



DUDLEY'S MONTHLY MESSAGE

1 PETER 3-4

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For the Sake of Our Prayers

Who among us values prayer so much that we make daily ethical decisions based on how it affects our prayers? This seems to be what the apostle Peter is suggesting—and even instructing us to do.

In his discussion of the husband's attitude toward his wife, he adds, "... so that your prayers may not be hindered" (1 Peter 3:7). In writing about living a blessed life, Peter emphasizes the eyes and the ears of the Lord being open to our prayers as we consider what we say and how we behave (1 Peter 3:10-12). Even later in the letter, he states how our eschatology (concept of last things) affects our prayers (1 Peter 4:7). For Peter, the privilege and power of prayer is so important that it should be considered as a primary goal of life. We are God's partners on earth, and our part is first of all prayer.

This should not surprise us, as Peter had been with Jesus for three years and had at least picked up on what was a major theme for Jesus. During his last few hours with his disciples, Jesus summarized what life would look like after his departure (John 14-17). He stated that he was going to the Father to prepare a place for them with the Father so that they could have the same access as Jesus had. They would be able to participate in even greater works than they had seen in him, because they could ask the Father and he would answer (John 14:12-14). He went on to describe their new relationship as branches on God's vine. This had

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been a designation for Israel in the Old Testament, but Jesus was now the true vine, and the disciples were branches connected to him and thereby instruments through which he would do his earthly work. In this arrangement, their joy would be as complete as possible (John 15:7-9). He then described the miracle of that day when they would know their union with him was complete. They would be extending his work on earth as they prayed in Jesus' name and the Father responded by bringing the kingdom of God to bear on earthly issues. Jesus left no doubt as to the divine intention to restore human partnership with God. Through his life he demonstrated it. Through his death he procured it. Through the Spirit he implements it. Prayer is central to our destiny. Effective prayer must be our goal.

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She is designed to **nurture those in her sphere of influence . . .**

Looking at the three texts in Peter's letter, we first focus on the husband. (Peter is using the marriage relationship

as an illustration, so we shouldn't see this text as in any way suggesting that the prayers of unmarried men and women are limited because they aren't married.) For the married man, however, unhindered prayer is dependent upon an accurate understanding of the nature of his wife. She is equal in value and a joint heir in life. In referring to the weaker vessel, Peter has in mind something that is delicate and treasured. Generally, the wife may not be as strong physically, but that's not all that Peter meant. She is to be prized and cherished. She is designed to nurture those in her sphere of influence, including children if they have them. Her focus is consistent with her design and assignment. She is to be protected by the husband who has been given the charge to lead her. Protection certainly includes more than just physical protection. The apostle Paul mentions the vulnerability of Eve in the Garden of Eden. Adam for some reason didn't speak up when his wife was being lied to by the deceiver (1 Timothy 2:8-15). Protection must include declaring and defending the truth for the wife. Because she is created to complete

the man—together the perfect union of humanity—God has designed the husband to lead her. She desires to be led, and when the husband fails here, she is confused, and the husband cannot pray well or be fully productive.

In this calling we must be able to have **clear lines open to the realm of God's rule.**

Many husbands are paralyzed by their awareness of failure. They don't feel qualified to lead, so they don't. They are aware that she knows their faults all too well and that any attempts to lead might be met with skepticism. Their prayers are hindered because they don't pray. They not only don't pray for the wife as the equal joint heir of life; they don't pray for much of anything. They are silenced by guilt and shame. The wife goes without protection and leadership, and prayers go un-prayed.

Then there is the ever-present need for the wife's respect, which often takes the form of being controlled by her sense of pleasure in him. Men so want respect

that they become slaves to their wives' moods. They can't lead, protect or pray because they are trying so hard to please her. In this futile effort, they lose whatever respect might have been there as the wife sees this slavery to human opinion.

The husband who is charged by God to lead the family must be able to pray effectively or the home will not experience the rule of the kingdom of God. Think what might happen if Christian husbands were alert to what God wants to do in the home and were channels of grace coming from heaven to earth to build up each member of the family.

In the section of Peter's letter about living as God's blessed people, he points out that this new-creation people are in fact the people of God on earth and have been blessed by the obedience of Jesus so that they can in turn be a blessing to their world. This blessing includes their privilege to live in unfriendly territory and to suffer accordingly. We don't normally think of persecution and suffering as blessings, but that is the case. In this calling we must be able to have clear lines open to the realm of God's rule.

Jesus is the exalted Lord, and he is ruling through his people. They are representing him in all kinds of culture, even where hostility exists. Communication must be good between the throne and the forces on the field. If we react to our suffering as victims or rebels, we are misrepresenting our kingdom. Our prayers will not be in accord to the plan and timing of God.

We don't pray or behave like those waiting for the Day of the Lord. **We pray on the basis of what Jesus has done.**

In the final section, Peter is reminding his readers that we live in a specific time in history, and knowing that timing will affect our prayers. We are living in light of the finished work of Jesus on the cross. All that needed to be done for God to have his final people on earth has been done. "The end of all things is at hand" (1 Peter 4:7). We don't pray or behave like those waiting for the Day of the Lord. We pray on the basis of what Jesus has done. We pray knowing that the Old Testament promises have been

fulfilled in Jesus. We pray knowing that sin has been forgiven and Satan has been judged. Death has been dealt a fatal blow, and our future is secure in Christ. We pray as redeemed sons of God. We have been reunited with God's reality and restored to our calling as his image-bearers on earth. He is eager to respond to our requests and enjoys answering our prayers.

It is not as strange as it might seem that we should value our prayers so much that we make sure that we are not hindering them by daily decisions. After all, we are his chosen partners on earth, and we are involved in the restoration of creation. It is for the sake of our prayers that we consider what we do.



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