



## Not Ashamed to Pray

By Cheryl Odden

Perhaps one of the biggest stumbling blocks in our prayer life and our relationship with Christ is disappointment. We are disappointed in our spiritual life, job, country, church, and perhaps even our family.

If we get to the heart of the issue, our disappointment is directed not at these areas of our lives but at God. We may ask: How could he allow this (circumstance) to happen? Why isn't he helping me overcome these sin issues in my life? Why isn't he rewarding me for my hard work? Why isn't he bringing about revival in our nation? Why isn't he working in our children's hearts?

The apostle Paul had every "right" to be disappointed in God. Paul was given a dramatic salvation experience and was launched into ministry. People were coming to Christ; religious and government officials were being convicted. It couldn't get any better than that, could it? It did. Paul was thrown in jail. There he wrote several letters, which today are cornerstones of the Christian faith.

Yet Paul saw his chains not as a disappointment or a setback, but as an opportunity. He wrote to Timothy, advising him not to be ashamed of him, and used Onesiphorus as an example of one who was "not ashamed" of his chains." He invited Timothy to share in his sufferings through God's power. Then earlier in his letter to the Philippians, he tells them that his imprisonment has furthered the gospel not frustrated it (1:12-14). And more so, his bonds have emboldened believers to preach without fear.

As we pray for the persecuted church, let us first evaluate our relationship with Christ. Spend some time alone with God, asking him to reveal any areas of your life where you are disappointed in him. If we allow ourselves to be honest, have we accused him of being indifferent toward our trials? Are we viewing our current sufferings as an obstacle for the gospel or an opportunity? Agree with him that your disappointment ultimately is sin. Thank him that he uses all things for his good purposes, and then stand on what's true about him: Jesus is the chief cornerstone (Matthew 21:42); the earth is his and all it contains (Psalm 24:1); and he is the "ruler over the kings of the earth" (Revelation 1:5).

Then start praying for your persecuted family who is inviting you to fellowship in their sufferings according to God's power.