

## **PRAYER HELPS**

2 Corinthians 1:10-11

### **Introduction**

How grateful I am for all the prayers that have been offered up on my behalf while I went through surgery; and now too, as I'm going through recovery. I am confident that the success of the surgery, the good prognosis, the renewed health and strength, and the feeling of peace and confidence that Susan and I have had through it all are due to God's help *in response to the prayers of many!*

I'm reminded of Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 1:10-11:

***10 [God] has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, 11 AS YOU HELP US BY YOUR PRAYERS. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for THE GRACIOUS FAVOR GRANTED US IN ANSWER TO THE PRAYERS OF MANY.***

I had many family members and friends offer to help in any way they could. We usually want to *do* something; something significant, something substantial, even something self-sacrificial. And while we may believe in prayer, we may see it as something we do only *after* we've done something else, or when there's *nothing else* we can do.

But prayer is the *best* thing we can do—whether there's anything else we can do or not!

Yes, prayer helps, but how? Let me offer at least four ways that prayer helps:

#### **1. Prayer connects us, and those we pray for, with God.**

Hannah Hunnard, in her book *God's Transmitters*, compares prayer to radio signals, which connects receivers with transmitters. Like radio signals, our prayers are invisible; but they are real and they are powerful—connecting people and circumstances with God and His power.

But how can our prayers affect someone or some thing that is a long way off—whether in distance or in time?

I understand that radio signals theoretically exist forever; they never dissipate or disappear. I've heard of radio signals being picked up that had been broadcast years earlier; they apparently bounced off of something in space, perhaps the moon or even some distant planet.

Do you remember the prayer Jesus prayed recorded in John 17? In a part of that prayer He prayed, ***my prayer is not for them*** [i.e., His 12 disciples] ***alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message*** (Jn. 17:20).

That includes us! How can a prayer prayed almost 2,000 years ago be of any help to us here and now—unless prayers are like radio signals: they never dissipate or disappear!

How can our prayers here be of any effect miles—even thousands of miles away—unless they are like radio signals that can travel infinite distances.

So, can our prayers for future generations and circumstances really be of any effect? I think so, because prayer connects us, and those we pray for, with God, who is eternal!

Secondly, prayer helps because . . .

2. **Prayer binds us together as the body of Christ, giving the Church a synergistic power.**

Prayer might also be compared to the energy (i.e., the electrostatic charge or attraction) that binds matter together.

Beyond merely affirming one another or even confirming the will of God, Jesus said, ***"Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.*** (Mt. 18:19)

There is a synergistic effect when two or more pray.

Ecclesiastes 4:12 says, ***Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.***

Leviticus 26:8 says, . . . ***five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand, and your enemies will fall by the sword before you.***

Right after Paul exhorts the church to pray for everyone, including especially kings and all those in authority, he adds, ***I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing.*** (1 Timothy 2:8)

Unity through agreement in prayer is powerful. Disunity robs prayer of power. That's one reason Jesus also prayed for unity.

Thirdly, prayer helps because . . .

3. **Prayer takes our focus and our energy off ourselves and puts them on God and others.**

This often causes *our* needs and problems to diminish in appearance—if not in actuality! This may be a part of what Jesus meant when He said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” (Acts 20:35) When we’re giving, our needs—and even our wants—appear smaller.

Conversely, focusing on *our* problems and *our* needs often amplify them—at least in our minds. But when we focus on others in our prayers, our problems seem smaller—if they don’t actually diminish altogether!

Job is known for all his very *real* troubles—and his complaints! But all his troubles went away *after* he prayed for his friends. Job 42:10 says, ***After Job had prayed for his friends, the LORD made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before.***

My father used to quote an expression when we complained as kids; it was, “I used to complain that I had no shoes, until I saw someone who had no feet!”

While we may be able to find those who are better off than we are, most of the people in the world are worse off than we are. And when we pray for others, our gratitude for all we have increases, and our troubles often seem smaller by comparison.

Finally, prayer helps simply because . . .

4. **God has promised to hear and answer prayer!**

***2 "This is what the LORD says, he who made the earth, the LORD who formed it and established it--the LORD is his name: 3 'Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.'*** (Jer. 33:2-3)

Jesus said, ***13 And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. 14 You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.*** (John 14:13-14)

God is good and faithful! And He is ultimately our source of hope and help. And He has promised to hear and answer prayer. We can thank God for all resources—for doctors and medicine and medical knowledge, and

every other resource we often look to, but all knowledge and aptitude and skill and provision ultimately come from God.

## Conclusion

Prayer is an act of faith (. . . ***being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see***. Heb. 11:1), and without which we cannot hope to receive anything from God. Faith is trust—specifically trust in God, not in our faith or our efforts or in anything else.

Prayer according to the will of God is assured of answers. John wrote,

**14 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us--whatever we ask--we know that we have what we asked of him.**  
(1 Jn. 5:14-15)

Have you ever thought of *not* praying as sin? Samuel knew it was, and in response to the people who asked him to pray for them, he said, ***As for me, far be it from me that I should SIN AGAINST THE LORD BY FAILING TO PRAY for you.*** (1 Sam. 12:23a)

Let us not sin by failing to pray for one another! Let us help one another with encouragement and practical helps. But let us especially help one another with our prayers by . . .

- Connecting them with God's power, by . . .
- Binding together, increasing our effectiveness, and by . . .
- Focusing our attention and energy on others, rather than on ourselves.

Because prayer *really* helps!