

The Prayer of Faith

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"Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them and you will have them." Mark 11:24

It is of importance that the believer prays the prayer of faith. Jesus asked us to pray believing because the prayer of faith is always answered. It is not how fancifully or religiously you pray. Nor do you need a special calling for prayer. You do not need the gift of intercession. The only requirement is faith! It is the privilege of every Christian to pray this kind of prayer for themselves and for others. In James 5:15, we learn that "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." The prayer of faith is necessary regardless of how big or small the need!

Let us learn from the prophet Samuel, one of the heroes of faith in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. Samuel had to pray the prayer of faith for Israel as they were spiritually backslidden for about twenty years and they were in bondage and living in fear of the Philistines. "So it was that the ark remained in Kirjath Jearim a long time; it was there twenty years. And the house of Israel lamented after the Lord (1 Samuel 7:2). When Israel longed for God and His blessings, the prophet Samuel urged the Israelites to get rid of their foreign gods. He called them together and prayed for them. "Gather all Israel to Mizpah, and I will pray to the Lord for you" (1 Samuel 7:5).

What are the characteristics of the prayer of faith?

1. The prayer of faith must be witnessed by action of what you confess and repent!

"So the children of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtoreths, and served the Lord only.... So they gathered together at Mizpah, drew water and poured it out before the Lord. And they fasted that day, and said there, 'We have sinned against the Lord.' And Samuel judged the children of Israel at Mizpah" (1 Samuel 7:4-6). The Israelites obeyed what the prophet Samuel told them to do. They threw out all their idols. They confessed and repented their sins. They demonstrated genuine repentance, humility and the desire for God's forgiveness and blessings.

Sin hinders the prayer of faith. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear" (Psalms 66:18). "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear" (Isaiah 59:1-2). Only when such hindrances are removed can we pray the prayer of faith. For the Israelites, pouring water on the ground "before the Lord" was a sign of repenting from sin, turning from idols and determining to obey God alone. This symbolized their willingness to give of themselves and to spend themselves for the Lord.

2. The prayer of faith will be challenged.

"Now when the Philistines went up against the Israel and when the children of Israel heard of it, they were afraid of the Philistines. So the children of Israel said to Samuel, 'Do not cease to cry out to the Lord our God for us, that He may save us from the hand of the Philistines'" (1 Samuel 7:7-8).

Doubts and fears will challenge the prayer of faith. How? When you look at the difficult circumstances, the problems and the enemies. You become fearful and doubt when your eyes are not on the Lord. Fear robs you of faith. Both cannot co-exist. Remember Peter who acted in faith? He walked in water but started to sink when he looked at the waves surrounding him. Jesus immediately stretched out His hand, caught him and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Matthew 14:31). What should you do when fears and doubts come? Keep praying. The prayer of faith is persistent! Samuel cried out day and night to God for the Israelites (1 Samuel 7:9).

3. The prayer of faith must be based on the blood sacrifice.

"And Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the Lord. Then Samuel cried out to the Lord of Israel, and the Lord answered him" (1 Samuel 7:9). We see the cross of Calvary in the Old Testament. There is only one way to be heard, by the blood of the Lamb. "And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there can be no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). Cain's way failed but Abel's succeeded. Cain's prayer was based on what he did. He brought his own works and God said, "Cain, I can't hear you." Abel brought a lamb. He asked for forgiveness. And God heard his prayer. There is no other way to the presence of God but by the blood of the Lamb. Similarly in one of Jesus' parables, we see the Pharisee's way failed but the publican's way succeeded. The publican was justified but not the Pharisee. The Pharisee relied on self-righteousness but the publican asked for forgiveness. It is at the cross of Calvary that we find mercy and acceptance.

Jesus never fails His children. The prayer of faith is always answered. The Lord answered Samuel's prayer. "So the Philistines were subdued, and they did not come anymore into the territory of Israel. And the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel" (1 Samuel 7:13). When the answer comes with the prayer of faith, God

gets the glory. "Then Samuel took a stone... and called its name Ebenezer" (1 Samuel 7:12). The name means "thus far the Lord has helped us". It is God who performed it. The prayer of faith will always bring glory and honour to God.

Let your life be a testimony of the prayer of faith. When your prayer is challenged, don't stop praying. Persist in prayer. Keep praying and base your prayer on the blood of Jesus. And something powerful will happen! Expect divine intervention. God honours the prayer of faith.

"Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know" (Jeremiah 33:3).

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