

## PRAY WITHOUT CEASING

1 Thess. 5:17

The call to prayer is one that brings us to the realization that our God is concerned with us and about us. A striking characteristic of the prophets and apostles of God is that they were men of prayer.

The subject of prayer is commonly meditated upon by the child of God. We know that we are to pray and offer thanks to God for all we are and all we have. In James 5:16 we have an assurance from God that the supplications of a righteous man availeth much in its working. But even with this assurance we may be guilty of denying such by questioning whether or not God does indeed answer our prayers.

The Deist holds the position that "God created the world but does not intervene in its affairs. According to this doctrine, the world operates and develops eternally on the basis of mechanical and unchanging laws established by God." They also rejected the idea of Revelation: that God revealed himself to man via the scriptures. Do we not also have a resemblance of this doctrine when we reject the written word in it's obvious declaration of God hearing and answering the prayers of his saints?

Many factors enter the realm of prayer: (1) for what should we pray? (2) what prayers can we expect God to answer? (3) whose prayer does God hear and answer? So many questions can occupy our thoughts in this area. Many of our number are diligently praying for the return of children to the faith, wondering how and by what means the prayers will be answered...if at all.

The remainder of this article will be devoted to the investigation of a number of passages that speak of prayer: what requirements are essential to acceptable prayer. It is my desire that they will provide you with a measure of hope.

James 4:1-4 reveals several characteristics that will result in our prayers not being answered: (1) vs. 2, because ye ask not. (2) vs. 3, Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend it in your pleasures. (3) vs. 4, indicates that their lives were worldly, they were friends with the world, and yet, they wanted God to answer their prayers.

Also, in James 5:16-18, we are instructed by the word of God that prayers are heard and answered by God. Elijah, a man of like passions (nature, footnote ASV) with us, prayed fervently that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth for three years and six months. And he prayed again; and the heavens gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. What a wonderful example of a man whose confidence in God did not waiver. He prayed fervently. Could it be that we lack the earnestness we need to the acquiring of an answer?

Among many of the Old Testament examples we have, where God expressly answered the petition, one in Daniel 10, is most interesting.

We are told in verses 2-3 that Daniel was mourning three whole weeks. He ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine into my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled. It is quite evident that he was dedicated to that which he had set himself to do.

In response to this prayer, it was told him, by the angel of God; "from the first day that thou didst set thy heart to understand and to humble thyself before thy God, thy words were heard: and I am come for thy word's sake." (Please take the time to read the whole account of Daniel's vision.)

The angel indicated that Daniel's words had been heard the first day. The question may arise as to why the answer didn't come the first day? In the angels response we might have hope: "But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days; but lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me: and I remained (was not needed, footnote ASV) there with the kings of Persia. Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days."

Paul said, Eph. 6:12, For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. He identifies that the true source of our conflict has its origin with the invisible spiritual host of wickedness: as was with Daniel, there may be a number of provisions that must be attended to before the answer comes.

We are presently dealing with the loss of a number of our young. Prayers are being offered unto God and efforts are being made to restore them. Brethren, this is not unique to our society. Albert Barnes, who lived in the 1800's, had the following to say concerning Daniel 10: "We pray for the conversion of a child; yet there may be obstacles to his conversion, unseen by us, which are to be patiently removed, and perhaps by a foreign influence, before it can be done. Satan may have already secured a control over his heart, which is to be broken gradually, before the prayer shall be answered...The duty, then, which is taught, is that of patience, of perseverance, of faith in God, of a firm belief that he is true to all his promises, and that he is a hearer of prayer - though the blessing seems long delayed."

In Matthew 21:22, the Lord assured his disciples that they would be able to accomplish great things through faith: "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."

If our prayers are accompanied by the attitude of Daniel, having set thy heart to understand, and to humble thyself before thy God, we too should expect good things.