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The Prayer Of A Soldier

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John 12:27-28b: "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say: Father save me from this hour? But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father glorify thy name."

Our text is the prayer of the world's greatest soldier. These are the words of the Captain of our salvation as He faced His zero hour. In their own way the best and truest of our soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines are echoing that prayer today. A soldier properly prays for his own safety, but the final prayer of a true soldier is not, "Father save me from this hour." If that were his ultimate prayer he would cease to be a soldier, desert, or turn into a running coward. The final prayer of the true American soldier is an echo of the prayer of our Lord, "But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father glorify Thy Name."

Our Prayer For Our Soldiers

Of course, our torn and anxious hearts are praying for our soldiers, Father either save them from that hour, or save them through that hour. As a prediction of half a million casualties in ninety days faced us on Christmas 1943, our prayer rose to Almighty God in whose hands are the issues of life that He might stay the angel of death.

"O Lord of air and land and sea,
Guard Thou our sons who fight for Thee."

Hear, Thou, our boys in the day of trouble, send them help from the heavenly sanctuary, and strengthen them out of Zion! Cover their heads in the day of battle, and under Thy wings cause them to trust! May Thy truth be their shield and buckler!

On receiving a cable that her son had returned safely after his Flying Fortress had made that terrific shuttle trip from England to Africa and back again an anxious mother said: "When he left I asked him to take this verse with him, 'For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.'"

May He who is our Rock and our Refuge, cover our boys with His feathers! Though they take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the sea, may His hand still lead them and His right hand uphold them! O, Thou Shepherd of Israel, spread a table before them in the presence of their enemies! Be Thou their strength and pull them out of the nets that the foes have laid privily for them! Into Thy hands we commit their spirits: redeem them, O Lord God of truth! Hear the voice of our supplication and deliver their souls from death, their eyes from tears, and their feet from falling! Grant that Thine everlasting arms may ever be around and about them, O Eternal God, our help and our shield!

"Protect them all where'er they be,
On land, in air, or on the sea."

The Soldier's Prayer For Himself

And every sober-minded soldier properly prays these prayers for himself. Many of our flyers in the South Pacific begin each mission repeating the ninety-first Psalm and sometimes their bat-

tered ships come limping back on a wing of prayer. When a "Y" worker asked a machine gunner in the First World War if he prayed, the answer came back: "You bet I pray, and say Mister, if you'd been where I've been you'd pray too." As the shells came over and wiped out one gun crew after another, those men prayed as their brothers and sons are praying in the fox holes and the battle wagons of today. As they leave Athens, Ga., many soldiers and sailors carry a card with this prayer upon it:

As on I go to the Battle Field
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to shield,
And if I should die for my Country's sake,
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to take
Into Thine Infinite Arms of Love,
Into Thy Glorious Home Above,
For Jesus' sake, Amen.

While every sensible soldier prays for God's saving and keeping power, his prayer is not only for his own safety. Speaking of the American troops as they landed in Italy, Dr. William B. Pugh said: "There was no noise or laughter, but grim seriousness of a character I have never seen in American youth. They hate war, but when they see a job to be done they go forward with a determination, bravery and courage that makes you take your hat off to American youth."

When one looks at General Thomas J. Jackson standing like a stone wall in the midst of the battle smoke at Bull Run he realizes that the prayer of a true soldier is not exclusively for his personal safety. In the Confederate War our grandfathers prayed for courage to do their duty and for grace to bear their suffering.

Some months ago one of our great banking institutions carried this striking ad: **Soldiers Both And Unafraid.**

"I saw my wife go forth one day—a look upon her face. It was just a little more than twenty-one years ago—but the memory has never dimmed. It was the look of a soldier—unafraid. That night our son was born."

"Today for the second time I saw that look. This time it was on the face of a soldier—unafraid. Our son had joined the army."

Yes the ultimate prayer of the mother is not to be saved from the hour of travail, but that God may be glorified through the life that she passes through the valley of the shadow to bring into the world.

And today: "Chin high—eyes bright—they are fighting—those soldiers who bore the soldiers. With aching hearts—with prayerful lips—they are mentally out on every battleline—on land—on the sea—under the sea—and in the air—fighting as only a Mother can fight—for her boy."

For a week prior to Christmas a soldier was home with his family before entering upon his commission to lead a platoon of infantry. During the days at home the family read several of the Psalms which tell of God's protecting hand: the ninety-first, the twenty-seventh, the twentieth, and the one hundred and sixteenth. But the text which struck fire was where the writer of Hebrews quotes God's great promise to Joshua as

he stepped forward to battle for the Lord. "He hath said, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee'. So that we may boldly say, 'The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.'" On the way to the train the soldier asked for the reference and remarked "That text gives us a kind of Christian Stoicism. Since God is my helper I will not fear what man may do unto me." He wrote back, "I found the Hebrews reference. I like it a lot."

Our boys are praying as our grandfathers prayed for courage to dare and for grace to bear. They are praying for courage, they are not boasting of having it. For courage is something one does not know he possesses until he needs it. In the hour of need, O Thou that savest by Thy right hand them that put their trust in Thee, strengthen them with strength in their souls; And soldiers, trust ye in the Lord and be not afraid, for in the Lord **Jehovah** is everlasting strength. "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the **Lord** shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint." (Isaiah 12:2; 26:4; 39:28-31).

It is thus that those who have been called to fight the battles of the Lord and break the rod of the oppressed have ever been strong and of a good courage (Joshua 1). As the soldier of today faces a stronger foe, a sharper fight, a more deadly encounter than any previous soldier has met, he prays

"Since I must fight if I would reign,
Increase my courage, Lord!
I'll bear the toil, endure the pain,
Supported by Thy Word."

And what more can one say of their prayer for patience to bear the pain, the dislocation, the disfigurement, the shock that war entails? Speaking to his suffering countrymen, Pastor J. Koopman of Holland reasons, "Why so much suffering comes no one can say. But one thing I know and whoever knows it has the true faith in life and in death—it does not happen outside the merciful will of Jesus Christ. He understands your suffering because He has borne it all before you did."

Our first American soldier, General George C. Marshall, adds: "War is a burden to be carried on a steep and bloody road; and only strong nerves and determined spirits, like the spirit of a Man who long ago carried the heavy burden of a Cross up a steep and bloody road to His own Crucifixion, may endure."

Closing a half century of foreign missionary service with six months in a Japanese jail Dr. James Myers wondered why God sent him so much suffering after so much service until these two texts came to comfort his heart: "All things work together for good to those who love the Lord," and "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." Is some soldier asking, Where was God when my buddy died? The answer comes back, Just where He was when His only-begotten Son died.

"We would see Jesus, the great Rock foundation
Whereon our feet were set by sovereign grace;

Nor life nor death with all their agitation
Can thence remove us, if we see His face."

The Prayer Of The Captain Of Our Salvation

Indeed, by looking to Jesus we see the perfect example of the prayer of the soldier. When the Greeks came saying, "Sirs we would see Jesus," our Lord realized afresh all that He must undergo in order to be the Saviour of the world. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die," He mused, "it abideth alone: but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal . . . Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say: Father, save me from this hour? But for this cause came I unto this hour: Father glorify Thy Name."

Soldiers, here is the perfect expression of the prayer that has been forming in your hearts and trembling upon your lips. Here is the model for the prayer of our grandfathers in grey and in blue and our boys in khaki, in green and in white. In the great war that God is waging for the souls of men our Lord Jesus Christ prayed for courage to dare and grace to bear. Yea He prayed until He sweat as it were great drops of blood and angels came to minister to Him in the Garden of Gethsemane. The flesh shrank from the awful ordeal, but the grace of God conquered in His prayer. "Father if it be possible let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done. Father, glorify Thy Name."

The Captain of our Salvation is leading onward the marching files of the sons of God. The example of His heroism as well as the presence of His Spirit moves His disciples to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Amid the fagots and the flames of the martyrs as among the bombs and shells and shot of battle Jesus has ever been the Leader serving His own with the fine charm of the courageous. God has given Him for a witness to the people, a leader and a commander to the people. He is the Leader who will encourage and ennoble every life that follows.

Anywhere, everywhere, fear I cannot know,
Anywhere with Jesus I can safely go.

Soldier, as you find in this text the perfect example for your prayer, look deeper and find here also the prayer that leads to your salvation. If Christ had turned His back upon His **via dolorosa**, if He had refused the cup of agony and the burden of the Cross, if His ultimate prayer had been **Father save me from this hour** our ultimate fate would have been damnation.

There was no other good enough
To pay the debt of sin
He only could unlock the gate of heaven
And let us in.

Christ swapped places with us. He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. He who knew no sin was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ alone, is our righteousness in the presence of God now. As Anselm of Canterbury taught the men of old, we place the death of Christ between us and our sins, between us and the punishment

we deserve, between us and the wrath of God. For in His great final prayer Christ willed to place Himself between us and the destruction we deserved, to take our burden upon His own shoulders and to bear our punishment on His cross. And when as our representative up from the grave He arose He became the **Lord Our Righteousness**, the ground of our forgiveness living in Heaven to intercede for us. The same Christ who ultimately prayed for the Cross on Calvary Hill that on that Cross He might die to save you and me, is today pleading on the basis of that Cross for your salvation.

The late Reverend John R. Mackay, an esteemed minister of the Free Church of Scotland once said that it seemed as he looked into his own heart

he could see only darkness, guilt and pride. "But then" said he, "I remembered that Christ is a Prophet who can dispel my darkness, Christ is a Priest who can remove my guilt, Christ is a King who can humble my pride. And I said it were good that Christ and I should meet."

"Lo, the incarnate God ascended
Pleads the merits of His blood:
Venture on Him, venture wholly
Let no other trust intrude
None but Jesus can do the guilty sinner good."

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Finding And Following God's Plan

By Dr. Samuel McPh. Glasgow*

(Scripture: Gen. 39:2 - 41:38)

"And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.

And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such an one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?"

If an intelligent savage, walking along the shore line, should see a knife, washed up from the sea, and should examine it, there would be an inevitable conclusion. As he looked at the smooth handle and saw how it would fit his hand, as he noticed the rivets and finally discovered the blade that could be pulled out of the shielding handle, and would stop at exactly the right place for service, blunt on one side, sharp on the other: the whole appearance of the knife would convince him that it did not just happen, that it was not something just washed up from the depths of the sea. That knife had been designed by some one with a mind like his own.

As we look out upon the universe with its order, its frictionless procedure, its quiet continuance, there begins to form in the human mind a conviction. As you look at a tree, breathing through its leaves, protected by its bark, sending out its hidden roots, drawing water and chemicals, the very strength of life, from the soil; in season its fruit forming and moving to perfection, this conviction is certified.

Think of the sea gull, with its tight fitting feathers, his well oiled body, the span of his wings, the web of his feet. See him quite at home far out to sea, every equipment that he has contributes to the sustaining of life in the environment where he is found.

All these, and a million voices more, speak of a Designer behind the physical universe, a mind. Yes, the Maker and Builder is God.

It is an easy and inevitable step from this

thought to the fact that God must have a plan for human life, His highest creation. And our study here in the life of Joseph leads us to find and follow God's plan. God has a plan for every individual life. Our lives, according to the Master mind that made us, fit into the day and destiny of our generation. There is a task reserved for us. God does not work at haphazards. He is a God of order and plan. We are given life. We are given life with a purpose. And as we find and fulfill that purpose, life is rounded out in its rich completion. No other man can fulfill my life plan.

How **serious** this makes life. It lifts it above the low levels of chance and caprice, and we realize we are a part of the thought and purpose of an Infinite God, that He has created us, that He may feed our lives into the movement and success of His Kingdom upon earth, His plan for the world.

How **safe** this makes life, when we realize our lives are in the keeping of Him Who marks the sparrows' fall. Under His great Infinite hand we can be sure that life will move on through threatenings, through change, through sorrow or sufferings, through joy or blessing, to His chosen consummation.

How **stirring** this makes life. Here the boy Joseph, when still a lad, dreams dreams. God sends a flash into the soul of the boy. The sheaves will bow down to his sheaf. The sun and moon and stars will yield him homage. His parents and his brethren will be dependent upon him and acknowledge his greatness.

Here is a call to every parent, with a son and daughter and their destinies. God has a plan for their lives and His plan compasses their largest possible life. He may reverse our small and unworthy program. Instead of the son becoming a money prince at home, he may become a prince with God on some distant African shore or in far away China. It matters not, so long as the