

FINDING PEACE DURING PAIN

I was preparing a lesson on prayer this week for today, but then we received the news of Fang's mother passing. This has been a brutal process for her, because not only does it hurt to watch your loved ones pass . . . how hard is it from a distance? It breaks the heart. There are normal wants, dare say needs, we have in such situations. The need to be near, to say good bye, etc. Our beloved sister, our hearts are with you and break for you.

I have a message for you and the rest who are present. My aim is to give God glory today and remind you of something about Him. He sees His children. He sees them. He sees them when they lose their loved ones. He sees their pain. Fang, He sees you. He hears your concerns, the voices in your head. The fear. Trust in Him and remember He is good. Remember, the Spirit intercedes for you in prayer in groanings too deep for words when you don't know what to pray for. You may be in the wilderness right now, but you're not alone. Let me remind you who you will find there.

HAGAR:

You know, I think about one woman of old who faced different kinds of trials, but wasn't not ignored or forsaken by the Lord. Hagar. I think of her often when thinking about God's goodness and comfort during pain. We read about how Hagar fled from Sarai because she dealt harshly with her.

- We read in **Genesis 16:7**, *"The angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness,"* (isn't that where we all feel we are during such times), and encouraged her by reassuring God's hand would be with her.

She would have her own son because He had listened to her affliction. What a tremendous blessing during difficult times. *(We're happy when we have loved ones by our side).*

- *"So she called the name of the Lord, 'You are a God of seeing,' for she said, 'Truly here I have seen Him who looks after me.'"* **Genesis 16:13.**

Then later, when Sarah requested that Ishmael and Hagar be cast out, she found herself in the wilderness again. She was convinced that she and her son of comfort would die. She lifted up her voice and wept. God heard again.

- *"And God heard the voice of the boy, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, 'What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the boy . . . hold him fast with your hand, for I will make him into a great nation.'"* **Genesis 21:17-18.**

So, He delivered her again. Today, it is good to hear again - God is with you. He sees you. He'll provide. Do not be troubled . . . fear not. Listen, He'll see you through the wilderness. The wilderness is lonely. You can feel lost in it, but He leads us out of them.

JESUS & DORCAS/TABITHA:

John 11:32-36. This passage can deliver both a sting and comfort to those who read it. A sting, because in this passage, the sisters end up getting their brother back. We have so many loved ones that we want to come back, but they don't. There is a finality to it, a point of no return. It's extremely sobering. However, it would be good to see Jesus' reaction before the miracle. I believe that Jesus was angry about death and moved because of the emotions during that time - it was sad and He felt it. It was not God's plan for us to die and suffer so greatly on this earth, because he is good and wanted good for us. But, notice something else - *"Jesus wept."* These Jews' response to this was,

"See how He loved him!" Sister, I can't think about how much your tears have said volumes about your love for your mother. It reminds us of a passage we studied this past Sunday afternoon with Billy:

- **Acts 9:39**, "So Peter rose and went with them. And when he arrived, they took him to the upper room. All the widows stood beside him weeping and showing tunics and other garments that Dorcas made while she was with them."

I can only imagine what the good works and acts of charity your mother did - in particular, for you. It's right to remember these things about her and to be thankful for them. No doubt, you will cherish the stories in your heart and continue to share them with your husband and children. No doubt, she has helped make you into who you are today and will live on through you in that way. God wants us to acknowledge God when we see it and to be appreciate. Jesus acknowledged when people do good no matter who they were. It reminds us who we need to be as His children when we see good in others.

CORINTH:

2 Corinthians 1:3-4, *"Blessed by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God."* It's hard to see it now, but even during these times God is strengthening us in two ways:

- By giving us each other. **Romans 12:9-15** is what you find among God's people. When one succeeds we all do. When one rejoices we all do. When one weeps, we all do. We are one body and comfort each other. We are here for you and will do what we can. We all strive to do this for each other and keep one another in our prayers.
- Equips us to encourage others to take courage in all situations. To stay the course no matter what. This is one powerful way God provides for His children.

Finally, such times are a powerful reminder of the big picture. That life is short. That we are given, overall, a short time on this earth to live for Him, become like Jesus, and reach out to those who don't know what it is to *know* Jesus. God never wanted the death of His children. He especially doesn't want us to be ultimately separated, which is why He gave His Son. We want to be able, if possible, to say goodbye just for a short while. We want to be with the Lord along with all those who love Him, so let's all encourage each other to not take life for granted, be the people He would have us to be, and spread the good news while we have the ability, time and opportunity.