

Day #9: The Strategic Place of Prayer in Crisis

Read: Psalm 22:5-21; Matthew 26:39; James 5:13

Whatever you may think of the movie “The Passion of the Christ” (Mel Gibson), I think the scene at the foot of the cross got a lot right. Looking down from the cross, Jesus sees a vile-looking “humanoid” (Satan) circling through the crowd. The creature’s sneering grin grows deeper as each breath of the Savior becomes more labored. Satan’s ancient plan will soon be realized.

Poetic license? Not so fast. But to find the source text one must leave the Gospels and go to the Psalms of David. Psalm 22, the prophetic account of the crucifixion, reads: “a band of evil men has encircled me....bulls surround me...roaring lions open their mouths wide against me...dogs have surrounded me....” Horrific. Evil.

The psalm continues, recounting the future prayers of the dying Lamb of God from the cross, “But you, O LORD, be not far off; O my Strength, come quickly to help me. Deliver my life from the sword...Rescue me from the mouth of the lions....”

Surely Heaven and Hell met at the cross! In a lesser, but very real way, the same is true during any crisis. Crisis brings people to their most vulnerable; and that’s where Heaven and Hell rush in *although for completely opposite purposes*.

Our only weapon to wield, as demonstrated here by Jesus, is **prayer**, which penetrates the veil, touching the heart of the Father and breaking the resolve of the evil one. Prayer – simple, desperate, and earnest. Only prayer.

OTHERS WHO SOUGHT DELIVERANCE THROUGH PRAYER

[PAUL] Three times Paul **prayed** for God to remove his thorn in the flesh. (2 Corinthians 12:7)

[JOSEPH] The Bible records none of Joseph’s prison prayers except those requesting wisdom to interpret dreams, but certainly this man of God prayed constantly to be delivered from prison.

[JOB] Job sweetly yielded to God’s will, offering up almost super-human **prayers** to Him who “gave, and . . . has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised” (Job 1:21).

James agrees, writing simply: “Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them **pray**...” (James 5:13).

PRAYERS ANSWERED

All four would affirm that their prayers were answered, though the answers looked different from their requests:

- **Jesus** still was made sin, but rose in victory, opening the way between God and man.
- **Paul** was granted sufficient grace...but not healing.
- For years God answered **Joseph’s** prayer for deliverance by granting him favor in the eyes of those in authority over him. Finally, at the perfect time, he was released from prison.
- **Job** was vindicated before his “comforters,” but his losses were real.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Is a prayer really answered if God's answer to our prayer looks totally different from what we expect?

Share experiences where God's answer to your prayer was very different than you expected. (For example, Habakkuk asked God to judge Israel for their disobedience, never imagining that God's answer would be in the form of judgment by a nation even more wicked than Israel.)

What word could you use to describe how it makes you feel to know that God's answer to your prayer may be different than you were expecting. (Words such as comforted, frustrated, assured, angry, etc.)