TITLE: GODS GREATEST GIFT-(PRAYER)

TEXT: Col. 4:2; 1st Thess. 5:16-18; Phil. 4:6-7;

Ja. 5:16-18; Ephe. 2:8-9; 1st Pe. 3:12; Acts 1:14, 2:42-43; Jn. 14:12-14

INTRODUCTION: This morning I want to talk about the greatest gift that God has given you and I as Christians. A gift that is by far the most powerful thing on this earth. It is in fact a weapon that God has placed in our hands, at our disposal, as a child of God to yield against the enemy that is out to destroy us, and help insure our success in living the life that we have been called to live in Christ Jesus.

It is Gods greatest gift to the Church and yet one that is probably the most neglected…

The gift that I am talking about is prayer.

Do you realize that prayer is the greatest of all of Gods gifts to the Church and it is the most powerful thing on this planet and in fact the most powerful force in the entire universe.

What makes it so powerful is that it is what unleashes the power of God on our behalf.

To understand the potential power that God has availed to each of us in prayer, we first need to come to an understanding of just what prayer is.

This understanding is so important to us as a Christian that the apostle Paul says such things as...

**Colo 4:2 (NIV) Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.**

We have been called to devote ourselves to prayer!

Just what does that mean?

The word we translate devote from the Greek is ....

**4342 proskartereo {pros-kar-ter-eh'-o}**

**1) to be devoted or constant**

**2) to be steadfastly attentive unto, to give unremitting care to a thing**

**3) to continue all the time in**

**4) to persevere and not to faint**

**5) to show one's self courageous for**

Does this describe your prayer life this morning?

Are you steadfastly attentive to prayer? Giving prayer your unremitting care? Do you continue in it all the time?

Scripture says in:

**1The 5:16 (NIV) Be joyful always;**

**17 pray continually;**

**18 give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.**

The Greek word we translate continually here is:

8**9 adialeiptos {ad-ee-al-ipe'-toce}**

1. **without intermission, incessantly, without ceasing**

Does this describe our prayer life?Are we praying without intermission, incessantly, without ceasing?

**Phil 4:6 (NIV) Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.**

**7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**

This speaks of praying and beseeching God about every aspect of our life? Seeking Him in all of life's circumstances.

How do you measure up this morning to these admonitions of Scripture about your prayer life?

Are you devoted to prayer? Do you pray without ceasing? Do you pray about everything?

Before we will ever come to this kind of prayer life----

It may help to understand some fundamental truths about prayer.

First, Just what does it mean to pray? What exactly is prayer?

Hebrew=Pray

**06419 palal {paw-lal'}**

**1) to intervene, interpose, pray, supplication**

**1a) to mediate, judge**

**1b1) to intercede**

**1b2) to pray**

Prayer in its simplicity is simply communication with God.

Prayer, Like all of our human communications, can take many different forms.

Intercession is a form of prayer. Supplication is a form of prayer. Petition is a form of prayer.

As we meditate on God it becomes a form of prayer.

As we Contemplate Gods Word it becomes a form of prayer.

When we Praise and worship the Lord it is a major form and forum of prayer.

Just stopping and giving thanks to God throughout the day is a form of prayer.

Coming to the day to day decisions in life and simply asking Gods guidance and direction is prayer.

When we understand just exactly what prayer is, all it encompasses, then it is a lot easier to understand the practical nature of what Scripture means when it says such things as....

**Devote ourselves to prayer!**

**To pray continually!**

**Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.**

Prayer is not as much about posture it is about simple communication!

Often when we think of prayer we think of posture.. Kneeling before the Lord, eyes closed and hands folded making request of Him.

If we associate prayer with posture then it will seriously limit and hinder our prayer life.

Example: I don't know about you but if I am diving on the same road as someone who feels that in order to pray that they have to close your eyes and fold their hands and bow their heads, then I hope that person waits until they pull of the road before they pray!

If that person is going to let go of the steering wheel and close their eyes then I don't want that person to pray continually and to pray without ceasing while attempting to drive a car..

But prayer isn't about posture, it is about communication! It is about relationship.

Think about it?

If you only communicated with your spouse only 10 minutes in the morning and 10 minutes before you went to bed at night what do you think your marriage relationship would be like?

Shaky at best! Probably not very good!

The same is true in our relationship with God.

If the only time that we pray, the only time we communicate with God is 10 minutes in the morning and 10 minutes at night then our relationship with Him is going to be shaky at best.

When we drive down the road in our car singing praise songs or hymns to God (with our eyes open) we are praying, we are communicating with God!

When we are at work and simply ask for Gods direction and guidance in our daily task we are praying!

When we are at the mall and ask God to bless our shopping experience so that we can be the best stewards that we can be with the money that He has enabled us to have we are praying!

When we are going for a walk and see the beauty of creation that is all around us and take time to thank God for it, we are praying!

When we are on a crowded street and see someone in a wheelchair and it touches our heart and we simply ask God to bless that person then we have prayed!

When we are in a store and see a stressed young mother with 5 unruly children in tow, and as we pass by we simply ask God to give her His peace and make her day go better, then we have prayed!

Folks this is how we devote ourselves to prayer and to pray continually.

To become aware of God in all the situations that we face every day.

Corrie ten Boom knew the importance and value of prayer in ones life. She once challenged an audience by asking...

“*Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tire?“*

Is prayer what guides your life or is it just something that you pull out when everything else you have tried hasn't worked?

We have talked about what prayer is and how we do it, so why do we pray? Why is prayer so importance?

Because Prayer is what unleashed the power and promise of God in our life!

There is tremendous promise in Scripture to a praying people…

**Jame 5:16 (NIV) Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.**

**17 Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years.**

**18 Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.**

We are assured here that: **The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.**

There is one word here that we need to define to unleash the power and promise of this verse of Scripture to us..

How many righteous people do we have here this morning?

How many of you view yourself as righteous?

Let me give you some good news this morning..

If you are saved, if you have allowed Jesus to come into your heart and be the Lord and Savior of your life then you are righteous in the eyes of God!

That is what being saved is all about! Being declared and pronounced righteous by God!

The only way that we can enjoy fellowship with God is to become righteous! Be placed in right standing with Him!

None of us did that on our own! Scripture says that our righteousness apart from Jesus Christ, the righteousness of man, is as filthy rags in the sight of God.

But when we come to Christ there is a trade off that takes place----Jesus takes our sin, our un-righteousness upon himself and He gives us His righteousness! He imputes His righteousness to us!

So, once we come to Jesus for the forgiveness of our sin and invite Him to come and indwell our hearts we are declared righteous by God!

The blood of Christ is so powerful that it literally covers our sin so completely that God cannot see it any longer!

Once we are saved we stand before God clothed, not in our own righteousness, but clothed in the righteousness of Christ!

And it is to, we the Church, that Scripture is speaking when it says that: **The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.**

Notice it says righteous man and not perfect man!

None of us are perfect, but if we have expressed a saving faith in Jesus Christ we have been declared righteous and can claim the promise of this Scripture---**The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.** (or we could say the prayers of a saved man are powerful and effective.)

Scripture follows this promise with an example...

**17 Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years.**

**18 Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.**

Elijah was a man just like us! Elijah was a sinner! His righteousness, like ours, apart from Christ, was as a filthy rag in the sight of God.

Elijah, like us, was declared righteous by God, not because of how good a man he was but because of his expressed faith and belief in God.

The Greek word Paul used for righteous here is:

1**342 dikaios {dik'-ah-yos}**

**1a2) innocent, faultless, guiltless**

**1a4) approved of or acceptable of God**

To be righteous is not to be perfect but to be being perfected! To be righteous is to be declared innocent, faultless, guiltless! To be approved of and accepted by God!

This only happens one way! Through a saving relationship with Jesus Christ!

**Ephe 2:8 (NIV) For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--**

**9 not by works, so that no one can boast.**

When we come to Christ we become the righteous!

We become the righteousness of Christ and can claim the promise of prayer power that Scripture speaks of!

The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

(The prayer of a Christian, a Christ like one is powerful and effective)

**Why?**

**1Pet 3:12 (NIV) For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayers!**

In short, God listens to His children and He listens attentively! He wants to hear from us! He wants to communicate with us! He longs to have a relationship with us!

We don't have to pester God to get his attention. We don't have to grovel. We don't have to bite our lip and groan and moan and all of these kinds of things people do to try to get Gods attention.

If one of your kids ever called you and said, "Daddy, please, please, please, I beg of you, I petition you, I'm pleading with you to listen to my need."

What would you say to them? You would say, "Time out. I don't like the underlying assumption here. You don't have to go through all those gymnastics. What can I do for you? Nothing in my life is more important than you." What gives me greater pleasure in life than meeting the needs of my children?

God listens attentively to us as His children because He loves us!

Church, God has availed His power to us through the action of faith and prayer.

What does that mean? What are the implications of that promise?

There is nothing that we can't potentially do in Christ!

The is no mountain that is too high for us to climb or no valley that is too large for us to cross!

God has gifted us, His Children, with prayer and all of its potential power..

Prayer was the catalyst of the early Church and it has been the catalyst of every major spiritual revival that this world has ever known.

The Church started in the power of prayer.

**Acts 1:14 (NIV) They all joined together constantly in prayer...**

**Acts 2:42 (NIV) They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.**

**43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.**

As we read the historical account of the early Church in the book of Acts we see that it was fulfilling what Jesus had said that the Church would do.

**John 14:12 (NIV) I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.**

**13 And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father.**

**14 You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.**

As the Church became men and women who devoted themselves to prayer this is exactly what happened.

They did not only do what Jesus had done while He was here but they in fact did even greater things then what Jesus did while He was here.

The sick were healed, the blind received their sight, multitudes came to eternal life.

On the first day after Pentecost, after Christ sent His Holy Spirit to indwell and empower His Church, it is said that when Peter spoke the gospel message of Jesus Christ to the crowd that over 5000 men, women and children accepted Jesus as their Lord and where saved!

The Church exploded in power!

And it wouldn't have happened if approximately 120 early believers had not seen the importance and necessity of prayer in their life and devoted themselves to it!

Prayer is what unleashes the power of God on planet earth!

Prayer is what unleashes the power of God in our lives!

And if we are not seeing God work today just as He did in times past, in 1st century Judea, then there is only one reason for it and that is that we, His Church, have lost sight of the importance and necessity of living our lives devoted to prayer!

Let me challenge us with a question this morning?

Are we doing even greater things with our life then Jesus did with His when He was here?

If not, why not?

Jesus said:

**John 14:12 (NIV) I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.**

**13 And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father.**

**14 You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it. -**

Is it our desire this morning to see the power of God unleashed in our life? Is it our desire to do, not just the things that Jesus did but do ever greater things then that?

If that is your desire then heed the admonition of God to you this morning.....

**1The 5:16 (NIV) Be joyful always; 17 pray continually; 18 give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.**

Tertullian,

*Prayer is the wall of faith: her arms and missiles against the foe who keeps watch over us on all sides. And, so never we walk unarmed.*

Have you armed, are you arming yourself with prayer?

Have you devoted your life to it?

For in reality, Devoting our life to prayer is devoting our life to God!