

The Oak Grove Oracle

(Family News & Views of the Oak Grove Church of Christ)

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Where's the Prayer?

In our class on the Old Testament book of Esther this past Wednesday evening, our teacher, David Shumate made an astute observation from his diligent study of the book in preparation for his role as our teacher. In chapter three of the book, we read about the decree of the king of the Medes and the Persians, King Ahasuerus, who posted throughout his entire empire a decree that all the Jews be slaughtered on the 13th day of the 12th month, Adar. Then, as chapter four begins, we read about a great lament which is heard throughout the land as the Jews react to the king's frightening decree.

In particular, the record states that one of the principal characters of the book, Mordecai, "rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry;" (Est. 4:1). As the narrative continues it is further reported, "And in every province, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, *there was* great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes" (Est. 4:3). Our teacher, David then simply asked, "Where's the prayer?," as he observed that the text says nothing about the Jews praying to God to ask for His help in deliverance from their enemies.

I suppose the case could be made that the Jews did pray and ask for God's deliverance, but the record just does not state that they did. Of course that's a possibility, but it would be pure conjecture or speculation on our part. David's point was well taken as he emphatically stated there is simply no record of them getting on their knees to plead for God's divine mercy and deliverance. Had they been so long in Captivity and so distant in both time and geography from their former life of temple worship in Jerusalem that they no longer cried out to God in prayer? David's question is certainly worthy of our careful consideration. The point is, we must not forget that there is power in prayer.

We have an extensive record in both Old and New Testaments of God's faithful people, being folks who placed their trust in God through prayer. In both good times and bad, but especially in times of spiritual need, God's people have been dependent upon prayer to avail themselves of the providential assistance of God. The critical question is not "where's the beef?," but rather "where is the prayer?"

God's people need to trust that God hears and answers the fervent prayers of His faithful followers (Jms. 5:16, 1 Jn. 5:14-15). We must continue all the time to put our faith in the power of prayer (Rms. 12:12, 1 Thess. 5:17). "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6-7).

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