

Teary Truth

Any of you who've been in the tragic position of having to watch a loved one suffer/die know what it means to feel ***totally, utterly helpless***. You want to help, but you can't. You would trade places with them in a second (something you've probably even prayed to God to let happen), but you can't. They suffer, and all you can do is watch. There's **nothing** you can do. Such a feeling of helplessness reduces even the strongest person to tears.

What about those times when a loved one is suffering and you *are* able to help... ***but they reject that help?*** It happens a lot, and it happens for any number of reasons. It doesn't matter what we're talking about either, be it physical help, financial help, emotional help, abuse, dependency...whatever. From the youngest to the oldest, people reject and turn away help ***all the time***. "*I can do it myself! I don't need/want your help!*" Maybe they're too proud to receive help. This is a very common occurrence. Many a person refuses assistance simply because they don't want to be thought of as a "charity case." Their pride won't allow them to be helped in their time of need. They'd rather go down in flames by themselves than get help from somebody else.

Then there are those instances when people refuse help, not because they're too proud, but because they honestly don't think they need it. ***They don't see a problem that needs helping***. All is well. Just ask them. They'll tell you. In fact, they'll tell you that you're the one who has the problem. They're fine. If they do admit to having a problem, they're quick to point out that their problem isn't that big. "*There are other people with much bigger problems than mine. There are others who have it far worse than me. Don't worry about me. Help them.*"

It's all so maddening, isn't it? It's ironic when you think about it, but when all you want to do is help, and the other person refuses, you're the one who winds up feeling ***utterly helpless***, no different than if you're standing at the bedside of a dying loved one. You see the train coming down the tracks. You know how this story is going to end if things don't change...and yet there's nothing you can do to change it. They're going to do what they want to do. They don't want your help. They won't take your help. Again, it's enough to reduce a person to tears.

This is exactly where we find our Lord Christ in the beginning of our Gospel lesson for today—looking out over His city of promise; His beloved Jerusalem, crying and weeping because "*Would that you have known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.*" Jesus actually sheds tears—not crocodile tears for attention, but real heart-broke, love-filled tears—over the people of Jerusalem ***because they have utterly rejected Him and His call to repentance and faith***. Jesus knows what's coming down the deadly

track for these folks. He knows what these proud and ignorant people have rejected, and He also knows what awaits such rejection. It tears Him up. It literally drives Him to tears. *“It doesn’t have to end this way!”*

What’s really sad is that none of this was *new or isolated* only to the people of Jerusalem. Old Testament Israel? How many times did they give God the middle finger? God Himself says that these folks had become so debased in their sin that they weren’t even able to blush at their sins anymore. They were *proud* of their sinful behaviors. *They were no longer ashamed or embarrassed.* They were utterly helpless, dying in their sins, and they were too stupid and proud to recognize the fact. It didn’t end well for them, and it didn’t have to either. It’s all so sad. What about all those works-righteous fools in Paul’s time (and beyond)? What a bunch of morons, right? No one can say God didn’t try with them. But they absolutely refused any way but their way, to the point that they beat and imprisoned and murdered anyone who dared to speak God’s Word to them. I understand why Jesus wept.

Okay... so what about you? How are you guilty? Notice: I didn’t ask IF you are guilty. HOW are you guilty? We’re all guilty. Have you ever felt “wronged” and angry when life takes a turn south? *“I’m a good Christian, God! I do all this for you, and this is how you treat me?! Help me! Tell me what I need to do to make things better!”* *The Pharisees couldn’t have put it better.* Do you no longer blush at things God Himself calls sin? Do you stand proud and defiant, justifying your sinful beliefs/behaviors, if not rejoicing in them (rather than repenting of them)? Let’s not forget the fact that God’s not a bully. He won’t *make* anyone repent. He won’t *make* anyone believe. How often have you stood idly by while loved ones continue in their sinful ways, and you say nothing? Head in the sand; see nothing, say nothing. *We don’t want to hurt anyone’s feelings, right?* How often have you plead ignorance or decried how “helpless” you are to such a situation, and yet you never bothered to unsheathe the sword of God’s Word? Sure, you can recite a few lines from some lame song that speaks of Jesus as your boyfriend or an empty platitude from the latest best-selling self-help book that claims to help you hear Jesus whispering, but actually listening to God’s Word; speaking God’s Word and letting Him work...? I understand why Jesus wept (and still weeps). I’m guilty too.

But rather than hammer on all these things that will (should) only produce more tears of helplessness and sorrow, let us focus on that which brings tears of joy to all who hear and believe. Look to this cross! Folks: This isn’t a case of God merely *helping* us. **This is God saving us!** Our heavenly Father didn’t send a boy scout to help us cross the street or cheer us up. He sent His only-begotten Son—God Himself in the flesh—to *save us*.

Here [the crucifix] is God's just and righteous wrath against all sin, and believe it or not, it is here in this divine and righteous anger of God that we, through faith, are also able to recognize His Gospel love for us. Here is where God pours out all His wrath and punishment against sin—***here, on Christ Jesus...not on you.*** Jesus did what we can't do. He took our place! Here is the One who has paid for each and every one of your sins on His cross; who died and rose again for you in order that you might have His free and unmerited gift of eternal life, and have it in overflowing abundance. ***This alone should make you hit your knees in repentant thankfulness and weep tears of joy!*** Here is the peace of God; the peace [singular] that surpasses all human understanding.

And the greatest thing of all is that none of this is hidden or done in secret. God wants nothing more than for ***everyone*** to partake and receive His absolutely free gifts of grace, mercy, and peace. He holds out these gifts constantly to ***all*** people, inviting ***everyone*** who is weak and wearied; ***everyone*** who labors under the yoke and bondage of sin, to come to Him and be yoked to Him and His righteousness and His peace, "*for My yoke is easy and My burden is light.*" If only people would recognize and clamor for the things that make for true peace!

Now, I'm not going to end by giving you some false hope that by simply having faith in God life will now be ***easy and cross-free.*** I say this because many a person does wind up rejecting the peace of God because they didn't find the version of peace they were looking for in their daily lives. "Jesus didn't help." They weren't having "fun." The bills still kept coming. The sickness only got worse. The loved one didn't get better. The marriage still failed. Friendships were fractured and families were split because of the ***divisive nature of the cross.*** The unrest and lack of peace in their lives tempts them and causes them to reject the peace of God. It's sad, but some people ***prefer*** the false and fleeting peace of the world. It's just easier. I understand why Jesus wept.

Folks: Here is the peace that surpasses all understanding. I know it doesn't look like much, but richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, in good times and in bad times and everything in between, here is the peace of Christ, freely held out to you. "*I am with you ALWAYS.*" No matter how bad life in this fallen and sinful world may get, we belong to Christ. ***Nothing and no one can ever snatch that away.*** No man can rent asunder the love that Christ has for us. Tears of joy.

These are the things of true peace, and may this peace of God, which far surpasses all human understanding, guard and keep your hearts and minds in the one and only source and giver of peace—Christ Jesus Himself.

In His holy name...**AMEN**