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Daily Devotional - Monday, April 8, 2019 - Courage Behind Your Convictions

APRIL 08TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Monday, April 8, 2019 - Courage Behind Your Convictions

Daniel 1:1-21

Today we live in a society that is convinced there are no absolute moral truths. It not only considers the Bible outdated and irrelevant to contemporary problems but also sees each person as free to decide what is right. As a result, our culture is ungodly, immoral, violent, and self-centered. How are we as Christians supposed to live in such an environment?

We need look no further than the example of a teenage boy named Daniel, who had the courage to stand for his convictions in the midst of the depraved atmosphere of Babylon. Despite his immersion in Babylonian culture, he committed to following the Lord faithfully, even if doing so would cost him his life. The issue of diet may seem trivial to us, but Jewish people of his day believed eating meat that had been offered to idols was an abomination to God.

In the modern Western world, we may find it hard to relate to Daniel's example. Few of us are willing to take such a bold stand even though we have no fear of losing our life. It's the threat of rejection, ridicule, or being seen as narrow-minded or judgmental that keeps us silent. Or worse, it may be that we don't have any strong convictions because we haven't let God's Word develop them within us. Ignorance of Scripture may let us live comfortably in a sinful culture, but it will never please the Lord.

God is looking for people like Daniel—followers of Christ who will stand by their convictions, regardless of threats or the temptation to compromise for the sake of profit or acceptance. Are you such a person?

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Daily Devotional - Thursday, April 4, 2019 - Praying God's Desires

APRIL 04TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Thursday, April 4, 2019 - Praying God's Desires

Colossians 1:9-12

As Christians, we all long to make necessary changes in our life so we'll become more like Jesus. And we're also concerned about the spiritual growth of fellow believers—especially our loved ones. But transformation doesn't come about by trying harder or putting Bible verses on sticky notes in hopes that family members will read them and shape up. The most powerful resource we have is prayer, and Paul has given us a pattern that is Christ-centered and specific.

Too often, believers pray without giving much thought to what God wants to do in a person's life. Instead, we focus on our own ideas regarding what He should do. How much more effective our prayers would be if we prayed according to God's will by using His Word as our source for requests.

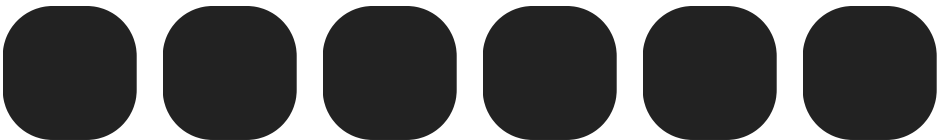
The prayer from Colossians 1 focuses on the heavenly Father's desires for His children. When we go before the Lord and substitute our own name or the name of a friend or family member for "you" in verses 9 and 10, we are praying His specific will for that person. The Lord delights in responding to requests that someone be filled with knowledge of His will and walk in a manner pleasing to Him.

However, we must be careful not to think of this prayer as a magic charm. It doesn't work that way. These godly qualities take time to develop in a life. And if we are praying these things for ourselves, we must avail ourselves of the means God has provided for our sanctification or transformation—namely, His Word. If we want to know and understand God's will, we should ask Him and search the Bible.

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Daily Devotional - Wednesday, April 3, 2019 - Receiving God's Power

APRIL 03RD 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Wednesday, April 3, 2019 - Receiving God's Power

Ephesians 1:13-19

There is so much that Christ wants to give us. What I'm talking about is not material wealth but spiritual blessings, one of which is that we might know the "surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe" (Eph. 1:19).

We need God's power both personally and corporately. But what is required for His power to be released upon us? I believe the answer is the same whether we're talking about individual believers or local churches.

Faith in God and His Word. It is essential to believe that the Scriptures are absolutely true and sufficient for life and godliness. Any time a pastor or a congregation begins to question the Bible's inerrancy, sufficiency, or clarity, that church has denied the source of its own power.

Dependence on God. Jesus said that apart from Him, we can do nothing of any spiritual value (John 15:5). In fact, God's power is perfected in us when we are weak and rely fully on Him (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Obedience. We can't expect God's power to flow through us when we are living in outright sin or rationalizing partial obedience. But He's always ready to strengthen those who obey Him.

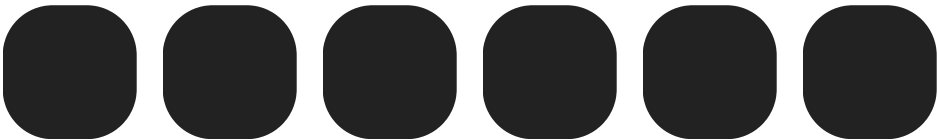
Prayer. When we come humbly to the Lord with our needs and in submission to His will, we can be confident that He will work on our behalf.

Sometimes we think that God empowers us to achieve goals, but in actuality, the Spirit comes to live Christ’s life through us. His power flows in us when we submit every area of our life to His authority—including our plans, desires, and future.

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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, April 2, 2019 - The Source of Our Strength

APRIL 02ND 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Tuesday, April 2, 2019 - The Source of Our Strength

Acts 1:1-8

How many churches sense God's power at work in their midst? One danger every congregation faces is the temptation to rely on human effort and strategies. However, "unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it" (Psalm 127:1). Therefore, we must determine whether ministry and outreach are empowered by the Lord or by something else.

God is the only true source of power in the church, and He works through three specific means:

His Spirit (Acts 1:8). The church of Jesus Christ began the day the Holy Spirit came down and indwelt those who believed in Him. The Spirit's work in and through the church is the only reason we can obey Christ's command to make disciples. That's why Acts 2:47 attributes all church growth to God: "The Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved."

His Word (Rom. 1:16). The gospel is the power of God for salvation—without it, no one would be saved. But the Lord also uses His Word to sanctify believers, just as Jesus prayed in John 17:17. Scripture is our source for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

His grace (1 Corinthians 15:10). God's unmerited favor is not only the means of our salvation; it is also the power in our ministry. His grace even teaches us to deny ungodliness and live righteously (Titus 2:11-12).

In your church, do you sense God's power at work in these three areas? How about in your personal life—are God's Spirit, Word, and grace the source of your strength and spiritual growth?

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Daily Devotional - Monday, April 1, 2019 - What Makes a Church Powerful?

APRIL 01ST 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

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1 Corinthians 1:26-31; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

What factors determine whether a church is powerful or weak? Oftentimes people make such evaluations based on appearances and human reasoning rather than on God's Word.

For instance, large congregations with dynamic worship services and programs for every age and interest group look impressive. Or a church could be viewed as powerful because of its prominent location, a big budget, or the pastor with a magnetic personality. In contrast, small churches—especially those with few members, a rural setting, and little money—are often considered lesser.

The point is that we can't judge a church's strength or weakness based on outward factors like size, location, prosperity, or prominence. Paul's letter to the Corinthians points out that a strong church is one that is founded on the message of the cross and grounded in God's wisdom rather than the world's.

God’s power is given to the church for His purposes, not for human agendas. And it isn’t a persuasive sermon but the gospel of Christ that can save souls. Some pastors may be able to manipulate people, but only God’s Spirit brings the genuine conviction of sin that leads to repentance and salvation.

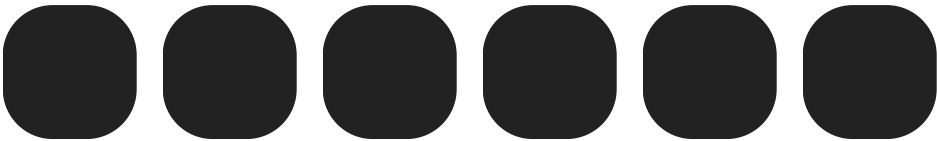
For divine power to flow into and through a local body, that church must hold firmly to Scripture. What’s more, it cannot use techniques derived from worldly thinking but must rely on God’s direction.

A faith community cannot be powerful unless the people within it are individually submitted to Christ and empowered by Him. This means our commitment to Jesus affects our churches for better or for worse.

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