

The Prayer of Eli

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One of the best prayers I have heard in recent memory was breathed at the end of a movie I have watched a number of times now. It wasn't so much the prayer, but how it summed up the character's life and faith in God. The movie is titled "The Book of Eli" and the prayer goes:

Dear Lord, thank you for giving me the strength and the conviction to complete the task you entrusted to me. Thank you for guiding me straight and true through the many obstacles in my path. And for keeping me resolute when all around seemed lost. Thank you for your protection and your many signs along the way. Thank you for any good that I may have done; I'm so sorry about the bad. Thank you for the friend I made. Please watch over her as you watched over me. Thank you for finally allowing me to rest. I'm so very tired, but I go now to my rest at peace. I fought the good fight, I finished the race, I kept the faith.

At the end of the movie, as Eli prays, my head bows and I find myself in God's presence. My heart and my conscience pricked by a movie written, produced and financed by secular society. I am convicted by this. Will I be able to pray with such conviction and assurance at the conclusion of my task on earth?

It is a sobering thought. For so many years I've demanded much of life, of God and others. I have given little in return and I have given even less thought to the task given to me by God - to do what is right, to love mercy and to walk humbly with Him. I have complained about any obstacle that blocked my path to selfish gain. I have quit all too soon whenever I attempted to 'put my hand to the plow'. I have not really sought the best for others, unless it has been mutually beneficial. Here I stand convicted, first by this prayer from a post-apocalyptic Hollywood movie character and secondly, and more importantly, by what I read in God's Word. I am just as Paul described when said to the Roman church in Romans 3:10-18 that "no one is righteous". I have turned away from good and I have not found real, lasting peace by the selfish pursuit of my own pleasures. You do not have to look long or very deep into my life to see how I have failed miserably in my service to my fellow man and to God. I am not bragging of this. Instead, it sickens and disgusts me when I realize that my 'good deeds' are no more than menstrual rags (Isaiah 64:6) and it disheartens me when I see what I did do had produced nothing more than a 'fart' (Isaiah 26:18).

My hard work alone has not secured anything of worth for me...especially since I have been expending my energies pursuing the temporal instead of the eternal. So, what now? By God's Word, I am proven to have offered nothing, of being unfaithful and inconsequential to who and what really matters. Is there no hope, or help, for me? Is this all? Am I to be trapped and held here in my ineffectiveness, my powerless state of sin and neglect?

No! The Apostle Paul asks the same question and then provides the answer in Romans 7:24 when he too found himself in the same state: "Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord." I raise my own voice in this declaration along with Paul. Thank God for Jesus Christ; my LORD and my Savior. With God's leadership, through the diligent study of His Word, at the end of my days my prayer will be similar to that of Eli and Paul before him: *I fought the good fight, I finished the race, I kept the faith.*