

THE POWER OF A MOMENT WITH GOD



Scripture:

Psalm 121

1. I lift up my eyes to the hills — from where will my help come?
2. My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.
3. He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber.
4. He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.
5. The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade at your right hand.
6. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.
7. The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.
8. The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and for evermore.

Luke 22:39-46

39. He came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him.
40. When he reached the place, he said to them, ‘Pray that you may not come into the time of trial.’
41. Then he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, knelt down, and prayed,
42. ‘Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done.’
43. Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength.
44. In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground.
45. When he got up from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping because of grief,
46. and he said to them, ‘Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not come into the time of trial.’



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Come, Holy Spirit, come. Come with peace to quiet stormy souls. Come with power to strengthen determined hearts. Come with persistence to encourage increased faith. Prepare us, provoke us, persuade us until we be wholly Thine and whole in Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen

Several years ago, a psychiatrist, after a long seminar, was walking down a sidewalk in Cincinnati. Poring over lectures he heard, he was interrupted by a young woman hastening down the street toward him. Her face drew his attention like a magnet. It was twisted in panic

or agony. She passed him. He thought a moment, then wheeled and walked swiftly to catch up to her, convinced that she needed help. He could not overtake her, and watched her climb the steps to a Roman Catholic Church.

He followed her into the unfamiliar surroundings, saw her kneel, light a candle and take a front seat. He sat in a rear pew, waiting and planning how he should approach her. After a half hour, she stood, genuflected, turned and started toward him. He prepared to stop her -- but stopped.

He was astonished by the change in her. Relief and peace reflected from her face. Terror was erased and serenity replaced it -- that was evident to his practiced eye. Something or Someone had performed a miracle, one that he yearned to be able to do.

He reported later to a Session of the church he joined, "I fell to my knees and found myself praying to God, who was a stranger to me. "O God, You did in a moment what I have dedicated my life to do. Please give me that power. Give me that power for myself -- and here I am."

That doctor witnessed the power available to every person of faith. Most prayer is a routine of thanksgiving, confession, and requests. But there come times when we need power beyond human resources. Today, many have lost jobs, homes, or health and are facing problems that seem insurmountable. Jesus faced a terrifying future and Luke beautifully records how He found power to face it. **That record is a lesson in prayer for power.**

JESUS WENT TO THE MOUNT OF OLIVES AND THE FIRST THING HE DID WAS TO FALL ON HIS KNEES.

Prayer is a unique experience. It is not having a discourse with yourself or another human being. Prayer is meeting with the creator and sustainer of all that we are and

know: GOD -- God, the creator of time and space; God who is not limited by time and space but is its author. And when Jesus met with God the Father, He knelt.

Dr. George Buttrick wrote, "Modern men expect God to fall on His knees and implore for them to believe Him, when by all that is holy, men should fall on their knees before God: the Holy of Holies."

Free people refuse to fall on their knees before any human, but should be proud to kneel before the Lord, their Maker. Were you at the choir concert last week? It was a treat. I was so thrilled that the choir, in choosing their favorites, chose anthems that glorified Almighty God -- that praised His majesty and might. Coming to such a God, I rejoice to kneel.

One of my fondest memories in the first church I served was to hear the clack, clack of kneeling benches as worshippers lowered them to pray. Many Orthodox Catholics prostrate themselves to pray as they come to their sanctuaries. Of course many Protestants do the same: they prostrate in bed on their backs to pray. In fact, I've been told that prayer is better than Nytol or counting sheep to put one to sleep. Such prayer may produce peace, but I doubt that it provides power.

**When Jesus needed power he knelt,
and when I need power I kneel, and if
you need power I suggest that you kneel.
If you can't do it physically, do it
mentally ... realize that prayer is
communication between God and you.**

**THE SECOND THING TO NOTE IS
THAT JESUS USED NO FORMULA
OR SPECIAL LANGUAGE
TO INVOKE THE PRESENCE OF GOD.**

As a young minister, I suggested so many formulas or rituals to open prayer -- what a

mistake. And people get so hung up on trying to use the King James English -- what a mistake. I don't believe God responds to ritual or special approaches to Him. And I believe God understands Latin, German, Spanish, any old English, even slang.

Jesus broke down all barriers, forsook any special way or language to go to God... He knew that God would be there and is always there. He knew that God would hear. He is always ready to listen. He knew that God would respond. He is always eager to speak to those who listen.

Hear Jesus:
**"Oh God, if it be possible,
take this cup from me."
In plain English He was saying that He
did not have the strength to go it alone.**

Like Jesus I have cried out, "O God I'm facing a wall I cannot climb, a task demanding strength that I do not have -- I need You." Have you faced such moments? Have you bared your very soul to God? Your weaknesses?

A mother heard her tiny son praying one night, "Please God put vitamins in candy and cake and take them out of liver and broccoli." I've prayed like that. Haven't you?

Our Lord did just that, and in His panic sobbed, "O God. If it be possible, remove this cup from me.

**THE NEXT THING TO NOTE IS
THAT AT THIS POINT
JESUS WRESTLED WITH GOD.**

The Heavenly Father must have wrestled within Himself. He was demanding that His sinless Son take the world's sin on Himself, and to bear the consequence of that sin. But it was necessary and God required this of His Son.

On the other hand, Jesus was at the height of popularity; crowds followed Him everywhere. He had a band of faithful disciples who adored Him. HE WANTED TO LIVE AND KNEW HIS FATHER REQUIRED HIM TO DIE. Of course He wrestled with God. I would have. You would too. I've wrestled with God. Haven't you?

I've come to crossroads where I knew what God demanded and what I wanted and fought with God. Haven't you had moments or events like that?

Jesus wrestled with such passion that Luke reports that His sweat was like great drops of blood. He wrestled and He lost His battle. And he cried, "Not my will, but Thine be done."

**BUT FINALLY NOTICE THIS:
WHEN JESUS LOST HIS
BATTLE WITH GOD – HE WON.**

- He won power to face His betrayal and trial.
- He won power to walk the Via Dolorosa with a cross on His back.
- He won power to forget Himself to forgive a felon on a nearby cross.
- He won power to remove that stone from His grave.
- He won power to change all history and win Salvation for trillions until this very date.

Look at how His words have changed history. And His power even reached you and me.

When life's troubles grow too heavy, or problems seem mountainous, remember, you have God's power at your fingertips. Today people all over the world and in our nation are overwhelmed with homelessness, joblessness and panic. **REMEMBER, you have God's power at your fingertips.**

The church is made up of God's chosen people: we are the Body of Christ. Let us go to our Mount of Olives, fall on our knees and cry out our common need for God's power to turn our panic into peace and our road ahead – His road.

He is there. He is listening. Perhaps He will not respond to our desires and we must bend to His will. But even if we lose what we want, we will be given that power that marked the life of

Jesus after Olivet. He will give power like that which replaced the agony of that Cincinnati lady with peace and hope and faith.

Those of us who have knelt at our Mount of Olives have been there. Let us pledge that for Lent, instead of giving something up, we will take on the burden of world and national suffering by kneeling and praying with passion to rescue our moment of history with the power that God will provide.



Rev. Roland W. (Rit) Anderson
Presbyterian Church of the Roses
2500 Patio Court
Santa Rosa, CA 95405
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