

The Empty Chair



A man's daughter had asked the local minister to come and pray with her father.

When the minister arrived, he found the man lying in bed with his head propped up on two pillows. An empty chair sat beside his bed.

The minister assumed that the old fellow had been informed of his visit. "I guess you were expecting me, he said. "No, who are you?" said the father.

The minister told him his name and then remarked, "I saw the empty chair and I figured you knew I was going to show up,"

"Oh yeah, the chair," said the bedridden man. "Would you mind closing the door?" Puzzled, the minister shut the door.

"I have never told anyone this, not even my daughter," said the man. "All of my life I have never known how to pray. At church I used to hear the pastor talk about prayer, but it went right over my head. I abandoned any attempt at prayer," the old man continued, "until one day four years ago, my best friend said to me, "Johnny, prayer is just a simple matter of having a conversation with Jesus. Here is what I suggest. Sit down in a chair; place an empty chair in front of you, and in faith see Jesus on the chair. It's not spooky because he promised 'I will be with you always'. Then just speak to him in the same way you're doing with me right now."

"So, I tried it and I've liked it so much that I do it a couple of hours every day. I'm careful though. If my daughter saw me talking to an empty chair, she'd either have a nervous breakdown or send me off to the funny farm."

The minister was deeply moved by the story and encouraged the old man to

continue on the journey. Then he prayed with him, and returned to the church.

Two nights later the daughter called to tell the minister that her daddy had died that afternoon.

She went on to say, "When I left the house about two o'clock, he called me over to his bedside, told me he loved me and kissed me on the cheek. When I got back from the store an hour later, I found him dead. But there was something strange about his death. Apparently, just before Daddy died, he leaned over and rested his head on the chair beside the bed. What do you make of that?"

The minister wiped a tear from his eye and said, "I wish we could all go like that."

Basting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

1 Peter 5:7

Trials & Afflictions

"A Christian without affliction is only like a soldier on parade."

--Felix Neff

To quote G. Campbell Morgan: "I remember hearing a very dear friend of mine in a conference say that if the Lord leads us into difficulties, He leads us out; but that, if we get into difficulties of our own making, we have to get out ourselves. I thank God that is not true of my life. That is not what I have found out. Yes, it is true, if He leads me into difficulty, He will lead me out; but if I wander off in my own foolishness, He will still follow me, and lead me out."

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; [trials or difficulties] Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have *her* perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." James 1:2-4



"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" 1 Peter 1:6-7

The words of Henry Ward Beecher come to mind in times of trial: "No physician ever weighed out medicine to his patients with half so much care and exactness as God weighs out to us every trial. Not one grain too much does He ever permit to be put on the scale."

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." 1 Corinthians 10:13

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose." Romans 8:28

WORRY



A very nervous airline passenger began pacing the terminal when the bad weather delayed his flight. During his walk, he ran across one of those life insurance machines. It offered \$100,000 in the event of an untimely death aboard his flight. The policy was just three dollars. He looked out the window at the threatening clouds and thought of his family at home. For that price it was foolish not to buy, so he took out the coverage. He then looked for a place to eat. Airports now carry a good variety of eateries so he settled on his favourite, Chinese. It was a relaxing meal until he opened his fortune cookie. It read: "Your recent investment will pay big dividends." * Adapted from Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations, Paul Tan, p. 440

The doctor finished the exam and talked with his patient, who suffered from an ulcer. The patient was quite concerned, saying, "Doctor, I'm worried about the fact that worrying about my ulcer might make it worse!" * Houston Post, March 17, 1992, p. D-7