

PRAYER

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## Prayer

### Lesson one

#### Teach us how to pray

In *Matthew 6:9-13; 7: 7-11 and Luke 11: 1-13* Jesus teaches his disciples how to pray. They have grown up familiar with prayer with their temple and synagogues central to their lives and reciting the Shema three times a day.

***Deuteronomy 6: 4-5. “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.”***

Although the disciples prayed they saw in Jesus a fellowship with God that was far superior to their mechanical prayers. May I suggest, for many Christians in the west we know we should pray, and we do, but we also know it could be improved upon. Like the disciples perhaps we need to ask the Lord to teach us how to pray.

#### Jesus’ teaching

##### Luke 11: 1-13

Jesus never intended for people to mindlessly repeat this prayer over and over as some do. It was meant to be an outline and was given in response to the disciples request for him to teach them how to pray. Nevertheless it is always a blessing to recite Scripture.

#### Who should we pray to?

We are to pray to our Heavenly Father.

#### What should we pray about?

We must pray about the priorities of the kingdom of God ***“your kingdom come.”*** It is together we build with God his kingdom on earth.

We are trusting God, our source of supply, to meet our every need. ***“Give us each day our daily bread.”***

We are committed to live a life of love and forgiveness. ***“Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.”***

Through his power in our lives we will overcome the evil one. ***“Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one.”***

#### How should we pray

Jesus encourages us to be bold, persistent ***“yet because of the mans boldness.”*** A ‘never say die’ attitude. A ‘never settle for less’ attitude. If you know what you are asking for is ‘the children’s bread’. Stay there until you get it.

## Ask, seek and knock

If we do not 'ask' we cannot expect an answer, so be sure to ask. Some requests may require more than simply asking but 'seeking out the answer through enquiry or pushing on doors. A further group of requests will require 'knocking' action before the door will be opened.

## Praying in the Spirit

Hidden in the teaching is the mention of the vital importance of the Holy Spirit's assistance. ***"How much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him."***

God has given us the Holy Spirit to help us in our prayer.

***Romans 8:26. "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express."***

***Jude 20. "But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit."***

***John 4:24 "God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth."***

## How the Holy Spirit helps us to pray

When we pray we must believe it's more than a request for help and an expression of thanks. Petitions and thanksgivings are good and right but not enough. Prayer is a question of living up to the four priorities Jesus taught us in the Lord's Prayer,

When we pray with the Holy Spirit's help we will be able to enter into a divine dialogue that is taking place. We will be able to hear God and know what to pray for. And wait patiently while at the same time being persistent and taking the necessary action until the door is opened.

## Personal and corporate prayer

We have two prayer lives. Private prayer conducted in the secret place alone when we commune with God about our family and personal needs. Corporate prayer when we join with others to seek God for our fellowship, our community, our nation and the world.

In our next lesson we will study the importance of coming together to pray.

## Lesson two

### Corporate prayer

When Christians meet together to engage in spiritual disciplines with one heart and mind, mutual strengthening and blessing will always be the result.

***Matthew 18: 19-20. “Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there I am with them.”***

***Romans 1: 11-12. “I long to see you that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong - that is that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each others faith.”***

Simply by leaving our separate homes and joining together something potentially powerful and significant happens that would possibly not happen in the secret place.

Being in the physical presence of other Christians praying, singing, sharing, worshipping and listening together our spirits are more open to God.

This is because when we meet family and friends we open ourselves up to each other. We relax with those we love and with those who we know love us. In our joy to be with them we talk and enjoy each others company. In opening our hearts in this way we open them to God. Those we are less friendly towards we are less open. The door of your heart that opens to receive me is the same door that opens to receive God.

**1 John 4:20. “If anyone says, “I love God,” yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.”**

Hearts that are closed to their brother and sister are closed to God.

***Matthew 5: 23-24. “If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother: then come and offer your gift.”***

If you know someone has a problem with you. Planning to meet with God is not possible until it is put right.

### Meeting in love and unity

When Christians meet together it must always be in love and unity never with a resentful attitude. Because it is only when we come together in unity it is there God bestows his blessing.

***Psalm 133. "How pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! .... For there the Lord bestows his blessing even life for evermore."***

The illustration of oil running down in this Psalm is a picture of the blessings of God being poured down from God in heaven.

To the extent we experience the Christian fellowship is the extent to which we will enjoy God's corporate presence.

**GOD CAN ONLY MEDIATE HIS PRESENCE IN AND THROUGH A COMMUNITY TO THE EXTENT THEY ARE OPEN TO HIM AND ONE ANOTHER.**

When we come together it is to listen to each other and God. As we pray together the Holy Spirit prays through individuals and together we hear the voice of God.

There is a dialogue already taking place between the Father and his Son and God wants us to enter into that dialogue. Through the administration of the Holy Spirit he will reveal their conversation to us. Prayer is only really effective as we flow with what he is saying not with what we are saying. As the Holy Spirit speaks into our heart we will hear the heavenly conversations and say Amen "Yes Lord we agree."

### **The lowest attended meeting**

One of Satan's devices to outwit us is to keep us from prayer and especially corporate prayer. Jesus quoting *Isaiah 56:7* said "***My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.***" Then quoting *Jeremiah 7:11* he went on to say "***But you have made it 'a den of robbers.'***" To neglect prayer is to rob from God, from the nations and from ourselves. We will study this further in our next lesson 'The danger of neglecting prayer.'

## Lesson three

### The danger of neglecting prayer

#### A difficult day for Jesus

Throughout the passion week Jesus and his twelve disciples lodged at Bethany a forty minute walk from Jerusalem. Following his entry into the city on a colt we read the account of the very eventful next day. In the morning he curses a fig-tree for not bearing fruit. Later in the day he causes a major disturbance in the temple courts. And finally, through his preaching, he infuriates the authorities so much they begin looking for ways to kill him.

The next day he uses all these events to teach us, in the sternest possible terms, that a religious life without substance is unacceptable to God.

#### Mark 11: 12-25 - Jesus clears the temple

To understand what Jesus wants to teach us it's important we recognise the clearing of the temple is sandwiched between the two halves of the account of Jesus cursing the fig-tree.

#### The story unfolds

It is the week leading up to the crucifixion. Jesus and his disciples are lodging with friends at Bethany. On their journey to Jerusalem in the morning Jesus is hungry, seeing a fig-tree he goes to pick some fruit from it. Jesus knows the tree will not have figs on it, it's not the season. When he reaches the tree he does something very strange. He curses the tree because it has no fruit. He actually speaks to the tree. ***"May no-one ever eat fruit from you again."*** And he said it loud enough for the tree and the disciples to hear. Why? He wants to teach us something.

#### The events at the temple

Now we move to the scene in the temple courtyard. The people have turned the temple area into a marketplace. They are exchanging currency and selling animals and birds to be sacrificed. Jesus overturns the tables of the money changers. He drives out those selling animals and birds. And denies merchants any access.

It was Passover hundreds of thousands of visitors were in Jerusalem for the feast. Jesus having the attention of all the people preaches to them. We are given two texts of his sermon.

***Isaiah 56:7. "My house will be called a house of prayer for all the nations."*** And

***Jeremiah 7:11. "But you have made it a den of robbers."***

His sermon resonates with the people, the whole crowd are amazed at his teaching. But for the chief priests and the teachers of the law his words angered them and they began to look for ways to kill him. That evening he returns to Bethany.

## Back to the fig-tree

The next day as Jesus and his disciples take the same route past the fig-tree Peter speaks up. “Rabbi, look! The fig-tree you cursed has withered.” It was obvious, the leaves that once covered the tree were withered. Life no longer flowed up from the roots of the tree. Its very source of life had been cut off.

## Peters helpful outspokenness

Peter is often the one who speaks up. In many ways he displays a honest clumsiness that has made him the butt of preachers jokes. But we should be grateful to Peter it’s because of his outspokenness we learn so much.

It’s on the Sea of Galilee that Peter blurted out **“Lord if it’s you tell me to come to you on the water.”** **“Come, Jesus said.”** Through his example we know it is possible for ordinary people to overcome the laws of nature.

When Jesus is explaining to his disciples he must go to the cross it is Peter who rebukes his Lord. **“Never, Lord! This shall never happen to you!”** It’s then we learn we must all take up our cross and follow him.

And when Peter complains he has left all to follow the Lord. Jesus makes it plain that God is no mans debtor.

Again thanks to Peters candidness we learn what this incident is all about.

It’s all about:

- genuine faith that bears fruit
- being robust in our faith not accepting a form of godliness.
- speaking to the problem
- taking authority in the world when things go wrong
- believing and not doubting
- not letting the church loose its mission
- looking out and not turning inward
- walking in love and forgiveness
- taking up our mandate to pray fervently

A tree without fruit is like a religion that does not meet the needs of people. A house of God without prayer is like a marketplace where people indulge themselves. The cursing of the fig-tree was not a malicious act of destruction but a vital truth Jesus wants to teach us.

## Repent of perish

In **Luke 13: 6-9** Jesus teaches a parable about a fig-tree, warning us that a religious life without substance is unacceptable to God. But in his graciousness he will give us extra time to **“humble ourselves, pray and seek his face and turn from our wicked ways, then he will hear from heaven and will forgive our sins and will heal our land.”**



## Lesson four

### Listening to God

#### The God who speaks

Our God is a God who speaks and he wants us to listen. He speaks in different ways on different occasions.

He shouts: *Job 37:5. "God's voice thunders in marvellous ways: He does great things beyond our understanding."*

At other times he whispers: *1 Kings 19: 12-13. "After the earthquake came the fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came the gentle whisper.....Elijah what are you doing here?"*

#### God speaks to Samuel

There is a lovely story in the Old Testament that reminds us that God can be heard - even by a child. Twelve year old Samuel had been taken by his mother Hannah to live and serve in the temple.

*1 Samuel 3: 8-10 "The Lord called Samuel a third time, and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, you called me." Then Eli realised that the Lord was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening." "So Samuel went and lay down in his place. Then the Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, Samuel, Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak for your servant is listening."*

#### The importance of listening for God to speak

Throughout the Scripture the Holy Spirit impresses upon us the importance of listening to God. Not hearing God but listening for him to speak.

God appeared to Adam and Eve in bodily form in the garden spoke directly to them.

*Genesis 3:8. "Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord called to the man, "Where are you?"*

Sin separated man from God making listening to him impossible. Jesus removed that barrier. With fellowship renewed our desire to listen was revived.

When Abram heard God speak he immediately knew the importance of obeying his voice.

*Genesis 12:1. "The Lord God said to Abram, Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. So Abram left, as the Lord had told him."*

At the burning bush Moses listened to God for the first time and for the next forty years it was something he continued to do.

***Exodus 3:14. “God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you.”***

After Moses God continues his dialogue with Joshua.

***Joshua 1: 1-9. “After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ assistant. “Moses my servant is dead. Now then.....”***

The prophets of God heard him clearly.

***Isaiah 8:1. “The Lord said to me, “Take a large scroll and write on it with an ordinary pen.”***

***Jeremiah 7:1. “This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: “Stand at the gate of the Lord’s house and there proclaim this message.”***

God picks his time and place to speak that’s why we should always be listening always tuned-in.

***Ezekiel 1:3. “The word of the Lord came to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi by the Kebar River in the land of the Babylonians.”***

When Solomon is young and afraid he needs to hear God speak. God speaking is the basis of our faith and courage.

***1 Kings 3:11 “So God said to him, “Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself.”***

Aside from their obvious unique historical role, each one of us has to settle in our own mind is this the only time God speaks or does he want to speak to ordinary me as well? Are these examples of the normal human life God intended for us?

### **Living by God’s word**

We live - really live - only through hearing God speak into our souls.

***Matthew 4:4. “Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”***

God indwelling his people through personal presence and fellowship is the normal life God intended for us. The major part of prayer is listening to God. We all need to develop listening hearts.

## What God said at the transfiguration

**Matthew 17: 1-5.** What a fantastic experience for these three young men. Invited to a prayer retreat with Jesus they received more than what they expected. Jesus was transfigured and Moses and Elijah appeared before them. Peter then, in his usual outspokenness, suggested the building of three shrines. ***“Lord if it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters.”*** Why did Peter presume what the Lord wanted? In the presence of ‘the God of all creation’ It’s no time to speak, it’s time to listen. ***While he was still speaking a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased listen to him!”*** Clearly there are times to speak and times to listen!

## Lesson five

### Hearing God

We have looked at the importance of being people who listen to hear the voice of God. In this lesson we shall consider how God speaks to us.

God is a spirit, who when he speaks to us it's supernatural, it's mystical, it's possibly through what we see and always spirit to spirit.

#### God speaks through his creation

God speaks to us, into our heart, as we look around us.

***Psalm 19: 1-4. "The heavens declare the glory of God: the skies proclaim the works of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. They have no speech, there are no words; no sound is heard from them. Their voice goes out into all the earth their words to the end of the world."***

- The stars at night - Sunsets and sunrises
- Mountains and rivers. - Oceans and trees

All speak a silent language. Wherever you are in the world God is saying listen and let me speak to you.

#### God speaks through ordinary things

When Jesus was with us he spoke about kingdom realities through ordinary everyday objects. He spoke about flowers in the field, vines, trees, snakes, scorpions, pearls, women sweeping floors, men fishing and children playing.

As he walked through the fields with his disciples he noticed they were covered with flowers. He used them to teach his disciples not to worry.

***Matthew 6: 25,28. "Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear ..... And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith."***

Wherever you are God can speak to you in your spirit through any object you are looking at.

#### God speaks through other people

Sometimes God speaks to us through other people.

**Acts 9: 1-19** we see a clear example of this. Jesus had appeared to Saul (Paul) on his way to Damascus and spoken to him in an audible voice. He is told to wait in Damascus and he would be told what to do next. Saul will now discover that God speaks to us through others. Calling on a disciple, Ananias, Jesus directs him in a vision to go to Saul and place his hands on him and say to him. ***“Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here - has sent me so that you will see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”***

Why did Jesus involve Ananias? It is the practice of God to involve his people, to partner with them, to fulfil his purposes in the world. This then required God to speak continually to his people. Being aware of this will cause his people to listen and be faithful messengers.

### **God speaks through the Scriptures**

God speaking through his Scriptures has long been considered the primary way God speaks to his people. But we would be wrong to limit God to this method only. As we grow in our relationship with God we will know his voice in the same way Jesus knew the will of his Father instinctively in his spirit.

***John 5:19. “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.”***

***John 12: 49-50. For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. I know that his commands lead to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.”***

## Lesson six

### Repentance

#### Free from condemnation

The constant repetition of repentance for sin is not what God designed for his children. His plan is that we walk free from sin. But if we do sin we know we have an advocate who represents us to the Father whose blood cleanses us from sins effects. Remember repentance has more to do with a change of heart and mind than an act of penitence.

#### Repentance in prayer

Repentance is vital to God if the Kingdom of God is to advance in this world. Sin hinders the progress of the purposes of God like nothing else. The ministry of the church is to stand in the midst of a rebellious sinful world and intercede on its behalf to a holy righteous God. If we fail to do this we fail. ***“My house will be called a house of prayer for all the nations.”***

#### Daniel our example

The book of Daniel is a clear illustration of the people of God caught up in a Godless world system and what God expects of his children. We read of tremendous faith and courage and the necessity of prayer to advance God’s purposes in the world.

#### Daniel’s prayer

Daniel spends all of his life in captivity. Taken to Babylon with his three friends as a teenager he never returns to his beloved Jerusalem. After 70 years serving foreign kings at the age of 85 God calls him to pray. Familiar with Jeremiah’s prophecy he knows it is time for God’s people to be released.

#### Daniel’s call to prayer

***Daniel 9: 1-3.*** Daniel is prompted to pray by the Holy Spirit through the word of the Lord given to Jeremiah. He is shown what to pray and how to pray.

There are several things that strike me as odd about this prayer.

- (1) Daniel repents about sins he has never committed choosing to identify himself with the sins of his predecessors.
- (2) God has already determined that he is going to release his people so why does Daniel need to pray at all?
- (3) Apparently, one man praying on behalf of tens of thousands is sufficient for God to show mercy.
- (4) God’s desire to bless is dependent upon repentance.

### Daniel's representative prayer

**Daniel 9: 4-11.** Daniel is praying for the salvation of his nation. Standing in the gap he identifies with his nation's sins. His feet are on the earth, his head is in heaven. Daniel has done none of the things listed in these verses, on the contrary he has lived a life of total commitment to God putting himself in great danger.

### Daniel upholds God's righteousness

**Daniel 9: 11-14.** Lord you are perfectly justified in acting like you have. All that has happened to us is only what we deserve.

### Daniel's plea for mercy

**Daniel 9: 15-19.** Daniel never raises himself or his people up in God's sight. His plea for mercy is not for their sake but for God's. That his name and the city that bears his name will not be dishonoured.

### Repentance a prerequisite of God's blessing

**Deuteronomy 30: 2-3.** *“And when you and your children return to the Lord your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today, then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he has scattered you.”*

Salvation and the grace of God does not mean we can live as we please and God will bless us whatever we do. God is still a covenant God and we are still his covenant people. If the church in the UK has broken covenant with God, God cannot bless his church.

**Acts 3:19.** *“Repent then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.”*

Surely this is a kingdom principle that is impossible for God to violate. We must seek God in repentance if we are to receive times of refreshing from the Lord and see the church in the UK revived.

## Lesson seven

### Stating our case

#### Invited to discuss things

***Isaiah 1:18 “Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are as red as crimson, they shall be like wool.”***

***Isaiah 43: 25-26 “I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remember your sins no more. Review the past for me, let us argue the matter together; state the case for your innocence.”***

Both of these verses are about salvation but is there more here? Is God saying come let's reason together? Please state your case? Can we argue, discuss the matter together? Is God giving us an open invitation to enter into an intimate dialogue with him?

Is it possible God wants to hear what his friends think about things? He wants to hear our thoughts. He wants us to fully express how we feel about things. He even wants to discuss the matter over with us.

#### God's conversations with Abraham

When we read the account of Abraham's relationship with God in Genesis it reads more like two very good friends discussing things than a creator speaking to his creature.

***Genesis 18: 23,25. “Then Abraham approached him and said: “Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked?” “Will not the judge of all the earth do what is right?”***

It appears that Abraham has two things on his mind the first is God's reputation and the other is Lot's safety.

#### God's conversation with Moses

Along with Abraham God also called Moses his 'friend'. Let's listen - into their conversation!

***Exodus 32:10. “Now leave me alone so my anger may burn against them that I may destroy them.”***

Moses' reasoning response.

***Exodus 32:11. “But Moses sought the favour of the Lord his God. “O Lord,” he said, “why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand?”***



Then it goes on to say “the Lord relented and did not bring on the people the disaster he threatened.”

### God’s conversation with Daniel

Daniel pleads his case before the Lord.

*Daniel 9: 17-19. “Now, our God, hear the prayer and petition of your servant. For your sake, O Lord, look with favour on our desolate sanctuary. Give ear, O God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act! For your sake, O my God do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name.”*

### The immutability of God

What we are considering here is not that God changes his mind but he leaves a space for us to speak into before he acts. Our reasoning appears to change the course of events but in reality the events were always fixed in the mind of God. Our reasoning was taken into consideration before eternity.

### The omniscience of God

God knows what we are going to think before we think it. Why would he want us to go through the process of talking with him and voicing our opinion about certain matters? If he already knows what we will need before we even need it - why would God even want us to pray to him in the first place? Why doesn’t God just rely on his perfect knowledge on all things and just give us what we will need without us ever having to ask for it?

### The only possible answer

I believe there can only be one possible answer. He wants more than anything else, that we enter into a one-on-one, intimate, personal relationship with him.

If we never had to approach God in prayer to voice and express any of our thoughts, feelings and opinions on anything - then we would never enter into any type of dialogue or personal conversation with him. And if we cannot establish any kind of good, two way communication and dialogue with the Lord - then no real, close personal relationship is ever going to develop between him and us.

The only way that any kind of a good personal relationship can be developed between two people is through good, personal, free flowing conversation where both parties are totally free to express all of their thoughts, opinions and feelings about anything they want to talk about.

This is what makes a best friend relationship so unique and wonderful - because you are in tune with your best friend and so comfortable with them - you are free and comfortable in being yourself and releasing and expressing yourself to your fullest potential.

### God's desired relationship with us

- 1) God wants us all available to him 24/7 for dialogue with him. This is only possible with God.
- 2) God wants to be our best friend at the same time as being God of the universe. Again this is only possible with God.
- 3) God has to be number one in our lives, he will not settle for number two behind a family member or friend. With God this is possible.
- 4) God has a consuming fire type of love for all of us.
- 5) God is possessive and jealous over every single one of us with an intense and passionate love.

Let us approach his throne boldly not afraid to state our case, to reason with him, to contend with him.

## Lesson eight

### Prayer as a weapon

#### A call to warfare

In Ephesians 6: 10-20 Paul describes for us the six pieces of armour the Christian is to wear if he is to defend himself against Satans attacks. With the exception of the sword all are for our protection. But even the sword can reach no further than the arm of the person who wields it.

#### Paul's call to attack

Writing to the Corinthians Paul speaks about our obligation to demolish Satan's strongholds.

***2 Corinthians 10: 3-4. "For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of this world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds."***

Initially we might see ourselves on the defensive but eventually we must move to the offensive. To do this we must discover what weapons of attack Jesus has given us to demolish Satan's strongholds. We will never win the war by retreating or even merely holding our ground. We have an obligation to move out of defence into attack.

#### Scriptural basis for the church to take the offensive

***Colossians 2:15. "And having disarmed the powers and authorities."***

The "powers and authorities" mentioned here are the same "rulers and authorities" in Ephesians 6:12. Through the cross Satan has been left without armour and stripped of his weapons. Then Paul goes on to say:

***Colossians 2:15. "He made a public spectacle of them triumphing over them by the cross."***

Who is it that Jesus disarmed of power and authority and made a public spectacle of? Fallen angels, evil spirits and men and women who do his bidding.

#### What does this mean for us now here?

On the cross Jesus did not win a victory for himself, he always had the victory. As our representative he won a victory for us. Now we always and in every place are to represent Christ's victory.

God wants to demonstrate, publicly, through us the victory he has won. That is the victory over rulers and authorities. And this victory is to be worked out through us. And it is with our spiritual weapons we demolish Satan's strongholds.

## **What are the weapons God has given us?**

Scripture reveals four main spiritual weapons. Prayer, Praise, Preaching and Testimony.

### **A New Testament example of prayer as a weapon**

The church had come under persecution by King Herod. James one of the church leaders had already been executed by Herod. Now Peter was also arrested and scheduled for execution.

Herod determined that Peter should not be rescued and placed him in the maximum security jail. Realising the seriousness of the situation the church began to pray in earnest for his release.

God answered the prayer of the church by sending an angel to deliver Peter. However the deliverance was only the first part of the results of their prayer. A short time after Peter's release the Lord sent an angel to strike down Herod and he died.

### **How prayer works as a weapon of attack**

Prayer broke through the heavenlies and released the intervention of angels. (There is a clear explanation of this in Daniel 10).

Peter had been promised by Jesus he would live into his old age but it took prayer to enforce the promises of God's word. This is important to understand. The promises of God's word are not a substitute for our prayers, they provoke our prayer, and it takes our prayers to make the promises of God's word effective in our spirit. It also takes our prayers to release the intervention of angels on our behalf.

Scripture tells us that angels are ministering spirits, sent forth for our benefit. But they do not come, as a rule until we pray through. By our prayers we release the intervention of angels which is God's answer.

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