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Just Thinking is a teaching resource of Ravi Zacharias International Ministries and exists to engender thoughtful engagement with apologetics, Scripture, and the whole of life.

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BEAUTY GIVEN BY GRACE

Still Point is proud to host Beauty Given by Grace: The Biblical Prints of Sadao Watanabe, a traveling exhibit of CIVA that celebrates Watanabe’s life and work by bringing together works from two private collectors, Sandra Bowden and John Kohan. Beauty Given by Grace opened on October 1, 2017 and will remain on view until December 31, 2017, before returning to Japan.
FORM BEFORE FUNCTION. I ran across that phrase recently and it stopped me in my tracks—literally. I’ve had a minor but nagging injury to my foot that wouldn’t heal even after several days off from running. The lack of progress over two months had been discouraging. “Form over function” suggested, however, that I first needed to pay attention to my posture and particular muscles that weren’t engaging properly before I could return to running. This idea, incidentally, fueled the barefoot running boom—and my own journey toward recovery.

“Progress, if such a practical term can be used, is not measured by the amount of ground that is covered; it is measured by the amount of attention that is paid,” remarks Robert Benson in his book Living Prayer. Regarding the journey of prayer, he writes, “We must pay attention to the seasons that surround us and we must live the season in which we find ourselves.”

If we were to look closely at our lives, we might find that there are particular narratives—perhaps associated with a loss or persistent difficulty—that give shape to our prayers or lack thereof. The pages of Scripture are punctuated with prayer, giving voice over the centuries to earnest cries, songs of praise, and words left unspoken. In the pages that follow, we consider the prayers of the psalmists, Daniel, Zechariah, and even Jesus. Their lives provide needed perspective and their prayers awaken hope. They bespeak a faithful God who does not forget his people: He is at work in us wherever we may be whether we see Him or not.

As Ravi Zacharias notes, “Prayer, in its most basic form, is the surging of the human spirit in its weakness, grasping at the Spirit of God in his strength.” Likewise, John Lennox calls to our attention “times when those of us who are believers may find the way difficult; we are faced with apparently unanswerable questions and insoluble difficulties—many of them to do with the flow of life. It is at those times that we most need reassurance that there is a world beyond this one; there is a God who is real, and He loves me.”

Danielle DuRant
Editor
Called by Name

By Margaret Manning Shull
Even a casual reader of the Bible cannot help but notice the many bold and staggering promises made concerning prayer. Perhaps none is more direct than Jesus’s statement in Mark’s Gospel: “All things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you” (11:24). Matthew and Luke record similar promises. Those who seek after God knock, and God will open the door. All things that are asked for in prayer, with belief, will be received. So strong are these promises about prayer that the Greek language in which they were originally translated indicates that what is asked for is already accomplished. The one praying simply needs to believe the answer has already been received.

It was reading bold promises like these found in the Bible that troubled English author Somerset Maugham. In his novel *Of Human Bondage*, he tells a fictionalized account of an incident with prayer from which his faith never recovered. The central character in the novel, Philip, is a young boy, full of faith, who has a clubfoot. When Philip reads this verse from Mark about prayer, he is overjoyed. Now he would be able to play football with the other boys. The relentless teasing would cease and he wouldn't have to hide his foot any longer when swimming with other children.

So Philip immediately “prayed with all the power in his soul. No doubts assailed him. He was confident in the Word of God. And the night before he was to go back to school he went up to bed tremulous with excitement…. He remembered at once that this was the morning of the miracle. His heart was filled with joy and gratitude. His first instinct was to put down his hand and feel the foot which was whole now; but to do this seemed to doubt the goodness of God. He knew that his foot was well. But at last, he made up his mind, and with the toes of his right foot he just touched his left. Then he passed his hand over it. He limped downstairs just as Mary Ann was going into the dining room for prayers, and then he sat down to breakfast.” His foot was not healed and his faith was destroyed.

Unanswered prayers prayed with utter conviction are particularly difficult to understand. Maugham, who had a stutter, prayed fervently for healing, but like his character Philip, his prayer was answered with a resounding “No” and his faith was never the same. Jesus implies in his teaching on prayer that like our earthly fathers, God longs to give us what is good in response to the asking, seeking, and knocking of prayer: “Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake?” (Matthew 7:9-10). Yet for Maugham, or his alter-ego Philip, how could he see his stuttering or that clubfoot as a good gift, when all it brought him was merciless teasing, rejection, and misery?
Most people—religious or non-religious—have experienced the pain of unanswered prayer. Whether in the simple prayers of childhood, or in the fervent prayers of the deeply faithful, it is an all too common human experience that prayers are answered “No” or with what can feel like indifferent silence. Prayers for God’s protection, God’s healing, and God’s intervention are answered for some, but others suffer accidents, injuries, illnesses, or death despite fervent prayer. Sometimes when we are most desperate to hear God’s voice, there is only a vast silence in return. Perhaps, we are tempted to give up praying all together. Emily Dickinson wrote of this temptation to despair over unanswered prayer: 

“There comes an hour when begging stops, 
When the long interceding lips 
Perceive their prayer is vain.”

Even if the divine answer is “Wait,” the months and years of waiting can stretch on interminably, making the most patient intercessor wonder what “good” gift could come in the endless waiting. And yet the Bible makes it clear that pain does not go unnoticed in God’s eyes. Psalm 56 speaks of God figuratively storing up our tears in a bottle and the Book of Revelation looks forward to a day when God will wipe every tear from our eyes. In the meantime, however, it is perfectly acceptable for us to cry, to question, to throw our grief before the God who laments along with us. In fact, a good portion of the Scripture is a record of such lament and groaning before God. The Psalms give voice to the lament of those who wonder about the presence of God in the midst of suffering and silence. “Evening and morning and at noon, I will complain and murmur, and God will hear my voice,” the psalmist writes in Psalm 55:17. In Psalm 73, we hear despair and hope together: 

When my heart was embittered and I was pierced within, then I was senseless and ignorant; I was like a beast before you. Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you have taken hold of my right hand. With your counsel you will guide me, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And besides you, I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. (verses 21-26)

What is so encouraging about this Psalm is that even when we are angry with God and embittered against God’s seeming indifference to our prayers, this does not put us out of God’s reach and presence. “Where can I go from your presence and where can I hide from your love?” the psalmist asks in Psalm 139. The answer is nowhere! “If I make my bed in Sheol (the place of the dead) behold, You are there!”

GOOD GIFTS

So what is this good gift promised by Jesus? Matthew 7 and Luke 11 present parallel teachings on this promise of prayer—and what Matthew implies, Luke makes explicit. In Matthew’s account Jesus tells his disciples that the Father will give what is good to those who ask Him. In Luke’s account, Jesus defines what is good and tells us that God will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask.

How might one understand the Holy Spirit as God’s abundant answer to prayer—even those prayers that go unanswered or receive an unwanted answer? Christians believe that the promise of the Holy Spirit is the promise of God’s presence through all the circumstances of life. The Bible speaks of the Holy Spirit as the comforter, the one who comes alongside. The promise of God’s presence is meant to sustain,
even in the mystery of “No” to our specific requests. God’s good gift is the hope that God is present no matter what life brings and that He knows us each by name.

I am reminded of a season when my late husband and I worked among the homeless in Boston. Like so many other homeless individuals all around our country, they were merely faces in a crowd, a nuisance to be avoided, or simply another panhandler asking for money. One gentleman in particular, sprawled against a building in a self-induced alcohol coma, became a fixture for me and the other passers-by in Boston’s financial district. He was stepped over and generally regarded as simply another facet of the building against which his stupefied body slumbered. He had no name or value to me, or to anyone who daily passed him by on those cold streets. In fact, at times he seemed barely human.

That is until we began to be involved in a ministry that made a point of calling people by name. As we participated in this ministry that saw the nameless among us, we learned their names: Bobby, Jim, Fred, John, Daniel, and Carl. We ate meals together and talked with each other. We listened and shared. We asked them to come in off the streets and into a place of warmth and solace. Soon, we couldn’t walk the streets of Boston without seeing these as persons we knew by name, these same ones who were formerly unknown to us. Now, I saw Bobby and Jim, Fred and John; they were known to me, and I to them.

There is something about being known and called by name that gives each of us dignity and worth. To be able to look someone in the eye and say his or her name communicates knowledge, oftentimes warmth, and a sense of value: I care enough to know your name.

In prayer, God invites us into his presence, where we are known and loved. We are invited to pour out our hearts to Him, for God is a refuge and promises in his presence there is fullness of joy. Likewise, Jesus says of his followers, “The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name” (John 10:3).

Prayer, then, is so much more than simply receiving answers to requests. Prayer is an invitation to relationship with God. Prayer is about joining in with the Spirit who rejoices with us, comforts us, and even groans with us. As theologian John Calvin claimed about the prayers of lament in the Psalms, they are “among the unutterable groanings of which Paul makes mention in Romans 8:26, ‘For the spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.’”

Unanswered prayer will always be a mystery. For every person who prays, there will be times when it seems the gift is a scorpion instead of an egg, or a snake instead of a fish. Yet perhaps as we wrestle with prayer, God’s bold promise to send the Holy Spirit is the only answer we could hope for: the good gift of the Father’s abiding presence, the power of redemption in the Son, and the promise of God’s creative, ongoing work to make something beautiful from the chaos of our lives.

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3 Ibid., 213.
5 See Psalm 62:8 and 16:11.
The Gift of Silence
By Nathan Betts

Before offering a narrative of Christ’s birth, the opening chapter of the Gospel of Luke recounts a dramatic conversation between a priest called Zechariah and the angel Gabriel. One day Zechariah was serving in the temple when the angel Gabriel appeared to him. Zechariah was very afraid, but Gabriel spoke to him saying, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great before the Lord” (verses 14-15). Indeed, this son, later identified as John the Baptist, would be the one to prepare people for the coming of Jesus.

Yet instead of rejoicing over the promised fulfillment of a deep longing and prayer, Zechariah objects, “How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years.” So Gabriel responds by explaining to Zechariah precisely to whom he is speaking and also by citing the authority on which he bears this news:

I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time. (Luke 1:19-20)

One only needs to read further in this chapter of Luke’s Gospel to find out that this promise from the Lord is soon fulfilled. Elizabeth and Zechariah have a baby boy—and it is only after Zechariah writes, “His name is John,” that he is able to speak again.

There are many aspects of this story that are remarkable. First is the context in which the story takes place: the people of Israel, of whom Zechariah and Elizabeth are a part, have not heard from God for a period of roughly 400 years! When Gabriel appears to Zechariah, it is highly likely that this is the first time Zechariah has heard from God in such a way.

To make theological matters even more complicated for Zechariah, Gabriel’s second statement, after telling him to not be afraid, is “Your prayer has been heard.” There is deep irony in this statement primarily because of the theological background to this conversation. For all of Zechariah’s life, he has never heard God’s voice like this. The very act of God verbally speaking to him would seem preposterous. Therefore, it is understandable why Zechariah questions Gabriel. Zechariah and his people have prayed to God, many for their entire lives, and they have never heard a verbal response—or perhaps anything. How could Zechariah be sure this was truly a message from the Lord? This encounter undoubtedly marks a watershed moment, not only for Zechariah but also for God’s people and the entire world. God would speak now and man would be silent.

God’s silence is often a challenge to Christian belief. One point I glean from the early part of this story is that God’s silence does not necessarily imply that God is inactive. In Israel’s case, God had been silent for years, yet in this angelic encounter, nearly the first words of instruction from the Lord are, “Your prayer has been heard.”

For those of us who are immersed in the urgency of the digital world, we
would do well to heed the implicit lesson of patience found in this story. God had been silent for a long time, but God was listening. There are times in our lives in which we do not hear God's voice. Gabriel's words tell us that although we might not hear God speaking, God is still listening. Silence does not mean inactivity.

After Zechariah objects to the seemingly audacious promise given from the Lord, Gabriel points out that it is not on his own authority that he speaks, but God's. Implicit in Gabriel's statement is the reality that God is bringing help to Israel, not because of what Zechariah or Elizabeth have done, but rather because of who God is. Historically speaking, God is the one who helped, rescued, and saved Israel countless times. The people of Israel knew this history well, and they also knew why God had helped them. They knew why God had helped them, and they also had learned how God had worked in history. Over time they had realized that God's grace and salvation would be worked out through quietness and trust. Israel's strength lay not in activity and being busy, but in silence. This was how God worked.

Zechariah's silence is a symbol of God's salvation. Zechariah's son, John, spent his life preparing people for Christ, the means by which people could be saved. But before John came, the Lord visited his father through Gabriel, telling Zechariah that God had heard his prayer and was going to rescue his people—not in a flurry of human activity, but in a way in which people could only watch Him work and hear Him speak.

Perhaps one of the vital lessons we can learn from Zechariah, and the entire story of Christ's coming, is to prioritize silence before God. At the very least, being quiet will remind us of a greater time, one of the greatest in history, when God spoke and humankind was there—there only to watch, listen, and receive.

Nathan Betts is a member of the speaking and writing team at Ravi Zacharias International Ministries.
The Man above the River

By John Lennox
The last section of the book of Daniel, chapters 10–12, contains the fourth vision that God gave to Daniel. He dates it to the third year of Cyrus, locates it as happening on the bank of the River Tigris, and describes it as the revelation of a great conflict. Once more he makes it clear that what he writes is not produced by his own brilliant intellect—it was given as a revelation. What is more, Daniel claims that what was revealed to him is true: And the word was true, and it was [or, it was about] a great conflict (Daniel 10:1).

Since this is the longest of the visions, we shall introduce it by giving a brief sketch of its contents. First of all Daniel sees the glorious figure of a man above the great River Tigris, and he is so overwhelmed that he falls asleep. He is awakened by a heavenly messenger, who tells him that he has come to make him understand what is to happen to his people in the future. The messenger says that his journey to Daniel has been resisted by certain powers in the unseen world, but now he has finally arrived to reveal to Daniel what is inscribed in the book of truth (Daniel 10:21).

There follows a lengthy historical survey, which we can now interpret as beginning in Daniel's time in Medo-Persia, tracing the rise of the Greek empire under Alexander the Great, and detailing the subsequent division of that empire into four parts under his generals. There follows the constant conflict between the various parts, particularly between the Seleucids (the “kings of the north”) and the Ptolemies (the “kings of the south”), culminating in the desecration of the temple in Jerusalem by the Seleucid king Antiochus IV “Epiphanes” in the second century BC.

Next, as elsewhere, the narrative uses the time of Antiochus as a prototype of the time of the end, when a fierce king will arise that shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god (Daniel 11:36). There will be a time of unparalleled trouble for Daniel’s people, Israel, followed by deliverance and the resurrection of both the just and the unjust.

At that point Daniel is told to seal the book until the time of the end (12:4). He then observes two figures standing, one on each bank of the river, and he hears a voice asking the man above the river, How long shall it be till the end of these wonders? (12:6). The answer comes: a time, times, and half a time. Daniel does not understand it, so he asks what it means. He is again told that the words are sealed until the time of the end (12:7). The book concludes with a wonderful promise to Daniel: you shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days (12:12).
A MESSAGE FROM HEAVEN

Let us now proceed to have a closer look at some of the detail of this vision. Daniel is told that its content is inscribed in the book of truth (10:21). In his previous vision Daniel was studying another book of truth—the prophecy of Jeremiah. That book was accessible to him. However, in this final vision, the book of truth is not the kind of book that is available in a library, so its content will be revealed to him directly. This makes explicit what we already know: Daniel was a prophet in his own right, in the sense that God revealed information directly to him.

Daniel is told that the book of truth contains detailed information about historical events after his time. The fact that it had already been written is very striking. Some people will then say that we cannot take it seriously. If it were true, they argue, it would lead to a deterministic—or, at least, a semi-deistic—view of God that would be totally unacceptable, whereby God has wound everything up and just let it run like clockwork, with no room for human responsibility or interaction with the divine. We note at once that this would also apply to Jeremiah’s prophecy about the captivity in Babylon, which Daniel was reading before he had the vision of the seventy weeks. Indeed, it would apply to all prophecy, including that of Daniel himself.

Some people think that if it is the case that certain events have been predicted in writing then whoever is behind the prediction causes those events to occur, and thus eliminates any freedom of decision or action on the part of those involved. However, that would only be arguably the case if we were naively to assume that God’s relationship to time is the same as ours. In fact, we do not even know what time is, let alone the complexities of God’s relationship to it.

Nor is this the place for detailed biblical teaching on the relationship between God’s sovereignty and human responsibility. Suffice to say that even if certain events have been predicted by God’s revelation, that does not in any way remove moral agency—and therefore responsibility and accountability. This is as much an issue in the New Testament as it is in the Old. Think, for instance, of Peter’s statement at Pentecost to the crowds in Jerusalem: this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men (Acts 2:23).

Daniel dates his vision to the third year of Cyrus, so it was over seventy years after his deportation from Jerusalem. He was an old man, therefore, at least eighty-five years of age. It is interesting how he identifies himself here. He tells us the name that he was given all those years before in the Babylonian period. It’s as if he is saying: “Yes, I am the very same Daniel, whom Nebuchadnezzar named Belteshazzar.”

The date is important, since it enables us to deduce something that Daniel does not explicitly mention: this vision occurred two years after some of the Jews were allowed by an edict of...
Cyrus to return to Jerusalem and begin the task of rebuilding the temple (Ezra 1:1). Daniel had not gone back with the pilgrims—possibly due to age or infirmity, or because he was still an important figure in the administration of Babylon. As Edward Young points out, if the Daniel of the sixth century BC were a fictitious person, created by the imagination of a writer in the second century BC, it would have been a plausible fiction to have Daniel returning to Jerusalem as soon as possible: “The fact that Daniel does not return to Palestine is a strong argument against the view that the book is a product of the Maccabean age.”

Judging from the tone of the book of Ezra, we can imagine that reports had reached Daniel that things were not going very well in Jerusalem. Daniel was still deeply troubled about his people and their future. It must have been very depressing, then, to learn from the vision of the seventy weeks that the ultimate restoration of Jerusalem and of his people would take a very much longer period than Daniel might have hoped.

In those days I, Daniel, was mourning for three weeks. I ate no delicacies, no meat or wine entered my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, for the full three weeks. (Daniel 10:2–3)

His use here of the Hebrew expression, literally “three weeks of days,” may be a subtle but deliberate hint at the contrast between that short time and the seventy interminable weeks of years in Daniel 9.

It was the first month of the Jewish year, the month Nisan, just past the time of Passover, when he and his nation ought to have been joyfully celebrating their marvelous deliverance by God from slavery. Passover celebrations started on the fourteenth day of the month, and normally took one week. Presumably Daniel had celebrated the Passover, yet such was the depth of his sorrow that he extended the period of his mourning for three times that length. It was as if his people were dead. Daniel could not know that centuries later Paul, who shared the same heartbreak, would express the hope that “dead” Israel would rise again:

*For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?* (Romans 11:15)

The matter of his people’s predicament weighed so heavily on Daniel’s mind that he ate very little, no fine food, meat, or wine. This mention of food is like an echo from the introduction to the book, where Daniel refused the king’s food in order not to defile himself with the surrounding pagan culture.

Incidentally, from what Daniel now says, his initial stance did not mean that he felt it necessary in other circumstances to refrain from good food and wine. He voluntarily gave up such things for this period of three weeks, not now to avoid compromise with paganism; he was fasting out of concern for his nation.

We cannot read Daniel’s mind, of course, but there is something very human about what is written here. Daniel has had a lifetime’s experience of God’s providential care and supernatural intervention. He has seen God working at the highest levels of state—even in the heart of an emperor. He has received three direct revelations from God about the future: each of them involving predictions of terrible things that will happen to his people. And yet here he is, one of those people: resolute still in the faith he developed as a student in Babylon, but deeply puzzled at the twists and turns in the fate of his nation. It was
almost too much for a sensitive, brilliant, and caring man like Daniel to bear. So he fasted and mourned, not even bothering to soothe and refresh his skin and protect it from the heat by the usual means of rubbing in oil.

Perhaps he hoped that God had something more to say to him—truth not sentiment that could comfort him in his old age, so that he could die in peace knowing that the future was safe. He longed for his mourning to end in joy.

He was standing one day by the River Tigris, contemplating its flow. Where he stood the river was about a mile wide—it was one of the mightiest rivers on earth. The massive expanse of water was constantly on the move, surging past him on its irresistible journey. The flow of great rivers had already been used by Jewish writers as a poetic metaphor to express the flow of history in the nations of the world, as they surged against each other in conflict, calmed down for a time, surged again, broke their banks, and flooded across each other in what seemed to be a ceaseless maelstrom of war, conflict, and suffering. For instance, Isaiah wrote of the Assyrian war machine:

*The Lord spoke to me again: “Because this people has refused the waters of Shiloah that flow gently, and rejoice over Rezin and the son of Remaliah, therefore, bebold, the Lord is bringing up against them the waters of the River, mighty and many, the king of Assyria and all his glory. And it will rise over all its channels and go over all its banks, and it will sweep on into Judah, it will overflow and pass on, reaching even to the neck, and its outspread wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel.”* (Isaiah 8:5–8)

Vivid imagery—picturing Jerusalem, perched as a head on the neck of a mountain, about to be engulfed by the rising flood of the mighty armies of Assyria pouring into the land around.

Daniel has had a lifetime’s experience of God’s providential care and supernatural intervention. He has seen God working at the highest levels of state—even in the heart of an emperor. He has received three direct revelations from God about the future: each of them involving predictions of terrible things that will happen to his people.

**THE FLOW OF HISTORY**
Daniel had already heard such imagery used of Jerusalem in the previous vision: *Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war* (Daniel 9:26). Now, as he watches the restless flow of the Tigris, his mind is drawn once more to the inexorable flow of history. Where is it all going? What does it all mean? He will speak of forces that come, *overflow and pass through*, as they wreak their destructive path (11:10, 40). He started his book by drawing attention to God’s sovereignty over history, even as he allowed Nebuchadnezzar to defeat the king of Judah (1:2). Now, at the end of the book, he is returning to the same theme. How is he to navigate the complexities of what he has already been told? After all, Judah’s defeat was relatively easy to understand. The moral and spiritual rea-
sons for it lie at the heart of Daniel’s prayer in chapter 9. He has been deeply shaken by this knowledge that only he possessed, of all his people: their future is going to be long and dark, and they have yet to experience waves of fierce persecution by the nations of the world. The vision of chapter 9 had left too much unclear. Daniel longed to know more.

Where was the Tigris going? Where was history going? Where was Daniel’s nation going? Where was Daniel going? Could anything impede the flow? Could one swim against it? What was the meaning of it all anyway? His mind is crammed with questions as he stands gazing across the vast expanse of the river. Then he becomes aware of the glowing figure of a majestic man above the river. The man is dressed in linen, with a belt of fine gold, his body incandescent with light like a jewel, his face like lightning, his eyes fiercely flaming like a torch, and his legs gleaming like bronze. The man is speaking, and his voice is like the roaring sound of a vast multitude. This is no mere human, or even an angel; here is overwhelmingly transcendent glory.

Six centuries later the apostle John saw him: the same glorious man, his face like the sun, eyes like flame, feet like glowing bronze, and a voice like the ocean’s roar. He was Jesus Christ, the risen and ascended Son of God. How could Daniel have seen him? We are now on the edge of something unfathomably profound. It was the same apostle John who wrote: No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known (John 1:18). He is the Word, who was with God, was God, and uniquely reveals God. This is the one Daniel saw.

Daniel was not alone that day. Perhaps he had brought some close friends who shared his burdens. We do not know, but whoever these companions were, they, like Paul’s companions on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:7), did not see the vision. Sensing that something awesome was happening, they began to tremble and ran to seek a place to hide. Daniel was left alone to gaze at this overpowering sight of the dazzling glory of the man who was above the river.

The vision had such an effect on his emotions that his strength ebbed away, and he was aware that his normally radiant facial expression had fearfully changed. The volume of the cataract of words coming from above the river caused his senses to go into overload. He collapsed on the ground and fell into a deep sleep. The apostle John reacted the same way. He fell as dead at the feet of the glorious man, until he felt a hand on his shoulder and heard the voice of Jesus telling him not to fear.

The next thing Daniel knew was that a hand was touching him, which set him on his hands and knees trembling with weakness and fear. And then a voice spoke to him. It is not said to be the voice of Gabriel, but the language of address is very similar:

O Daniel, man greatly loved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for now I have been sent to you. (Daniel 10:11)

Once more, a supernatural messenger tells Daniel personally that he is greatly loved. Far from being rejected because he has been asking questions, he is much loved in that world that is the source of all love. By far the most wonderful thing any human can hear is that he or she is loved by God. It brings stability and hope into the worst of situations.

Daniel was told this twenty-six centuries ago, and any one of us can know it today. A heavenly Messenger, greater than the one sent to Daniel, has come to our world—God himself,
incarnate in his Son, Jesus Christ the Lord. He came to tell us the good news:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

Those people who respond and trust him shall enjoy the friendship and love of God eternally. They can hear the voice of God himself saying to them, “O man, O woman, greatly loved.”

There are times when those of us who are believers may find the way difficult; we are faced with apparently unanswerable questions and insoluble difficulties—many of them to do with the flow of life. It is at those times that we most need reassurance that there is a world beyond this one; there is a God who is real, and he loves me.

Daniel stood up, still shaking, as the voice continued:

Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words. The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia, and came to make you understand what is to happen to your people in the latter days. For the vision is for days yet to come. (Daniel 10:12–14)

These words give us insight into Daniel’s state of mind as he began his three-week fast. He wanted to understand, and so he humbled himself before God. That is the way the heavenly world evaluated his attitude. Daniel’s life had been spent with proud men whom God had humbled. God did not need to bring Daniel down to humble reality; he had humbled himself.

We all detest false humility—a cloak of assumed lack of pride that is not genuine. It is possible for us, however, to humble ourselves in a genuine way that does not involve hypocrisy. Indeed, it is expected of Christians. The apostle Peter writes:

Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility towards one another, for God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties upon him, because he cares for you. (1 Peter 5:5–7)

It all has to do with our mindset and our attitude towards others. Instead of regarding ourselves as more important than others, we are to consider others better than ourselves.

Daniel had walked his whole life with kings and emperors. It had not gone to his head. In God’s eyes—and that is what counts—he was still a humble man. And the heavenly world was watching him. The moment Daniel started his three-week fast to wait on God, the other world responded, and a messenger was detailed to take a message to him.

A MESSENGER FROM HEAVEN

But the messenger was hindered. This is an extraordinary statement. It opens a window into an unseen realm about which we know very little. The messenger tells Daniel of a strange conflict in that realm: The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me (Daniel 10:13). Prince Michael is mentioned later in the vision as the great prince who has charge of your people (12:1).

The skeptic will hoot with derision if we add to our confession of faith in God the belief that another realm exists where there are supernatural beings—
EXTRAORDINARY FAITH

Daniel’s story is one of extraordinary faith in God lived out at the pinnacle of executive power. It tells of four teenage friends captured by Nebuchadnezzar, emperor of Babylon, and how they eventually rose to the top echelons of administration in a pluralistic society antagonistic to their faith. That is why this story has such a powerful message for us.

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RZIM Resources
angels and demons. Such laughter strikes me as decidedly out of place, especially nowadays. If any scientist announces with confidence that there is life elsewhere in the universe—or, as is very likely these days, that there is a multiverse: a plurality of universes, many of which are teeming with life—there is no derision, but rather fascinated and respectful attention. Yet when the Bible suggests that this may not be the only world (or universe), and there are other beings “out there,” it gets laughed to scorn. This is intellectually inconsistent, and simply shows the depth of prejudice that the naturalistic worldview has generated.

So far Daniel has given us very good reason to take him seriously. He is an exceptionally brilliant and wise man who has governed two empires, and has been used by God to demonstrate to his emperors that God and the supernatural are real. He has not taken leave of his senses here. As we have already seen as we considered Gabriel’s role, both the Old and New Testament testify to the reality of angels. Christ himself said to those who came to arrest him:

*Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?* (Matthew 26:53–54)

Our Lord was not speaking metaphorically; he was explaining to Peter why he should not try to protect him by force. Jesus could have summoned all the protection he needed from supernatural angelic forces, but he chose not to.

Who or what are angels? The Bible tells us that they are **ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation** (Hebrews 1:14). By contrast we are told that humans are, from one point of view, **a little lower than the angels** (Hebrews 2:7) since they are spirit plus flesh. The term “spirit” does not mean that angels have no substantive being. Unfortunately, the influence of materialism is so deep that many people unconsciously assume that matter is the only reality. The truth is, matter is not even the primary reality. Jesus taught that God is spirit (John 4:24), so spirit is the primary reality. Matter is derivative: **All things were made through him** (John 1:3).

There should therefore be no problem in principle in accepting that God has made other beings that are spirit. Certainly, that is the claim of the Bible, and the book of Daniel in particular.

The angelic messenger reveals to Daniel that a battle is raging in another world that in some sense reflects, and may also be reflected by, the conflicts in this one. This idea recurs in the book of Revelation:

*Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.* (Revelation 12:7–9)

Paul tells all Christians that there are spiritual forces arrayed against them and that in order to stand firm they need to put on the armor of God.
It needs to be emphasized that the idea of a cosmic conflict is not some peripheral notion, generated by the overheated imagination of Christian extremists. Paul tells all Christians that there are spiritual forces arrayed against them and that in order to stand firm they need to put on the armor of God:

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:10–12)

Atheistic rejection of the supernatural dimension can lead even Christians to underestimate the forces of evil. This part of the book of Daniel would have served us well if it alerted us to take the level of the conflict seriously.

When Daniel heard that the angel had come to tell him what would happen to the Jewish nation in the latter days, he turned his face towards the ground and found himself unable to speak. Someone who looked like a man (but presumably wasn’t) touched his lips, which enabled Daniel to speak and describe the debilitating effects of the vision. He wondered how he would have the strength to speak to such a superior being. Daniel sensed that he was in the presence of a greatness that far exceeded his own.

Again the supernatural being touched and strengthened him, and told him once more that he was greatly loved. Then he asked Daniel if he knew why he had come to him. Without waiting for a response, the angel said that he must soon return to fight in the ongoing spiritual war against the prince of Persia and a new foe, the prince of Greece, who was yet to come. But first he would reveal to Daniel what was in the book of truth.

Before he did, however, there was another important piece of background information that Daniel needed to know:

...there is none who contends by my side against these except Michael, your prince. And as for me, in the first year of Darius the Mede, I stood up to confirm and strengthen him (that is, Michael). (Daniel 10:21—11:1)

In the supernatural battle with the mighty princes of Medo-Persia and Greece, Daniel’s angelic messenger (whom we may presume to be Gabriel) was aided by another prince. His name was Michael, and Daniel is told that he is your prince... the great prince who has charge of your people (10:21; 12:1). It was Gabriel who had strengthened Michael at the beginning of Darius’s reign, though Daniel had not realized it. Indeed he had probably not known of his existence.

This takes Daniel’s mind back to the very beginning of the Medo-Persian kingdom (and so to the first section of the second half of the book). Was the messenger informing Daniel that Gabriel, or Michael, or both of them, were involved in rescuing Daniel from the lions’ den? Daniel was being assured that there was a mighty prince in a higher realm, guarding his people. That knowledge would enable Daniel to face the contents of the book of truth that would now be opened to him.

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2 J. Edward Young, The Prophecy of Daniel (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1949), 223.
Have *Mercy* on Us

By Michelle Tepper

For Christians, prayer is more than remembrance, positive thinking, or a moment of silence on another’s behalf. It is talking to God, our Father, who created this world and who passionately loves every single human being.
From the devastation wreaked by recent hurricanes and wildfires to the horrific massacre in Las Vegas to our own deep, personal heartaches, we can understandably feel overwhelmed by the magnitude of such events and at a loss to know how to respond. In the wake of such suffering, what I continually return to is the “mere” prayer “Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy on us.”

One may ask, How can prayer be an appropriate or effective response to suffering on this level? The truth is, in times like these, even Christians struggle to find the words, direction, or desire to respond in prayer. Yet, I am reminded of why prayer is, in fact, a powerfully appropriate and tangible response to suffering.

First, prayer opens hearts. For Christians, prayer is more than remembrance, positive thinking, or a moment of silence on another’s behalf. It is talking to God, our Father, who created this world and who passionately loves every single human being. The Scriptures tell us that He is intensely moved when his children suffer and stands in solidarity with every one of them in the midst of their pain: “As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him” (Psalm 103:13).

Prayer not only opens our hearts to God’s love but ought also to move, soften, and challenge hearts that have grown hard, cold, and indifferent to the needs of others. As God has been merciful toward us, so we are called to show mercy and comfort to those in need.

Second, prayer is also a powerful outlet for grief, emotional burdens, and honest communication. It is a natural human reaction to lash out in anger or confusion when we are hurting. Prayer is a safe, eternal space for those mourning to pour out raw grief without time limit, fear of judgment, or the need for repression.

Grieving takes time and needs space; prayer is space for the brokenhearted.

When I respond to tragedy through prayer, I am comforted by a heavenly Father who knows what it is like to watch his own precious son be killed in an act of selfish hatred. When my natural response is to be paralyzed by anxiety or fear for the safety of my friends and family, in prayer I am reaching out in trust to the One who loves and cares for those dearest to me as his very own.

Third, prayer opens doors. Throughout history, communities of faith have led the way in relief and rescue responses in times of national and international tragedy. Jesus told Peter to give evidence of his devotion, asking him to “feed my sheep” (see John 21:15-17). Mother Teresa was guided to the poor of Calcutta through prayer as countless others have been in the wake of suffering. Prayer not only gives the Christian an outlet for requests; it is an opportunity to seek and receive supernatural guidance, revelation, and wisdom from God Himself. When Christians use prayer in this way, it can be a powerful response to the areas of greatest need in a community.

Fourth, prayer opens minds. Christians believe that prayer brings change, but sometimes it is not in the way we expect. Prayers that start as frantic cries for help or outpourings of raw emotion often turn to confident declarations of trust and focused hope.

In Matthew 6—the most famous prayer—we see this phenomenon at work. As we are invited to ask God, Our Father, “Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts,” so also are we called to forgive others. Jesus teaches us to pray in a way that compels us to love and forgive others in the same way that we want to be loved and forgiven. We are reminded that God, our Father, is
personal, loving, and all-powerful. This knowledge invites us to trust that He will “deliver us from evil” when we feel powerless to fight it on our own.

**KYRIE ELEISON**

I mentioned that the “mere” prayer “Lord, have mercy, Christ, have mercy on us” often comes to mind in the midst of suffering and tragedy. I was first introduced to this petition through the Church of England during my studies at Oxford. These words are from one of the oldest responsive prayers of Christian liturgy practiced historically in both Eastern and Western church traditions and they are still used today. The prayer in its original form, *Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison*, is derived from the New Testament. It is used in corporate worship as a repeated refrain after petitions are made to the Lord either by a pastor or a member of the congregation leading a time of communal intercessions.

The rhythm of petition and response creates space for the much needed yet often unpracticed communal processing of our shared human existence. Every petition said by the leader is answered with a continual cry for mercy.

What does this cry for mercy signify? How can it help us as we seek to process tragedy and suffering and also support those in need?

“Lord, have mercy” is a cry for deliverance.

These are words of desperation. A cry for mercy is a cry for help or deliverance from a burden that is too great to bear. The brutality of mass shootings or bombings shows a lack of regard for human life that is indeed pure evil. How do we fight evil? It is an invisible reality that is powerful yet unpredictable, and often only named in hindsight. The government, first responders, friends, and family can at times predict, contain, legislate, and act against evil. However, it is a reality outside of our natural world that we can never fully fight in our natural capacity alone. As we cry for mercy in the face of pure evil, we recognize our need for power, relief, and compassion from a source more powerful than ourselves.

*Utte rings Kyrie Eleison is also an act of humility.*

The prayer is both a statement and a request. Our human need for supernatural deliverance is declared as a request to the Lord. “Lord, have mercy” is a statement of authority. It is a recognition that there is a God; we are not God and only He is powerful enough to answer our request. This prayer for mercy forces us out of our natural self-centeredness and back into alignment with the nature and character of our Creator.

*The prayer is likewise a request for forgiveness.*

Continual surrender to the lordship of someone other than ourselves invites us to a continual need for repentance. The Christian understanding of repentance speaks of a change in thought, a turning of direction. The Christian worldview agrees with the harsh diagnosis that we are all contributors to the evil we encounter in our world. The Bible refers to it as sin. Sin is separation from God. When we choose to define morality, meaning, justice, and truth based on our own feelings and desires, or anything other than our Holy God, we are separated from the eternal and true source of love and goodness. Our sin separates us from God; but we cannot live with the evil that comes from our separation. It is upon this recognition that we cry out “Christ, have mercy.”

Jesus came to restore our relationship with God. He sacrificed his life to deliver us from the burden of our sins. On the cross, he took the just punishment we deserved upon himself so that we could receive the forgiveness and
Mercy we desperately need. So then we must also ask ourselves, How can we cry for deliverance from the evil happening to us until we cry for mercy and forgiveness for the evil that happens through us?

Finally, Kyrie Eleison is a statement of hope.

It is through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus that we have the blessed assurance that anyone who believes and receives Christ as Lord will receive mercy. The beauty of the good news of Jesus is that God is constantly demonstrating his love and showing mercy even before we realize our need. The biblical understanding of mercy is always linked to the compassion God has for humanity. He is the God who suffers alongside his children; He is the God of all comfort who comes alongside us in tragedy; and He is the healer and restorer of our souls. When we cry out for mercy on behalf of others, we are asking God to bring supernatural comfort and healing to our broken world.

Biblical scholars offer a beautiful description of mercy to unpack this powerful aspect of the Kyrie eleison prayer:

The word mercy in English is the translation of the Greek word eleos. This word has the same ultimate root as the old Greek word for oil, or more precisely, olive oil; a substance which was used extensively as a soothing agent for bruises and minor wounds. The oil was poured onto the wound and gently massaged in, thus soothing, comforting and making whole the injured part. The Hebrew word which is also translated as eleos and mercy is hesed, and means steadfast love. The Greek words for “Lord, have mercy,” are “Kyrie eleison,” that is to say, “Lord, soothe me, comfort me, take away my pain, show me your steadfast love.” Thus mercy does not refer so much to justice or acquittal, a very Western interpretation, but to the infinite loving-kindness of God, and his compassion for his suffering children! It is in this sense that we pray “Lord, have mercy,” with great frequency throughout the Divine Liturgy.

“Lord, have mercy, Christ, have mercy on us” is a prayer that signifies our need for deliverance, forgiveness, and healing that comes from Christ alone. It is a prayer that moves us from self-centered to God-centered living and offers hope and healing to our hearts and our broken world.

How can we respond when we feel overwhelmed by the things of this world? Might we find hope and comfort in prayer, for it is a humble recognition that we are all in need of God’s love, grace, forgiveness, and rescue. The more we are faced with that reality, the more we are filled with the gentleness and respect we desperately need in order to pour out love on all, regardless of what they believe, how they respond, or how vast our differences may seem. Prayer empowers us to love well, give grace, and to continually see the best, pushing us out from ourselves to the needs of others.

Lord, have mercy, Christ, have mercy on us all.

Michelle Tepper is a member of the speaking and writing team at RZIM.

Time and again I have found myself drawn to the story of Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth, which Luke records in the first chapter of his Gospel. You will recall that Elizabeth was barren and they were both well advanced in years. However, unlike Abraham and Sarah, as far as we know, Zechariah and Elizabeth had not been given any promise of a child. They were living in a period of silence, as some Bible scholars call it: It had been over 400 years since God had spoken of a coming Redeemer and his forerunner through the prophet Malachi.

Moreover, though year after year Zechariah served in the temple, the lots always fell to someone else to perform the evening offering of incense—a once in a lifetime privilege. Who knew how many times the lots overlooked him? Nevertheless, Zechariah and Elizabeth held onto God and did not forget his words; as Luke tells us, “Both of them were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord’s commandments and regulations blamelessly” (1:6).

“God is the author and source of all the good that you have had already,” theologian J.I. Packer reminds us, “and all the good that you hope for in the future. This is the fundamental philosophy of Christian prayer. The prayer of a Christian is not an attempt to force God’s hand, but a humble acknowledgement of helplessness and dependence. When we are on our knees, we know that it is not we who control the world; it is not in our power, therefore, to supply our needs by our own independent efforts; every good thing that we desire for ourselves and for others must be sought from God, and will come, if it comes at all, as a gift from His hands.”

Evening Prayer

By Danielle DuRant
And how many moments before the angel appeared, startling silence—

*Do not be afraid. Your prayer has been heard.*

In a breath a fragrant offering descends: *Your wife will bear you a son.*

Suddenly, a rush of air—the weight of longing—burning your lungs.

*Zechariah.*

Gasping, did you believe God speaks to someone else—your name forgotten?

*Zechariah.*

*The LORD remembers.*

Zechariah’s name means “The LORD remembers.” *And He did.*

---

*O LORD, I call to you; come quickly to me. Hear my voice when I call to you. May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice.*

(Psalm 141:1, 2)

**Evening Prayer**

How many decades had the prayer been uttered? Only to be met with seeming silence. How many decades had the lots been cast? Only to fall to someone else.

“O LORD, assuage this longing.”

Did hope expire like hot breath when passion dried with the passing of time forgotten? Did prayer taste like ashes smoldering bringing tears to the eyes?

Yet when one evening cast its shadows and lots, it did fall to you once to burn before the Lord a sweet aroma. Did your prayer rise up with hope or fear descend like smoke choking you?

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I sat with a man in my car who shared with me a series of heartbreaks he had experienced. “There were just a few things I had wanted in life,” he said. “None of them has turned out the way I had prayed…. Not only have my prayers amounted to nothing—the exact opposite has happened. Don’t even ask me if you can pray for me. I am left with no trust of any kind in such things.”

I felt two emotions rising within me as I listened. The first was one of genuine sorrow. He felt that he had tried, that he had done his part, but that God hadn’t lived up to his end of the deal. The second emotion was one of helplessness, as I wondered where to begin trying to help him.

Over the years I’ve met many people who have expressed similar experiences—and if we are being honest, who of us has not sensed this frustration, dejection, and confusion over prayer? On the other hand, I have also known countless individuals who have witnessed God’s dramatic intervention or certain answer to a request laid before Him.

Prayer is a constant reminder that we are not autonomous. Prayer, in its most basic form, is the surging of the human spirit in its weakness, grasping at the Spirit of God in his strength. Sometimes mere words cannot give shape to the longing of the heart.

Prayer, then, is a reminder that God is transcendent, all-powerful, and personal. As such, we may react with anger or withdrawal when we feel God has let us down by not giving us things we felt were legitimate to ask of Him. We may feel guilty that our expectations toward God were too great. We may feel that God has not answered our prayers because of something lacking in ourselves. We may compare ourselves with others whose every wish seems to be granted by God, and wonder why He hasn’t come through for us in the way He does for others. And sometimes we allow this disappointment in God to fester and eat away at our faith in Him until the years go by and we find ourselves bereft of belief.

And yet, I would suggest that prayer is far more complex than some make it out to be. There is much more involved than merely asking for something and receiving it. For every person who feels that prayer has not “worked” for them and has since abandoned God, there is someone else for whom prayer remains a vital part of her life, sustaining her even when her prayers have gone unanswered, because her belief and trust is not only in the power of prayer but also in the very character and wisdom of God. That is, God is the focus of such prayer, and He is the One who sustains and preserves one’s faith.

Saint John Chrysostom wrote of the power of prayer:

The potency of prayer hath subdued the strength of fire, it hath bridled the rage of lions, hushed anarchy to rest; extinguished wars, appeased the elements, expelled demons, burst the chains of death, expanded the gates of heaven, assuaged diseases, repelled frauds, rescued cities from destruction, stayed the sun in its course, and arrested the progress of the thunderbolt.

Who can read that and not be tempted to exclaim, “Is that mere rhetoric?” No, not so. Each of the instances referred to by Chrysostom is drawn right out of the Scriptures. The Bible talks about the
privilege of prayer and cautions against insincere prayer. Whether we’re talking about the Welsh Revival or that in the Hebrides or the Second Evangelical Awakening in America, each had one thing in common: concerted prayer over a protracted period of time.

Often as a student years ago I would read stories of those revivals and their foundations of prayer, and I would think, That’s what I want to build my life on—on the solid footing of prayer. My library is full of books on prayer. One would think that with each passing year the discipline of prayer would get easier, but in fact it doesn’t. Whether early in the morning or late at night, it is always a challenge. But as God has proved Himself in his time and his way, I have no doubt in my heart that prayer makes a difference.

Indeed, no one is a better instructor on prayer than Jesus himself. Scriptures tell us that Jesus spent time in prayer, evidencing its vital importance: at his baptism (Luke 3:21); on the occasion of his transfiguration (Luke 9:29); at the selection of his twelve disciples (Luke 6:12); at the Last Supper (John 17:1-26); before his arrest in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36–46); and at his cruel execution on the cross (prayers that are recorded by all four gospel writers).

Likewise, on the heels of the Lord’s Prayer and as his conclusion to it, Jesus encourages his disciples to pray, saying, “Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?” (Luke 11:11-12). Then he gives the key to the whole passage that begins with his model prayer, Our Father: “How much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” (verse 13).

Jesus tells us that God will give the Holy Spirit, his indwelling presence, to those who ask. That is the whole point of the prayer. God will give the gift of his indwelling presence to any who asks —this is an absolute certainty! You can count on it! The Holy Spirit of God prompts us in prayer, prays for us when we don’t have the words to pray for ourselves, and comforts us in our times of need. God is both the enabler of our prayers and the provider of answers to those prayers. God’s indwelling presence conditions us to receive whatever answer He gives to us. If you are a praying Christian, your relationship with God will carry your faith. If you are not a praying Christian, you have to carry your faith—and you will get exhausted trying to carry the infinite. Sometimes the greater miracle is not in an answered prayer but in a transformed heart. Miracles can come and go but the just shall live by his or her faithfulness. In fact, the Scriptures speak of “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

I wonder if perhaps the reason we sometimes have the false sense that God is so far away is because that is where we have put Him. We have kept Him at a distance, and then when we are in need and call on Him in prayer, we wonder where He is. He is exactly where we left Him. Or, we have turned prayer into a means to our ends and seldom wait on God’s response long enough to think about what He wants for us in that very moment.

And yet, the ultimate aim of prayer is that Jesus intends to make his home within the life of the supplicant—to give the gift of God’s indwelling Spirit—to each of us who calls upon God: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:20). What an intimate invitation and amazing gift we are offered!

Warm Regards,

Ravi
A M A G N I F I C E N T T A P E S T R Y

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—Ravi Zacharias

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O LORD, I call to you; come quickly to me. Hear my voice when I call to you. May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice.

—Psalm 141:1, 2