

Lee on Prayer

A number of years ago, I received a book from my niece that is a collection of quotes from various sources concerning Christianity, the Bible, and faith in God. I was amazed at the eloquence of many of the quotes, but more amazed at the sources from which the quotes came. The book gives a great deal of insight into the private, spiritual lives of many very public people.

The Civil War was a terrible thing. The South fought to protect sovereignty—its right to decide important issues for itself rather than be told what to do by what it considered to be a power-grabbing Federal government. The North fought to, as Lincoln stated, preserve the Union. Eventually it became the North's goal to free the Southern slaves and give citizenship and political rights to all people regardless of race or color. No matter what the cause, the loss of lives was horrendous. Over 650,000 soldiers and civilians died or were killed as a direct result of the Civil War.

The leader of the southern troops was Robert E. Lee, the West Point educated Mexican-American War veteran. He was so highly respected that when war looked imminent, President Lincoln offered him the field command of the United States Army. He rejected the offer, determined to be loyal to his native Virginia and their involvement in the Confederacy. One year before the war's end, Lee issued orders for his troops to observe a “day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer” that had been proclaimed a year earlier by President Lincoln. This is his charge to the troops:

“Soldiers! Let us humble ourselves before the Lord, our God, asking through Christ, the forgiveness of sins, beseeching the aid of the God of our forefathers in the defense of our homes and our liberties, thanking Him for His past blessings, and imploring their continuance upon our causes and our people.”

Concerning prayer, Lee wrote:

“Knowing that intercessory prayer is our mightiest weapon and the supreme call for all Christians today, I pleadingly urge our people everywhere to pray.

Believing that prayer is the greatest contribution that our people can make in this critical hour, I humbly urge that we take time to pray, really pray. Let there be prayer at sunup, at noonday, at sundown, at midnight—all through the day.

Let us pray for our children, our youth, our aged, our pastors, our homes. Let us pray for our churches. Let us pray for ourselves, that we may not lose the word 'concern' out of the Christian vocabulary. Let us pray for our nation. Let us pray for those who have never known Jesus Christ and redeeming love, for moral forces everywhere, for our national leaders. Let prayer be our passion. Let prayer be our practice.”

That's Lee's exhortation to you. I couldn't have said it better myself.