

Wings

*“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles.”
Isaiah 40:31*



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The Power of Prayer

We spend too much time fretting about how—or even whether—God answers our prayers. In doing so, we neglect some tangible benefits that prayer can provide, regardless of what God does.

“Hear my cry, O God; attend to my prayer. From the end of the earth I will cry to You, when my heart is overwhelmed; lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For You have been a shelter for me, a strong tower from the enemy” (Psa. 61:1-3).

In our studies on prayer, we often focus our attention on the topic of how God responds to our prayers; that is, does He answer them or not? If so, how? If not, why not? If we believe in the providential care of God for His people, this is a legitimate area of study.

However, by concentrating so much of our attention on how God chooses to answer our prayers, we may be depriving ourselves of other, more immediate rewards that prayer can provide. Regardless of how God responds to our prayers, there are some very real benefits that come from praying, benefits that accrue solely as a result of expressing our thoughts to God.

In this Psalm, David looked to God as “a strong tower” to shelter him during a period of hardship. That’s why he poured out his heart to God in prayer.

But notice that David viewed God as his shelter *even before* God had an opportunity to respond to David’s prayer. In other words, the very act of praying was itself a source of strength.

This principle has profound implications for our prayer life.

First, consider that *it’s hard to sin against God while I am in the act of praying to Him*. Jesus’ night of prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane was critical to Him staying strong and finishing His mission the following day. When I struggle with a strong temptation to sell out my convictions, talking to God about the battle that is raging in my heart will reinforce my will to stay strong and do the right thing. Prayer is a ready weapon against the schemes of Satan.

Second, *it’s hard to get discouraged in the face of adversity when I am praying*. After experiencing a prolonged period of failure in my life, it is easy to fall into a mode of thinking “why even try?” I’m tired of the struggle, and search in vain for the tiniest scrap of good news to bring joy into my miserable life. Talking to God about my strug-

gles—especially thanking Him for the blessings I have received—will help restore a sense of perspective in my thinking, and remind me that life is not nearly as desperate as it appears. Prayer can bring a small but significant jolt of positive emotion into my life.

Finally, *it’s hard to hold a grudge against someone who has wronged me at the same time I am praying for him*. Jesus tells us to pray for those who spitefully use us (Matt. 5:44). Even if my prayers regarding my tormentor involve some imprecatory element, the fact that I am praying to God in behalf of my enemy will soften my feelings toward him. I will gradually come to view him as an object of pity, not revenge. I can even reach a point where I ask God to be merciful to my enemy for his crimes committed in ignorance (Lk. 23:34).

How God chooses to answer our prayers is His business, and we should let Him deal with that. Instead, if we are struggling with temptations, burdened with discouragement, or burning with bitterness, we should know that relief is just a prayer away.

— David King