Effective Prayer

"In that day you will ask nothing of Me. Truly, truly I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in My name He will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask and you will receive that your joy may be full …. The hour is coming when I … will tell you plainly about the Father. In that day you will ask in My name." (John 16:23-26)

It takes a much deeper spiritual life to **pray** than to work. Our old nature (the flesh) can be very active **for** God and, for a while, apparently accomplish great things. So often lack of power in prayer drives us to use our human resourcefulness. '**Only** to pray' seems stupid! Why? Is it because we have no power in prayer? Someone has said, "Prayer moves the hand that moves the world". If our prayers fail to do this, what else can we do but do the best we can?

What is effective prayer from God's standpoint?

"Ask anything … He will give." "Ask and you will receive." (Jn. 16:23-24)

Commentaries point out that the first 'ask' is in the aorist tense in Greek giving the thought of such power with God that to ask once is enough to obtain what we ask for. The second 'ask' is in the present continuous tense showing that we need to ask continuously and will then continuously receive the supply of all our needs.

So effective prayer is the power to ask continuously and also to receive or take the answer! ***"And this is the confidence that we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us. And if we know He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of Him."*** (1 Jn. 5:14-15) [see also Mt. 7:8]

When was effective prayer promised to the disciples?

"In that day" (Jn. 16:23)

A date is promised! The date was the day of Pentecost! Before this the disciples knew nothing about effective prayer. In Lk. 9:18 we read that ***"Jesus was praying and His disciples were with Him."*** They realized they knew nothing about prayer and so they came to Him and said, ***"Lord teach us to pray."*** So He began to teach them. First He taught that prayer is a secret 'discussion' with an unseen God. It is not a public performance. There is no point in "going in with impressive words". It is the simple spreading of the need before Our Father who knows the needs before we ask, but still says: ***"I will let*** …(them) …***ask me to do it for them."*** (Ezek. 36:37)

The disciples brought people to the Lord Jesus but it appears that they knew very little fellowship with Him in His yearning for people to know Him. How like them we are! Fellowship in prayer with the Lord Jesus is very dimly understood.

How would they pray 'in that day'?

They would ***"ask the Father"*** (Jn. 16:23). The disciples had been used to making their requests to the Lord Jesus. But this was not really prayer. But now He promised that then they could ask in His name. Prayer 'in that day' would be answered by the power of the Holy Spirit. When we are filled with the Spirit we are in fellowship with the Lord Jesus in His death, burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:4) and in union with the risen, ascended and glorified Lord Jesus – ***"Hid with Christ in God"*** (Col. 3:3)

This is the place of power in prayer! The Holy Spirit has been given to make this union with the Lord Jesus a reality and only in union with Him can we ask.

How would they be taught to be effective in prayer?

"I … shall tell you plainly about the Father" (Jn. 16:25)

"In that day" began when the Holy Spirit first came – the Day of Pentecost. The Lord Jesus said, ***" …no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him."*** (Mt. 11:27) The Holy Spirit reveals the Son to us and our union with the indwelling Son reveals to us the Father.

Prayer is not our living out in the world and periodically getting access to the Father in our private devotions or in corporate prayer meetings. It is rather living in unbroken access to God. There is a book called **The Christian's Vital Breath**. It is about prayer – not about prayer meetings. It is about living in unbroken fellowship with God. This is absolutely as vital as breathing.

To sum up – effective prayer is:

- Asking and receiving continuously
- Only known fully by Holy Spirit filled believers
- In practice it is only partially known in this earthly life
- Prayer to the Father in union with the Son through the Holy Spirit
- Taught to us by the Son as He reveals the Father to us

This doesn't mean that answers to our prayers are not received before all this is fully recognised. It is God's Law always to respond to faith wherever and however He finds it, but this is not the life of **continual** effectiveness in prayer.

Five defined hindrances to effective prayer

1. Sin in the heart (Ps. 66:18)
2. Idols in the heart (Ezek. 14:3)
3. Hate (or a grudge) in the heart (Mt. 5:23-24)
4. Unbelief in the heart (Mk. 11:23)
5. Selfish motives in the heart (James 4:3)

The Holy Spirit must deal with all of these if we are to know power in prayer. All must be surrendered to Him for:

- The cleansing of the blood of Jesus (1 Jn. 1:7-9)
- The crucifixion of the flesh (Gal. 5:24)
- The indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9)

How can an effective prayer life be maintained?

"If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you." (Jn. 15:7)

Practically the Word of God dwelling in us in all its richness maintains an effective prayer life. The Word teaches us to pray according to His will. By the Word, His life in us and our life in Him will be nourished and deepened by the Holy Spirit. The desire of our hearts is that we dwell with God in prayer. ***"Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it and it will be yours."*** (Mk. 11:24)

As your prayer life deepens it will get more simple until, ***"Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"*** will express completely your great desire and hope. Our one single aim is: ***"My food is to do the will of Him who sent me"*** (Jn. 4:34)

What about effective prayer meetings?

I believe group prayer meetings will become effective on the basis of the same conditions and principles as private prayer. God must be allowed to deal with and remove all the hindrances. He must have the absolute surrender of all "the work" into His hands. Then He will create an atmosphere in which effective prayer meetings can be held. The Spirit of liberty will be present – opening dumb lips, breaking down barriers, melting our hearts and desires into one. Then we will see what happened in Acts 4:24-33:

- The Holy Spirit in the disciples moved God to act
- God on the throne mightily moved the disciples (v. 31)
- The disciples – moved by God – moved the hearts of the people (v. 33)

What was the result? ***"And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women."*** (Acts 5:14 – see also 15 and 16)

O Lord teach us to pray!