

an essay:

ON THE FACES OF WEARINESS IN CAREGIVERS

Robert Baral
8/18/2008

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I. INTRODUCTION TO THE QUESTION OF WEARINESS

Caregivers are no less human than those they care for. It must therefore be expected that, in the course of their caring for others in whatever form, they themselves will at times experience weariness. This may take many forms and in many places in life. Here we will consider four forms: physical weariness; emotional weariness; relational weariness; spiritual weariness.

Identifying and being aware of the shadow of weariness in our fellow servants, and in ourselves, is the first step to seeking its cure and remaining effective instruments of The LORD. While many immediate prescriptions may be apparent, the ultimate prescription rests in rediscovering hope. There is only One Source of true and lasting hope, which is at the feet of The Author of Hope, The Lord Almighty. Restoration of hope in men's lives, and the peace which passes all human understanding, flows only from The loving and merciful GOD, which shines most brightly at The blessed Cross.

II. A QUESTION OF HOPE VERSUS HOPELESSNESS

We may understand weariness in its many forms in terms of our hope in GOD, or lack thereof. The life of faith for men in this life is a daily shifting on a spectrum, between having the total and perfect hope in GOD possessed by saints in Heaven, and being in a state of total and complete hopelessness possessed by the damned in Hell. Until we stand before the judgement seat of The LORD, in this world we never reach the heights or depths of either, but journey between the two endpoints with the peaks and valleys of life.

To keep hope in The Almighty in life's battles brings us closer to The Perfect Hope Above. To loose hope in The Almighty in this life causes us to sink closer to That Total Perfect Hopelessness Below. Insight from the nursing diagnosis of "hopelessness" is helpless here in understanding weariness and its roots. Ackley and Ladwig define "hopelessness" as the "subjective state in which [an] individual sees limited or no alternatives or personal choices available and is unable to mobilize energy on his or her own behalf."¹

Hopelessness may be characterized by "passivity; decreased verbalization; decreased affect; verbal cues...; [inappropriate] closing of eyes; anorexia; decreased response to stimuli; increased/decreased sleep; lack of initiative; lack of involvement in care...;" general passivity in life activities and interactions with others; "reporting feeling lost, unable to cope, abandoned."²

¹ 1, Ackley and Landwig, "Nursing Diagnosis Handbook," nursing definition of "Hopelessness," p 626.

² 1, Ibid., defining characteristics of "Hopelessness," p 626-627.

Related factors may include actual or perceived “abandonment, prolonged activity restrictions creating isolation, loss of beliefs in transcendent values/God, long-term stress, failing or deteriorating chronic physiological and/or psychological condition, negative life review, perception of demands that overwhelm personal resources.”³

III. PHYSICAL WEARINESS

What physical red flags can we name from our own experiences? These may take the form of insomnia, sweats, gastric disturbances, increased infections and illnesses of multiple types, chronic fatigue and aggravation of underlying physical illnesses.
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But GOD is no stranger to the physical suffering of men. JESUS Himself became physically weary in His Passion as He literally carried the weight of the world upon His shoulders for the sake of mankind. The Lord went up to The Mount of Olives with His disciples. He went on alone to pray to The Father. Saint Luke records CHRIST’s Words in LUKE 22:42-44, “...Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto Him from Heaven, strengthening Him. And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of Blood falling down to the ground.”⁴

In our physical suffering, we must keep close to mind that GOD understands and is still there with us. Not that we should seek physical suffering for its own sake. Nor should we turn away from reasonable sources of relief. Nor should we neglect proper physical self care. Rather, we should seek GOD’s Presence and peace in the midst of suffering. As Saint Robert Bellarmine asks, “What is easier, sweeter, more pleasant, than to love goodness, beauty and love, the fullness of which You are, O Lord, my GOD?”⁵

Saint Bellarmine answers that the strength we need to bear physical weariness and suffering, and to receive GOD’s healing, lies in the hope of The Two Great Commandments – to love GOD and to love others.⁶ O LORD, “...the recompense is great for those who keep Your Commandments. That First and Greatest Commandment helps the man who obeys...,” giving hope and healing as we walk daily with Him. The

³ 1, Ackley and Landwig, “Nursing Diagnosis Handbook,” related factors to “Hopelessness,” p 6276.

⁴ 2, KJV, LUKE 22:41-44.

⁵ 3, Saint Robert Bellarmine, “On The Ascent of the Mind to GOD,” Liturgy of The Hours, Book IV, p 1412..

⁶ 2, KJV, MATTHEW 22:36-40, “Master, which is The Great Commandment in The Law? JESUS said unto him, Thou shalt love The Lord thy GOD with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is The First and Great Commandment. And The Second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On These Two Commandments hang all The Law and the prophets.”

Second Great Commandment, and its fruits in our daily lives, reinforce our hope in GOD by offering hope to others, “perfect[ing] the man who obeys Them.”⁷

Why is this so? As Saint Bellarmine observes, obeying The Two Great Commandments because a man loves GOD “...provide[s] him with what he needs,” to be in fellowship with The Creator and with others. “They instruct and enlighten him and make him good and blessed. If you are wise, then, know that you have been created for The Glory of GOD and your own eternal salvation...!”⁸ Seizing hold of hope in The Lord is the foundation for both bearing and recovering from physical weariness.

IV. EMOTIONAL WEARINESS

What emotional (feeling) and cognitive (thinking and self talk) red flags can we offer from our own struggles? Excessive and seemingly spontaneous constant tearfulness or frequent outright crying. Cold and withdrawn emotions. Anxiousness. Irritability. Sarcasm. Resorting to addictive and destructive behaviours, such as substance abuse. Feelings of aloneness, isolation and abandonment.

But GOD is no stranger to the emotional suffering of men. GOD heard His servant David crying out from a heart and mind heavy with affliction in PSALM 6:6-7. “I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears. Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies.”⁹ CHRIST Himself, The very Son of GOD Incarnate Who gave up Himself for us, cried out from The cruel Cross to The Father in Heaven as in MATTHEW 27:46, “...My GOD, my GOD, why hast Thou forsaken me?”¹⁰

In our emotional suffering, we may know that we are not the first servants of GOD to bear such weights. But if our hope rests in The Lord, there is The Strength to quiet the turmoil of our minds, put to rest our fears, carry on in the face of our worries and a healing balm for our hearts. We are called to find such hope in the consolation laid down for us in CHRIST. So are we, as is written in HEBREWS 6:18-20, “...who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even JESUS, made An High Priest for ever...”¹¹

As The Catechism of The Catholic Church says, such is the Christian virtue of hope, “...the aspiration to happiness which GOD has placed in the heart of every man; it takes up the hopes that inspire men’s activities of Heaven; it keeps man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment; it opens up his heart in

⁷ 3, Saint Robert Bellarmine, “On The Ascent of the Mind to GOD,” Liturgy of The Hours, Book IV, p 1412, paragraph 2.

⁸ 3, Ibid.

⁹ 2, KJV, PSALM 6:6-7.

¹⁰ 2, KJV, MATTHEW 27:46.

¹¹ 2, KJV, HEBREWS 6:18-20.

expectation of eternal beatitude. Buoyed up by hope [in CHRIST], he is preserved from selfishness and led to the happiness that flows from charity,” that is, His Perfect Love.¹²

V. RELATIONAL WEARINESS

What relational red flags have we tasted in our own lives? Neglected or broken lingering relationships. Suddenly unstable interactions in previously stable relationships. Increased conflict with others. Violation of clearly established and previously respected boundaries in work, Church and family. Unsubstantiated anger at others that consumes our love for others and prevents our forgiveness of those who give offense. Turning even from the face of GOD, His Church and those who care for us because of our own repressed and unconfessed guilt.

But GOD is no stranger to the relational suffering of men. Saint Paul laments the breaking of relationships with many that he cared for and labored with deeply. His pain of feeling deserted and alone are evident as he beseeches his disciple Timothy in II TIMOTHY 4:9-11. So he reaches out, “Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me: For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.”¹³

We may further presume that - in The Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of our Saviour JESUS CHRIST - GOD Himself lamented in the alienation of men from Himself because of mankind’s sinfulness. Not that GOD experiences weariness of any kind, but that He understands the nature of the turning away of His face from us when we are in a state of mortal sin. For JESUS Himself on The Cross echoes this cry to The Father. The cry of The Son of GOD at Calvary to The Father Above echo the song of Asaph in PSALM 80:3-4, “Turn us again, O GOD, and cause Thy face to shine; and we shall be saved. O LORD GOD of Hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of Thy people?”¹⁴

But therein is our sure hope for the weariness of our souls, that GOD will always hear the cry of His people from His Temple Above, and turn again His face towards us. For then does the light of His face shine most brightly into the dark night of our souls, when we are afflicted in spirit because of our sins, and cry out to Him for His Grace! So we may confess with Simeon of old, when Joseph and Mary brought the infant JESUS to The Temple as in LUKE 2:29-32, “Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy Word: For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, Which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A Light to lighten the Gentiles, and The Glory of thy people Israel!”¹⁵

¹² 4, Catechism of The Catholic Church, # 1818, p 499, “Hope.”

¹³ 2, KJV, II TIMOTHY 4:9-11.

¹⁴ 2, KJV, PSALM 80:3-4.

¹⁵ 2, KJV, LUKE 2:29-32.

Such is our consolation, as Saint Teresa of Avila writes, “Hope, o my soul, hope. You know neither the day nor the hour. Watch carefully, for everything passes quickly, even though your impatience makes doubtful what is certain, and turns a very short time into a long one.” For “...the more you struggle, the more you prove the love that you bear your GOD, and the more you will rejoice one day with your Beloved, in a happiness and rapture that can never end” Above!”¹⁶ So our relationships are restored, and the weariness of broken communion with GOD and others is swept away, as we turn our hope back to GOD.

VI. SPIRITUAL WEARINESS

What spiritual red flags have afflicted us in our own souls? A decrease in prayer. Sudden callousness and coldness in performing pastoral care. A seeming uncaring and distant aloofness with the suffering, loved ones and other fellow servants. Dropping out of Church and Church activities. Isolating oneself from spiritual support. Depression that leads into prolonged despair. The prolonged loss of hope. The dark night of the soul that refuses to lift. The desire to give up the fight and die.

But GOD is no stranger to the spiritual suffering of men. The patriarch Job, that righteous man who suffered so many losses before The Almighty restored him, cries out to GOD in JOB 10:1-2, “My soul is weary of my life; I will leave my complaint upon myself; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. I will say unto GOD, Do not condemn me; shew me wherefore Thou contendest with me.”¹⁷ But when Job repented with the dust and ashes of humility upon his head before The LORD, his weariness left him as the hand of GOD restored him in all things.

GOD’s hand is no less active in the present for His weary soldiers of The Cross today. As Jean-Pierre De Caussade offers, The LORD’s will is working for us and within us every day. His blessings and renewal are upon us in direct proportion to our humble submission to Him now. Our task is, by His Grace through The HOLY SPIRIT, to “...listen to GOD moment by moment.”¹⁸ For “the present moment is an ever-flowing source of [His] holiness” to us.¹⁹ Therefore, we are to seek the peace of “...obeying GOD’s will from moment to moment... And will not GOD continue until the end of the world to pour out His grace upon all the souls who utterly abandon themselves to Him?”²⁰ Most certainly!

Moses reminds us in DEUTERONOMY 8:16 that it is GOD “Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that He might humble thee, and that He might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end.”²¹ So the prophet records in ISAIAH 57:15, “For thus saith The High and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, Whose

¹⁶ 4, Catechism of The Catholic Church, # 1821, p 500, “Hope.”

¹⁷ 2, KJV, JOB 10:1-2.

¹⁸ 5, Jean-Pierre De Caussade, “Abandonment to Divine Providence,” p 49, paragraph 1.

¹⁹ 5, Ibid., p 49, title of part (9).

²⁰ 5, Ibid., p 50, paragraph 1.

²¹ 2, KJV, DEUTERONOMY 8:16.

Name is Holy; I dwell in The High and Holy Place, with him also [now in this life] that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”²² Therefore Saint Peter counsels us in I PETER 5:6-7, “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of GOD, that He may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you!”²³

VII. IN REVIEW OF FOUR FACES OF WEARINESS

In physical weariness of the body, we as servants of The LORD may rest upon His righteousness, for he is our strong fortress Who saves and refreshes us. He is our strong Deliverer and Rock Who never fails. As David says in PSALM 31:1-3, “In Thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in Thy righteousness. Bow down Thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be Thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me. For Thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for Thy Name's sake lead me, and guide me!”²⁴

In emotional (feelings) weariness of the heart and cognitive (thinking) weariness of the mind, we as servants of The LORD may rest upon His goodness and Grace. He alone settles our hearts and quiets our minds when we trust in Him. As the Psalmist writes in PSALM 84:10-12, O LORD, “...a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in The House of my GOD, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. For The LORD GOD is a sun and shield: The LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly. O LORD of Hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee!”²⁵

In the relational weariness that soldiers of The Cross bear, we may rest upon the sure hope of The LORD's steadfast promises to always be with us and to never leave us. This is the cure for restoring broken relationships with others, when we find that The Lord is always there for us, even when we for a time turn away from Him. As is written in HEBREWS 13:5-8 says, “...for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me... JESUS CHRIST the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever!”²⁶

And in spiritual weariness of the soul, we may rest upon the power and command of The Great Commission of The LORD. For He vows that He is always with us. As Matthew records The Words of The Redeemer in MATTHEW 28:18-20, “...All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in The Name of The Father, and of The Son, and of The Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen!”²⁷

²² 2, KJV, ISAIAH 57:15.

²³ 2, KJV, I PETER 5:6-7.

²⁴ 2, KJV, PSALM 31:1-3.

²⁵ 2, KJV, PSALM 84:10-12.

²⁶ 2, KJV, HEBREWS 13:5-8.

²⁷ 2, KJV, MATTHEW 28:18-20.

XIII. CONCLUSION TO THE QUESTION OF WEARINESS

Caregivers are no less human than those they are called to care for. To become weary in the course of one's duties in pouring oneself out in His Name for the sake of others is to be expected. When we give ourselves as The Lord's servants to others, we risk being drained and hurt, because love requires the giving of self to others before self. As Kevin O'Neil observes of the suffering of Mary, The Mother of GOD Incarnate, "Mary's sorrows at JESUS' suffering is as intense as her love for Him. She, too, loves in the midst of her suffering and sorrow."²⁸

Can we expect any less if we love GOD by loving others in the midst of human suffering? Certainly not! O'Neil offers further, that whatever the form of weariness in ourselves or others, "The greatest danger to those who suffer is to turn in upon themselves and to be unable to give and to receive love. While doing all that we can to deal with our sorrow [as caregivers do for the sake of others,] and make it bearable, may we also see in JESUS and Mary examples of... continued love even in their sorrow."²⁹

Let then our souls wait upon The LORD in all things at every moment of life, most especially when we as caregivers are afflicted with weariness in the caring of others. Whatever the forms of our weariness – physical, emotional, relational or spiritual – let us cast them all upon the mercies of The Almighty. As the Psalmist says in PSALM 33:22, "Let Thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in Thee!"³⁰ The ultimate antidote to any form of human weariness is to persevere and be refreshed daily in The Lord.

As Saint Peter says in I PETER 1:6-7, it is The Lord Who is our Hope, "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."³¹ For GOD alone is The unmovable Anchor of our souls, "both sure and steadfast," Who alone is our Hope now and forever!³² Let us then humble ourselves before The LORD. In The Name of GOD The Father, The Son and The Holy Ghost. AMEN.

²⁸ 6, O'Neil, "The Seven Sorrows of Mary," The Fourth Sorrow, "Mary Meets JESUS on His Way to Calvary, LUKE 23:26-32," p 29, paragraph 2

²⁹ 6, Ibid., p 30, paragraph 1

³⁰ 2, KJV, PSALM 33:22.

³¹ 2, KJV, I PETER 1:6-7.

³² 2, KJV, HEBREWS 6:19.

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