

About Travelling Through Tragedy

CARRYING BURDENS and MANAGING LIFE'S UNAVOIDABLE SADNESS

^^

*** PRAY AND WAIT**

*** GOD DID HEAR, BUT HE DID NOT SPEAK**

*** GOD ANSWERS WITH A TERRIBLE ANSWER**

*** THE LIFE AND DEATH OF OUR LORD**

^^

Beverley Russell 2002-2003 (free to copy)

CARRYING BURDENS

and

MANAGING LIFE'S UNAVOIDABLE SADNESS

PRAYER - WAITING - THEN ACCEPTING GOD'S PLAN

Carrying a burden, through something seemingly unbearable,

nourishes the soul,

so that the journey through the darkness, in itself,

brings a spiritual enlightenment that builds us towards perfection.

We know so many who pray, and wait upon the Lord, and then accept His decision.

So together with them, we think and talk and wonder about suffering burdens,

with the attendant prayer and waiting,

all the time learning about God,

and then accepting His answer with "whatever Lord",

when He is ready, in His good time,

in order to be to be refined gold for Him, for His glory.

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Part A

PRAY AND WAIT

November 2002

Part A PRAY AND WAIT November 2002

1. WAITING

We talk about never waiting to pray, and about waiting for God to answer.

So, we need to have a prayer life, a life of prayer, praying always, yes.

Never wait to pray.

But to wait for God to answer (even sometimes there is a need to wait for the answer until He comes again to tell us the answer), "*Ah, there's the rub*"!

Patience mostly needs to accompany prayer, for waiting is mostly inevitable.

WAITING WITH PATIENCE

Patience needs understanding.

But there is often no understanding of why God waits,

and we wait impatiently for God to answer, hardly understanding.

So, we need to practise patience, without understanding and, as well, persistence and trust.

But the trick is to keep that all going without (often) any fruition.

Lack of fruition can so easily cause despondency and depression,

and, "*all things work together for good to them that love God*", of Romans 8:28.

begins to lose its shine of good advice.

Pray and wait.

Waiting with patience - is good advice?

Nothing ever happening - is good?

2. WAITING IS HARD WORK

Prayer is not about bargaining and bartering with God, haggling for the best deal,

like, "*I'll spend time with you, God, if you will fix/heal my ...*",

"*a pound of piety for a remission from sickness*".

To become like the crucified and risen Christ, is the same as it was for him,

a slow and painful process.

We can only be like Christ if we survive the seeming solitude and suffering and sorrow.

It is a hard work to become like Christ,

like wind carving stone, or a feather to sweep the path.

It is slow and painful and toiling work, rarely swift or easy.

Walking "*amid the shades, while the lingering twilight fades*",

"*learning all the worth of pain*" is indeed hard work.

Setbacks and breakthroughs happen seemingly at random.

Breakthroughs cause great joy, but setbacks, well, they upset our expectations.

SETBACKS

In setbacks, our expectations must be unrealistic to God, for He seemingly does not act.

In any case He must think our expectations are unrealistic right now.

Maybe our request might always be unrealistic for God.

BUT - setbacks and breakthroughs are not random.

Seemingly random setbacks and breakthroughs are God ordered.

AND - if there are no breakthroughs then - prayer IS about waiting. Oh how we wait!

We know that

what is now,

is not what it should be,

or what it will be,

or how it could be.

So why do we need to wait?

We think we really know best how to organise our lives, so that God will be praised.

So why does God make us wait, when with a stroke of His hand,

in an instant even,

everything would come right again?

THE VALUE OF DIVINE DELAY

But "*the Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness*",

2 Peter 3:8-9, for "*a day is like a thousand years, or a thousand years is like a day.*"

One day is like the other to Him.

Divine delay can so easily sap our energy,

when we pray and wait, and pray and wait,

and continue to pray and wait, while the pain continues,

for it seems an answer will never come.

There is no satisfaction for the input.

But in divine delay there is value for God -

SO THAT ... HIS WORK MAY BE DISPLAYED

Is that the reason for delay?

3. NEVER IS WORSE

What about never! "*Never*" is even worse than "*wait*".

Never! never! - never comes for some, who NEVER see their prayers answered. They die without release, from pain and suffering, and terror and torture,

and loved ones sick nigh unto death, or "*outside the pale*",

and they die with the picture in their minds of their loved ones

ever looking over the high fence into the kingdom garden.

Christ's ones always anxiously pray and long for that event,

(only as we are all asked to urge, as in "*Thy Kingdom Come*").

They plead ultimately for Christ's return, and then die before He comes.

They spend their final days, longing and waiting.

But the answer for them is "*never in your lifetime*".

"Never" is like a hard layer, thick and impenetrable.

There is never a crack in "*never*".

It can be viewed as something lacking in life,

when something which you prayed for never comes to pass, in your lifetime.

God never gives - IT. You never have it. So it is a lack, - a denial.

GOD'S DENIAL

Maybe that denial condition of ours, or of other loved ones,

that condition that we, or they, don't need, will never go away, never.

God never heals - IT. You are never rid of that.

We did not think the wind would change a rock shape in our lifetime,

or a feather would sweep. We were not as ignorant as that.

We just thought a generation time, or a lifetime was long enough. But not "*never*".

We all hate waiting, the men of old hated waiting.

Men who worked for God with their talents got things done, like we do.

While others stand by in timidity and apathy, or with uncaring little hearts and minds,

we make things happen, we always have.

Yet we have to "*wait*" for God to do things we ask for.

It is as if prayer and waiting are bound together.

It is not about getting things, getting well, getting justice.

There are other methods for procuring those.

But, we may say, "*Lord, this has to be dealt with in another way*".

"*Relieve*" or "*heal*" or "*unburden*" this burden. "*Do this for me*". "*Do this for us*".

LEARNING LESSONS

We seem to learn so slowly the lesson that "*Thy way not mine, O Lord, however dark it be*".

It is "*Not mine, not mine the choice*", so why is it our way we want?

So it is best to think differently about solutions. Prayer requests are rather like saying,
"help my unbelief, show me the way, show me Your way". "Teach me thy way", we sing.
And does *"Teach us to pray"*, really mean *"Teach us to wait"* ?
Can continuing conversations with God, make waiting for me not only bearable, but holy too?
Can I be invigorated and replenished by waiting, rather than despondent and doubting?
For *"those who wait on the Lord will renew their strength"*.

4. WHY "WAIT", or DO WE NEED TO ACCEPT "NEVER"?

We know such good things can happen, if only God will do

We know God's purpose, but it seems He is in no hurry to accomplish His purpose.

Why?

God promised them, (us), a land flowing with milk and honey,
but all the time there is garlic and bitter herbs.

The milk has gone sour and the honey bees sting, as well.

Why?

Why did they, (why do we), need to wait 40 years, with only one thing on the menu?

Is it because some other characters need refining?

THEM AND US, WAITING

Many grizzled and complained about leaving Egypt.

But why did everyone have to suffer for the ill temper of those?

People constantly, and always need to play catch up,
as little children do to their older siblings.

So why does God make us wait, while catch up happens?

Are we not refined enough?

Why does He make us wait for the laggards?

God took the hands of Lot's family when they lagged,
and pulled them along out of Sodom.

Why does He not just pull everyone along like that?

We are told of many men and women of old who had to wait, as well.

Why did they need to urge, and encourage, and wait for the laggards?

Is it because of the stubborn or lazy or rebellious or couldn't care lessers?

Is it so that they learn lessons also, and catch up?
But "*that takes years*", they said, "*40 years, and I'll be dead by then!*"
Yes, and they were, they all were, and never saw the promised land.
They did not get there, and only looked on from afar.
So did they really know everything?
Well, there were some there who mostly knew how to do everything,
like we think we do!
And if Christ does not soon return, we all will be dead, as well.
Do we really know how to do everything?
Not so.
For -
EVERYONE HAS TO LEARN LESSONS.
And so it was "*never*", "*NEVER*" for all of them!
And often it is "*never*" "*NEVER*" for all of us.

5. WE ALL NEED REFINING

Is it that I have some mistakes also?
Do I NEED to pray and wait, with no breakthrough, while I am made into more refined gold?
Do I also have a need for the "*never*"? I, who thought I was gold enough?
Well, I do, and I wasn't, you know!
It seemed like nothing is accomplished, no result from the hours I spend learning to pray,
making my life a prayer. Morning and evening prayer each day, and three times, at meals, or,
even remembrance, every time I pass through the kitchen door, and during the night in dreams.
Does no amount of prayer ever win out, or get a breakthrough?
(All day, all night did not take the cross from our Lord, and he had no mistakes.)
So does a "*no result*" of my prayer requests, make better refined gold?
Is it possible that the refining goes on for me, while I pray and wait?
I pray daily for God to "*fill me with wisdom and cover me with grace*".
How long before that happens? Inch by inch? Is that how? Will that ever be? When?
Like Jacob, on his death bed? "*Perfect*" he was, at the end!
Will I be perfect like he was, just at the end? Or will it be never, and only after I die?
REFINED GOLD - WHEN?

It must mean that refining never ends while there is breath.

It does not seem to matter that my connection with God is open all the time,
and that my longings go unrequited, as if He never hears me.

Surely it is not so, that He never hears me?

I was young, enthusiastic, and full of vigour. As I aged, the "wait" and the "never" took their toll.

It seems then that the continual disappointments, the "waits", can scar and scab me,
but the "never" can do worse, "never" can really debilitate and decimate me.

Is there no end to it?

Can't I have some relief, or even a sliver of healing, so we can manage better.

That thick covering and disability can numb my yearnings.

And then, it might as well be "never", always "never".

But, do all the disappointments and longings better refine me in the end? Do they?

How can that be?

Do I also need to die before I see the Promised Land?

EVERYONE IS DISAPPOINTED SOMETIME

I have known many loved and loving ones who longed to see the Lord's day, and dreamed of the singing by the river. One said, *"Yes I heard it last night again. He must be very near. To night he will come to redeem us"*. And we knew the singing was only ringing in her ears,

for the longed for redeemer did not come in her time.

She felt the longing as well, and the disappointment, for God did not act.

But was that longing of hers a false hope?

Or, is it that "never" makes even better gold for Him?

No, hers was not a false hope, for with the "never", she was more refined for Him.

As I watched, she turned to her sleep of death, still with love for Him,

and with confidence in His Promises. If I please Him, so will I.

SO I TOO CAN BE GOLD. Is that too hard for me?

6. HELP FOR "WAIT" AND "NEVER"

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything,

by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving present your requests to God.

And the peace of God will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus", Philippians 4:5-7.

The Apostle doesn't say anything about waiting.

But it does say I can have peace!

When?

It must mean BEFORE my request is granted,

while I *"wait"*, or in the event of the *"never"*.

So if my request is not to be granted, I can still be at peace?

Really?

GOD'S PLAN FOR GOLD

"Carry each others burdens", Galations 6:2,

begins to give the hint that burdens may continue,

and I need to help others, as well, over the *"wait"* or *"never"*.

So *"wait"* and *"never"* are all part of God's plan?

So the illness/trauma/trouble may never heal in my lifetime?

If there are only limited breakthroughs,

then it must mean that God's plan also requires us to be refined

with *"wait"* and *"never"* all the way to the end of my breath.

It is the burdens that refine the gold.

Heavy burdens make more refinement?

Yes, for He wants pure gold!

What a wonderful way to refine gold!

We would never have thought up such a plan!

7. "WAIT" AND ENDURE IT WITH GLADNESS

So *"wait"*, or *"never"*, is not a lack, or failure.

God's plan needs to be viewed in much wider concepts than just our lifetime.

That for which we pray might come to pass when we are gone, and gone a long time.

It is said, God helps us to bear burdens. He make our backs very strong.

He does not take burdens away, unless it is time for Him to do so.

But those burdens can become heavier.

The interesting part is that He knows about burdens, and their heaviness.

So *"wait"* or *"never"* are the answers we must accept with extra weight.

And in accepting those answers, with burdens on us, we are brought closer to God.

Are we?

GO WITH THE LORD AND BE GLAD

We can change His mind, like Lot did, over those saved out of Sodom,

but we need to have a good reason, that fits in with His plan.

It is good to ask, but it is better to understand about His will, about "*wait*" and "*never*",

but it is best to endure what He decides, with gladness.

We have seen earlier, that God does promise us peace and support in the trials,

through reading about Him, and through prayer to Him

and through our ever strengthening relationship with Him,

so that we can have good spiritual health,

(when our bodies are falling apart, and we are physically failing).

He will take our hand and pull us along, if we are frail in purpose.

That must have been why He pulled Lot along, away from Sodom.

That must be the support in the trial that we can access, as well.

Our closeness to God helps us to access God's helping hands with the burdens,

and so we can then endure with gladness.

FOR PERFECTION

For, of course, we know a day will come when there will be perfect spiritual and physical health.

8. WAIT FOR THE DISPLAY

But let's go to *John 9 :1-3*, "*so that the work of God may be displayed*".

"*He is of age*", so that son waited a long time - blind, waiting for the display to take place.

How many days curled up afraid, only managing to walk by feel, but always frightened,

and in the dark, always in the dark, for 15 or 20 years, deprived of life as we know it.

But God chose him to be in the dark - for a grand light display!

Those, too, who live in the dark of depression, live in the blind.

They feel black, and unsure of their place, or even of any place in this world.

Though they are loved "*to bits and pieces*" by their loved ones,

though in their intelligent mind they know of that love,

they think in their frail emotional mind, that they are an obstruction to others,

and an obstacle to the spinning of the world.

With unseeing eyes they stand at the brink of the deep hole.

They think that by being depressed, and in the dark,
that all the love light around them is being extinguished.

They worry that their blind like and silent behaviour will dampen the love that others feel for life.

Only continual reassurance, and love constantly expressed, and company always, (silent often)
just sitting with them, through the time of blind inactivity,
will reassure them and bring them through to the light, from that veil in that shadow of death.

Where the plague of depression rages, reminders need posting on all the walls,
that the blind and dark night WILL give way to the wisps of the morning dew,
and then the bright light of a display will come.

GOD IS THERE

God IS there, though aloneness is the prevailing thought.

He has worked like this before with us, and He will again.

God has told us that "*there is a time to be born, and a time to die*".

As they slip from us, further blinded by the black animal that seeks to slay them, to end it all,
they wonder "*is this the time to die?*"

But it is all "*the gift*" of God, and it "*is His time*", not ours to decide. He will tell us when.

It is not for us to decide on beginnings or endings, on births or deaths, nor our time to display
our wishes in these grave matters. Those in the dark must wait until God speaks to them,
or until the right medical advice eases their torment - and we must mind them while they wait.

WITH HIS DISPLAY

And we must pray - for they cannot. He will bring them from the abyss, from the precipice, that is
the grave's edge, if it is His will, and in His time, for it is His display, "*whatever, Lord*" it will be.

By their waiting, and us minding and caring, we will see God's display. It may be at last be the
answer to our prayers for restoration. Initiative will flourish again, and activity and enthusiasm
will return. The smiles and laughter and joy and gladness will dazzle us, as it has done before,
for the dark blind has receded, and we will be, as well, smiling and laughing, and full of joy and
gladness. But whatever it is, the brightness of God's display will give us all hope again. So there
is the rub! God's will and purpose and glory has to be displayed.

Moreover, it needs to be displayed not only to us, but to the laggards, who watch and doubt.

He sends the Saviour to as many of the laggards as He can gather and take hands with,
and they are gathered up with us. So, it is not us. IT IS US IN HIM, AND HIM IN US, - for them.

9. PERFUME BRINGS THE DISPLAY

Prayer and psalms saying IS necessary, so that continual incense and perfume arises to Him. We say, as the world turns someone is always awake praying, while the others dream away. That continual perfume is very powerful, and so with their praying and waiting,

little old ladies can do terror like any other terrorist.

Their powerful enduring perfume will bring His will upon earth.

"*You can put your children through the fire*", (like with a war, or a suicide bomb),

as Molech asked you to do before, and you obeyed,

but I have a power like none else with my God who asks me to pray.

I send my perfume up all day, every day.

It mixes with the incense of others, and will bring about a powerful display.

Those little old ladies, in Egypt, cared for Joseph's coffin for hundreds of years,

until it was time to march. "*Oh,*" they said, "*quick, dust it off once more, polish it up, and four young men will need to come here to our cellar tomorrow, so that Joseph can march with us to the Promised Land*". Then during the march those little old ladies educated more little old ladies

how to look after Joseph's coffin, until Joseph reached Shechem.

They understood about "*watching*", and "*waiting*", and "*praying*" and "*never*", and "*dying off*". They anticipated their deaths in the wilderness,

but they guaranteed the on going care of that precious coffin with Joseph's body within.

KEEP UP THE PERFUME OF PRAYER

Little old ladies are valuable. Little old ladies, (or tiny insignificant people)

can send up so much perfume, that God will answer, one day, in His time.

Their wisps of scent do not disappear over the face of the earth.

Their perfume can actually move mountains, or even move the whole earth,

if they pray in His will. With the incense of others that powerful force can make Holy Fire.

I have a communication line open with the Heavenly Father, and if I die off,

and it is not accomplished yet, well, I understand that it can be a lifetime in the dark blind,

or more than a lifetime, waiting for the display to guide us to the Promised Land.

Some other old lady, when I die, will take over the praying and waiting,

for by my praying and waiting I showed her how.

I know of a surety that her perfume, will mix with mine own, long drifted away,

and blend with the incense of all the other saints, and will wend afar, heavenwards to Him,

and finally plead with His will, "*even so, come, Lord Jesus*", and He will answer our call.

But this little old lady right now, wants to be able to say like the Shunemite,

"It shall be well", for I want the unwellness to be well again.

Just that, some small wellness and maybe a little wholeness. But I am fearful.

"Not a great display, please Lord, but just a little one, here with us, now".

Or will we pray and wait, and then never ever have healing?

I know that, in any case, soon Holy Fire will descend and His son will come with the Promise,
and all will be solved.

So, "LET NOT YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED", Beverley, "FOR IT SHALL BE WELL".

Beverley Russell, November 2002.

Part B

GOD DID HEAR,

BUT HE

DID NOT SPEAK

December 2002

Part B GOD DID HEAR, BUT HE DID NOT SPEAK December 2002

CHANGING MY PRAYER LIFE FOR GOD

With God's help I am changing my life, once more.

I have been thinking, recently, again and again, about *"Pray and Wait"*,

about blessings we ask for ourselves when we suffer adversity.

Why does God ask us to pray for blessings and then we must wait?

Why does He not answer straight away?

Why does our unbearable yearning languish?

Like Job, why do we need to have nothing, before we can have anything?

So how far *"down"* do I need to go?

Surely not to the point of denial that there is a God, (which we know can happen).

I would never judge any who watch their children die, and lose their faith,

- but, we, perhaps, need to go so close to that.

You did remember Job, Lord, just in time.

So will there be a blessing for us as well, just in time?.

WAIT, AND GO FURTHER DOWN

Is it that we need to go to that point, after months and years of prayer and waiting?

Should we then intimately ask God what He wants?

Or is it better to accept, what we have, and not ask any more?

It is a dark and dangerous and fearful place to be, waiting until we know what God wants.

"How will He answer?" Or "is He already answering?"

We need to truly WAIT for Him with our anxiety, in this fearsome place,

with our overwhelming and impending concern, concern not only for now,

but for the future as well, and how we will manage the outcomes.

I think praying for Jesus to come is the same.

I think forgiveness is the same.

I think reading our Bibles is the same.

I think socialising in our ecclesia is the same.

Anything we do is the same. All of it - is for Him.

Why do we pray for *"daily bread"*?

We have plenty, and plenty of other comfort blessings as well.

So why do we pray for that which we have? For His sake?

FOR HIS SAKE

So that we may have it, and eat it, and enjoy comforts, for His sake?

Or is it that we need to move beyond the comforting satisfaction,

to the point where we use that satisfaction in His service?

Not doing more things, not that, just being His representative in the things we do.

Why do we pray for Jesus to come?

Why do we forgive, or

why do we read His word, or

why do we strengthen our ties in the meeting, or

why do we want lives in the meeting to go smooth together?

We know about preaching or missioning for Him, - but what about all else?

The fact is, it is all missioning for Him, He wants all our life to be for Him.

"To Him be glory", Romans 11:36, "of him, and through him, and to him".

How?

By worshipping Him, and being more like His son, serving others,

loving others, and telling them of Him. Is that how?

FOR HIS GLORY

But, in this dreadful passive state how can we worship Him?

How can we be like Him, love, serve, and witness for Him?

How can I, or those in the dark do that?

How can we keep the faith within such melancholy and morbidity?

And more, not just keep the faith alive, but keep it buoyant, as well?

How can we keep it all afloat for His sake?

Worry and fretting about a terrible sadness,

and experiencing the downward freefall plunge, always looking down, is not buoyant.

If it is buoyant I must be, then there can be no looking down in the pit,

only up, towards the glowing flashes, and shafts and sparkles of light.

ALWAYS, ALL FOR THE LORD

We pray

- not for our own indulgence, or pleasure, or benefit, or peace, or justification,

but because we need/want to mission for Him.

So it is all for Him. I ask for His sake, not mine, and for Him to be glorified.

"Remember me when you come into your kingdom", Luke 23:42.

But what about now as well?

So, can I petition God that He "*remembers*" the burden, so that He will not "*forget*"?

At least, in my prayer and waiting time, can I petition

just for His "*remembrance*" of the burden, in the waiting time?

If that prayer is more acceptable to Him, then He might be ready to act.

Or I might better hear His answer!

For troubles in my life, and for those loved of me,

I am changing my prayers, and I hope my life.

Beverley Russell, December 2002.

Part C

GOD ANSWERS

WITH

A TERRIBLE

ANSWER

February 2003

Part C GOD ANSWERS WITH A TERRIBLE ANSWER February 2003

1. ABOUT THE BURDEN

I prayed and waited, and prayed and waited, but I had no answer.

So I stumbled on with my burden. "*In My time*", He said, "*when I am ready*".

I asked God to take our burden, but He still listened, and did not act.

Then I paused, and said, "*Just remember, Lord, and not forget*".

Then I had my answer, the terrible answer. It was the "*never*".

But not the never I had hoped for.

That answer was another burden, a heavier burden -

the "*never*" answer is now a heavier burden.

I am encouraged to "*pray without ceasing*",

and "*pray constantly*" stares provokingly from my kitchen notice board.

He gave us a place to pray, so why was it so hard to get the display we wanted?

I knew in my mind that even as I feel helpless and hopeless,

that when earth has no answers, heaven always does.

But, I became increasingly afraid, for my heart was wary of the darkness

of the earth's "*no answer*", or the "*never*", that I knew could be there.

I knew that the secret things belonged to Him, so I waited, asking Him to remember,

still praying about the secret thing, and hoping for a blessed heavenly answer.

Then I did go there, and learned about God's secret, and found the terrible darkness.

The pictures in my mind of that place are frightening, for I became completely unglued,

unhinged really, and flip flopped around without direction.

My heart was secretly outside my body and broken in pieces,

"*How can I have that heart together again*", I asked Him, "*and back inside my body?*"

I KNOW DARKNESS ENHANCES THE DISPLAY

I am persuaded that God hears, but I am not guaranteed that He will speak to me.

Though He does not speak to me, I know He has the answer.

He did not promise that He would tell me the answer.

Indeed if He does not tell me the answer,
He can just decide to give me the answer in other ways.
Then when I have the answer, added in with that answer,
He does give me the grace to endure and carry the answer burden.
And so I need to better grasp the idea that there is more grace
when the burden gets heavy for then there is more opportunity.
If I earnestly ask *“to be filled with wisdom”* each day, *“and covered in grace”*,
why do I resent the path? I know that grace grows well in the icy chill of winter,
amongst crushed and broken hearts, so why do I find that difficult?
So, before when there was hope, I prayed without ceasing. I was looking for help,
a light to help carry the burden. I trusted that it would *“be well”*.
But it was not like it was for the Shunem lady, or the Nain mother.
I know that, and understand that mine is a different course.
But I did think, if it could not be wellness, there could be something better than ill.
I knew I must pray, pray and pray some more, abundantly, always and forever,
no matter what burdens I have to carry.
I know prayer is not just an idle amusement of little old ladies,
but that for many it is a potent instrument of action, for many prayers are answered.
I know, also, life is not all blooms and flowers,
but I did think there could be some blooms and flowers,
not all thorns and thistles.
I never asked for all thorns and thistles. I never asked for this! I don't want this!
Not this terrible sadness! I can hardly believe this!
The path was always strewn with a thicket of never removed difficulties,
but not as bad as this. *“Blessed”*? How are the mourners ever happy, or blessed?
BUT IT IS SO
Struggling in this thicket, I understand also that if I have a burden, it should not paralyse me,
Now I have to move forward unparalysed, for no one can stand still in the thicket.
So *“Lord, ‘Whatever’*, for the Lord will send *“beauty for ashes and the oil of joy for mourning”*
and *“The burdens will soon be over, and the joys will come forever”*
But how long is *“soon”*?

It seems to me that “soon” stretches on endlessly in front of me.

“I will transform her valley of troubles into a door of hope”. But Hosea’s “door of hope”, (2:15), offers no reassurance for me now, and when will I *“sing again, as in the days of”* my “youth”? God’s “soon” seems more of “never” to me right now, for I can see no “door of hope”!

WE NEED TO STRETCH OUR FAITH

God saw Abraham’s surrender of his son, Isaac, as an act of faith, a gift really, where loyalty to Him perfected his faith.

As well, God extends and stretches the faith and trust that He knows we already have in Him.

If we can accept that, we acknowledge God’s ownership of us and our bodies, and our lives.

If we are subdued to Him, then our hopes and expectations are subject to Him, as well.

If we say, our children are gifts to us as treasures for a season, then we too are God’s treasures. So does God also try to tell us that bodies are of no great importance to Him?

As we learn God’s way, and fill with patience and love and care, that is

“filled with wisdom and covered in grace”, that physical body does seem insignificant.

The Preacher’s broken golden bowl, or cracked pot is of little consequence, it is only dust.

That body can be here for a short time or long time on the earth. Then it is returned to the earth.

God means that body to be filled with His glory, the filling is the thing, and when it is filled,

God decides about when he will loose that preacher’s silver cord, and recall that better thing in the death. He tells us that He reached out and carried his elect

“on eagles wings and brought you here to me”.

So He can reach out for us as well, when we are full, and carry that better thing to Himself.

GOD’S PREPARATION

God did promise me a strength with everlasting arms holding me, and a lamp or a light to guide me, a grace cover and light.

And so it was insightful to pause and change my prayers, and I am thankful for that.

That prepared me, though I did not know it, for the “never” answer.

Then with God’s “never” answer to my prayer, His answer was the heavier burden.

So now I think that it does not matter what the burden is, or whether the burden changes, and diminishes or increases. I know now, all that matters is - how I respond.

His grace cover and light is abundant to carry the burden whatever the weight.

That is how He helps me with the load. For remember, He gives me the burden -

FOR HIS SAKE, FOR HIS GLORY.

2. DISAPPOINTMENT

If the illness was hedged with compassion, why did I have so much anguish?

Why was there a fire in my heart sitting atop the grief?

Grief is enough, but not smouldering bitterness.

When the fuel dried up and the fire was quenched,

then I began to be at peace under the shadow of His wings,

with the strong cover of His everlasting arms, where He wanted me to be.

BITTERNESS IN MY MOUTH

But before that peace my teeth were set on edge,

chewing sour grapes and bitter herbs.

My teeth chattered uncontrollably when I least expected it.

Then I was surprised to find that there was sourness and bitterness in my soul.

For me, or anyone, to carry a load of resentment around, resentment about something that cannot be undone, is wasting energy.

That is not carrying a burden with His grace.

There is no grace cover and light there, for that is the malaise of negativity.

At first, when the answer burden was thrust upon me,

I was very disappointed and had thoughts of self pity.

The morbidity of death wishes came upon me as well, and I was melancholic.

Like the Preacher, I too *"hated life,*

because the work that is wrought under the sun, is grievous to me."

It vexed my spirit, and I also thought *"all is vanity"*.

I tried to think of Samson again, and again, the now changed and faithful man,

and his prayer to God for strength to do what needed to be done.

His mention in the list in the book of *Hebrews* heartens me.

I thought of all the other ultimate gifts of love that people manage for others.

History is full of them.

Surely I could take comfort from this gift to us, and not deny it.

I now think that, to wish that the end did not happen, is to deny the gift I have.

How can I deny the gift of freedom for the peace we now have?

Vines must be pruned for growth, and olives squeezed for oil,
Grapes must be pressed for wine, and flowers crushed for perfume.

So we know there will be no joy without sadness.

Sadness and pain are inevitable in life, I know, but misery is optional.

God gives us a method to deal with pain that precludes misery,
if only we will search for it.

IN SEARCHING FOR ANSWERS

I just asked God to bear with my misery for a time,
until I could find some answers and put some gracious requests.

I prayed for less affliction, and that the grace cover and light would shine brighter,
and I could give Him every one of my broken heart pieces,
and not keep any to feed my misery.

When the grief was overwhelming and the tears would not stop falling,

I imagined a beautiful box with stars on the outside,
into which I put all those tears. I put the lid on that box sometimes,
and reached for another box to open - a joyful and good memory box.

I also needed to see the way in the fearful darkness,
so I lit a candle, to light what my life has become,
and tried to stop howling at the darkness.

"Weeping may endure for a night", but how long is a night?

"Joy cometh in the morning", but when is the morning for me?

How else can I have joy again, and stop the continual sighing, and learn to sing anew?

The hymns have begun to come into my head again, how can I put them into song?

THINK ABOUT OTHERS

I needed to be more generous of spirit, and better filled with compassion,
for there are others worse off than myself.

Everyone, who has a child, walks around
like as if their heart is outside their body, not only me.

Often those hearts are broken, too.

I can be generous if I think less about myself,
and more about others who are also gathering broken heart pieces.

I can find a new heart broken person every day, if I will look.

We need to wrap up those heart pieces in beautiful paper

and tie that parcel with pretty string,

and not keep one piece to be miserable over.

We can give those broken pieces to God

and He will mend our broken parts back together again.

Then God will put our hearts back where they belong

and we will be glad once more,

and strong enough to show His face again.

These are hard lessons for

the sad at heart,

those in hours of loneliness,

and in times of dire distress,

for those who have failed,

and those who have doubts and fears.

Though storms o'erspread the skies,

through the cloud and the rain,

and through sorrow and toil and pain,

He does teach us His way.

That's why we are here. Not to mourn ourselves, but to learn His way. *John (14:26)* tells us that Jesus said, God will send His spirit to teach us, and to help us remember, and then we will have peace. So the true and Godly way is to learn His way -

TO SHOW GOD'S GLORY.

If I go, and sit, and even lie where I can see the sky, night or day, I am reminded that He is there.

I can see Him, even as Balaam's ass did, (*Numbers 22*). She saw Him, even when Balaam did not, at first. If those angels of His were round about Balaam as he sat on the ass, causing the ass to remind him of God's presence, surely I have learned that lesson, as well.

THE BLESSINGS IN ACCEPTING GOD'S SOLUTION

The blessings that came to us in our misery,

those numerous and gracious comforters sent by God,

began to cover large patches of sadness, until we again felt

the strength of His arms around us, and then we began to be at peace.

PRAYERS, WHAT THEY MEAN

I need to think intelligently about my prayers.

How can I approach God in a better way, or more meaningfully?

What is God trying to tell me in my life experiences?

I thought at first - will this burden never go away?

I did not think that God would give me a greater burden instead. Yet He did.

I need to let go and let God do His work, and accept His burdens.

They will be after all, better solutions. His way is not my way.

His way is best. How can I accept His solutions, and be glad?

How can I accept wondrous gifts where people understand God's love,
and give their imperfect lives, so that others might live in peace?

If I do not accept God's solution, then I know now I deny the gift.

We have said that Scripture tells us of Samson who prayed for strength,
and God gave blessings in his death, so why do I question,

and say "*what if ...*", "*If only ...*" ? It would be better if I said "*Why not me, Lord!*"

So "*Whatever Lord*", should be my constant reassurance to God that my will is His.

SO, GO ANGUISH, NOW

Before the terrible burden, I was able to allow my anxiety and anguish to go from me.

And I did wrap up my treasure, and passed that burden, the trouble, and the pain,
and the black darkness, up to Him to carry.

I did find a way, after the "*pray and wait*" brought no resolution,
when I changed my prayer to ask God for remembrance and not forgetting.

So why was I not better prepared in this new burden to accept the gift
when I asked God "*to remember*" ?

That is the hardest thing. To accept God's solution.

If I do not understand what God is doing in my life,
surely I still can live my life for Him,
letting Him live through me. Is that too hard?

HAVE FAITH AND HOPE AND JOY

Drought produces a blessing to ripening grapes.

The grapes are not so sour, nor so bitter, but sweeter and better for us.

Can I be sweeter as well, for the hardship that came upon us?

Can I learn from the pain?

Yesterday there was sadness and disappointment,

but tomorrow there might be faith in the future, as well as some hope and joy.

They are sisters really - faith hope and joy, all in the same family.

(I knew once in my teens, three girls called "*Faith*", "*Hope*" and "*Joy*").

Today I must try to manage to get from yesterday to tomorrow, with those three sisters.

For if I do not go forward, I will never see what God has planned for me.

I do need this pall to permanently lift from my brain. I am often unhinged still.

And then when that happens will I be in danger of putting our loved one away,
putting the lid on the box and never remembering?

I do not want to go there, either.

In learning my Godly lesson, how far from the memories do I go?

Where do I safely place those memories?

IT DOES COME TO PASS

The Biblical "*It came to pass*" takes on a different connotation now,
for I understand everything "*comes to pass*", it does not "*come to stay*".

Everything continues and "*goes on forward*".

Every emotion rolling around, coming and passing, and coming again.

Each cycle teaches me greater lessons, if I will only learn.

I know I could never have prepared for the worst, I thought I had the worst.

But then from that worst that God did give me, I can hope for the best,
and be thankful for the opportunity that God gave me.

SO BE THANKFUL

Surely I can be thankful for the treasure we had, and then lost
without dwelling on the sadness of what might have been.

I do know that it is in the valley where all the goodness of the earth is,
that we learn to live again.

I also know now, that nothing can happen today that God will not help me manage,
and that I will climb from this valley looking up, like Joseph did

from his earth and prison pits. But - why do I need this practice in the pit?

Does it mean that I will need to endure more pits in my lifetime?

What more will He ask of me?

I must not be fearful as I think of that, for I will try to be ready next time.

These are no uncontrolled disasters or calamities. If I am afflicted,
or torn, or filled with bitter herbs with teeth on edge, broken on the ground,
trampled and downcast, He will raise me up, and give me hope again.

I have said already, I am His, I do not belong to me, so He controls me.

So, my me belongs to God, and He will solve my griefs.

He surely will, if I give my me to Him.

AND TURN OFF SELF

But there is a chink in the armour now, a sort of cracked shell that feels like it is permanent.

Something is missing. It is a sort of brokenness.

We want to avoid brokenness, but that is where openness abides.

And we know that the journey to wholeness begins where the brokenness is,
where we are most vulnerable. But if God fills that broken space, it will heal.

So when we have encounters that lead us to feel most vulnerable and broken,
where human tragedy seems to us to be at its worst, and the heart is most sluggish,
is that where the divine and hidden opportunities hide?

The offer He makes of His grace cover and light needs people to see it, and respond to His call.

That's why I am here, not for me, or myself, but for God's sake.

So I must turn off my self, my anxiety, my sadness, my fears and disappointments,
and receive a whole again heart from God, and shine the light for Him.

In the young age, to forget is easy. After all, the young age is where memories are made.

The lovings poured out, and the good things spilled, make the memories for the old age.

That is why it is important to make good memories.

Predictability and certainty are the expectancies of the young,
but contingency and uncertainty are the concerns of old age.

The old age is where the memories are, for reviewing,
for life unreviewed or never chewed over, and swallowed, is a life lost.

If we do not review, then there is no understanding of the events on our life,

our life patterns, and the ongoing assessing of our journey.

But there, also, are the funerals and the constant remembering.

We are so often filled with woe, and we seem undone.

But God is waiting to meet us on the way home from the funerals,

He was there for *Isaiah* (in 6:1-8), and He will be for us.

After those unwilling journeys we are desperate for God

and so if we look, we can find Him there. He will “*touch our lips*”

and our “*iniquity*” will be “*taken away*” and our “*sin purged*” once more.

He will help us to find that purpose buried in the rubble

the destruction that is left over from our secure and safe world.

We can't control the tragedies that are happening to us

but we can control our trust in Him to help us deal with the tragedies.

We do so often reach for comfort to the scriptures He placed with us

for consolation in the absence of His son, until he come.

They help us to deal with the tragidramas in the life we lead.

FORGIVE

I see an illuminated message of forgiveness in the light of recovering hearts,

even as there was at the body of the little child at a concentration camp.

Oh Lord, remember not only the men and women of goodwill,

- but also those of ill will.

But do not remember all the suffering they have inflicted upon us;

remember the fruits we have bought, thanks to this suffering -

our comradeship, our loyalty, our humility,

our courage, our generosity,

and the greatness of heart which has grown out of all this,

- and when they come to judgement

let all the fruits which we have borne,

be their forgiveness".

If, in the face of such terrible iniquity there can be forgiveness and hope,

I can go there as well. So may I rise above our concerns,

when they have not done as we would have done,

or done as we would not have done.

May I take all the parts for the whole, and be thankful for them all.

I can remember the Godly lessons we have all learned,

and the fruits that we have all bought,

during the grief that came upon us all,

and may those fruits be the forgiveness of us all.

Then we can praise God for the greatness of heart that has grown from this also.

LOVE

After the fasting and weeping and praying that preceded the death David's child,

he had to endure the bitter herbs and sour grapes with his teeth on edge.

But the butter and honey and the sweetness did return for him.

He thought outwardly again,

and took his renewed chance with the Lord whom he loved.

"David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself,

and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord, and worshipped."

1 Samuel 12:20. He feasted on bread after his fast, and he found the sweetness again.

So, we too can rejoice in God's present gift of grace that covers us in His son's absence,

and with His love in our hearts we patiently wait until we see His face.

If we ask he will fill us with His wisdom, and the grace cover will be there,

and we will be better servants for him, refined and showing His glory.

For it is all for His sake.

"We love one another, for love comes from God.

Everyone who loves has been born of God, and knows God.

Whoever does not love, does not know God, because God is love", 1 John 4

Love has a deep hem on her garment.

The hem can often be broken, and so it trails in the dust and the dirt.

It catches in the weeds, and the stones in the lanes,

and brushes over the stains and spills on the road,

- but it is still love.

Because it can trail, it does trail, it often does.

God is there, as well, in the dust and dirt,

and amongst the weeds and stones, and in the stains and spills,
with His love for us for His comforting arms are outstretched,
giving shelter with His wings.

*Isaiah (40:28) asks us, "hast thou not known, hast thou not heard" that
"there is no searching of His understanding",
for "He giveth power to the faint and to them that hath no might
he increaseth strength".*

So, as we waited upon the Lord, and He did renew our strength
and took us on eagle's wings to Himself, (as He did for His exodus elect).

He taught us to walk, and to run again, and even to fly.

But He did not keep us with Him this time. He sent us from Him,
and He restored us again to where we were.

Perhaps we are restored to that which was before, before this worry came upon us.

Or perhaps we will be glad to be different. In any case,

we will be strong again for Him, and able to deal with the next dust and dirt,
and weeds and stones, and stains and spills occasion, the next hard place.

God knows, about the dust and dirt, and weeds and stones and stains and spills.

God only knows. He was there, because we were there, in the hard place.

Now I want to be gold for Him, for His sake,

AND PRAISE HIM.

Beverley Russell, February 2003.

Part D

THE LIFE

AND DEATH

OF OUR LORD

March 2003

Part D THE EXAMPLE IN THE LIFE AND DEATH OF OUR LORD March 2003

Life's experiences encourage us in our evaluating of Scriptural texts.

We grow in the direction of being more wisdom filled and grace covered,
as we stand closer to Him who fills and covers us.

But we are illuminated anew when we find new ways to look at scripture.
So the verses about *"strong crying and tears"* show the humanity of our Lord,
and he becomes another example for us, if we will take it.
Certainly there are strong crying and tears in the experiences in our lives.
Many Biblical words about such experiences fall into our minds,
and recognition of the angst of those faithful in Scripture
who similarly wished for God to take them back *"on eagle's wings"* to Himself.
We all want so much to be with God and to know His purpose,
and to finally rest with Him, and see His face.
It is not only the example of faithful ones,
but the supreme example as well, of the Lord himself, the sinless one.
I had not dared to go there for a time but it is evident now for me,
that the Son's angst at the coming trial,
as he tearfully implored His Father for another way, is also an example
that should be recognised and not be erased, or covered.
We have often thought about, and discussed Christ's concern
of the unwarranted and impending pain and anguish
which he naturally would not welcome.
"Remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done", Luke 22:42.
Further on than that, from the strong crying for release from the cup,
there is the other matter of doing the death well,
Not in the sense of a polished performance,
but rather in the sense that Christ did not want to *"curse God and die"*,
of being overcome with the terrifying task, and failing
when he knew God would need to forsake him.
Others, like Job's wife, had recommended cursing,
as a way to cope with heavy unmanageable burdens

Failure, for Christ -

1. of him not performing the will of God adequately,
 2. of not giving God all the glory,
 3. of not fulfilling the purpose that God had in mind,
- must have been a serious concern in his closing earthly days.

After the strong crying and tears that did not save him,
and with the realisation that the cup would not pass
that Son did set himself to do the sacrifice for God.
He would have asked God for strength for that as well.
He had with all else in his life, so why not in his death as well?

So the example of the Lord's strong crying and tears
for release from the coming doom,
but then his acceptance of the task,
and his wish to do God's will well,
to me, is also an example that we should also follow.

And so we do need to talk about that (human) aspect of Christ's life.

Sometimes God will say "yes", and sometimes "no".

To His Son He said "no",

and with God's help that Son did prepare perfectly for his death,
as well as he did for his life.

And so Christ became an even greater example for us all,
as he did in the manner of his life,

- in the manner of the acceptance of the cup,
- in the manner of his death when God necessarily forsook him,
- and his gift of that perfect life, given for the sins of others,

Yes, the fear of pain and death is something we can relate to.

But we can move on from that, and regard death as a sleep with the Lord.

Life is precious, and God given, but when it is evident that service to God is closing down,
we can look at death in a different way.

We know bodies stay in the earth and return to the dust,
but His gift of breath and spirit, with which He sustains us,
go back to God who gave them, for they are His.

As well, the record of faithful service returns, for He gave the opportunity for that service.

So in that sense, we can be with the Lord, not lingering with the death,
but recognising that He takes to Himself, what is rightfully His,
and as well, the intent of the dying.

We understand that *"the worlds were framed by the word of God"*,

but as He took the faithful Samson, *Hebrews 11*,
of whom, amongst others, *“the world was not worthy”*,
we also understand that *“God has provided some better things for us”*.

In our imperfect responses to God,
the experience of strong crying and tears for us

1. can be a renewal of our love for the Lord,
2. can be an example of how we can implore God,
3. can also be an example of how to accept God's will,
when we would rather not.
4. But it can also be an example of how we can *“do”* His will - well,
- even in our unwanting,

John (9:1-3) implies that if God wants a display
(say healing, or escape from tragedy),
then healing, or whatever, will happen, a real *“cup of blessing”*.

It is so that, *“the works of God should be made manifest”*.
But if God will not *“let this cup pass from”* us,
then, like His son, we also need to utter, *“nevertheless, not as I will”*
and accept the cup of illness, or death, or tragedy.

It means that this cup then will not be a blessing for us,
because God, in His wisdom, wants another sort of display.
So we need also to accept the unwanted cup with all our heart,
so that the works of God may be made manifest, in a different way.

Here is a valuable example in the life and in the death of Christ.

So, if are we tempted to *“a far better thing”*, that is,
“to depart and be with the Lord”, as the apostle Paul wished for himself,
we, of sound mind, have choices to make.

Which to *“choose”*? Where is the *“gain”*?

Paul knew what God wanted, and stayed for the greater good,
and endured *“sorrow upon sorrow”* and unutterable sadness,
as he told the Philippians, for God's display, His glory,
that He might be made manifest.

If we also so choose, then we know, as Isaiah did,
that *“He gives power to the faint,
and to them who have no might He increases strength”,*
for *“God fainteth not, nor is weary, and there is no searching of His understanding”*.

It is also true that if we *“abide in Him and in His words,
you will ask what you will desire and it shall be done for you”* ,
and He will hear even as we pray and wait.

We know surely that God *“will remember”* us *“and not forget us”*, if we abide in Him.

If we *“abide in His love”*, the *“eventide”* and *“deepening darkness”*
of the terrible answer will eventually bring us from darkness to light.

It is recorded in *Matthew* and in *Luke* that Jesus said of that time
when the demons were expunged *“The Kingdom has arrived”*,
and so it does come for those who abide in Him.

God has shown us how the light comes on,
when we have the tragedy of the unwanted burden.

He, through His son, shows us how to carry the burden,
He lightens the burden, giving us peace, if we go there with Him,
and then the fearful darkness will go out, away from us.

When the lessons of tragedy have been learned,
and the unwanted burden is lifted,
when the unbearable sorrow has gone from the sluggish heart,
- then the unavoidable sadness will recede
with its melancholic and morbid outlook,
and joy and happiness will emerge once more to make the peace,
and I will learn to sing again.

Then I too can move forward again in Him, and for Him
until the race is won, until the journey's done, until the crown is won,
for He teaches me His way.

John (14:26, 27) reminds us how Jesus encouraged us in His discourse,
when the world sees it not, nor knows Him, how He will be with us to teach us,
and activate our memories, giving us peace, if only we are His.

What more could we want while we wait
for the open, celebrated and literal second coming, spoken of in other places.

*“The Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit,
whom the Father will send in my name,
He shall teach you all things,
and bring all things to your remembrance,
whatsoever I have said unto you.
... Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.
Let not your heart be troubled, (Beverley), neither let it be afraid”.*

Beverley Russell, March 2003

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