

Now This is How They Prayed!

When looking at the character of believers in the Book of the Acts of the Holy Spirit, we have considered their fasted lifestyle. We have noted additionally how deeply early believers were devoted to one another. Now let's look at one other wonderful trait. These were truly a people of prayer. These brethren really knew how to pray! The power in their prayer lives is noted repeatedly from the Book of Acts through the Revelation of John (though admittedly, John's Revelation pointed to the prayers of the Church at the end of the age and in eternity.) I just did a quick count and found the word "prayer" in one form or another being used 61 times there! This information is impressive and puts great weight on this form of worship. Think about it:



- 1. They prayed in one accord.**
- 2. They engaged in prayer with fasting on a regular basis.**
- 3. They seemed to pray night and day.**
- 4. They prayed as though their prayers (requests) would absolutely be answered by God. That is to say, they prayed with incredible confidence.**
- 5. They prayed with authority.**

Now what was the result of their prayers? Oh, this is wonderful! It was often though not always instantaneous, it was measurable and it was powerful. Above all, it gave glory to God. Consider these passages:

1. Acts 1 and 2: they were ALL filled with the Holy Spirit.....
2. Acts 2:9 Unbelievers said this: "...we hear them speaking.....the wonderful works of God!"
3. Acts 2:41 and that day about three thousands souls were added to them.
4. Acts 2:43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.
5. Acts 2:47 And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.
6. Acts 3 a man crippled from birth is instantaneously healed
7. Acts 4:31.....they were all filled with the Holy Spirit (again!) and they spoke the word of God with boldness.
8. Acts 5:12many signs and wonders were done among the people. ...and believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women (v. 14)
9. Acts 5:15 they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them.
10. Acts 5:16bringing sick people and those tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.
11. Acts 9:40 Peter raises a lady from the dead as a result of prayer..... and the result: v.42 many believed on the Lord.

This list could go on and on! What is the point? **The point is that when those early believers, whose lives were lived in unity, and in a fasted prayer life, when these saints prayed, God responded!** That is the point! Again, I look at my prayer life and I see something really lacking, something not measuring up at all to what I see in the Scriptures.

I find my prayers far too often tenuous and intentionally vague, so as not to be disappointed by an apparent "un-answer" or a seeming denial to my request. And the more I consider the content of my prayers, I have become aware of asking God to do what I think or what I wish or I desire for Him to do in many situations. Oftentimes my prayers are lacking in authority and in unabashed confidence. Could it be I can learn something from our brethren of the first century?

Let's look at just one more thing. **Perhaps if we knew *the content of the prayers of the early church***, we could get a better glimpse of the prayer or prayers that might move the heart of God.

God is unchangeable, we all know that. The early church was a dynamo for Christ, and He wants to be a powerhouse in our lives. I really want to be a woman whose prayers God will answer. How to I do that? I think a part of that answer might lie in the focus of their prayers. We have a treasury of recorded prayers of the Apostles. They are there for you and me to hold up to all the rest of the Word of God. **I think the reason their prayers were answered was because they prayed GOD'S WILL!!!! They were simply consumed with His will!**

This has been a major revelation for me in the past few years; to become enlightened as to the "hugeness" of the prayers of the Apostles. They had enormously large vision! They asked unashamedly for the increase of God's kingdom and for His Bride the church! Just read through this list of Apostolic prayers:

1. Prayer for the revelation of Jesus' beauty and the Bride's destiny for transforming our heart.

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. **I pray also** that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. **Eph 1:17-19**

2. Prayer for the release of supernatural strength in the heart unto experiencing God's emotions.

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. **And I pray** that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. **Eph 3:16-19**

3. Prayer for God's love to abound in our heart resulting in discernment and righteousness.

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ--to the glory and praise of God. **Phil 1:9-11**

4. Prayer to know God's will, to be fruitful in ministry and strengthened by intimacy with God

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we **have not stopped praying for you and asking God** to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. **And we pray this** in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. **Col 1:9-14**

5. Prayer for unity in the church across a city or region.

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. **Rom 15:5-7**

6. Prayer to be filled with supernatural joy, peace and hope.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. **Rom 15:13**

7. Prayer for Israel to be saved through Jesus.

Brothers, **my heart's desire and prayer to God** for the Israelites is that they may be saved. **Rom 10:1**

8. Prayer for the release of apostolic ministry and to abound in love and holiness

How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? **Night and day we pray most**

earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith. Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you. May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones. **1Thess 3:9-13**

9. Prayer for the release of apostolic ministry and to abound in love and holiness

"... we rejoice for your sake before our God, **night and day praying exceedingly** that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith? Now may our God and Father Himself and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you. And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all...so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints." **1 Thess 3:9-13**

10. Prayer to be equipped and prepared to receive the fullness of God's destiny for the church

With this in mind, **we constantly pray for you**, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith. **We pray this** so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. **2 Thess 1:11-12**

11. Prayer for the Word to increase by the release of God's power to win unbelievers to Jesus

Finally, brothers, **pray for us** that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you. And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith. But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command. May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance. **2 Thess 3:1-5**

12. Prayer for the impartation of Holy Spirit boldness through the release of signs and wonders.

When they heard this, **they raised their voices together in prayer to God.** "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David:

"` Why do the nations rage
and the peoples plot in vain?
The kings of the earth take their stand
and the rulers gather together
against the Lord
and against his Anointed One.'

Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

Acts 4:24-31

13. Prayer to be enriched with the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit leading to righteousness

I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in him you have been enriched in every way--in all your speaking and in all your knowledge-- because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you. Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. **1 Cor 1:4-8**

Wow! Do you get a glimpse of how huge their vision was? It was God's heart! How did they get God's heart? By the way they lived – by their unity with one another, by their personal integrity in their

relationship to the Lord, by their fasted prayer lives, by praying the Scriptures themselves back to God Himself!

I'm asking the Father to enlarge my vision. I am asking him to teach me how to pray. He has graced me with brothers and sisters in the faith who are likewise hungry for "something more" in terms of effective prayer lives. And one of the things I've begun to do is to pray these prayers of the Apostles. As I pray them, I pray just one at a time (prayer session). I tear them apart word by word, phrase by phrase. I personalize them. I ask the Lord for my community, for my city, for my church, for the churches in my area, for my family, for my neighbors, for my State, for this country, for Israel, for the nations. Every prayer written in the New Testament is excellent for praying a prayer we can be certain is God's will.

This, then, is the secret to having one's prayers answered: coming to know God's will, then praying *His* will be done! Come to think of it, wasn't that in Jesus' teaching when his disciples asked Him to teach them to pray? I seem to remember Him saying,

"When you pray say, "Our Father, **THY** kingdom come, **THY will be done** on earth....." Matt 6:9-10

So here is where I am landing these days. Paul says "But we have the mind of Christ." 1 Cor 2:16. If I have His mind, then let me so pray as to come to agreement with His known will as expressed in the Word. Let me pray God's Word back to God, asking Him to do the very thing I already know He wants.

Father, let me pray "big" prayers. Father, let me dream Your dreams. Father, I come to You in agreement with Your will. Let Your will be done on earth (in every way) even as it is done in heaven! Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus!

The Spirit (the Holy Spirit) **and the Bride** (the Church) **say** (they agree together) "**Come!**"

Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus!