

Understanding the Daily Need for Christ

Seems like it happens more and more to me. I think it's because people know that I'm a preacher. And I suppose it comes with the territory as we often say. What I'm talking about is people asking me to pray for them. I get that request all the time. I view it as an honor that people ask me to pray for them. Somehow people must think that what I say in prayer is more powerful than what they can say. Or most likely, they know that the more people praying the better it is. I've had people call me on the telephone and after pouring out their hearts about a troubled life they will ask me if I will pray for them. I always do. Sometimes I get an email from someone I've met on one of my travels. They will ask me to pray for them. I always do. I've been asked this by friends, elders in other congregations, family members visiting a loved one in the hospital. Will you pray for me? What a touching request!

Just today I met with someone who owns a business. The market has been soft for them and they over purchased some equipment. Payments were high, income was low. This person told me that things were desperate and some of the equipment needed to be sold. I was asked, "Will you say a prayer that someone will buy this stuff?" Something about that request grabbed my attention. I have tried to talk to this person about Jesus and have gotten no where. I have invited this person to come and worship with us. Nothing. Zero. Zilch. No interest. But on this day, the subject of prayer was brought up and it wasn't by me. This person is so desperate that he realizes that he needs to call in help. He needs prayers. Yet, I wonder if his equipment is sold, will there be any prayers of thanksgiving to God or will there be a renewed interest in learning more of the God of Heaven and earth? Or, is God the last resource for a desperate and discouraged person? Could it be that after everything else has been tried and nothing seems to work, then and only then, is prayer something that ought to be tried?

I did pray for this person. I prayed for something more important than the selling of his equipment. I prayed for the salvation of his soul. I prayed that he would see that God is not to be used just when we need Him and then discarded when we get what we want. God deserves better than that.

We sing a song that goes, "*I need Thee every hour...*" but I wonder if we really feel that way. The early disciples seemed to have a good understanding of this:

- Jesus told them to pray for their **daily** bread (Mt 6:11)
- The Lord wants us to take up our cross **daily** (Lk 9:23)
- The Bereans searched the Scriptures **daily** to see whether those things were so (Acts 17:11)
- The apostles taught **daily** (Acts 5:42)
- The Hebrews were told to encourage one another **daily** (Heb 3:13)

We need the Lord every day. We need the Lord to guide our steps every day. We need the Lord to forgive our sins every day. We need the Lord to strengthen us every day. We need to pray every day.

Our faith needs to be a DAILY faith. Not a Sunday morning faith. Not a "get me out of this trouble" faith. Not a faith that changes like the weather. ***Yes, I need Thee every hour!***

What are we Expecting from our Prayers?

We pray because prayer works! James writes, “*The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much*” (5:16b). If God never listened, or if God never answered our prayers “yes” then why pray? There would be no motive to pray. We would say, “It just doesn’t do any good.” But we know better. We all can be thankful for the numerous prayers answered in our lives. Indeed, prayer works. God is moved by the prayers of His people.

I recently met with someone whose business was not doing well. The person needed to sell some equipment to survive. They asked me if I would pray for them. They wanted me to pray so that someone would buy their equipment and thus save their business from the impending financial disaster.

This brings us to the important question, “*What are we expecting from our prayers?*” The simple answer would be, “We are expecting God to answer our prayers.” So often, we discuss praying in faith. Pray believing. That is such a powerful lesson.

But beyond this I feel that some look at prayer as the “magical fix all” to our problems. We make a mess of our marriage and then in desperation pray about our marriage and think God will now make it right. We mess up our health by poor eating habits and a lack of exercise and then lying in a hospital bed pray for our health and believe everything will be ok because we have prayed about it. We think the church should grow because “we have prayed for that.”

It seems that in all of this, we are expecting God to right all the wrongs, fix all the mistakes and make everything fine simply because we have prayed about it. Now this is not questioning the power of God. But we need to understand our roles and responsibilities and our need to work with God to make things right. A troubled marriage will not just get better because someone prayed for it. A change of hearts and a renewed dedication are essential to turning that marriage around. God will not “fix” that marriage without the cooperation of those in that marriage. A church cannot grow if the members simply say a prayer and then sit around with folded arms and wait for something to happen. But working with God, as we evangelism, invite and teach, the church will grow.

Sometimes we can get ourselves in a real mess. For instance, financially, we can spend when we ought to be saving. It doesn’t take long before a person is in serious trouble financially. We can get ourselves in a real mess with our relationships. Gossiping, nagging, dishonesty and being negative chips away at bond in relationships. Before long friends are no longer friends. Our children resent us. We have dug a huge hole and gotten ourselves in real trouble. Are we to expect that all a person has to do is pray and everything will then just be fine? Absolutely not! Apologies, forgiveness, and changes are necessary to rebuild those broken relationships. Bad business decisions will not turn profitable simply because a person prays. It’s not fair, nor right for a person to think that he can make all sorts of messes in his life and simply say a prayer and everything will work out. There are consequences of our choices. There are responsibilities that rests upon our shoulders. God will not do what we are supposed to do!