

As most of you know my dad is terminally ill. People often ask me what he's sick with, which is tough to answer since his medical record is as thick as a history textbook. I've actually coached myself in the mirror to just respond, "His kidneys are failing and he has cancer." Though when I say this I feel I don't give him proper credit for his courage against his illnesses. Bottom line: I love my dad fiercely. To date, witnessing his decline, has been the most gut-wrenching trial that I've ever dealt with.

As my dad's health became worse- I did the most logical thing that a Christian would do- I prayed and enlisted others to pray. I prayed that God would heal his kidneys. I prayed that his cancer would go away. I prayed that he would feel better. I prayed for the pain to stop. I prayed he would be well enough to go to a family vacation at a Dude Ranch, to go to a Phillies game, to go out to dinner with me and finally just to get out of bed. His situation got worse- he went into the hospital with infections, he lost weight, he was "too tired to eat". So, I prayed that the infections would go away and that he would regain his appetite. I even prayed my dad would return to his Cheesesteak diet! None of these things happened.

On one flight up to Philly, when I was reading through the Psalms, a scripture stood out to me. It was in Psalm 62:

One thing you have spoken, O Lord, /Two things I have heard:/
That you O God are Strong/ and that You O Lord are Loving.

I felt convicted as I read this that my prayer life was really shallow. I realized I had been talking AT God for months without pausing to think about His character or His will. Basically I had been asking God to return us to a time when I didn't have to rely on His power or mercy. I was not recognizing that these very hard circumstances didn't detract from God's power, His love or His mercy. I had it all wrong. God was providing- I just wasn't paying attention.

In light of that realization, God has rocked my world and up-ended my perspective on prayer- namely that I would trust God's power and submit to it. Also, that I would know He is filled with love- that He deals with us all in love even when we're sick, even when circumstances are bad. It also changed how I pray for people's needs. For example, now I pray that the Lord's power would be more overwhelming in my dad's life that the pain he suffers. I pray that God's steadfast love would overpower my dad's desolation.

What is so amazing about these prayers is that with my focus adjusted to God's will and not my own- I feel blessings heaped upon us. It's true that my dad's body is failing and sometimes (often) sadness overwhelms me to a point where I can barely breathe. (I still want to go see the Phillies play with my Pop!) However, the peace of God transcends all understanding and calms me in these moments. Strangely, I'm more content now, relying on the Lord in submissive prayer, than I was when I didn't know I needed it.