

A Cooperative Effort

"It seems God is limited by our prayer life - that He can do nothing for humanity unless someone asks Him." --- John Wesley

God will have ALL men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth; (I Timothy 2:3) but He does need and has chosen to use men to be His witnesses and intercessors.

When God created the world and all that is in it He acted alone - that is - God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit cooperated in Creation. (Genesis 1:26) But in His redemptive purposes, He chooses to unite Himself with human instruments to bring about His ultimate victory.

The "cooperative effort" works this way: God, by the power of His Holy Spirit, reveals to His people His desires. He leads them to pray and then gives to them the very thing He burdened them to pray for. Thus we can plainly see that the vital indispensable part of this "cooperative effort" is prayer. One incident in the Bible that reveals this principle is in the life of Elijah regarding the drought that God caused by withholding not just rain but also dew!!! (I Kings 17:1)

God then commands Elijah to go to Ahab and tell him that He will send rain (I Kings 18:1). After his encounter with the prophets of Baal, when God showed Himself powerful, Elijah then began to pray that God would fulfill His promise of sending rain to relieve the drought (I Kings 18:42) - and He did!

James 5:17 reminds us of this "cooperative effort" regarding the prayer of faith - that Elijah was "a man just like us" - who prayed earnestly that it not rain and again that it would rain. God withheld rain and then sent rain, in the process used a man who He trusted to pray. This was not Elijah's self-conceived idea but his working with God in a "cooperative effort."

The will of God is not automatically accomplished on this earth. Our part in this "cooperative effort" is to pray according to God's will. When Paul prayed three times for the thorn in his flesh to be removed God answered him with the words, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness (II Corinthians 12:9). God's answer to Paul has been used to help and encourage multitudes of Christians through the ages who have prayed in similar ways regarding some difficulty in their own lives.

Our great need is to be able to discern God's spiritual goals in the circumstances He allows to come into our lives and the lives of others. The power of prayer lies in the intertwining of the will of man with the will of God - only on the basis of our surrender of self-will.

Prayer is truly a "cooperative effort" in which neither man nor God is dispensable. God has so orchestrated His redemptive purposes on this earth that man's prayer is the force that moves those purposes into action.

We know that as we pray everything depends on God, but at the same time He would have us realize that everything depends on us.