

“The Difference Prayer Makes” (sermon #2)

Luke 3:21-22

Sunday, October 15, 2017

Introduction: I do not know what you believe about prayer. Only you and God know that. You may not be sure what you believe about prayer. You may wonder sometimes if prayer makes a difference.

What I do know is that what you believe about the Bible determines what you believe about prayer. If you believe the Bible is the Word of God, then what you believe about prayer is settled. The Bible says that prayer makes a difference. Verses like James 5:16, Jeremiah 33:3, Ephesians 3:20, and I John 5:14-15 taken seriously will inspire you to pray. What will inspire you to pray even more will be to keep a prayer journal and realize how many prayers you have prayed have been answered.

Let me suggest something to do in November that will renew your faith in prayer. There are 30 days in November. On each day, write a prayer that you have prayed that God has answered. This will be one of the most enriching things you will ever do.

Text: Luke 3:21-22

- Let’s think a moment about Jesus being baptized.
- His baptism was the first public event of His ministry.
- Why was Jesus baptized? Jesus was baptized to identify with sinners.
- Why should Christians be baptized? Christians should be baptized to identify with Jesus.

Biblical baptism is symbolic.

1. Baptism symbolizes Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection.

2. Baptism symbolizes our identification with Christ.
3. Baptism symbolizes the cleansing of sin.
4. Baptism symbolizes the reception of the Holy Spirit.

There is the sacramental view of baptism. The sacramental view of baptism says that baptism cleanses from sin.

- The problem with this view is that this is not what the Bible teaches.
- The Bible teaches that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from our sin. The Bible says, “The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

The Biblical method of baptism is immersion.

- The Greek word is *baptidzo*. (To plunge in water).
- In Matthew 3:16 and Mark 1:10 the Bible says that Jesus came up out of the water.
- Immersion prevailed until the late Middle Ages in the West. It is still so in the East.

Illustration: Jon’s booklet on How to become a Happy Christian has a good section on Baptism.

T.S. The phrase “while He prayed” in Luke 3:21 teaches us some things. Last Sunday we looked at one of them

1. **Prayer prepares us for the battle.**
2. **Prayer also guarantees victory during the battle.**

- Read the temptation experience Jesus went through, and you see Him having victory.
- We usually say that Jesus had victory over Satan's temptations because He used Scripture. That is a true statement, but that is not the whole story.
- I think the prayer Jesus prayed as He was baptized is also why He had victory over Satan's temptations.
- Jesus had victory over bitterness and He had victory over unforgiveness.
- Jesus prayed before His battle with the devil. He was prayed up first. Prayer first and Scripture second. That one-two combination is the key to victory whatever battle is faced.

Illustration: I experienced something recently that caused me to feel bitterness creeping up inside me. It is a bad feeling. I begin praying about my own spirit. This past Tuesday and Wednesday Bible readings in Jon's booklet 31 Timeless Truths gave me victory in the battle. Had I not prayed first I am not sure the Bible readings would have connected.

Application: Whatever battle you face, pray first and read God's Word. Prayer guarantees you victory in the battle.

3. Prayer is the battle.

- Jesus' 40 days temptation with the devil in the wilderness after His baptism was a battle.
- But the "battle" in the Garden of Gethsemane was His "big battle."
- Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane was His greatest battle. The battle was the struggle between His will and His Father's will.

Illustration: The “battle” in life is prayer. Satan will do everything to keep you from praying because Satan knows that prayer is powerful.

Application: When you face a challenge, you will not feel like praying. That is the “battle.” Pray first and read the Scriptures second and you will have victory whatever battle you face.

Conclusion: Prayer is not just about getting answers. Prayer is about getting to know God in a deeper way. Knowing God in a deeper way is better than answers.