

Intro: The gospel writer, Luke, has been progressively showing us the extent of the authority of Jesus Christ. From proving His authority over the spiritual powers to His authority over the Law, we are being shown the greatness of this powerful God-man who shows grace to the humble outcasts and broken people. And yet, we see in one simple verse here in chapter 6 that even the God-man needed the strength of His Father to do what He had been sent to do. In verse 12 Luke reveals, almost in passing, that in the midst of the conflict of v11 and before the foundational acts of selecting His 12 apostles on which to build the new humanity (Eph 1) which He came to restore, we see the Divine King spending all night away from the busyness of life and the grandeur of the city in order to pray and to seek the will and the power of God. This is the only time an “all-night prayer” is mentioned in the New Testament and I do not believe it is an accident that it comes directly after the first mention of plans of “do away with Him” or directly before the choosing of the 12. Jesus is preparing for the most difficult part of His ministry, for conflict without and conflict within, for enemies seeking to destroy Him and the painful frustration of training up obstinate self-centered men to carry on the gospel proclamation.

If we, now founded in Christ and by Christ, are called to carry on His mission to bring all things to glorify Him in our society, it becomes obvious that we lack the power to do so. In ourselves, this task of loving and living like Christ, being transformed from within to move forward, is daunting at best and seemingly impossible in reality. Sure, I want to think Christianly about things, to be patient with those around me, to love my enemies and forgive those that hurt me, to be able to honestly show how we think differently about sex, money, and power, but COME ON, LORD!! Just ask me to pass out a tract, or hold up a sign, or invite someone to church, or just speak the truth. Those things I can do, they’re hard, but I can do them. Don’t ask me to be gentle when others attack me, or humble when others succeed and I don’t! Don’t ask me to work hard for a society that hates You and at the same time give up all my own power to benefit them! And PLEASE don’t ask me to die to my own comfort and ease and security and respect and honor in order to build up the very people that don’t appreciate me or even try to tear me down! I cannot do that!

To a degree, you are right. You cannot do that. I cannot do that. Yet, the Lord has called us to be *like Him*. What are we to do? For such a desperate time as this we must follow the footsteps of the prophet Daniel. It was not Daniel’s wisdom or Daniel’s strength that lifted him to be Christ-like in his pagan multi-cultural relativistic polytheistic culture (just like ours!). It was this fact from Daniel 1:9,17 - “and God gave them...” Any power that we have to be, think, and do like Jesus is found only in the power and the working of the Holy Spirit of God within us and through us. He is the ultimate mover of hearts, the ultimate Wise One, and the ultimate giver of all needed resources. So, the first step in learning to be like Him and to follow Him rightly, is really not a step at all, but a drop. A drop onto our knees in prayers of gratitude and petition, moving from self-will to utter dependence, asking the Almighty and Gracious Creator to work within us His promised presence and powerful transformation of the soul.

You see, the reason that living for His Kingdom, giving up power in repentance and living in complete trust of Jesus, is that we have an enemy who does not want our Father to get any glory. And he wages war against our Father and against His people. It is in these times of conflict without and spiritual battle within that we struggle, and as such is the reality, so is the utter necessity for the spiritual strength, protection, and resources not of our will or mere determination, but of the presence of God Himself. Prayer is our first step in every aspect of our life with Jesus. From the self-denial of repentance, to the power to believe, really believe, for the strength to endure when everything around comes crashing down, to the power to pursue the Lord in the midst of great pain, and to the hope that He has called us toward in Christ, our greatest strength and power lies in His presence with us and His power to shape us into the image of Christ Jesus. So we will pray like He prayed as conflict around us rages and the kingdom of God advances further and further until the last tear falls.

1. Prayer is Asking for God’s Resources for God’s Purpose
  - a. The Proclamation of the Gospel Brings Conflict and Struggle
    - i. It is no accident that Luke mentions that Jesus went out to pray all night immediately after recalling the hatred and scheming of the religious leaders to do away with Him.
    - ii. 1 Th 2:2
    - iii. 1 Ti 6:12 – “Fight the good fight of faith”
    - iv. Heb 12:1-2 – “Run the race before you with your eyes on Jesus”
    - v. Col 4:12

- b. Prayer is for Wielding the Word
  - i. Eph 6:17-20
  - ii. The proclamation of the Gospel to the glory of God (both in its acceptance and in its rejection) is the purpose of prayer
- c. Prayer is Purposed in the Building of the Kingdom of God
  - i. The Lord's Prayer: Matt 6:9ff
    - 1. God's Priority – "Hallowed be Your Name"
    - 2. God's Purpose – "Your Kingdom come"
    - 3. God's Plan – "You will be done on earth as in Heaven"
    - 4. God's Provision – "Give us our daily bread"
    - 5. God's Pardon – "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors"
    - 6. God's Protection – "Deliver us from the evil one"
  - ii. John 15:16
    - 1. Jesus chose them and appointed them to go
    - 2. In going that they would bear abiding fruit
    - 3. SO THAT they might ask the Father for help and receive it for the purpose of bearing abiding fruit in His name
  - iii. Col 4:3
    - 1. Bold speaking in opportunity
    - 2. Wise words of gospel truth

## 2. Kingdom Prayer is Audacious Prayer

- a. This "all nighter" was indicative of how greatly the Son relied upon the Father for the strength, the wisdom, the patience, etc. to build His Kingdom for the glory of His Father
- b. This is the attitude of kingdom-building prayer, when we are at the end of our rope of giving, and we feel like we cannot do this alone...we need help. God wants us to be audaciously unconcerned about convention.
  - i. Prayer is not quaint and tidy. God-honoring prayer is raw, authentic, cries of persistence and shameless pounding on God's door. It's asking and asking and asking for his help to build His Kingdom, to live His calling, to be His witnesses, until He gives you the divine resources to feed the spiritually poor and walk to the front lines again.
  - ii. In these prayers, we do not ask for our mere comforts or concern with our own welfare (Jam 4:3), but are asking for bread for the hungry travelers who have come to our door in the middle of the night. These are prayers for the resources to meet the needs of others and are according to the will of God, for He has stated His desires in His word.
    - 1. When we feel that we cannot, we are shamelessly and audaciously wrestling until we get what we need to live for His glory and His kingdom.
    - 2. When we feel that we cannot love our enemies, we implore Him to transform our desires to love well!
    - 3. When we feel that we cannot forgive those who have hurt us, ask Him to open the eyes of your heart (Eph 1:18ff) to know the immeasurable greatness of His power toward those who believe!
    - 4. When we know we need wisdom (Jam 1:5), bang on God's door until you receive the bread that you need to serve in love and truth!
    - 5. When we feel that God is not listening, bang harder! Be more audacious! Don't let it go! God honors this raw tenacity of helpless dependent prayer.

## 3. Dependence Through Prayer Glorifies God

- a. God is the Powerful One, Not Us
  - i. Our prayers do not twist God's arm, for we are to pray for what God desires and what God has promised.
  - ii. Prayer does not "work"!!

1. It is God that works, not our prayers, as if some secret mantra or special way of praying was the key to success. We seek the wisdom, the power, the glory of the person to whom we pray!
  2. God works!! He is active, moving, living, personal, and powerful to affect any change that He so desires, so let us ask Him to give us what we know that He already desires...HIS GLORY!!
- iii. Prayer is NOT powerful!!
1. God is powerful!!!
  2. How slight a perversion of words that places the emphasis on the power of man, rather than on the power of God. It is not our prayers that affect anything, it is God who moves and we, in prayer, simply ask Him to affect transformation and change.
  3. Being with God is what gives us the motivation, passion, strength, endurance, and joy of glorifying Him...

a. C.S. Lewis –

“The very question, ‘Does prayer work?’ puts us in the wrong frame of mind from the outset. ‘Work’: as if it were magic, or a machine – something that functions automatically. Prayer is either a sheer illusion or a personal contact between embryonic, incomplete persons (ourselves) and the utterly concrete Person. Prayer in the sense of petition, asking for things, is a small part of it; confession and penitence are its threshold, adoration its sanctuary, the presence and vision and enjoyment of God its wine. In it God shows Himself to us. That He answers prayer is a corollary – not necessarily the most important one – from the revelation. What He does is learned from Who He is.”

b. Building the Kingdom is the Work of God

- i. Matt 16:18
- ii. John 10:16 – I bring in My sheep, they hear My voice and know Me
- iii. John 6:37 – all that the Father gives to Me I never cast out
- iv. We Preach so that Others Believe, but it is Christ that Gathers His Sheep

“Our fallen hearts are predisposed to think that we can ‘do church.’ But we only think that way if we’re task-oriented to begin with. Real ‘church’ is not running a program; real church is the manifest presence of Jesus among His people. And we can’t program Him. We can only pray for His presence.” ~Ray Ortlund

c. It is God Who Equips and God Who Saves

- i. Acts 11:18 – God grants repentance that leads to life
- ii. Ps 50:15 -
- iii. Charles Spurgeon quote

God and the praying man take shares....First, here is your share: “Call upon me in the day of trouble.” Secondly, there is God’s share: “I will deliver thee.” Again, you take a share – for you shall be delivered. And then again it is the Lord’s turn – “You shall glorify me.” Here is a compact, a covenant that God enters into with you who pray to Him, and whom He helps. He says, “You shall have the deliverance, but I must have the glory....” Here is a delightful partnership: we obtain that which we so greatly need, and all that God gets is the glory which is due His name.”

- iv. God gets the glory because He is the provider, the mover, the shaker. The Father is glorified as the one who gives what we need to accomplish His purpose.
  1. John 14:13

2. John 15:5-8
- v. Prayer humbles us and exalts God
  1. We admit that we have no power or ability to do what God has called us to do!
    - a. Thus, we do not trust ourselves, our plans, our efforts
  2. But God is Powerful!!
    - a. Thus, we move forward to minister with boldness, to die with joy, to gratefully sacrifice our comfort on the altar of His great renown because He is worthy
    - b. When we trust in God's power and provision through prayer, we find a great boldness to move forward to fulfill His calling upon us
- d. We can approach the throne of grace with confidence because of the Cross of Christ
  - i. Hebrew 4:16
  - ii. Our sins do not condemn us any longer, God's wrath is gone because Jesus is our High Priest who made atonement for our sin
  - iii. Thus, we approach God with great fearless confidence, knowing that Jesus understands our sorrows and our plight and He pleads for us with great grace and mercy in our times of need

Conclusion:

Remember, remember, remember that our goal is that God would be known and glorified for the great God that He is. We are in a conflict without and conflict within. Struggle is the word that would sum up much of how we live in this society, trying to live and love well, but struggling to trust in Christ for all things. Even Paul struggled to be who he wanted to be. We all struggle because the Spirit of God within is battling the flesh and all of its self-centered desires. We need His great and infinite power to proclaim Him truthfully and we need His great and infinite power in order to be transformed into humbly bold proclaimers of His great glory. **WE NEED HIS PRESENCE AMONG US!**

Prayer brings us into the necessary power behind kingdom living and the revelation of the Glory of God: His Spirit, His power, His Glory. Because Jesus paid down our debts and rose to life forever we have been given His real and living presence to accomplish the impossible task of living humbly and proclaiming His glory to the world. Remembering these two promises: that nobody is beyond God's reach, for "all things are possible with Him," and that you are never called by God to do something that Jesus will not be with you to do. He is your empathic High Priest who suffered and knows suffering from within and from without. And after He commanded us to witness of Him, He gave us this promise of comfort and assurance: "I will be with you always, even to the end of the ages." Go audaciously and ask for the all the spiritual, emotional, and physical resources necessary to see His Kingdom built to the glory of our great God and Savior!