

The (Purpose, The Prerequisites, and The) Power of Prevailing Prayer

From Chapter 3 of the book by David Roper "Elijah, A Man Like Us"

Background reading on Elijah:

1 Kings: 17 - 2 Kings: 2

Key Verses:

1 Kings 18:37 "Answer me, LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again."

Philippians 4:6 "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."

Opening

I want to ask you a question before we start our time of sharing today....

If you could pray for anything or anyone right now and have your prayer answered immediately, who or what would your prayer be for? Jot it down on a piece of paper so that you remember what it was when we finish our talk.

Have you thought of something or someone?

Then let's begin....

We are looking at Chapter 3 of the book, "Elijah, A Man Like Us" and thus far you have benefitted from hearing from:

Richard - with an introduction to the series

Chris – on "The Worst of Times, The Best of Times"

Greg – on "Happy To Be Nobody"

...and then a short break last weekend for your Memorial Day celebrations.

So we continue this week with Chapter 3...and allow me some speaker's liberty to modify the title slightly from its original "The Power of Prevailing Prayer" to "The Purpose, The Prerequisites, and The Power of Prevailing Prayer"...

The Purpose

The Prerequisites

and The Power...

Of Prevailing Prayer

Alliteration is a good thing, wouldn't you agree?

The Purpose of Prevailing Prayer

1 Kings 18:37 "Answer me, LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again."

Here Elijah gives us the answer to what the Purpose of Prevailing Prayer is...so that the people will know that the Lord is God. So that the people will turn their hearts toward Him.

All prayer must have this as its central purpose. All prayer must turn peoples' hearts toward God.

He alone is to be glorified.

He alone is to be lifted up.

He alone is to be praised.

We are His creatures, designed, and purposed to give Him glory... and all our circumstances, and all our possessions and all our positions are for this one purpose.

Tell me, have you put your prayers through this test?

Do your prayers have this as the central tenet, the central purpose, or are they more selfish and self serving in nature?

Paul teaches us in a similar fashion in 1 Timothy 2:1-4

I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—² for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior,⁴ who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

The Prerequisites of Prevailing Prayer

Pray with faith

Mark 11:24

Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

Pray with perseverance and with thanksgiving

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Luke 18:1-8

The Parable of the Persistent Widow

¹ Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. ² He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. ³ And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'

⁴ "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care what people think, ⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!'"

⁶ And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. ⁷ And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? ⁸ I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

Luke 11:5-8

⁵ Then Jesus said to them, "Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; ⁶ a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.' ⁷ And suppose the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' ⁸ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need.

Jesus is not saying that God is like either the judge or the friend, He is saying that even if one of these much lesser beings would grant such a request, how much more would God grant it.

Philippians 4:6-8

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with **thanksgiving**, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

How about you? When you wake in the morning, are your first thoughts, "Thank you Lord, for this new day." "Thank you Lord, for the sunshine, or for the rain, for the blue sky, or for the clouds. Thank you Lord, for my job or for my retirement. Thank you Lord, for freedom from pain, for freedom from want, for freedom from persecution."

Or have you, like Paul, been brought to that higher plain, where you can in fact, **rejoice in your trials.**

Have you arrived at that place where you can indeed with a truly grateful heart say, "Thank you Lord, for the pain that Thou has caused or allowed, may it teach me what they wouldst have me to learn, or will it bring me in contact with those that Thou wouldst have me minister to or better understand what circumstances they are going through.

Thank you Lord for this time of unemployment. May it have its humbling effect upon my life that I might be a better witness for You. May it bring me in contact with the least and the lost that my times of blessing kept me far away from.

Thank you Lord for this time of hurting and broken relationships. May it be a time when I learn to better understand how many others in this world are lonely and alone. May it be a time when my eyes and heart are truly opened to the pain that is all around us, but which my former relationships kept me from be open to.

Thank you Lord for this time of poverty and want. Forgive me that my former times of prosperity kept me from ministering to those in need. Forgive me that my life of comfort caused me to be blind to those that struggle every day. Thank you that you have heard my prayers and given me a heart of flesh to replace the heart of stone I had previously....

In my times of study each morning, I came across this passage in Ezekiel, where God is talking to the Israelites whom He has scattered so that they might be humbled and turn from their idol worship. He tells them that they are now ready to return to the land He has promised and.....

Ezekiel 11:19-21

I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. ²⁰ Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God. ²¹ But as for those whose hearts are devoted to their vile images and detestable idols, I will bring down on their own heads what they have done, declares the Sovereign LORD."

Has the Lord done some difficult teaching in your life lately?

Has He had to scatter you and remove you from your familiar territory?

Has He removed you from your job, from your family, from your home, from your Church?

Have you learned to truly thank Him, indeed, to rejoice in the hardships you have experienced?

Have you learned to thank Him for the lessons that only these difficult circumstances could teach you?

A lesson to "Seek Him first", a lesson to break your heart in order to turn it from the affections that have grown for the things of this world and the coldness that has developed for the things of God?

God can, God will, and God already has done everything in the life of a believer. The question is not can He, or will He, the question is, have you trusted Him. And have you trusted Him completely.

Where is your level of trust in Him?

In the Book we are studying, David Roper rightfully says "Prayer is the main thing, the centre, the core, the root, the spirit of all we do. It is our primary task."

And while Elijah was "A man like us", Jesus too, was a man like us. He was helpless as He stated in ... **John 5:30** "By myself I can do nothing;"

Jesus came to show us The Way.....think about it....

Psalm 109:4b

I am a man of prayer

What is Communion?

Have you thought about why the Sacrament of Communion is called that or do you just think about the ritual or the actions that we go through each time we meet around the Lord's Table?

Have you thought about what Communion means and to whom you are to have this Communion?

Have you thought about what Christ is calling us to and when He wishes for this Communion to take place?

Is it to be something you only celebrate once every six weeks, or even once a day? Is it something that He wants you to celebrate only when you go to a Church building? Or is it a symbol of what He is calling you to?

Do you think that being in Communion with Christ involves some form of communication? Have you every tried to commune with someone and never speak with them? Of course not. Constant communication is the key to true communion.

Christ came to earth and gave up His position, His possession and His power.

Have you entered into Communion with Him?

Prayer is worship.

Prayer is petition.

Prayer is conversation.

Prayer is abiding.

He had no power (other than that which came from the Father),
He had no position (other than that appointed Him by the Father),
and He had no possessions (other than all of Creation which He spoke into existence) ...

Rather, He had complete communion with and complete dependence on the Father.

And this is the place that He leads us to, if we are willing to follow. Absolute Surrender.
“Not my will but Thy will be done.”

A moment by moment abiding. I ask you, how many moments have you strung together this morning or this week?

The book of John gives us such a beautiful and easily understood example that is all around us in nature...As the branch is grafted into the vine, so we are to be grafted into Christ and so abide. As the branch depends upon the vine for the life giving sap that flows from it, so we are to depend fully upon our relationship in Christ for the life giving Spirit to flow from Him into and through us and so enable the Fruit of the Spirit to be born and flourish in us.

In his book, Roper describes General Stonewall Jackson's understanding of this to be as follows “I never seal a letter without putting a word of prayer under the seal. I never receive a dispatch from the post without a brief sending of my thoughts upward. I never meet my troops without a moment's petition on those who go out and those who come in. Everything calls me to prayer.”

This is to be our position and this is to be The Prerequisites of our Prevailing Prayer.

And with this we come to the last part of my talk,

The Power of Prevailing Prayer

James 5:17

Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years.

Matthew 7:7-8 + 11

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened....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!

And even when “we don’t know what to pray, the Holy Spirit intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express” (**Romans 8:26-27**)

It only makes sense that a branch grafted into vine need not worry about what fruit to bear, it is the Vine that will decide and it is the sap flowing through the Vine into the branch that will make it happen.

It only makes sense that the clay which is wholly yielded up to the Potter need not worry about what it shall become, for it is the Potter who has the design in mind, and it is the Potter “who will cause us to will and to do of His good pleasure” (**Philippians 2:13**) and (I know the plans I have for you...**Jeremiah 29:11**)

Prayer is also the best cure for our confusion.

We come to Him with our petitions, and He replaces our list with His.

Life gets exciting when we ask God to chart the course. When we surrender our will to Him. He takes us where we never thought we would go and He takes us in ways we never thought we could take

The past 6 years have been an incredible geographic and Spiritual journey for me...and I dare say there are others in our group like Dennis and Greg and Richard and Reuben and Chris and John and Neil and Lowell and Mike who can attest to the same.

Whether they were changes in health, changes in career, changes in city or country, changes in ministry, changes in relationships, the Lord has been faithful to each of our prayers to take us where we’ve never been before in our relationship with Him and to use us as He ordained from before the foundations of the world...and I daresay He is not finished with us yet by a long stretch!

So let's go back to that prayer that I asked you to think about at the start of our talk today...

Who or what did you want to pray for above all else?

Was it first and foremost that God be glorified, or that at the very least He be glorified by the outcome of the event?

The Power of Prevailing Prayer....If I can leave you with one thought, and one request, it would be this.

Pray the prevailing prayer that never fails...

"Lord, not my will but Thy Will be done." ...and mean it...and then hold on, not for your dear life, but for His.

...and if you forget that simple prescription, try this even simpler one....

Whatever your circumstance, whatever your mood, whatever the time of day, pray this overall prevailing prayer....

"Thank you Lord Jesus.

Thank you for what you have done in the past.

Thank you for what you are doing right now.

and Thank you for what you have already done in my future."

Amen, Amen and Amen. So be it.

Miracles in the Career of Elijah:

- 1) Causing the rain to cease for 3 1/2 years (1Ki 17:1)**
- 2) Being fed by the ravens (1Ki 17:4)**
- 3) Miracle of the barrel of meal and cruse of oil (1Ki 17:14)**
- 4) Resurrection of the widow's son (1Ki 17:22)**
- 5) Calling of fire from heaven on the altar (1Ki 18:38)**
- 6) Causing it to rain (1Ki 18:45)**
- 7) Prophecy that Ahab's sons would all be destroyed (1Ki 21:22)**
- 8) Prophecy that Jezebel would be eaten by dogs (1Ki 21:23)**
- 9) Prophecy that Ahaziah would die of his illness (2Ki 1:4)**
- 10) Calling fire from heaven upon the first 50 soldiers (2Ki 2:10)**
- 11) Calling fire from heaven upon the second 50 soldiers (2Ki 2:12)**
- 12) Parting of the Jordan (2Ki 2:8)**

- 13) Prophecy that Elisha should have a double portion of his spirit (2Ki 2:10)**
14) Being caught up to heaven in a whirlwind (2Ki 2:11)

Questions for table discussion:

1. What do you think are some of the elements of effective and prevailing prayer?
2. In Luke 18:1, Jesus said that we should “Pray and not give up.” What does that mean to you?
3. What do you need to do to have closer communion with Christ?