

## **Part 19: "NOW WE TAKE POSSESSION!"**

### **Part 1 - "Experiencing the Life-Changing Power of Prayer"**

#### **Text:**

**Acts 10:1-4 (NIV)** - "At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. [2] He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. [3] One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, "Cornelius!" [4] And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, "What is it, lord?" So he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God."

### **"The Power of Prayer Can Change Your Season"**

- A. Prayer is one of the most powerful forces in the world.
  - 1. It unleashes the power of God to do what we had believed to be impossible. Prayer has the power to transform a troubled nation to become vibrant and whole again. As Billy Graham wisely stated, "To get a nation back on its feet, we must first get down on our knees."
  - 2. Prayer has the power to revive the weak in spirit and make them as strong as a lion. If you're discouraged and struggling to keep a positive outlook, pray! It will lift your spirit and strengthen your heart.

3. If you can't seem to break through to your destiny or the things that matter most to you are being attacked, prayer can cause the enemy to flee!
4. George Herbert, a 16<sup>th</sup> century clergyman, said, "Prayer should be the key of the day and the lock of night."
5. Prayer will move God to do what attorneys, bankers, counselors and doctors can never do.
6. Gospel singer Mahalia Jackson said, "Faith and prayer are the vitamins of the soul; man cannot live in health without them."
7. Prayer expresses our gratitude to God for all He has done. "If God did not forget to wake you up this morning, don't forget to pray!" (Anonymous).
8. Unfortunately, the eyes of many believers seem to glaze over when the word "prayer" is mentioned. They simply do not realize how powerful it actually is!
9. "The Power Of Prayer" (true story).  
Drummonds, a bar in Mt. Vernon, Texas, decided to expand their building, hoping to "grow" their business. In response, the local Baptist Church began a prayer campaign to block their expansion. About a week before the bar's grand reopening, a bolt of lightning struck the building and burned it to the ground. Afterward, the church folks were rather smug, bragging about "the power of prayer."  
In response to their prayer campaign, the angry bar owner sued the church on the grounds that ... "they were ultimately responsible for the demise of the building, through direct actions or indirect means." Of course, the church vehemently denied all responsibility or connection to the loss of the building.

As the judge carefully read the plaintiff's complaint and the defendant's reply, he then opened the hearing by saying, "I don't know how I'm going to decide this, but it appears from the papers that have been filed that we have a bar owner who believes in the power of prayer and an entire church congregation that does not."

B. When God's children pray, we are talking to our Heavenly Father—not some distant, uncaring deity.

1. I love the fact that God knows each of us by name:
  - a. **Acts 10:3 (NIV)** - "One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, "Cornelius!"
2. Some consider prayer to be nothing more than begging a crust of bread from God to sustain our existence. But if this was true, God would either be unaware of our need—or even worse, unconcerned about our predicament. Such a misunderstanding of prayer denies God's love that is so extraordinary, He gave His only begotten Son to redeem us.
3. The enemy wants us to believe this false concept and to think that if we beseech Him long enough, and we're desperate enough, maybe—just maybe, God might hear us. If He happens to be in the right mood, He may even grant our request.
4. This is not the meaning of prayer nor the attitude of our Heavenly Father. Our loving God knows the exact resources to fulfill the destiny you were created to achieve and the purpose for which you were born.

5. Since He knew every obstacle, every challenge, every temptation and struggle you would ever face, He provided everything you would need—in ADVANCE!
  - a. **Ephesians 1:3 (NKJV)** - “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with **every** spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.”
6. We have **already** been blessed with **every** spiritual blessing. The Greek words for “every blessing” are: each, every, any, all, the whole, everyone, all things, and everything. Nothing has been omitted!
  - a. **Ephesians 2:10 (NKJV)** - “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God **prepared beforehand** that we should walk in them.”
7. Everything that would ever be needed to fulfill your destiny was prepared by God **beforehand!** It has already been provided!
8. Notice the words “in the heavenly places,” and then look again at Ephesians 1:3. We must pull down His blessings into this space of time. Through prayer, we reach up and appropriate what God has already granted. Prayer releases things in the heavenly dimension and then manifests it in this present realm.

C. A promise given you from God will inform you how to pray.

1. Prayer enables us to enter into a divine partnership with God. We become what Apostle Paul called “laborers” with Christ.
  - a. **1 Corinthians 3:9 (NKJV)**- “For we are God’s fellow workers.”
2. We bring into our present realm what God has released in Heaven by His spoken Word.

3. During the reign of wicked Ahab and Jezebel, God told Elijah that the heavens would be shut up for three years. At the end of that time, Elijah assumed a 'birthing position' as he prayed for God to send rain. The prophet understood that he must partner with God to birth what had already been promised.

D. What makes Cornelius' story in Acts chapter 10 so incredible is the fact that he was a Gentile!

1. That may not seem so important until you closely examine the facts. Throughout the Old Testament era, God had only committed Himself to the Jewish people. The nation of Israel had been exalted for three reasons:
  - a. They were to preserve the integrity of the message, "Hear oh Israel, the Lord our God is One" – who is Jehovah!
  - b. They were to model the holy nature of God.
  - c. This nation would be the vehicle through whom God would send the Messiah to the world.
2. All the other nations to whom God had never been revealed were Gentiles. The plan was for Israel to introduce Jesus to the entire world. Many verses in both the Old and New Testaments gave us this promise:
  - a. **Romans 9:23-24 (NKJV)** - "That He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, [24] even us whom He called, ***not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles.***"

E. Prayer works, when you 'work' prayer!

1. **Acts 10:2 (NKJV)** - "He (Cornelius).....prayed to God regularly."

2. Those who pray regularly will see God's power manifested regularly. He will act for them in unusual ways on a regular basis. So, if you will continue to pray, the answer is sure to come!
3. Prayer can cause an **ordinary appointment**—and even **no appointment**, to become **a divine appointment**. Cornelius had no appointment with Peter, nor did Peter have an appointment with Cornelius. It was all arranged by God!
4. Though it had been promised from the beginning that God would visit the Gentiles, nothing had happened yet. Even after Peter had received the Holy Spirit in the Upper Room and had boldly proclaimed that the promised Savior was for ALL men, ten years had passed without a single Gentile being saved. But because Cornelius and Peter both prayed, God's divine appointment opened a new era of growth and evangelism for the church—which continues until this day. Revival comes when we pray!
5. This is yet another reminder that we can become God's partner in the fulfillment of His promises. Even though the promise had been released in the heavens, it was not manifested until Cornelius and Peter prayed!
6. Scripture does not indicate that Peter was praying for anything in particular while on the housetop. He was just praying—in "Chronos" time—a Greek word we regularly use for linear or ordinary time. The words: chronometer, chronograph, chronology and chronological that are often used in our vocabulary describe the passage of linear time. This is how the word is used in the Bible:
  - a. **Galatians 4:4-5 (NKJV)** - "But when the fullness of the **time** (Chronos) had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a

woman, born under the law, [5] to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”

7. The Greek word “Kairos” describes a significant moment in life; a propitious, critical, or life-changing time. Since the New Testament is written primarily in Greek, this helps us grasp the full meaning of these verses. Those few “Kairos” moments in your entire lifetime have the power to literally change everything!
8. Shakespeare spoke of a Kairos moment when he wrote: “There is a tide in the affairs of men, Which taken at the flood, leads on to fortune. Omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and in miseries. On such a full sea are we now afloat. And we must take the current when it serves, or lose our ventures.”
9. A biblical example is in the Book of Ephesians:
  - a. **Ephesians 1:10 (NKJV)** - “That in the dispensation of the fullness of the times (Kairos), He (God) might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.”
10. As Peter waited in “Chronos” time for a meal to be prepared, he suddenly had a vision that literally changed mankind. Because he prayed, Chronos time shifted into Kairos and became an explosive, life-changing ‘God’ moment! God blew the door of separation between the Jews and the Gentiles off its hinges for good, and opened the way for Gentiles to have access to redemption through the blood of Christ.
11. Prayer changed Chronos to Kairos time. When you pray, ordinary time can become a God-ordained moment that will release your destiny. Both Cornelius and Peter changed their seasons when they

prayed. You can either wait until your season is revealed or you can pray and *change* your season!

- a. **Daniel 2:20-21 (NKJV)** - "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, For wisdom and might are His. [21] And He changes the times and the seasons."

12. The Aramaic word for *prayer* means: "to set a trap." Prayer can capture what you are seeking from God. It can take hold—and not let go! Prayer is also the mechanism whereby a 'God' idea is conceived and captured.

F. God not only changed the Gentile season; He literally changed their era!

1. An era differs from a season. As I've said before, seasons come and seasons go, and are usually rather short. We have four of them every year. People talk about "coming into their season" and that is wonderful. But I want more than just a 'season'!
2. The dictionary defines an era as: a memorable or important date or event; especially one that begins a new period in the history of a person or thing.
3. In the Bible, the word "era" is only a root word. For example: Gen-ERA-tion or Gen-ERA-tions. Isn't it fascinating that "era" is a foundational word that describes not only a temporary season of a few years, but rather decades, centuries—and even longer! We have moved into a new 'era' here at Inspire Church!
4. One of the most incredible stories of the Bible is found in Acts, chapter 10. While it may appear to be an extraordinary coincidence, it isn't a coincidence at all. It's about divine providence and a divine appointment.



G. Prayer is not limited by the dimensions of time or space.

1. For example, when you die, your prayers live on. Some of you are saved today because of the prayers of a mother, father, or grandmother who has gone to be with the Lord. That's because prayers do not die when a person dies!
2. As our prayers ascend to heaven, they are continually offered as incense before God. Prayer is the fragrance that perfumes the Throne Room of God!
  - a. **Revelation 8:4 (NIV)** - "The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of God's people, went up before God from the angel's hand."
3. Prayers are not limited by time or space. While Cornelius was praying in Caesarea, Peter was praying in Joppa. The two cities were probably about 38.5 miles apart or a journey of two or three days of walking, which the scripture seems to indicate.
4. Cornelius shows us how to pray. Not only did he pray regularly, but persistently. God hears and answers persistent prayer! What I mean by "persistent" is like a bulldog that won't let go or give up.

H. Just how powerful is prayer?

1. Prayer is much like prophecy. If you pray according to God's Word, you're praying His will for your life. It's much like prophesying your own future. When you pray God's will, it always comes to pass.
2. The old-timers used to talk about "praying through." That means, you'll pray until you know you've moved Heaven. It's praying until you have the assurance that what you asked is going to happen. If you can "pray through" and touch God for your request, you are prophesying what will happen. The situation may look impossible

- right now, but the outcome of that circumstance can be changed. What was meant to bring harm or defeat can change to a stepping stone to the next level. Don't panic or worry; just "pray through" it!
3. In Latin, the name Cornelius means "horn" and was originally derived from the German word "little seed." It is also the prefix for cornucopia, or "a horn of plenty."

In other words, a little seed can produce an abundant breakthrough. That's what happened when Peter obeyed God's instruction to meet Cornelius and then watched as he was filled with the Holy Spirit. Peter's small seed of obedience produced a mighty revival.

Cornelius' obedience was also a seed that produced a mighty breakthrough for us Gentiles that continues to this very day. We would never have been included had it not been for the obedience of these two men!