

Plugging into the Power of Prayer

Text: Ephesians 3:14-21
John 17:8-24

Intro:

What are the most pressing issues in your life today?

What are the things that pray about the most?

When you really get down to business with God, what are the things which rise to the surface as you petition God to meet your needs?

The answer to those questions are the things that are most important to us.

If we could the Apostle Paul stand before us today and share with us those things which he would think were most he probably would still pray the same prayer he prayed for the Ephesians years ago.

Notice with me again in verse 16, ***“I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being.”***

Notice also in verse 17b and 18 Paul continues to speak of the power when he says, ***“And I pray***

that you being rooted and established in love, may have power ...

And dropping down to verse 20b ***“...according to His power that is at work within us ...”***

This is a prayer from Paul dealing with things he felt were essential to the Christian life.

If you don't pray you won't have the power. If you don't have the power it means you and I are not praying.

If there is one area in our Christian life where many of us struggle, it is in the area of prayer.

Many believers find their prayer life to be labored, inconsistent and far less than what they would like it to be.

C.J. Vaughn wrote, “If I wished to humble anyone, I should question them about their prayer life. If know nothing compares with the topic for its sorrowful confessions.”

Most all of us in this dome this morning understand the importance of having a strong prayer life.

However, we struggle with the practice and discipline of prayer.

3

And yet I am convinced that the most important spiritual discipline we can have in our church today is that of Prayer.

Somewhere along the line we have slipped away from what we call effective Prayer that prays through to Heaven.

Everything we do as a Church family centers itself around this action that we call intercessory prayer.

It was on the Day of Pentecost, when Peter, who before had denied the Lord three times and wept bitterly because it, was filled with the Holy Spirit and walked out of the Upper Room and preached a 3 minute sermon and 3,000 people were saved.

Today, we pray for 3 minutes, preach for 10 days and many times not even 3 souls get saved.

Illustration:

The preacher was Charles Finney

The year was 1830

The place was Rochester, N.Y.

The result was in one year 1,000 of the 10,000 population of Rochester came to know Christ.

Finney's prayer partner was a man by the name of Abel Clarey.

Finney wrote, Mr. Clarey continued as long as I did and did not leave until after I left. He never appeared in public, but gave himself wholly to prayer.

4

Illustration:

I read about Charles Spurgeon, who saw great results in his ministry, thousands came every Sunday to hear him preach and the whole country side was affected by his ministry.

One day some college students came and visited and wanted to know what the secret was to his great ministry.

Mr. Spurgeon replied, "I can show you the secret, come with me, and he took those students with him down under the platform.

And he opened the door and there on their knees were 300 people gathered and praying for their pastor as he preached that morning.

And he said, "Gentlemen, that's the Secret!"

Max Lucado said, "When we work, we work, but when we pray, God works."

I am convinced this morning that when we learn this Great Secret here at PCN, God's hand will move and people will be saved.

It's through prayer God makes the impossible possible!

I keep wondering what would happen here if we had a number of people who would covenant together to cover the people around them in the service in prayer.

I. The Petitions For Us 14-19

5

“14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. 16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”

A. Christians should not have to be reminded of the Power of Prayer.

By prayer we touch the throne of God.

God has ordained that through prayer we should set His hand in motion on our behalf.

He has chosen to respond to our prayers by performing all kinds of miracles in our midst.

Listen to me – The believer has no higher calling than to pray.

We never so tall as when we bow in prayer.

Prayer is powerful.

Paul knew that. That is why he prayed.

6

Multitudes of people have come to understand the power of prayer through the centuries.

I was reading about Martin Luther last week, that great reformer of the church, who had a great friend who assisted him in his work, by the name of Friedrich Myconius.

In 1540, Myconius became very sick and was told he was going to die soon.

On his deathbed he wrote a farewell letter to Luther.

Luther read the message and immediately sent a reply: “I command you in the name of God to live because I still have need of you in the work of reforming the church ... the Lord will never let me hear that you are dead, but will permit you to survive me. For this I am praying, this is my will, and may my will be done, because I seek only to glorify the name of God.”

While those words may seem brash to us, Myconius, who had lost hope to live, recovered and he lived six more years and finally died two months after Luther died.

I could spend all morning giving you examples and stories of people who have had miraculous answers to their prayers.

7

B. As we look at Paul's prayer for us, we notice in verse 16 where Paul prays to God

“That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Holy Spirit in the inner man.”

“To be strengthened with power through His Holy Spirit”

We all need spiritual strength and emotional strength.

And the place we need it is in ***“The inner man.”***

What is that Inner Man?

It's the seat of our influence.

It's where we have our inner feelings

It's where we feel our feebleness.

But every one of us needs strength that is beyond our own.

And the only place we can get this strength in the Inner Man is Power that is beyond our own human power.

The Greek word for Power is ***Dunamei***.

We get our English word Dynamite from this word.

8

If you have ever been around dynamite you know the power that it can produce.

But this word describes to us the Power of God which every one of us desperately needs.

This is not human power. This is not something that we can dredge up.

Instead it is Power / Dunamei that comes through the Power of His Holy Spirit.

This is what happened to the 120 – to Peter in the Upper Room when the Holy Spirit fell on them.

And when we are open to receiving the Holy Spirit and we welcome him into our hearts we receive this power.

Listen folks, God wants each of us to be strong in the Power of His might, and only way is receiving His Holy Spirit.

II. What Prayer will do for us.

Prayer changes us.

It changes the ordinary man or woman and makes them extraordinary.

Prayer changes us by drawing us closer to God.

That Great King David understood this when he prayed in Psalm 25:4-5

***“4 Show me your ways, O LORD,
teach me your paths;***

***5 Guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my Savior,
and my hope is in you all day long.***

There are Three Key Phrases here:

- 1) Show Me
- 2) Teach Me
- 3) Lead Me

So in this prayer David is praying to God is asking God to Show him His ways; to Teach him His Path and to Lead him in His truth.

When we pray God will show us His standard for our lives.

When we pray God will show us His will for our lives.

And sometimes folks, its not always an easy thing for us to go through.

There's a song out right now that says, "I must go through the valley in order to stand on the mountain with God."

Once we accept what God has to show us, He is able to teach us. And when we are teachable and growing He is able to lead us into His plan and purpose for our lives.

We recognize the Power that comes when we pray it will change our lives, our churches and our world.

Regretfully too many Christian believers never tap into this Power.

These people come to Christ for salvation, but they stay beneath their spiritual privileges because they haven't tapped into the Power of Prayer.

It's like God preparing for us a huge banquet and we insist on sitting in the corner eating our bologna sandwich.

Let me ask you this morning – The table has been set – we have received the invitation. But now what are we going to do?

Are we going to gather around some fellow Christians and come to the table, or are we going to sit in the corner by ourselves and eat bologna?

People, listen to me, I am convinced, I'm as guilty in this area as anyone else in this dome this morning.

11

And I am also convinced that all of us are living below our spiritual privilege and God can do far more for us than what we could ever imagine.

I draw your attention to verse **20** ***“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us...”***

Do we really believe this?

God wants to do for us as a Church far more than we can ever imagine is possible if only we would covenant to pray together.

Yes, it's important that we pray in our closet, but we have stressed this to the neglect of praying together.

Illustration:

Dr. Wilbur Chapman, that great Nazarene who pastored the Wanamaker Church told this story.

It was his first sermon at Wanamaker.

He had an older gentleman who met him in front of the pulpit and said, “Pastor, you're pretty young to be the pastor of this great church. We've always had older pastors. But you preach the gospel, and I am going to help you all I can.”

12

Dr. Chapman looked at the older man and thought, “What an old crank.”

But the older gentleman said, “I am going to pray for you that you have the Holy Spirit's Power upon you, and there are two others who have covenanted to join with me.”

Dr. Chapman said, “I was then humbled as I realized this man was going to pray for me.”

The 3 soon became 10, the 10 became 20, the 20 became 50, and the 50 became 200, who met before every service to pray that the Holy Spirit would come upon their pastor as he preached and pastored that great church.

While they were praying, there were 18 men who met personally with Dr. Chapman and surrounded him with prayer.

He said, “I always went to the pulpit feeling that I would have the anointing as an answer to the prayers of 218 people.

What was the result?

1,100 people got saved in 3 years, all as an answer to 218 people who gathered before every service and prayed for their pastor.

What an incredible impact a church can have when its people pray!

III. Five Prayer Requests for our Church.

Turn your Bibles with me to John 17 and I want to begin my reading at verse 8 and read through verse 24

8For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. 9I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. 10All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. 11I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one. 12While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled. 13I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. 14I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. 15My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. 16They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. 17Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. 18As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. 19For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

Jesus Prays for All Believers

20"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the

world may believe that you have sent me. 22I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: 23I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. 24"Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

The model prayer of Jesus is an excellent one for us to follow:

1) Pray that people would sense the Glory of God. Verse 22

“And the glory which You have Me I have given them.”

When Jesus prayed these words, His desire is when we meet together we would continually sense the presence, power and radiance of God in our midst.

You see – when God’s presence meets with us, we are lifted up spiritually and that is when great and miraculous things happen.

The problem in our churches today is that way too many Believers come to church preoccupied with their problems. . .

They come to church thinking what can they get out of the service. . .

15

Or they come to church analyzing what went wrong with the service or somebody's mistake that was made. Stop doing that. When you do that you can't worship God and that's why you're here.

But when the people of God focus on Him and give Him the glory, He comes and makes the church a place of power.

You see – I personally believe when a church really worships, and when people really seek to please God and have fellowship with Him and other believers, it draws the unchurched like bee that is drawn to honey.

A Church only has value when we are focused on him. That's what makes the difference!

Remember when Jesus said, ***“When I am lifted up I will draw all men unto Myself.”***

2) Secondly, Pray that we would follow the Word of God. Verse 8 *“For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me.”*

When you come to church, before you ever get here you need pray this prayer – Lord, speak to me through the sermon – I realize this is Your word.

16

God's Word is relevant to all of us. It cuts sharper than any two edged sword.

That's what He desires for us this morning.

3) Thirdly, We need to Pray that all of us would be united in the love of God.

Jesus prayed this in verse 23 when He said, ***“I in them and You in Me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that You sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me.”***

Jesus prayed for all believers to be completely united in the love of God.

Do you want to know why?

Because Spirit filled Christian believers united in love and guided by a purpose they truly believe in can do anything.

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” There's that word again – **STRENGTHENS/ THAT'S POWER COMING FROM JESUS!**

When we have this unity the Church can shake the very Gates of Hell.

17

Jesus said, ***“I will build My church and the Gates of Hades will not be able to prevail against it.”***

But – when a church is divided it is almost rendered powerless.

When a church is divided – where there is dissension among the believers – it can't take care of its own people, and it can't be an effective witness to people in their community.

I so appreciate the Unity we have here this morning.

But I will tell you that when we see God moving and things happen, Satan again will try to divide us.

So we need to Pray that all of us will be United in the Love of God and we won't allow disunity to enter among us.

4) Fourth, We need to Pray that we will go forth in the Mission of God.

For too long the church has been satisfied in the people who come to us.

We have settled into the philosophy that if we have new families who come to us and we can retain them then we're happy.

18

I want you to look at how Jesus looks at this and commands us what we should be doing:

Look at verses 17 and 18 ***“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.”***

What is our Mission?

That we might leave the four walls of this church and go into the world where live, work, fellowship, do our thing and take the Good News of Jesus Christ who loves sinners just like He loves you and me.

Oh, folks, how we need to pray that we never lose sight of that as a church.

That we never forget the very reason why we exist.

All that we do, if for one reason: For that we might win the lost to Jesus Christ!

So that's the fourth things we should Pray about – God's Mission becoming our Mission!

Do you realize that when we pray for someone's salvation, God begins a work through Holy Spirit in that person's life?

Something happens that we can't explain.

I've heard testimony after testimony of believers who began to pray for the unsaved and something happened that caused that person to be terribly convicted of their lostness.

I want to challenge you this morning to make a list of the unsaved, loved ones, neighbors, friends whom you will pray for their salvation and then let's get back to lighting our candle on the communion table to remind us that God is still at work.

How will the rest of us know unless we light the candle?

5) Fifth – Pray that we would experience the Joy of God.

In verse 13 it reads this way, ***"I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them."***

Jesus said He wants His Church to experience Joy.

My friend, if you are here this morning and you can't sense the Joy of the Lord in your spiritual life, then you need to pray that God will restore your Joy.

What gives a Church Joy?

There are five things:

1. Obedience to God in all the things Jesus talked about gives Joy.

2. Giving God glory gives us Joy.

3. Being United in Love gives us Joy.

4. Following His Word gives us Joy.

5. Carrying out His Mission gives us Joy.

Would you be willing to pray those 5 points for your church and your pastors?

You see – I believe that our church can be transformed and we can reach our potential that would be beyond our imagination – but it will only come through prayer.

Thank God for all of you who are praying. You signed up for a specific time to pray for your church.

I want to remind you every week look at that clock out in the foyer and be reminded to pray for your church and its pastors.

I want to challenge you this morning before you leave this room that you would explore the possibility of forming a prayer group that would come early and pray together.

I believe that Satan has stolen our united prayer from us.

Would you covenant to pray for a revival?

Would you covenant and pledge yourself to pray so that God would move in only the way He can?

Let me close with verses 20-21 – this is often used as a benediction to the church – but I’d rather refer to it this way:

20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

God is describes as ABLE.

His ability to works “according to the power that works within us.”

The power within us is His Holy Spirit.

But look at how God’s ability is described.

He is described as ...

ABLE

ABLE TO DO

ABLE TO DO BEYOND WHAT WE ASK

ABLE TO DO BEYOND WHAT WE THINK

ABLE TO DO BEYOND WHAT WE ASK OR THINK

ABLE TO DO ABUNDANTLY BEYOND ALL THAT WE ASK OR THINK

ABLE TO DO EXCEEDINGLY ABUNDANTLY BEYOND ALL THAT WE ASK OR THINK.

Believer friends, it is only through an Able Savior that we are going to experience what we really need.

And we serve a God who is more than Able!

What is your hearts prayer?

Have you been praying? Do you sense you need to make a commitment to pray at the altar?

Then come – Let’s start now to Pray and watch an Almighty God move on our behalf!

