

Power of Prayer

#0706

Study given by W.D. Frazee—May 15, 1964

Turn to Acts 12, beginning with the first verse:

“Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.) And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternion of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people. Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him” Acts 12:1-5.

It’s interesting there were two groups of people that were on the job day and night—the people that were *guarding* Peter and the people that were *praying for* Peter. Notice the contrast of this last verse as given in the translation of the New English Bible:

“So Peter was kept in prison under constant watch while the church kept praying fervently for him to God” Acts 12:5, New English Bible.

The soldiers kept guarding and the church kept praying. Which one won? *You* know: the church won. Their prayers were stronger than all the soldiers. It’s a wonderful lesson in the efficacy of prayer—earnest prayer, persevering prayer.

You remember the rest of the story here. While the church prayed, the angel of God came and opened the prison doors and let Peter out and he was delivered.

Now, there’s another prison house bigger than that one that Herod had in Jerusalem. Peter himself spoke about it in that first epistle of his, the third chapter. He speaks of “the spirits in prison.” Peter’s body was in prison that night, but his soul was free. But all over this world, my dear friends, there are dear souls that are in prison. They are in bondage.

The *Desire of Ages* puts it this way:

“Souls whom Satan has enslaved are waiting for the word of faith and prayer to set them free” *Desire of Ages*, page 429.

And it takes that word of faith and prayer. It was the faith and prayer of that Jerusalem church that opened the prison doors and let Peter out. (True, it was an angel that did the work, but that angel came from the throne of God in answer to the prayers of the church. Is that right? That's what happened.) Thank God, the prayers of God's people are just as efficacious, just as efficient, just as powerful today as they were back then.

Let's notice a great promise on this in 1 John 5:14-16:

“And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us: And if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him. If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and He shall give him life for them that sin not unto death” 1 John 5:14-16.

We can receive life, then, for those that need it—poor men and women that are oppressed, enslaved by sin, in bondage, in the prison house of the enemy. You and I can pray and God says He'll give us life. He'll give us that word to set them free. He'll do for those like He did for Peter who came out free, and the souls that we pray for can come out free.

Notice how it's put in Volume 5 of the *Testimonies*, page 162. Here the figure is changed, but the lesson is the same—the power of prevailing prayer:

“Brethren and sisters, have you forgotten that your prayers should go out, like sharp sickles, with the laborers in the great harvest field? As young men go forth to preach the truth, you should have seasons of prayer for them. Pray that God will connect them with Himself and give them wisdom, grace, and knowledge. Pray that they may be guarded from the snares of Satan and kept pure in thought and holy in heart. I entreat you who fear the Lord to waste no time in unprofitable talk or in needless labor to gratify pride or to indulge the appetite. Let the time thus gained be spent in wrestling with God for your ministers. Hold up their hands as did Aaron and Hur the hands of Moses” *Testimonies for the Church*, Volume 5, page 162.

Yes, that experience of Moses and Aaron and Hur is very interesting. Do you remember the setting? Israel had come out of Egypt, and not long after they arrived in the desert, they were attacked by the Amalekites. They fell upon the weary ones that were at the end of the caravan and attacked them.

God didn't like that. God didn't like that *mean*, shall I say, *unfair* way. And God told Moses to have Joshua take the army and go out and fight. This is the first battle of Israel after they left Egypt. The story is in Exodus 17.

But the interesting lesson for us tonight is that while Joshua was down there in the plain with the army fighting Amalek, Moses was where? He was on a hill praying. And as the custom in those times was, he was praying with his hands uplifted.

Well, by and by Moses' hands began to get heavy, and they came down. And somebody noticed that down there in the valley, there was a change in the tide of battle. Amalek was winning. And that gave Moses a fresh spurt. He thought, "Oh, no! We've got to have some special help!" And again he raised his arms and pled with God most earnestly. It was observed that Israel was winning the battle. But again Moses' hands got heavy. (Did you ever try to hold your hands up for a while or keep in any position for any great length of time?)

Well, dear friends, as the tide of the battle went back and forth, depending upon how Moses' hands were, it was observed that there was a relation (don't miss this point!) between the prayers of Moses and the tide of battle there in the valley. And do you know what they did?

Well, that's what it's talking about here with Aaron and Hur. Let's read about it here, Exodus, the 17th chapter, beginning with the 10th verse. (Well, we'll go back to the eighth verse and just get the setting as we've been telling it here.) Let's get the words of scripture:

"Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword" Exodus 17:8-13.

Well, what won the victory: Joshua's fighting or Moses' prayer? Well, it took both, didn't it? Yes. So the point is it took both. I suppose that all Amalek observed was the work of Joshua and his men with the sword. Probably that's all they knew about. But Israel knew where the power was; they knew where the powerhouse was.

All over this campus, we have various kinds of power tools, power machinery going. But the powerhouse is a long ways away, isn't it? Yes. It's over there where those floods of water are flowing through the machinery that generates the electricity there at Chickamauga Dam.

And so my dear friends, as someone has written, "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." Prayer stopped the mouths of those lions in the den of the king of Medo-Persia; prayer opened these prison gates where Peter was bound; prayer brought the victory to Israel over Amalek; and prayer, we read here, like a sharp sickle, is to go out with the preaching of the ministry and help to gather in the harvest.

Can something that you and I do here on this campus affect what happens miles away in evangelistic endeavors? Can it? Well, if these words that we're reading tonight mean anything, that's exactly what happens.

As *Great Controversy* says:

"It is a part of God's plan to grant us, in answer to the prayer of faith, that which he would not bestow did we not thus ask"
Great Controversy, page 525.

And I'll tell you, friends, if my job is to be there with Joshua in the plain fighting Amalek, that's where I want to be, don't you? But if my job is to be on the mountain praying to God while Joshua fights, I want to be there. And maybe my job is just to hold up somebody's hands. That's all Aaron and Hur did, wasn't it? They just held up Moses' hands to encourage him and help him to keep right on praying.

I'm impressed, dear friends, that we need some Aarons and Hurs right now in a very special way. There are some who grow weary and faint. But I'll tell you one thing: it's easier to keep on *fighting* when you're weary than it is to keep on *praying* when you're weary. Do you know that? That's right. It takes more of whatever it takes to keep on praying when one is weary than it does to keep on fighting. There's a certain amount of adrenalin that seems to go with a hard battle, but it takes grace and faith to pray and *keep on* praying. So Moses was helped by Aaron on one side and Hur on the other.

Tonight, as we're praying for the evangelistic effort that is going on, I trust that we'll pray, also, for every weary heart on this campus. The enemy is fighting a great battle.

Someone was talking to me a few days ago about a certain one who was having, apparently, a 'special' battle. And as I listened to the story I said, "You know, Brother, I can think of one after another on this campus who's having very special conflicts at this time. Probably, if we knew all the facts, there are a lot of others besides those."

I'm not going to ask for a show of hands tonight, but I wonder if any of you have been having a special battle. Well, I know there are special battles going on. And the burden of my heart tonight is to ask you to pray, not only for the souls who are in the valley of decision, the souls that are facing the great tests of this message, but pray, as the apostle says, pray one for another.

Notice how he puts it here in Romans, the 15th chapter, and the 30th verse:

“Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me” Romans 15:30.

“Strive”—what does “strive” mean? “Put forth some effort.” I think it would not be wrong to use the word *fight*. It has the idea of wrestling as Jacob did there that night by the brook. Strive, fight. Fight what? Fight the Devil; fight our own weakness, our own lethargy, our own tendency to go to sleep.

You know, that night as Jesus was praying in Gethsemane, and when He asked His disciples to pray with Him, they tried. And they *did* pray for a little while and then what happened? They got drowsy and went to sleep. The servant of the Lord says that they could have *shaken off* that drowsiness if they had continued to pray resolutely, but it was easier to go to sleep.

So tonight, I say, let us pray for the souls that are in the testing time. Tonight, tomorrow afternoon, tomorrow night, and during next week, many a soul will be making a decision. And while we pray for them, let's pray for every weary one on this campus—weary of body, weary of mind, weary of soul.

As I told you, the Amalekites attacked those who were weary and were straggling along. That's the way the Devil does. He's a mean old fellow, just as mean as he can be, and if there's somebody weary, overworked perhaps, overtaxed, then the Devil will try to pounce upon that one and take advantage of the situation and bring discouragement upon the soul.

Last week I was reading a very interesting letter that Sister White wrote from New Zealand back in 1893. You remember that some months before she had gone over to Australia in answer to the call of the brethren there, given through the General Conference. She went over there to strengthen the work.

But very soon after she got there, she was attacked with sickness. Week after week, month after month, went by. For some time she was afflicted with pain all over her body except her right arm. She felt that was providentially spared in order that she might continue writing. And she wrote hundreds of pages during that time of enforced retirement from public speaking. Sitting propped up in bed on pillows, she wrote some of those marvelous chapters of *The Desire of Ages* that thrill our hearts now.

Well, the enemy tried to discourage her. This letter I was reading tells about how that she longed to come home. She was over there. She wondered what it was all for. There were other discouragements beside the sickness. Even after she got well from that, she wondered why there was no more support from America, why more means and workers weren't sent out there to that needy field.

The prophets of God are not above temptation, friends. Jesus Himself, when He took our flesh, met the temptations that we must meet. But all of these—Jesus and His prophets and His men and women in all ages—have found in prayer, their support.

Tonight you and I are summoned to pray for souls in the valley and for dear ones, our dear brothers and sisters who are especially under the pressure of the enemy. Oh, there's a battle going on, dear friends, a battle over every soul! Do you feel it?

May I suggest, friends (for I think when we pray, we should always do what we can to help answer our prayers; don't you think so?), may I suggest to you one way that the enemy works? (And oh, how cruel and mean he is!) When we are weary, when we are pressed, then he tries to suggest to us doubts concerning our brethren. They may be brethren far away. They may be brethren right next to us. They may be brethren with whom we work. And things that, if we felt well and everything was going well, wouldn't bother us at all, those things may become very chaffing, very burdensome. They may become something that really presses the soul. So I suggest to you, friends, let us not be ignorant of the Devil's devices. Let's recognize the enemy as he comes suggesting doubts and worries and fears and suspicions to our soul.

I said to someone not many days ago, and I think it's worth repeating to all of us here tonight, I said, "My Brother, there are two things that I want you to know. In the first place, when there is a burden that is pressing you down, and you feel frustrated, I want you to go to God alone and seek to pray that thing through. And if you find in Christ the answer that takes away that frustration and gives you the peace and the strength to carry on, fine. That's all that is necessary."

"But" I said, "number two: if in spite of your prayers and earnest seeking of the Lord that thing is a burden, a frustrating burden, then I say give me the opportunity to pray with you, that together we may share that burden and seek the Lord in united prayer until that frustration is gone." For, dear ones, we cannot long succeed with some frustrating thing eating away at the vitals of our experience. No. If it doesn't give us ulcers of the stomach, it'll give us ulcers of the soul.

So Jesus says to each of us, "Come to Me with your burdens. Come to Me." And if we come to Him and all alone with Jesus we find that He hears and answers, wonderful. We can bear a ringing testimony of faith and courage.

Why, just the other day a worker who had asked to see me, and other burdens and appointments made it so that I couldn't get there. A few days later I had the

privilege of being with this worker and indicated that the time had come. This worker said, "Well, Brother Frazee, we won't need to go into that. The Lord has handled all that." And with radiant face, the testimony was given of answered prayer. I like to hear that, don't you, friends? Yes.

There are times when God's best way is to hear us all alone as we take the burden to Him in prayer. There are other times when it's necessary for us to claim the promise of Matthew 18:19:

"...If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them"
Matthew 18:19-20.

And I suggest to you, friends, that if everything we need *could* always come and *would* always come in answer to prayer all alone, then this promise would not need to be in the Bible. And if it doesn't need to be, it wouldn't be there. And so, while there are things that God is waiting and longing and anxious to do for each one of us, personally, in intercessory prayer, there are other blessings that come as we seek Him unitedly, in little groups—two here, three there, a larger number perhaps in other places.

We're going to pray now, and in harmony with the things that we've read, we're going to *expect* that God will answer.

Peter was kept in prison under constant watch while the church kept praying fervently to God for him. Let us pray. Let us be done with formalities and formal set phrases. Let each one pray briefly and to the point as the Spirit of God moves upon your hearts. And let us *know* that God is hearing us as we approach the mercy seat tonight.

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