

A Manifestation of God in Answer to Prayer

by T.M. Anderson

The sermon highlights the transformative power of united prayer in times of crisis, leading to a bold proclamation of God's Word and the manifestation of His presence through the Holy Spirit.

Scripture: Psalm 46:1, Psalm 118:6, Mark 16:17, Acts 4:27-33, Hebrews 1:10

Topics: "Prayer Power", "Holy Spirit"

Description

T.M. Anderson preaches on the power of prevailing prayer as demonstrated in Acts 4:31, where the believers were filled with the Holy Ghost after praying together. The believers expected God to answer their prayers in His way, not necessarily through supernatural phenomena but through spiritual victories. They prayed in times of crisis, acknowledging the need for God's intervention and boldly speaking the word of God. The sermon emphasizes the importance of continual infilling with the Holy Spirit to overcome spiritual challenges and the need for unwavering faith in prayer, trusting in God's unchanging nature and promises.

Transcript

"... When they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness."--Acts 4: 31.

This remarkable manifestation of God reveals the effectiveness of prevailing prayer. It vividly discloses the fact that prayer can accomplish much. It is apparent that neither the apostles, nor the assembled company of devout believers were astonished at the marvelous visitation of God. They had assembled together in one place for the express purpose of achieving victory over the opposition of wicked men, and they fully expected the Lord to answer their united prayers in His own way.

Perhaps the shaking of the place where they were assembled together was an extraordinary occurrence, but receiving a direct answer to their importunate praying was neither unusual nor unexpected. The believers had assembled for the specific purpose of producing a miracle in the spiritual world, and not for the purpose of producing a phenomenon in the natural world. We do not need a manifestation of the supernatural to arrest the attention of a pleasure seeking world. God does not often shake the shackles off His imprisoned saints, and open the doors of the jail with an earthquake. He can do the unusual and the unexpected when necessary. We do not need the Lord to do something to astonish us, but we do need Him to do something to alert us to our dangers.

We cannot ignore the fact that we desperately need a startling manifestation of God to shake us out of our spiritual lethargy and selfish complacency. We cannot substitute a program for power and have the least semblance of hope that the unsaved will be attracted by it.

The believers were praying in a desperate crisis when they said, "... Lord, behold their threatenings ..." We are aware that some of the most enduring results recorded in sacred history were obtained when some devout person prayed in an hour of crisis. Abraham prevailed with God in prayer when the angelic messengers told him about the destruction of Sodom. The holy Scriptures reveal that Moses prayed importunately for the people when they incurred the fierce anger of God by worshipping the golden calf. It was a critical time in Israel when Elijah prayed earnestly on mount Carmel. Jesus was praying in an hour of crisis when He said, "... Father, the hour is come ..." The believers were confronted by a desperate situation when they said, "... Lord, behold their threatenings ..." With them, it was a case of life or death, victory or defeat. The odds against them were tremendous, but the God that was for them was Almighty.

There is nothing in the sacred records to show that they had the slightest intention of compromising the truth in order to have favor with men. They did not call a meeting of the official board to discuss ways and means of evading the fundamental issues involved. They did not take refuge in a stupefying pessimism saying that nothing could be done to remedy the situation confronting them. Neither did they deceive themselves by saying that things would work out satisfactorily to all parties concerned. They were willing to accept the conflict that challenged their faith and hope in God. They did the most natural thing in the sight of the Lord when they assembled together with one accord in prayer, and lifted up their voice in one concerted petition to Him for help.

The believers in this day of grace should be impressed by the victory achieved by this praying company of saints. There are many things which threaten us today. We are confronted with serious situations that cannot be overcome unless we keep our strength renewed through prevailing prayer.

It is written, "... They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness." A gracious infilling with the Spirit of God is the only solution for our spiritual difficulties in this age of the world. The Lord's holy prophet said, "... When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him."--Isa. 59:19. We cannot hope to escape the flood of evil which threatens to overwhelm the believers today unless we are constantly refilled and re-invigorated by the Holy Spirit. When Paul said, "... Be filled with the Spirit," he was stressing the necessity of continuing in the fullness of the Spirit in order to achieve the victory for Christ in this world. This remarkable filling with the Spirit was evidently different in some respects from the epochal filling received on the day of Pentecost. This gracious enablement of the Spirit was obviously one of the times of refreshing to be expected from the presence of the Lord. (Acts 3: 19.)

Unless the believers in the church today have their spiritual strength replenished repeatedly by the Spirit they will not be able to overcome the increasing power of spiritual wickedness threatening them today. The church cannot cope with the menacing threat of worldliness except the company of believers pray for power to meet the insidious threat. The company of believers cannot withstand the subversive teachings of modern Liberalism unless they pray for strength to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints.

It will require much prayer to prevail against the creeping paralysis resulting from meaningless programs and pointless plays promoted by the worldly-minded leaders in the church. Unless the company of believers today are girded with the power of the Holy Spirit they will not be able to cope with the crisis

confronting them in this day of formality and unbelief. God did not answer their impassioned prayer in the hour of crisis by miraculously changing the attitude of the determined opposition. He did not remove the threat which endangered them, neither did He destroy the ring-leaders responsible for the persecution of the church. It is interesting to note that the company of believers did not ask the Lord to change the attitude of their enemies. They accepted the fact that such persecution had been foreseen and foretold. ". .. Thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ."--Acts 4: 25. (Psalm 2:1-3.)

The Lord would have us understand that suffering persecution for His sake is the price to be paid in blood and tears for the unspeakable pleasure of serving Him in the holy way of life.

Our young people should be impressed with the fact that they cannot expect the Lord to change the attitude of their unsaved friends and associates. When once the young converts discover this truth they will not find it difficult to overcome the hardships of life. Pastors find it difficult to get the young people established in the faith because they apparently believe that God should change their environment in answer to prayer. It is apparently difficult for them to understand that a change in their surroundings is not the solution of their spiritual problem. It is likewise true that a change in the moral conditions which environ the church today is not the solution of its spiritual problem.

The company of believers found the solution of their problem when they lifted up their voice with one accord in prayer to God. The answer they received enabled them to cope with the rising tide of spiritual wickedness in high places. The Lord fortified them with a spiritual power that no combination of evil forces could withstand successfully.

The embattled believers were praying with an unwavering faith when they said, "Lord, thou art God." The indisputable fact of God was the basis of the unshakable confidence which inspired them to pray. It is remarkable how impotent and insignificant the feeble efforts of wicked men appear when we realize that God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. (Psalm 46:1.)

The imperishable Word declares, "The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?"--Psa. 118:6. God gave us a certified promise when He said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." The Lord has never deserted His faithful people in the time of conflict. We need to have this blessed truth imbedded in our consciousness, impressed on our minds, and indelibly inscribed in our hearts by the hand of God. When once we grasp the fact of God it is not difficult to pray.

God's everlasting kingdom will never be destroyed by the combined forces of the ungodly. Almighty God is never in jeopardy. He has no fear of mortal man. He shall remain immutable in purpose and invincible in power for evermore.

Consider what the praying company said about God's enemies, "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done."--Acts 4:27, 28. The conscienceless Herod, and the cowardly Pontius Pilate are dead, and their vicious opposition to Christ is dead and buried in the sepulcher of the ages. The aggressive agnosticism and sneering atheism that ran rampant less than a century ago has ceased to occupy a prominent place in the world today. The vicious Liberalism which afflicts the church today will soon be dead, buried together with modern infidels who have advocated its pernicious views.

Perhaps the sands have been washed in the footprints of the Stranger of Galilee, but the world has not forgotten that He lived, loved, and labored to save lost humanity from eternal death. The countless centuries which have hurried into the dateless past have not impaired His strength to save us to the uttermost. The marching millenniums will not erase His matchless Name from the annals of sacred history. The last desolate day of time will not find Him buried in the sepulcher of the ages. The fleeing ghost of eternity will never discover the grave of God. Of Him it is written, "And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail."--Heb. 1:10-12.

When we fortify our faith and underscore our thinking with the words, "Lord, thou art God," we can prevail in prayer and overcome the combined forces of evil which threaten us in these trying times. Almighty God will not abandon His eternal purpose because a few wicked men have lifted up their voices against Him. Our God has assured us that all things work together for good to them that love Him, to them who are the called according to His purpose. His imperishable promises give a strong consolation to lay hold of the hope set before us. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for He is faithful that promised.

The assembled company prayed that the messengers of the Word might have courage. They said, "... Grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word."--Acts 4:29. The voice of prayer was heard in heaven and the answer granted when the assembled company of devout saints prayed this importunate prayer in the time of crisis. God's people were not praying for boldness because they were moral cowards. They were fearfully aware of the danger which threatened them; but they were not too cowardly to face it with God's help.

The rulers of the people, and the elders in Israel had called Peter and John before the council, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. (Acts 4:18.) God's called servants could not heed this diabolical command and be faithful to the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. To comply with such an unjust demand, not to speak at all nor teach in the Name of Jesus, one must compromise the truth of Christ, and cease to emphasize the central theme of the Gospel message. The very essence of the Gospel is contained in the Name of Jesus.

It is interesting to notice that the believers were praying for the message of divine truth. They said, "With all boldness they may speak thy word." The emphasis is placed on "Thy word." The Christians wanted to hear God's Word declared with firm conviction and unwavering confidence. They evidently wanted to be edified and enlightened by the message of saving truth. They obviously believed that the Gospel was the power of God unto salvation to every one that believed it. It is indeed blessed to discover a people who desire to hear the message of redeeming grace, a people who do not want to be entertained with cheap programs and silly plays in the church, a people hungry for the bread of life which Christ only can give.

The assembled believers prayed for the messengers of the Gospel, saying, "Grant unto thy servants." It is well to notice that the Christians said, "Thy servants." They evidently recognized that the apostles were the servants of God. They were not considered to be servants of an institution, or an organization. They considered the apostles to be the called servants of God, who had commissioned them to serve His redeemed family. These godly men were not hired promoters; they were Christ's holy messengers.

It does not require moral courage to promote a program to entertain a group of nominal Christians. Neither does it require courage to give a book review, or speak on current events; but it does require boldness to press the claims of Christ on men, and demand that they repent of their sins and yield themselves to Him.

It does not require spiritual fortitude to organize a campaign to raise money for the general interests of the church; but it does take much prayer and faithful preaching to precipitate a genuine revival of full salvation.

To raise these issues does not mean that one is indulging in hurtful criticism of God's faithful people and preachers. It does mean that one is gravely concerned about the praying of God's people, who are members of the body of Christ. It is apparent that a devout minister can perform his work for Christ more efficiently when he knows that the Christians want to hear the Word and are supporting him with their prayers and faith. The record shows that Peter and John had joined the company of saints in the fellowship of prayer. This fact discloses that the messengers of Christ realized the necessity of prevailing prayer.

It is not unusual to hear some ministers say they are so burdened with the work of the church that they have very little time to spend in earnest prayer. This is a startling admission for any man to make, especially a minister of the Gospel. It is a serious matter in the life of a preacher when he allows himself to be cumbered with much serving. The results of his neglect of prayer will be revealed by the poverty of his preaching. It is possible for a minister to become so preoccupied with his duties that he will give prayer a place of secondary importance in his life. God's servants should consider that nothing pertaining to the church of Christ is more important than waiting before the Lord in the secret place of prayer. The man of God loses his passion for souls when he willfully neglects to pray. He must wait until his soul is aflame with holy zeal, and his mind stimulated with fresh news from heaven. When he takes proper time to pray, his preaching will edify and enlighten the Christians, and the fruitfulness of his ministry will be increased.

The writer disclosed some remarkable results from this ministry of prayer when he said, "And with great power gave the Apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all." v.33.

The assembled company prayed for miracles to be performed in the name of Jesus. "By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus."--v.30. It is obvious that the Christians expected miracles to accompany the preaching of the Word. It is interesting to note that the prayer for boldness to speak the Word included the petition for healing, and signs and wonders. The order of the prayer places preaching the Word first before the performing of miracles in the name of Jesus.

Our Lord placed more emphasis on preaching and teaching than He did on His gracious ministry of healing the sick, and showing signs and wonders. However, we are not to conclude that such miracles cannot be performed through the power of prayer in this age and generation. The healing of the sick, and the signs and wonders performed in the name of Jesus accompany the preaching of the Word.

This fact is clearly observed when we give thoughtful attention to the import of the prayer. The prayer for miracles reveals the true concept regarding the power of Jesus to heal. They said, "By stretching forth thine hand to heal ..." The presence of Jesus was so real to praying saints that they asked Him to stretch forth His nail-scarred hand and heal the people.

Jesus did stretch forth His hand and touched the diseased bodies of men, and they were instantly healed. The fact that Christ has ascended to heaven has not changed our concept of His Divine Person. He is willing and able to stretch forth His hand and heal our broken bodies today like He did in the days of His flesh.

I am persuaded to believe that the professing Christians would see more miracles of healings performed by the hand of Jesus if they would spend more time in earnest prayer for the messengers of the Gospel.

I am convinced that the Lord will work wonders in this age of indifference if we will cease to limit Him by unbelief, and accept the fact that miracles can be performed today by the outstretched hand of the Holy Child Jesus.

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