

When All Else Fails

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. Romans 8:26 NRSV

There is an old spiritual in the United Methodist Hymnal, There Is A Balm in Gilead. The opening verse says, "Sometimes, I feel discouraged, and think my work's in vain, but then the Holy Spirit revives my soul again."

Have you ever been so discouraged that you didn't know what to think, how to act or even what to pray? Most of us have found ourselves squeezed between a rock and a hard spot. Those times when we feel stuck can freeze out our best thoughts and actions as we don't know what to do or say. It feels as if, no matter what we do, it has the likelihood of being the very worst thing to do or say. We Christian people know that we ought to pray about everything, however when we find ourselves in a particularly difficult situation, we lose our words and our thoughts. In those times when we are stuck or have a big decision before us, we find ourselves saying, "but what do I pray for?" What do we do when words fail and the words of our prayers remain silent?

In Romans 8, Paul gives us an answer...when words fail, allow the Holy Spirit to intercede and allow your prayer to be sighs too deep for words. There are times when we don't need to do anything other than to be. Learning to "let go and let God" is a difficult lesson for many of us. It is an especially difficult lesson when we find ourselves between that rock and hard spot; when we are of two minds, when there is no clear answer for our dilemma. In those situations of uncertainty, taking a step back to be rather than to do becomes an invitation to the Holy Spirit to intercede on our behalf. Paul assures us that God searches our hearts and knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God (v27).

Sometimes, we just need to be still, invite the Holy Spirit into our midst, and offer up those deep sighs. When all else fails, trust the work of the Holy Spirit to intercede for you.

May you feel the reviving presence of God, always,

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