

Thoughts and Prayers

Ponder: What good are thoughts and prayers?

Scripture: “I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day” (2 Timothy 1:3, NKJV).

A hurricane hits. An epidemic kills hundreds. Another mass shooting occurs. News anchors, politicians, and ordinary people respond: “Thoughts and prayers” for the victims and families. Then militant atheists and even some professing believers hoot and jeer at the idea that “thoughts and prayers” accomplish anything helpful.

To be fair, they have a point. If all we offer are “thoughts and prayers,” then we haven’t finished our job. When people are in need, and all we do is say, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” what good is that pleasant thought? (So asked James in 2:16.) Thoughts and prayers won’t put a roof over their head or food on the table.

Please note that I said “if” all we offer are thoughts and prayers . . . “if” all we do is say, “be warmed and filled.” And that’s a mighty big “if”! Let’s ask two questions:

First, do thoughts and prayers have any inherent value? The inspired writer of Hebrews exhorted his readers to “remember the prisoners as if chained with them – those who are mistreated – since you yourselves are in the body also” (13:3). To remember them is to be mindful of them, to think of them. A faithful Christian who remembers those in crisis will certainly pray for them. Elsewhere, Paul taught when one member of a body suffers, “all the members suffer with it” (1 Corinthians 12:26). Yes, there is real value in knowing others care and are thinking of you and praying for you. God answers prayer! Let the skeptics rail all they please.

Second question: Are thoughts and prayers “all” that Christians offer when tragedy strikes? To hear the scoffers, you would think so. But whether at home or abroad, our brethren are often in the forefront helping disaster victims long before FEMA, the UN, or other heavily-bureaucratic organizations show up, and they stay long after the “big guns” leave. Christians don’t make a big show of helping people, nor should we. God sees, and we want people to glorify Him, not us.

Keep up the thoughts and prayers. Meanwhile, keep your work boots on!

Song: “Each Day I’ll Do A Golden Deed”

Prayer: Gracious God, we thank You for the privilege of praying for each other, especially when severe trials come. Help us not to be content with praying alone, but to busy ourselves doing what we can to meet the needs of those less fortunate than ourselves. Thank You for meeting our needs in Christ. In His name, Amen.