

## **Scriptural Basis for Prayer Ministry**

### **Introduction**

In this article, the subject of prayer ministry will be referred to simply as “ministry” and as we look into basis in scripture we shall see that the ministry of the Lord Jesus is the basis for ministry today.

### **The Ministry of the Lord Jesus**

When witnessing to Cornelius as recorded in Acts 10:38, Peter summarized the ministry of the Lord Jesus perfectly in these words:-

.... God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, [and how] he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

The Lord Himself summarized His own ministry as recorded in Luke 4:16-21 where we read as follows:-

He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me,  
because he has anointed me  
to preach good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners  
and recovery of sight for the blind,  
to release the oppressed,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

The scripture in Isaiah can be found in chapter 61:1-3.

That ministry was fulfilled in the life of Jesus as He Himself testified when speaking to the disciples of John the Baptist who, at that time, had been imprisoned and had sent his disciples to ask Jesus if He was the one who was to come. Jesus replied:-

"Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor." Matt 11:4-5

Interestingly, the Lord did not proclaim actual freedom from prison for John the Baptist in literal fulfillment of Luke 4:16-21 and there was no attempt recorded in the Gospels to secure his release from prison. In fact, John the Baptist died there. However, it can't be denied that the Lord brought freedom to people who, say, were trapped in a prison of demonic oppression. The demoniac a Gadara – who was kept in chains - was one such example of that. And while the

Lord is recorded as bringing physical healing to more than one blind person, the Lord Himself interpreted His ministry wider to embrace the bringing of people out of spiritual darkness into spiritual light, a principle echoed in the epistles more than once. (See John 8:12, Ephesians 5:8 and Colossians 1:13).

### **The Ministry of the Followers of the Lord Jesus**

When we read the Gospels, we see how the Lord Jesus ministered in that way and, from John 14:12, we also see how it was his intention that those who followed Him should do the same.

I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. John 14:12

The church is now God's vehicle through which The Lord continues His ministry on earth. The Lord did so through the early church (by using both those who were apostles and at least one (Stephen - Acts 6:8) who was not) and it was particularly interesting to read what the Lord said to Paul when he was Saul of Tarsus on the way to Damascus:-

I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you. I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.' Acts 26:16-18.

There is a marked similarity between the way the Lord summarized His ministry and the way the Lord summarized Paul's. Through the ministry of Paul, the good news of the Lord was preached (Acts 15:35, Acts 28:31) people were set free from the power of the demonic (Acts 16:18 Acts 19:11) people were physically healed from disease (Acts 28:7-10), and many passed from spiritual darkness to light (Eph 5:8, 1 Thess 5:5). That is still the ministry of the church today. God uses His body of people in various ways to put that ministry into effect and Paul paints a picture of it in 1 Corinthians 12:14-30.

The church's ministry has many aspects. Whilst all Christians can witness for Christ and pray for the needs of others (see James 5:16) there are those who seem particularly enabled to preach the gospel with considerable power and effectiveness while others seem to have a specific ministry through which God brings healing to people. Others are clearly used by God in delivering individuals from demonic oppression while still others, for example, are blessed with an ability to speak with much spiritual wisdom into difficult situations. The existence of the fivefold ministry described in Ephesians 4:11-13 indicates ways in which God equips individuals to minister to God's people and the Gifts of the Spirit as described in 1 Corinthians 12: 4-11 equip people in other ways. So, not only does the Lord require His disciples to continue His ministry on earth, He also provides the tools with which to do such work.

There is what might be called "A Divine Tool Kit" to help the church continue the ministry of the Lord Jesus on earth. There are many tools in the kit but tools of particular importance are the Name of Jesus, the scriptures, the presence of God, the Gifts of the Spirit and the teaching of those with experience. Using those tools, a team of people working in harmony with a heart to help fellow Christians can minister powerfully.

The ministry described in this section of the website is that which could fall best under the headings of setting prisoners free and releasing the oppressed thereby helping Christians to

deepen their relationship with God and experience more of the abundant life which that brings (John 10:10).

Of course, all Christians should be experiencing the abundant life which the Lord has promised to those who follow him. However, the reality is that some Christians don't appear to do so, at least not for much of the time – it simply isn't there and they may not know why. Also, and sadly, it turns out that some Christians are entangled with habits and addictions of which they feel ashamed but cannot seem to overcome them even though they try hard to do so. Also, some Christians are locked into behaviour patterns which adversely affect them and maybe their families too. They know it shouldn't be like that and know they should put it to death in their lives but the ability to do it seems to elude them. "Well, they need to change and not be like it" say some people "because Christians simply shouldn't be like that." Actually, that's what such Christians usually want with all their hearts but, despite the encouragement and counseling they have received, all the discipline applied and efforts made, they simply can't seem to experience the freedom they want so much.

Ministry of the kind we are going to look at in this section of the website can help such people, and it is hope that the notes which follow will be found useful as you minister for the Lord to "set prisoners free and release the oppressed".

### **Accountability**

Finally, and this will be repeated from time to time, the leadership of a church or organization offering ministry should always oversee ministry so that they know what is going on and who is involved. There must be accountability and these notes are provided on the basis that those who might use them do so only with the permission of, and under the direction of, their church leadership or the leadership of the organization offering ministry who take full responsibility for the ministry and the way the team operates.

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