

Prayer List

Gene
Veda
Wallace
Sheila
Ophelia

Services:

Sunday

Bible Class 9:00 a.m.
Assembly 10:00 a.m.
Assembly 11:00 a.m.

Wednesday

Bible Class 7:00 p.m.

Elders:

Brad Behrens - bradbehrens@pinolechurchofchrist.com
Michael Odom - MichaelOdom@pinolechurchofchrist.com
Ernie Sprinkel - preacher@pinolechurchofchrist.com

This Week's Question:

According to the law, what can be used in place of a lamb as a sin offering?

Answer To Last Week's Question:

Malachi - Malachi 3:16-17

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Prayer: A Distinctive Trait of Sound Faith

W. Frank Walton

Name a sure mark of sound faith. Did "continuing steadfastly in prayer come to mind? Saints are distinguished as those who continually "call upon ... the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:2; Acts 9:14). Healthy, sound faith is shown by active, fervent prayer, not by just nodding your head that you ought to pray. So, how "sound" are you?

Restoring the Apostolic Pattern

To restore New Testament Christianity, remember that the early church aggressively "continued steadfastly in ... prayers" (Acts 2:42). But today, many anguished souls struggle in the drought of prayerless lives. We like to have gospel meetings and singings, but how important are prayer meetings? A church gathered to specifically petition God for a fruitful gospel meeting. A preacher supposedly commented: "That sounds denominational." Where I labor as an evangelist, we have a monthly prayer service on Sunday afternoon. Reactions vary from, "That's unusual ... I've never heard of that before" to "That's new ... we ought to try it." But this isn't new, unheard of, or denominational. It's apostolic!

After Peter and John faced the furious Sanhedrin, brethren met the challenge together by lifting "their voices to God with one accord" (Acts 4:24). This was their first line of defense, not a last ditch desperation. They didn't pray for brief persecution, but for bold perseverance (4:29). Later, the apostle James was slaughtered and Peter was imprisoned for execution. In this

horrible crisis, brethren didn't panic, but "prayer ... was being made fervently by the church to God" (12:5). Does the church face difficult problems, discouraging obstacles or great challenges? A local church should do as they did in their crisis: "many were gathered together and were praying" (12:12).

Yet, the apostles didn't see prayer only as a "fire plug" (use only in an emergency). In Acts 6, they delegated benevolent work to others. Why? To effectively preach, they needed much time given "to prayer" (6:4). If miraculously endowed men needed it, how much more do we!

"Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17) isn't an option with faithful achievers. "Without ceasing" (adialeptos) is used in Greek papyri of a hacking cough, etc. Paul urges a sound habit that's continual, reoccurring. Don't quit calling on God! We need to stitch in each day with petitions so it won't unravel at both ends.

The Reality of God

We're hesitant to converse with illusions. Is God real to you? David knew Him as, "O You who hears prayer" (Psalm 65:2). Jesus urges us to spend time alone with our Father in communion (Matthew 6:6). To live for God out of the prayer closet, we must first invest time in the prayer closet. Drawing near to God impresses us with His all-seeing eye that searches our heart and His all-powerful hand that providentially answers our petitions (Matthew 7:7-11).

Pentecostal error shouldn't make us reactionaries, spooked by God's true way of directly answering prayer. If God's hands are completely tied, why bother praying? Does it make any difference? Righteous, fervent prayer "avails much" (James 5:16). His providence acts "behind the scenes" through laws of nature. He can accomplish His will and answer our prayers without miraculous suspension of nature's order. As the giving God, nothing is outside the reach of prayer if it's first within His will (1 John 5:14-15). God hasn't just pitched us the New Testament and walked off saying, "See you on Judgment Day, good luck!" His eyes "are upon the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer" (1 Peter 3:12). Prayer can move the Hand that moves the world.

The Response of Faith

Prayer is borne on wings of supreme faith and dependence on God (Mark 11:22-24). It's the breath of the soul. By prayer, we

enter the center of the universe to breathe the pure air of heaven. Here we humbly admit we can't go it alone in our puny strength. "Prayer offered in faith" (James 5:15) looks away from self unto the supreme need and trust of God. Prayerless people arrogantly boast, "I don't need God ... He can't help; I'd rather be left alone and make it on my own." How many preachers, teachers, elders and deacons pray sporadically? I have. Prayerful reliance on God, not self, helps to shatter pride and the illusion of self-importance and self-sufficiency.

What time is it when we're burdened with a load of care? Stung by unfair criticism? Unmotivated and discouraged in the Lord's work? Grievously tempted to surrender to Satan? Can't sleep for all your worries? It's time for prayer in faith! "Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He will sustain you" (Psalm 55:22).

A life of settled dependence on God makes prayer to God as necessary as the air you breathe. We must do more than pray—but only after we've prayed in faith. Enroll in the school of supplication, rise up early with Christ and go to a solitary place to pour your heart out to God (Mark 1:35). Set aside time for praise, thanksgiving, confession of sin, intercession for others and supplication for your cares and needs. Pray before Bible study, while driving to work, while walking in the woods. Pray with your family, with your brethren. Pray when tempted. Pray without ceasing! Read how the godly prayed in the Bible. But just as no one learned to swim or walk by correspondence course, you won't learn to pray just by reading this. We learn to swim by swimming, to walk by walking and to pray by praying. And to pray well is to pray much.

Fight like a man in the good fight of faith. And get on your knees. Make calling upon the Lord a distinctive trait of your life.