

# God for All

OT: Jer. 8:18-9:1

NT: 1 Timothy: 2:1-7

THE POWER OF PRAYER IS NOT ALWAYS EVIDENT. WE SHOULD NOT ONLY PRAY FOR THE SICK AND IMPOVERISHED, BUT FOR THOSE FACED WITH DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES. PRAYER HAS A POWER ALL ITS OWN, BUT IN ITSELF IS ANTI-POWER. BY COMMENDING OUR LIVES TO GOD WE PUT OUR FATES IN THE HANDS OF THE ONE WHO TRULY HAS THE POWER TO CHANGE THINGS. IT IS IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE DIVINE THAT HOLDS THE TRUE POWER NOT IN THE WORDS WE SPEAK, AS IF THEY ARE SOME MAGICAL INCANTATION OR MANIPULATION OF GOD'S WILL. SPEND TIME WITH THE GOD OF GOODNESS AND YOUR LIFE WILL BE GOOD REGARDLESS OF THE TRIALS YOU FACE.

THE POWER OF PRAYER DOES NOT FLOW FROM US; IT IS NOT SPECIAL WORDS WE SAY OR THE SPECIAL WAY WE SAY THEM OR EVEN HOW OFTEN WE SAY THEM. THE POWER OF PRAYER IS NOT BASED ON A CERTAIN DIRECTION WE FACE OR A CERTAIN POSITION OF OUR BODIES. THE POWER OF PRAYER DOES NOT COME FROM THE USE OF ARTIFACTS OR ICONS OR CANDLES OR BEADS.

THE POWER OF PRAYER COMES FROM THE OMNIPOTENT ONE WHO HEARS OUR PRAYERS AND ANSWERS THEM. PRAYER PLACES US IN CONTACT WITH ALMIGHTY GOD, AND WE SHOULD EXPECT ALMIGHTY RESULTS, WHETHER OR NOT HE CHOOSES TO GRANT OUR PETITIONS OR DENY OUR REQUESTS. WHATEVER THE ANSWER TO OUR PRAYERS, THE GOD TO WHOM WE PRAY IS THE SOURCE OF THE POWER OF PRAYER, AND HE CAN AND WILL ANSWER US, ACCORDING TO HIS PERFECT WILL AND TIMING.

WHAT SHOULD WE PRAY FOR? ONLY FOR MY FAMILY? FOR SOMEONE I KNOW WHO IS ILL? FOR GOD TO HELP ME IN THE DAY AHEAD? FOR GOD TO RESOLVE WHATEVER PROBLEM IS CURRENTLY WORRYING ME? I OFTEN SENSE THAT THERE IS SOME *CONTENT* THAT I'M MISSING WHEN I'M PRAYING.

PAUL HAS A LOT TO SAY ABOUT THIS TOPIC. I READ THROUGH ALL OF PAUL'S LETTERS, TAKING NOTES ON EVERYTHING HE ASKS PEOPLE TO PRAY FOR, OR THAT HE MENTIONS OTHERS ARE PRAYING FOR, OR THAT HE IN FACT IS PRAYING FOR IN HIS LETTERS. ONCE AGAIN, I WANTED TO UNCOVER AREAS THAT NEEDED ATTENTION IN MY OWN PRAYER LIFE THAT ARE EMPHASIZED IN PAUL'S LETTERS.

I DISCOVERED THAT THERE ARE THREE MAIN CATEGORIES OF *WHAT TO PRAY FOR* FOR OURSELVES IN PAUL'S LETTERS HERE IS A SUMMARY:

WE SHOULD ASK GOD FOR GROWTH IN OUR CHRISTIAN FAITH.

ASK GOD TO MAKE US BOLD IN SHARING OUR FAITH.

ASK GOD TO DELIVER US FROM EVIL.

WE SHOULD CONSIDER NOT ONLY WHAT TO PRAY FOR BUT WHO TO PRAY FOR AS WELL.

IT IS NOT SELFISH TO FIRST PRAY FOR OURSELVES IF WE PRAY FOR THE RIGHT THINGS. STRONGER FAITH, MORE COMPASSION, AND DEEPER UNDERSTANDING ARE ALL WORTHY OF OUR PETITIONS. TO GROW IN OUR CHRISTIAN LIFE INVOLVES A GREATER RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GOD WHO CREATED US AND THE SPIRIT THAT CAN GIVE US THE POWER TO CHANGE. WE SHOULD BE THE FIRST SUBJECT OF OUR PRAYERS.

IT IS ALSO RIGHT THAT WE PRAY FOR THOSE NEAR TO US- FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND PEOPLE WE ARE IN CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP WITH, THAT GOD WOULD BLESS THEM AND KEEP THEM SAFE.

NOW IT GETS A LITTLE HARDER. WE ARE INSTRUCTED TO PRAY FOR THOSE WHO LEAD US, THOSE WHO ARE IN POWER.

THE TEMPTATION IS TO ONLY PRAY FOR THE LEADERS WHO WE AGREE WITH- THOSE OF THE SAME PARTY WE ARE AFFILIATED. THE EARLY CHRISTIANS WERE INSTRUCTED TO PRAY FOR EVEN THE EMPEROR WHO WAS OPPRESSING THEM. WE SHOULD PRAY FOR THOSE WHO HAVE THE POWER TO WAGE WAR OR BRING PEACE. LEADERS WHO CAN USE THEIR POWER FOR GOOD OR UNJUSTLY. YOU MAY NOT LIKE WHO IS IN POWER AT ANY ONE TIME, BUT WE MUST PRAY THAT THEY ARE LEAD TO RULE WITH JUSTICE AND ACT WITH MERCY AND KINDNESS.

WE ARE ENTREATED TO PRAY FOR THOSE WHO ARE NOT CLOSE TO US- THE STRANGER, THOSE WHO DO NOT SPEAK OUR LANGUAGE, THOSE WE HAVE NEVER MET. WE ARE ESPECIALLY ENCOURAGED TO PRAY FOR THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED AROUND THE WORLD. WE ARE TO PRAY FOR NOT ONLY PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS BUT ALL THOSE WHO ARE LIVING IN CONDITIONS WHERE THEY ARE NOT FREE TO WORSHIP AS THEY WISH OR TO LIVE A FREE LIFE IN PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS.

WE ARE TO PRAY FOR THOSE WHO ARE DIFFICULT TO LOVE- THAT OBNOXIOUS FAMILY MEMBER WHO MAY BE SUFFERING FROM MENTAL ILLNESS, THE DIRTY HOMELESS PERSON BEGGING FOR A HAND OUT, THE ONE WHO IS JUSTLY BEHIND BARS FOR HIDEOUS CRIMES

THEY COMMITTED. GOD TELLS US TO PRAY FOR THE JUST AND THE UNJUST, THE CRIMINAL AS WELL AS THE RIGHTEOUS, AND THE CRUEL AS WELL AS THE KIND.

THAT BRINGS US TO THE MOST DIFFICULT TO PRAY FOR- OUR ENEMIES. IN WAR, IT IS PRUDENT TO DEHUMANIZE THE OPPOSITION. WE MAKE UP PEJORATIVE NAMES FOR OUR ENEMIES LIKE "JAPS", "KROUTS", "GOOKS" TO LESSEN THE IMPACT FOR A SOLDIER TO KILL. IF THEY'RE NOT QUITE HUMAN, IT IS EASIER TO LIVE WITH TAKING A HUMAN LIFE.

BUT GOD CALLS US TO LOVE OUR ENEMIES, TO PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PERSECUTE US, AND THOSE WHO VEHEMENTLY OPPOSE US. WE NEED TO RECOGNIZE THAT THE GOD WHO LOVES YOU AND ME, LOVES EACH INDIVIDUAL AND WISHES THAT ALL MAY COME TO KNOW HIM. AND THAT SHOULD BE OUR PRAYER AS WELL.

REMEMBER THAT PRAYER IS NOT A MANIPULATION OF DIVINE WILL, BUT RATHER THE SUBMISSION TO THE CARE OF OUR LOVING GOD. SOME TIMES OUR PRAYERS ARE ANSWERED IN A DIFFERENT WAY THAN WE WOULD LIKE. SOMETIMES GOD SEEMS TO BE SILENT. THE ANSWER TO THAT IS NOT TO QUIT PRAYING, BUT TO DRAW CLOSER TO GOD. WHEN GOD WHISPERS AN ANSWER, WE NEED TO BE CLOSE TO HEAR.

PRAY WITHOUT CEASING. DRAW CLOSER TO GOD AND YOU WILL  
LEARN GOD'S LANGUAGE IN ANSWERING PRAYERS.

The Rev. Scott Solether  
Eastminster Presbyterian Church  
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