

THE PRAYER MATRIX

Let me say it once more: God works in our world primarily through prayer. No doubt He could have selected some other method, but He has chosen to do most of His work through prayer. In certain unexplainable ways, He has made Himself subservient to the prayers of His people.

I scoured the New Testament some time ago, looking for things God does in ministry that are not prompted by prayer. Do you know what I found? Nothing. Everything God does in work of ministry, He does through prayer.

Consider:

Prayer is the way we defeat the devil (Lk. 22:32; Jas. 4:7).

Prayer is the way we help to save the lost (Lk. 18:13).

Prayer is the way we acquire wisdom (Jas. 1:5).

Prayer is the way a backslider gets restored (Jas. 5:16-20).

Prayer is how the saints get strengthened (Jude 1:20, Mt. 26:41).

Prayer is the way we get laborers out to the mission field (Mt. 9:38).

Acts is like a handbook on prayer. Everywhere you turn, the disciples are praying, and as a result, remarkable things happen. Prayer triggers God's action. This is true from the very first chapter, where the first believers gathered in an upper room, and "these all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication" (1:14). That was the church's foundation – it all started through prayer. Then came the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came down upon them, and Peter preached, and three thousand new believers were added.

Afterward, all these new Christians "continued steadfastly. . . in prayers" (2:42). When opposition against them heated up, "they raised their voices to God with one accord" (4:24). God's response was quick and awesome: "And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness" (4:31).

The apostles made prayer a top priority (We will give ourselves continually to prayer"-6:4). We see the church praying when deacons and elders are selected (6:5-6, 14:23) and when missionaries are sent out (13:3). And we see prayer when they faced emergency needs, such as when Peter was thrown in prison (12:5, 12). There was no such thing in those early days as a powerful church without prayer. . . Just as in our day there will never be such a thing as a powerful church without prayer.

So it is that God has made certain things dependent upon prayer, things that will never be done unless we pray. Could God do whatever He chooses without our prayer? Of course. But God determined that He will use the prayers of His people to accomplish His purpose of bringing glory to His name for all eternity.

"Prayer is everything," Oswald Chambers wrote. Whatever's happening in this world for God, prayer is always at the critical center. Andrew Murray declared this about prayer: "The powers of the eternal world have been placed at its disposal." He describes prayer as "the very essence of true religion, the channel of all blessings, the secret of power and life." Murray looked at the commands and promises Jesus gave us about prayer in Matthew 7:7-8 and called them "the fixed eternal law of the kingdom." And he added, "Though in its beginnings prayer is so simple that the feeblest child can pray, yet it is at the same time the highest and holiest work to which man can rise."

Prayer is the greatest and best thing for God you'll ever do. "Prayer does not fit us for the greatest works," writes Oswald Chambers; "prayer is the greater work." You can literally affect what is going on throughout this world by praying.¹

¹ David Jeremiah, The Prayer Matrix