

12. The Battle in Prayer and Satan

Contributed by LG Parkhurst Jr
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And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith. -- 2 Thessalonians 3:2

Since Francis and Edith Schaeffer walked with God throughout the day and tried to maintain a life of prayer and purity in the Lord Jesus Christ, God sometimes forewarned them about a difficult period ahead and moved them to send out an urgent call for prayer. We see this particularly in Edith's letters home. On January 10, 1953, she asked for prayer and said, "when the Holy Spirit is working, the devil is sure to attempt to hinder and your prayers are needed." After almost five years of unprecedented answers to prayer and success in witnessing with little opposition, Satan began to take special notice of what the Schaeffers were doing in their small corner of the world. The devil's attacks and various afflictions seemed to engulf them beginning in 1953, and continued to plague them through the beginning years of L'Abri. But God used every one of their trials and tribulations to teach them more about prayer and show them His power to deliver.

Over the succeeding years as God answered their prayers, He often did so in the context of overcoming afflictions and defeating Satan. In her letters, Edith's prayer requests of others became almost the continual call "that Satan be defeated or disappointed." In 1953, God began to show them more and more about the spiritual battle ahead, and that Satan could use the government, non-believers, and even other Christians to attack them and His work. God did this to show the new people who needed to be saved or who studied at L'Abri that He could defeat Satan or give a believer the grace to persevere in trouble in answer to their and others fervent, persistent prayers. These facts about the power of prayer in affliction needed to be demonstrated time and time again to different people, and this meant real suffering.

Before they left for their furlough in America, after five years in Switzerland, Fran faced a spiritual crisis, an attack upon his faith and God's faithfulness, a loss of the reality of walking with God in His way, a dark cloud that Satan lowered. Paul might have described such an experience with these words: "For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law" (Galatians 5:17,18--NASB). Or perhaps Peter better described Fran's problem when he warned, "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

Fran walked and prayed in the hay loft of Chalet Bijou in poor weather and in the mountains whenever possible. He thought through everything once again from his early skepticism to the present, and God renewed his faith, love, and joy. The Holy Spirit guided him as Satan tried to destroy what God had been building in Fran's soul. And God won an even greater victory through Fran's testing by giving him an experience and knowledge that allowed him to write a series of lectures on sanctification that he taught many times while on furlough in America.

Unfortunately, some of the leaders in his denomination did not appreciate Fran's lectures and call to show forth God's love as they fought for the truth. The conflict became so heated, that in the middle of their seventeen month furlough the Lord showed the Schaeffers that they would need to pray for the funds to return to Switzerland. They decided not to write letters describing their plight and requesting money, but take their need to the Lord alone in prayer. The girls made a thermometer, and colored it in as they received funds for their boat fare. They needed their ticket money by July 29, 1954 to make reservations, but it came in so slowly they had to remind the girls that God might be showing them that His will was for them to remain in America rather than return to Switzerland, and all they wanted was God's will for their lives. From unexpected sources, once again God met their needs right before the 29th, and the Schaeffers sent for their tickets home.

Through their prayers for boat passage, God reminded the Schaeffers that He would often providentially use money, its lack or provision, to show them His will. By His Spirit and through circumstances, He gave them enough warning to begin praying soon enough for Him to work and give them the answer in a way that would do them the most good spiritually. Rather than wait until the last minute, in the middle of their furlough they began praying for money. God could have answered their last minute prayers and sometimes did; however, this time God inspired them to begin praying immediately. God often prefers to show us the need for persistent prayer to build up our relationship with Him and increase our faith when He gives the answer. Through much prayer, God and His will often become more important than the answer we want, and God wants us to be in that state of heart. After eight months of prayer and patient waiting, the money for their boat passage came the day it was needed. What a wonderful way for God to inspire real rejoicing for His answers to prayer!

God will often delay an answer so we will pray fervently for something to show ourselves and Him just how much we want the answer. In His great mercy, God will sometimes delay an answer until we discover that the very thing we are praying for we really do not want or need, or do not want seriously enough to persist in prayer until we get the answer. Through much prayer, each member of the Schaeffer family discovered that they earnestly desired to continue the work God had begun through them in Switzerland, and no attacks from Satan or the people who misunderstood them would deter them from doing what they believed God wanted them to do. God gave them this deep desire to continue their work and met their need, so once they returned their increasing difficulties would not overwhelm them.

God often shows us His will and how to pray from the providential things that are happening around us. While they were in America, God reminded the Schaeffers that He could be trusted more than people, but that He could use people to meet their needs by prayer alone. God taught them this valuable lesson, so they would have the courage to step out in faith when it was time to begin L'Abri and trust in God alone.

In the battle against Satan and in our search for God's will, we must observe all that is taking place around us, because God will use history, the lives of others, the state of the church, and our situation to reveal His will providentially to us. When we understand God's will from providence, we need to pray that His will may be accomplished. Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, help me prevail as I battle in prayer. Help me discover whether the opposition I face is from Satan or from your desire to direct me in a different way. Show me your will as I draw close to you, and keep me from deception. Keep me from blaming Satan for anything sinful in my thoughts, desires, or way of life that may be delaying your answers to prayer. Help me turn from all unrighteousness so my prayers will be effective in defeating all of Satan's schemes. By your Spirit, show me your will in the events taking place all around me, so I will know how to pray according to your will and real needs. Amen.

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