

Truth and Spirit Ministries

Praying With Conviction

By Denise Bostic

Every Christian desires to receive answers to their prayers. We all want to see God move powerfully in our own lives and for those that we pray for as well. We want to know that God is listening and that He cares about us. According to the Bible, God responds to our faith in Him and His Word. Because this is true, it is essential that what we believe lines up with God's nature, character and Word. Since there are many times in the Gospels where Jesus made reference to the requirement of faith for receiving what we ask for, it is necessary for us to understand how important believing prayer is as we approach the throne of God for ourselves, and on the behalf of others. It is as equally important to know how doubt and unbelief can prevent us from receiving what we ask for. Our prayers can tremendously impact the world around us. The Apostle James wrote, "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." (*James 5:16*) In order for this statement to be true in our own lives, we must first understand our position before God. We all need to have powerful prayers that produce results in our own lives and in the lives of others so that we might experience God's presence, power and provision.

Understand Our Position

What is prayer? Prayer means to ask, request, petition, plead, beseech and entreat. Although this is somewhat of a limited description of what prayer is, the teachings of Jesus show us that prayer involves a much higher purpose than petitions alone. Prayer is first and foremost the way that we have fellowship and communication with God and worship Him. When we come before God personally in prayer, our position before Him is actually based on our relationship to Him as sons. (Read the article- *Lord, Teach Us To Pray*) When we are born again, we are adopted into His very own family. God has become our Father and we have been given the privileged status of sons of God. The scriptures declare, "But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that they may receive the full rights as sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave (to the law, sin and death), but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir." (*Galatians 4:4-7*) We can request and have total confidence that we can receive our inheritance that was left to us in the last will and testament of Jesus Christ. (*Hebrews 9:15-17*)

When we approach God in prayer for others though, we are representing them before God in the capacity of priests. In the Old Testament, the office of priest served in the function of representing man before God. As believers in Christ, we have now been made priests of God in the New Testament. (*1 Peter 2:9, Revelation 1: 6*) Being made priests by God, we can now represent other people in righteousness (right standing) before a holy God because of who we are in Christ. Because we have been made right with God through His Son, our prayers can produce powerful and effective results. We can represent the lost, who have no relationship with God yet, and intercede on their behalf so that they too may receive eternal life and an inheritance in Christ.

We can also come to God in supplication (which means a seeking, asking, entreating and of prayers imploring God's aid in some particular matter) to pray for our brethren and their needs and believe God to touch their lives in a remarkable way. How are we made righteous? When we accept the redemption provided by Jesus Christ, God in turn imputes His righteousness to us. (*Romans 3:21-26*) Through the atoning blood of Christ we are reconciled to God, born again of the Spirit and become His children. (*John 3 & Romans 8:14-17*) We not only are reconciled and

have access to God the Father because of the blood of Christ, but also have been put in a position of power and are now seated with Jesus in heavenly places! (*Ephesians 2:4-7*) Understanding our position of power alongside the Lord Jesus is a great key to seeing the presence, power and provision of God manifest in the earth. This powerful truth can forever change our outlook on how we relate to God through the devotion of prayer.

Because of our position before God, we do not have to come to Him with doubts or fears that we will not receive what we ask for, but we can have full assurance and know that we have all the privileges that belong to the sons of God! If we are born again from above and led by the Spirit, this makes us sons of God. "...Because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship, and by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs- heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may share in his glory. (*Romans 8:14-17 NIV*) We can now approach the throne of God with confidence to receive our inheritance that our Lord Jesus obtained for us by His sacrifice. We can also have confidence that Lord will freely give to us what He promised us in His last will and testament – the New Covenant.

The Lord Himself promises that those who seek God in prayer will receive answers because of His goodness and paternal love. (*Matthew 7:7-11*) Jesus also promises us that if we would ask anything in His name, He said that He would do it. So first of all, when we pray, we should believe and expect that God will give us divine answers. The Bible teaches us in *Hebrews 11:6* that God requires faith when we come to Him in prayer. Why? Because when we have faith we are showing God that we truly believe that He does exist and that because of His goodness, He will reward us with what we believe for.

Let God Be True

Every Christian should have strong convictions about what they believe. What is conviction? It also means, persuasion, confidence, belief and faith. (Webster's Thesaurus) If we truly believe God and His Word, we can have the confidence when we pray that God will make good on all of His promises that He has given us. The Apostle Paul declared, "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us."(KJV) In the NIV translation it reads, "For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God." (*II Corinthians 1:20*) God is always true to His Word and does not lie. Since this is so, we need to let God be true... (*Romans 3:4*) We can boldly declare God's promises and believe that He will fulfill them in our lives and for those whom we pray for. We need to say yes- that means that we agree with God and His Word; we need to say "amen" (meaning so it is, so be it and may it be fulfilled)- so that God will perform His word and that He may be glorified!

We are admonished in the Bible to "Prove all things, hold fast to that which is good." (*I Thessalonians 5:21*) Praying in faith and expecting to see the results manifest in our lives is one way we can prove that God is true to His Word. This is what it means to pray with conviction. It means that we believe everything that God says and freely receive these things by faith. When we believe God, He is pleased and delights in moving on our behalf so that He may reveal His love to us and show Himself strong in our lives. Glory to God!

Persuasive Prayers

Another meaning of conviction is persuasion. This not only means that God can persuade us to believe and receive His promises through His Word and Spirit, but that we can have confidence in God and persuade Him to hear and answer our prayers as well. Does this mean that God will be persuaded by anything that we want? No, only that which is according to His will. John writes, "This is the confidence that we have in approaching God; that if we ask anything according to his

will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us- whatever we ask- we know that we have what we asked of him." (*1 John 5:14-15*) Wow! What amazing promises from God!

There are those throughout history that have persuaded God with their prayers. One such example is Abraham, our father in the faith. Abraham interceded for his nephew Lot and his family when God was planning to destroy the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. He persuaded God to intervene to save the righteous within these doomed cities. (Abraham also knew the nature and character of God was to not destroy the righteous along with the wicked. This is a very important part of prayer and something we will touch upon later.) Because of Abraham's intercession (he spoke to the Lord face to face), the Lord sent two angels to rescue Lot and his family from destruction. Abraham, our father in the faith, set an example for us in believing and persistent prayer. (*Genesis 18:16-33*)

Moses, God's chosen deliverer of the great nation of Israel, also gave us an example of the powerful persuasion of prayer. God had led Israel out of Egypt with a mighty hand yet later they fell into idolatry in the wilderness. In His righteous anger, God wanted to destroy the whole nation and start over by making a greater nation through Moses. But Moses interceded for his people; he appealed to God's mercy and greatness. He reminded God of His promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Through the fasting and intercession of Moses, God changed His mind and poured out mercy instead of wrath. A nation was spared by one man's intercession- one man that truly believed the promises of God. Prayer can affect whole nations! (*Exodus 32:1-14, Deuteronomy 9:9-29, 10:1-5*)

A powerful story is recorded in *II Kings 20* about a man named Hezekiah, King of Judah. This man was faithful to the Lord and served Him with wholehearted devotion. One day he received a word from the Lord through the prophet Isaiah to prepare him for his impending death. Hezekiah wept bitterly concerning this word and sought the Lord's mercy in prayer right away. Astonishingly, even before Isaiah had left the King's middle court, God had heard and answered Hezekiah's prayer. The prophet was sent back into the King's quarters with a new word of the Lord to this godly man- that not only would he be healed in three days, but that He would add fifteen years to his life! Prayer can bring tremendous change to seemingly hopeless situations!

Have Faith In God

Our greatest example among men concerning the results of powerful prayer is the Lord Jesus. He taught His disciples about prayer often. One such teaching stands out as a testament to the magnitude of believing prayer. Jesus and His disciples saw a fig tree along the road to Jerusalem one day and when the Lord saw that it was barren, He cursed the tree by speaking over it that it would never bear fruit again. The next morning when they passed by this same tree going out of the city, the amazed disciples noticed that the tree was withered from the roots and inquired the Lord about it. Jesus took this opportunity to teach his followers about the power of believing prayer. "Have faith in God," Jesus answered. "I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours." (*Mark 11:20-24*) Did you catch that last part? Jesus teaches us that whatever we ask for in prayer we should believe that we have already received it and it will be ours! That's awesome!

What is faith? The biblical definition of faith is, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (*Hebrews 11:1*) In the NIV Translation this verse reads, "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." The Greek meaning of substance in this verse also means confidence, firm trust, assurance. The word evidence here means that by which invisible things are proved (and we are convinced of their reality) and of the inward result of proving a conviction. [5287 & 1650, Joseph Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament] Also, Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible has the meaning of the word evidence as being: proof, conviction. When we pray with conviction, we are praying

outwardly what we already believe inwardly (God's Word). We are sure or certain that God will produce the proof or evidence of that which has not yet been received by our five physical senses. How can we be so sure? Because all of God's promises are yes and amen! With such strong convictions, we can be sure that we have already received what we have asked for!

Hindrances To Faith

There are many Christians today that do not have knowledge of this wonderful truth and as a result, do not see powerful results in their prayer life. Why? Some believe the false teachings and traditions of men (that go contrary to His Word), rather than believing God's truth. There are also others who unwittingly (not intentionally) believe the lies of the devil and his doctrines. (*Matthew 15:1-9, John 8:44, I Timothy 4:1-2*) When we receive words that are of human or satanic origin instead of God's, we are in effect canceling out His Word and mighty, effectual, working power in our lives. (*Matthew 15:6*) God cannot work where His Word is not believed. (Read *Hebrews 3:12-19 & 11:6*) This may be shocking but true nonetheless. Jesus Himself could not do many mighty miracles in His own hometown of Nazareth because of their unbelief (lack of faith). Our worship, prayers and doctrines could be in vain due to not receiving or rejecting God's true Word. (*Matthew 6:5-8, 15:6-9, 13:53-58, Mark 6:4-6*) Of course, we do not want this to be the case in our walk with the Lord. We must take God at His Word and believe that He will manifest Himself powerfully in our lives. We must believe and obey God rather than men. (*Act 4:18-19*)

We are warned in scripture to not allow ourselves to be taken captive by the principles of the world or the devil, but rather we are to receive the fullness of Christ and His principles instead. (*Colossians 2:8-9, II Timothy 2:26*) We all have some type of belief system, we just need to make sure that what we believe lines up with what Christ says. God and His Word must be our final authority when it comes to our faith. We should be careful that we are not receiving false teaching over that which is truth. We should make sure that what we are receiving is in agreement with the truth of God. (*John 14:6 & 17:17*) We can trust God to lead us personally by His Spirit and give us the discernment we need to accept what is true and reject what is false. (*I Corinthians 2:9-16 & 12:10*) We need to exemplify the faith of our elder brother (i.e. follow in Jesus' footsteps). Jesus entrusted His entire being to the Father and only spoke His words and did His works. (*John 5:19, 14:24*) When we look to Jesus' example and follow the Holy Spirit's direction, we can learn and understand to have the kind of faith that pleases God and causes Him to move in supernatural power.

Another thing that Jesus also made clear regarding prayer is that one cannot have doubt in his or her heart while praying and see the results that they so desire. (*Mark 11:23*) This is important if we want to pray with conviction. Doubt is a great hindrance to faith. When we doubt, we do not really believe what the Lord has already spoken as truth and as a result we can become double-minded. Doubt causes our faith to waver and therefore we are not able to attain from the Lord what we are asking for. Under the inspiration of the Spirit, the Apostle James explained it so well, "If any of you lacks wisdom (or anything else), he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does." (*James 1: 5-8*)

We must ask the Lord to help us cast off all doubts and have confidence in Him that He is able to perform His Word. When Jesus was going to deliver a demon-possessed boy, He first had to deal with the unbelief of the boy's father. Jesus taught the man that the word "if" should not have been in his vocabulary and that everything is possible for those who believe. Like this double-minded man, we may even have to ask the Lord to help us and cry out, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" (*Mark 9:14-29*) We need to be single-minded, at one with the Lord and not doubt and then we will see Him do many mighty works!

Come Boldly!

We must not forget that when we come to God in prayer, we come as His sons. This is so very important that we understand that we are in a relationship with God and that it is His good will and pleasure to give us these things. "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! (*Matthew 7:7-11*) As we grow in our relationship with the Lord (getting to know Him better), we can come to know His ways. Remember Abraham's intercession for Lot and his family? Abraham knew that it was not in God's nature or character to destroy the righteous with the wicked. Abraham knew this about God because He had been in His presence and spent personal time with Him. The same is true of Moses. He spoke to God face to face. The more we get to know God, the more we can understand His heart, mind and will. This is so important to getting the results we desire in prayer. We can know more about how to pray and how we are not to pray. We can have less of those "empty prayers" and more of those meaningful prayers that produce results that we can see.

All believers can be as close to the Lord as they desire to be. How much time do we want to spend with Him? The more time you spend with someone, the more you get to know him or her. The more we grow in our personal relationship with God, the more that we can come to know what is in our Father's heart, have the mind of Christ and be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. As we grow in the Lord and continually abide in Him, godly fruit can be produced in our lives and God can manifest His power so that we may grow up spiritually and be effective witnesses for the Lord. Also, as we spend personal time with the Lord in prayer and Bible study, we can grow strong in our love for Him, our knowledge of Him and faith in His promises.

God wants us to believe what He tells us and it is His will for us to receive our inheritance as His children. (*Acts 26:18, Ephesians chapter 1*) When we approach God's holy throne, our Father wants us to boldly ask for help and receive the promises He has given us. "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast to our profession. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (*Hebrews 4:14, 16*) Do you dare to believe God and come boldly before Him and trust that He will keep His promises to you? He will. After all, God paid such a high price for us to have them- He paid with the life of His dear Son.