

## *The Value of Using Apostolic Prayers*

### I. INTRODUCTION

- A. When I intercede, often times I use the prayers of the Bible. The prayers that Jesus, Paul, and Peter prayed are recorded for our benefit. I refer to them as the “***apostolic prayers***” because they are the prayers that Jesus prayed as our chief apostle (Heb. 3:1) and that the Spirit gave to the apostles.
- B. The apostolic prayers are a valuable gift to the church the prayers that burned in God’s heart and give us the language of His heart. He never changes, so be assured they still burn in His heart.
- C. These prayers are guaranteed! They are like checks already signed in heaven and waiting only for a co-signer on the earth to be cashed. They are as relevant today as they were in the early church.

### II. PRAY GOD-CENTERED PRAYERS!

- A. All the prayers in the New Testament are God-centered prayers each one is addressed to God.  
Not one apostolic prayer is addressed to the devil. God-centered prayer, including spiritual warfare prayer, is the model set forth in the New Testament. It is the model the early church used in resisting and dislodging demonic forces and cultural strongholds (Eph. 6:12; 2 Cor. 10:3-5).
- B. All the prayers of Jesus that are recorded in the Bible were directed to the Father (Jn. 14:16; 17:5, 11, 15, 25). Jesus taught His disciples to direct their prayers to the Father (Mt. 18:19; Lk. 11:2, 13). The apostles’ prayers also teach us to address the Father when we pray. In the “warfare epistle” Paul wrote to the Ephesians, he addressed all his prayers to the Father (Eph. 1:16-17; 3:14, 16, 20).

### III. PRAY POSITIVE PRAYERS!

- A. The apostolic prayers are positive prayers asking God for the *impartation of positive things* instead of the *removal of negative things*. For example, Paul prayed for love to abound instead of asking for the removal of hatred (Phil. 1:9). He prayed for the impartation of unity instead of praying against division (Rom. 15:5). He asked for peace to increase instead of fear to be removed (Rom. 15:13). He did not pray against sin but asked for an increase of holiness, purity, and love (1 Thes. 3:12-13). Even Paul’s requests to be delivered from evil men are positive in focusing on the deliverance of God’s people rather than on exposing or bringing down the evil men persecuting them (2 Thes. 3:2).

- B. I believe that one reason God established “positive prayers” as the norm in the New Testament is to enhance unity and love in the church. Some pray “negative prayers” that focus on sin in the church or its leadership; often such prayers feel judgmental and angry. Others in the prayer meeting do not agree with the view or tone that was expressed in the negative prayer, so the prayer results in creating an unnecessary division among some of the people at that prayer meeting.
- C. The Lord knew that praying for the impartation of positive virtues, instead of focusing on removing negative characteristics, would unify God’s people and heal some of the negative emotions & offenses against the church in the very people praying for the Church.
- D. The positive focus that comes from using the apostolic prayers can also help us to operate in faith.  
The apostolic prayers provide us with good theology for a victorious church. A man once asked me, “Why do you believe the church will be victorious?” These prayers were given by the Spirit, so we know they will be fully answered. The church will walk in great power, purity, and unity before Jesus returns.
- E. **God is a God who designs and always designs with a purpose.** Positive apostolic prayers facilitate unity, impact our emotions, and build our faith. I believe God designed these prayers to help us, to knit our hearts together in unity with a spirit of encouragement and faith.

**IV. PRAY PRAYERS THAT STRENGTHEN THE CHURCH VS. NEGATIVE PRAYERS THAT FOCUS ON SIN, LISTING THE PROBLEMS OR FOCUSES ON THE DEVIL!**

- A. **The vast majority of the apostolic prayers are focused on strengthening of the church** not on the lost or the transformation of society. This does not mean that God is ambivalent about the lost or society or that we are not to pray for these things. The only prayers I could find in the New Testament that is focused on the salvation of the lost is Romans 10:1 where Paul prayed for Israel that they might be saved and Matt 9:37-38 when Jesus exhorted the Church to prayer to the Lord of the Harvest to send out workers because they are few and the fields are white for harvest.
- B. **God’s Mission has a Church.** Why are the vast majority of the apostolic prayers for the strengthening the church? Because God’s primary plan to reach the lost or to impact a city is by anointing His church with power and love. When we pray for the whole church in a city to be revived in love and power, the answer to these prayers will have an immense impact on the lost. Many unbelievers will inevitably come to Jesus and society will be changed as the church in that city walks in the power of the Spirit.

- C. We see this principle at work in the city of Ephesus. The preaching of the Word of God was so powerfully anointed that its influence “grew mightily and prevailed” across Ephesus (Acts 19:20). God’s strategy was to raise up a large, anointed church with congregations across the whole city that would win a great harvest in all Asia. What happened in Ephesus was so powerful that everyone who lived in Asia “heard the word of the Lord” from Paul and others in this church.

*<sup>10</sup>...so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus...<sup>20</sup>So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed. (Acts 19:10, 20)*

- D. **Build unity and mobilize the Church.** When preachers and God's people are anointed and the church is revived, the saints will speak the Word and do the works of the kingdom with great consistency and a multitude of unbelievers will come to Jesus.
- E. We do well to pray the apostolic prayers for an increase of the measure of the Spirit’s anointing on the church, knowing that a harvest will surely result. No power can prevent the lost from coming to Jesus in great numbers when the church is revived and operating together in the anointing of the Spirit.
- F. We are to pray for the whole church in our area, not just for our ministry or congregation. Thus we ask the Lord to visit 200 congregations with His power in the region of the Inland Valley.
- G. The Lord loves the whole church—every denomination and congregation that proclaims Jesus. He wants His people to love the whole church and not to write off any ministry, but pray for them.
- H. We will love those for whom we pray consistently. God knows that we will love the church more as we pray for it regularly. His divine strategy is for the hearts of the people of God to connect and grow in love towards the church in the city for which they consistently pray.
- I. It is easier to love the lost in a city or nation because we do not know most of them. But some are quick to become frustrated and impatient with the churches in their own city because they actually know the believers in them. Therefore the Lord calls us to pray for the church so that we will love it while we are working to bring the lost to Jesus and impact society. He doesn’t want us to despise the churches in our city because of their weakness; He wants us to love both the church and the lost.
- J. God is a brilliant strategist! He directs us to pray for the harvest by asking Him to visit the whole church—the local churches—in our area with His great power. It is no coincidence that most of the New Testament prayers are for the church!

**V. INTERCEDE WITH A FOCUS ON JESUS AND HIS WILL THROUGH THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT!**

- A. Two requests Jesus exhorted us to make of the Father when we intercede are for the release of a greater measure of the Holy Spirit and the release of a greater measure of justice.
- <sup>13</sup>“...*how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”  
(Lk. 11:13)*
- <sup>7</sup>“...*will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night...?”  
(Lk. 18:7 NAS)*
- B. As believers, we received the indwelling Spirit at our new birth (Jn. 3:3-5; Rom. 8:9-11). Thus we do not pray for the Lord to “give us” the Holy Spirit in the sense of the indwelling Spirit; rather, we ask Him to release a **greater measure** of the ministry of the Spirit in and through us.
- C. Scripture refers to a greater measure of the Spirit on the church as a “greater measure of grace.”  
In Scripture this increase is referred to as “a greater grace” (Jas. 4:6); “great grace” (Acts 4:31-33); “grace . . . abundant” (1 Tim. 1:14); “full of grace” (Acts 6:8, NAS); “growing in grace” (2 Pet. 3:18); and “grace . . . multiplied” (2 Pet. 1:2).
- <sup>6</sup>*But He gives a greater grace.* (Jas. 4:6, NAS)  
<sup>33</sup>...*with great power the apostles gave witness...and great grace was upon them all.*  
(Acts 4:33)
- D. We pray for the release of a greater measure of justice. Justice can be defined as God making wrong things right. There are two sides to justice: salvation and judgment. We see the salvation side of justice when God’s people are healed and delivered. We see the judgment side of justice when the wicked—those who rebel against God’s righteous ways—are stopped, removed, and even punished.

## VI. EMPLOY VARIOUS SCRIPTURAL THEMES IN YOUR PRAYER LIFE!

- A. I use multiple prayer themes, but generally speaking regardless of what type of prayer I am offering to God my prayers when Spirit led seem to come under three general prayer themes. These three themes are the *release of the gifts, fruit, and wisdom of the Holy Spirit*. A Biblical survey will reveal that a vast majority of the prayers and promises in the Bible fit into one of these three general prayer themes.
- B. **The gifts of the Spirit:** Praying for a greater release of the gifts of the Spirit involves praying for the release of God’s *power*, including His supernatural *favor*, *provision*, and *protection*. We ask for a greater measure of God’s power to be manifest in our lives and in the people or places we pray for.
- <sup>7</sup>*The manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one ...<sup>8</sup>*for to one is given the word of wisdom..., <sup>9</sup>to another gifts of healings..., <sup>10</sup>to another the working of miracles...*  
(1 Cor. 12:7-10)*

- C. ***The fruit of the Spirit:*** Praying for a greater release of the fruit of the Spirit refers to asking for God's character to be formed in the lives of others. We ask that the fullness of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 (God's love, joy, peace, patience, etc.) be established in those we pray for.
- D. One of the ways I pray for a person to have more fruit in his character and to be more godly is to ask the Lord to release a *spirit of conviction* and a *spirit of wisdom and revelation of God* to him. Being convicted of sin and understanding the truth of who God is will result in an increase of the fear of the Lord and holy affection for Jesus and thus the formation of godly character in that person.
- <sup>8</sup>... ***He [the Spirit] will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment (Jn. 16:8)***
- <sup>17</sup>...***may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. (Eph. 1:17)***
- E. ***The wisdom of the Spirit:*** When we pray for a greater release of the wisdom of the Spirit, we are asking for an increase of understanding and insight into God's plans, will, and Word for others. Paul prayed much for spiritual wisdom and understanding for others (Col. 1:9-10). Praying for wisdom includes asking the Spirit for dreams and visions that give insight into His will for our lives as well as insight into His plans for a city, nation, business, church, etc. (Acts 2:17-19).
- F. These three themes cover the vast majority of the biblical promises related to praying for people or places. Over years, I have employed and enjoyed a variety of ways to pray. Early on I developed prayer lists of all kinds, some by listing people, or places, or categories. Lists in the beginning helped me to pray longer and to meet a goal of praying for one hour straight. Lists are neither good or bad but can be very helpful in keeping things before the Lord and your heart.
- G. Love of God & Love of neighbor (Matt. 22:37-40). I pray for a greater release of the gifts, fruit, and wisdom of the Spirit when I intercede for other people or places, when I offer up personal petitions for myself, and during devotional prayer I ask the Holy Spirit for enabling power to help me love, obey, and worship Jesus as well as be empowered to love, forgive, and be merciful to my neighbor.
- H. Today I find in personal or corporate intercession I commit the members of my body to the Holy Spirit, ask Him to lead me to Jesus, and pray the prayers He wants me to pray. I seek to follow the Holy Spirit in my times of being before Him and it often involves various themes and modalities; intercession, supplication, worship, praise, thanksgiving, petition, declaration, binding & loosening, prophesying, etc. I simply enter into His presence and let the Spirit flow even if I do come with a particular topic, purpose, person, or request I present that to Jesus and seek to pray the prayers the Holy Spirit leads me to pray around that issue.

- I. I ask for the *fruit of the Spirit* or godly character to be established in people as the Spirit convicts them of sin and righteousness, reveals the knowledge of God, and releases more of the love and fear of the Lord to them. I ask for the *wisdom of God* to be given to them so they would walk in God's will and plan for their lives. And I ask for the *gifts of the Spirit*—the supernatural power, favor, and protection of God—to be released to and through their lives and ministry.