

Fears, Tears, and Years

A child wakes in his cot, alone in the nursery. He is hungry and afraid. He does not know where his next meal will come from. He cries. His mother is well within earshot, attending to housework or resting briefly. But he does not know that. For all he knows, his mother is no longer alive or no longer exists at all. He is afraid. His mother quickly comes to comfort, tend, feed, and nourish him. He need not have been afraid.

A baby must learn that people and things do not cease to exist just because they are outside his field of vision. We must learn to remember that God still exists, even though we cannot see Him, even when we cannot perceive how He is helping, blessing, and caring for us. We need that awareness when we are afraid, whenever we cry out in the darkness of this world.

A child weeps because his request has been denied or his pleasure delayed. The most minor of losses causes him to despair of ever again experiencing peace, contentment, and joy. He cannot look beyond his most immediate needs or wants. That takes years to learn.

A youngster must learn to accept disappointment. He must bow to the superior wisdom of his parents. He must trust that it is for his own good when they deny him something. They know it would be bad for him or not as good as what they are preparing. We need to learn the same things. As much wiser as human parents are than their children, our heavenly Father is infinitely wiser yet. If He says no, it is because He plans to say yes at a better time, because He is preparing something good for us instead of something terrible we want, or because He is preparing something better for us than even something good.

A child waits so impatiently. Only a few minutes into an hour-long trip, he asks, "Are we there yet?" So little time has passed in his life compared to the years of an adult that he cannot fathom that an hour will pass quickly enough. When he is told he must wait, an hour seems an eternity. The few days or weeks until a birthday or Christmas seem forever and then some.

A child must learn that time does pass. And with it passes away the things that hurt and harm and pain us in this life. Eagerly anticipated joys do finally come. But then, if they are earthly joys, they pass away, too. Waiting is hard. Waiting patiently is impossible without hope assured and reassured. But the hope of eternal life for Jesus' sake is the most certain of all hopes. It will not be disappointed because Jesus' life and death have earned us the forgiveness of sins, eternal life and all the blessings of salvation. Those joys last forever.

A parent tells a child to wait: "It's only an hour." God tells us to wait: "It's only a lifetime." The few short years we spend on earth are nothing compared to eternity. When made to wait, a child's petty, petulant pouting is very much like our throwing a thousand whys before God while we wait for His help in our earthly needs and for the bliss of eternal life.

Someone once asked me: "What's the hook?" At first, I did not understand what he was asking. Then I realised he was asking for something to hold on to. He wanted to know what made sense of our problems on this earth and how they seemed to contradict faith in God. The "hook" is Jesus. The Son of God became Man not to abolish the sorrow of this world in this world but rather to share that sorrow with us, for us, and, most importantly, in our place. God and Man in One, He lived our life and died our death. The life we should have lived, He lived. The death we should have died, He died. All the guilt of our sins and God's anger against our sins.

All the guilt of our sin and God's anger against our sin, He took upon Himself and slew it by His death. He earned for us the complete forgiveness of all our sins. He won for us the grace of God, peace with God, joy in God, and the hope of everlasting life before God's smiling face.

Because of all Jesus did and suffered for us, through the faith, hope, and trust in God worked in us by the message of Jesus, the Gospel; our fears, our tears, and our years lose their sting. They cannot deprive us of comfort, assurance, peace, and joy in the secure knowledge of eternal salvation for Jesus' sake - and of God's help along the way in ways we cannot now fully comprehend.

Looking back from the eternal maturity of glory, we shall realise how silly and childish we were in this life. But we will not regret that we were like children in one way - in the comfort we were granted by our Father's hand holding ours, our Father's arm holding us - in Christ, through His Word.