How to Have Effective Prayers

Matthew 8:5-13

I. Recognize the Power of God

A. Who was the servant?

 1. v6 - Servant (παῖς) = a young male child; pre-puberty. He could be his son or a slave - this word doesn’t make that distinction.

 2. But in Lk 7:2 the word is slave (δοῦλος).

 3. He certainly had his master’s affection (Lk 7:2).

B. What was his condition?

 1. v6 - This was a hopeless situation. He was about to die - Lk 7:2.

 2. Palsy was a progressive paralysis caused by brain & nerve damage.

 3. It caused muscular spasms & painful respiratory movements.

 4. It was incurable & always resulted in death.

C. What was the Centurion’s attitude?

 1. v9 - He lived under a chain of command: he had the responsibility to carry out orders from superiors & the authority to give orders to his subordinates.

 2. v8 - The Centurion believed Jesus had the same authority over creation he had over Roman soldiers.

D. Like the Centurion, you should trust that no circumstances in this life are too big for God to overcome!

 1. We have a big God - you can pray for big things!

 2. God is willing to display His power if you are willing to receive it.

 3. This miracle was performed in public.

 a. v1 - This was the same crowd who heard the Sermon on the Mount.

 b. Capernaum, where the miracle occurred, was a big city on the shore of the Sea of Galilee.

 4. Lord Jesus was even willing to defile Himself ceremonially & enter the home of a Gentile (a non Jew).

 a. The Pharisees believed ceremonial cleansing was necessary for anyone who came in contact with anything belonging to a Gentile.

 b. That’s how willing Jesus is to answer prayer!

II. Recognize Your Own Condition

A. A Centurion was important.

 1. He was an officer in an army that occupied Palestine for over 100 years.

 2. He had absolute authority over 100 soldiers.

B. But - this Centurion was also humble.

 1. Lk 7:3 - He didn’t even approach Jesus personally. He sent the elders of the city.

 2. Lk 7:5 - He had built the Jewish synagogue in Capernaum.

 3. Lk 7:7 - He denied he was even worthy to stand in the Lord’s presence.

C. Like the Centurion, you need to constantly see yourself only as sinners redeemed by grace!

 1. You need to say like the Prodigal: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ﻿I am no longer worthy to be called your son - Lk 15:18-19.

 2. The stronger your faith - the higher you think of God & the lower you realize you are!

III. Recognize the Way to Pray

A. God is pleased when faith is expressed.

 1. Your faith should not be blind. The Centurion’s faith was built on evidence.

 a. He may have been acquainted with the Messianic prophesies of the Old Testament since he was so close to the Jewish leaders in Capernaum.

 b. He may have heard about the Lord’s reputation for healing since he healed the paralytic carried by his 4 buddies there (Matt 9:1-8) & Peter’s mother-in-law lived there (v14).

 2. There are only 2 times Jesus marveled:

 a. Here - when unexpected faith was observed. - v10

 b. In Nazareth - when He expected faith & it wasn’t there! (Mk 6:6)

B. Faith is the criteria for a relationship with God - not heredity!

 1. The Centurion was not a part of the “in” crowd. He was a Gentile (a non-Jew).

 a. Jews were supposedly unclean if they went into a Gentile’s home.

 b. v7 - Jesus was willing to do that!

 2. But Is 11:10 says that Jews & Gentiles alike would come to God by faith. This happened twice:

 a. The Ethiopian’s Conversion (Act 8:26-39).

 b. Cornelius’ Conversion (Act 10:1-48).

C. Like the Centurion, you must pray with the faith that God is present, hears you & answers!

1. Recognize the Power of God

Nothing is too big for Him!

2. Recognize Your Own Condition

A sinner saved by grace!

3. Recognize the Way to Pray

With faith that He hears & answers!

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