

## IN TUNE WITH THE INFINITE

Dr. Fred Fourie ~Sunday, February 18, 2006

**Psalm 8: 1 – 9** O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger. When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor. You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas. O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!



**Luke 18: 1 – 8** Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, 'Grant me justice against my opponent.' For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, 'Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.'" And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

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It is no secret that the word PRAYER holds different meanings for different persons! Through our prayers, and our talking about prayer, we reveal to ourselves and often to others what we believe and think about God. Some people carry within themselves a dangerous and a faulty image of a God that acts at impulse, do magician's tricks and punishes indiscriminately. So, their prayer life becomes a constant battle to deal with this "danger in the sky" For them PRAYER means doing their best to get their self-made God to change its mind.

Sickness and tragedy are not punishments and should never be explained as GOD'S WILL! Sickness and tragedy are facts of life. Viruses attack. Wars kill. Tumors are formed. Leukemia strikes. Blood vessels wear out and rupture. Drunk drivers kill innocent people, and by psychotic people acting out a drama, that makes sense only within their sick minds. Accidents occur. Alcohol distorts. Children are killed playing with guns. These are the facts of existence. There is no divine plan that we must seek either to know and change or await its unfolding patiently. That is neither the way life is, nor the way God is.

Jesus always refers to God as a loving, caring God with wideness in God's mercy. Life is unpredictable. God is not. God is our God in sunshine and in rain, in sickness and in health. Whether I live or whether I die, I believe that I belong to God who will be by my side even in

times of suffering and death.

How do you think about PRAYER? Here is an illustration of a wrong way to think about what God is all about:

A Pastor was playing golf. He had difficulty in hitting the ball over a small pond. After he put five balls in the water, he hesitated before teeing up again and then said to his caddie, "I know what I'm doing wrong. I just forgot to pray before each shot, that was all." He prayed, and then swung at the ball -- and it traveled about twenty yards in a loop right into the water. "Pastor," asked the caddie, "might I make a suggestion?" "Certainly son," the pastor said. "Well" the caddie said, "the next time you pray, keep your head down."

An important part of prayer listening to what God would say to us. Problem is that many folks misunderstand this concept - and often do not hear what they want to hear!

This is an absurd little story about an atheist who fell off a cliff. About half way down he caught hold of a bush sticking out of the cliff. There he was hanging, ~ spared for the moment, but still in great danger. Not knowing what else to do - the Atheist decided to try PRAYER for the first time in his life. He begins to pray by shouting, "Is there anybody up there?" Lo and behold, a voice answers, "Yes, this is the Lord." The man yells frantically, "help me!" After a moment of silence, the Voice said. "Let go of the bush and I will save you" After a long moment of silence as the man looks down at the ground far below he yells, "Is there anybody else up there?"

Even non-believers find themselves uttering desperate prayers in times of great distress. But for the believer--for the follower of Christ--the issue is not prayer in crisis but prayer as an ongoing part life. Prayer is communication with God and is possible because God is real, always there, always within reach, and has so revealed himself that men and women, made in his image, may address him by name. Through prayer, in its many and varied forms, you and I can reach out, far beyond the barriers of our human understanding,

To touch the Infinite.

To tune in to the Infinite

To get our lives in tune with the Infinite.

Jesus told his disciples a parable about "their need to pray, always" so they would not "lose heart."

In the parable of the unjust judge that we read earlier on -- Jesus tells his disciples to pray persistently. Jesus wants the disciples to pray even when they are discouraged -- when it seems they are getting no results, Jesus tells them. "Pray always and do not lose heart." That is sound advice for us. Even when things go wrong, even when we do not seem to get the results we want, even when it seems our world is crumbling, continue to pray. We receive strength in the face of difficulty when we are able to pray without ceasing.

The great missionary to India, Dr. E. Stanley Jones, once put it like this: "Prayer tones up the total life. I find by actual experiences that I am better or worse as I pray more or less. If my prayer life sags, my whole life sags with it and if my prayer life goes up, my life as a whole goes up with it. To fail here is to fail all down the line; to succeed here is to succeed everywhere." Jesus said pray always--not for God's benefit, ~but for our own.

There is another ridiculous story about a tailor who visits his rabbi and says, "I have a problem with my prayers. If someone comes to me and says, 'Mendel, you're a wonderful tailor,' that makes me feel good. I feel appreciated. I can go on feeling good for a whole week, even

longer on the strength of one compliment like that. But if people came to me every day, one after another, hour after hour, and kept saying to me 'Mendel, you're a wonderful tailor,' over and over again it would drive me crazy. Is God so insecure that He needs us praising him every day? Three times a day, morning, noon, and night? It seems to me it would drive God crazy."

The rabbi smiled and said, "Mendel, you're absolutely right. You have no idea how hard it is for God to listen to all our praises, hour after hour, day after day. But God knows how important it is for us to utter that praise, so in His great love for us, He tolerates all of our prayers."

We pray with patience and persistence as we constantly seek to sense God's presence and understand what God wants us to do.

When I pray, I believe that it is God's will that I also do my part to make things better. When I say, "GOD AND ME," I AM ALWAYS REFERRING TO A WINNING TEAM! PRAYER REVEALS MY WILLINGNESS TO MAKE THINGS BETTER: Let's first listen to how this concept changes the Lord's prayer. Afterwards, I am going to invite all of us to pray the Lord's Prayer – for a second time this very morning!

I cannot say **our** if my religion has no room for others and their needs.

I cannot say **Father** if I do not demonstrate this relationship in my daily living.

I cannot say **who art in heaven** if all my interests and pursuits are on earthly things.

I cannot say **hallowed be thy name** if I, who am called by his name, am not holy.

I cannot say **thy kingdom come** if I am unwilling to give up my own sovereignty and accept the righteous reign of God.

I cannot say **thy will be done** if I am unwilling or resentful of having it in my life.

I cannot say **in earth as it is in heaven** unless I am truly ready to give myself to his service here and now.

I cannot say **give us this day our daily bread** without expending honest effort for it or by ignoring the genuine needs of my fellowmen.

I cannot say **forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us** if I continue to harbor a grudge against anyone.

I cannot say **lead us not into temptation** if I deliberately choose to remain in a situation where I am likely to be tempted.

I cannot say **deliver us from evil** if I am not prepared to fight in the spiritual realm with the weapon of prayer.

I cannot say **thine is the kingdom** if I do not give the King the disciplined obedience of a loyal subject.

I cannot say **thine is the power** if I fear what my neighbors may say or do.

I cannot say **thine is the glory** if I am seeking my own glory first.

I cannot say **forever** if I am too anxious about each day's affairs.

I cannot say **amen** unless I honestly say, "Cost what it may, this is my prayer."

"Our Father who art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name, Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever."

**AMEN**