

# **Grief**

**(Encouraging words to help you get through it.)**

**By Barbara Henderson**

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# 1. The Valley of Sorrow

It felt like I had been run over by a freight train. I was stunned. I was in shock. I was crying hysterically. But it was really just a phone call. My dad called and said he had to talk to my husband Jerry. I knew it was bad because Jerry hates to talk on the phone so no one ever asks for Jerry unless something bad is going on. I knew some elderly family members and friends were sick, so I thought one had died. I was right someone had died. But it was not an elderly person or even a sick person. It was my sister April. She was 33, a college graduate, a non drinker, non smoker, no drugs - nothing - just a little over weight. She had been getting ready for a Sunday School party and simply dropped dead. It was probably a heart attack. And that was when the shadow of death passed over my life like a freight train. Suddenly, from the middle of bright sun shiny Good Friday, I was in the valley of Baca. At some time or another I had heard a sermon based on a verse from Psalms 84:6 on the subject of "when passing through the valley of Baca (sorrow) dig a well. I had suddenly become a "well digger".

The well I dug was really just "digging into God's word" and learning to believe His promises. I learned that God was with me because somehow He gave me the strength to read His word. Somehow He gave me strength to get up every morning and go through the day. He gave me strength to live each day. He gave me strength to begin to look toward the future.

The first thing He showed me when I was looking toward the future was our eternal future. I "saw" heaven. I saw a very real place filled with very real people doing very real and wonderful things. I saw peace and joy. I saw love and excitement. I saw beauty without ugliness, pure love without any animosity. It was wonderful.

Then from that vantage point I began to consider the immediate future and try to live each day as it came. Gradually it became more normal. There will always be an empty place in my life here on this earth because my sister's existence here is missed. Nothing could fill her place. But I know she is in heaven doing just fine. The Bible tells us. 1 Corinthians 2:9 "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." April is in a place that is just too wonderful for us to even imagine. Knowing where she is does not fill the empty place she left here, but it does give great comfort that she really is ok.

So - I miss her - but I am not without hope. On the firm foundation of God's promise - I will see her again and there will be no parting anymore. All this I learned from digging through the wonderful written message God gave us. The Bible became more real to me than ever before. It is a well of comfort and joy beyond anything we can imagine. Really the well is already dug. It is the Bible. We just have to dig through the verses to find what we need at the moment.

My father-in-law recently died of cancer. He was the earthly patriarch of my husband's family. He was (and still is) loved deeply. His illness was hurtful to everyone because we didn't want to see him suffer and grow weaker. We didn't want him to leave this earth. We wanted all of us to abide in good health until the return of the Lord. But in leaving us here - we KNOW he went to the same place in which my sister now resides. I think they are laughing about the time April fell off my daughter's horse and rolled right up to my father in law's front door - and dented the screen door. The Bible says "we shall know as we are known" (1 Cor. 13:12). We know the apostles knew Moses and Elijah at the transfiguration - even though they had never met them before. We will not only know our friends and loved ones - but others also!

Before my father-in-law's death I had already come to terms with how wonderful heaven will be. My real sorrow is for the family who was left without him. Without his corny jokes and his ornery Grief (Encouraging words to help you get through it.)

way. Without his steady faithfulness in the daily things of life. For his wife of 64 years who was left alone and lost without him. But I have hope for the future. That future is more real than the here and now.

The very thought of the reunion in heaven becomes more and more precious with the passing of each loved one. It also becomes more real each time. Sometimes I begin to wonder how thin the veil between heaven and earth really is.

I don't know what you personally may be facing right now. No one knows what he or she may have to face in the future. But I do know the One who will be there to face it with you. I know He will not leave you nor forsake you.

Of course there are many sorrows in life that don't involve a death but are still very painful. The way through any sorrow or trial is still the same. First you look to Jesus - the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). Second you focus on the promises he has given you in the book he has provided for us. The Bible is chocked full of promises. I don't know what promise you will find the most helpful. That is why you must study the Word for yourself. There will be a verse that jumps from the page into your mind and brings you comfort as though it had been directly spoken to you and written thousands of years before just for you to read today. Third, you keep at it. Keep reading. Keep studying. Keep praying. Second by second, minute by minute, hour by hour, keep going.

I like to end an article by mentioning an old hymn that seems relevant to the subject if the article. I usually have a hard time deciding on the hymn because there are so many wonderful hymns. But this time it was easy. The hymn for the day is "Whispering Hope". "Whispering Hope - Oh how welcome thy voice." That relates so well to the still small voice that speaks - but it can be heard more easily than thunder by the child of God who is listening.

God Bless YOU!!

## WHISPERING HOPE

Soft as the voice of an angel,  
Breathing a lesson unheard,  
Hope with a gentle persuasion  
Whispers her comforting word:  
Wait till the darkness is over,  
Wait till the tempest is done,  
Hope for the sunshine tomorrow,  
After the shower is gone.

### Refrain:

*Whispering hope, oh how welcome thy voice,  
Making my heart in its sorrow rejoice.*

If, in the dusk of the twilight,  
Dim be the region afar,  
Will not the deepening darkness  
Brighten the glimmering star?  
Then when the night is upon us,  
Why should the heart sink away?  
When the dark midnight is over,  
Watch for the breaking of day.

### Refrain

Hope, as an anchor so steadfast,  
Rends the dark veil for the soul,  
Whither the Master has entered,  
Robbing the grave of its goal.  
Come then, O come, glad fruition,  
Come to my sad weary heart;  
Come, O Thou blest hope of glory,  
Never, O never depart.

### Refrain

<http://ingeb.org/spiritua/whisperi.html>

## 2. Daddy Died on Monday

Monday was a sad day for us, but a glad day for my dad. Dad died. He was set free from a frail body filled with pain. We will never see him again weak or sick or frail. He will never be confused or unable to communicate. He is with Jesus. He is with his family, who have already gone to be with the Lord. Even dad's bones won't be alone here on earth. He is buried in a family cemetery by my sister, with many other family members buried nearby.

That leaves my mom alone without dad after nearly 60 years of marriage. Mom has some difficult days ahead of her. She has to set a pattern for a normal day that doesn't include dad at all except in her memories, and in her anticipation of how much fun they will have together in heaven.

I know we are not the first family to go through the loss of a very dearly loved family member or friend. We are not the first family to face a lengthy illness and watch someone we love fade into a shadow of his or her former self. It is hard, to say the least.

It seems to be human nature to look for good in hard times. A lengthy illness is no different. In a lengthy illness there are at least three things that can be accomplished that might not be accomplished any other way.

**First**, the sick person has time to contemplate their future. They have time to consider God's promises to believers. They have time to become a believer in Jesus Christ. Dad had been a Christian for many years, but often times this is not the case.

**Second**, the sick person has time to get it right with God and family. They can repent of anything that is keeping them from fellowship with God. They have time to seek better fellowship with family members.

**Third**, as a committed Christian goes through an illness, they have a chance to be a witness to others. They know where they are going, and they are bold about saying so. My dad was never bashful about telling the people he met how to be saved anyway, but some people are. Yet, as sick people see the real probability of the end of their life, they may become bolder in their evangelistic outreach to those around them.

Up until the day before dad died, my mom never gave up hope that he would recover. She worked and prayed for him to get well enough for their lives to go on together a while longer. She hoped against hope that this illness would not be the illness that killed dad. Now, mom, and all the rest of us, have to admit that THIS was dad's illness. It was the 'illness of which he died'. The Bible tells us that the prophet Elisha fell ill of an illness. It was HIS illness. It was the illness that would kill Elisha.

You and I will also one day face our own illness. It will be the illness of which we die. That is the illness from which we cannot recover. We don't know what illness it will be. For instance, in my dad's case, he was sick to the point of death at least half a dozen times in the last 20 years, not counting the near death illnesses that came from repeated bouts of pneumonia. In one illness dad had an aneurism on the aorta on the back of his heart. He happened to be in the right place at the right time. Hot Springs Arkansas happened to have a doctor who was pioneering surgery in just that area. He put dad in the hospital, and in spite of very weak lungs, he did the surgery. It included taking dad's heart out so they could get to the aneurism. He basically put a giant patch over the aneurism like he was repairing a hole in an old tire inner

tube. Then he personally sat with dad 24 hours and adjusted his oxygen and medication. THEN, dad lost 40 pounds of body weight. The doctor eventually sent him home. He told my mom that if dad could recover it would require thousands of calories per day. The doctor had basically given up, but my mom had not. She sat by dad's bed and poked food down his throat every time he opened his mouth. She gave him basically heavy whipping cream. Occasionally there was a drop or two of coffee in it.

Dad recovered to the point that he had ten more good years of life, except for the two times his head sprung a leak. He had a brain bleed. That is a bleeding blood vessel between the skull and the brain, but it is not in the brain. It presses the brain and gives symptoms of a stroke, but it is not a stroke. Once the bleeding is stopped, the brain returns to normal, and so does the patient. Anyway, neither the aneurism nor the brain bleeds were dad's illness. Although he should have died, he didn't. None of those were the illness of which dad would die.

None of us know what our illness will be. But we do know that our own personal illness is coming. Eventually we will fall ill with an illness that kills us. We need to prepare for that illness now.

First, be saved.

Second, live your life like you really are a Christian. My mom and dad practiced their Christian faith from the day they were saved at Bible Baptist Church in Anchorage, Alaska. They followed the Lord in believer's baptism. Don White and my parents walked right out in the freezing water of Mineral Lake. Don ducked dad first. Then dad held mom's coat while she was baptized. Dad put the coat around mom, and together they walked out of the cold water and into the church picnic. They also walked into a dedicated Christian life. I was about five years old but I remember the day. It was a delightful day, only marred by the preacher's three year old daughter falling in the lake. There was a vicious rumor that my three year old brother pushed her, but it was never proven. They also walked into their new lives as Christians. They faced hard ships and trials just like everyone else faces. They also faced disappointments and hurt feelings with other Christians or so called Christians. But they never stopped doing the things Christ said to do.

Third, tell others about Jesus. Dad couldn't stop himself from asking people if they were saved. When Jimmy Carter brought the Cubans to Arkansas dad was a security guard at an apartment that housed many of them. They were many violent criminals among them. Dad had to physically subdue some of them while waiting for police to arrive occasionally. Dad was angry that they were there in the first place. And, rightly so, he wanted the criminal element tossed in jail and deported back to Cuba. So, he took things into his own hands. He got 'Born of God' tracts in Spanish and began to hand them out. We don't know that anyone was ever saved, but it wasn't because dad didn't try. Dad was eventually forced to quit the job because of pressure from mom and the rest of us. One day, a Cuban pulled a knife on dad. Dad pulled a gun and could have shot the man in self defense. But, he couldn't do it, so instead he tackled the man and broke his nose. Dad said the man would have undoubtedly gone to hell if he had killed him. (Dad was a marksman – no question he would have hit what he aimed at.)

My brother Dane is in the Philippines now visiting his wife's family. It was hard to get hold of him to tell him the news. He said he already knew it because he had a dream the night before that dad was in heaven surrounded by Mexican's who were thanking him for giving them that gospel tract. (Dad moved on from Cuban's to Mexicans when he and mom moved back to the old home place near Glenwood.) Dad still talked to anyone he met about the Gospel, but he couldn't talk to the increasing number of Mexicans, so he just gave them Gospel tracts. Dad

also tried to learn Spanish, but that didn't turn out quite like he wanted it to. I don't think he ever even learned to say hello or goodbye.

Dane took the same tract that dad used with him to the Philippines, only it was in the Philippine language instead of Spanish. Of course it is available in English, and a number of other languages. It is lengthy for a tract. It may not be any better than the Chick tracts, but it was just the one dad liked to use. (Dane's dream wasn't a prophetic dream or anything like that. And, Dane knew dad was very sick, so don't put any extra meaning into it. It was just an unusual dream without any particular interpretation. Dane is also concerned for the souls of the lost in the Philippines, so that could have contributed to his dream.)

The tract was written by Don White, the preacher who baptized mom and dad so many years ago. Don also made it to dad's funeral. He gave a talk, but did not do the funeral.

Anyway, dad had been too sick to go to church in quite some time, but he still had a lot of people show up for the funeral. They were sad for dad to be gone, but also sad for the Christian man that wasn't here in the world anymore.

There was sadness when Elisha the prophet was facing his illness also. King Josiah visited Elisha. 2 Kings 13:14 says.'

'Now Elisha was suffering from the illness from which he died. Jehoash king of Israel went down to see him and wept over him. "My father! My father!" he cried. "The chariots and horsemen of Israel!"

Elisha was a mighty man of God. The king himself wept over the prophet. And, the king said, 'my father, my father, the chariots and horsemen of Israel.' You can study the meaning of this phrase, but the **Harper/Collins study Bible says that phrase was used by the king because the prophet's support for Israel was more important than the king's armies.**

Now, that is where we are today.

Godly lives and prayer support from God's children is more important than our armies.

It is more important than our leaders.

It is more important than our property.

The support of the Godly is the salvation of the brethren in trial, the family, the church, and the nation.

My dad was not what the world would call a 'great man of God' like Elisha. He wasn't even a preacher. I can attest to the fact that dad was not perfect. He was a work in progress. He loved his family. He wanted the lost to be saved. Now, he is gone from us. I have full confidence that dad will be in line for rewards in heaven, as the Lord proposes to hand them out. The world is really going to miss daddy and his Godly sincere way of living.

Dad is fine today. He is safe now in heaven with Jesus, his parents, brother and sister, his in-laws, and a host of friends. BUT, the entire world is bereft of a man of God. Now, I am NOT under any circumstances discounting the necessity of soldiers and their bravery and sacrifice. In fact, they are on the front lines of suffering which is partly caused by lack of prayer and true Christian conduct by Christians.

The question now arises, 'Who will stand in the gap?' Who will walk so closely with God that he or she is more important to the blessings and prosperity of a nation than all the nation's armies?

Who will live his or her life in a way that is pleasing to God?

Who will pray for the lost?

Grief (Encouraging words to help you get through it.)

Who will hand out Gospel Tracts to those who don't speak our language?

Who will hand out Gospel Tracts and just plain speak up to those who do speak our language?

I'm gonna try. Will you?

Thank you for reading my article.

Ps – I love the line that says, 'not a sigh for the blessings of rest'. In the last year of his live dad was weary. In his weariness still loved God, his family, and he still tried to do right; but, he was just so weary he could barely move. Dad will never sigh for rest again.

### **In The Sweet Bye and Bye**

There's a land that is fairer than day,  
And by faith we can see it afar;  
For the Father waits over the way  
To prepare us a dwelling place there.

#### *Refrain*

*In the sweet by and by,  
We shall meet on that beautiful shore;  
In the sweet by and by,  
We shall meet on that beautiful shore.*

We shall sing on that beautiful shore  
The melodious songs of the blessed;  
And our spirits shall sorrow no more,  
Not a sigh for the blessing of rest.

#### *Refrain*

To our bountiful Father above,  
We will offer our tribute of praise  
For the glorious gift of His love  
And the blessings that hallow our days.

#### *Refrain*

### 3. More Life Without Father

Daddy was a Christian man. He was also a man who was blessed with a good life filled with lots of humor.

My husband Jerry and dad had quite a few 'excellent adventure' together. Many of them included my three brothers, and sometimes the entire family.

Jerry is pretty much overwhelmed by dad's death.

Jerry works with a bunch of what some people would call rednecks. In fact some people would call Jerry a redneck. Anyway, most of them really like Jerry and they could tell he was heartbroken because he kept bursting into tears. They got together and ordered him flowers - a giant bouquet of flowers.

They called a meeting and gave them to Jerry.

Jerry started crying, so he started trying to tell funny stories about things he and dad had done together.

Pretty soon, he had everyone laughing.

Then, at a quiet moment, they realized the man they were hearing about was dead, so they all started crying.

The upside to that is the big boss came in and told Jerry to take a few days off with pay - he wants Jerry to 'pull himself together'. He also wants to get some work done.

Humor is a good thing. We have all been laughing about some of the things dad got Jerry into, and some of the things they got into together, and some of the things that involved my brothers, and even the whole family.

Some of these funny things are hard to explain. You really just had to be there and know a little about the personalities of the people involved. For instance, Dad always called mom by her childhood nickname - which was Chirpy - after a cute little squirrel in a children's book.

My granddad's favorite joke was "What does a 500 pound canary say?" Then granddad would yell "CHIRP" because that is what dad was always yelling. No matter what his problem was - he would yell CHIRP and my mom would come running and usually manage to fix what ever problem dad was facing.

Which reminds me of my granddad. He was a character as well.

Anyway, whatever you are facing, the love of God is what will help you the most. But remember, God gave a sense of humor. In times of stress and even sorrow, humor is a good thing.

Start now looking at things that happen in your life with a sense of humor. Remember who was there, what was happening, and of course who was to blame for the entire incident. Of course if you were to blame for the incident, don't remember that one. Trust me, someone else will remember it for you.

In remembering dad, I remember his brother in law, my uncle Dean. Now there was laugh anytime you wanted one. I remember the time Dean had to give mouth-to-beak to his high dollar fighting rooster - but that story is too long to tell here.

Thinking of Dean, I remember dad's brother Joe. Dean and Joe weren't saved early on, so I probably shouldn't mention some of the stories I know about them.

I remember dad being such a help to his sister in law (mom's sister) when they were young. Merle is there with dad now. So are Dean and Joe. So are all my grandparents, and my sister.

I know dad will see my father in law who is there as well. And he will meet my father in laws brother who was killed D-day. Dad will see some of his friends who were killed in the war as well.

Dad will see his missionary friend whose plane went down in the mountains of Alaska.

Dad is in a good place. No sad farewells where dad has gone.

Thinking about all the people who are there that I know and love, it seems like I am missing a big party. This trip down memory lane almost seems like a reunion for me, too. I can almost touch some of these people and hear them speak.

Please pray for my mother.

AND, if you don't know you will go to heaven when you die, now is the time to settle the matter. Dad had a long illness, but my sister April just dropped over dead at age 33 with absolutely no warning,

You don't know how long you have. Settle it today. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. Then buy a Thompson Chain Reference Bible and start studying.

If you get to heaven before I do look up my dad. Marvin Jonathan Wright. He will be glad to see you.

Hum a few bars of 'In the Sweet Bye and Bye' and think of all the people you will see in heaven.

One more thing. Not long after my granddad died I was wishing out loud that we could talk to granddad just a few minutes.

I said, 'Dad, if we could talk to granddad just a few minutes, he would tell us what it is really like in heaven, and what is going on there.'

Dad replied, 'No, he wouldn't Barbara. He would tell us to tell people how to be saved. He would have seen first hand what is the most important thing in the world.'

I believe dad was right.

The most important thing in the world is to tell people how to be saved.

I have to say that in re-reading this article to put it into this little booklet, I realize that it was so helpful for me to write down some things about my dad. I don't expect these things will go down in history as great literature, but that wasn't the goal. The goal was to help me get through the grief, and to help others as well. If you are missing a loved one, you could try writing something about them. Write what is in your heart and don't worry about your grammar or spelling.

## 4. Separate Christians From the Love of God? Impossible!

"We should look at that which is for us, as well as what is against us." Matthew Henry, 1 Samuel 1:1-8 commentary.

'If God be for us, who can be against us?' Romans 8:31b Remember, this is God Almighty, who did not spare His own son that we might have eternal life. Will He forsake us now, after such great cost already spent?

Nothing can separate us from the love of God. Romans 8:35-39 says:

*35. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*

*36. As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.*

*37. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.*

*38. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,*

*39. Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

If you want to memorize scripture, then memorize that.

Christians have died for their faith. Christians are still being persecuted around the globe, and some are even killed. They counted as sheep for the slaughter. YET, they are more than conquerors through the victory of Jesus Christ. Martyrs in Christ can only face the death of the physical body, the shadow of death. No creature has power to cast Christ's own into hell. Eternal life is theirs through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ at the cross. Though they be killed, they are not separated from the love of God for one second.

It is true that at some point we will be separated from all that we have on this earth. It may be in death. It also may be in life.

In this life:

I pray not to be separated from freedom of religion. I certainly enjoy worshipping my God and my King freely and openly. I would probably get myself into trouble immediately if an open declaration of faith in Jesus Christ was forbidden.

I pray not to be separated from my family.

I pray that my family and I and the brethren will not be in true want.

I pray that we will all be able to be content with such things as we have, and not let our lives be consumed by constant thoughts of things that we do not have.

Never the less, no matter what comes to pass while we yet live or when we die, we know that NOTHING can separate us from the love of God.

Whether we have material possessions beyond measure, or live in abject poverty, God's love is with us. Sometimes, based on circumstances, we are more aware of God's love, but His love is with us always.

We will eventually be 'parted' from all the things of this earth, both good and bad. Families, good works, evil intentions, material possessions, prestige, and everything that is accounted as valuable and worthwhile on this earth will still be on this earth when we are not here anymore.

Yet, the love of God will still be with us.

God will still be for us.

The devil and his followers will not be able to stand against us.

Sometimes, even often, when viewing the world system and the wicked and silly world leaders, we see all the things that are truly against us. It isn't paranoid to say the government hates Christians. The government hates all those who do not look to it for salvation from every day trials. It is easy to be overwhelmed by all the frightful and wicked events that we see happening.

What we tend to forget is that God is still for us, even though the entire world is against us. God is more powerful than the world because He created the world.

We should do as Matthew Henry says; 'We should look at that which is for us, as well as what is against us.'

We should remember that God is for us; He is for His own children, just as earthly parents are for their own children. He counted the cost of adopting us before He started. He went through with the cross for us. He is not going to leave us now.

There are those who dearly love us, and that we dearly love in return. If it was within our power, we would not be separated from loved ones by death, or even great distance. Yet, no matter how great our love for family and friends, we have no power to stay the hand of death.

Jesus Christ has the power and authority to promise that we will not be separated from His love.

Jesus Christ has the power and authority to promise that He will never leave us nor forsake us. (Hebrews 13:5)

A quick review reminds us:

Look at that which is for us as well as that which is against us.  
Grief (Encouraging words to help you get through it.)

Christ is for His own children.

Nothing can separate us from the love of God.

Jesus Christ will never leave us nor forsake us.

Ultimately, we are facing a defeated foe.

What counts is how we face him.

We can face him with an attitude of defeat,

OR

We can face him with faith in our God who loves us and gives us courage.

Christians are holding the winning hand.

We are holding the hand of Christ our Savior.

This song, 'The Love of God', is a good companion hymn for the scriptures written in Romans 8:35-39.

### **The Love of God**

The love of God is greater far

Than tongue or pen can ever tell;

It goes beyond the highest star,

And reaches to the lowest hell;

The guilty pair, bowed down with care,

God gave His Son to win;

His erring child He reconciled,

And pardoned from his sin.

#### Refrain

*O love of God, how rich and pure!*

*How measureless and strong!*

*It shall forevermore endure*

*The saints' and angels' song.*

When years of time shall pass away,

Grief (Encouraging words to help you get through it.)

And earthly thrones and kingdoms fall,  
When men, who here refuse to pray,  
On rocks and hills and mountains call,  
God's love so sure, shall still endure,  
All measureless and strong;  
Redeeming grace to Adam's race—  
The saints' and angels' song.

Refrain

Could we with ink the ocean fill,  
And were the skies of parchment made,  
Were every stalk on earth a quill,  
And every man a scribe by trade,  
To write the love of God above,  
Would drain the ocean dry.  
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,  
Though stretched from sky to sky.

Refrain

<http://www.cyberhymnal.org/html/l/o/loveofgo.htm>

'All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name' is also an excellent hymn to remind of who it is that stands for us against the world.

<http://www.cyberhymnal.org/html/a/h/ahtpojn.htm>

## 5. Preparing to Face Tomorrow's Grief Today

I know three good widows who faced the loss of their husbands and went forward with their lives. These three women were in very solid stable marriages of length. Their husbands were very different, but all were good and faithful husbands. Their loss was staggering.

One thing I personally learned from the deaths of these fine men is that there are no words of comfort that a human being can give in that situation. The loss and grief must be endured and lives must be adjusted to a different normal routine. While these women were going through the initial stages of grief, there was nothing that anyone could do to make it better except pray for them. Actually, because I loved all three of these men, if I could have found any great words of comfort I would have used them on myself first. There is just nothing that can be said or done to help.

Each of the three widows has done remarkably well. I have seen other people suffer loss of a spouse and cope with their grief and situation by digging into the trenches of grief and just living there. Some of them stay there in the darkness of grief the rest of their lives. I would have to say that I don't think anyone ever 'gets over' the loss of a loved one. It appears that what they do is go on with their lives anyway.

The first widow is my mom.

The second widow is my childhood friend Lindy.

The third widow is my dear friend Judy.

In looking at these people that I love so dearly, I began to consider what they had in common. What spark has pulled them forward? In observing them, and considering what they had that helped them do so much better than other Christians in the same situation, it became apparent that mom, Lindy, and Judy were living 2 Peter chapter one. They also had/have a sense of duty to the rest of the family, but I don't think that duty alone is enough to strengthen them to keep going. Their real strength was in doing the things all Christians are instructed to do in 2 Peter.

Step one, these three became citizens of heaven through faith in Jesus Christ. They came to know Jesus Christ personally. By faith they were saved from the second death, which is separation from God for all eternity in a place called hell. They had faith in God Almighty. They loved the God of their salvation. Because of their faith, they chose to do the things that God said to do. 2 Peter gives us step by step instructions in how to live a life that grows more like the life of Christ.

A saving faith in Jesus Christ is step one.

Step two, they diligently added virtue to their faith. That means virtue in all things, faithfulness to God, faithfulness to their husbands, faithfulness to love one another as Christ loved them first.

Step three, they added knowledge of the teachings of the Bible and faithfulness of God to His children.

Step four, the next building block on their firm foundation was temperance. That means restraint, self control, and self discipline. They learned to not do the things their first impulses told them to do. Boy, that's a hard one. Having known these ladies many years, I can tell you it was REALLY a hard one for one of these women.

Step five, to temperance they added patience. It is one thing to not do something impulsively. It is another thing entirely to set the matter aside and wait patiently for the Lord to work something out for good. Of course that was hard for all of them. They worked to do it anyway.

Step six, to patience they added godliness. In patience they gained a sense of God's constant presence with them.

Step seven, to godliness they added brotherly kindness. They knew that circumstances gave them no excuse to become mean spirited and harsh.

Step eight, to brotherly kindness they have added charity. Charity is a peculiar word. Charity is extreme love. It is the kind of love that sets aside its own desires and wants in order to do the things that need to be done. This is kind the kind of love that makes the world so much better. In effect, it is the kind of love that lays down his or her life for a friend.

These things became a way of life for them. None of them were perfect. They each had to take these steps at their own pace. Sometimes the faltered, but they always came back to their project of building a life doing the things Christ said to do. They wanted to do the things that pleased God, regardless of their circumstances and disappointments.

These steps were their blueprint for success. By the way, 'blue print for success' means living a life that is pleasing to God. It doesn't mean you will or won't have material success. I suppose you could say material success is immaterial when it comes to pleasing God. Anyone attempting to build their lives on these stepping stones is going to please God. However, in pleasing God, these women also helped themselves. When the storms of life came, their foundation was sure. They were prepared for the disaster that they prayed would never come.

These three widows actually put the things spoken of in 2 Peter chapter 1 into their own hearts. They loved the things of God more than the things of the world. Being human, they staggered here and there. They were/are fruitful children of God because they have grown/are diligently growing the fruits of faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity in their own lives. In following the instructions in 2 Peter Chapter 1 during the time prior to the loss of their husbands, these women were preparing themselves for whatever the future held for them. This chapter in 2 Peter is not specifically a chapter on how to face loss of a spouse. It is a chapter with specific instructions on how to prepare for whatever the future holds for you or anyone else.

Are you worried about your retirement? Do the things 2 Peter chapter 1 says to do.

Are you worried about unsaved family and friends? Do the things 2 Peter chapter 1 says to do.

Are you worried about failing health? Do the things 2 Peter chapter 1 says to do.

Are you worried about loneliness and heartache that you know is coming? Do the things 2 Peter chapter 1 says to do.

Are you worried about the economy, job loss, failing government policies and wicked politicians? Do the things 2 Peter chapter 1 says to do.

Are you worried about the moral decline of your own country and civilization as a whole? Do the things 2 Peter chapter 1 says to do.

Following God's instructions here will not ensure that you do not face hardship and loss. As long as the hearts of men are at war with God, sorrow and trials will come to everyone. However, these things will equip you to go through whatever comes your way and still find some joy in your life.

When I look at my mom, Lindy, and Judy I am continually amazed. I know they could not have progressed forward with their lives without direct intervention from God Himself. Yet, they are going forward. When they look back at what they have lost, they turn again and look to the future in heaven where they know they will meet their loved ones. They know that their relationships in heaven will not be like it was here on earth, but they also know that it will be wonderful however it works. Their 'view' of heaven has a stronger pull on them than their view of the past. Because of the foundation on which they stand, they are compelled to keep their line of vision on the future instead of the past.

The Bible says,

*'But it is written, Eye hat not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.'* ( 1 Corinthians 2:9)

By faith, and by hearing of the word of God, they know they are not following cunningly devised fables, but the truth of the Living God of creation.

The song for this article is 'Never Grow Old'. These three widows are eventually going to that land where no one grows old. In that land Daddy and Ben won't have cancer. Evan won't have a failing heart. I am so homesick for heaven now I could cry.

The path behind is sinking and pulling those who walk on it down to despair. It will not hold their weight if they try to walk it a second time.

The path ahead is stable as we walk over it the first time. Let your vision be always to the future.

Whatever loss you have face or are facing, let your vision be of the future and the good things there.

## **Never Grow Old**

I have heard of a land on the far away strand,  
'Tis a beautiful home of the soul;  
Built by Jesus on high, where we never shall die,  
'Tis a land where we never grow old.

### Refrain

*Never grow old, never grow old,  
In a land where we'll never grow old;  
Never grow old, never grow old,  
In a land where we'll never grow old.*

In that beautiful home where we'll never more roam,  
We shall be in the sweet by and by;  
Happy praise to the King through eternity sing,  
'Tis a land where we never shall die.

### Refrain

When our work here is done and the life crown is won,  
Grief (Encouraging words to help you get through it.)

And our troubles and trials are o'er;  
All our sorrow will end, and our voices will blend,  
With the loved ones who've gone on before.

<http://www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/n/e/nevergro.htm>

## 6. The Door to the Haven of Rest is Through Jesus

Have you ever heard old the old fashioned phrase, 'wore to a frazzle' or 'plum tuckered out'? Both of those phrases mean someone is completely exhausted - physically, mentally, and spiritually. Everyone has known someone completely overworked and overwhelmed by events and the speed at which their lives were progressing. Chances are, YOU are the one who is 'plum tuckered out' as well as 'wore to a frazzle'. If that doesn't describe you today, I can almost guarantee that it will describe you tomorrow - or the day after that. Fortunately, God knew in advance that His children would be susceptible to fatigue and weariness. So, He made provisions for rest.

Genesis 2:2 tells us,

*"And on the seventh day God ended his work which He had made, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made."*

I have been taught from my childhood that that means we are to spend a day drawing closer to the Lord. The Old Testament is under the law. Man worked first, and rested on the seventh day. Most people believe that the New Testament begins the week with rest through the grace of Jesus Christ, and that we work for Him the rest of the week because we love Him. That is why I go to church on Sunday instead of Saturday. Some churches, such as the Seven Day Baptist, hold church services on Saturday. Regardless of which day you attend church, rest begins with a day that is different from other days. The focus of that day should be drawing closer to the Lord. This includes physical and mental rest. Just try to feed the spirit on the day of worship.

I know that a lot of things still have to be done on Sunday just the same as any other day. Try to make it as easy on yourself and your family as possible. God knows the heart. Something I am trying to do is set aside my problems on both Saturday and Sunday and make the focus of my prayers thankfulness to God on those days.

It is good to continue the 'rest' of the Lord's Day as you go through the week. Moses tells us how it is done - you may leave the place of worship - but let God lead the way!

Moses had been in the tabernacle with the Lord during a stop in wilderness. He asked God to show him the way to go.

God answered him in Exodus 33:14 which says, ***"And he said, 'My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.'"***

How could you get a better promise than that? God had just told Moses that His presence would go with Moses, and He would give Moses rest. I really like this because God gave Moses more than he asked for. He gave Moses rest as well as His presence.

I don't know what Moses was thinking in the next verse, but it sounds like he was clarifying that God's presence would remain with him once he left the tabernacle because Moses says, " and he said unto him, 'if thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.'"

Moses didn't want to leave the tabernacle until he was certain that God would go with him. He said - look - if you aren't going with me - don't even let me go anywhere. I'll just sit here until we come up with a new game plan.

Christians often become impatient and decide not to wait on God. They see something that they perceive as needing immediate attention. Maybe they take the time to pray about it - maybe they don't. But in the end - they rush off to solve the problem WITHOUT God going with them.

**The end result of such impatient Christianity is a mere social gospel.** Not waiting to be Grief (Encouraging words to help you get through it.)

sure God is going with you on even a small endeavor is to be assured of disaster. The greater the matter undertaken without God's presence - the greater the size of the disaster or defeat will be. Besides the fact that whatever you do without God is doomed to failure - you will be just plain miserable. You will also be 'wore to a frazzle' and 'plum tuckered out'.

Besides a day to rest, and the rest obtained through God's presence and direction, God also gives us the rest of peace.

I Chronicles 22:18 tells us,

*"Is not the Lord your God with you? And hath he not given you rest on every side? For he hath given the inhabitants of the land into mine hand; and the land is subdued before the Lord, and before his people."*

The enemies circled around Israel were defeated by the hand of the Lord, and even the land itself was subdued before the Lord. Then the people were instructed to "set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God". (v 19).

**That is the key to both personal and national victory.** We should all set our hearts and souls to seek the Lord our God. It is God who is willing and able to defend us. If we seek Him we will find Him. In modern English the mindset of Moses might be stated something like - "Lord - if you ain't going with me - I ain't going no where".

Unfortunately, this is not the way Christians usually act. But God gives us instructions on what to do after his people have strayed away from Him and His rest. Jeremiah 6:16 tells us:

*'Thus saith the Lord, 'stand ye in the old ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.' But they said, 'We will not walk therein.'*

This is very important. God told them what to do. **Return to the old ways.** In our day that means things like accepting the literal interpretation of the Bible; acknowledging that God's word is without error; and following the commandments given to us in the Bible. Obedience to the commandments doesn't provide entrance to heaven, but obedience DOES save us from a lot of trouble, AND gives eternal success.

**God offered the people a reward for obeying His instructions. He offered them 'rest for their souls'.**

But the people refused to walk in the old ways and the old paths. Verse 20 tells us that instead they gave the Lord burnt offerings and sacrifices. But God knew their hearts. He refused their offerings and disaster came to the land. It appears that today in the United States there is a growing number of churches and their congregations that are doing the same thing. They have refused to stand in the old ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein. As a result - rest for the soul is forfeited.

Rest to the people was also offered and rejected in Isaiah 30:15, which says,

*" For thus saith the Lord God, 'the Holy one of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength; and ye would not."*

The people of that day were afraid of an advancing army. They made an alliance with Egypt instead of relying on the Lord. The end result was disaster. That is really where Israel is today. She is trying to appease the world thinking the world will save her from the armies of Islam. The end result will be disaster. The requirement both then and now is simply to return to the Lord and rest in Him.

It makes no more sense today than it did in Isaiah's day to form an alliance with those who hate you. This means that alliances with the armies of those sworn to destroy the United States and all Christians will also lead to disaster. Friends - it looks like our goose is cooked!" UNLESS.....

We follow the instructions in Isaiah 30:15. We need to first RETURN TO THE LORD. This has to be a true return to the Lord that involves heartfelt repentance. Then, REST IN THE LORD. It appears that the battles raging in our homes, our churches, our nation, and the world can no longer be won by the arm of flesh. Truthfully, they never were won by the arm of flesh, but it appeared so. Today it appears that there is no military power on earth that can subdue our enemies. There are just too many of them. God is making it clear that the arm of flesh will fail us, and that the time has come to return to the Lord and rest in Him. **The greater the battle the greater the need for rest!!!** Our goal should be to rely on the Lord so completely that resting from worry is normal.

This is a call to all Christians to take the opportunity today to rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. **To rest in the Lord doesn't mean to go take a nap. It means to study and believe His word so completely that by faith you SEE and BELIEVE He WILL help you.**

Why not determine right now that YOU will begin a new life spent resting in the Lord? It sounds funny to say this, but resting in the Lord is work! But no matter how hard it may be, a life spent resting in the Lord is much easier AND more successful than a life spent trying to fight your battles yourself.

Don't delay. Hebrews chapter 4 tells us of the rest God offers, but there is a time limit. Don't harden your heart and refuse to seek God's rest. The offer of rest may be withdrawn.

"What difference can one person make?" you might ask. With the world in so much turmoil, it might appear that God will not help us. Never the less, there is hope and help for both the individual and the nation.

Keep in mind that God does not need an army of warriors to save the day. In I Samuel chapter 14, we are told the story of Jonathan and his armor bearer, and how these two defeated the Philistine army.

Jonathan left the army of his father, King Saul, and went with his armor bearer to check out the garrison of the Philistines. In verse 6 Jonathan says to his armor bearer, "Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that the Lord will work for us; for **there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few.**"

Now the armor bearer replies, "Do all that is in thine heart; turn thee, behold I am with thee according to thy heart."

There are at least two magnificent lessons from these passages. First, Jonathan knew the Lord didn't need a mighty army to defeat a foe. He knew the Lord could use just two men to defeat an entire army. Second, the armor bearer was unquestionably a man of great valor. But his reason for going on what appeared to be a suicide mission was not his personal bravery. He went to follow his leader. The lesson I get from that is that even if you are the first one to begin a work, someone will rise up to follow you into battle - just like Jonathan's armor bearer followed Jonathan.

The story continues that Jonathan and his armor bearer attacked the Philistines. Jonathan slew to the front, and the armor bearer slew to the rear. They killed about twenty men over half an acre of land.

Then there was a great earthquake and the Philistines started beating down one another.

Jonathan did not win this battle against such odds by his own strength. He knew from the start that victory was through God. And he knew that God could use two men or ten thousand men. His faith in God was not a 'psyche your self up' 'mind over matter' faith. It was rock solid, based on what God had done for Israel in the past, and what He had promised to do in the future.

What do we know about the Lord that might help in our quest for rest?

We KNOW God will save all who ask Him. Believers have a sure future guaranteed in heaven with God. So Christian, you don't have to worry about your life after death. Just rest in the Lord.

We KNOW that God has aligned Himself eternally with the nation of Israel. So we know that Israel will not be driven into the sea. So Christian, don't worry that the only stable nation in the Middle East will be destroyed or taken captive, you can rest in the Lord.

We KNOW that God promised a blessing for those that bless Israel and a cursing for those who curse her. So Christian, don't worry about which side is in the right in the Middle East Crises. God has chosen Israel. To be on God's side is always to be on the right side. To be on the right side AND the winning side, be on Israel's side. Don't worry about it - rest in the Lord.

We KNOW that God said in I John 3:20, "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart." Good news Christian - God is greater than how you feel. He will do what He said he would do whether you 'feel' like He will or not. Rest in the Lord.

For our personal lives and problems, God also has a plan. You can look at prayers God has answered in your past. A common mistake is to think that because God has blessed you mightily in the past that He won't do it again. That is the same mistake the children of Israel made while wandering in the desert. God had done all those miracles to bring them out of Egypt. Then He continued to show miracle after miracle as they wandered through the wilderness. But each time they were surprised that He had saved them again. The end result was they all died in the wilderness and never entered in God's rest. Don't let that happen to you. Believe God will help you - again - and again - and again. Rest in the Lord.

Another mistake is to believe that God won't help you because He hasn't helped you in the past, or didn't answer a specific prayer. God will help you according to His plan for your life. Rest in Him and wait patiently. No matter how trying the circumstance may be, you cannot solve the problem on your own. Rest in the Lord.

A better relationship with God is the key to fighting and winning what ever battles you may be facing. God can change the course of one person's life like He did with the apostle Paul. And with that one life changed, He can change the course of a nation and the world. If you want to think a little smaller than changing the world, God can also change the course of one family for the better.

Now is the time to begin studying and praying to know God well enough to believe Him like Jonathan did when he fought the Philistines. What the future holds for any of us cannot be known. But we can know that we will pass through whatever trials we face more easily if we have drawn closer to God, and already begun to rest in Him.

The song for this article is "The Haven of Rest". PS - this is the longest article I ever wrote! Boy am I tired!

## **Haven of Rest**

My soul in sad exile was out on life's sea,  
So burdened with sin and distressed,  
Till I heard a sweet voice, saying,  
"Make Me your choice";  
And I entered the Haven of Rest!

### Refrain

*I've anchored my soul in the Haven of Rest,  
I'll sail the wide seas no more;  
The tempest may sweep over wild, stormy, deep,  
In Jesus I'm safe evermore.*

I yielded myself to His tender embrace,  
In faith taking hold of the Word,  
My fetters fell off, and I anchored my soul;  
The Haven of Rest is my Lord.

### Refrain.

The song of my soul, since the Lord made me whole,  
Has been the old story so blest,  
Of Jesus, Who'll save whosoever will have  
A home in the Haven of Rest.

### Refrain

How precious the thought that we all may recline,  
Like John, the beloved so blest,  
On Jesus' strong arm, where no tempest can harm,  
Secure in the Haven of Rest.

### Refrain

O come to the Savior, He patiently waits  
To save by His power divine;  
Come, anchor your soul in the Haven of Rest,  
And say, "My Belovèd is mine."

### Refrain

<http://www.cyberhymnal.org/html/h/a/v/havenres.htm>

## 7. Gerald's Story – A Tribute to Valor

**This soldier really did lay down his life for his friends.**

John 15:13

*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*

June 6, 1944... So long ago, on a beach so far from the heartland of America, the course of history was changed. The liberation of Europe began, and the life of T/Sgt Gerald Henderson ended.

This is the citation for his Distinguished Service Cross awarded posthumously. It was given to his family after the war ended.

“For extraordinary heroism against the enemy on June 6, 1944, in Normandy France, on D-day, Technical Sergeant Henderson, while exposed to intense enemy artillery, mortar, machine-gun, and small arms fire, heroically supervised the unloading of men and vehicles from his landing craft. Observing that a vehicle from an adjoining landing craft had stalled, he voluntarily drove a truck along the fire swept beach, plunged into the water, and fastened a cable to the vehicle. After towing it safely to shore, he personally carried two wounded occupants to safety and rendered first aid. He returned to the beach and amid bursting shells and devastating small arms fire, courageously continuing his rescue work. While carrying a wounded soldier across the beach to a position of safety a shell landed near this valiant soldier fatally wounding him. His heroic achievements in the initial landing resulted in the saving of many lives and much vital equipment. The self sacrificing devotion to duty, personal bravery and valorous leadership displayed by Technical Sergeant Henderson exemplified the highest tradition of the armed forces. (Auth GO 92, HQ, 21st US Army, 18th infantry, antitank company)”

I wonder about the men he carried to the safety of the cliffs. I wonder if they knew Gerald in the first place or if they were just strangers in need of help. I wonder if they survived the war. Did they have children already who would have lost their father that day. Were they married? Did their mothers learn that their sons were saved, but Gerald's mother lost her son that day?

And mostly I wonder what these men did with the rest of their lives? Since Gerald's life was cut short so their lives could run a natural course, did they feel any obligation to live their lives in a way that would make Gerald think his sacrifice was worth it that day?

Today, other soldiers are fighting all over the globe. It isn't called a world war this time, but it surely appears to be one. And I know bravery and self sacrifice are not limited to any one generation. There are soldiers today who may wish things were different, but never the less, they will do their duty to the highest measure necessary.

But bravery and self sacrifice are not limited to the battlefield. That is just the obvious place people look for such heroism. In truth, bravery worthy of the highest honor is present all around us, in all levels of society, economics, and cultural variances. The character that allows such bravery to defy extreme adversity is built daily in the lives of men and women and children who just get up and do what is required of them every day. Most days it isn't that hard. Some days it is very hard. And on that occasional day when doing one's duty seems impossible, the individual who has already set the habit of "just getting the job done" will just get the job done that day as well.

Grief (Encouraging words to help you get through it.)

I have heard the question, "Have you thanked a vet today?" asked many times over the years. I suppose the question is supposed to make us think of the price paid for our freedom and the American way of life. But how would you thank the veterans who did not return? A proper tribute is in the way each of us lives our lives. There are three things everyone who lives with the blessing of freedom should do.

First, fully acknowledge that complete freedom is only possible through Jesus Christ. But he uses all sorts of people to allow us the freedom we enjoy in every day life

Second, only accept the boundaries in our lives that are imposed by God and national law that doesn't contradict God's law. This means DO love God, keep the commandments, treat others the way you want to be treated, be moderate, and be modest. It also means DO NOT allow yourself to be ruled by political correctness, social acceptability, or peer pressure. These things will only add unnecessary complications to your life and hinder you from doing whatever God actually has for you to do.

Third, lay down your life. Surrender to God. True surrender means agreeing to do what God asks of you before you actually know what it is. Then it means doing what you know to do every day. The husband and father who provides for his family often has to set aside many personal wants and ambitions to do what is best for his family. The mother who cares for her children 24 hours a day has to lay down things she wants to do in order to do what needs to be done. The child who obeys his or her parents will set aside their own desire in order to be obedient. Just do your duty - in full measure. What ever your race is for the day - just do it as well and cheerfully as possible.

In full surrender to God, and consistent completion of duty - you will come to realize that your fulfillment could not be greater, and your joy will only grow greater. You will be taking full advantage of the freedom provided by God, and all those He used to provide your freedom. You will effectively have "thanked a vet" by the way you live your life.

### **Gerald's Song**

Our freedom was bought by soldiers of honor, who sleep in the valley of the shadow of death. Now weeping endures for the night but God promised, joy comes in the morning with a trump and a shout.

*Refrain:*

*I'll see you tomorrow when the trumpet shall sound, the death song from sorrow to victory resounds.*

*Grave clothes all changed for white robes and crowns, I'll see you and know you when the trumpet shall sound.*

Your face in the picture, your laugh in my mind, all fade and grow dimmer one day at a time.

The words on the tombstone may weather away, but your name is on the Father's hand awaiting that day.

*Refrain:*

*I'll see you tomorrow when the trumpet shall sound, the death song from sorrow to victory resounds.*

*Grave clothes all changed for white robes and crowns, I'll see you and know you when the trumpet shall sound.*

Our redemption was bought by God's son the Savior, crucified, buried, but rose up the third day. Ascended to heaven to be with the Father, but coming back to receive us with a trump and a shout.

*Refrain:*

*I'll see you tomorrow when the trumpet shall sound, the death song from sorrow to victory resounds.*

*Grave clothes all changed for white robes and crowns, I'll see you and know you when the trumpet shall sound.*

I wrote these lyrics - but I need someone to write music to go with the lyrics.

Thanks,

Barbara Henderson

## 8. An Encouraging Word

It was a dark and stormy night there in Israel. Well, OK - it could have been daylight - but there was definitely a storm brewing in their hearts and souls of David's army.

David and his men had returned to their homes, only to discover that the Amalekites had invaded, burned down everything, and taken the women captives. The good news was they hadn't slain any of the captives, but had taken all the prisoners with them as they went on their way. (I Samuel 30:1-2)

Well actually - it was somewhat worse than that. Besides burning the city and taking the women captive, they also took their sons and their daughters as well. (v 3)

Naturally, David and his army were upset - so they did what all real men do in a crises situation. They burst into tears - and cried until they couldn't cry anymore. (v 4)

Then David became even more distressed because the people started talking of stoning him. Then David panicked and fled into the hills, where he died a lonely old man living in a cave. Oops. Wait a minute. That isn't how the Bible tells this story. It says, "But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God." (v6)

David enquired of the Lord what to do next. "Shall I pursue the enemy? Will I overtake them? And the Lord answered David, 'PURSUE THE ENEMY.'" You will not only overtake them, you will recover all without fail.

So that is what David did. He set out on a jaunty little pony ride, overtook the enemy, and the Amalakites surrendered everything without a fight.

Oops again. That isn't exactly what happened.

David and 600 men set out in hot pursuit of the enemy. It was an exhausting chase. They came to a creek and there 200 men were left to rest because they were just plain tuckered out. That means they were really tired - so tired they couldn't go on. (v 9)

David took off again with 400 men in hot pursuit of the Amalakites. Eventually a gravely ill Egyptian was found. They fed him and revived him, and then enquired of him as to the whereabouts of the enemy. (v 11-13)

The Egyptian told David he was a servant to an Amalekite, and his master left him behind when he fell ill. He said they were the company that had taken captive the families of David and his men. He agreed to lead David's men to the Amalakites in exchange for his personal safety and freedom. (v 15)

David and his warriors found the Amalakites, smote them for at least a day and a night, and recovered everything. (v18-19)

Then David ticked off his 400 warriors who wanted to keep all the spoils for themselves. David insisted that they divide the spoils equally among themselves AND the 200 men who had stayed at the brook. David said the spoil was given to them by the Lord and it would be divided equally with those who could not continue on the quest because of physical weakness. (v - 23)

OK - this is a super cool story. It has many lessons, but this is what I want to focus on.

In the midst of tragedy and extreme uncertainty David 'encouraged himself in the Lord.'

When David was certain the Lord had given him instructions on what to do - he did it. So certain was David of the Lord's instructions that he continued going forward even when one third of his army was too weak to follow.

God blessed David with victory just as He said He would - although it was a long battle - more than a day and a night.

David gave God the credit for the victory even though it had been so hard physically for David and his army to even catch the Amalakitites, much less whoop the tar out of them. (That's Southern for 'David's army had a very decisive victory'.)

Here is the encouraging word for you personally. In the midst of a great trial, David encouraged himself in the Lord. Whatever trial you are facing - great or small - encourage yourself in the Lord. You do this by reading your Bible and praying for wisdom and understanding. You do what you know to do until God gives you additional instructions. He will give you a 'game plan'. Then pursue the plan with all your heart and all your might - just like David did. When you win a victory, or resolve the problem, give God the credit just like David did.

An aside here is that the 200 men left behind because of exhaustion were given no reproach for their weakness. They were rewarded as though they had been in the battle against the Amalakitites. Some times, each of us will be numbered in the 200. There will be times we honestly cannot reach the goal for which we were striving. Don't despair. God knows your heart. He will care for you just as He cared for these 200 soldiers who were too weak to even reach the battle - much less fight in it. Remember David's example. The glory of victory belongs to the Lord - not to those who fought in the battle.

Would you like to know the secret of David's success? In Psalms 17:8 David prays, "Keep me as the apple of thy eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings". In Proverbs 7:2 God says, "Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye".

This is the key to being able to encourage yourself in the Lord. If you keep God as the apple of your eye - He will keep you as the apple of His eye. Another example of gaining the good favor of God is from the book of Daniel. Daniel was a man greatly beloved by God (Daniel 9:23). You can see from Daniel's life that he loved God greatly. As you love God - so will He love you in return. (Keep in mind that Christ loved us all so much that He died for us while we were still sinners. I am speaking here not of salvation, but of a loving and respectful relationship that receives daily maintenance.)

All believers are not strong enough to encourage themselves in the Lord. Some are new believers and haven't yet learned what the Lord considers acceptable behavior. Others are refusing to grow as Christians. Strong Christians are to encourage the weak. Regardless of exactly 'why' a brother or sister is weak, we are to encourage each other.

Isaiah 41:6 tells us, 'they helped every one his neighbor; and every one said to his brother, 'Be of good courage.' Can you remember a time when someone gave you an encouraging word? Can you remember the last time you gave an encouraging word to someone else? This is important. Don't wait for someone to encourage you before you start encouraging others. Galatians 6:2 tells us, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

This is good news. You don't have to wait for someone to encourage you. As a believer you have the opportunity to encourage yourself in the Lord. Even in a dire situation like David was in, when the crowd was getting ready to stone him, he faced the challenge by looking to God for help. Then, when YOU are strong in the Lord, strengthen those who are yet weak. David was the one who got the word from the Lord to pursue the enemy. David was the one who got the promise that they would overtake them and recover everything. But then - it was David who had Grief (Encouraging words to help you get through it.)

to convince the warriors that he really did hear from God. He had to convince them to the extent that they were willing to follow David in a strenuous military campaign - when they were tired to begin with.

To be strong in the Lord when a great trial comes, it is necessary that you flex your faith muscles right now. It is the Lord who will strengthen you to get through even the easy days. He will strengthen you to hold onto that crummy job until He gives you a better job. He will even strengthen you to be thankful for the job you have right now. He will strengthen you in whatever trial or adversity you are facing right now. In trusting God through the smaller trials you will gain strength for the greater trials that are coming.

That we can find encouragement in the Lord is good news. The bad news is that we need that encouragement now more than ever before. Take the time to set God as the apple of your eye right now. Make knowing Him better a priority in your daily activities.

I believe that times are going to get really tough for Christians. In order to be prepared for that future spiritually, it is imperative that Christians take God and His instructions for living seriously today.

Have you ever been in a church service where the song leader does one verse of a song, then interrupts the singing and tells everyone to go around and shake hands with their neighbor? So we all go around shaking hands, smiling a frozen smile, and saying, 'glad your here,' 'glad you could make it', 'thanks for coming' and things like that. Then we go back to our seats, rub our hands with germ killer, and sit down for the service. We have done what was asked of us, but we have not made any real contact with anyone. That is often the way we approach God. We do what is outwardly required of us, but inwardly we are still far from Him.

If you want to be a strong enough Christian to be able to 'encourage yourself in the Lord' - you must actually establish a relationship that goes beyond your salvation. You must give God more than 'lip' service. You must give Him your heart. That is the only kind of relationship that will take you through the trials that this world is preparing for those who follow Jesus.

The song for this article is Nearer My God to Thee. One line says, "Even though it be a cross - nearer to Thee". My friend - any cross you may be called to bear because of your nearness to Jesus Christ will be light compared to the cross you will bear without Him. In stepping closer to Jesus - you are not only choosing to walk the narrow way - you are choosing the way that will be easiest to walk. I did not say 'easy to walk - for it will often be hard; but it will be easier than walking without Him. Do you doubt this? Then - imagine this. What if David had not been able to 'strengthen himself in the Lord' on the day he and his army returned home to find their families kidnapped by the enemy? Would they have been able to recover their families and a great amount of treasure as they did? Or would they have lived their rest of their lives without ever seeing their families again - and with all their worldly possessions burned or stolen?

Please take the time to strengthen yourself in the Lord today - apply yourself to getting to know and rely on the Lord better as if you were an athlete training for a great competition.

Please take the time to encourage a weaker or weary brother or sister today.

Thank you for reading my article. God bless you.

## **Nearer, my God, To Thee**

Nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!  
E'en though it be a cross that raiseth me,  
still all my song shall be,

### Refrain:

*nearer, my God, to thee;*  
*nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!*

Though like the wanderer, the sun gone down,  
darkness be over me, my rest a stone;  
yet in my dreams I'd be

### Refrain:

*nearer, my God, to thee;*  
*nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!*

There let the way appear, steps unto heaven;  
all that thou sendest me, in mercy given;  
angels to beckon me

### Refrain:

*nearer, my God, to thee;*  
*nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!*

Then, with my waking thoughts bright with thy praise,  
out of my stony griefs Bethel I'll raise;  
so by my woes to be

### Refrain:

*nearer, my God, to thee;*  
*nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!*

Or if, on joyful wing cleaving the sky,  
sun, moon, and stars forgot, upward I fly,  
still all my song shall be,

### Refrain:

*nearer, my God, to thee;*  
*nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!*

[http://library.timelesstruths.org/music/Nearer\\_My\\_God\\_to\\_Thee/midi/](http://library.timelesstruths.org/music/Nearer_My_God_to_Thee/midi/)

## Scriptures on SUFFERING

2Timothy 3:12  
Romans 8:18  
2Corinthians 4:17  
1Peter 2:19- 21  
1Peter 4:13-19  
James 5:10  
Psalms 119:71  
Longsuffering  
2Peter 3:9  
Exodus 34:6  
Psalms 86:15  
Galatians. 5:22  
Ephesians 4:1-2  
1Timothy 1:16  
2Timothy 4:2  
Death  
Hebrews 9:27  
James 1:15  
Romans 6:23  
Genesis 2:17  
Psalms 23:4  
Revelation 21:4  
1Corinthians 15:55

## Scriptures on GRIEF

and they were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah. (Genesis 26:35)

that this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself: and when the LORD shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid. (1 Samuel 25:31)

So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great. (Job 2:13)

But I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the solace of my lips should assuage your grief. (Job 16:5)

Though I speak, my grief is not assuaged: and though I forbear, what am I eased? (Job 16:6)

Mine eye wasteth away because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine adversaries. (Psalms 6:7)

Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in distress: mine eye wasteth away with grief, yea, my soul and my body. (Psalms 31:9)

A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him. (Proverbs 17:25)

For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow. (Ecclesiastes 1:18)

For all his days are but sorrows, and his travail is grief; yea, even in the night his heart taketh no rest. This also is vanity. (Ecclesiastes 2:23)

In the day of thy planting thou hedgest it in, and in the morning thou makest thy seed to blossom: but the harvest fleeth away in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow. (Isaiah 17:11)

He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised, and we esteemed him not. (Isaiah 53:3)

Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. (Isaiah 53:10)

Woe is me for my hurt! my wound is grievous: but I said, Truly this is my grief, and I must bear it. (Jeremiah 10:19)

For though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. (Lamentations 3:32)

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit to them: for they watch in behalf of your souls, as they that shall give account; that they may do this with joy, and not with grief: for this were unprofitable for you. (Hebrews 13:17)

Grief (Encouraging words to help you get through it.)

Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, ye have been put to grief in manifold temptations, (1 Peter 1:6)