

Sermon 2

Prayer in Action

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Main Text : Mark 1:35

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

When prayer is in action, great things are accomplished because, “When we work, we work. But when we pray, God works” (Jame Hudson Taylor). Prayer is the foundation of a great accomplishment in the work of God that heaven approves. Prayer aligns our thoughts and actions with the will of God. So, it is crucial to pray fervently in whatever we do. There are several men and women in the Bible who demonstrated prayer in action. Let’s consider some of them:

1. Nehemiah’s Prayer in Action

Nehemiah saw that the walls of Jerusalem were broken. He prayed, humbling himself before God, and moved under God’s guidance despite great challenges. As a result, the walls of Jerusalem were built in 52 days. Nehemiah 1:5-11 records the prayer of Nehemiah:

And I said, “O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father’s house have sinned. We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant, Moses. Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples, but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.’ They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand. O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.”

Prayer in Action Point:

In Nehemiah 6:15, the outstanding result was recorded as response to Nehemiah’s fervent prayer: “So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty-two days.” Indeed, a testament of prayer in action.

2. Esther’s Prayer in Action

Esther 4:15-17 tells us of Esther's dedication and her request to fast and pray to save God's people in response to the looming annihilation of the Jews as Haman commanded, and to the challenge to her to do something as Mordecai appealed.

Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, "Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish."³ Mordecai then went away and did everything as Esther had ordered him.

God honored their humility and prayer. The plan to annihilate them reversed to their enemies. God acted on behalf of His people. Esther 9:1-2 states,

Now in the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king's command and edict were about to be carried out, on the very day when the enemies of the Jews hoped to gain the mastery over them, the reverse occurred: the Jews gained mastery over those who hated them. ² The Jews gathered in their cities throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus to lay hands on those who sought their harm. And no one could stand against them, for the fear of them had fallen on all peoples.

Prayer in Action Point:

Esther knew the plan to annihilate the Jews in Persia, instead of murmuring, she requested God's people to pray and fast. She asked for God's guidance. God worked. He saved His people from the hand of their enemies. Indeed, a prayer in action.

3. Daniel's Prayer in Action

In response to the plan of King Nebuchadnezzar to annihilate the wise men because of the unforgotten dream, Daniel 2:17-19 records the prayer request of Daniel to seek mercy from God with his friends:

Then Daniel went to his house and made the matter known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his companions might not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven.

God acted on their behalf. Daniel 2:23 relates, "To you, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of you, for you have made known to us the king's matter."

Prayer in Action Point:

Daniel and the wise men in Babylon did not know the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar about the future of the kingdoms of the world. The life of the wise persons, including them was at stake because no one could interpret the dream. Thus, Daniel gathered his three friends and they prayed. When they prayed, God worked. God revealed to Daniel, to King Nebuchadnezzar, and to us, the rise and fall of the kingdoms and the final kingdom of Jesus which will never be destroyed. Indeed, a prayer in action. (Daniel 2)

4. Hezekiah's Prayer in Action

The prayer of Hezekiah demonstrates a prayer in action. It shows that when we pray God works. Here's the prayer of King Hezekiah:

Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it; and Hezekiah went up to the house of the LORD and spread it before the LORD. And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD and said: "O LORD, the God of Israel, enthroned above the cherubim, you are the God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth. 16 Incline your ear, O LORD, and hear; Open your eyes, O LORD, and see; and hear the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to mock the living God. Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste the nations and their lands and have cast their gods into the fire, for they were not gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone. Therefore, they were destroyed. So now, O LORD our God, save us, please, from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, O LORD, are God alone." 2 Kings 19:14-19

As a result of his fervent prayer, God acted and defended His people. The remarkable prayer in action is recorded in 2 Kings 19:35-37:

And that night the angel of the LORD went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies. Then Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went home and lived at Nineveh. And as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god, Adrammelech and Sharezer, his sons, struck him down with the sword and escaped into the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon his son reigned in his place.

Prayer in Action Point:

Hezekiah received a letter from King Sennacherib who defied God and persuaded King Hezekiah to distrust God. But instead of surrendering, King Hezekiah spread the burden before the living God and prayed. As a result, God heard his prayer, and an Angel killed King Sennacherib's 185,000 soldiers. Later, King Sennacherib was killed by his son also.

5. Jesus's Prayer in Action

Jesus is a man of prayer. His disciples asked Him to teach them how to pray. They noticed His prayer life. The Bible records that He prayed the whole night (Luke 6:12), he prayed early in the morning. Mark 1:35 describes, "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed." He prayed when He was happy (Luke 10:21). He prayed after an event, "After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray" (Mark 6:45-46).

Jesus also prayed when He was suffering (Luke 22:41-44). He prayed when He was experiencing excruciating pain on the cross (Luke 23:34; Matthew 27:46). He prayed when He was happy (Luke 3:21). He prayed when he had a big decision to make (Luke 6:12). In Jesus's life, prayer is like breathing. He couldn't live without prayer. Ellen White commented on Jesus's prayer life. She writes, "As a man He supplicated the throne of God till His humanity was charged with a heavenly current that should connect humanity with divinity." (DA 362) She adds, "No other life was ever so crowded with labor and responsibility as was that of Jesus; yet how often He was found in prayer!" (DA 362)

Oswald Chambers rightly describes Jesus's prayer life. He said, "In the life of Jesus, prayer was the WORK, and ministry was the prize." He further added, "Prayer is not a preparation for a great work, it is the great work." Thus, before implementing youth events like Global Youth Day, Pathfinder Day, PCM Day, Adventurer Day, and even this Week of Prayer, we must fervently pray because prayer is crucial and foundational to productive and fruitful ministry programs.

Prayer in Action Point:

Jesus's prayer life was a prayer in action indeed. This was the reason why His life was so productive and fruitful. He was connected to His Father. He remained with His Father and His Father remained in Him. Thus, His life was characterized with fruitful actions for God's glory.

6. Prayer in Action in My Life

(Preacher Note: Use an example from your own life where prayer was essential in making the next step in your life. If you can not think of one, use the example below.)

In his testimony, Pastor Ron Genebago recounts a time in his life when prayer changed the trajectory of his life. He said, "When I learned much from the Word of God, after my conversion, I asked God to lead me to persons who would need Bible Studies. I fasted and prayed on Christmas and New Year for this special request. God heard my prayers that when the classes resumed, a lady named Arlene, approached me and asked, "Can you give us Bible Studies?" We started with three interested students until I was giving Bible studies to a classroom filled with students of different denominations and religious affiliations. Some were members of Iglesia ni Kristo, Born Again, Protestant, Roman Catholics, and others. When my Physics teacher who was an Adventist learned of this, he suggested that I should enroll them in the Voice of Prophecy Lessons, which I did. More than 50 of them graduated and eight or nine were baptized, that started the Lumil Seventh-day Adventist Church, which is now a growing church. I became a youth elder later in that company, which later became a church. A strong desire to learn more engulfed me, so I decided to enroll in the Bachelor of Theology program at the Adventist University of the Philippines (AUP). I studied in AUP for 5 years and after graduation, I was called to serve at the Filipino Adventist Church, which conducted the evangelistic meetings that led to my conversion, as their pastor.

While I was studying in AUP, the LORD had given me blessed opportunities to use my spiritual gifts both in church and in the college. I became a youth elder of a newly planted church, a youth leader of Filipino Church, a district youth president, area president of the province of Cavite, president of the Young Ministers Club in AUP, and later the church pastor of Filipino Church in Puting Kahoy, Silang, Cavite.

After my almost two years of service as a pastor of Filipino Adventist Church, I received a call to serve as a district pastor in the province of Cavite, in the province of Bulacan, and in Metro Manila. I served as a district pastor for five years until the LORD has called me to become the Communication Director and Hope Channel Coordinator for the Central Luzon Conference (CLC) and later the Youth and AMiCUS Director of CLC and of the North Philippine Union Conference for five years. The LORD has also called me to teach in the College of Theology of AUP, while completing my PhD in Biblical Studies. However, when I was writing my dissertation, He called me to youth ministries again as the youth (servant) director of the Southern Asia-Pacific Division. I am still currently holding this assignment upon writing of this testimony how prayer is in action in my life.

To end, prayer is not a lifeless inactivity. It is full of life. It is connecting yourself with the living God. It is a blessed meeting with the divine Council of God, the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit. It is the lifeline of being a Christian. Ellen White said, “Those who will devote sometime every day in meditation and prayer and to the study of the Scriptures will be connected with heaven and will have a saving influence around them.”

Prayer is indeed in action, for “APART FROM CHRIST, OUR WORK IS FRUITLESS” (DA 249).

Here are some practical suggestions to prayerful actions:

1. Establish a prayer network. There are young people who are passionate about prayer. Tap and organize them to a prayer network ministry. It should be an integral part and a lifestyle of the young people.
2. Conduct a prayer marathon. The youth can be organized to conduct a prayer marathon to pray for the youth ministries initiatives and beyond. The prayer marathon can have the following outline:
 - A. Sermons on Prayer using Ellen White book on Prayer or series of Bible characters that demonstrate a prayerful life.
 - B. Prayer Focus can be divided into personal prayers, prayer for family, for the church, for the mission and conference, for the union, division and general conference. There should be time for praying for prayer requests.
3. Conduct a 100 Days of Prayer before a major event. Set a starting date that will culminate during the target event. For instance, before a pathfinder camporee or a youth leaders’ summit, officially announce about the 100 days of Prayer. It can be done individually or set a time to pray together whether online or onsite depending on the situation.
4. Make every breath a prayer. This will lead you to an atmosphere of prayer making it your lifeline and lifestyle.