

A Prayer of Rage

This article is from the “Edifying the Body” section of the Church of God Big Sandy’s website, churchofgodbigandy.com. It was posted for the weekend of May 27, 2017.

By Lenny Cacchio

LEE’S SUMMIT—“When I get angry with God, I say a Prayer of Rage,” she said to me. And I found this comment gratifying.

For some time now I have felt that, if there is one thing God wants from us in prayer, it’s transparency. I sometimes refer to it as standing naked before God.

Put in an earthy sort of way, He knows what you got. Why not bare it all before Him?

I am reminded of this scene from *Oh, God!*, the 1997 John Denver and George Burns theologically interesting comedy. Jeff (played by John Denver) is complaining that God isn’t working things out the way Jeff thinks He should. Guess who shows up to set the record straight.

Still, raging before God might strike some as almost blasphemous, and indeed it can be. Consider this account of Joseph Stalin’s death as recalled by his daughter.

From the website History in an Hour, Stalin’s daughter, Svetlana Alliluyeva, described in almost religious terms his last moments:

“He suddenly opened his eyes and looked at everyone in the room. It was a terrible gaze, mad or maybe furious and full of fear of death . . . Then something incomprehensible and frightening happened . . . He suddenly lifted his left hand as though he were pointing to something above and bringing down a curse on us all . . . The next moment, after a final effort, the spirit wrenched itself free of the flesh.”

Some have characterized this final gesture as a rage against God, an echo of the duplicity contained in the atheist’s confession: “There is no God—and I hate Him.”

But also look at Psalms and see a number of instances where the psalmist questions God, albeit without rebellion and with the expectation of an answer:

- Psalm 10: 1—“Why do you stand afar off, O Lord?”
- Psalm 13:1-2—“How long, O Lord? Will you forget me, forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? How long will my enemy be exalted over me?”
- Psalm 42:9—“I will say to God my Rock, ‘Why have you forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of my enemy?’ ”

■ 44:17-19—"All this has come upon us, but we have not forgotten you, nor have we dealt falsely with your covenant. Our heart has not turned back, nor have our steps departed from your way, but you have severely broken us in the place of the jackals, and covered us with the shadow of death."

We see it even more so in the book of Job. Quoting from The Message paraphrase:

■ Job 27:2—"God-Alive! He's denied me justice! God Almighty! He's ruined my life!"

■ Job 30:20-24—"I shout for help, God, and get nothing, no answer! I stand to face you in protest, and you give me a blank stare! You've turned into my tormentor—you slap me around, knock me about. You raised me up so I was riding high and then dropped me, and I crashed. I know you're determined to kill me, to put me six feet under. What did I do to deserve this? Did I ever hit anyone who was calling for help?"

■ Job 31:1-4, 35-37—"I made a solemn pact with myself never to undress a girl with my eyes. So what can I expect from God? What do I deserve from God Almighty above? Isn't calamity reserved for the wicked? Isn't disaster supposed to strike those who do wrong? Isn't God looking, observing how I live? Doesn't he mark every step I take? . . . Oh, if only someone would give me a hearing! I've signed my name to my defense—let the Almighty One answer! I want to see my indictment in writing. Anyone's welcome to read my defense; I'll write it on a poster and carry it around town. I'm prepared to account for every move I've ever made—to anyone and everyone, prince or pauper."

Read all of Job's complaint and you'll see quite a tirade—quite a Prayer of Rage, if you will.

And God answers Job. He answers him in a straightforward way, cutting him down to size, so to speak (chapters 38-41).

God essentially says the following.

- Who do you think you are?
- You do remember who I am, don't you?
- I know what I am doing.

And it's also true what God tells Job's three friends about Job.

Job 42:7-8 (The Message)—"After God had finished addressing Job, he turned to Eliphaz the Temanite and said, 'I've had it with you and your two friends. I'm fed up! You haven't been honest either with me or about me—not the way my friend Job has. So here's what you must do. Take seven bulls and seven rams, and go to my friend Job. Sacrifice a burnt offering on your own behalf. My friend Job will pray for you, and I will accept his prayer. He will ask me not to treat you as you deserve for talking nonsense about me, and for not being honest with me, as he has.' "

So maybe my friend is on to something. We are not going to snow Him with feigned bliss and reverence. God appreciates honesty.