

*Blessed
are they
that mourn:
for they
shall be
comforted.*

Comfort
Matthew 5:4

“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”

❧ Revelation 21:4 ❧



WHAT WORDS SHALL BRING COMFORT?

To those of us who have lost a loved one, our grief is known to the Lord. The sentiments in the scripture above assure us that the God of creation is aware of all sorrow, and will *wipe away every tear in due time*... nothing that His creation has experienced has escaped His watchful notice. He knows! As the prophet Jeremiah expressed it: “...*His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.*” (Lamentations 3:22-24) Yes, we can have hope, for He truly has compassion for this *poor groaning creation!* (Romans 8:22)

Initially it can be so hard to conceive that our loved one is gone. It may not seem possible that their passing has actually happened, and it can be more than the mind can even process. We may utter *“I just can’t believe it... I will never see them again.”* And we may be asking, *“Why God? Where were you? Why did you let this happen?”* Jesus’ friend Mary asked this same question in John 11:32.

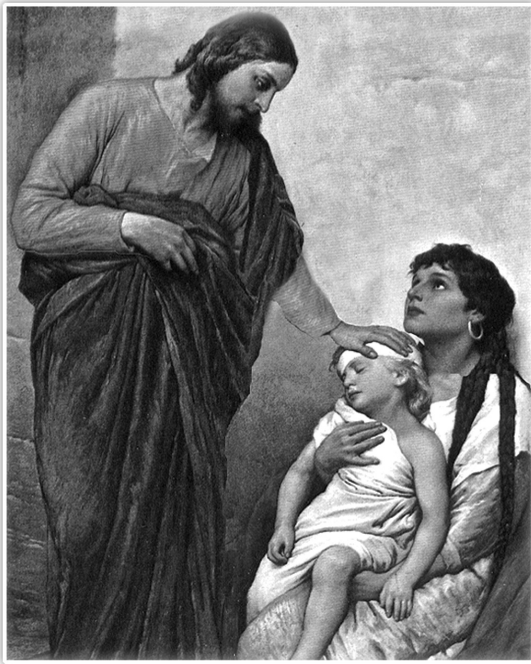
As we draw near to our family and friends, and perhaps a minister, they do earnestly sympathize, but may be unable to help us understand why God has permitted our loss. To be deeply comforted we must have an explanation — we must have answers to such searching questions.

REST IN PEACE

Before we try to understand why God permits tragic losses to occur, we can again take comfort simply knowing that He is aware of our grief — that God loves all of His human creation. We can realize, too, that as any loving father



would, He actually shares in the grief and pain suffered by His creation. His great message of comfort to us is that “*in due time*” there will be a re-awakening of all the dead. This anticipated awakening out of the sleep of death is why we have the saying “*rest in peace,*” and even the origin of the word cemetery means “*a sleeping room or place.*” This understanding came to us because Jesus and many Bible writers spoke of death as being like “*sleep,*” teaching that the dead shall be awakened! (John 11:11-14) Jesus said “*all*

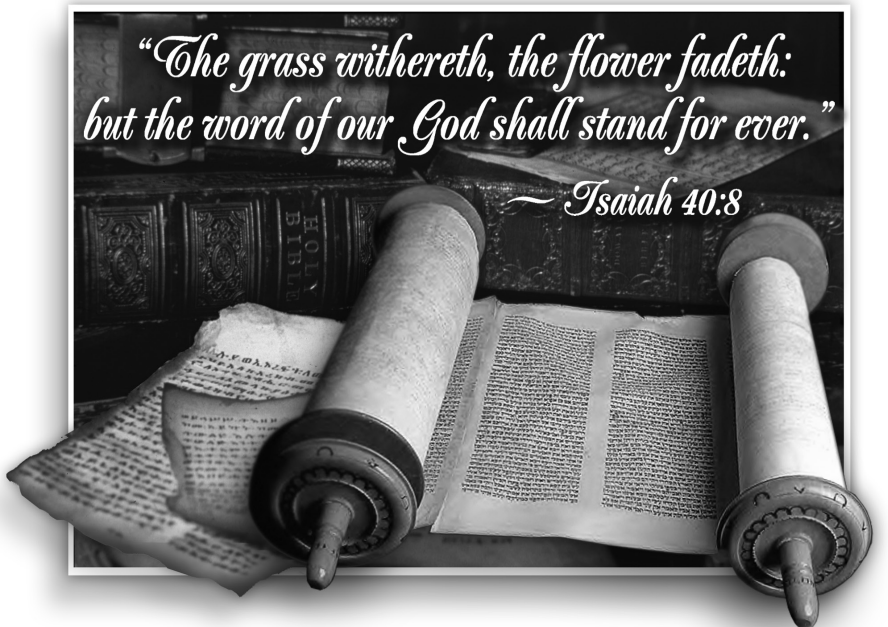


that are in their graves shall come forth.” The apostle Paul wrote that God “*will have all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth,*” the results of Jesus having provided a “*ransom for all.*” (John 5:28-29 NAS, 1 Timothy 2:3-6)

Because of Jesus’ *ransom sacrifice*, the resurrection process will bring healing to every broken heart as all separated loved ones, gradually awakened from the sleep of death, are reunited.

Take heart, dear friend, God has promised it! Our separation from departed loved ones is not forever. We will see these loved ones again! True, this hope is by faith, but it can be a faith that is based on good, sound reasoning and proven by many lines of solid evidence found within the Bible. (Hebrews 11:1) The awakening of the dead will be a reality for all of mankind, just as real as the fact that they have already existed in this present life.

One might ask, “*when is this going to happen, and isn’t my departed loved one now in heaven with God?*” Jesus’ own words will answer this very question as you read on, but let us recognize that the Bible instructs us that *all* mankind *sleep in death*, believers and unbelievers alike. However, because of their faith in the resurrection, believers do not sorrow *as others who have no hope*. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-14) We look forward to the promised *resurrection* — and the hope that it extends to everyone. This is indeed a most satisfying and a most comforting promise, when fully understood.



JESUS WEPT

The shortest verse of the Bible is John 11:35, and it simply states that “*Jesus wept.*” Why did Jesus shed tears? It was because he had lost his beloved friend, Lazarus, but also because he was deeply moved with compassion when he saw the family of Lazarus grieving over his death. “*When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled.*” (John 11:33) Jesus knew that Lazarus was in the tomb, resting in the sleep of death, and so he offered these words of comfort to the sister of Lazarus: “*Jesus saith unto her, ‘Thy brother shall rise again.’ Martha saith unto him, ‘I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.’*” (John 11:23-24) There is no mistaking what Martha had already learned directly from Jesus — she knew her brother Lazarus was in the sleep of death, awaiting the promised resurrection and the blessings that would follow.





BUT “WHY?” GOD

Coming back to the question, “*Why did God allow this to happen to my loved one?*” This question is particularly poignant when a loss has come suddenly, especially when the loss is someone young. Within this question, however, is part of the answer. God did not *cause* this to happen, but in His wisdom He has *allowed* mankind to experience the outcome of sin, which ultimately leads to death. By this experience, we are learning to hate the consequence of sin, and will eventually learn to love righteousness. (Psalm 45:7)

The Apostle Paul wrote, “*Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.*” (Romans 5:12-18, 1 Corinthians 15:21,22) Just here is the promise that *in due time* death shall be wiped away, because Jesus Christ gave his perfect human life to satisfy justice and provide a *ransom for all* — Adam and his posterity.

THE PERMISSION OF EVIL

We ask, “*Was man created to be like a robot, programmed to only obey rules?*” The answer is “*No*” — man was made in the

image and likeness of God—he was created perfect. (Genesis 1:26-27) This “*likeness*” included the freedom to make choices. Man was created as “*a free moral agent*” — a being with the abilities of thought, evaluation, and choice. God knew when He created Adam and Eve that they lacked the “*knowledge of good and evil.*” In other words, they lacked experience and did not fully comprehend the consequences of their actions. (Genesis 2:17) This can be easily understood by any parent who has told their child “*Don’t touch! The stove is hot!*” Lacking experience the child does not fully comprehend the danger. This illustrates the human condition. Presently, God is allowing the human family to collectively experience the consequences of imperfect choices, as they live apart from His laws. In most cases man’s efforts are out of harmony with God’s designs, often leading to an evil outcome. But, experiencing sin and evil provides vital knowledge of the consequences of disobedience to God.



When applied in the future, after the resurrection from the sleep of death, this knowledge will ultimately guide humanity to willingly leave behind sin and lay hold on the perfection originally intended by their Creator.

We can see the wisdom in God's permission of evil. Romans 8:22 states that *the whole creation has always been groaning and travailing as in the pains of childbirth*. This explains the condition that all of mankind finds itself in, experiencing the anguish of sin, while awaiting deliverance from it. It also explains our personal painful experiences. One by one we are all learning through first-hand experience of sin's sorrows. These difficult lessons will not be lost or forgotten. (Ecclesiastes 1:13)

THE GOOD NEWS

Now, the Good News! The Bible teaches us that our experience with evil, sin and death is nearly complete. Soon, all of mankind is to be delivered from the present evil world into "*the Kingdom of Christ*." The Bible says that he will reign for a thousand years. (Revelation 20:6) His perfect government will provide all people an extensive experience with good, with perfect and just laws, under flawless and pure conditions. The Prophet Isaiah tells us that then "*the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea*." (Isaiah 11:9) "*And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and*



every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.” (Hebrews 8:11) Resurrected humanity, then equipped with a full “*knowledge*” of good and of evil, will come to a time of decision. “*I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse [good and evil]. So choose life in order that you may live.*” (Deuteronomy 30:19) This admonition originally given to natural Israel will be equally true of every individual in God’s Kingdom. The vast majority



will see the blessings of obedience and righteousness and will be granted eternal life, here on the earth. By the end of the Kingdom of righteousness, those who choose to disobey will be cut off in what the Bible terms the “*Second Death.*” (Revelation 20:14) It will be a death from which there will be no further resurrection. But, thank God that, by His merciful plan, the incorrigible will be few. Jesus’ prayer to God will then be fulfilled — “*Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*” (Matthew 6:10)

HE KNOWS...

When accidents or tragedies strike, disease, murder, war, or death from any cause, it’s true — God has *allowed* it. At the same time He also shares in the pain. Your present loss

is a part of this experience with the permission of evil. God knows that permitting sin and death, for a season, will best serve the long term interests of the entire human family. But our God is merciful and has not left us without hope, promises, and comfort. From the earliest glimmers in Genesis to the glorious outcome in Revelation, the entire Bible speaks of an end to sickness and sorrow, sin and death. (Isaiah 35 and Isaiah 2:2-4) This glorious time is referred to in Acts 3:21 as *“the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.”*



God’s inspired Word promises that He will restore conditions to that of a perfect earth. Because it is His Word, His oath, we can rest assured that it will be fulfilled! (Isaiah 55:11)

HEALED FROM OUR PAIN

Your loss, as painful and devastating as it may be, should not be looked at as though you were singled out to suffer. Neither should we expect extraordinary protections, shielding

us from the common experience with sorrow. Even those closest to Jesus suffered illness, leading eventually to their death, as in the case of Lazarus. And some, like Stephen, were even murdered, simply for speaking out and teaching about Jesus. (Acts 7:59-60) Let us try to always be thankful to God for the times that have been shared with our loved ones, and take heart knowing that He has provided for a time of reuniting. Alas, when that time comes, you will look back on this present pain and distress as but a moment in the distant past, and you will be healed from your present sorrows. This too is His promise. (Genesis 22:16-18)

These thoughts were foremost in Jesus' mind as he began his earthly ministry long ago by quoting these words of comfort and hope: *“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison [of the tomb] to them that are bound.”* (Isaiah 61:1)



In Jesus' sermon on the mount, he spoke these tender words: *"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."* (Matthew 5:4-6)



We hope that this message, in some small way, has been comforting to you and provided some answers, showing that there is a plan for a future, lasting, happy life. God's plan is unfolding right now, and you are in it. This plan has at its center Christ Jesus, his life, death and resurrection. His heavenly Father has authored it, and it will surely come to pass. We wish to express our heartfelt sorrow for your loss. We all as a human family know how heart wrenching the emotions can be while coping with such a loss. Please rest assured that your pain will be more than offset in the days that are yet to come. *"And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."* (Isaiah 35:10)



To learn more about God's plan for our human family please request your free copy of *"The Divine Plan of the Ages."*

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