



*"For the eyes of the LORD  
run to and fro throughout the whole earth,  
to give strong support to those  
whose heart is blameless toward Him."*

## **Our Sole Concern**

### **2 Chronicles 16:9**

**David Sunday      April 28, 2019**

Lord, when we cannot stand, we fall on You. Help us to never think we can stand apart from You. I come to You today in weakness, fear and much trembling, as did the Apostle to the church at Corinth. I thank You that this is where You show Your power. In our weakness, You are made strong. Lord, we depend on You. We cry out to You. Speak to us. Show us wonderful things in Your Word and set us on a more faithful, intense pursuit of You today, we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen.

If you came today looking forward to a sermon on Psalm 1, I beg your patience. I felt it needed more time in the cooker and I was struggling this week in preparing the Word. I called on a couple of our elders to pray for me. One of them called me yesterday, prayed with me and encouraged me with a verse that has been precious to me for 27+ years. After I thought about it through most of the day yesterday, I decided this was what I think we need to hear today. It's certainly what I need to hear.

The key verse is 2 Chronicles 16:9. God's Word says, *"For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him."* I love how the Christian Standard Bible puts it: *"The eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to show himself strong for those who are wholeheartedly devoted to him."* Or the New American Standard Bible says, *"...those whose hearts are completely His."*

This is one of my favorite verses in Scripture. In fact, when Kate and I got married, we asked the pastor to read this verse at our wedding. I remember him reading these words and thinking how desperately we needed God's strong support in order that the vows we were making to one another would be kept and fulfilled and that we would be fruitful for God's glory in our marriage. We knew that for our marriage to not end in flames, like so many others, we would need God's strong support.

This verse is even more precious to me today. After having raised three children and having been involved with church leadership for many years, I am very aware of my need for God's strong support. In one brief sentence here, we have a profoundly moving revelation of the character of our God. God reveals Himself as One Whose eyes are constantly scouring the earth. His eyes are scouring St. Charles right now; scouring this building right now.

This statement is repeated in Zechariah 4:10, "*These seven are the eyes of the Lord, which range through the whole earth.*" God is on the lookout, looking for a particular type of individual, so that He might lend His strong support to that person. If I say to you, "The eyes of the U.S. military run to and fro throughout the world so they might capture terrorists," you would understand that is their job and they're determined to do it. It belongs to the very nature of the U.S. military to pursue and capture terrorists who would threaten our peace and security.

This is how we should understand 2 Chronicles 6:9. God is a God Who is, by His very nature, One Who pours out His power in support of those whose hearts are depending on Him, in support of those who are completely devoted to Him. He looks for people like this. When He finds a person or a church who is saying, "God, I need You. I'm depending on You. I'm devoted to You," God says, "I want to strongly support that person."

Now, what does it mean to have a heart that is whole, as it says literally, or a heart that is with God? It means your heart is wholly relying on God, wholly trusting in Him, wholly committed to His care, His cause and His calling. It's like an old hymn that I love says, "We may trust Him fully, all for us to do." In other words, all God is asking us to do is trust Him fully. "We may trust Him fully, all for us to do. They who trust Him wholly, find Him wholly true." He will never let that person down. He will strongly support that person.

John Piper puts it like this: "God's eyes are everywhere always, so that He never misses one single opportunity anytime, anywhere to demonstrate His power on behalf of weak people who rely on Him and not man." Is that good news? Everywhere, always—He never misses a single opportunity to help people and demonstrate His power to weak people who are utterly relying on Him.

Now, this is a universal statement about God's character and it applies to all people everywhere, but this verse does have a specific context that we're going to look at together today. These words were spoken by a prophet named Hanani. They were spoken to a king named Asa who reigned during a period in Israel's history that was known as the divided kingdom. The northern part of the kingdom, the larger part, was typically called Israel; the southern part of the kingdom, which was smaller but included Jerusalem, was called Judah. Asa was king over the southern part and reigned over Judah 41 years.

For the first 35 years, Asa trusted in God. He was wholly dependent on God and was enjoying God's strong support. Look at what we read in 2 Chronicles 14, beginning with verse two. This is the beginning of the Asa story:

*<sup>2</sup> And Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God. <sup>3</sup> He took away the foreign altars and the high places and broke down the pillars and cut down the Asherim [a particularly grotesque and immoral type of idolatry] <sup>4</sup> and commanded Judah to seek the LORD, the God of their fathers, and to keep the law and the commandment. <sup>5</sup> He also took out of all the cities of Judah the high places and the incense altars. And the kingdom had rest under him. <sup>6</sup> He built fortified cities in Judah, for the land had rest. He had no war in those years, for the LORD gave him peace.*

We see very clearly why it was that the Lord blessed him with this peace. Look at verse seven:

*<sup>7</sup> And he said to Judah, "Let us build these cities and surround them with walls and towers, gates and bars. The land is still ours, because we have sought the LORD our God. We have sought him, and he has given us peace on every side." So they built and prospered.*

The reason the land enjoyed peace and God's kingdom was being built up under Asa was because the people under his leadership were learning to depend on God. They were seeking God and He was lending them His strong support. Then a threat comes and it's a large one.

*<sup>8</sup> And Asa had an army of 300,000 from Judah, armed with large shields and spears, and 280,000 men from Benjamin that carried shields and drew bows. All these were mighty men of valor.*

So count it up. How many men did he have in his army? 580,000. What did they have with them? Shields and bows. They were strong men and they had shields to put in front of them and bows to shoot with. Then look at what happens in verse nine: "*Zerah the Ethiopian came out against them with an army of a million men and 300 chariots.*" Oh boy. We didn't read anything about chariots in Judah—just shields and bows. Now, here are a million men with 300 chariots and they're coming out to attack Judah. It looks like the whole land is going to be eaten alive. But Asa believes in God. He depends on God. So he casts this burden on the Lord and look at how he approaches this:

*<sup>10</sup> And Asa went out to meet him, and they drew up their lines of battle in the Valley of Zephathah at Mareshah. <sup>11</sup> And Asa cried to the LORD*

*his God, "O LORD, there is none like you to help, between the mighty and the weak."*

If you want to know what it looks like to have a heart that's wholly devoted to the Lord, this is what it looks like. It looks like crying out to the Lord and saying, "We need Your help. It doesn't matter that they're mighty. It doesn't matter that they've got a million men and 300 chariots. If they don't have Your help, they're doomed. It doesn't matter that we're weaker, because if we have Your help, if we have Your strong support, we will prevail." So Asa cried out to the Lord, saying, "Help us!"

Sometimes we think our prayers have to be really sophisticated, but they don't. They just have to come from a heart that is dependent on God. Sometimes it's just a matter of saying, "Help us!" Asa prays, "*Help us, O LORD our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this multitude. O LORD, you are our God; let not man prevail against you.*" If you read the rest of the story, you will see how God gave them the victory—a great victory over this huge army.

Asa has experienced God's strong support. You would think that after experiencing God's help like that, he would trust in the Lord for the rest of his life, right? Because that's what you and I do, right? God helps us, we're amazed at how He comes through and we never doubt Him after that, right? Well, that's not my life's story and it wasn't Asa's either. It's actually not going to be automatic for any believer. Charles Spurgeon says, "The greatest faith of yesterday will not give us confidence for today unless the fresh springs that are in God will overflow again." We can't rely on the faith we had yesterday. We need God to continually nourish and strengthen our faith with the fresh springs that come from Him.

God does that in 2 Chronicles 15. He sends a prophet to Asa, because He knows Asa—like all human beings—is going to be tempted to not trust in the Lord. Just because he's experienced God's strong support for 35 years doesn't mean he's going to keep trusting the Lord. So God sends a prophet with an oracle that pretty much serves as a paradigm for the story of Asa's life—and it's also going to serve as a paradigm for our lives in many ways.

*<sup>15:1</sup> The Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded, <sup>2</sup> and he went out to meet Asa and said to him, "Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: The LORD is with you while you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you."*

The prophet then tells Asa that for a long time, Israel wasn't hearing from God and didn't have a prophet or priest. But he goes on to say that God would still be with them. Verse seven: *"But you, take courage! Do not let your hands be weak..."* don't give up, *"...for your work shall be rewarded."* Essentially he's saying, "Asa, keep depending on the Lord. If you keep trusting in Him, He's going to be your strong support. And there's nothing He asks you to do that you're not going to be able to do, because He'll help you in all your ways. But, Asa, be warned. Don't ever get to the point where you stop depending on the Lord. If you start saying, 'God, I can handle this on my own,' God will let you handle it on your own and you'll see where that goes."

### **The Lord is with you...**

So the first aspect of this prophetic word is that the Lord is with you when... It's conditional. Now, if you're thinking scripturally, you're probably having a little bit of a dissonance going on in your mind. You're probably thinking, "I thought God is present everywhere all the time." Yes, He is. Jeremiah 23:24 says, *"Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the Lord."* He is omnipresent. As a result, Psalm 139:7 says, *"Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?"* The answer is: nowhere. We're never apart from the presence of God.

But this passage here is not talking about God's omnipresence. It's talking about a different aspect of God's presence; an aspect of God's presence that we desperately need in our lives. Listen to this from Psalm 105:4: *"Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually!"* Why do we have to seek His presence if He's always present? Moses said the same thing in Exodus 33:15-16:

*<sup>15</sup> And he said to him, "If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here. <sup>16</sup> For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?"*

We see that this is exactly what Asa experiences in 2 Chronicles 15:8-9. He takes courage, he puts away more detestable idols in obedience to God, and people are drawn to him because they see that God's presence is with him. Verse nine: *"And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and those from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon who were residing with them, for great numbers had deserted to him from Israel..."* the Northern Kingdom, *"...when they saw that the LORD his God was with him."* What is going on here? The omnipresent God is with Asa in a special way.

The omnipresent God says to us in Psalm 105, “Seek my presence continually.” Moses says to the omnipresent God, “I don’t want to go anywhere unless You go with me.” Some people call this the “manifest presence of the Lord.” It’s different than His omnipresence. He is everywhere present all the time, but there are people with whom He makes His presence manifest, with whom He makes His presence very clear and strong.

It should be the desire of every one of God’s children that we would experience, not just the omnipresence of God, but that we would walk and live in the manifest presence of the Lord, depending on Him, experiencing His joy, strength, comfort and help. When God draws near to His people, when He manifests His presence, when He smiles on us with His favor, people around us can see it and sense it. They are attracted to it just like we see here. Our prayer should be, “Lord, make Your presence known among us. Let it be seen that You are with us in a powerful way. Not just that we would know about You doctrinally, Lord, but that we would experience You as the God Who is near.”

Back in the days of the Great Awakening, Jonathan Edwards—who has been called by many America’s greatest theologian so he knew his doctrine—lamented the fact that there were many professing believers who were very suspicious of the work the Holy Spirit was doing in this great revival. They were nervous about the way God was manifesting His presence to people. This is what Edwards said:

How greatly has the doctrine of the inward experience or sensible perceiving of the immediate power and operation of the Spirit of God been reproached and ridiculed by many of late!

People just wanted to know doctrinal truth, but they got really nervous when God started revealing Himself in ways they couldn’t understand or control. Edwards’ continued:

It is God’s manner in the great works of His power and mercy to make His hand visible and His power conspicuous and man’s dependence on Him most evident, that no flesh should glory in His presence; that God alone might be exalted and that the excellency of the power might be of God and not of man, and that Christ’s power might be manifested in our weakness and none might say, “My own hand has saved me.”

What Edwards is saying is that God loves to get His people to a place where we’re desperately dependent on Him, so that we cry out to Him for His strong support. And when He gives us His strong support, everyone around us sees God is with us and knows it is God Who did it, not us. We are not our own saviors—all the glory goes to God!

**... when you are with Him.**

So the prophet says to Asa, *“The Lord is with you when you are with him.”* That’s the second phrase I want us to look at: *“...when you are with him.”* It’s the same phrase we read in 2 Chronicles 16:9, *“...whose hearts are completely his,”* or *“...whose hearts are with him.”* What does it mean for your heart to be “with God”? The prophet adds two phrases that help to explain what that means. Look at 2 Chronicles 15:2: *“The LORD is with you while you are with him...”* Then he says these phrases: *“If you seek him, he will be found by you.”* That’s the positive of what it means to be with the Lord. It means you’re seeking Him actively and He will be found by you.

Here’s the negative. If you’re not with Him, this is what it looks like: *“But if you forsake him”* —if you say in your heart, “Lord, I can find other help, either in myself, or in my wealth, or in other people. I don’t really need You right now, Lord.” Of course, we don’t usually actively say that. But if our lives are saying that, we’re actually forsaking Him and it says, *“He will forsake you.”* So being with the Lord means seeking the Lord, but abandoning God to seek so-called superior help elsewhere equals forsaking the Lord. Friends, there are only two alternatives. All of us are doing one or the other.

Ray Ortlund says, “If we are not seeking the Lord, we are not in neutral. In His sight, we are forsaking Him, even if we think we are living admirable Christian lives.” If you’re not actively saying, “Lord, I need You. I desire You. I want You. I’m hungry for You. Be with me. Be near me. Fill me,” you’re actually relying on yourself or relying on something other than God, even if you think you’re living an admirable Christian life.

About 50 years ago, Francis Schaeffer said this is the main problem in the world. It’s not communism. It’s not other religions. It’s not rationalism. It’s not postmodernism, consumerism or any other ism. “The real problem is this: the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, individually or corporately, tending to do the Lord’s work in the power of the flesh rather than of the Spirit. The central problem is always in the midst of the people of God, not in the circumstances surrounding them.”

So the problem is trying to do the Lord’s work in the flesh. When we think we can do that, the Lord says, “Okay, let Me unplug you for a little bit and see where that will lead you.” So, *“Seek the Lord while He may be found; call on Him while He is near.”* (Isaiah 55:6). *“I sought the Lord, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears”* (Psalm 34:4). *“Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart”* (Jeremiah 29:12-13).

It's an attitude of soul that says, "Lord, all the real answers, all the real joys and all the real breakthroughs I need are from You. I'm looking to You for those answers. I'm looking to You for that joy. I'm looking to You for that breakthrough." It means being persistent and tenacious in crying out to Him. Listen to these words in Psalm 77:2: *"In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord; in the night my hand is stretched out without wearying..."* Day and night, I'm calling out to You, God.

The psalmist continues, *"...my soul refuses to be comforted."* In other words, "I won't be satisfied with any other help than the help You give me. I'm going to keep seeking You, God. I'm going to keep crying out to You, because I'm driven by a hunger for reality with You. I have an appetite for You. I have a gnawing hunger that will not be satisfied unless You satisfy it." That's seeking the Lord.

Asa was doing that with all his heart for most of his reign. Even at the end of 2 Chronicles 15, he's seeking the Lord so intently. Look at what it says in verse 16: *"Even Maacah, his mother, King Asa removed from being queen mother because she had made a detestable image for Asherah. Asa cut down her image, crushed it, and burned it at the brook Kidron."* That's courage. Can you imagine saying to your mom, "Sorry, Mom. I'm firing you as queen. I'm taking your throne away from you. I'm taking away your crown, because you're an idolater. Mom, you're going to have to go."

That's how courageous Asa was. That's how much he was seeking the Lord. That's how godly he was for 35 years. But there's a warning here from the prophet: "If you forsake him—if you forsake him—he will forsake you."

### **If you forsake Him...**

I hope right now in your mind there are all kinds of alarm bells going off. "Wait a minute, Lord. What shall separate us from the love of God? Tribulation, distress, famine, nakedness, danger, sword? No, in all these things, we're more than conquerors through Christ Who loves us. I am persuaded that nothing in all creation will be able to separate me from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:35-39). So what does it mean for God to forsake me? I can't be separated from Him.

I hope you're thinking like Romans 5:6-10, "God, You loved me when I was Your enemy. Will You reject me, now that I'm Your friend? No, it can't be." I hope you're thinking about Hebrews 13:5-6, where God says, "I will never leave you. I will never forsake you." I cling to those promises.

The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,  
I will not, I will not desert to his foes;  
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,  
I'll never, no, never, no, never forsake!

[From How Firm a Foundation by John Rippon]

That's a promise I desperately need. Ray Ortlund says it like this: "At no point will God ever say to one of His children, 'That's it. I'm fed up. The deal's off. I can put up with a lot, but I never agreed to go this far with you and your problems.' God's never going to do that. He knew ahead of time what a hassle we would be. He anticipated and compensated for all our failings at the cross." That's the truth. But, what will our good, good Father do when we say, or when we act, like we can get along just fine without Him?

Let's see how that unfolds in Asa's last years, beginning in 2 Chronicles 16:1: "*In the thirty-sixth year of the reign of Asa, Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah and built Ramah, that he might permit no one to go out or come in to Asa king of Judah.*" Baasha is the king over the Northern Kingdom of Israel and he's an evil king. He comes to a city named Ramah, which is about five miles north of Jerusalem, and fortifies it so it would become a blockade. That would mean people could not go back and forth from their land into Asa's land which is a big problem for Asa. There are political and commercial implications. But Asa has faced other threats before.

Remember what he went through with the Ethiopians? Remember how they came against him and remember how Asa cried out to the Lord, "Help us, Lord! We're weak, but You're going to be our stronghold." Is Asa going to remember how God helped him? Is Asa going to look to the Lord again for help against this threat? He should be remembering how God strongly supported him. But sadly, he doesn't. Sadly, he responds, "I think I can handle this threat."

Look at how he responds in verse two: "*Then Asa took silver and gold from the treasures of the house of the LORD.*" I don't think that was a very good idea, do you? Stealing from the house of the Lord? So he's thinking, "I've got the money for this." He also took silver and gold from the king's house "*and sent them to Ben-hadad king of Syria, who lived in Damascus, saying, 'There is a covenant between me and you, as there was between my father and your father.'*" So he goes to this king of Syria, which is north of the Northern Kingdom, and says, "I need your help. I'm going to send you silver and gold—the gold I've stolen from the temple. *Go, break your covenant with Baasha king of Israel, that he may withdraw from me.*"

The strategy goes like this: "I'm going to buy off the king of Syria so that he won't align himself with Israel. Then the king of Israel isn't going to have the time or resources to be meddling

around with this little town of Ramah in the south, because he's going to have bigger battles to fight with Syria in the north." So militarily and politically, it's a brilliant strategy. What a smart king to figure all this out. You're a genius, Asa.

And it works! Look at verse four: "*And Ben-hadad listened to King Asa and sent the commanders of his armies against the cities of Israel, and they conquered Ijon, Dan, Abel-maim, and all the store cities of Naphtali. And when Baasha heard of it, he stopped building Ramah and let his work cease.*" So Asa has met his objective. "*Then King Asa took all Judah, and they carried away the stones of Ramah and its timber, with which Baasha had been building, and with them he built Geba and Mizpah.*"

Asa's kingdom was growing. Everything was going his way. It seems like a brilliant maneuver. But friends, beware! Beware when all your plans are going your way. Beware of assuming that what you have obtained through self-reliance and trusting in man is all a product of God's blessing on your life. It may not be God's blessing. God will not be pleased with the work of our hands if we have not done our work in an attitude of reliance on Him.

I think one of the worst things that could happen to our church would be for all our plans to go the way we want them to go...without prayer. For God to give us everything we want, all the money we want, all the ministries we want, all the influence we want, but we don't become a house of prayer in the process would be not a success. That would actually be a failure. Because when we stop trusting in God and start relying on ourselves, there are a lot of blessings we forfeit.

I want to read a portion of a book called When God Comes to Church by Steve Gaines to illustrate what it might look like to be a church that gets all kinds of things but doesn't rely on God. Listen to this.

"We all know what it's like personally when God withdraws His gracious presence. We may carry on in our Christian routines, but without the vivid personal reality of God attending our way, we are left to our weary and wearisome selves." I hate that. I don't want to be left to my weary and wearisome self—no! "We are struggling along, ungladdened by His nearness..." Oh, don't let that happen, Lord—struggling along ungladdened by Your nearness. "...and unsupported by His providences. To live and work under the blank stare of God is unbearable. He makes sure of that."

When God's eyes roam to and fro to strongly support those whose hearts are completely His, you don't want Him to have a blank stare at you. You don't want Him to be thinking, "When are you going to start depending on Me? When are you going to start crying out to Me? When are you going to realize you've come to the end of your hoarded resources and nothing's happening that you really need to have happen in your life? All the breakthroughs you need, all the joys you seek, all the blessings you desire—they're in Me. When are you going to cry out to Me?"

See, when He brings us to this point it is God's grace. He's not forsaking us in order to reject us forever. He's saying, "Wait a minute. If you think you can do this yourself, I'll let you go there, but you're going to fall flat. Instead I want you to come near to Me. Draw near to Me and I will draw near to you."

One more paragraph from When God Comes to Church:

It can happen to a church as well, although it may not be obvious at first. The church machinery may continue to tick, its institutional momentum running along, money in the bank and so on. But when the Lord removes a church's lampstand (Revelation 2), that church's radiance fades. Its credibility as a spiritual force is no longer taken seriously. The children of that church grow up and leave, never to return, for there is nothing to return to. The church's witness counts for nothing. It has become bored and boring. A vaguely defined restlessness enters the soul of such a church, The offers arriving in the mail for various gimmicks to juice up the church program become attractive, but fads cannot replace the departed Lord. Only God can.

Here's what happened with Asa. Look at 2 Chronicles 16:7: *"At that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said to him, 'Because you relied on the king of Syria, and did not rely on the LORD your God, the army of the king of Syria has escaped you.'" In other words, "I would have done so much more for you, Asa. I would have given you so much more strength, had you relied on Me." "Were not the Ethiopians and the Libyans a huge army with very many chariots and horsemen?" Do you remember that, Asa? "Yet because you relied on the LORD, he gave them into your hand." Why did He do that, Asa? Verse nine: "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless"—dependent, trusting in Him. "You have done foolishly in this, for from now on you will have wars."*

The last few years of Asa's reign were not peaceful. God was calling Asa back, but it never looks like Asa actually repented of forsaking his trust in God. He got a foot disease, it says in verse 12, and it became severe. *"Yet even in his disease he did not seek the Lord, but sought help from physicians."* Then Asa died and they had a great funeral for him. I'm quite confident that Asa is with the Lord today as a believer, under God's blessing, but he's a human being like all of us. He stands in Scripture as an example to us of what happens when God's people stop trusting in God. We forfeit His blessings.

C.H. Spurgeon summarizes this chapter with these words: "To rest in the Lord—that is our business. To rely only on Him—that is our sole concern." In the end, he says, that's all we really

have to worry about. We just need to rely on Him, trust in Him. That's our business. That's what the church needs to be doing. That's what we need to be all about.

So where are we going with this? Over the next four months, we're going to be going through a series of sermons from the Psalms. We'll probably go through about 15 or 16 Psalms together, learning how to pray from these wonderful passages of Scripture. Praying the Psalms will be our focus for May through August, plus we're going to have a Psalms prayer group on Wednesday nights in June and July to help stir up our hearts to seek the Lord and put these things into practice. That's the first place we're going with this.

The second place is Friday night. We're going to kick this off with an evening of prayer this Friday night from 7:00 to 10:00, because we believe God's eyes are roaming through the Fox Valley, looking for people who are dependent on Him, looking for people who are seeking Him. He's saying, "I want to support those people." And we want to be the people God is strongly supporting. We want our church to be like that. So we're going to meet in Room 150 on the side of the gym. It's going to be a special evening devoted to prayer. We're going to hear brief teachings from John Sale, Brandon Stern and Patrick Havens, then sing songs of praise and pray together.

There's nothing the enemy of our souls wants more than to discourage us from coming to this. I know some of you absolutely cannot come because of prior commitments, but I would expect that many of you will be hearing little insinuations like this: "You know what? It's going to be boring. Don't go." Or, "Maybe they're going to make you pray out loud." I can tell you right now, we won't do that. So when the enemy says, "They're going to make you pray out loud," just say back, "No. The pastor said they're not going to do that."

There might even be another snow storm that will happen on May 3<sup>rd</sup> to keep you from coming for prayer. Throughout this week, the enemy is going to be working to sabotage this prayer meeting. So let's resolve to resist the devil and he will flee from us (James 4:7). Draw near to God, for He will draw near to us (James 4:8). Friday, 7:00 to 10:00. The time will go quickly. You can come at any point and leave at any point.

Let's be the kind of people who know we are needy. Let's not pretend we can handle anything on our own. Let's show God that we believe we need His strong support by crying out to Him as a people in prayer.

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, apart from You and Your Son Jesus, we can do nothing, but we are so slow to believe that. Forgive us our self-reliance. Forgive us for forgetting the many times You have come through for us in ways we could not have possibly managed on our own. Teach us, Lord, to trust You wholly with all our hearts. Prayer scares us, Lord. We feel like infants when it

comes to prayer, but we thank You for the help of Your Holy Spirit. We thank You that all You're looking for is a heart that is saying to You from the depths of its being, "Help, Lord! Help, Lord! I am weak, but You are mighty. Hold me with Your powerful hand." We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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*All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.*

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