



fingerprints

Last in a Series

Through the Fire

We cannot escape the dangers which abound in life, without the actual and continual help of God; let us then pray to Him for it continually. How can we pray to Him without being with Him? How can we be with Him but in thinking of Him often? And how can we often think of Him, but by a holy habit which we should form of it?

Brother Lawrence

ONE OF THE DEEPER MYSTERIES OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH is that we will discover our strength for trials by remaining close to the One who set us in them.

Jesus knew this. No one else but the Father had set Him on a path that included a period of forty days and forty nights of fasting and temptation. Yet, His strength throughout the trial was found in communion with God the Father, and meditating on His word.

King David, too, a man after God's own heart, knew well that every dark passage of his life was orchestrated by the Lord, yet he found the strength to continue on in the praise of the One who had set him there. For example, when, as a result of David's increasing popularity with the people and soldiers of

Israel, King Saul became jealous of the young man and threatened his life.

Now Saul told Jonathan his son and all his servants to put David to death. But Jonathan, Saul's son, greatly delighted in David. So Jonathan told David saying, "Saul my father is seeking to put you to death. Now therefore, please be on guard in the morning, and stay in a secret place and hide yourself."

1 Samuel 19:1-2

While in hiding, David wrote:

In the Lord I take refuge;
How can you say to my soul,
"Flee as a bird to your mountain;
For, behold, the wicked bend the bow,
They make ready their arrow upon the string
To shoot in darkness at the upright in heart.

Reflections
by the Pond

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If the foundations are destroyed,
What can the righteous do?"
The Lord is in His holy temple; the Lord's
throne is in heaven;
His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons
of men.

Psalms 11:1-4

There is no contradiction in our being sustained by the author of our trial when we apprehend the truth that, for the child of God, all things dwell in Him. In everything, God. To deny God's sovereign hand in our lives is as foolish as denying that He even exists. And to deny that He is as much in the hard times as the times of ease is to have a very low opinion of His personality.

David understood that the totality of life is both focused on and enveloped by the good pleasure of a sovereign God. And he understood that man's pleasure will only be found in regular, continual communion with Him. At every turn of his life—both pleasurable and hard—David always and repeatedly returned to his God.



The pathway to holiness is strewn with the discarded good intentions of those who preferred only a small measure of God—those who thought of time with the Father as browsing a dietetic salad bar, rather than sitting down to a sumptuous feast.

Time spent with the Father is, in many respects, much like time spent with anyone else: we get out of the relationship in proportion to what we put in. Open any newspaper, read any news magazine, listen to any television newscast and you will have sufficient evidence for what becomes of a child's life that has had little connection with a parent—and especially a father. It is a life filled with anger and rebellion, ignorance, defiance of authority, and, inevitably, ruin.

Contrast that with the life of a child that has had a stable, loving home life, where the child had a healthy relationship with his or her parents. This child will have a fighting chance in life, because he's beginning with a strong, solid foundation based on knowing well the stock from whence he came.

Just so, when we spend time with our heavenly Father—quality *and* quantity, not

choosing only one or the other—we come away strengthened, whole, and confident in our relationship with a loving Parent. And when we establish the habit of continual praise as a complement to our more ordered, well-spoken prayers, we add an even more intimate dimension to that relationship.

The habit of praise assumes what we know is true, that we belong to a loving, interested God, who delights in spending time with His children.

Of Benjamin he said,
"May the beloved of the Lord dwell in
security by Him,
Who shields him all the day,
And he dwells between His shoulders."

Deuteronomy 33:12

Through Jesus Christ we have gained access into the family of God—yet our relationship is not with Christ alone: because of Him, the Father Himself loves us as sons and daughters, fellow heirs to His kingdom.

...for the Father Himself loves you, because
you have loved Me and have believed that
I came forth from the Father.

John 16:27

And through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, we are equipped to spend unending hours of intimate exchange—learning, listening, confessing and complaining, crying, laughing, and dwelling in the sweet union that is our habit of praise of the Father.



Use yourself then by degrees thus to worship Him, to beg His grace, to offer Him your heart from time to time, in the midst of your business, even every moment if you can. Do not always scrupulously confine yourself to certain rules, or particular forms of devotion; but act with a general confidence in God, with love and humility.

Brother Lawrence

