

ISSUE

19.40

BULLETIN OF
THE OLSEN
PARK CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Faithful Sayings

October 1,
2017

Services

Sunday: 9:00 AM

10:00 AM

11:00 AM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter
Jeff Nunn

Deacons:

Steve Dixon
Ryan Ferguson
Arend Gressley
Ben Hight
Blake McAlister
Brady McAlister
Walker McAnear
Sam Nunn
Lance Purcell
Rusty Scott
Justin Smiley
Trevor Yontz

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope



Prayer in the Early Church: Patterns in Acts By Kyle Pope

The book of Acts is the inspired history of the early church. It sets patterns for us of how early men and women first obeyed the gospel and worshipped God under the New Covenant. As a people who seek to follow these patterns we must always strive to be consistent in following all that Scripture teaches us. With that objective in mind, what patterns can be discerned from what the book of Acts teaches us about prayer in the early church?

Worship

The book of Acts affirms prayer as a central element of worship under Christ. Disciples of Christ do not need to perform some ritual of altered consciousness to come before the Creator—children of God can speak with the voice or the mind and God through Christ hears them. After Jesus' ascension His disciples **"continued with one accord in prayer"** (Acts 1:14, NKJV). When the church was established on Pentecost, **"they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers"** (Acts 2:42). Even when imprisoned, Paul and Silas did not consider themselves alone. At midnight they **"were praying and singing hymns to God"** (Acts 16:25). This reverent consciousness of God's presence is a pattern we should follow today.

Prayer for Special Purposes

Acts demonstrates Christians praying for a number of special purposes. Some were miraculous in nature while others were more common.

1. Miraculous Purposes. During the age of miraculous spiritual gifts it is interesting that prayer often accompanied the miracles that were performed. When Peter raised Dorcas he **“knelt down and prayed”** (Acts 9:40). When Paul healed Publius’ sick father, he **“prayed, and he laid his hands on him”** (Acts 28:8). Even when the miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit was given to those in Samaria by the laying on of hands, Peter **“prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit”**

(Acts 8:15). No one could ever claim the power came from Peter or Paul. Prayer made it clear to all who witnessed such things that God was the cause of these wonders.

2. Common Purposes. While the miraculous age has passed, the examples in Acts show that we too should pray for the sick (cf. Acts 28:8). James teaches that God can answer such prayers with no need for the type of miracles seen in the New Testament (James 5:13-15). Most often prayer was offered in times of trial and difficult decisions. After Peter and John were arrested and released they prayed for boldness (Acts 4:23-31). When Peter was arrested again the church offered **“constant prayer”** for him (Acts 12:5). When a replacement was to be chosen for Judas, they prayed about it (Acts 1:24). When the seven were appointed in Jerusalem to care for the widows, they prayed about it (Acts 6:6). When the church in Antioch first sent out Paul and Barnabas to preach, they prayed about it (Acts 13:3). When Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in the churches they planted, they prayed about it (Acts 14:23). This is a pattern we must follow. Let’s never be so afraid we will look like those who still believe in miracles that we fail to follow the biblical pattern of *casting all our cares upon God* (1 Pet 5:6-7).

Prayer and the Church

The book of Acts also teaches us that prayer is an authorized work of the church. As noted above, when Peter was imprisoned, **“constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church”** (Acts 12:5). It is following a biblical pattern for churches to set aside times for prayer. When the Grecian widows were neglected in the care offered by the church in Jerusalem, the seven were appointed so that the apostles could **“give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word”** (Acts 6:4). Peter was engaged in this work when the Lord revealed to him that he should go and teach Cornelius (Acts 10:9). We often see in the appointment of the seven principles regard-



ing deacons. Does prayer as a work of the apostles suggest that elders, in the same way, should make constant prayer a part of their work? While no specific procedure is outlined in Scripture for the appointment of elders, prayer in connection with their appointment is certainly demonstrated as a pattern for us (Acts 14:23).

Prayer and Salvation

The book of Acts offers numerous examples of conversion, but it also allows us to see the true relationship between prayer and salvation. In the example of the first conversion of a non-proselyte Gentile Luke tells us some important things about the man prior to his conversion. Cornelius is said to have been, **“a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always”** (Acts 10:2). It is commonly taught in our world that one can be saved by simply praying to God for salvation through Christ. The example of Cornelius shows this is not true. In spite of the fact that we are told his prayer was **“heard”** (Acts 10:31) and an angel spoke to him (Acts 10:3-6), it is clear his prayers did not bring salvation, nor was he told to pray. He was told to send for Peter who would tell him what he **“must do”** (Acts 10:6). When he did, Peter commanded that he be baptized (Acts 10:48). While the book of Acts shows that a good place to look for converts is in places where non-Christians engage in prayer (cf. Acts 3:1; 16:13), prayer prior to baptism does not bring salvation. This is the pattern of prayer and conversion we must follow.

Prayer and Sin

It is the Christian who has the privilege of praying to God through Jesus Christ for forgiveness of sins (see 1 John 1:9). Outside of Christ one does not have this privilege. When Simon tried to buy the miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit,

Peter told him, **“Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you”** (Acts 8:22). He asked Peter to pray also for his forgiveness (Acts 8:24). When a brother or sister in Christ repents we too should pray to God on their behalf. It is not that our prayer brings forgiveness, but in prayer we talk to our Father in heaven about the condition of our family in Christ. Jesus demonstrates this in praying that Peter might overcome temptation (Luke 22:32). We are to pray for ourselves that we **“may not enter into temptation”** (Luke 22:40, 46), but those who **“love as brothers”** (1 Pet. 3:8) will also pray for the spiritual well-being of their brethren.

Personal Prayer

The book of Acts also sets some important patterns for us when it comes to personal prayer. It is clear that early Christians set aside deliberate time to devote to prayer. Often we approach prayer merely as a transition from one thing to another. We begin and end

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