

Acts of the Apostles

28 – Praying like God is Going to Answer

Acts 12

Earnest Prayer

- The kind of prayer we're talking about here is the passionate pleading of God's children to their kind, good, powerful Father
 - Abraham as he prays for Ishmael (Gen 17) and Lot (Gen 18)
 - Jacob as he wrestles with God (Gen 32)
 - People of Israel in Egypt (Exodus 3)
 - Moses on behalf of sinful Israel (Exodus 32) – “blot me out!”
 - Hannah drunk with sorry (1 Sam 1)
 - David needing help (Psalm 40)
 - Jonah and Ninevites (Jonah 2-3)
 - Jesus – there's a fervency – stretched out kind of prayer (*ektenos*) – Jesus in Garden Luke 22.44
 - To be clear: we don't pray so that He will be good but because He is
- Why pray if God is going to rescue Peter anyway?
 - Shows how much we don't understand prayer
 - Fatalism is no part of the Bible
 - Participation is a huge part of the Bible – God initiates, we cooperate
 - We don't have to rob God of His sovereignty for prayer to be real and effective
 - Why? Because God has ordained both the ends and the means (Aspirin)
 - God has given us the means to affect the sickness of the world – fervent prayer

Expectancy

- Anticipation poised for action
 - We're not so much counseling God on how to act (expectations) as we are being confident that He will (expectancy)
- He will most likely surprise us (doors open / both Peter and Rhoda) – so be poised for action
- I prayed and God didn't answer my prayer – they killed James but not Peter
 - Was I ready to bear the responsibility of the answer?
 - Does God want to do something different (almost always better)?
 - Does God want to change a situation elsewhere?
 - Is God protecting me from getting what I want?
 - It's often harder to hear a different answer for others than yourself (particularly if it's kids)
 - Go down swinging

Peace

- When we have prayed earnestly and expectantly, we can be at peace with the outcome
- God will work in the supernatural realm
 - Angels – Word going forth
 - John G Paton story
- God will work in the natural realm
 - Herod – his word died with him while God’s word multiplied
 - God is not disengaged from the natural world – it remains under His control

Questions for Discussion

1. What is the most surprising answer you have ever received to a prayer you have prayed?
2. What is the most passionate / fervent / earnest that you have been in your prayers? What were the circumstances? The answers that followed? How did you change as a result of it?
3. Read Ephesians 1.15-21. What stands out in Paul’s prayer for the Ephesian church? What does he pray for? Do you sense any passion in his praying? If so, where? How is this kind of praying an antidote to the fatalistic approach: “Well, God will do it anyway, so why pray?”
4. In the section of the sermon on expectancy, we talked about praying big prayers and then having “anticipation poised for action.” What’s the biggest prayer you’re praying right now? How are you poised for action?
5. Out of the four reasons that we gave that God may not answer a prayer like we asked, which is hardest for you to deal with personally? Do you find it true that it is harder to hear “no” or “not yet” when praying for someone else than yourself? How does that shape your praying?
6. What kinds of examples from your life can you think of where God worked in the supernatural realm and in the natural realm (sometimes simultaneously)? Share these testimonies to encourage your group. Then take time to pray earnestly and with expectancy for the requests your group has.