

## Selective Prayer

For several months I have been receiving e-mails and watching ad's on television requesting me to pray for Israelis who were fleeing their enemy, and for the Israeli soldiers. Many of the requests came from The Fellowship of Christians and Jews. Requests like my e-mail and the ads emphasize, "helping God's people" and sitting alongside like a tossed salad was the scripture reading, Psalm 138:7

Nothing is mentioned in the prayer requests for the displacements of thousands of Palestinians, the death of the elderly, aid workers being killed, and many hospitals being destroyed. From the beginning of time we have placed into categories, "good" and "bad" people. We white, Christian people somehow always manage to be in the group with the "good" guys.

I am leery of one lined scripture verses being used to promote any point of view. One line scripture has very little meaning to me unless the entire paragraph is studied. Following a look at the paragraph I put its meaning along side the entire book. Following the reading of the entire book of Psalms I need to ask who wrote this, to whom was it written and what is the text telling us today?

Psalm 138 is a song of praise for a community who has just received their freedom. Being a restored community, they are challenged to carry out their vocation to give support to the lowly and the weak, ALL THOSE WHO ARE SUFFERING.

What's with all the prayers? Are we trying to get the attention of God? Maybe if we get a million prayers God will place it first on the list of things for God to do. Of course I am being facetious, but why do we pray?

Every time there is a school shooting some politicians extend their prayers. How about talking less and taking more action about gun control and mental health?

Every time we are in a drought, we pray for rain. How about talking more seriously about climate change and the changes we need to make in our lives.

Every time there is a war we extend our prayers to one side or the other. How about talking more seriously about why this war happened and what we can do to bring about peace and wholeness to all.

I suggest we pray because life comes from God, and we offer our life back in prayer. Prayer assists me in being centered and I see how God is a fountain for mercy for everyone. Through prayer God offers us strength and guidance, the strength to speak out and the guidance to do what is right. There is no Jew, there is no Christian we are all one. Genesis 12:3 “all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” There are many more one liners, paragraphs and books just like that throughout the Bible.

God is not some sort of sky-hound randomly granting wishes of cars, cash and care on fellow humans. Instead of choosing our prayers over others, I believe God blesses everyone, giving everyone the power, and the hope to endure, and to have the strength to work out our own problems.

Shalom, peace and wholeness,

Dennis Siebert