "if we permit it" because we have the power to bind and loose, but it is up to us to use it. Sickness and disease is from the works of the devil, and Christ came to destroy the works of the devil; all who came to Christ in faith were healed, no one was ever turned away, and there is no indication from Scripture that Christ, who is with us always, intended to cease healing. There is no indication that we are to no longer trust these words:

James 5.15

15 And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

For when sickness, disease and trials befall us, God is willing to take what was intended for "bad" and transform it to "good" and beneficial. These experiences serve as tests of faith – opportunities to allow your faith to mature so that you learn that you can be patient in allowing God's blessing to manifest while maintaining your trust and confidence in his word. It is God's will that we learn to persevere.

James 1.2 – 6

- 2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,
- 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.
- 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.
- 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.
- 6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.

Romans 5.3 – 4

- 3 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;
- 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope.

Jesus promises to reward those who have learned to persevere:

“Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

Revelation 3.10

So, an even greater reward for maintaining faith and learning to persevere will come at the end of age. Mature faith gives us that ability to persevere, to endure.

One way of viewing faith is as having in your heart the absolute certainty that you can trust the word of God. Walking in this trust is walking according to the sight of the spirit, and not according to the sight of our physical senses, for God is ultimate reality and ultimate reality is not defined by the appearance of physical reality. God is Spirit, and his word is Spirit and life. The word of God creates physical reality, just as it created the universe, the heavens and the earth; therefore, physical reality marches and conforms to the word of God.

That which we request in the name or authority of Jesus is already granted us, in spirit. Faith allows that which is true (granted to us in Jesus' name) in the spiritual realm to materialize in the physical realm. So, when we trust God's word as we know his word is true, we know that what he says shall be, shall be, we only need be patient to physically witness the how and when. It is this patience, this endurance, and perseverance that is the true blessing we attain from the trials and tribulations that we experience, the “good” that comes from these “bad”; and it is through this that our faith matures.

Disciples of Christ are to carry on the works of Christ. We are to exercise the powers and abilities Christ have entrusted to us to advance the kingdom and further destroy the works

of the devil. Christ has well enabled us to carry on his works and “greater works than these.”
Trust him and have faith.