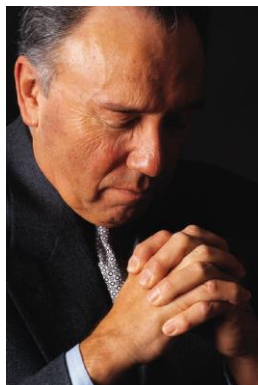


Prayer in the Valley

Dan Hitz



“...keep on asking, and you will be given what you ask for. Keep on looking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And the door is opened to everyone who knocks. Luke 11:9-10 (NLT)

Many of us in our brokenness have lost the hope in that Scripture. We may have asked countless times for the Lord to “take these feelings away” or move on the heart of a loved one. We may become discouraged and wonder if God really does care, or if our prayers really do matter to God. The answer to those questions is YES! God really does care, and our prayers do move the heart of God.

Why then do we continue to struggle year after year. Why does our situation not seem to change at all? The answer lies beyond the immediate concern that we see, much deeper into the core of our own hearts.

One day when I was in a meltdown point in my own life, I asked God another familiar question. “Why?” His answer surprised me. The story of Elijah and the widow woman’s son immediately popped into my spirit. In 1 Kings 17, Elijah goes to a poor widow who is about to die in a famine and asks her to make some bread for him from her last remaining staples. She obeys and sees the hand of God move in her life supernaturally by replenishing her oil and flour. She and her son experience the power of God in their lives firsthand just as many of us have. One day her son becomes ill and dies. Her reaction surprises me. She blames the man of God. “Have you come here to punish my sins by killing my son?” (17:18) Sound familiar? So often, in our despair, we think that God is out to punish us and that we will simply have to live with our pain. We think this way even after we have seen the supernatural hand of God move on our lives in miraculous ways.

Elijah’s answer also surprises me. “O LORD my God, why have you brought tragedy on this widow who has opened her home to me, causing her son to die?” (17:20) In short... “God, you did this!” Both Elijah and the widow seemed to blame God. Just as surprising (although it shouldn’t be) is God’s response. “The LORD heard Elijah’s prayer, and the life of the child returned, and he came back to life!” Elijah then brought the child to his mother and proclaimed the words that she so wanted to hear, “Look, your son is alive!”

What happened here with the widow woman and her son? Was God out to terrorize a poor desperate woman by taking her son? No!!! Was God out to punish her for her sin by taking her son? No!!! God was after something far deeper in both of their lives. He wanted to remove any doubt in their hearts that he was God and that He could do far more than they ever asked or thought. The woman declared, “Now I know for sure that you are a man of God, and that the LORD truly speaks through you.” I believe this woman’s statement goes far beyond Elijah, a mere man, and speaks of the heart and character of God, Himself.

How many of us have reacted in the same way as this poor widow? We have seen God do miraculous works in our own lives. We have known Him as our Heavenly Father. We have felt His presence. He has changed our lives. Yet when a trial comes and we face terrible uncertainties, our own thoughts turn toward God in anger and even rage. Our minds run through an emotional checklist of our past sins and current failures. Does God hate us? Is He finished with us? Does our gracious Heavenly Father even care that we are perishing? The answer is simple. God does not hate us. He is not finished with us. And yes, He does care that we are perishing. He cares so much that He is allowing our current situations to occur in order that He may touch a much deeper issue in our hearts than the current crisis. When we reach the other side of our trial, we will realize that He has healed much deeper hurts in our own hearts than we ever dreamed possible. Like the widow woman we will shout, "Now I know that you are God, and that you are able to do exceedingly, abundantly more than I have ever asked or thought!" We will have an even deeper appreciation of the love of our Heavenly Father, and His heart of love toward us.

That is the heart of God in our lives. When the Lord spoke to me about the widow woman and her son, He also spoke to me about the deeper issue in my heart that He was healing. To paraphrase what He said that day, "Dan, I've allowed this situation in your life so that as I empower you to walk through that valley, I'm going to heal a much deeper wound in your heart than the one that has your attention. It will be a much deeper victory that goes far beyond you, to touch the hearts of others." With those words came a peace... a trust... The trial did not immediately disappear. I had times of darkness where I still doubted my ability to pass through the fire. Yet it was those words from the Holy Spirit – that sweet assurance from my Father – that empowered me to continue walking and trust in His goodness to meet me on the other side. His healing truly does reach down into the deepest recesses of our hearts and flow through us to touch the lives of our brothers and sisters in the body of Christ.

May we all have the grace to trust in the goodness of our God. May we all learn to pass through the wilderness "leaning on our beloved". (Song of Songs 8.5) If you find yourself in the middle of a trial or temptation, take heart. God does indeed love you. God is not finished with you. I encourage you to reach out your Savior who died for you. Reach out to the Body of Christ and the safe Christians that He has put in your life. You don't have to walk alone.

"And I will give you treasures hidden in the darkness – secret riches. I will do this so you may know that I am the LORD, the God of Israel, the one who calls you by name." Isaiah 45.3 (NLT)