

The Power of Prayer

I had a car accident. It was minor, but it was my fault. It wrecked my whole week. It was all I could think about. Until my daughter had to get three stitches in her upper lip after a close encounter with a see-saw. She became my world at that moment. Until the next morning when we got the call about Teena Harris. Her father, Glenn, had just finished teaching a class on the Miracles of Jesus. “We could use one right now,” he said in the somber, subdued waiting room.

Life has a way of reminding you of what is truly important. Just when you have fretted over the fact that your team didn’t win the big game or your car is not working right or one of the appliances needs to be replaced, you are shocked out of selfishness by something that has real value. In a moment, all of the trivial things that seemed important at the time are thrown aside so that your mind and heart can give full attention to the matter at hand. Since life is so uncertain and can change so quickly, it is also a subtle reminder that you have little control over what happens.

Staying in touch with people is critical when critical times come. We keep them informed, we update them on any progress, we let them know what we are feeling. But we must not forget the superior form of communication, one where there is no limit on the number of minutes used, no access fees or connections charges. It is a free access to God that man has enjoyed from the beginning. Long before there were cell phones, email, and the combination thereof, there was prayer.

What is it about prayer that it can lift the heaviest of loads?

Prayer reassures us that the Lord is listening. David prayed, “Hear the voice of my supplications when I cry to Thee for help, when I lift up my hands toward Thy holy sanctuary” (Psa. 28:2). Like a little child who raises his hands to be picked up by his father, David was certain that the petitions he was raising were being heard by his Father in heaven. But David was not the only one who had the ear of God.

The Father was listening to all the prayers offered in all the assemblies of His children today. He was listening to all of the families who bowed and “returned thanks” around their dinner tables. He heard every cry from every waiting room, emergency room, and back bedroom. How incredible to think that He who created all the world cares about what’s going on in mine. Our Lord listens.

Prayer reminds us that God can handle what is out of our hands. Psalm 28 was David’s call for help. But he did not strap on his armor and attempt to fight his enemies on his own. The Lord had delivered him from the paw of the lion and bear that threatened his sheep. The Lord brought him a victory over Goliath. The Lord’s power would prevail over the enemies of His anointed. “The Lord is my strength and my shield,” David confessed (Psa. 28:7). No other weaponry was necessary.

There will be occasions when our safety is threatened by the seemingly impossible, a situation that makes us admit, “I can’t do anything about it.” But God can. No matter how scary the lion or bear, no matter how tall the giant, no matter how many the enemy, no matter how bleak the diagnosis, no matter how great the difficulty. This is still our Father’s world. Trust in His strength to control what you cannot.

Prayer enables us our hearts to hold nothing back. In his cry for deliverance from his enemies, David pleaded for the Lord to “requite them according to their work and according to the evil of their practices” and “according to the deeds of their hands” (Psa. 28:4). He was not calling for personal vengeance, but for the Lord to punish those who did not honor His work or His will. In any case, David did not hide the most intimate feelings of his heart.

God wants to hear from His people, but He is not interested in the mere repetition of meaningless phrases that do not originate from the heart. He wants us to pour out our cares before His throne, to make all our “wants and wishes known.” He will never betray our confidence; our faith in Him will never be disappointed. When David did that, he could boast, “my heart trusts in Him, and I am helped” (28:7). Perhaps our help has not come because we are still withholding from Him from Whom nothing is hidden.

I never know what to say to someone in the wake of a disaster. But I’ve learned that it’s not as important what you say at those times, but Who you say them to.

Bubba Garner