

Prayer Time With God

Romans 12:12c

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

When you think of a sister and her family in Lebanon and you think of the situation there, it's amazing to think what the Israelites and the Syrians were doing about 3000 years ago. About 3000 years ago, the Syrians and the Israelites were fighting. It's almost as if history reinforces the truths of God's own word. During that time you might remember, part of the historical record shows us that the Syrian king was making raids into Israelite territory -- trying actually to make surprise attacks -- but he was coming up with one embarrassing and bewildering problem all the time.

He would carefully lay plans for the surprise raid -- no one else would know -- he would make them privately in his own bedroom actually. He would send his army out to make the raid and sitting right there would be the Israelite army waiting for him. Eventually he called his servants and then he said, "Listen! There's a spy among us. There's somebody here who tells the Israelite king what I am going to do. Now who is the spy?" The servants and the counsellors replied, "No, there is no spy. But we know that there's an Israelite prophet called Elisha and by miraculous power he is able to divine what you are planning in your own mind. He goes and he tells the Israelite king where you have planned to make the surprise attack and that's why the Israelite army is always there." Of course, right then, the Syrian king decided let's eliminate this early warning system that we have out there. Let's get rid of the radar and let's eliminate this prophet and the servants told him, "Well, this prophet Elisha lives in Dothan so that's where you'll have to deal with him." Loved ones, you can see the rest of that account if you look at 2 Kings 6:15. The Syrian king actually sent a whole army out just to get the one man.

2 Kings 6:15 tells what happened when old Elisha's servant got up in the morning: "When the servant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, behold an army with horses and chariots was round about the city. And the servant said, 'Alas my master, what shall we do?' He said, 'Fear not, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.' Then Elisha prayed, and said, 'Oh Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see.'

"So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw; and behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. And when the Syrians came down against him, Elisha prayed to the Lord, and said, 'Strike these people I pray thee, with blindness.' So he struck them with blindness in accordance with the prayer of Elisha. And Elisha said to them, 'This is not the way, and this is not the city; follow me and I will bring you to the man whom you seek'. And he led them to Samaria.

"As soon as they entered Samaria, Elisha said, 'Oh Lord, open the eyes of these men, that they may see.' So the Lord opened their eyes, and they saw; and lo, they were in the midst of Samaria. When the King of Israel saw them he said to Elisha, 'My father, shall I slay them?' He answered, 'You shall not slay them. Would you slay those whom you have taken captive with your sword and with your bow? Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master.' So he prepared for them a great feast and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master. And the Syrians came no more on raids into the land of Israel."

You in your present life, here on this earth do not face one shattered relationship in your family at this moment -- or one shattered relationship in your work. You do not face one financial or job crisis at this moment -- but that there is not a mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about you.

There's not one thing that you face in your life at this moment but that there is not a mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about you. Loved ones, the power of all that cannot be manifested -- and you cannot know it and experience it in your life -- unless you do what the little bit of this verse that we're studying today in Romans states, unless you're constant in prayer.

If you say, "Well, why do I have to know that it's there?" Well, what you know governs what you do. What you do affects God's ability to manifest all of that in your life. Now you can see that plainly if you look back to the situation in Dothan. In 890 B.C. Elisha's servant comes out and sees the whole Syrian army gathered around him. All he can see is what is coming through his eyes and his ears -- the thunder of the horses and the chariots and his eyes taking in those millions of people or hundreds of people and thousands of soldiers. He shouts out to Elisha, "Alas my master, what shall we do?"

Now, if Elisha had only the evidence that was coming through his eyes and his ears, if his mind and his emotions and his spirit were reinforced only by what was coming through his eyes and his ears at that moment, he would probably have said, "Mate, run like mad!" or "Start sewing a white flag!" or "How about a long escape tunnel?" -- or maybe less facetiously and probably more consistent with what we do -- maybe "Let's negotiate with the king of Syria. Let's offer to him this ability I have to read minds so that he can carry out his surprise raids effectively." That is usually what we end up doing in these situations.

We negotiate a compromise. Therefore, our life is littered with uncompleted tasks and unresolved problem situations because we're always trying to juggle around the amount of energy that exists in the world at this present time -- because we believe in the First Law of Thermodynamics, that the amount of energy does not change. We're trying to juggle this kind of energy into this form so that we'll deal with this situation. That's what Elisha would have done, loved ones. Yet, you know from reading the account, how utterly inappropriate that was to the reality of the spiritual situation -- because in fact, God had already all things in place for the solution.

In Christ, who was the lamb slain from before the foundation of the world, He had not only destroyed all of us and remade us, but He had disarmed the principalities and powers of the elemental spirits of the universe that linked the mental perception of the Syrians to their physical eyesight. He had already done all that.

He had already set that all in position so that it was ready to be activated. You can see if Elisha had not realized that, if Elisha had not realized that the Father was not caught off balance by this situation -- but he had already the whole solution to it set in place -- Elisha would not have acted in such a way that he could have asked God to strike them with blindness, and then led them to another city and then eventually had the wisdom to set them free.

In other words, do you see that it didn't matter what God had set in place. If Elisha had not believed that and not seen that and not realized that, he would have been sewing a white flag or digging an escape tunnel out or running like mad. If he had seen only what he saw with his eyes, heard only what he heard with his physical ears, he would never have acted in such a way that God

could have actually brought his solution into play.

Loved ones, it's just true that our Father has the solutions all in place for everything that has happened and is happening in our present lives. See, we have this kind of feeling that God is kind of a managing director sitting up there in the office and the office is chaos. This guy runs in and says, "John is in trouble", or, "Didn't you know he is in trouble? He has caught a disease that is incurable." Then God kind of gets to work and says, "Oh, what do we do?, What do we do? Oh, I don't know!" Meanwhile there's another guy coming through another door and saying, "You know Peter has lost his wife. She has separated." Peter! Boy, what will we do about Peter?" We kind of picture God running round the office trying to think of solutions, trying to catch all these balls and throw as many back as fast as He can.

Loved ones, it's ridiculous. Even our computers can do better than that. Even our computers can calculate the permutations and the probabilities. How much more our dear Father -- how much more our dear God can see everything that is happening. Actually, don't you think He can foresee some things, too? He is not sitting up there (as He is at this moment in peace and joy and happiness with His Son Jesus and with the Holy Spirit) -- He is not sitting up there in such happiness because He doesn't know what to do in your present situation. He is sitting up there in peace and happiness because every solution is prepared. Everything is in place but He cannot impose it upon us. Do you see that?

He cannot simply sit up there and impose upon us the prepared solutions that He has made available in Jesus' death and resurrection. Do you see what would have happened if He just pulled the thunderbolts down and solved the problems without our knowing what He was doing, without our asking, without our understanding why it happened, without our understanding why the army has retreated, without our understanding why the money was provided? Do you see that our lives would have no logic to them? I mean it would be chaos. There would be no cause and effect relationship. And most of all, we would understand no more about the nature of God, our Father, at the end of our lives than at the beginning.

So our God, loved ones, has all the solutions set in place. But He is only able to effect them in our lives if we know that -- if we realize what He is planning to do. Therefore, we take the necessary actions. That's why it went as it did. If you just look back to that in 2 Kings 6. That's why the record reads as it does.

2 Kings 6:15, The servant saw the army and said, "Alas, my master, what shall we do?" Then verse 16, Elisha said, 'Fear not, for those are with us are more than those who are with them'. But he prayed. "Then Elisha prayed, and said, 'Oh Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see.' It's essential for us to be able to see what the reality of the spiritual situation is. Otherwise, you'll walk through your life seeing this thing lifted out of your way, seeing this thing moved away -- not knowing why it happens -- and becoming more and more a kind of fantasy child moving through a magical world where there's no reason and no sense. You, yourself, of course, will not grow with wisdom or maturity at all. When you meet God in heaven, you'll know less about Him than when you even first started out.

So that's why old Elisha prays that God will open his servant's eyes so that he can see that the mountain is full of chariots of fire and horses, full of the power of God 'round about him. Loved ones, that's exactly the situation with us. That's exactly the situation with each one of us.

Well, you could list the things that you are facing in your life at this moment. It might be amazing how similar they all are, the things we're facing. The truth is that your God saw that way, way out there before it ever came anywhere near you. He has a solution for it. He is able to make that situation utterly changed and align it with His solution if you will begin to know what He is about.

In other words, you either live an anachronism today -- that is, you live a life that is outdated, that is old-fashioned, that is already destroyed and past and done with -- you experience all the frustration and all the compromised solutions, and all the make-do kind of arrangements that that brings upon you. Or you live in the midst of reality. You live in the spiritual reality that God has already put in place in His Son Jesus.

You at this moment live either in a world that is past and done with or you live in the present reality. Now if you say, "Brother, what are you talking about?" I'll show you in Ephesians. If you look at Ephesians Chapter 2 -- and I know they're kind of deep things-- but they are the secrets to victory in our lives -- so it is important to try to grasp it.

Ephesians 2:1, "And you He made alive", and here's the old world, the outdated world, the destroyed world, "When you were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. Among these we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of body and mind, and so we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind." That's the old out-dated world.

See, that's why Paul says, "You once walked in those things." That's the world we walked in when we decided to live independent of God's love and of His power, and we became the tools and play-things of society and of the mass media, and of our own desires for approval and recognition and happiness. That's the world we lived in.

Our only answer to the solution, the only answer to our problems where we used anger against anger, money against money. We used force against force. We used guns against guns. We used sarcasm against sarcasm. We tried to juggle around the resources that we have in the world to try to overcome the difficulties that we're facing. That was the kind of life we lived. Loved ones, you know how hopeless it is.

I mean it deals with the problems that aren't real problems -- but it doesn't deal with the problems that are real problems. All it does is put off the solution to them or compromise or enable you to live with them. How many of our lives are just a trail of unsolved problems? Isn't that true?

How many of our lives here are crippled and hindered by problems that we have not really solved. We haven't really found an answer to them. We kind of just live with them. Now, that's the old out-dated world. Now, here's the real world. Ephesians 2:4, "But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive", 'made' -- that's past tense -- "made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with him and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus," Why? "that in the coming ages," -- this age, this year 1982 -- "he might show the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."

Now loved ones, I know it sounds like double-Dutch, but that's what God is saying. When Jesus died in eternity and manifested in time-space on Calvary, all of us were crucified with Him. All of this

old world system was destroyed with Him. The spiritual powers of it were destroyed -- once and for all. When Jesus was raised from the dead, God in eternity, raised us all up with Him. We are now in Jesus at God's right hand, far above the spiritual powers that bring chaos into our lives.

If you say to me, "Well brother, I suppose you're kind of talking about yourself or maybe some others here, who kind of think they're spiritual, are you?" No. The Bible says "Christ died for all, therefore all died." I am talking about all of us -- including old Brezhnev.

The spiritual reality, according to this dear word, is that God has raised us all up in His Son Jesus and we dwell at His right hand. That's the meaning of that mountain full of horses and chariots of fire. If you say to me, "Well now brother, Brezhnev, obviously he doesn't believe it." That's right, he doesn't believe it -- but that's the only reason that people do not experience it. It's not because they have not been raised with Jesus. It's because they do not believe it. They either don't want to believe it or they just don't know about it -- but they don't believe it.

If you say, "Well, why would God allow the old anachronistic world -- as you call it -- to continue? Why would he allow me to be facing these problems of the car that need repaired, the money that I need, the job, the family situation, the marriage situation?" Because God allows even the unreality that He has destroyed in His Son Jesus to continue to manifest itself to those of us who believe that lie -- so that all of us will be able to say to the very end, "We had our free will."

Even though God had changed the whole thing, we had our free will to continue to believe the old lie if we wished. God wants us -- right to the end -- to be the choosers of our own destinies. That's what was happening in Dothan in 890 B.C. God was making available the miracle that He had already worked in those Syrian soldiers, in His Son Jesus who was the lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. It's true with every one of us here.

Now, do you see how important it is to be constant in prayer? Because most of us are absolutely brainwashed with the distressing situations that we're facing, aren't we? I mean you spend your whole day with that guy criticizing you in the office. It's coming through your ears all the time. You're brainwashed with it.

You're brainwashed more and more with the idea, it's impossible to get him to stop. It's impossible to deal with him. You're brainwashed all day long with those orders that can't be filled. You're brainwashed all day long with those receivables that are not coming in. You're brainwashed all day long with the boss that you have to work with, that is hard to deal with.

So your eyes and ears are filled all day long with the apparent reality -- but it's unreality! The truth is, all that has already been changed in Jesus by God --but you're brainwashed with the idea, "This is reality". You're like old Elisha's servant coming and saying, "Master, what do we do? Look at the chariots out there and the horses." Isn't it true, we have real trouble being able to live in reality, above the very immediate evidence of unreality around us? Yet, loved ones, the only way to do it is to be constant in prayer. That's why this is the last clause in that verse. Do you realize that? You needn't look it up, but I remind you the verse we're studying (Romans 12:12) says, "Rejoice, rejoice in your hope" -- be outrageously and gloriously happy in your absolute confidence that God is going to supply every need of yours from His riches in glory in Christ Jesus; and that there's no trial that has come upon you above what you're able to bear; and with the trial, He'll make also a way of deliverance. Then the next phrase says, "Remain, be patient in your tribulation knowing that", knowing that God has brought a solution already to this thing, "be patient. Remain in

your situation". Stay in the difficult situation -- however awkward it is. Stay under it.

Stay under the burden that God has given to you. The only way to do those two things is to be constant in prayer -- to be often in the world of reality in Jesus at God's right hand -- to be often in the place where you see things as they really are, where you see, "Lord, I am here with You at our Father's right hand, above this world that has been crucified to me, and I know that the effects of it are no longer effective in my life. I thank You for that Father, and now, will You show me what You aim to do in this situation so that I can cooperate?"

But loved ones, that's the only way to live that way. Otherwise, the days that we live -- I mean if you're like me -- I am in the midst of business most days in life and we're all much the same. We're facing the agonies of the economic situation. We're facing the problems of family life. We're facing the challenges of our job-life. We're worrying in the back of our minds about the economy and the international situation and the old mushroom cloud is away behind it all. All those things come through our eyes and our ears all the time -- and we have no chance -- unless at some time we close those eyes and close those ears and begin to see things as they really are in prayer. That's why we're having such trouble.

See, the fact is, you let John Hinckley live long enough in the fantasy of Jodie Foster in that movie and that illusion begins to govern his life. See, if you look at a lie long enough, if you look at an illusion long enough, it begins to affect your life and actually, in his case, almost destroyed another life, and certainly has destroyed lives that we don't know about in his family.

Or you let the kids on Saturday mornings watch those cartoons for a solid four hours, and the wee souls begin to see those characters as the real people. Those characters become the reality that they live in and that begins to govern their lives. In other words, we're kind of naïve -- we say, "Oh well, I mean they're just kids. They have difficulty distinguishing between reality and unreality." Yeah, but we are just as much kids.

If we keep looking at these things that we can see and touch and hear around us -- and we become so overwhelmed by the distressing situation around us -- that we begin to believe this is reality -- the effects of that lie will work their destruction in us. The fact is that all of that is a passing façade, this dear Word says. All this is a passing façade because in Jesus, God disarmed the principalities and powers that brought all this lie about. He destroyed them and the effects of that destruction can be made real in our lives.

So, what God is saying to us is, "Look, would you give yourself half a chance? Would you spend at least half an hour each day living in maybe a chapter here? I've described the things kind of graphically in the Old Testament so that you see them more clearly -- but actually, they operate in invisible terms in this era of the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. So would you spend half an hour each day reading a chapter of the way I dealt in the past with people, and would you meditate upon it and then, would you close your eyes and close your ears to all the noisy world outside? Would you talk with Me about your own situation and would you listen to Me as we sit here together with My Son, Jesus -- far above all your difficulties -- and would you let Me explain to you what I have already planned for your particular situation? I'll tell you what to do so that I can do what I want to do." Loved ones, that's the way we're meant to operate.

Do you realize the First and Second laws of Thermodynamics give no hope? Do you realize it? The first law of thermodynamics is that the amount of energy in the world remains the same. The second

law is the tendency of a process is to run down. That's a pretty hopeless situation. That's exactly the situation that we deal with and we try to manipulate it. That's why we never find solutions to our problems. Do you see that?

We can't bring any new energy into the situation. We can only change the form of the energy and juggle it around a little -- and yet we're fighting a deteriorating situation all the time -- not only in our own bodies which are dying moment-by-moment, but in every situation that we face. They're coming apart. Unless you get a new power of energy into that situation that recreates it, there's no hope. That's what happens when you begin to spend time in prayer. You begin to see things slowly, the right way up. Then you begin to relax enough to hear God directing you to do certain things.

Don't get it wrong. It doesn't mean you kind of sit there and say, "Lord, wash the dishes." You have to do certain things -- but they are things that God directs you in the light of what He has already done. They're usually entirely different -- whether it concerns your business or your family or your job -- it's just a different drummer that you walk to.

So loved ones, I'd encourage you to think seriously about it because it feel for you. We're all the same. We're all in the same boat. We're so blasted by these things that we see through our eyes and hear through our ears -- and then we see this old Hinckley thing. We watch the kids and the cartoons -- and here we are doing the same thing. We think this is reality.

Well, God is saying, "No, see, I played this whole thing through. I played it all through and I have actually already destroyed this all in My Son, Jesus, and don't be mesmerized by that. The fact is, there's no such thing as time. Time is one great eternal moment. I have seen the whole thing through and it's all finished with. I have a solution set in place." If you can't deal with the philosophical niceties of that, you can see that with the big IBM frame computer you can certainly foresee 20 years hence what's going to be the situation in our country. Now, can the Creator not see at least as far as that? Of course He can.

Does He know what your situation is at this moment? Sure He does. Not a little sparrow falls to the ground but He knows -- so he knows what's happening in your heart and in your job. Is He sitting up there, like a Buddha indifferent to what's happening? You know He isn't.

You know His heart is the heart of Jesus. He weeps over Jerusalem and He has already set in place the solution to your problems. He is saying to you, "Look, spend half an hour with Me each day. Meditate on a chapter of this book each day. Spend a little time with Me and My Son, and I'll show you what we've planned." Loved ones, He has planned carefully a real solution to our situations.

I would pray that all of you would start -- that some of you will get out of the rat race and will begin to be constant in prayer. Spend a little time in the world of reality each day so that you can see things as they are. Let us pray.

Dear Lord, I pray for my brothers and sisters here because I know this is in a way kind of deep stuff or paradoxical stuff. So Lord, we would pray for each other that You would help us to see into the reality -- that You have actually not only destroyed us and raised us in Jesus and destroyed our own sinful natures -- but You've actually destroyed this world system that we're facing, this bewildering system. You've already recreated it and You've already destroyed the powers -- the elemental spirits -- that seem to make our life so chaotic.

Lord, we want to draw close to You as children getting onto their father's knees and see things the way they are -- through Your eyes -- and begin to get like Elisha, a sense that the mountain is full of horses and chariots of fire -- that all the resources of heaven are surrounding us and are available this moment. All we have to do is talk the thing over with You and find out from You what you intend to do. Thank You Lord that prayer is not trying to get you to do what we want, but finding out what You want us to do so that You can do what You want.

Lord, we pray for each other that we may begin to spend half an hour each day with You alone, away from the chaos and this madding crowd, so that we can begin to get a line on our lives from You for Jesus' sake. Amen.