

Autobiographical Notes

“When you pray, do you pray as an advocate or as an accuser?”

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Sometime after our family moved to Kansas, in my renewed desire to draw close to Jesus Christ and to follow His plan for my life, I asked the Lord how I would know if I was walking with Him in the right way, that is, in *wisdom's path*. I had taken some significant wrong turns of late, and was concerned that I knew with confidence a practical answer to this question.

There were many individuals and groups who claimed to know, or at least who were ready to suggest the way a person should live his or her life (in their personal walk, family life, church life, social friendships, community involvement, leisure activities, health concerns, work-related pursuits, etc.). Sorting through all this volunteered advice and guidance was a bit wearying. So I simply wanted a way to rightly *prove all things* and to *hold fast that which is good* (I Thessalonians 5:21).

While I was hoping for guidance through a somewhat practical answer, the Lord responded to my question with a question, one that had an emphasis and scope that I had not necessarily anticipated. While I was thinking in terms of making decisions, the Lord drew me back to a particular heart attitude.

“When you pray, do you pray as an advocate or as an accuser?”

I was then reminded that there are two who stand before God to represent us: one fairly, the other presumptuously. The first is Jesus Christ, who is our *advocate with the Father* (I John 2:1,2). The other is Satan, who is *the accuser of the brethren* (Revelation 12:10).

The question before me then was this: when I prayed was I praying with the Advocate, or with the Accuser? Equally important, was I becoming either an advocate or an accuser myself? In short, whose side was I on? Whose side was I hoping would succeed? And whose side was I willing and ready to support and prosper? Not in general terms, mind you. Rather, on a case-by-case basis with regard to those I bring before God in my prayers and, more importantly, by my thoughts in general and through my heart attitude toward others specifically.

The Lord soon strengthened the gravity of His question to me through a prayer titled, “*The Ravensbruck Prayer*” (author unknown). While our son, Garrick, took a Kindermusik class one evening (sometime in late 1993 or early 1994), I noticed this prayer posted in the home of the teacher. It reportedly was found in the pocket of a dead child's clothing at Ravensbruck, the only all-female concentration camp in Germany during WW II.

*O Lord, remember not only
the men and women of goodwill,
but also those of ill will.*

*But, do not remember all the suffering
they have inflicted upon us:*

*Instead remember the fruits we have borne
because of this suffering:*

*Our fellowship, our loyalty to one another,
our humility, our courage, our generosity,
the greatness of heart
that has grown from this trouble.*

*When our persecutors come to be judged by you,
let all of these fruits that we have borne
be their forgiveness.*

The prayer was of great encouragement and inspiration to me. So I copied it down and later typed and printed it on a sheet of paper to keep with me in my scriptures. It was a particular time of trial in my life and ministry, and this prayer greatly encouraged me to focus more closely upon our Lord and His ministry as opposed to my circumstances.

Eventually I misplaced the paper and was unable to locate another copy. I searched the web several times over the years, but failed to find it. This past week the prayer again came to mind, so I searched my computer files one more time without success. When the prayer came to my thoughts this morning, I searched the web again and was blessed to find a copy on the following website:

<http://imagesofhisglory.wordpress.com/2009/09/04/the-ravensbruck-prayer/>

Not only did this webpage contain the prayer I was seeking, but it also included the following wise counsel from a father to his sons:

“I told my sons when they left the house to go off into the big wide world that the faith I had taught them had to become their own. I had never forced my faith down them, but had taught them of mine but I knew they were going to be exposed to things they’d never heard before. They could go to a zillion different churches and hear a zillion different things. They could read the latest pop psychologist or philosopher trying to tie the loose ends of life together, but whoever or whatever they listened to, they needed to filter it all through four really important things.”

1. “Does it help you fall in love with God?”
2. “Does it help you love yourself?”

3. “Does it help you love your neighbor?”

4. “Does it help you love your enemy?”

(This counsel reminded me of Enos’ experiences as recorded in the book of Enos in the Book of Mormon.)

It is easy for us to find fault with others or to get into disagreements and arguments with them. At times our differences with others over a limitless number of things may even turn into grievous disputes and grudges. Nonetheless, with the answer provided above, the Lord is able to focus our thoughts squarely back to the essential message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. No matter the rightness or wrongness of a situation or another’s actions or attitude, all is for not if we miss the essential purpose of God in sending Jesus Christ into this dark world to be a saving and redeeming light of hope. He is intent on our being reconciled to Him and to each other (II Corinthians 5:19-21). I find the following passages from the scriptures helpful in keeping our Lord’s message justly in my thoughts when dealing with others in difficult situations:

*He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doeth the Lord require of thee, but to **do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?** The Lord’s voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name; **hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.** (Micah 6:8,9)*

*Therefore after this manner shall ye pray, saying, Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread. **And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.** And suffer us not to be led into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, who trespass against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses. (Matthew 6:9-16)*

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. This is both just and merciful.

My hope, then, is that everyone who reads these words will be richly blessed by God according to His riches in Christ Jesus our Lord. And may the above prayer and the wise counsel shared by a father be an encouragement to you all. Please remember to set your face steadfastly toward your Jerusalem with Christ (Luke 9:51). Join the Advocate in His prayers for those around you, both near and far. He knows each one and is seeking to reconcile them unto to Himself, and to you.