

PRAYING FOR NEEDS

(Psalm 17:1-9 and James 5:13-18)

Opener; A dear old lady had just gone to live in a warden controlled flat. On her first morning the warden called up the lady on the intercom to check if she was alright. Edith, Edith, came the voice over the intercom. There was a pause, and then a frail voice replied: speak Lord for thy servant heareth".

This morning's message "Praying for Needs" is given to awaken faith and to pray in areas of life where we truly need the presence and provision of God.

Like you I have found the stories of the bible helpful in understanding that as we pray God provides for our needs. One story that is helpful to me is that of Abraham and Isaac. Poor old Abraham had been given a task from God, it is said in the text that God was testing his faith. Abraham was asked to take his son to a mountain range and to sacrifice him. As Abraham prepared the altar for burning, Isaac recognised a need and asked, "where is the sacrifice"? Abraham in faith said those golden words *God himself will provide the lamb*. Simply put God will provide for our needs. What a relief that was for Abraham and Isaac and what a test of faith and character.

I have started this morning message from this point as a help to us as we slowly walk through the fields of God's word.

From the Bible passages we have 5 clear needs for prayer

- Our need of God in heart and mind
- Our need of God to Guide
- Our need of God our Father to Listen, love and protect
- Our need of God in troubled times
- Our need of God in healing - Sozo

So having listed these points do you and I have to be supermen and women to live and understand prayer and how God can be relied on to provide for our needs?.... No because Elijah who prayed some great prayers was nothing more than an ordinary person just like us. What he had, and what we need, is a great faith in God and a practiced life of prayer. I need to tell you from the start I am nothing more than a desperate learner.

Our need for God in heart and mind

In Psalm 17v3 David is clearly aware that at night time, his life has slowed up he is in a place of rest and repose and God is at hand. In that young and tender relationship there is a hint of expectation in the work of God on the heart for like Abraham of old God has shown that he will test the heart. This word test comes from the word to melt, and much of David's current experiences have become heated and harsh, Saul and his companions are against David, and life has become like a smelting pot, where dross is affecting the heart. For David it could have been the dross of words coming from his talking and conversation with others. Whatever, it makes you truly feel his need of God in the heart and that need of Gods Spirit on him to deal with the dross of life.

On this very issue CS Lewis wrote; *It is no use to ask God with factitious earnestness for A when your mind is in reality filled with B. We must lay before him what is in us, not what ought to be in us.*

Our need of God to Guide

In the Psalm we read; *"my steps have held your paths, my feet have not slipped"*.

In the stillness of the night we get to think about life, and the question often comes where are we going? What shall we do the next day? What will the next month be about? Sometimes the questions come with such force that we don't sleep or we wake with the same questions. In our inner debate about the directions of life we are sometimes left in a struggle over which way to go and then the thought comes; "can we truly rely on the guidance of God?", how easy is it to follow this rule? David Watson said *"In some ways I find guidance if anything gets harder rather than easier the longer I am a Christian. Perhaps God allows this so that we have to go on relying on him and not ourselves"*. So Praying for God to guide us is a real need we have the more we pray and rely on him the greater the opportunity he has to show the way and to bring us onto his paths. For...

Is 58 The Lord will guide you always, he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a spring whose waters never fail.

When Isaiah gave this word he was certain that Gods paths and guidance were the best ways of our prayer needs being met.

Our need of Father God to listen, love and protect

In Verse 6 we begin to feel that beyond the questions of the night it's time to rest in God and pray.

When we read "*I call on you, O God, for you will answer me*, here I see the relationship of one vulnerable son calling out for God; who is our great Father in heaven. David is calling out from the heart just as Jesus did in his life, always calling out for the love and protection of the Father. So the words flow:

V7; Show the Wonder of your great love, you who save by your right hand.

One writer helps me understand our need to pray for the love of God;

He said Love has its speed. It is an inner speed. It is a spiritual speed. It is a different kind of speed from the technological speed to which we are accustomed. It goes on in the depths of our life experiences, whether we notice or not, at three miles an hour. It is the speed we shall walk and therefore it is the speed the love of God walks.

I wonder if this answers our need for quick fix answers when we pray for our needs. But the slowness of an answer to our prayers gives God another opportunity in our lives, one that we need. For we need the protection of Father God.

V8. Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings. These are the pleas of a person who is very alone and feeling a high level of trouble, a person needing that reassurance that Father God will bring a protection, an invisible covering, given as a token of love and given as a security to rest in. I wonder how many here today are feeling the need of praying for the protection of Father God?

Our need of God in troubled times

So having explored the personal need for Father God in our lives, the Epistle of James has more to say on praying for needs, but in this instance it is the shared prayer life of the church.

James is aware that the Christian path is filled with its great highs and deep deep lows. In both events we are offered a spiritual path. For the happier days we can Praise God with singing, which in today's church we love to do. But in troubles we are called to consider prayer and walk in the Spirit just as David was led to in Psalm 17. So in troubles we need to pray.

Our need of God in healing

One of the great needs we face is good health. The older we get the more susceptible we are to find that the machinery of this body is beginning to respond to years of wear and tear and break down. Ill health can be physical or emotional, and

during the days of sickness and confinement our appetite for work is suspended and distractions are minimal, like David's night time prayer, there is that opportunity to be alone with God and to call for his love and healing.

But we are asked in the passage to call for the help of the church, to share our prayers with our fellow brothers and sisters. We can do this today by phoning a Church prayer chain, or ask the pastoral team to come and anoint with oil for the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well. For the Lord will raise you up.

But what of a sickness due to an inner turmoil over sins; the word in James 5 encourages all to confess sins to each other. Sozo prayer ministry is one way of practicing this very verse. During Sozo prayer ministry we ask the Holy Spirit to reveal issues that have been hidden for years but the root of the problem has become a trouble to the heart and mind. The prayer times always end with that prescription of forgiveness of others and the joy of experiencing the forgiveness of God.

In all of these experiences of life we know that we must pray for our needs, the key to prayers being answered is always in the hands of God, but we need to turn the key.

Prayer is the key that unlocks all the storehouses of Gods infinite grace and power. All that God is, and all that God has is at the disposal of prayer.

Summary; so we have learnt this morning that praying for our needs is an expression of our faith and wonder in God. When we make the time to experience Him we have one who meets us in heart, Guides us in Spirit, Listens to us gives to us his loves and protection. But praying does not mean quick fixes; we must remember that Gods love has its own speed.

But, life has many challenges and the longer we live the greater our needs, we need Father in days of trouble, in times of illness, and to know that there is no desert that he cannot reach, for he has promised to meet our needs and satisfy us from the inside out, to give to us Spiritual paths, a strong frame and a life where we experience the eternal spiritual waters that will never fail or run dry.