

Facing Life's Challenges - Part 3

The Power of Prayer: Another Weapon of Victory Against Life's Challenges

The Bible contains an abundance of examples of passionate prayers offered in the throes of anguish. Many of the Psalms express the writer's pleas for God's help in times of trouble. Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane in Luke 22:41-42 demonstrates how even the Master poured out his heart in the shadow of the cross. Each of these prayers should be studied in order to learn how to pray when we have trouble. In essence, though, the power of prayer as a weapon against life's challenges all comes down to one statement made by Divine inspiration and written by the apostle Peter: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." (I Peter 5:6-7).

It doesn't get much more basic than that. To gain the relief that God makes available to His faithful children we must first humble ourselves before Him. In short, we must recognize our need to go to Him and trust His providential care of us. How many precious minutes of this brief life we waste in worry and distress, "all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer"! And why don't we carry it to God in prayer? Is it because we think we can handle it ourselves? Many times our heads won't bow because our hearts won't bend! Stubbornly we keep the burdens on our shoulders and carry them like lead weights. All we have to do is humble ourselves before God and go to Him in prayer through Christ. How difficult is that?

Then notice what Peter says in verse seven. "Casting" means "to throw." In other words, cast it off. "All" means just that; every bit of it. "Care" means "anxiety, worry." "Him" is God. Take your anxieties, every last one of them, and throw them onto the broad shoulders of Almighty God. Why? "For he careth for you."

So that's the magic answer, is it? Just pray and all of our troubles will be taken away? No, that's not what we're saying. Leading us to this determination to pray in times of trouble is the faith that says, "I trust God's will to be right." Jesus prayed for deliverance in the Garden but God had a different answer. Paul prayed for relief from his thorn in the flesh but God had something else in mind (II Corinthians 12:1-10). Prayer does not miraculously erase life's challenges. What it does is bring peace to those who pray in faith. Paul wrote, "Be careful (anxious, mg) for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6-7). When Jesus finished praying in the Garden He went calmly and confidently into the hands of His betrayers. Prayer steeled his determination to do His Father's will. When Paul learned that it was not God's will for his thorn in the flesh to be removed, he declared that he would use that challenge of life to make him stronger in the Lord (II Corinthians 12:9-10). The Psalmist wrote, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes." (Psalm 119:71).

When we face life's challenges, we can most certainly pray that the challenges will be taken out of the way and sometimes they will be. But the aspect of prayer that really demonstrates its power is that it allows us to share our burdens with the One who understands everything we're facing. There's an incredible calm that sweeps over the soul when cares are cast upon the Lord. Prayer's power is not necessarily about having our troubles removed. It's more about gaining the strength to deal with them and thus be more effective in our service to Christ. Prayer, then, can be a powerful weapon in our arsenal as we battle the world if we remember that its function is not just for asking for removal of the pain but also for the patience and endurance to grow spiritually through the pain.

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