

How a Misguided Prayer Helped Empower This Woman's Spiritual Warfare

A few years ago, I had a tendency to brood over ill-treatment or being overruled, especially when I knew for sure I was right. I would accept others' decisions without rebelling over authority, but would stew over the injustice of it all and pray to God for vindication.

Once, I was at loggerheads with my leader over an issue and had to accept his decision as final just before he left for an overseas preaching assignment. He was away for nearly three weeks, during which time I fell sick with back pain. This was a usual occurrence during cold season because of the change in temperature. I was prescribed a week of physiotherapy, again a normal occurrence that would usually set me back on my feet after the treatment. This time, however, my health did improve enough to go back to the office, but I was not fully healed and still had vestiges of pain and discomfort.

My leader had just returned, and we inquired about each other's health since he had developed leg pain in the midst of his speaking tour. He replied he felt better, and I also said I was better, but couldn't understand why I wasn't totally healed as usual. He shocked me by saying, "You need to repent of the prayer you prayed!"

I only prayed for healing, so what is there to repent of? I thought.

My leader told me I had to repent of the prayer of vindication I had prayed, something He couldn't have known unless God had revealed it. He went on to explain that my prayer had been the cause of his leg pain, because instead of covering him in prayer and supporting him as a team member in his hour of

need, I had actually been praying against him.

I was dumbstruck by the blinding light that fell on me and horrified at the enormity of my vengeance and the resultant prayer. I had never realized until then the enormity and the negative impact of my prayer, though it seemed spiritual to me to leave my cause to God.

First Corinthians 13:5 says that love keeps no record of wrongs and, by its definition, I was not walking in Christian love toward my brother and leader in Christ. It hurt me to realize I had unwittingly become a tool of the enemy to attack my leader, costing him his health at a crucial time. I would never forget his pain at my betrayal, and his words—"You who should be covering me in prayer were stabbing me in the back by your prayer asking for vindication"—convicted me of my sin. Horrified, I repented of my attitude and action before God and took a decision never to pray for vindication, no matter the situation or perpetrator. It has not been easy, but I have never wavered from this commitment, though often tempted to do so. I paid the price through my painful learning to establish this as a core value and character in my life. Needless to say, after my prayer of repentance, my healing and recovery were complete.

In Ephesians 6:10-16, there is one part of the body that doesn't seem to be covered by the armor: the back. The apostle Paul, after describing the various portions of the armor of God, concludes with: "Pray in the Spirit always with all kinds of prayer and supplication. To that end be alert with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints. Pray for me, that the power to speak may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may speak boldly as I ought to speak" (Eph. 6:18-20). I believe prayer not only activates the armor, but also provides the cover for others' backs in the warfare against the principalities and powers of darkness!

I always love the scene in the movie *Gladiator* where a band of poorly armed slaves ward off and win over an attack by a group of heavily armed horsemen. They stand shoulder to shoulder and win the fight, simply because they guard each other's backs and protect one another from danger. What a perfect illustration of what we should do and how we should stand for one another in this battle for spiritual survival!

Ephesians 6 also points out that "our fight is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (v. 12). We are not here to fight one another nor stab each other in the back, for in our Christian faith walk, we are not enemies or rivals. We are all engaged in battle with a common enemy, the devil and his minions, and we must concentrate on defeating him, not one another.

Our prayers should serve as protective armor for the backs of our brothers and sisters in Christ and never as weapons to brandish or daggers to use against each other. Instead of turning against one another, we must walk in forgiveness so as not to give the enemy even an inch of space. {eo}

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