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THE LIFE OF A PRAYING CHURCH

*And when they had prayed, the place
where they were assembled together was shaken;
and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit,
and they spoke the word of God with boldness.
(Acts 4:31)*

The early church was a praying church. Every time they prayed, they experienced the supernatural at work. They were first of all an obedient church. **They did what the Lord told them to do.**

They Waited “Until”

And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” He said, “you have heard from Me.” (Acts 1:4)

*“Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem **until** you are endued with power from on high.” (Luke 24:49)*

What were they commanded to do? They were to “wait”. This is one of the most important aspects of prayer but it is missing in the church today – waiting on God. What did the disciples do while they waited? They prayed.

These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers. (Acts 1:14)

How long were they to wait? **Until** they received the promise. The early church received the promise because they were obedient and waited in unity. When they first started to wait, they did not know how long it would take. They waited persistently and patiently for 10 days **until** they experienced Pentecost.

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2:1-4)

Why was it so important for them to wait? Because only through their obedience in waiting could they receive the Holy Spirit's empowerment from on high.

They were to continue the work that Jesus had begun. **It was not any ordinary work but the work of God and it could not be done with human methods or efforts but with divine power.**

In fact, everything Jesus Himself did on earth was through the power of God (Luke 4:18, Acts 10:38). His ministry of teaching, preaching, healing, deliverance and working of miracles were all done through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Now Jesus was about to transfer this very power to them to enable them to continue His work. The work of God must be done with His power.

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. (Rom 8:11)

“Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.” (Luke 10:19)

They were given the promise and were instructed on how to receive it. They just obeyed Jesus, then the supernatural took place. Suddenly, they were visited with power from on high, just as was promised to them.

They Continued In Prayer

The early church demonstrated life and power in their preaching of the gospel because of their persistent prayer. They **continued** to meet together. Why did they meet? To pray.

They not only prayed until they received the power but they **also continued in prayer.**

“To continue” means “to persist; to endure; to last; to remain in a state, capacity or place; to extend”.

The one thing the early church had in common was their prayer life. The church was birthed through prayer and **continued** in one accord in prayer.

*And they **continued** steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. (Acts 2:42)*

*So **continuing** daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart. (Acts 2:46)*

Why were they in the temple? To pray, of course. How often? Daily. **Their praying together kept them in close fellowship, in unity and in one accord.**

Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common. (Acts 2:44)

Such was their togetherness that they had all things in common. They even “sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need” (Acts 2:45). **When people experience the reality of God, the things of the world lose their value.**

As they **continued** steadfastly in prayer, “fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles” (Acts 2:42-43). It was as they **continued** daily in prayer praising God that they had favour with the people and saw people saved every day (Acts 2:46-47). They had continuous revival because they had **continuous** prayer.

They Had Been With Jesus

When Peter and John went up to the temple to pray, they met a man lame from birth and healed him. The first thing the man did after he was healed was to go to the temple. Why? To join Peter and John in the prayer meeting. It was the hour of prayer (Acts 3:1-10).

After 10 days of waiting upon God and having been filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, Peter was charged with the power of God. He was so full of God that he was able to say, “Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk” (Acts 3:6).

What did Peter have? He had the power of God to heal the lame man. How did Peter get the man healed? By releasing the power of God to the man. The release was so powerful that the man lame from birth not only stood up, he leaped up praising God.

The healing of this man created such a commotion, for the people were greatly amazed. This gave Peter the opportunity to preach the gospel. As a result, thousands more were saved.

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they

marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus. (Acts 4:13)

Even the rulers of the people and the elders of Israel realised that there was something different about these men. They could heal the lame man because **they had been with Jesus.**

Being with Jesus is very important. It was reported that they were uneducated and untrained yet they were able to perform such miracles through the power of God. We do not see such power at work today when we are too busy, even in our serving Him, and have no time to be with Jesus.

We cannot minister like Peter and John did when we do not have what they had. They had the fullness of the life of Christ in them. Hence they could exercise the power and the authority that Jesus had given His disciples. They had been with Jesus.

When we pray like Peter, John and the early disciples did, we too can have the power to do what they did, bringing healing to people. How did they pray? They prayed until they received the power of God. How long did they pray? For 10 days. Even after receiving the power, they **continued** in prayer.

The healing of the lame man brought persecution but the early church had such a reality of God that **even though they were severely threatened, they were not afraid** (Acts 4:20-21). Instead, they lifted their voices to God with one accord, praising God and praying for His healing power (Acts 4:24-30).

When you pray, you too will experience what the early church experienced.

And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness. (Acts 4:31)

When they prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; they were all filled with the Holy Spirit; they received boldness; they were united; they were one; they

received great power from God; they had great grace upon them; and they began to give generously.

When they experienced the reality of the kingdom of God, earthly things lost their value. When they touched the reality of heaven, they gave up the temporal things of the world.

While we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. (2 Cor 4:18)

They Exposed The Enemy Through The Holy Spirit

At the same time that the church was experiencing great revival, Satan tried to infiltrate the church through Ananias and his wife, Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). They sold a piece of land, kept part of the money and brought the rest to Peter, pretending that they were giving all.

Full of the Holy Spirit, Peter immediately detected that deception had crept in. It had to be dealt with straightaway. Both Ananias and Sapphira died within three hours of each other. They had lied to the Holy Spirit. As a result of the swift judgment upon them, great fear came upon the church.

They Moved In Power

Through the hands of the apostles, many signs and wonders were done among the people. The people esteemed them highly and multitudes were added to the church. Supernatural healing took place as the shadow of Peter fell upon the sick and they received healing. Multitudes came from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing the sick and the tormented to receive healing (Acts 5:12-16).

They were experiencing a powerful revival as the supernatural took over and the power of God was so clearly demonstrated. Why? Because as a praying church, they were in

touch with God. Even when the apostles were imprisoned, God sent an angel to open the prison doors (Acts 5:17-25).

They Made Prayer Their Top Priority

“but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” (Acts 6:4)

A dynamic church growing by leaps and bounds had pressing needs but, unlike us today, the leaders of the early church were not distracted. They quickly solved the problem by appointing other Spirit-filled, godly leaders to take over the daily administrative duties.

Do you see the difference between most of today’s leaders and the leaders of the early church? Prayer had priority in the early church. Nothing could take them away from prayer. Others could be appointed to handle lesser matters but prayer was so important that **they had to give themselves to it.**

They Were Vigilant Against The Enemy

The early church realised that prayer had to be continuous because spiritual warfare was continuous. **They had to be continually in prayer because Satan’s onslaught against them was ongoing.**

They were heavily persecuted but their praying converted their persecutor Saul into Paul. After he had consented to the death of Stephen, the first New Testament martyr, Saul continued to come down hard on the church but he suddenly had an encounter with God. That encounter turned his life around. From persecutor, he became one who was himself later persecuted (Acts 9:1-30).

They Prayed And God Worked

Throughout the book of Acts, we see the hand of God tangibly at work.

Cornelius was a man constantly in prayer. Peter too was praying when God divinely brought them together. Cornelius received an angelic visitation while Peter saw a vision (Acts 10).

When we pray, we too will experience such divine power and divine connection. When did it happen? While they were praying.

Acts 12:5 says that when Peter was kept in prison, “constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church”. The result?

Now behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shone in the prison; and he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, “Arise quickly!” And his chains fell off his hands. (Acts 12:7)

God sent an angel to deliver Peter from prison. Why? Because constant prayer was being offered to God for him.

When Paul and Silas prayed in prison, they too were miraculously freed (Acts 16:25-26). When we pray, even those in prison can experience deliverance.

They Were Sensitive To The Holy Spirit

As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” (Acts 13:2)

Prayer was the lifestyle of the early church. They were sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit simply because they were ministering to the Lord and fasting.

Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away. (Acts 13:3)

Having heard the Holy Spirit, they obeyed. Today, we do not see much of the evidence of the Holy Spirit at work because we do not know how to minister to the Lord, with fasting. We are not sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit and thus cannot be led by Him.

I believe that it is time we begin to imitate the lifestyle of

the early church i.e., to give first priority to prayer by learning to **pray in every situation**. We also need to learn to wait until the Lord endues us with His power from on high to enable us to serve Him by His Spirit.

God is waiting to manifest His power and glory. Are we willing to be like the early church in every manner of prayer?

The Bible says that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:16-17; 1 Cor 6:19-20). A temple is a place where spirits dwell. God wants us to be holy because we are His temple. Most people find it difficult to pray because their bodies are not cleansed of all the past and all the rubbish accumulated over the years.

As we too begin to minister to the Lord with fasting and prayer, I am sure we will be able to re-live the days of Acts in greater glory.

*The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former.
(Hag 2:9)*

My prayer is that we will be men and women of prayer who are known to **have been with Jesus**.