

SYMPHONY OF PRAYER

Today we will explore the power behind corporate prayer. What I will refer to as "a symphony of prayer." Matthew 18:19, ***“Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.”*** The word used here in the Greek is "sumphoneo," from which comes the word symphony. It literally means "to agree in sound" or "to be in harmony," as may be heard in a symphony orchestra. Harmonic sound of two instruments is more beautiful than the sound of one, though more difficult to achieve. And the harmony, as well as the difficulty in performing it, becomes greater as more instruments are added. Likewise with united prayer? When we pray together, we are expected to blend into a symphonic and balanced sound. The harmonic whole becomes greater than its individual parts. At the same time, there is no diminishing of the unique contribution of each participant. In fact, by learning to blend with others, we get to understand and appreciate our own uniqueness more and more. In the next verse Jesus reminds us that we do not need a crowd (verse 20); just two or three of us harmonising in agreement is more beautiful than a congregation of a thousand that is in discord.

A **symphony of prayer** is when we speak with one voice; when we are of the same mind and in complete agreement. A couple of weeks ago we examined the importance of being "like-minded." In Philippians 2:2 the apostle Paul states, ***“Fulfil my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord (σὺμψυχος) and of one mind.”*** The original Greek says, *“Fulfil my joy that you may be of the same mind, having the same love, joined in soul, minding one thing.”* Does this mean that we are all expected to think and act the same? Definitely not, for there is nowhere in God’s word that suggest this.

Uniformity and unity is not the same thing. It is possible to attain unity without uniformity. We have the right to choose, and these choices can lead us to unity or discord. Therefore, it's up to each of us to exercise our will to unified and likeminded. Where there is likemindedness you will find unity, and where there is unity the Lord will command His blessing (Psalm 133).

Likemindedness means having the same love, the same spirit, and the same purpose. The Greek word is sometimes translated "*feel this way*," and it comes from the root verb '*phroneo*', which means "mindset". When writing to the church in Philippi, the apostle Paul makes it perfectly clear that "like-mindedness" is important to Him. Paul sees it as the key to bringing unity in the church. The church had been experiencing some problems (as with any church) - difficult people with different perspectives - different viewpoints that were dividing the church community. Therefore, Paul pleads with them, "***If you have any encouragement from being united in Christ, any comfort from His love, any fellowship with the Spirit, any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded***" (Philippians 2:1-2).

Paul wanted every member of the congregation to feel the same way; love the same way, and have the same purpose. In other words he wanted them to be in complete harmony with each other. We see this principle highlighted in Matthew 18:19-20, "***Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them.***" A literal translation would read, "*Again I tell you, if two of you on earth shall agree (harmonise together, make a symphony together) about whatever (anything and everything) they may ask, it will come to pass and be done for them by My Father in heaven. For when two or three come together in My Name, My presence is with them.*"

God has given power and authority to the Church and when we stand together in unified prayer His power is released in greater measure. However, standing together is not merely being in the same room, it has to do with agreement. There needs to be a symphony of prayer. 'Symphoneo' means to sound together or resonate together. That is what releases the power in corporate prayer!

One of the first lessons Jesus taught us concerning prayer was privacy - not to be seen by men. He told us to enter the inner chamber; and be alone with the Father. In this context, the meaning of prayer is "personal individual contact with God." Andrew Murray said, *"As a tree has its root hidden in the ground and its stem growing up into the sunlight, so prayer needs equally for its full development the hidden secrecy in which the soul meets God alone."* However, in Matthew 18:19, Jesus reveals another way to pray. The Lord tells us that secret solitary prayer can be augmented by public united prayer (a symphony of prayer). And He gives us a very special promise for this kind of prayer; He says that anything and everything we agree on will come to pass.

The reason why is so plain. When we were reconciled to God in Christ we became one with Him, and therefore, the bond that unites us with God unites us with each other. We are "one" with Him and "one" with each other! Grace renews not only our relationship to God but to man as well. We not only learn to say 'My Father,' but 'Our Father.' Nothing would be more unnatural than for children of the same family to always meet their father separately. We, as believers, are not only members of one family, but even of one body. Just as each member of the body depends on the other, likewise we cannot attain the full blessing of God until we receive such blessing in fellowship with each other. It is in the symphony of prayer that the Spirit manifests His full power.

Note, a symphony of prayer must contain three elements:

- (1) There must be complete cooperation and agreement by all present concerning that which God is being petitioned for. Everyone gathered together needs to speak with one voice, be of the same mind and in one accord. In such agreement it will become very clear to us what exactly we are believing God for, and whether we are ready to receive whatever we have asked for. ***"Whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them"*** (Mark 11:24).
- (2) The second element which needs to be present is, coming together in the Name of Jesus. The Name of Jesus must be at the centre of our union (for which we gather together), it should be the glue of unity that makes us one. That Name of Jesus must become such a reality to us that whenever we meet "within it" we acknowledge His divine presence. It is the living presence of Jesus, in the fellowship of His loving followers, that gives a symphony of prayer its power.
- (3) The third element is, the sure answer: *"It shall be done for them of my Father in heaven."* Corporate agreement is a means of securing a special answer to prayer. Any meeting without recognised answer to prayer should be the exception. When anyone feels too weak to exercise their faith, that person ought to seek strength in the help of others. The unity of faith; the love of the Spirit; the power of the Name and the Presence of Jesus; all act more freely when we are in harmony. And as a result, the answer comes more surely. The mark that there has been complete agreement in prayer is the 'fruit' - the answer - the receiving of the very thing we have asked for: *"I say unto you, It shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven."*

Imagine what we could achieve if we gave ourselves to symphonic prayer, where each member has a distinct part to play in bringing harmony to the inspired tune of the Holy Spirit. Imagine what power can be unleashed in the realm of the spirit. Imagine how many souls can be ushered into God's a Kingdom. Most Churches think their members are gathered together simply to take care of and build up each other. They neglect the fact that prayer is the power by which Satan is conquered; that by prayer the Church on earth has at its disposal all the powers of heaven. They cannot comprehend that every congregation is in fact a consecrated "gateway to heaven" - where His Presence is to be felt, and His Power experienced in the fulfilment of the people's prayers.

Remember, unity in prayer requires unity in the spirit. Merely meeting together is not enough. Our hearts need to be joined together in complete agreement. Leviticus 26:8 says, ***"Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight."*** Agreement is very powerful - especially in prayer! When our hearts are joined together in faith, and our supplications are in agreement with the Word of God, we sound like a harmonious symphony. It is out of this kind of agreement that our authority in prayer is established!

The united corporate prayer of agreement has unspeakable value. So we should all purpose to meet in smaller groups to practice it as often as possible. Thereafter, as proof of our unity and our faith in the power of symphonic prayer, we will see and experience signs and wonders in our midst. Whenever we all meet in the Name of Jesus (and have His presence manifest), we can boldly claim the promise that it **shall be done** on earth as it is in heaven - by our Heavenly Father. And as a result, whatever we've agreed to ask for we will surely have! Let's do that right now!!