

Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this teaching series you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. A teacher will teach from the Bible that a disciple of Jesus prays. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. The fourth series of 8 teachings is about "The practice of prayer". The four topics are: "A disciple is motivated to pray", "A disciple is sensitive to the physical aspects of prayer", "A disciple persists in prayer" and "A disciple is convinced about the effects of prayer". Every topic will be in two parts. Today we will learn about "A DISCIPLE IS CONVINCED ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF PRAYER - PART 1". The Bible says, "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." There are many examples in the Bible of righteous men and women who have prayed and received marvellous answers to their prayers. We will consider such examples in six areas: In part 1 we will consider prayers that result in knowing God and that result in experiencing God's deliverance. In part 2 we will consider prayers that result in experiencing God's restoration, blessings and help as well as prayers that result in extending God's kingdom.

POINT 1. PRAYERS THAT RESULT IN KNOWING GOD.

First. Prayer and the reality of God.

In 1 Kings 18 we read about the prophet Elijah and the prophets of Baal. For many years king Ahab and his wife Jezebel promoted the idolatry of Baal and Asherah. Baal and Asherah are the names of the Canaanite male and female gods of fertility. Baal represented the generative power of nature, while Asherah represented the source and maintainer of life. Baal is thought of as living above the mountains and is the sun god. As the sun, Baal also destroys life with his scorching rays. People, who burn their children alive to him, represent this! Asherah is the planet Venus and is called the queen of heaven. Every town made its own idols of Baal and Asherah and gradually many different kinds of Baals and Asherahs were worshipped from Israel to Babylon. King Ahab and Queen Jezebel killed the prophets of the Lord and looked for Elijah in all the neighbouring countries in order to kill him too. They appointed 450 prophets for Baal and 400 prophets for Asherah.

After some time, the Lord sent his prophet Elijah to challenge king Ahab and queen Jezebel. Ahab had to call all his 850 prophets as well as all the people of Israel together for a competition between Baal and Asherah on the one side and the living God on the other side. The prophet Elijah rebuked the people and said, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him" (vs 21). He then challenged the prophets of Baal to build an altar, to cut a bull into pieces and put it on the wood on the altar, but not to set fire to it. Elijah would do the same. Then the 850 prophets of Baal and Asherah would call on the name of their god to light the fire. And the prophet Elijah would call on the name of the LORD. The god who answers by fire - he is God! Everyone agreed. The whole morning, the prophets of Baal called on the name of Baal, but there was no response. Then the whole afternoon, they danced around the altar, shouted aloud to Baal and cut themselves with swords in order to get the attention of Baal. The whole day passed and no one answered, no one paid attention. The prophets of Baal had failed! Then Elijah called all Israel and the false prophets to witness what he was going to do. He rebuilt the broken altar of the Lord and dug a trench around it. Then he put the wood on it, cut a bull in pieces and put the pieces on the altar and then ordered people to pour many jars of water over everything until the water filled the trench. Then Elijah prayed and said, "God... let it be known today that you are God ... and that I have done all these things at your command. Answer me, *so that these people will know that you, O Lord, are God*, and you are turning their hearts back again" (vs 36-37). Immediately the fire of the Lord fell down from heaven and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the water and even the stones of the altar with the soil around it! When the people saw this, they fell on their faces and acknowledged that the LORD is God. The people then killed all the 850 false prophets of Baal and Asherah.

Conclusion. *Through prayer, people may come to know the reality of the God, who revealed himself through the true prophets in the Old Testament.* The God of the Bible is not an invention of man. He is also not a religious myth. The LORD is the only real God!

Second. Prayer and the presence of God.

In Exodus 33:14-17 we read about the prophet Moses and the rebellious people of Israel. The Israelites had made a golden calf and had set it up as an idol. This angered the living God. So God said to Moses that he himself would no longer go with the Israelites as they journeyed through the desert, but that he would send an angel instead (vs 1-3). But Moses would not settle for anything less than that God himself would go with them! So Moses prayed to the Lord and said, "*If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here.* How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?" Moses knew that neither he himself nor the people of Israel were something special. Only with the Presence of God could he be the prophet of God. Without the Presence of God he would be like any non-believer. Moses knew that only with the Presence of God would Israel be the people of God. Without the Presence of God in Israel, Israel would be just

like any other nation in the world. The Presence of the God of the Bible is the distinguishing mark of the worker of God and the distinguishing characteristic of the people of God! God answered Moses and said, "I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name. My Presence will go with you!"

Conclusion. Through prayer, people may experience the Presence of God. The Presence of God is the one indispensable characteristic of genuine Christians! The Presence of God distinguishes God's people from all other religions in the world.

Third. Prayer and the awesomeness of God.

In Numbers 11 and 21 we read about Moses and the judgements of God. The Israelites complained about their hardships. God heard their complaints and fire came down from heaven and consumed some of the Israelites. The people cried in fear and Moses prayed to the Lord. Then the fire died down and God's judgement against their complaining came to an end.

Some time later, the Israelites grew impatient on their journey through the desert and spoke against God and against their leader, Moses. They complained and said, "There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!" The Lord heard their complaints and sent poisonous snakes among them. The snakes bit the people of Israel and many people died. The people came to Moses and said, "We sinned when we spoke against the Lord and against you. Pray that the Lord will take the snakes away from us." Moses prayed to the Lord, but this time the Lord did not take the snakes away. Instead, Moses had to make a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. God said, "Anyone who is bitten can look at it and live." God's answer to Moses' prayer was that the Israelites would still suffer the consequences of their complaining, but each Israelite who has been bitten must personally look up at the cross and believe what God said. Only those who believed God did not die.

Conclusion. Through prayer, people may experience the awesome greatness and righteousness of God. God is still judging people today, because of their sins. Sometimes God judges their sins by sicknesses and plagues. Other times he judges their independence from him and their rebellion against him with accidents and natural disasters (cf. Ezekiel 14:21). God allows people to suffer the consequences of their sins. But God also sent Jesus Christ to be lifted onto a cross and die for the sins of people. Every person who believes in Jesus will not die the eternal death, but have eternal life (cf. John 3:14-18).

Fourth. Prayer and the nearness of God.

In Deuteronomy 4:7-8 we read about Moses praying, "What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them *the way the Lord our God is near us whenever we pray to him?* And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?" All people, who belong to the Lord, the God who revealed himself through the prophets in the Old Testament, have two great privileges. Their first privilege is that they possess God's words that reveal God's plan and God's will. Their second privilege is that they have the constant experience that God is near whenever they pray to him! Through Jesus Christ, these two privileges are for Christians in every nation of the world today.

Conclusion. Through prayer, people may experience the nearness of God.

Listener, start praying to God in the name of Jesus Christ and begin to experience the reality of God, the presence of God, the awesomeness of God and the nearness of God!

POINT 2. PRAYERS THAT RESULT IN EXPERIENCING GOD'S DELIVERANCE.

First. Prayer and God's protection.

In 2 Kings 6 we read about the prophet Elisha and the army of Aram. The king of Aram was waging a war against Israel. He pursued the army of Israel to this place and that place, but was never able to catch them, because the prophet Elisha advised the king of Israel. The king of Aram was told, "Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom" (vs 12). Therefore the king of Aram wanted to capture Elisha. He sent an army with horses and chariots and they surrounded the town where Elisha was. The servant of the prophet Elisha saw the army and exclaimed, "What shall we do?" He was afraid, because he only saw the army of horses and chariots, which the king of Aram had sent. Then the prophet Elisha said, "Don't be afraid. Those who are with us are more than those who are with them" (vs 16). Then Elisha prayed that the Lord would open his servant's eyes so that he may see reality as God sees it. The Lord opened his eyes and he saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha (vs 17). These horses and chariots of fire came from the Lord to protect his prophet Elisha!

Then Elisha again prayed to the Lord, "Strike these people with blindness." And the Lord struck all the soldiers of Aram with blindness. They were groping around, not able to find any way. Then Elisha led them to Samaria and the king of Israel. Again Elisha prayed that their eyes might be opened so that they could see. And the Lord opened their eyes and they realised that they were in the hands of the king of Israel. However, the prophet Elisha did not permit the king of Israel to kill his enemies. Instead he ordered that food and water be set before them and to send them back to their country. The Israelites prepared a great feast for their enemies and then sent them back. Since that time, the bands from Aram stopped raiding Israel's territory.

Conclusion. *Through prayer, God can open the spiritual eyes of people so that they can see how God protects his servants. Through prayer, God can also blind the physical eyes of enemies so that they cannot continue to do evil.*

Second. Prayer and God's defence.

In 2 Kings 19 we read about king Hezekiah and the Assyrian army. The Assyrians were the strongest nation at this time in history. They were extending their territory and also came to Jerusalem. The king of Assyria, Sennacherib, sent a letter to king Hezekiah of Judah telling him how the Assyrians had completely destroyed other nations and had thrown their gods into the fire. He boasted that no god could stop him and he warned Judah to capitulate. However, king Hezekiah went to the temple and spread this threatening letter before the Lord. He prayed and said, "Lord, ... you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. ... See and listen to the words Sennacherib has sent to insult the living God. ... Deliver us from his hand, so that all kingdoms on earth may know that you alone are God" (vs 15-19). God sent his answer through the prophet Isaiah. God said that he had heard Hezekiah's prayer. He knew that Sennacherib had spoken in pride against God and had insulted God. He promised that Sennacherib would not fight against Jerusalem, but that God would force him to return to his country. God said, "I will defend this city and save it for my sake." (vs 34). That very night, God sent his angel and this one angel killed 185 000 soldiers within the Assyrian army! Sennacherib immediately returned home. Soon afterwards his own sons murdered him.

Conclusion. *Through prayer, God can deliver his people from any overwhelming great power. This history is a warning to all earthly rulers who speak against the living God and a warning to all soldiers and police, who fight against God's people.*

Third. Prayer and God's fighting.

In 2 Chronicles 20 we read about king Jehoshaphat and the armies of the Moabites and Ammonites. These armies came to make war against Judah. Jehoshaphat was alarmed and decided to ask God to help. He proclaimed a national fast and people from all over Judah came to Jerusalem to seek help from the Lord. King Jehoshaphat prayed and said, "Lord, ... you rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you. ... We have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you" (vs 6,12). God answered and said, "Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's. ... You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will give you" (vs 15,17). The next day the army went out to take their positions against the armies of Moab and Ammon. People walked ahead of the army, singing and praising the Lord. As they were singing and praising the Lord, the Lord set ambushes against the armies of Moab and Ammon, and the armies of Moab and Ammon destroyed one another. The two vast armies had killed one another and not one enemy soldier escaped! Then "the fear of God came upon all the kingdoms of the countries when they heard how the Lord had fought against the enemies of Israel" (vs 29).

Conclusion. *Through prayer, God himself can fight against the enemies of his people. Through prayer, the battle is no more ours, but the Lord's. We may stand still and see how the Lord delivers us from our enemies.*

Fourth. Prayer and God's deliverance.

In Acts 12 we read about the apostle Peter and the church. The apostle Peter had boldly preached the Gospel in Jerusalem and thousands had accepted Christ as their Saviour. King Herod arrested some Christians in order to persecute them. He killed the apostle James and put the apostle Peter in prison in order to stage a huge public political trial. Peter was thoroughly guarded. He was bound with two chains, slept between two soldiers and sentries stood guard at the entrance. In the mean time "the church was earnestly praying to God for him" (vs 5). The night before the trial, many Christians gathered in the house of Mary, the mother of Mark, and prayed (vs 12). Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared in the prison cell. He woke Peter and the chains fell from Peter's wrists! The angel told Peter to get dressed and led him out of the prison. They passed the first and the second guards, without the guards being able to see them! The iron gate leading out of the prison opened by itself and the angel walked with Peter the length of one street and then disappeared!

Conclusion. *Through prayer, God can deliver his people from prison.*

Hebrews 13:3 and 10:34 says, "Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering. You sympathised with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions." Listener, do you need the protection or the deliverance of the Lord? Start praying. The same God who protected the prophet Elisha, delivered king Hezekiah, fought for king Jehoshaphat and freed the apostle Peter, can protect and deliver you!

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

First. Memorise James 5:16, "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."

Second. See the workbooks "Go and make disciples" and Internet on www. Etc

Third. Listen on short wave radio every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY to "Discipleship training on the air".