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Peace in the Midst of the Storm

Long ago a man sought the perfect picture of peace. Not finding one that satisfied him, he announced a contest to produce this masterpiece. The challenge stirred the imagination of artists everywhere, and paintings arrived from far and wide. Finally the great day of revelation arrived.

The judges uncovered one peaceful scene after another, while the viewers clapped and cheered. The tensions grew. Only two pictures remained veiled.

As a judge pulled the cover from one, a hush fell over the crowd. A mirror-smooth lake reflected lacy, green birches under the soft blush of the evening sky. Along the grassy shore, a flock of sheep grazed undisturbed. Surely this was the winner.

The man who instituted the competition uncovered the second painting himself, and the crowd gasped in surprise. Could this be peace?

A tumultuous waterfall cascaded down a rocky precipice; the crowd could almost feel its cold, penetrating spray. Stormy-gray clouds threatened to explode with lightning, wind and rain. In the midst of the thundering noises and bitter chill, a spindly tree clung to the rocks at the edge of the falls.

Upon closer inspection, though, one notices a little bird which had built a nest in the hollow of a rocky ledge (in the bottom middle of the painting, above the raging river). Content and undisturbed in her stormy surroundings, she rested on her eggs. With her eyes closed and her wings ready to cover her coming little ones, she manifested peace that transcends all Earthly turmoil.

We can find true rest in the Prince of Peace amid life's raging storms. In Him, we can have perfect peace that transcends all understanding.

From: A Wardrobe from the King, Berit Kjos, pp. 45-46.
<https://bible.org/illustration/perfect-picture-peace>



Painting credit: Jack E. Dawson

A SONG IN THE EYE OF THE STORM

As I was reading Psalm 63 this morning, a memory of long ago emerged. Forty-five years ago, when our eldest son had just started school (he never attended kindergarten) he was very insecure. A good Samaritan placed his Volkswagen combi at the disposal of our community and the children were safely transported to and from school. One morning, however, Jaco decided to hide in the laundry instead of boarding the bus. Shortly afterwards, busy in the kitchen, I heard singing from somewhere. It was Jaco's voice. But he was supposed to be at school! I found him hiding behind the washing machine. He never realised that he gave himself away by his singing.

David was hiding in the wilderness, in mortal danger, possibly when he was fleeing from his son, Absalom. However, he made time to be alone with God in worship, crying out for help against the clear and present danger. As usual, David wrote a Psalm, confirming his faith in God's help. "O God, You are my God; I earnestly search for You... in this parched and weary land where there is no water" (v. 1). "Because You are my Helper, I sing for joy in the shadow of Your wings. I cling to You; Your strong right Hand holds me securely" (v. 7,8).

King David often found himself in precarious situations because of his enemies. Yet, he never failed to confirm his faith in the protection of God. He did not strategise or seek his own way out. His plan of action was simply this: "I wait quietly before God, for my victory comes from Him" (Psalm 62:1). This is how he faced his storms: "I will praise You as long as I live; lifting up my hands to You in prayer" (63:4).

Worshipping, even in a dry and parched place fraught with danger became a cocoon for David - like a baby bird hiding in the shelter of its mother's wings. He had learned that even in the most barren of places his spirit can feast, finding nourishment and strength in God's love that is "better than life".

May God's love and protection seep into your heart today and in the most difficult of situations, transforming them into the shelter of His wings. Paul van Gorden says it so well, "We may not dodge the storm, and the winds may still blow. But the Master of wind and wave is on board. We can trust Him. He will either calm the waves or quiet our hearts. We need not nervously pace the deck if the Captain of our salvation is at the helm."

-Helen du Plessis, 083 332 0895.

Op die Kruispad

Ek is gebore gedurende 1944, net ná Wêreldoorlog II. Die land moes weer opgebou word. Moeilike jare. Ek het op 'n plaas grootgeword wat my ouers gehuur het, in die ou Wes-Transvaal. 'n Groot plaas, maar ons was kleinboere, hoofsaaklik met beeste, melk en room, en dan landerye vir eie gebruik en voer. Ek was so 10 jaar oud. Telkemale, elke jaar, was daar 'n veldbrand in die droogte wat die veld afgebrand het tot teen die deurpad op ons plaas, ongeveer 'n kilometer van ons huis af verby, op pad na die dorp toe. Dan moes ons die vlamme gaan doodslaan met takke en nat sakke om die veld te red. In daardie tyd was die meeste boere kleinboere en selfs gemiddelde boere wat alles op die plaas maar self moes hanteer.

Gedurende hierdie tyd het een van my ouer broers kom kuier - hy was met verlof. Toe breek daar weer 'n veldbrand uit, en die vlamme kon in die verte gesien word, kilometers ver oor die rante. Dit is tóé dat my broer 'n fiets gryp en al met die beespaadjies langs gery het die veld in om die vuur te gaan blus. Maar 'n ramp tref hom! In die veld stamp hy sy knie, met 'n ou besering wat hy by die werk opgedoen het, teen die fiets. Daar sit hy in ondraaglike pyn. Hy kan nêrens heen nie. En die vlamme, meters hoog, kom verwoed aangerol, deur die wind voortgedryf. Die vlamme woed voort en beweeg óór hom in sy pyn. So erg was die vlamme dat tot die fiets se bande gebrand het. Hy het ernstige brandwonde opgedoen, want hy kon nie ontvlug nie. Uiteindelik kom hy aangestap en stoot die fiets oor die swartgebrande vlaktes tot by ons huis.

Ons het hom dadelik hospitaal toe geneem, 30 km ver. Dit was 'n traumatiese gesig om te aanskou. In die hospitaal was hy van kop tot tone toegedraai met wit verbande, net sy neus en sy mond het uitgesteek. Dit is nou nog vars in my geheue, 70 jaar later. En hy lê en kreun van die skok en van die pyn.

In hierdie tyd kry my ou moeder 'n droom oor hom, want sy het baie vir hom gebid. In die droom sien sy hom, toe onder verbande, en soos 'n wipplank. Dan sak sy kop af ondertoe asof hy sterwe, dan kom sy kop weer op - op grond van haar gebede. Dan sak die voete weer af, asof hy herstel. Hierdie gebeure herhaal hom 'n paar keer. Sy word wakker en wéét sy moet as moeder nie ophou om vir hom te bid nie. Sy het as kind in die Church of England grootgeword, en op 'n baie jong ouderdom met my pa

getrou. Hy was 'n baie streng en toegewyde Gereformeerde lidmaat. Sy het nie eers geweet van Pinkster- en Charismatiese kerke nie, want dié was daar nog nie toe sy gebore is nie. Maar sy bid... En my broer oorleef. My Pa was ook 'n bidder vir siekes. Hy het 'n hele paar genesings gesien as antwoorde op sy gebede. My broer het deur die vlamme gekom en oorleef op grond van hulle gebede.

En my broer? Hy het deur hierdie vlammehel op 'n kruispad beland. Hoe lyk die kruispad waarop ons almal telkemale beland? Op die kruispad kan jy links draai, of jy kan regs draai. Jy kan vorentoe of jy kan ook agtertoe gaan, maar dan keer jy terug en bly in jou smarte. Die keuse is joune. Jy word nooit 'n willose pion in God se Hand nie. Maar die enigste pad wat eintlik voor jou ooplê, is die pad vorentoe. Al die ander blyk afdraaiopaadjies te wees, om te ontvlug uit jou smarte en pyn. En hoe lyk die pad vorentoe? Dit is net een vlammehel wat aangerol kom om jou te verswelg, en jy voel al die hitte van die vuuroond. My ou broer kon nêrens heen nie, en die vlamme wat van voor af gekom het, het oor hom heen-gegaan.

Hoe lyk jóú kruispad? Dalk moet jy self die Here nog ernstiger aanroep as ooit tevore. Hy sê mos in Sy Woord: *“Roep My aan in die dag van benoudheid: Ek sal jou uithelp, en jy moet My eer”* (Ps. 50:15). My ou swaer, wat 'n pad met die Here geloop het, het ook telkemale op 'n kruispad te staan gekom wanneer groot probleme met van sy kinders opduik. Dan sê hy vir sy vrou: *“It is time to double up.”* Hy het daarmee bedoel dat hulle méér intens moet bid - op hul knieë waar hul die Aangesig van die Here soek totdat die lig deurbreek. Dalk hoor jy by die Here dat jy deur die vuuroond móét gaan, want ook dáár is Hy met jou. Ook dáár sal Hy jou ondersteun, want Hy is groter as die vlamme wat jou wil verswelg. Hy het mag oor die vuurvlamme.

Jesaja 43:2 lees, *“As jy deur die water gaan, is Ek by jou; en deur die riviere - hulle sal jou nie oorstroom nie; as jy deur vuur gaan, sal jy jou nie skroei nie, en die vlam sal jou nie brand nie.”* Dawid het ook in Ps. 23 geskryf: *“Al gaan ek ook in 'n dal van doodskaduwee, ek sal geen onheil vrees nie.”* En ook: *“U sluit my in van agter en van voor, en U lê U Hand op my”* (Ps. 139:5). Versoen jou daarmee dat jy óók soms deur die vuur moet gaan, maar weet dan dat die Here met jou is in die vuurvlamme. In die

hitte van die stryd, wanneer jy nie weet herwaarts of derwaarts nie.

WAT IS DIE VYAND SE MOTIEF IN DIE VUUROOND?
Hy versoek jou ook dáár. Tranebrood word ons toegevoeg. Want die vyand vervolgt God se kinders met die doel om hulle van God te vervreem met leuens. Hý val jou aan in jou vuuroond en sê vir jou jy moet God vloek! Soos Job se vrou vir hom gesê het: *“Vloek God en sterf!”* Hy is die dief. Jesus sê: *“Die dief kom net om te steel en te slag en te verwoes. Ek het gekom, dat hulle lewe en oorvloed kan hê”* (Joh. 10:10). Let op die orde: Hy steel eers die skapie uit die kudde, dra hom weg, dan slag en verwoes hy hom. Daarteenoor kom Jesus en gee lewe in oorvloed. Nie geld en besittings in oorvloed nie, maar lewe, soos ons ook in Psalm 23 lees.

WAT IS GOD SE WERKSAAMHEDE IN DIE VUUROOND?
Hy voed elkeen van Sy kinders met hemelbrood. In die hitte van die stryd, wanneer jy nie weet waarheen nie, is Hy daar vir jou. Paulus leer die kinders van die Here: *“...omdat ek juis hierop vertrou, dat Hy wat 'n goeie werk in julle begin het, dit sal voleindig tot op die dag van Jesus Christus”* (Fil. 1:6). Wanneer het Hy die goeie werk in ons begin? By wedergeboorte, toe ons Jesus as ons Persoonlike Saligmaker aangeneem het en ons opnuut gebore is in die krag van die Heilige Gees. Toe reeds het Sy werk in ons gestalte gevind, deurdat Hy ons sondes vergewe het en vir ons gesê het: *“Gaan heen en sondig nie meer nie.”* Jy is 'n nuwe mens en keer nie weer terug na die ou weë nie. Jy het jou pad gevind, want die Heilige Gees woon in jou.

Die Woord verklaar: *“Daarom, as iemand in Christus is, is hy 'n nuwe skepsel; die ou dinge het verbygegaan, kyk, dit het alles nuut geword”* (2 Kor. 5:17). Dit is soos om 'n stel trappe op te klim van wedergeboorte af tot by verheerliking, met Jesus wat my hand vashou en saam met my opklim na boontoe.

Die Here gee my 'n liedjie, net een reël, vier keer gesing: **En Jesus is lief vir my (4X)**. Hy haat my nie, Hy straf my nie, Hy veroordeel my nie, maar Hy help my, want Hy is lief vir my! En Hy dra my waar ek nie meer kan loop nie. Regdeur my storm! En dan kom ek heel anderkant uit!

Paulus skryf aan die Galasiërs: *“Staan dan vas in die vryheid waarmee Christus ons vrygemaak het, en laat julle nie weer onder die juk van diensbaarheid bring nie”* (Gal. 5:1). Vir Paulus gaan dit oor die vryheid om los te kom van die wet. Maar vir elke gelowige kan ons die Woord toepas om vas te staan in die geloof in Jesus Christus. *“Want Ék weet watter gedagtes Ek aangaande julle koester, spreek die HERE, gedagtes van vrede en nie van onheil nie, om julle 'n hoopvolle toekoms te gee. Dan sal julle My aanroep en heengaan en tot My bid, en Ek sal na julle luister. En julle sal My soek en vind as julle na My vra met julle hele hart”* (Jer. 29:11-13).

Gaan op jou knieë en bely jou geloof in Jesus Christus. Dit is ook Sy Naam: *Jahwe is Redder!* Glo dit, bely dit, en beleef jou oorwinning in Jesus se Naam! Hou aan met glo, hou aan met bid tot die lig deurbreek! Amen!

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“Therefore if anyone is in Christ [that is, grafted in, joined to Him by faith in Him as Saviour], he is a new creature [reborn and renewed by the Holy Spirit]; the old things [the previous moral and spiritual condition] have passed away. Behold, new things have come [because spiritual awakening brings a new life]” (2 Corinthians 5:17).



Die Heerskappy van Jesus Christus

WAAR IS JESUS SE TROON?
Maria kry die volgende woord van die engel Gabriël toe hy haar kom besoek met die nuus dat God haar uitgesoek het om aan Sy Seun geboorte te gee: “Hy sal groot wees en die Seun van die Allerhoogste genoem word; en die Here God sal aan Hom **DIE TROON VAN SY VADER DAWID** gee, en Hy sal koning wees oor die huis van Jakob tot in ewigheid, en aan Sy koninkryk sal daar geen einde wees nie” (Luk. 1:32-33). Hierdie troon spreek van Jesus se heerskappy as Messias, en ook van Sy uiteindelijke heerskappy.

Maar die troon van die Here is ook in die hemel: “Die **HERE** is in Sy heilige paleis; die troon van die **HERE** is in die hemel; Sy oë sien, Sy ooglede toets die mensekinders” (Psalm 11:4). “So sê die **HERE**: Die hemel is My troon en die aarde die voetbank van My voete. Waar is dan die huis wat julle vir My sal bou? En waar die plek wat My rusplek sal wees?” (Jes. 66:1). Hierdie troon in die hemel. Die Seun van God is egter die beeld van die onsienlike God: “Niemand het ooit God gesien

nie; die eniggebore Seun wat in die boesem van die Vader is, dié het Hom verklaar” (Joh. 1:18). “En die Vader wat My gestuur het, Hy het van My getuig. Julle het nog nooit Sy stem gehoor of Sy gedaante gesien nie” (Joh. 5:37).

Wanneer ons dan in die Bybel iemand op die hemelse troon sien sit, dan sien ons die gestalte van die Seun van God, soos Jesaja Hom gesien het: “In die sterfjaar van koning Ussía het ek die Here sien sit op ‘n hoë en verhewe troon, terwyl Sy some die tempel gevul het” (Jes. 6:1). “En bokant die uitspansel wat oor hulle hoof was, was iets wat soos saffiersteen gelyk het, in die gestalte van ‘n troon; en op die troongestalte ‘n gestalte wat soos ‘n mens gelyk het” (Eseg 1:26).

Is dit nie verbasend nie? Voordat die Seun van God vlees geword het, het Sy gestalte al soos dié van ‘n mens gelyk. Dit is ‘n voorafskaduwing van Sy menswording. Eintlik moet ons andersom dink: Die menslike gestalte lyk soos die Seun van God, want ons is in Sy beeld of ewebeeld geskape.

Jesus is beide God en mens. Toe Hy opgevaar het hemel toe, het Hy ‘n verheerlikte liggaam gehad. Hoe word Sy voorkoms beskryf wanneer Hy, ook as Mens, op die hemelse troon gaan sit? Johannes beskryf dit so: “En dadelik was ek in die Gees, en kyk, daar staan ‘n troon in die hemel en Een sit op die troon. En Hy wat daarop sit, het in Sy voorkoms gelyk soos die steen jaspis en sardius; en rondom die troon was ‘n reënboog wat in Sy voorkoms gelyk het soos ‘n smarag” (Op. 4:2-3). “En elke keer as die lewende wesens heerlikheid en eer en danksegging gee aan Hom wat op die troon sit, wat tot in alle ewigheid lewe, val die vier en twintig ouderlinge neer voor Hom wat op die troon sit, en aanbid Hom wat tot in alle ewigheid lewe, en werp hulle krone voor die troon...” (Op. 4:9-10).

Dan sien Johannes dat Hy wat op die troon sit iets in Sy hand hou - ‘n boek wat verseël is met 7 seëls. “En ek het in die regterhand van Hom wat op die troon sit, ‘n boek gesien, van binne en van buite beskrywe en met sewe seëls goed

verseël” (Op. 5:1). Daar was klaarblyklik ‘n soektog na iemand wat waardig is om die seëls oop te maak. Niemand in die hemel of op die aarde of onder die aarde is waardig bevind nie. Johannes het hartverskeurend geweene, totdat ‘n hemelse ouderling vir hom sê dat daar wel iemand gevind is: “Toe sê een van die ouderlinge vir my: Moenie weene nie; kyk, die Leeu wat uit die stam van Juda is, die wortel van Dawid, het oorwin om die boek oop te maak en sy sewe seëls te breek” (Op. 5:5). Daarop sien Johannes Jesus in die hemelse troonkamer: “En ek het gesien, en kyk, in die middel van die troon en die vier lewende wesens en in die mitte van die ouderlinge staan daar ‘n Lam asof Hy geslag is, met sewe horings en sewe oë, wat die sewe Geeste van God is wat uitgestuur is oor die hele aarde. Hy het gekom en die boek geneem uit die regterhand van Hom wat op die troon sit” (Op. 5:6-7). Die Lam staan in die middel van God se troon: “en hulle het met ‘n groot stem geroep en gesê: Heil aan onse God wat op die troon sit, en aan die Lam!”
Vervolg op p. 8

NNANG BATSHWARI BA DITLHAPI! (Become fishers of men!)



DITEMANA
“A ba raya a re: ‘Ntshalang morago, mme ke tla lo dira batshwari ba batho’” (MATHEO 4:19).
“Jesu a ba raya a re: ‘Tlaang lo ntshalang morago! Ke tla dira gore lo nne batshwari ba batho.’” (MAREKO 1:17).
“Mme Jesu a araba a re: ‘Ke a lo bolelela ka re: Fa ba, ba ka didimala, majwe a tla kua’” (LUKA 19:40).

DIKAKANYO
Ke bone nopollo e e reng: “Ba tshware, Modimo o tlaa ba phephafatsa!” Batho botlhe ba ba itseng go tshwara ditlhapi ba tla go bolelela gore go tshwara ditlhapi go monate mme tiro ya go di tlhaba le go di phephafatsa ga e monate. Monkgo wa go phephafatsa ditlhapi ga o monate mme fa o feditse mme o besa mme o ja

tlhapi go monate-nate!

Ka nako fa Jesu a ne a bitsa barutwa ba Gagwe a ne a re o tlaa ba dira batshwari ba batho. Go bolelela batho ka Jesu ke ka ga go amogela Jesu go nna Mopholosi wa bone le go Mophepafatsi wa bone ke sone tiro ya go tshwara batho. O ba tshwara ka go ba bontsha le go ba ruta ka ga tumelo le bophelo jwa motho yo o ipitsang mokeresete. Barutwa ba Jesu ba ne ba tsamaya le Jesu mme ba ithuta ka ga bophelo jwa modumedi. Gape Jesu a ne a ba ruta mme a ba bontsha gore ba dire eng. Fa o le modumedi le wena, o tshwanetse go nna Motshwaraditlhapi. Go na le dikgato di le 4 tse re tshwanetse go di latela go nna batshwaraditlhapi tsa batho.

■ Abelana Efangele: Fela jaaka

batshwaraditlhapi ba latlhela matloa a bone go tshwara ditlhapi, re le Bakeresete re laelwa go abelana molaetsa wa ga Jeso efangedi le ba bangwe, re “tshwara” dipelo tsa batho le go ba tlisa mo pusong ya Modimo.
■ Dira Barutwa: Pitso ya go nna batshwari ba batho e amana thata le Thomo e Kgolo, fa Jeso a laelang balatedi ba gagwe go dira merafe yotlhe barutwa (Matheo 28:18-20).
■ Bopelotelele le Go Itshoka: Go tshwara ditlhapi go tlhoka bopelotelele, maiteko mme ka dinako tse dingwe go thata. Fela jalo, go fitlhelela batho ka efangedi go thata ka gore batho ga ba rate go reetsa le go sokologa mme go ka tlhoka gore o itshoke.
■ Latela Keresete Pele: Motheo wa go nna motshwari wa batho ke go latela Jesu ka namana. Ke fela ka go mo itse le go ithuta mo go ene fa Bakeresete ba ka abelana molaetsa wa gagwe le ba bangwe ka katlego.

Bakeresete ba bileditswe go tlisa ba bangwe kwa go Jeso, mme ke Jeso fela ka boene yo o ka phephafatsang batho mo dibeng tsa bone mme ke Mowa o o Boitshupo o o ka ba fetolang dikakanyo le dipelo. Go ya ka Beibele, madi a ga Jesu - loso lwa gagwe lwa setlhabelo ke one a a tlhatswang boleo le go dira gore batho ba nne phepa fa pele ga



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Sêlê ke 083 458 3837

Modimo (1 Johane 1:7, Bahebera 9:13-14). Re tshwanetse go bua le go ruta. Fa re sa dire jalo re tlabo re sa dire se Jesu a se kopileng. Temana ya Luka 19:40 e bile ya re: “Ke a lo bolelela ka re: Fa ba, ba ka didimala, majwe a tla kua.” A re simololeng go dira!

THAPELO
Modimo ke kopa o fe Mokeresete mongwe le mongwe maatla le bopelokgale jwa go bolela le go bontsha batho efangedi ya Gago le maatla a Gago a a pholosang. Re kopa o thuse mongwe le mongwe wa rona gore re ithute lefoko la Gago le go tsamaya le wena mme re bontshe ka maphelo le ka mafoko gore go na le bophelo jo bo siameng, jo bo tlišang kagiso ya jaanong le kagiso ya bophelo jo bo sa khutleng.

God Se Perspektief vs. My Perspektief

Ons wêreld is deurmekaar. Daar is oorloë en konflikte, hongersnood en armoede. Onreg. Selfsug. Wreedheid. Dood. Dit is skokkend, hartseer, neerdrukkend en vermoeiend. Ons voel magteloos... Ook in ons eie lewe ervaar ons soms 'n watermassa van besig-wees en verantwoordelikhede, aanslae van alle kante en skynbaar onoplosbare probleme. Gebroke verhoudinge. Vrees en radeloosheid. En ons wonder baie keer: "Hoe lank nog? Wat sal die uiteinde wees? Hoe sal ek hierdie uitdagings te bowe kom?" Al voel ons soms alleen en geïsoleer, is hierdie ervaring nie uniek nie. Ons sien vele Bybelkarakters wat ook gewroeg het oor verskeie sake. Dink byvoorbeeld aan Barug, die skrywer van Jeremia se profesieë.

Te midde van hardnekkige sonde en rebellie, spreek God van felle oordele oor Israel by monde van die profeet Jeremia. En terwyl Barug skryf, raak hy benoud, moedeloos, en radeloos; maar God het 'n spesiale woord net vir hom: *"Die woord wat die profeet Jeremia vir Barug, seun van Nerija, gesê het toe hy hierdie woorde uit die mond van Jeremia in 'n boekrol geskryf het in die vierde regeringsjaar van Jojakim, seun van Josia, koning van Juda: So sê die Here, die God van Israel oor jou, Barug, 'Jy sê: Wee my! Want die Here het droefheid by my smart gevoeg. Ek is moeg van my gesug, en ek kry geen rus nie.' So moet jy vir hom sê, So sê die Here: 'Ky, wat Ek gebou het, gaan Ek afbreek, en wat Ek geplant het, gaan Ek uitruk - hierdie hele land. En jy, soek jy vir jouself groot dinge? Moet dit nie soek nie, want ky, Ek gaan onheil bring oor alle mense,' is die uitspraak van die Here. 'Maar Ek sal jou lewe vir jou gee as buit, op al die plekke waarheen jy sal gaan'"* (Jer. 45:1-5 DV).

1. MOEITE EN VERDRIET

Ons kan met Barug identifiseer. Die swaarkry en verdriet van ons wêreld is oorweldigend - veral as dit ons persoonlike lewe tref en ons dit nie net op 'n afstand in 'n nuusbuletin sien of in 'n koerant daarvan lees nie. Dit laat ons benoud, omdat ons nie uitkoms sien nie. Ons staan vas teen die skreiende pyn en lyding. Ons soek naarstiglik na antwoorde en vind dit nie altyd nie. Ons het dalk onopgeloste pyn en onbeantwoorde vrae. Politieke onrus, finansiële inperkings, gesondheidsprobleme, vervreemde verhoudings... En ons vra dalk - hoekom? Wie is verantwoordelik? Is daar 'n einddoel met alles? Ons kan dus met Berug identifiseer wanneer hy in die aangesig van God se oordele sê, *"Ek is*

moeg van my gesug, en ek kry geen rus nie." Meer nog, hy blameer God vir al die smarte! Hierdie perspektief herinner ons aan Salomo wat skryf, *"Alles tevergeefs, sê die Prediker, alles tevergeefs, dit is alles tevergeefs!"* (Pred. 1:2 OV). Ons sien ook mense se nood en pynkrete regdeur die Psalms. En wie sal Job se ongelooflike smartrede vergeet?

Dit is egter insiggewend dat die Bybel juis sulke smeekgebede en noodkrete bevat, en dit nie net onder die mat invree nie. Selfs in die lewe van Jesus merk ons dit op: *"Hy wat in die dae van Sy vlees gebede en smeking met sterk geroep en trane aan Hom geoffer het wat Hom uit die dood kon red..."* (Heb. 5:7a OV). Jesus het ook sielsbenoudheid ervaar. Watter pyn en lyding het Hy nie deurleef nie? Gelukkig bly dit nie daar nie. In ons teksgedeelte in Jer. 45 sien ons hoe God vir Barug antwoord. Hy weet wat Barug in sy hart spreek, waarom hy wroeg, waarom hy heimlik tob, en wat hy hardop uitspreek. Hy verstaan waarom ons wroeg. Hy staan nie afsydig nie, en Hy laat ons nie alleen nie. Hy is nie onaangeraak deur onreg nie.

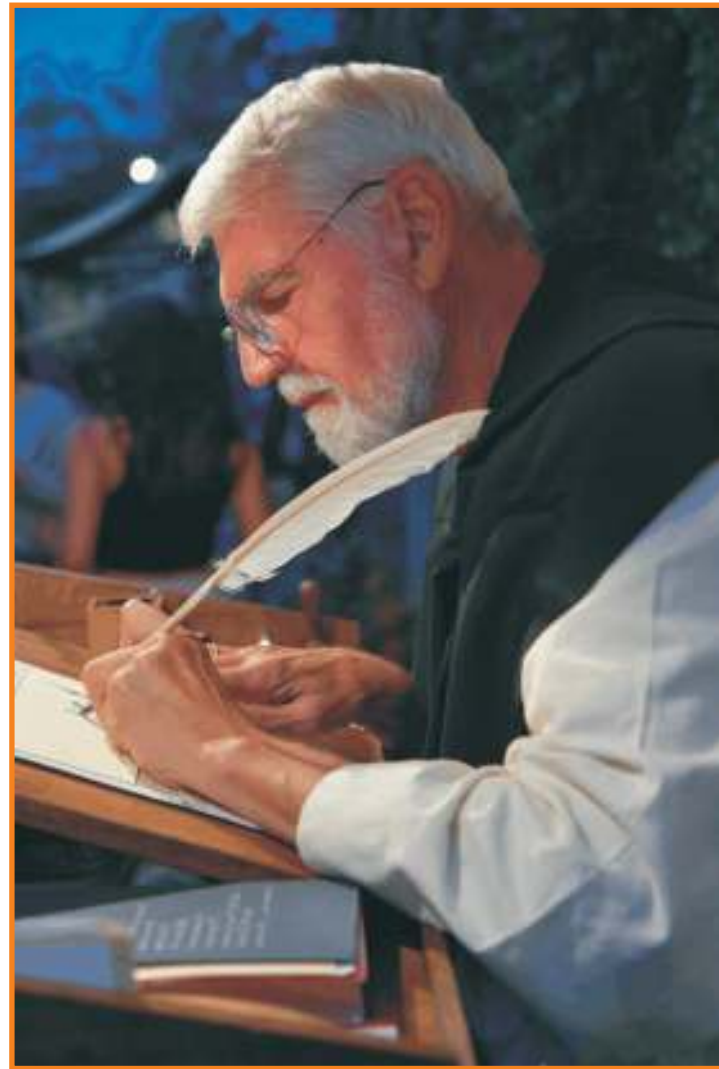
2. GOD SE SOEWEREINITEIT

Ons sien dat Barug sy perspektief na binne rig. Hy is moeg van sy gesug. Hy is verdwaas en oorweldig. Hoewel die Here hierdie emosies erken, skets Hy 'n veel groter prentjie. Hy is die Regter van die wêreld. Hy hou geskiedenis in Sy hand. Wanneer mense ná vele waarskuwings rebels aanhou sondig, sal God hulle onreg straf. Hierdie straf is nie sonder aanleiding, konteks, en rede nie. Al is dit moeilik vir eindige en feilbare mense om dit presies te begryp, is God regverdig en goed, en doen Hy wat reg is: *"Want U het my reg en my regsak behandel; U het gaan sit op die troon, o Regverdige Regter!"* (Psalm 9:5 OV).

Dalk is dit tyd dat ons ons tydelike, eng perspektief prysgee en God vra om ons 'n ewige, heerlike perspektief te gee. *"Daarom gee ons nie moed op nie, maar al vergaan ons uiterlike mens ook, nogtans word die innerlike mens dag ná dag vernuwe. Want ons ligte verdrukking wat vir 'n oomblik is, bewerk vir ons 'n alles oortreffende ewige gewig van heerlijkheid; omdat ons nie let op die sigbare dinge nie, maar op die onsigbare; want die sigbare dinge is tydelik, maar die onsigbare ewig"* (2 Kor. 4:16-18 OV). Ons lewe in 'n gebroke wêreld, en baie dinge lê buite ons beheer. Die finale en volmaakte het egter nog nie aangebreek nie.

Dit is reg dat ons ons kwel oor onreg. So het Lot ook gedoen: *"...En die regverdige Lot gered het, wat hom baie gekwel het oor die losbandige lewe van die sedelose mense; want deur wat hy gesien en gehoor het, het dié regverdige man, wat onder hulle gewoon het, dag vir dag sy regverdige siel gepynig oor hulle wettelose werke - die Here weet om die godsaliges uit versoeking te verlos en die onregverdiges te bewaar vir die dag van oordeel om gestraf te word; en veral die wat die vlees in vuile begeerlikheid agteraloop en die heerskappy verag"* (2 Pet. 2:7-10 OV).

Ons kan op hierdie fondasie bou: God is regverdig en sal aan ons ook reg laat geskied, al moet ons soms wag vir die regte tyd wanneer God die oordeel sal vel. Paulus bemoedig ons, *"Want ek reken dat die lyding van die teenwoordige tyd nie opweeg teen die heerlijkheid wat aan ons geopenbaar sal word nie. Want die skepping wag met reikhalsende verlange op die openbaarmaking van die kinders van God. Want die skepping is aan die nietigheid onderworpe - nie gewillig nie, maar ter wille van Hom wat dit onderwerp het - in die hoop dat ook die skepping self vrygemaak sal word van die slawerny van die verganklikheid tot die vryheid van die heerlijkheid van die kinders van God. Want ons weet dat die hele*



skepping tesame sug en tesame in barensnood is tot nou toe. En nie alleen dit nie, maar ons self ook wat die eersteling van die Gees het, ons sug ook in onself in afwagting van die aanneming tot kinders, naamlik die verlossing van ons liggaam. Want ons is gered in hoop; maar die hoop wat gesien word, is geen hoop nie; want wat iemand sien, waarom hoop hy dit nog? Maar as ons hoop wat ons nie sien nie, dan wag ons daarop met volharding" (Rom. 8:18-25 OV). Paulus deel ons daarna twee waarhede mee: (1) die Gees tree vir ons in en leer ons bid in hierdie tyd van ons vreemdelingskap; (2) God sal alle dinge ten goede laat meewerk vir dié wat Hom liefhet.

3. HOË DINGE

Die Here gaan voort om Barug te bemoedig. Hoewel Barug terneergedruk en angstig is, en sy perspektief klein is, word hy aangemoedig om nie groot dinge vir homself te soek nie. Hier sien ons 'n rede vir Barug se moeite en verslaentheid. Hy het groot planne gehad, en nou word dit bedreig deur God se oordele.

Dit laat 'n mens dink aan Jesus se woorde wat ons vermaan om ons oë op die geestelike dinge van waarde te hou, en ons nie te bekommer oor materiële dinge nie: *"Wie tog onder julle kan, deur hom te kwel, een el by sy lengte voeg? En wat kwel julle jul oor klere? Let op die lelies van die veld, hoe hulle groei; hulle arbei nie en hulle spin nie; en Ek sê vir julle dat selfs Salomo in al sy heerlijkheid nie bekleed was soos een van hulle nie. As God dan die gras van die veld, wat vandag daar is en môre in 'n oond gegooi word, so bekleed, hoeveel te meer vir julle, kleingelowiges? Daarom moet julle jul nie kwel en sê: Wat sal ons eet, of wat sal ons drink, of wat sal ons aantrek nie? Want na al hierdie dinge soek die heidene; want julle hemelse Vader weet dat julle al hierdie dinge nodig het. Maar soek eers die koninkryk van God en Sy geregtigheid, en al hierdie dinge sal vir julle bygevoeg word. Kwel julle dus nie oor môre nie, want môre sal hom oor sy eie dinge kwel. Elke dag het genoeg aan sy eie kwaad"* (Matt. 6:27-34 OV). Paulus skryf, *"Wees eensgesind onder mekaar; moenie na hoë dinge streef nie, maar voeg julle by die nederige; moenie eiewys wees nie"* (Rom. 12:16 OV). Kommentators wys daarop dat die *"hoë dinge"*

Vervolg op p. 5

God Se Perspektief vs. My Perspektief

Vervolg van p. 4
hier verwys na trots - as 'n mens so trots is dat jy ander mense as 'n laer klas sien en nie met hulle wil assosieer nie.

Mag die Here ons help dat ons ambisies en planne met Syne belyn sal wees. Dat ons nie teen Sy wil in sal streef na rykdom, projekte, ontwikkeling, bouwerk, ens. nie. Nie dat hierdie dinge insigself verkeerd is nie. Maar daar is 'n tyd en plek vir alles. En dit sal raadsaam wees om God se wil te ken en ons te onderwerp daaraan. Dit sou nie help dat Barug huise bou en wingerde plant terwyl God van verwoesting spreek nie. Net so moet ons eers ons planne, wat ons baie werk en moeite mag kos en wat dalk menslikgesproke baie logies en lonend kan wees, eers toets aan God se wil.

4. GOD SE RUS TE MIDDE VAN DIE STORM
God spreek laastens met Barug en sê dat Hy aan hom sy lewe as geskenk sal gee. Te midde van oorlog, pes, en dood, sal Barug ontsnap met dit wat die kosbaarste van alles is - sy lewe. Weer eens is dit 'n gans ander perspektief. Barug het dalk gehoop op gemak en welvaart. God sê dat Hy sonde sal straf, maar dat Barug sal ontkom. Die lewe is immers belangriker as materiële dinge; verhoudinge as leë plesiere. Ons kan dus nou tot 'n mate van 'n antwoord kom: te midde van krisis en vervolging, is God daar en sal Hy uitkoms bring. *"In my nood het ek na die Here geroep en Hy het my gebed verhoor"* (Ps. 120:1). Die *Amplified Bible* lui, *"In my distress I cried to the Lord, and He answered me"*. Laat ons op die tweede deel van

Heb. 5:7 let, *"Hy wat in die dae van Sy vlees gebede en smeking met sterk geroep en trane aan Hóm geoffer het wat Hom uit die dood kon red, en ook verhoor is uit die ang"*. God sal ons ook red uit ons ang. Laat ons saam met Paulus te midde van stryd en verdrukking jubel, *"Wat sal ons dan van hierdie dinge sê? As God vír ons is, wie kan teen ons wees? Hy wat selfs Sy Eie Seun nie gespaar het nie, maar Hom vir ons almal oor-gegee het, hoe sal Hy nie saam met Hom ons ook alles genadiglik skenk nie?"* (Rom. 8:31-32 OV).

TEN SLOTTE
Ons kan nie ontken dat ons wêreld in die mag van sonde lê nie. Maar ons vind drie belangrike perspektiewe uit hierdie gedeelte: God staan nie afsydig van ons pyn nie, maar weet wat ons deurmaak. Hy heers oor die wêreld

met reg en sal sonde straf. Sy gedagtes en waardes is hoër as dié van mense, sodat dit ons sal baat om eerder Sy wil te soek as ons eie. Laastens is die lewe belangriker as al die dinge en ervarings in ons lewe: *"Want wat baat dit 'n mens as hy die hele wêreld win, maar aan sy siel skade ly? Of wat sal 'n mens gee as losprys vir sy siel?"* (Matt. 16:26). Laat ons dan ons perspektief en aspirasies met God s'n belyn: *"But first and most importantly seek (aim at, strive after) His kingdom and His righteousness [His way of doing and being right - the attitude and character of God], and all these things will be given to you also"* (Matt. 6:33 AMP). Kom ons vind rus in God, en vertrou Hom om alles vir ons ten goede te laat meewerk!

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Klein Beginne, Groot Beloftes

"Die werk wat nou aan die gang is, lyk miskien klein en nie waffers nie. Maar moenie die waarde daarvan onderskat nie" (Sagaria 4:10 DB).

Tussen waar jy nou is en waar jy graag wil wees, is daar iets klein. 'n Saadjie. 'n Gedagte. 'n Stukkie gehoorsaamheid. En dit voel dikwels té klein om saak te maak. Ons wil mos eerder groot bewegings hê - onmiddellike antwoorde, sigbare deurbrake, dramatiese verandering. Maar God begin dikwels met iets skaars sigbaar.

Sagaria 4 vertel van die heropbou van die tempel. Die volk het gevoel hulle poging is te klein, te stadig, te swak. Maar God sê: *"Moenie die waarde onderskat van dit wat klein begin nie."* Want dit wat jy as 'nie waffers' beskou, is dalk juis die begin van iets heilig.

God se koninkryk is soos 'n mosterdsaad, sê Jesus. Dis nie groots en indrukwekkend in die begin nie - maar dit groei, stadig, onmerkbaar, totdat dit skadu bied vir ander.

'n Gebed wat jy opsê met bewende woorde.
'n WhatsApp-boodskap wat jy stuur na iemand wat lank stil was.
'n Keuse om vandag liever te wees, eerder as reg te wees.
Dis sulke dinge wat nuwe seisoene plant.

Dalk voel jou lewe nou kaal, neerdrukkend of doelloos. Maar kyk mooi: is daar nie dalk 'n klein begin êrens aan die broei nie? 'n Sprietjie hoop? 'n Vlammetjie geloof? 'n Gedagte wat nie wil stilbly nie? Moenie dit weggooi nie. Moenie dit minag nie. Want God is meesterlik met klein goed. Hy maak reuse van skaapwagters, wyse manne van sterrekykers, en heilige grond van woestyne.

Gebed: Here, ek wil nie meer wag vir groot oomblikke voor ek glo U werk nie. Leer my om U te vertrou in die klein beginne. Help my om vandag getrou te wees met die klein stukkies lig wat U gee. Mag dit groei... in U tyd. Amen.
- Hettie Wessels

MY CUP OVERFLOWS

"The hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him" (John 4:23-24).

The term "worship," like many other great words, lack adequate definition. The meaning of these words, like the exquisite perfume of a rose, or the delightful flavour of honey, is more easily experienced than described.

One person describes "worship" as: "The overflow of a grateful heart under a sense of Divine favour."

Psalm 45:1 in the *Message Bible* reads, *"My heart bursts its banks, spilling beauty and goodness. I pour it out in a poem to The King, shaping the river into words."*

- God's Word and Love in Action





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Rejoicing in Suffering

At a recent church service, I met a man who was in bed with his wife one morning a year or so ago, when their teenage son suddenly appeared in the doorway with a gun in his hand. Without a word, he shot them both. When the mother tried to crawl away, the boy shot her a second time. They both managed to escape and called the police, who came and took their son to a mental hospital. This man and his wife managed to survive that terrible time, but I heard him speak to a group of men about it, and he said that God got his attention through that ordeal. He began to learn things that he had never learned before. I met another man whose son is so mentally disturbed that he has to be kept in a very expensive hospital for treatment which costs \$50 000 a year. I met others who were battling cancer. I was amazed at the number of people struggling with severe problems. **Suffering is something that all Christians are called to experience in one way or another. And yet I suppose there is no question that is more difficult for us to handle than this one: "Why do Christians suffer?"**

Let us turn to Romans 5 to see how to handle Christian suffering. This chapter deals with the results that come in a Christian's life when he or she truly and genuinely believes that God has given him / her the gift of righteousness in Jesus Christ our Lord. If you have been justified by faith, then certain results will be obtained. These results come in various stages, or levels of maturity. The first one is found in verses 1-2: *"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom we have gained access into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God"* (Romans 5:1-2 NIV). **The rejoicing comes immediately. We rejoice because we have a hope for the future, a hope beyond death.** That is the initial and introductory phase of Christian growth. But Paul goes on. Not only is this so, **but there is something more** in verses 3-5: *"Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, Whom He has given us"* (Romans 5:3-5 NIV).

It is clear from this that Christians are expected to experience suffering. We don't like that fact, but, nevertheless, it is a fact. In

his letter to the Philippians, the Apostle Paul puts it very plainly, *"For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in Him but also suffer for His sake"* (1:29, RSV).

The Greek word for suffering is translated as "tribulation, something that causes distress." It can range from minor annoyances that we go through every day to major disasters that come sweeping down out of the blue and leave us stricken and smitten. These are the sufferings that we might go through, the tribulations. According to Romans 5, **the Christian response to suffering is to rejoice:** *"Not only so, but we rejoice in our sufferings."* Many people do not want to accept this. But it is instructive to note that this is the unanimous testimony of every writer of the New Testament. First Peter 4:12 says, *"Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is coming upon you to test you, as though some strange thing happened to you."* **It is not strange, it is normal.** James 1:2 says, *"Count it all joy, my brethren, when you fall into various tribulation."* Even the Lord Jesus told us in the Sermon on the Mount, *"Blessed are you when men persecute you for righteousness' sake, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven. For so persecuted they the prophets before you"* (Matthew 5:11-12 KJV).

It is clear from Scripture that rejoicing in suffering is not simply a 'grin and bear it' attitude, or 'tough it out'. Many people pride themselves on how much they can take. Sometimes people who are not Christians will put us to shame by the things that they can take without complaining. There are some people who think "rejoicing in suffering" means that you are to enjoy your pain and hurt, that somehow Christians ought to be glad when a terrible tragedy occurs and their hearts are hurting. Masochists like to torture themselves. That is a twisted, distorted view of life. That is not what Paul is saying. Nor is he saying that we merely are to pretend that we are happy. Christianity is never phony.

Hebrews 12 helps us. It says plainly, *"No discipline for the present is pleasant. But afterwards it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it"* (12:11). Right at the moment of hurt, you are not going to feel like rejoicing, but it should soon follow that you rejoice in your suffering. And that is what Paul plainly says: *"We*

also rejoice in suffering."

I heard a man some years ago put this very clearly. He was going through great physical trouble, and one of his legs was amputated. That did not arrest the course of his disease, and he ultimately died because of it. Just a few days before his death I visited him in the hospital and he said something to me that I never forgot because it so perfectly expresses what Christian rejoicing in suffering means. He said, "I never would have chosen one of the trials that I've gone through, but I wouldn't have missed any of them for the world!" That is rejoicing in suffering. **How do you get to the place where you can rejoice in suffering?** The Apostle's answer is, *"We rejoice in suffering because we know..."* It isn't just because it's such a great feeling to be hurt, it is because we know something about it. It is something our faith enables us to know, a kind of inside information that others do not share. Paul says, *"Knowing that suffering produces..."*

What does suffering produce? The Apostle says there are four things that suffering produces: **First, suffering produces perseverance (patience).** The Greek word literally means "to abide under, to stay under the pressure." Pressure is something we want to get out from under, but suffering teaches us to stay under and endure. Perseverance is the opposite of panic, of bailing out. **Suffering produces steadiness.**

Do you remember when you first became a Christian and went through a trial? How easily you panicked and cried out to the Lord, "What's gone wrong?" You were in a panic over what was happening, fearful that it would wreck everything and destroy your hopes and dreams. You were just like the disciples in the boat on the Sea of Galilee when the storm was raging. They panicked. They came to the Lord, and shook Him, and said, *"Wake up! Don't You know we're about to perish?"* (Matthew 8:25, Mark 4:38, Luke 8:24). And the Lord did as He does with some of us. He stood up and said, *"Don't panic."* Then He said to the storm, *"Peace, be still,"* (Mark 4:39). And quiet came.

Storms teach you that you're not as strong as you thought you were. You learn that you don't have the 'stick with it' that you thought you had. You wanted to bail out much sooner than you thought you would. They also teach you something about the Lord - you learn how gracious He is. You learn that He can handle events in ways that you couldn't

dream of or anticipate. You see Him work things out in ways that you could never have guessed.

Second, steadiness, Paul says, produces character. The Greek word for character carries with it the idea of being put to the test and approved. It is the idea of being shown to be reliable. **Steadiness produces reliability.**

You finally learn that you are not going to be destroyed, that things will work out. God is building you up so He can hold you up and say, "He's approved, he's tested." Second Corinthians 1:8-10 reads, *"I think you ought to know, dear brothers, about the hard time that we went through in Asia. We were really crushed and overwhelmed, and feared we would never live through it. We felt we were doomed to die and saw how powerless we were to help ourselves; but that was good, for then we put everything into the Hands of God, Who alone could save us, for He can even raise the dead. And He did help us, and He saved us from a terrible death; yes, and we expect Him to do it again and again"* (2 Corinthians 1:8-10 Living Bible).

Years ago I stayed with a family and asked a the 9-year-old boy, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" I'll never forget his answer. He said, "I want to be a returned missionary." He didn't want to be just a missionary, but a returned one - one that's been through it and it's all behind him. Here Paul tells us that God is in the process of building returned missionaries.

Third, we find that reliability produces hope. In verse 2, Paul spoke of *"rejoicing in hope,"* the hope of sharing the glory of God, a hope for the future beyond death. But here is a hope that we will share the glory of God, which is God's character, right now. We have the hope that God is producing the image of Christ in us right now. And this hope is a certainty, not just a possibility. We are being changed. We see ourselves changing. We are becoming more like Jesus. We can see that we are more thoughtful, more compassionate, more loving. We are becoming like Christ - stronger, wiser, purer, more patient. To our amazement, a certainty grows in our hearts that God is doing His work just as He promised. He is transforming us into the image of His Son.

Fourth, hope does not disappoint us. The King James translation is better, *"Hope does not make us ashamed."* This is a figure of speech called litotes,

Rejoicing in Suffering

Continued from p. 6
which is the use of a negative to express a positive idea. Paul does this in Romans 1:16 when he says, *“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ because it is the power of God...”* He is proud, confident and bold. **Hope makes us confident.** Hope, or certainty, produces confidence and boldness.

The man I mentioned earlier, who had gone through the terrible trauma of having been shot by his son, began to study and to grow. As he spoke, it was evident that a man who previously had been ashamed to speak of Christ was now confident and bold. What the Lord had shown him, and how the Lord supported and sustained him through this terrible, tragic time means so much to this man that he didn't care what anybody thought about it. He shared openly what God had brought him through. We lose our fear of ridicule and shame, and we speak up and share out of the reality of our experience of what God has brought us through.

Paul goes on to explain why our hope does not disappoint us. He says it is *“because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, Whom He has given us.”* It is a very significant verse because it is adding a thought that we have not had in the book of Romans up to now. It is the explanation, above all else, of how to rejoice in suffering. You can see how important this is, because it is the first

mention in the book of Romans of the Holy Spirit. This is also the very first time in this book that the love of God is mentioned. *“You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by His blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through Him! For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!”* (Romans 5:6-11 NIV).

Some Christians are being made bitter and resentful and angry in suffering, even to the point of denying their faith. Suffering, you see, does not produce these qualities automatically. What makes the difference? As Paul explains here, the difference is in **seeing your suffering as evidence of God's love, and not His wrath.** Then you will experience that love in the midst of the suffering. **The Holy Spirit will shed abroad in your heart an experience of the love of God so rich and radiant and glorious that you will not be able to help but rejoice in your suffering.** Paul says there is a place where every Christian knows that God loves him or her, even though he / she feels worthless and useless and forgotten.

Where is that place? It is the cross.

In the cross of Jesus Christ you always see three things: First, you see yourself. If there were any other way to get to God, then there never would have been a cross. But the cross is God's testimony that there is no other way. That is why it says, *“At the right time, in due time, Christ died.”* At that time in history God amply demonstrated to all the world that man could not save himself. Second, as we look at the cross we see how ungodly we are. We see that we are sinners. We are involved in things that are hurtful. We are destroying ourselves and others. We are the enemies of God. And yet we know, if we are Christians at all, that in that place where man's inadequacy is so fully demonstrated, we also thirdly have the clearest testimony that God loves us. *“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son”* (John 3:16 KJV). Jesus came to break through all our despair and weakness and shame and sorrow and sin, all man's ruin and disaster. He came to demonstrate a God Who loved mankind and would not let it perish.

Now we come to the force of Paul's argument. If you clearly knew God's love when you became a Christian - when you were enemies and helpless and powerless - how much more can you count on the fact that God loves you now that you are His child? Even though you are

suffering, even though you don't feel loved right now, even though it seems as though God is against you, how much more you can count on the fact that God loves you. Paul is arguing from the greater to the lesser. If God could love you when it was so evident to you that you didn't deserve it, how much more must you reckon upon His love now that you know that you are dear to Him and loved by Him! Therefore, this suffering is not coming into your life because God is angry with you; it is coming because God loves you. It comes from the heart of a Father Who is putting you through some development that you desperately need to grow into the kind of a person you desperately want to be. And He loves you enough that He will not let you off, but will take you through it. Therefore it is not His anger you are experiencing, but His love that will work everything for good. There is a hymn that expresses this idea beautifully:

*“When we have exhausted our store of endurance,
When our strength has failed, 'ere the day is half done,
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources,
Our Father's full giving is only begun.*

*His love has no limit, His grace has no measure;
His power no boundary known unto men.
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus,
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.”*

-Ray C. Stedman

Reageer Wanneer die Lig Groen word

“Verder, by 'n ander geleentheid, het Jesus vir die mense gesê: ‘Ek is die lig vir die mensdom. Wie My aanhou volg, sal nooit in die duisternis leef nie, maar sal die lig hê wat lewe gee’” (Joh. 8:12 NLV).

In sy boek, *Deep Thoughts*, skryf Jack Handey: “Soos die lig van rooi na groen na geel en toe weer terug na rooi verander het, het ek daar gesit en oor die lewe nagedink. Was dit dan niks meer as 'n klomp toeterende motors en geskreeu nie? Soms het dit so gevoel.”

Baie keer wonder ons oor die sin van die lewe. Oor ons volgende stap. Oor God se plan vir ons lewe. Maar daar is meer. Baie van ons wag dat dinge in plek moet val - vir die groen lig wat alreeds vir ons gegee is. Jesus het egter gesê, *“...Wie My aanhou volg... sál*

die lig hê wat lewe gee.”

Wanneer kry 'n mens dan die insig, duidelikheid en rigting vir ons lewe wat sin en betekenis en vervulling sal bring? Wanneer jy die eerste tree in geloof neem! Ons beveel nie 'n gedagtelose of gebedelose benadering tot besluitneming aan nie. Jy moet seker wees dat God jou roep. **Jy kan egter só bang wees om die verkeerde ding te doen dat jy nooit die regte ding doen nie.**

Dit is wys om te dink en weer te dink, maar nie om te óórdink nie. Oormatige ontleding lei tot geestelike verlamming. Ons moet eerder in kinderlike geloof reageer op wat die Here ons op die hart druk om te doen, al maak dit nie altyd vir ons menslike verstand sin nie. As ons te lank wag en uitstel, kan ons 'n gulde

geleentheid mis.

'n Pastoor verduidelik: “As jy probeer om die wil van God logies uit te redeneer, sal jy nooit 'n geloofstap neem nie, omdat die wil van God nie logies is nie - dit is teologies.” Die woord “theos” beteken “God”, en dus dui “teologies” daarop dat God in die vergelyking ingebring word.

Die pastoor gaan voort: “Die aansporing van die Heilige Gees sal nie altyd vir jou logiese linkerbrein sin maak nie. Trouens, Godgeïnspireerde idees lyk dikwels soos slegte idees. Juis dan moet jy toelaat dat die Heilige Gees jou intellek oorheers.”

Die dissipels wat Jesus geroep het, het twee dinge gedoen. Hulle het wonderwerke verrig en hulle het foute gemaak. As hulle onwil-



lig was om 'n fout te maak, sou hulle nooit die vreugde daarvan om wonderwerke te verrig, ervaar het nie. Reageer dus in geloof wanneer die lig groen word!

- Bob & Debby Gass

Hope in a Despairing World

According to the Congressional Budget Office, the US needs to spend nearly \$1 trillion over the next ten years on its nuclear forces. Here's the frightening reason: the risk of nuclear war is higher than at any time since the end of the Cold War. China has doubled the size of its nuclear arsenal over the past five years. The next crisis over Taiwan could involve nuclear weapons. According to the Atlantic Council, "both China and North Korea have increasing incentives and capabilities for limited nuclear attacks." Nuclear power India says it has only "paused" military action against nuclear power Pakistan. Russia's new nuclear weapons doctrine states that Russia could launch nuclear weapons in response to an attack on its territory by a non-nuclear-armed state backed by a nuclear-armed one. It could therefore see an attack by Ukraine, backed by the US, as justifying a nuclear response.

Such massive threats can feel overwhelming. But there's an antidote to such discouragement, one as close as tonight's sky.

A MILLION EARTHS CAN FIT INSIDE OUR SUN

Brian Cox is a professor of particle physics at the University of Manchester in England. He is also the UK's Royal Society professor for public engagement in science and visiting scholar at the Crick Institute, a biomedical research centre in London. He recently recorded a video for Big Think on "the incomprehensible scales that rule the universe." In it, he offers these facts regarding the size and scope of the universe at large:

- A million Earths can fit inside our Sun. The Sun is so large, it would take a passenger aircraft a year to fly around it. And yet he notes that it is "quite a small star."
- Our Milky Way Galaxy contains somewhere between two hundred and four hundred billion suns and is about one hundred thousand light years across. (A light year, the distance light travels in a year, is 9 trillion kilometres.)
- The nearest galaxy to us is the Andromeda galaxy, two and a half million light years away.
- The *James Webb Space Telescope* can measure light that has journeyed over thirteen billion years to reach us.
- Since the universe is expanding, the place that emitted that light photon is forty-six billion light years away from us now. There's more universe beyond it; this is just as far as we can see at present.

Dr. Cox adds: The universe, for all we know, and given the accuracy of our measurements at the

moment, might be infinite in extent. And that genuinely is inconceivable.

When we contemplate the size and the scale of the universe and our place within it, which you're forced to do when you think about the distance scales and the sheer size of the universe, then I think it's very natural for us to tend to come to the conclusion that we don't matter at all.

In his view, however, we are immortal to the degree that we influence the universe and thus live beyond ourselves. Dr. Cox calls this "a very beautiful idea." But there's an even more beautiful idea to which we turn next.

"PARTAKERS OF THE DIVINE NATURE"

The God Who made all of that lives in you right now! The Bible says of Jesus, "*All things were made through Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made*" (John 1:3). Paul adds: "*By Him all things were created, in heaven and on Earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities - all things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together*" (Col. 1:16-17).

Now comes the amazing news: "*He is the head of the body, the church*" (v. 18). This means that you and I are Jesus' "body," inhabited by His Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19; 12:27). We are "*partakers of Christ*" (Heb. 3:14 NRSV) and thus "*partakers of the divine nature*" (2 Pet. 1:4). As C. S. Lewis noted, "The whole mass of Christians are the physical organism through which Christ acts." Take a moment to consider that fact. Reflect on the reality that the One Who created every molecule in a universe too large for human comprehension is so omnipotent that He can reduce His infinitude to become a fetus in a mother and a Baby in a manger. If you believe that Jesus came at Christmas, you should believe that He came again when you invited Him to be your Lord and now lives by His Holy Spirit in you today.

This does not mean that you will be protected from the consequences of living in this fallen world. Missile shields and all the rest attest to the sinfulness of humans who would destroy humans and the finitude and frailty of our lives on this broken planet. But it does mean that Jesus can empower us to face all that comes to us today with triumphant faith. We can testify with Paul, "*I can do all things through Him Who strengthens me*" (Phil. 4:13). If we will submit this day to His Spirit (Ephesians

5:18) and ask our Lord to redeem all that He allows in our lives (cf. Romans 8:28), we will discover that "*we are more than conquerors through Him Who loved us*" (Romans 8:37; note the present tense).

"INSTEAD OF BONDAGE, LIBERTY"

So name your greatest fear today, then claim your Father's promise: "*Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God*" (Isaiah 41:10). Pray with David, "*When I am afraid, I put my trust in you*" (Psalm 56:3). Know that the

God you trust is living in you right now, giving you all the strength you will receive, leading you whenever you will be led. The great missionary Hudson Taylor testified: "Christ liveth in me. And how great the difference - instead of bondage, liberty; instead of failure, quiet victories within; instead of fear and weakness, a restful sense of sufficiency in Another." Will you claim this "restful sense of sufficiency" today?

- Dr Jim Denison
www.denisonforum.org

Die heerskappy van Jesus Christus

Vervolg van p. 3

(Op. 7:10). Jesus het Sy heerskappy telkens bevestig. Dit is die eerste keer geprofeteer deur Dawid: "*Die HERE het tot my Here gespreek: Sit aan My regterhand, totdat Ek U vyande maak 'n voetbank vir U voete*" (Psalm 110:1). Jesus gebruik hierdie profesie om te wys dat Hy die Een aan die regterhand van God is (Matt. 22:44). Dit was hierdie woorde wat veroorsaak het dat die hoëpriester Hom ter dood veroordeel het (Matt. 26:64).

Dan getuig die Evangelies dat Jesus na Sy hemelvaart aan die regterhand van God gaan sit het: "*Nadat die Here dan met hulle spreek het, is Hy opgeneem in die hemel en het gaan sit aan die regterhand van God*" (Mark. 16:19). Petrus preek oor waar Jesus in die hemel is: "*Want Dawid het nie in die hemele opgevaar nie, maar hy self sê: Die Here het gespreek tot my Here: Sit aan My regterhand totdat Ek U vyande gemaak het 'n voetbank van U voete. Laat dan die hele huis van Israel sekerlik weet dat God Hom Here en Christus gemaak het, hierdie Jesus wat julle gekruisig het*" (Hand. 2:34-36).

God die Vader getuig oor die feit dat Jesus aan Sy regterhand sit: "*Nadat Hy dan deur die regterhand van God verhoog is en van die Vader die belofte van die Heilige Gees ontvang het, het Hy dit uitgestort, wat julle nou sien en hoor*" (Hand. 2:33). "*Hom het God as Leidsman en Verlosser deur Sy regterhand verhoog om aan Israel bekering en vergifnis van sondes te skenk. En ons is Sy getuies van hierdie dinge, en ook die Heilige Gees wat God gegee het aan die wat Hom gehoorsaam is*" (Hand. 5:31-32). Agt jaar later sien Stefanus 'n visioen terwyl hy gestenig word, "*Maar hy was vol van die Heilige Gees en het die oë na die hemel gehou en die heerlijkheid van God gesien en Jesus wat staan aan die regterhand van God. En hy het gesê: Kyk, ek sien die hemele geopend en die Seun van die mens aan die regterhand van God staan*" (Hand. 7:55-56).

Jesus is dus verhewe is bo enigiemand: "*...wat Hy gewerk het in Christus toe Hy Hom uit die dode opgewek het en Hom laat sit het aan Sy regterhand in die hemele, bo alle owerheid en mag en krag en heerskappy en elke naam wat genoem word, nie alleen in hierdie wêreld nie, maar ook in die toekomstige*" (Ef. 1:20-21). "*Hy, wat die afskynsel is van Sy heerlijkheid en die afdruksel van Sy wese en alle dinge dra deur die woord van sy krag, nadat Hy deur Homself die reiniging van ons sondes bewerk het, het gaan sit aan die regterhand van die Majesteit in die hoogte*" (Heb. 1:3). "*En aan watter een van die engele het Hy ooit gesê: Sit aan My regterhand totdat Ek U vyande gemaak het 'n voetbank van U voete?*" (Heb. 1:13).

Bostaande inligting vanuit die Woord moet ons aandag heeltemal in beslag neem. Wanneer ons gedagtes op Jesus gerig is, word ons in Sy gelykenis gevorm: "*As julle dan saam met Christus opgewek is, soek die dinge daarbo waar Christus is en aan die regterhand van God sit. Bedink die dinge wat daarbo is, nie wat op die aarde is nie. Want julle het gesterwe, en julle lewe is saam met Christus verborge in God*" (Kol. 3:1-3).
- Elizabeth Jordaan
Liewe leser, het u Jesus al die Heer en Meester van u lewe gemaak? Sit Hy op die troon van u hart? Heers Hy oor u lewe? - Red.

The Joy of Forgetting Yourself

Few treasures are more rare or more freeing than self-forgetfulness. C.S. Lewis called it the cheerful hallmark of humility. Tim Keller described it as the gateway to spiritual freedom. And John Piper saw it as the trusted companion of deep wonder.

Self-forgetfulness is not low self-esteem or denial of one's worth; it's the holy freedom of not needing to constantly evaluate, defend, or centre oneself. In a world obsessed with personality tests, self-discovery, and inward excavation, Scripture quietly invites us to something altogether different: to forget about ourselves and live.

THE MOST LIBERATING LOSS
Self-forgetfulness is not achieved by willpower alone. You can't simply tell yourself to stop thinking about yourself. That never works for long. Rather, like Thomas Chalmers once suggested, we need "the expulsive power of a new affection." We forget ourselves by remembering Someone better - Jesus. To pursue self-forgetfulness, consider this simple acronym FORGET.

F: FILL YOUR MIND WITH JESUS
Self-forgetfulness isn't about mental emptiness it's about better attention. You can't stop thinking about yourself unless you start thinking about something (or Someone) greater. And there is no greater subject for the human soul than Christ.

The Gospels, the Psalms, the letters of Paul all lift Jesus high. Make reading about His life, His love, and His lordship a habit. Read books that magnify His glory. Spend time with people who can't stop talking about Him. Make Him your morning meditation and your evening rest. The more you look at Jesus, the less you'll need to look in the mirror.

O: OBEY MORE THAN YOU ANALYZE
Introspection isn't always harmful, but it can become a trap. After teaching, leading, or even conversing, you might find yourself replaying everything you said. Was I too harsh? Did I talk too much? Was that biblical enough? But here's the catch: while analysing yourself, you're often failing to love the person right in front of you. You're missing the Lord in worship. You're distant at the dinner table. Distracted. Jesus calls us to obey simply, directly, joyfully. When your thoughts start spiralling inward, ask: "What's the next right thing God is calling me to do?" Then do it. Let obedience drive you out of yourself and into life.

R: REPENT AND CONFESS QUICKLY
When you sin, don't stew in guilt. Don't wallow in introspection, hoping your emotional suffering will earn you some kind of penance. Instead, run to the Father. Confess. Be forgiven. Move forward. God forgets the sins He forgives (Hebrews 8:12).

That means you can, too. Don't let lingering guilt keep you turned inward. Repent, rejoice in grace, and return to your calling.

G: GET LOST IN SOMETHING GOOD
When was the last time you were so engaged in something good that you forgot yourself? Whether it's art, a great book, a long hike, a worshipful song, or a hearty laugh with friends, these moments help pull us out of ourselves. They let us marvel at beauty, meaning, and wonder. Scripture shows us this rhythm. David's songs. Jesus pointing to birds and lilies. The psalmist watching the stars. These holy moments remind us that life is not about us it's about God's glory in a world bursting with His fingerprints.

E: EMBRACE YOUR GOD-GIVEN CALLINGS
The antidote to overthinking is often found in faithful action. God has called you to be a friend, a student, a parent, a church member, a servant. Embrace these roles with courage and diligence.

When you're pouring into others, you'll have less time to spiral inward. Your thoughts shift from self to service. Even the ordinary tasks - changing diapers, answering emails, attending Bible study - can become acts of joyful obedience that loosen self's grip.

T: THANK GOD ALWAYS AND FOR EVERYTHING
Gratitude lifts us. When you thank

God for His faithfulness, you're not thinking about your failures. When you recount His mercies, you're not nursing your insecurities. Thankfulness directs your heart upward and outward.

Philippians 4:6-7 shows us the path from anxiety to peace. It's not just prayer - it's prayer with thanksgiving.

The more you remember God's goodness, the less you'll worry about your own image.

Start small. Thank God in the morning. Again at night. Make it a rhythm, a ritual. As you do, you'll find yourself looking less in the mirror and more to the heavens.

Self-forgetfulness isn't indifference - it's clarity. It's not thinking less of yourself; it's thinking of yourself less. It's the soul looking outward to God, and then outward to others.

It's how we were made to live.

So ask the Lord to help you FORGET. Let Jesus fill your mind. Let obedience take the place of endless self-analysis. Confess quickly. Get lost in something beautiful. Embrace your responsibilities. And thank God all the way through.

In losing yourself, you may just find the joy you've been looking for all along.

www.faithactivist.com

SHEMA: Hear and Obey

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (Deut. 6:4-5).

"One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked Him, 'Of all the commandments, which is the most important?' 'The most important one,' answered Jesus, 'is this: Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.' The second is this: Love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.' 'Well said, teacher,' the man replied. 'You are right in saying that God is One and there is no other but Him. To love Him

with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.' When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, He said to him, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.' And from then on no one dared ask Him any more questions" (Mark 12:28-34).

The first Scripture many Jewish children commit to memory is Deut. 6:4-5, which begins: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is One." It's not a throw-away line or a religious formality - it's the heartbeat of Jewish faith. This passage, known as the Shema (שמע), is more than tradition. It's the prayer that begins a life of faith - and for many, it's the final breath of one too. The first words learned, and often the last words spoken. In

observant Jewish homes, these verses are recited daily - morning and evening - forming a sacred rhythm that stretches across generations. In joy and suffering, in obedience and even martyrdom, the Shema is the confession that frames a Jewish life wholly devoted to the Lord.

Even Jesus knew the Shema. In Mark 12, He's confronted by the Sadducees - religious elites trying to trap Him in theological error. But Jesus doesn't flinch. He answers with clarity, exposing their flawed thinking and hollow hearts. Nearby, a scribe listens in. Scribes were guardians of the Law - meticulous in their transcription of Scripture, hand-copying every letter with reverence. They were rigorous in interpretation and exacting in defense of truth. Mark 12:28 tells us this scribe was impressed.

That's no small detail. Scribes weren't easily swayed. They had the Torah memorised. They were theological heavyweights, entrusted to protect the sacred texts. And yet this one steps forward - not to argue, but to ask: "Which commandment is the most important of all?"

Jesus doesn't hesitate. He answers with the Shema. Out of every command and word etched in sacred ink - Jesus points here. These words are the foundation, not the footnote. He affirms that love for God - with all your heart, soul, and strength - is not only the greatest commandment, but the very lens through which all of life must be seen. It may surprise you that Jesus would root everything in this ancient declaration. To understand why, we must consider the very first word of that

Continued on p. 10

SHEMA: Hear and Obey

Continued from p. 9
passage: Hear.

On the night of January 27, 1986, engineers gathered at Cape Canaveral to make a critical call about the Challenger launch. Allan McDonald, head of the launch approval team, raised urgent concerns about the space shuttle's O-rings and how the cold temperatures could cause them to fail. His warning was heard - but not heeded. The next morning, at 11:39 a.m., Challenger lifted off. Just 73 seconds into flight, the shuttle broke apart - killing all seven crew members aboard.

Hearing without heeding led to tragedy. That's a modern echo of what Scripture means when it uses the Hebrew word shema, translated as "hear" in Deut. 6:4. In English, hearing is often passive - sound enters, and we move on. But in ancient Hebrew, shema means to hear in such a way that it results in action. It carries both listening and obedience in one breath. There's no separate Hebrew word for "obey." To hear is to respond.

God models this kind of hearing Himself. In Exodus 2:24, we're told, "God heard [shema] the groaning of His people" - and acted. In Psalm 34:17, David writes, "When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears [shema] and delivers them." In both, divine hearing leads to movement. God doesn't just listen. He responds.

This same expectation rests on us. In Exodus 19:5, God says, "If you will obey shema My voice and keep My covenant, you shall be my treasured possession." And in 1 Samuel 15:22, Samuel rebukes Saul's disobedience with a piercing truth: "To obey [shema] is better than sacrifice." In both,

hearing without doing misses the mark.

Jesus doesn't just point to this idea - He builds with it. In Matthew 7:24-27, He tells of two men who hear His words. One man builds on rock. The other on sand. The difference isn't information - it's obedience. The Greek word used in this passage is akouō (ἀκούω), the same word the Septuagint uses to translate shema in the Old Testament. Jesus is drawing a straight line from ancient Hebrew understanding to the foundation of a life that won't collapse. In His framework, hearing without doing isn't just incomplete - it's catastrophic.

Luke 5 opens with Jesus teaching on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Two boats are close by. One belongs to Simon. The men are ashore, washing their nets in preparation for the next day. This is when Jesus steps into Simon's boat and asks Simon to "put out a little from the land." His request is out of sequence. It's not time for boats to leave shore - it's time for them to return. Jesus's promptings will often feel out of sync with our expectations. Simon obeys anyway. But he isn't rewarded with instant clarity. Instead, Jesus soon makes another ask: "Let down your nets." Same lake. Same nets. Same tired fishermen. This comes right after Simon had "toiled all night." That's his word for it: toiled. Toil is when you work hard but come back empty.

Still, he obeys - and then it happens. The water flashes silver. Nets snap taut. The boat groans. The exhausted fishermen are suddenly awake and laughing at their fortune while their hands burn raw, clinging to heavy nets laden with fish threatening to sink the boat. And there's Jesus - in the middle of the chaos - steady and

smiling.

Fish thrash around His feet, and He laughs. Not at them, but for them. He knows Simon's about to realise something - Someone - far greater than the fish is in his boat. Simon then falls at Jesus's feet, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Just moments before, he called Jesus Master - a respectful title, but not a revelatory one. Now, something has shifted. He's Lord now.

Obedience led to revelation. Only after Simon obeyed did he see the holiness of the One in the boat, and it changed everything. What if Simon only gave Jesus his first "yes" that day? Imagine if he never let down the nets. How different would his story be?

How different will yours be?

You are one shema moment away from the Master wrecking your life in the best way imaginable. It didn't make sense for Simon to drop his nets again - and it won't make sense when your moment comes either. Do. It. Anyway.

Luke 12:32 may be one of the most breathtaking verses in all of Scripture. Jesus looks at His followers - fragile, fearful, unsure - and says, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." God doesn't just allow us into His Kingdom - He delights to entrust it to us. The phrase "good pleasure" carries the weight of resolve. This isn't a reluctant gesture. It's a determined one.

So why do so few of us live like heirs? Perhaps we've confused our kingdoms with His. We chase influence, clarity, and comfort - mistaking them for Kingdom. But Romans 14:17 tells us that "For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but

of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit". These aren't casual, manufactured virtues - they are costly, Spirit-wrought realities shaped in surrendered lives.

Trust roots us in Kingdom life, though it rarely grows in certainty. Many know the promises but miss the Person behind them. We crave plans and answers, but obedience rarely provides that kind of certainty. It often feels like walking blindfolded. That tension isn't a flaw - it's part of the formation process. God isn't making us comfortable. He's making us new. Ephesians 4 says the life He leads us into means a new mind and new self. This is the battleground of real faith.

John Kavanaugh, a Catholic priest and ethicist, once travelled to Calcutta to work with Mother Teresa, hoping to gain perspective on where his life with God was headed. When he asked her to pray for him, she replied, "What do you want me to pray for?" "Clarity," he said. "No," she answered. "Clarity is the last thing you're clinging to - and you must let go of it." When he asked why, she smiled and said, "I've never had clarity. What I've always had is trust. So I will pray that you trust God."

Scripture tells us, "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is fully His" (2 Chronicles 16:9). He's not scanning for perfection. He is looking for a shema heart. One that is soft enough to listen, brave enough to obey. When He finds it, something happens...

He moves. And the Kingdom moves with Him.

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Jer. 20:11

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-KOFFIE KAFEE-

HEB. 6:19

est. 2023