

REFLECTIONS ON PRAYER 4

Reflections on Tim Keller's 'Prayer' and God's word

KICKING OFF

On the 25th April 2006 a mine collapsed in Beaconsfield Tasmania killing one man and trapping another two nearly a kilometre below the surface. And the nation prayed. Even the most secular media personalities such as Tracy Grimshaw on A Current Affair shared that, ***"All our hearts go out to those in Beaconsfield and we pray for the miner's safe return."***

Q: Why do you think would Australia would turn to prayer at a time like this?

Keller begins chapter 3 by stating that prayer is one of the most common phenomena of human life. Not one culture has been discovered without some form of religion or prayer. In 2004 even 17 percent of atheists admitted that they prayed sometimes. But as Keller goes on to discover, not all prayer is the same. While Carl Jung discouraged seeking contact with a personal God outside of ourselves, (instead finding oneness with reality through ***inward contemplation***), the German scholar Friedrich Heiler saw ***outward contemplation***, the "passionate crying and groaning" of prophetic prayer as superior. While ***mystical prayer*** seeks God within us - connecting to God by going down into ourselves, ***prophetic prayer*** "emphasises that God is outside us, transcendent above us, holy, glorious, and 'other'."

Q: What are your own thoughts on this?

Ultimately Keller concludes that prayer is ultimately a verbal response of faith to a transcendent God's word and grace, not an inward descent to discover we are one with all things and God. But this doesn't mean we can't have a wondrous, mysterious, awe-filled experience but that such an encounter with God needs to come from our knowledge of God. Therefore the clearer our understanding of God is, the better our prayers. But it is also more than just knowing about God but knowing and being known, a two way personal revelation as God speak to us through his word and grace, (a conversation he first started) and we respond. This takes us back to what we have learnt so far; that this conversation is both an intellectual and an emotional one as in any true relationship.

GOING DEEPER

So let's now explore how God has revealed himself to us and how this should shape our prayers. Job is certainly someone who God educates by taking Job through the valley of death and out the other side.

Read Job 40:2-14 as well as 42:1-6

Q: What does God teach and remind job...

- a) about God?
- b) about humanity?

Q: How does Job respond to this encounter with God?

Q: How should Job's encounter shape how we should speak with God?

Now read Hebrews 1:1-3

Q: How has God revealed himself to us most fully?

Q: How should this final and full revelation of God shape our prayer life?

Now read John 1:1-14

Keller reflects that because Jesus Christ is the Word of God, there is no more comprehensive, personal, and beautiful communication of God possible to us.

Q: What astonishing details do we learn about Jesus in these verses?

TAKING IT HOME

Keller helpfully concludes that “the power of our prayers, then, lies not primarily in our effort and striving, or in any technique, but rather in our knowledge of God.” And this fullest revelation found in Christ...

Q: How should “the glorious riches” of Christ enrich our conversations with God?

PRAY

Pray together, asking God to help us know him better in order that our conversations with him might be more informed, honest, humble, and seeking to understand and encounter the glories of Christ.