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How Can We Pray For Those Going Through The Storms Of Life?

Introduction

In Leviticus God gave a variety of laws and amongst them was one having to do with making rash statements. It says, "Or if a soul swear, pronouncing with his lips to do evil, or to do good, whatsoever it be that a man shall pronounce with an oath, and it be hid from him; when he knoweth of it, then he shall be guilty in one of these" (Lev. 5:4). The individual made a statement, a promise to do something and possibly through neglect, forgetfulness, or the business of life, promptly forgot about what they had pledged to do. Later, they are reminded it was a sin of which they are guilty.

It is oftentimes heard after a traumatic happening in personal or public life, whether it be the sudden severe illness of a loved one, a death, or a financial loss, someone says, "I will pray for you" or "Our thoughts and prayers are with you". Sadly, almost immediately it is forgotten about.

Two years ago I was exceedingly ill with kidney and heart failure. I assure you, I was greatly encouraged by these expressions, and no doubt there were those who really did pray for my recovery, and for that I am grateful. I am just as sure that due to the business of life there are others who said it, and while they may have remembered from time to time to "say a wee prayer", it was almost forgotten about. I have no doubt that the Lord was gracious in that those prayers were answered, and I believe in the God who does answer prayer.

As I lay there week after week, test after test, there is the feeling of helplessness, especially after being seen by numerous doctors and they did not know what the problem was.

What can an individual pray for?

One of the things which I experienced was the power of Satan in a very frightening way. As an individual lies there in the almost silence of the hospital room with little other than the low hum of the instruments and the flashlight of a nurse doing her check ups every so often, the devil can work with the mind. How do you know there is a God? Are you really saved? Is this whole spiritual data just an intriguing fairy tale? What is heaven like? Will I see my grandchildren grow up? But, the worst is the spiritual conflicts and confusion of the mind with heavy medication. What can we pray for when we see others in this situation?

- a) Pray for the emotional, spiritual, mental and physical healing and restraining work of God. Restraining in hindering the attacks of Satan in the hours of darkness and aloneness. Pray that the High priestly work of Christ will be known by the individual in the storm and the presence of the Lord as He was with the disciples in the boat. As the Lord lay asleep in the boat and the storm raged, it seemed the Lord was not aware of their plight, and that can happen so easily and quickly.
- b) Pray for the spouse and loved ones of the family for very often it is harder for them than the individual in the hospital bed. They also do not know what is happening to the one they love. From time to time the dark thoughts of death and how can they carry on, the devastation of the funeral arrangements when one is numb and just functions mechanically, the going home to an empty home, an empty chair, even if it is only for an extended hospital stay.
- c) Pray for help to accept the changes in life. Having spoken to a number of people who have had heart surgery or heart attacks, they have nearly all noticed a change in themselves. Some became more emotional at things, others got agitated more easily. Often doctors do not tell these things and the immediate family cannot understand what has happened. I know with myself I was quite stoic but after I would find myself having a little weep at things which would never have affected me before. That was hard to accept as was the change in ability to function as I once did. At one time I could have worked for hours in the garden or in my studies of the scriptures, but not now. Apart from the fact that I am older (75), my strength and energy is not near what it once was. That can be very frustrating and prayer is needed to accept the new normality.

- d) Pray for those of the medical world whose expertise they are dependent on. Let us not forget that doctors treat illnesses but only God can heal, and thank God He is still in the healing business. Those doctors, specialists, nurses and ambulance personnel also have traumas to face daily. Sometimes they treat a little child and other times an elderly individual. Sometimes patients can be disgruntled and other times people who are just frightened in the hospital environment. Sadly there are those times when they do all they can and then have to make the decision that there is nothing more they can do, and then bring the family into a secluded area to tell them, "Sorry, we did everything we could but the loved one did not make it". If it is an elderly person that is bad enough, but what must it be like to have to tell the parents of a little child that news. They need prayer. When doing surgery, doctors and nurses need alertness and calmness of mind when things do not go as expected or planned.
- e) Pray that the individual may be able to get a good restful sleep. The human body needs a restful sleep even when it is well and healthy. How much more when it is in a weakened state? The scriptures inform us that it was the Lord who caused the first man to fall asleep (Gen. 2:21). It is a good and perfect gift (Jam. 1:17), applicable even today. The scriptures state, "He giveth his beloved sleep" (Psa. 127:2).
- f) If the one who is ill is the main provider in the home but due to the illness may be unable to work for a considerable amount of time, help may be needed financially. If it is a wife who is ill and the husband works, they may need help with the children or in the provision of meals. I recall when my daughter was so ill after she gave birth to her little daughter, the women of the church rallied round and provided a hot meal for her husband and children every day, not only when she was in hospital, but also for a time afterward. No one will know how much that was appreciated.
- g) Pray for acceptance of the family, especially if the individual had been seriously burnt due to a fire, or perhaps marred for life from a serious accident. There are times when the loved ones cannot look at the individual because the face is so badly marred or do not know what to say. This is a time where a support system is greatly needed so that they are assured of the family's love and care. The sick one may feel they are a burden and this concern hinders their getting better. Reassure them they are not a burden and that caring for them is an act of love not necessity. When I was so ill, at separate times my son Rowan and daughter Esther both took two weeks of their holidays to come from Edmonton, and my daughter Heather came from Florida for ten weeks to care for their mum and myself. I shall never forget that. I needed that support from all my children, and I got it.

The apostle John wrote, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 Jn. 3:18). Prayer is a deed of truth and love. May the Lord graciously help us in the storms of life.

.. . . Rowan Jennings