

Entreat the Searcher of Hearts

Prayer That Sets the Heart at Rest

A [prayer that sets a heart at rest](#) is recorded in

Psalms 139:23,24:

[Search me, O God, and know my heart!](#) Try me and know my thoughts!

And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

Why does this entreaty resonate in the heart of man so deeply? Because it reveals to us that [God is the great Heart-Searcher](#) — the One Who plumbs our very depths. What greater intimacy could we have with our Creator than to be known and cared for *despite* all our human failings and foibles? [God, the Searcher of hearts, knows everything about us and still loves us!](#)

We can take comfort in the way that God deals with us. He doesn't condemn us, even if He sees us clearly headed the wrong way; but instead, by His mercy and grace, [He gently guides us down the Road Marked Right](#). What a great example for us of how we should treat our fellow man!

Bearing One Another's Burdens

All of us stray from the path at some point in time. Galatians advises us on how to deal with a brother in such a case.

Galatians 6:1,2:

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression [or wrongdoing], you who are spiritual should [restore him in a spirit of gentleness](#). Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ [the law of love].

In context, a burden is the consequences of a wrong-headed decision. Our heart may be right but we've become confused in our head. [One of the ways we can restore a brother who's gotten caught up in an ill-advised trajectory is through prayer.](#) We can take the situation to our heavenly Father, Who knows exactly what's going on and what will actually help.

But what if it seems to us like we're not getting any results? This happens perhaps more times than we'd like to admit, and the reason is simple: the one you're praying for has their own free will, and you can't override it.

So now what do you do? Maybe you were hoping to see them change course, change their mind, or have a change of heart; but in the end, you personally can't cause any of those things to happen.

From a human point of view, these kinds of situations can seem almost insurmountable; but when we allow ourselves to think that way, we're forgetting about our most important resource: the [Searcher of hearts](#).

Being human, we want to have knowledge about outcomes. [We want to know how and when](#) the situation will be resolved, and may even take offense when the answer is not immediately forthcoming. Yet God has the matter firmly in hand.

To receive an answer, we need to [take a step back](#). Do we even know what the actual need is, even superficially? Probably not. Do we know anything at all about how to accomplish the desired outcome? Even more unlikely. We must learn to [rely on the great Heart-Searcher](#) in seeking an answer. He is [the Only One with the inroads to man's heart](#).

Please turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians, chapter 2. As fallible men, we must remind ourselves that [only God knows](#) what's in a person's heart.

1 Corinthians 2:10b-11a:

... For the Spirit [of God, the great Heart-Searcher] searches everything, even the depths of God.

For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? ...

I know what's in my heart, you know what's in yours; but only God knows what's in the heart of every man.

So what are we to do to see a godly change of heart on the part of another individual? We entreat the Searcher of hearts to go to work to get through to them. This releases us from a burden we could not possibly bear on our own.

Entreating the Searcher of Hearts

I'd like to read Romans 8:26 and 27 to you from the Weymouth New Testament.

Romans 8:26,27 [WNT]:

In the same way the Spirit [God] also helps us in our weakness; for we do not know what prayers to offer nor in what way to offer them. But the Spirit Himself [the spirit itself, God's gift within us, the holy spirit] pleads for us in yearnings that can find no words,

and the Searcher of hearts [God] knows what the Spirit's [the holy spirit's] meaning is, because His [its] intercessions for God's people are in harmony with God's will.

Often when we are praying for another's change of heart or mind, we simply do not know exactly what to pray for or how to pray for it. This is where prayer in the spirit becomes so valuable. Speaking in tongues gives voice to the yearnings of our hearts that can find no words, and the Searcher of hearts knows precisely what the spirit is saying as we speak.

Please turn to Jeremiah 17.

We can rest assured that the spirit's intercessions for God's people will always be in harmony with God's will. This is important, because a boundary that God will not overstep in dealing with man is free will. How does God deal with conflicts between man's will and His will?

Jeremiah 17:10:

"I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds."

Turn, if you will, to 1 Chronicles 28. God is constantly examining each of our hearts and minds with the intent of giving us the best He can in light of our freedom of choice.

1 Chronicles 28:9a:

"And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought..."

The all-knowing Searcher of hearts has perfect knowledge of every man. He knows perfectly how to get through and effect a change of heart where there's a willing mind, and He can make a way where there seems to be no way. Recall the promise of Christ in

Matthew 19:26:

But Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

As we pray, we need to remember that God can orchestrate all the necessary circumstances to reach the heart of the individual we're praying for. We can stop trying to set things up on our own and relax, knowing that God is on the case day and night and cares more for that person than we ever could.

Praying for Things Beyond Our Control

Praying in the spirit (which is speaking in tongues) helps us in our human frailty to close the knowledge gap in our prayer life. When, by

the spirit of God within us, we speak in a tongue we haven't learned, we acknowledge our powerlessness to effect the desired change on our own. We can [speak in tongues for things beyond our ability to affect or control](#), confident that God is working in us as we do.

Philippians 2:13:

for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

We can also benefit in such instances by [praying with our mind](#).

1 Corinthians 14:15a:

What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; ...

Praying with our minds reminds us Whom we're addressing as we pray. We can [make our request to the Searcher of hearts knowing that He has inroads to the other person's heart that we have no way of knowing about](#). Since the path to a man's heart belongs to God and not to you or any other man, you can relinquish the situation to Him knowing that that's the only way it can possibly be resolved. Be bold and acknowledge this out loud, to yourself or in the presence of others. This will help you to reaffirm your commitment to [leave the matter in God's hands once you offer it to Him in prayer](#).

Seeking Guidance from the Searcher of Hearts

Speaking of praying with the mind, did you know that [the first recorded prayer after the ascension was addressed to the Searcher of hearts](#)? Judas had been numbered among the twelve and had been allotted his share in the ministry, but now he was no more. Having agreed upon two candidates who could bear witness with the eleven to Christ's resurrection, the disciples prayed in unison for God's guidance. How would they know whom God would have to take on this responsibility? By trusting the Searcher of hearts to reveal His choice!

Acts 1:24-26:

And they prayed and said, “[You, Lord, who know the hearts of all](#), show which one of these two you have chosen

to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.”

And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

The twelve had a specific ministry and apostleship to fulfill. Starting from the time that Jesus first called them, the twelve were apostles to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, ministers to the circumcision. One of these two men would be the one God had chosen to join them in that calling going forward. They needed for the Searcher of hearts to show them who that was, and He did.

It’s worth noting in this passage that the first candidate to be mentioned, Joseph called Barsabbas, may in fact be the same man later referred to as Barnabas. (E.W. Bullinger has intimated as much in his *Companion Bible*.) If that is indeed true, it’s another indicator of why [we need to rely on the foreknowledge of the Searcher of hearts](#).

When the eleven made the decision to replace Judas, they did not know what the Searcher of hearts knew:

- That there would one day be an apostleship, not just to the circumcision, but also to the *uncircumcision*; and
- That He would entrust this apostleship to the *uncircumcision* to Barnabas as well as Paul.

But they didn’t need to know. All they needed to know was the right man to pick, and for that information they entreated the Searcher of hearts Who knows it all. The result was that Matthias was able to step into the role of apostle to the circumcision in the present, leaving Barnabas in reserve for the role of apostle to the *uncircumcision* in the future.

Do you see why we need to [consult the Searcher of hearts for guidance](#)? Because only He knows all the particulars, and only He can set all the elements in perfect order.

Seeking Wisdom from the Searcher of Hearts

We can look to the Searcher of hearts for wisdom in how to bear a brother's burden. We discover a vivid example of this in the life of the great Apostle Paul.

In all his years of ministering to the uncircumcision, Paul's great love for the Jewish people never waned.

Romans 9:1-4:

I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—

that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.

For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.

They are Israelites,...

Paul continued to hold the Jewish brethren of Jerusalem and Judea in his heart as he lived out his life in distant lands fulfilling his apostolic ministry to the Gentiles. We pick up the record of his travels in

Acts 20:16,17:

For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he might not have to spend time in Asia, for he was hastening to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost.

Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him.

Something was more important to Paul than taking the time to revisit the city where only a short time previously, the Word had increased and prevailed mightily. What could it be? He surely must have had a reason to be in such a hurry.

Some fifteen years earlier, at the outset of a worldwide famine prophesied by the Judean prophet Agabus, Paul had traveled with Barnabas to Jerusalem to deliver charitable assistance from the believers in Antioch to the church in Jerusalem.

About eight years earlier, he and Barnabas had promised Peter, James and John that they and the believers they ministered to wouldn't forget to share foodstuffs and other necessities with the resource-strapped believers in Judea if crops were to fail in that rain-deficient land.

Then for the last five years, in fulfillment of this commitment Paul had been preparing just such a collection on his missionary itineraries through the Gentile lands. Every place he visited, he had local envoys selected to gather and protect the believers' contributions which were ultimately bound for the Jewish Christians of Judea. After reaching the most distant point on his itinerary, he began picking up these envoys to accompany him as stewards of the bounty as he traveled back to Jerusalem.

So far so good. But as we'll soon see, Paul started to get stuck on the idea that *he himself* needed to be the one to deliver and present the collection. Yet God had already begun letting him know in no uncertain terms that this was *not* the way to go.

Acts 20:22-24:

And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there,

except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me.

But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

Being fearless is a good thing; stubborn, not so much. It wasn't yet time for him to finish his course.

Paul needed for someone to get his attention. Look at all the prayers and entreaties that were offered on his behalf as he proceeded on his journey.

Acts 20:36,37:

And when he had said these things [to the Ephesian elders], he [knelt down and prayed with them all](#).

And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him,

Acts 21:4-12:

And having sought out [the disciples](#), we stayed there [at Tyre] for seven days. And [through the Spirit they were telling Paul not to go on to Jerusalem](#).

When our days there were ended, we departed and went on our journey, and they all, with wives and children, accompanied us until we were outside the city. And [kneeling down on the beach, we prayed](#)

and said farewell to one another. Then we went on board the ship, and they returned home.

When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais, and we greeted the brothers and stayed with them for one day.

On the next day we departed and came to Caesarea, and we entered the house of [Philip the evangelist](#), who was one of the seven, and stayed with him.

He had four unmarried [daughters, who prophesied](#).

While we were staying for many days, [a prophet named Agabus](#) came down from Judea.

And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'"

When we heard this, [we and the people there urged him not to go up to Jerusalem](#).

Just look at that! As Paul well knew, Agabus was the same guy who had inspired the first collection for the Jewish Christians. God is really pulling out all the stops to get his attention! Unfortunately, he still doesn't listen.

Acts 21:13,14:

Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

And since he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, "Let the will of the Lord be done."

What else can you do? The situation had gotten to a point where it was a lot bigger than just Paul's personal walk and would affect many. The believers trying to persuade him, recognizing this, put everything in the hands of the Searcher of hearts.

And how did it turn out in the end? Though there were tribulations along the way including trials, hardships, shipwrecks and imprisonments, Paul lived quite a few more years. During those years that God restored to Him, Paul wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and perhaps even Hebrews.

Would you say that the believers' prayers to the Searcher of hearts were answered? I should say so! God looked past His son's willfulness and its consequences to deliver a yield that no one could have anticipated.

Joel 2:25-27:

I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great army, which I sent among you.

"You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, who has dealt wondrously with you. And my people shall never again be put to shame.

You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God and there is none else. And my people shall never again be put to shame.

A Heart Opened by the Searcher of Hearts

Years before when Paul heeded the Macedonian call, it's said in

Acts 16:14:

One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. [The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.](#)

[Neither you nor I can open anyone's heart; but the Searcher of hearts can.](#) It may only be at that point that they start paying attention.

A close relative of mine had a terminal illness. He was a big-hearted man, well-liked by all and extremely generous (though he didn't have much). He had lived alone for years following a divorce precipitated in part by chronic drinking. When he was sober, you'd never suspect him to be mean or unkind; but when he wasn't, anything could happen. But none of us had ever been able to persuade him to seek help.

As his disease progressed, I would travel in from where I lived to offer support and physical assistance. This was a practical way of showing my love for him; but in my heart, I hoped to make a deeper connection. Even as close as we had been all my life, I couldn't just force such an opportunity. I had to wait on God.

The last time I drove in to see him, I thanked God en route for an open door to reach his heart. I didn't know then that this would be the last time he could actually hold a conversation. As we got talking, I asked him if there was anything I could do for him. His answer stunned me.

"Tom," he said, "I'm just not sure that I'm saved." I never expected that. We had attended the same church in our youth, and had been believers our whole lives.

I responded, "But I *know* you've confessed Jesus as Lord and believed that God raised him from the dead. That's all there is to it. The Bible says so in Romans 10:9."

He wasn't so sure. "But you *have* confessed Jesus as Lord, haven't you?" The answer was yes. "And you *do* believe that God raised him from the dead, don't you?" Another yes. "Then you're saved, there's no doubt about it."

Then I reminded him of an encounter we'd had back when I was a college student.

"Do you remember when you came to see me when I was in college and we talked for a long time late in the night in the dorm parking lot and I led you into speaking in tongues?"

Yes, he remembered. But he wasn't sure that what he spoke that night was actually speaking in tongues. I affirmed to him that it really was.

"I *know* you're born again because I *heard* you speak in tongues, and you most definitely did it. It's impossible to speak a language you've never learned without first being born again. That means you're born

again of God's spirit, you're going to heaven, and all hell can't stop you from getting there."

A tear glinted in his eye while we prayed together in that moment, as I thanked God for confirmation of salvation to settle in his heart, once and for all. The remainder of our time together that weekend we shared a peace and a joy beyond words.

That was the last time we ever conversed. But what more momentous answer could I have ever received to my prayer? It was the Searcher of hearts Who ushered us into that final encounter in this life, and Who put His seal on our spiritual brotherhood for all eternity.

When you pray for a loved one, confide in the Searcher of hearts, knowing He knows the way into our hearts and onward to salvation and eternity. And in the final analysis, isn't that all that really matters?