



奧克蘭華人長老會 AUCKLAND CHINESE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Sermon Summary - 28 March 2021

The Prayer that Changes the World - Acts 3:23-31 (Andrew Cox)

The Prayer of Jabez: Breaking Through to the Blessed Life, by Bruce Wilkinson was enormously popular but is a repeated prayer for God's blessing a "big enough" prayer?

Principles from this passage on praying to change the world:

Recognise the _____ (1) of our prayer (24-30)

"Despotes" was used to describe the relation of a master to his slave. It implied absolute power over another. God has both absolute power and absolute goodness. He is sovereign over all things. Why did they focus on God's sovereignty? Because they were being asked to come under the authority of men they disagreed with, of men who failed to understand what God was doing in the world. They answered to a higher power.

In verse 25 and 26, they quote from Psalm 2 which expresses the _____ (2) of the world's powers. God is in control! So they prayed according to God's sovereignty.

When we pray, we must recognise who it is we are praying to. We often come to God with a list of requests but before we ask for the gifts, we must acknowledge the _____ (3). In his model prayer, Jesus begins with an acknowledgement of who God is and what he wants to do.

Peter and John and the others then prayed for God to enable them to speak his Word with great boldness and to stretch out his hand to heal people through the name of his holy servant, Jesus. Notice what they don't pray for wisdom or protection or favour with the authorities.

Receive the _____ (4) of our prayer (31)

God wants to fill us with his Holy Spirit today. Why? Because Jesus said, "Apart from me, you can do _____ (5)." The word, "filled" means to be "controlled by".

Brother Yun ("Heavenly Man" saw God do miraculous things in his life. "Oh Lord, do it again!" (Habakkuk 3:2) But we do not insist that God work in a certain way in our lives, in our church or in our city. Nor do we give up and say that these things will never happen here.

Restore the _____ (6) of our prayer

I find prayer difficult. Like the father of the deaf and mute boy cried to Jesus, I cry, 'I do believe; help me overcome my _____ (7)!' This is the paradox of prayer isn't it? We pray but we doubt but we pray anyway.

What is the basis of our prayer? God's _____ (8) of us in Christ. James 5:16 says that "the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective." Our righteousness is found in Christ.

Some suggestions:

- ✓ Adoration, Confession Thanksgiving, Supplication
- ✓ Scripture, Observation, Action Point, Prayer

- ✓ Use books of prayers, especially the Psalms. E.g. Psalm 40:4-8.
- ✓ Step out of your _____ (9) zone - to a place where you have to depend on God.
- ✓ Allow God into the everyday activities of your life.

Exercise: Think about your typical ordinary day and brainstorm ways you can do these tasks with God –acknowledging your dependence on him, telling him your concerns and inviting Him to share each moment of the day with you. Waking up / Washing clothes / Working / Eating / Taking a break / Waiting in line / Driving / Solving a problem / Dealing with an interruption / Exercising / Doing homework with my kids / Cleaning up after dinner / Reading / Watching TV

So let us pray - joyfully, humbly, expectantly - when it is convenient and when it is not - and unleash the power of God in our lives and in our world!

Questions

1. What do you find most difficult about prayer?
2. Read Acts 3:23-31. What strikes you about their prayer? What is the relationship between God's sovereignty and their request for boldness?
3. Read Habakkuk 3:2. Do you find yourself wondering why amazing miracles don't seem to happen in our lives? Why is this the case, do you think?
4. Do you use an acrostic like A.C.T.S. or S.O.A.P.? What habits or tools do find helpful in your "Quiet Time" with God?
5. If you were to step out of your comfort zone and trust God for something scary, what might it be?
6. Work through the exercise above and allow God into the everyday activities of your life. How might you "practise the presence of God" while driving or sitting on the bus, for instance?

Answers to blank spaces

(1) Person, (2) futility, (3) Giver, (4) nothing, (5) power, (6) practice, (7) unbelief, (8) acceptance, (9) comfort