

Section Two: Prayer as Intercession

Lesson Twelve: Fervent Prayer

When tears have watered the soil into which the seeds of prayer have been planted, we should expect a harvest.

In Colossians 4:12–13 the apostle Paul describes one of his fellow servants, Epaphras, as one who "is always wrestling in prayer for you... he is working hard for you." Sometimes intercessory prayer, which is praying for other people and causes, is difficult work. It requires a wrestling in the Spirit with passionate, fervent prayers.

In his description of the prophet Elijah, James wrote, "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" (James 5:17).

Elijah's fervent prayer produced dramatic and measurable results! When we think of raising the dead, Lazarus usually comes to mind. However, in the Old Testament, Elijah laid on the body of a dead child and cried out to God for the child's life to return, and it did! (Read 1 Kings 17:21–22.)

Jeremiah was also a fervent pray-er. He prayed, "Oh, that my head were a spring of water and my eyes a fountain of tears! I would weep day and night for the slain of my people" (Jer. 9:1). Now that's fervent!

Jesus prayed with passion in the Garden of Gethsemane before His betrayal and crucifixion. Of Jesus, Dr. Luke writes, "And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground" (Luke 22:44).

Perhaps no passage of Scripture better describes Jesus' passion in prayer than does Hebrews 5:7. The writer of Hebrews describes Jesus' prayer that night in the garden when facing the cross: "While Jesus lived on earth, he prayed to God and asked God for help. He prayed with loud cries and tears to the One who could save him from death. And his prayer was heard because he left it all up to God" (Heb. 5:7, ICB).

Here is an important key concerning prayer. In describing Jesus' prayer in the garden, this passage points out His loud cries and tears. But we are told that He was actually heard because of His reverent submission to the will and plan of God—"his prayer was heard because he left it all up to God."

God loves fervent people, and He loves tears! We collect things that are of value to us. Scripture tells us that our heavenly Father saves our tears in a bottle (Ps. 56:8). When tears have watered the soil into which the seeds of prayer have been planted, we should expect a harvest. The title of singer/songwriter Dottie Rambo's gospel song says it rightly: "Tears are a language God understands."

Have you noticed that life is not a rose garden? There certainly are pressing times and issues that we will face that will bring us to tears. Without question, there have been times when tears have provoked the Lord to rule in one's favor.

In 2 Kings 20, King Hezekiah was dying of an illness when he prayed, "Remember, O LORD, how I have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes" (v. 3). And as Hezekiah prayed, he wept bitterly before the Lord.

Later the Lord told the prophet Isaiah, "Go back and tell Hezekiah I have heard his prayer and seen his tears; I will heal him" (vv. 2–5, paraphrased).

"You number my wanderings; put my tears into Your bottle; are they not in Your book?" —
Psalm 56:8, NKJV

Read Psalm 126:5. What does the Lord promise to those who pray so fervently that they weep?

What prayer assignments have you had, if any, that have brought you to tears?

Next week we'll consider grateful prayer.

Blessings, Eddie and Alice "America's prayer coaches"

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