

The Danube Letter

on Prayer



Some Thoughts on Prayer from Entrust

October 2011

“Desperate prayers are the best prayers.”

Prayer No Substitute for Action

*“...Why are you crying out to Me?
Tell the sons of Israel to move forward.”*

Exodus 14:15

History and honest memory will remind us that we were often doing something else, something less, when we ought to have been praying.

But it is actually possible to pray while we should be doing something else.

We may fall back on prayer as a way to put off some less pleasant assignment. If we ascertain by prayer that God wants action taken, then laziness or cowardice may inspire more prayer in place of the action indicated. Scripture is faithful to relate just such dangers even in the lives of the greatest heroes.

Moses is undeniably rebuked in Exodus 14:15, but it may be wise for those of us who occupy a lower station than Moses to go easy on him. We have surely fared worse on less demanding occasions. We have to consider that his instructions just prior to the rebuke could have been misconstrued.

Exodus 14:14 is a consolation which begs to be memorized.

“The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent.”

What comfort!

Evidently Moses interpreted that promise as an excuse to leave off active measures while the Lord attended to everything.

He was mistaken.

With the assurance that God would do the fighting, it would have been easy to assume that merely petitioning God was enough.

But petitioning God is the greatest preparation for commanding men. By the middle of Exodus 14 the time had come to leave off petitioning to take up commanding.

Desperate prayers are the best prayers. Desperate prayers avoid artifice and embrace sincerity. They are focused and pointed. They aim at specific results.

Israel was in a desperate situation in Exodus 14. As the Egyptian army approached them on the Red Sea shore they were literally pinned between “the devil and the deep blue sea.”

They cried to the Lord and He answered them.

Their desperate prayers called forth definite instructions.

The answer came in the command to do something.

They were to move forward.

Their prayer begged God to do something and He answered. He told them what to do. He told the children of Israel to move. To postpone obedience by pressing their suit was not a thing acceptable to Israel’s God.

Sometimes we may feel at an impasse in prayer.

We may be tempted to conclude that God has stopped listening.

This is never the case, but it may be the case that we continued to pray while failing to listen. Instead of asking why God is not answering it would be much better to go back and see if there’s something we have overlooked.

John Bunyan warned his congregation to always assume that the oversight was their own. He urged them to nourish a “godly suspicion of their own infirmity.”

Certainly there is nothing infirm or slack in the hand of God to answer prayer.

But sometimes He demands that we first move forward.

And that itself is the answer.



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