

Devotion #4 God Hears, Answers, Helps 1

Thank you for joining us for a time of devotion and prayer. I read this morning that in places all over the nation people are putting up their outdoor Christmas lights again. It is a way of brightening up the atmosphere and sending a message that the darkness of this hour will be overcome. We are all in this together. In the last two days there have been a lot of phone calls since we cannot meet in person. The phone calls have taken on a new dimension that is worthy of mentioning. There is a wonderful honesty taking place, people expressing their true feelings to what is happening in their lives. The conversations are more heartfelt than normal. When they end you can feel your closeness with the person on the other end of the line, the connection that comes from the Lord Jesus Himself. I have appreciated hearing of acts of kindness such as purchasing a haircut, giving the money to the hairdresser for work that will be done after the virus. I have also heard of people buying gift cards to places that are closed so they can be used when the places of service reopen. This is one way of trying to help businesses that are either closed or are at a standstill.

One of the disciplines of Lent that we are participating in is every day expressing to God something that you are thankful for and after you have done this, either write it down to remind yourself later or to tell another person what you expressed to God. Being thankful to God, even for minor little things, is a way our own spirits can be uplifted. I think it is a good time to call a particular person that you are truly thankful for and express it over the phone. This is a good way to stay linked to one another especially to those who are confined to their own homes.

The Bible says, "Bend down, O Lord, and hear my prayer; answer me, for I need your help" (Psalm 86:1). In these trying times I know that we need the help of the Lord more than ever. It is good and healthy to ask God to hear our prayers. By doing that you are reminding yourself that in prayer you are speaking directly to God. Yes, God does hear every word, even those unspoken words that are deep in your heart. God cares about your every need no matter how small or how big. I also know that it seems like our prayers are often not answered in the

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way we prayed, and it is easy to grow discouraged about praying. Does praying really matter? The answer is yes, prayer really matters. Let me explain. Your faith in Jesus is truly exercised in prayer. What I mean by that is this. In prayer we present our sins, our praises, our thanks, and our requests to God. God takes it all in and always answers according to His will, according to His way, and according to God's perfect timing. I know some have prayed for 20 years for a particular issue and in the 21st year it is finally resolved. Faith is being assured that God hears your prayers and will answer according to His perfect will. We may not agree with the way God answers, but God is always good and always does what is best even though we may fail to see it. Faith in Jesus gives us assurance and certainty that God will work all things out for our good and for the greater glory of God. Praying in faith is being absolutely vulnerable to God in every way and accepting God's answer in the way God sees fit. So often in prayer God changes us so we can accept His will and not grow discouraged in prayer.

"Bend down, O Lord" the Psalmist writes. That is a wonderful definition of God's grace. God bends down to our level. God stoops down to us and lavishes us with His grace that sustains us through everything and one day that grace will lift us up into the fullness of His Presence. God's grace is truly amazing.

"Hear my prayer" the Psalmist pleads to God. God hears what you pray as well as all the thoughts of your hearts including the pain or anxiety behind your prayers. God also hears your praises emanating from a thankful heart.

"Answer me" the Psalmist writes. One can detect a sense of urgency in this prayer. The one praying is deeply troubled.

"for I need your help" the Psalmist writes. Friends, sometimes it takes something extreme, like a virus, to humble ourselves before God and lean on Him, rely on Him, and trust in Him for everything, asking God for help. The most self-sufficient person who has ignored God

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and thought Christianity a false may even be moved to give his or her life over to God in this time of need. Let us pray to that end.