

Crossing Over from Death to Life
Jennifer Sides 3/14/06

It was a season of doom which I had anticipated on as far back as I can remember. Not that I had ever really sat back and dwelled on it but even so it crossed my mind on occasion and I felt the odds would not be what I would have hoped for. Then, years before I would have estimated the moment of truth came when Satan like a thief in the night plunged from out of the darkness in pursuit of stealing my joy and every other source of all that I consider good. The bottom line is the timing never would have been right as far as I was concerned. Now I was wondering where had the time gone and knowing it was way to late to make up for any of it. The memories and the material objects would be all that was left of my mom but even they would fade away with time in one way or another.

Sure, the signs were there that something was not quite right. She had been living with a disease for a few years and everything seemed to point to her medication needing some adjustments. Then, in a moment that came as quick as the blink of an eye I realized that the signs were escalating down a path far worse than I had expected. I knew she had not been to a doctor yet and that there had been no tests done or results to prove to me otherwise but I just knew that God was showing me the inevitable. I did not necessarily know at the time why He was making this so clear but nonetheless I knew beyond the shadow of a doubt.

Through that, "Why has thou forsaken me period of my life?" as hard as it was I believed deep down that God wanted to use me during this trial as an example to my family and friends. I began by telling each of them one by one what was going on and what to expect after we went to the doctor and got the results. Some loved ones listened reluctantly while others just seemed to take things as they came. When we received the final word that my mom had 3 months left all those I had spoken with wanted to know what they could do to help? I have to admit that I

had no peace whatsoever. My alone and quiet times left me falling apart and wondering how I would survive.

I started making arrangements from day one knowing that I had to act quickly before the clock ran out. There was chaos going on inside my soul like none I had ever known but on the outside the example that I was hoping to set before those who were watching made an impact. Even though I felt like I was losing the biggest battle of my life I had to prove that with God all things are possible. I look back now and even though I did not feel it then I know that because I fought the fight with all the faith I could muster and ran the race the Lord's hand was upon me every step of the way. Though my flesh was weak I trusted in Him to get me through and I was determined to be used for His glory. It was by taking those steps in faith that an overwhelming peace out of nowhere flooded my soul and has not wavered. It is the peace that passes understanding (Philippians 4:7) during the most difficult time of my life that still holds me together to this very day. Yes, I have to admit that I have daily struggles with the loss of my mom but I have the hope that she will one day be with the King of kings and the Lord of lords when the dead in Christ shall rise to meet Him in the air.

Now, I feel another heavy burden even more clearly than the one which I just described. First, I have to admit I am like the little boy who cried wolf. Before I became a Christian I just knew it was the end of the world when the Gulf War was going on. I never let anyone know my fears because I felt like such a fool. After all, I had nothing to base any of it on. All I had ever heard was the world was going to end in war some day. I was a Christian when the New Year arrived in 2000 and I was afraid that the end of the world might be close at hand then as well. I had nothing to base any of those fears on either. The only people who I told I was afraid were the one's who I thought would understand and would share my same beliefs.

It is different this time around though, far different. This time around I know what signs to look for. This time around I am not afraid to

share what I believe the Lord has laid upon my heart with anyone I think will give me the time of day. This time around I have scripture to back up what I believe and why I believe it. Recently, the Lord has been showing me His truths at every turn on the events taking place in this world as they unfold even when I am not looking for them. This is another season of doom that I believe is rapidly approaching. Why else would He be sharing these things with me in such a short time? I always looked at Revelation like it was some kind of foreign language that no one on the face of the earth would ever be able to translate. It can only be God that has been leading me on this journey into what was completely unknown to me just a few months ago. I have no doubt that Satan would like nothing more than to see me fry with him after God does away with him once and for all.

Wouldn't it be great for this generation to miss the 7 years of tribulation even if it is by the skin of our teeth? But what if that is not the case and why is it so important to understand that we need to get in the word and search these things out? (Matthew 24:34 says, "I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.") Which generation is it and what are the signs? Even though there was not a single thing I could do about it; I know that if my mom would have passed away without notice; without me seeing any of the signs; I would not have been near as prepared for what was to come. Now, just as with my mom I believe that the signs of the end are escalating out of control and we need to be aware. Don't wait until the deadline draws near to wonder what can be done to help yourself or your loved ones.

I have found that as time goes by more and more people are just thinking of themselves and not anyone else. It is going to get far worse. We need to realize what it says in Mark 13:12,13 - That brother will rise up against brother and a father against his child and children will rise up against their parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for my names sake but he who endures to the end will be saved. Sure, these things happen today and they have been since Cain

and Abel but what we see today is nothing compared to what awaits that generation during the 7 years of tribulation.

What about warnings of antichrists and how we need to know when we see one? The antichrist has been around since Satan was in the garden but how will we be able to recognize the one coming in the flesh during the 7 year tribulation and even now? (The Bible tells us in 1 John 4:1-3 not to believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how we recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, But every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God.) Living our lives the best that we can day by day does not guarantee us that we will not be fooled. We have to be in the word to know how to determine who is and who is not of the Lord.

I can't help but imagine Noah. Think about it for a minute. If you would have been here during that generation would you have hopped on the biggest boat ever built to take the most historic cruise ever? (Only 8 people were saved from that flood. Genesis 7:13) (For many are called but few are chosen. Matthew 22:14) Something tells me that had I been spared it would have only been because I set sail just to get away for a few days. (But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that day will come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the earth. Watch, therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man. Luke 21:34-36)

It will come like a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the earth but how much worse for those who choose to not watch for the signs? The signs of the end are in the Bible and they are there for a reason. (Revelation 1:3 – Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.) I know it is scary and hard to understand what the

future holds during the tribulation but the Lord does not want us to be blind. (He wants us to endure to the end so that we will be saved. Mark 13:13) It is much easier to endure to the end with our spiritual eyes opened to see the traps Satan has set before us. (Matthew 24:43 – But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched his house and not allowed it to be broken into.) If you knew a thief was going to break into your house wouldn't you prepare yourself?

This life is literally a rollercoaster ride. We have 2 choices on how to take this ride of our lives. We can sit in the front row and watch as we ascend to the highest of mountains and descend into the lowest of valleys or we can sit in the back with our hands over our eyes all the while missing out on the fullness of an abundant life.

Are you ready to die tomorrow? Are you ready for the rapture? Are you ready for the tribulation? I hope and pray that I am. Ready or not one or more of these incidences is standing at the door of each one of our souls prepared to knock at any given moment. I know that I do not want to be fooling myself. I do not want to be like Peter who said he would never deny Christ only to do it not once but three times. Only God knows our true heart more than we know it ourselves. I do not want to be like the ones in Matthew 7:22-23 - who came to Jesus saying, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name? I do not want to hear the Lord say that He never knew me.

Has any of this caused me to be depressed? Yes, in the beginning and even now but not in the same ways that it did. What depresses me is that I should be a lot further ahead in this race; pressing on toward the goal to win the prize for which I have been called heavenward in Christ Jesus. The Good News is that if I really have the Godly sorrow he describes in 2nd Corinthians 6:9-11 He will forgive me those trespasses as far as the East is from the West. The other depressing fact is the multitudes of people who choose to deny the truth and perish with no

more chances to be redeemed. I hope and pray that more and more I choose facing things head on; standing firm on the solid rock in every circumstance that Satan uses to try and destroy me. I need encouragement though. In this world of good and evil there are no lone rangers who survive it alone. We are called to encourage one another daily (Hebrews 3:13) and to confess our sins one to another (James 5:16). How can all of that be done alone?

There is nothing depressing about the will of God being fulfilled. Remember, the Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. (2nd Peter 3:9) I know we all tend to dwell on things that are not the whole picture. We need to learn to trust in Jesus and seek Him only and realize that His plan will bring everlasting peace and do away with a world that is already passing away. His Kingdom will come and those who seek Him with all of their heart will reign with Him forever. How much better does it get? It doesn't!

I had no idea that doing a little research on a few Bible verses would turn out to be a full blown cover to cover mission. The past few months has taken me along this journey that I never expected to find myself on. It is so unlike me to be so consumed by the word of the Lord. I am still amazed at all the things that the Lord has revealed to me in such a short time. It really seemed as if I was in my own little corner of the world minding my own business when out of nowhere a gentle hand started steering me and easing me over to a reality check.

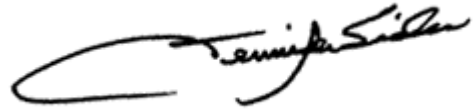
So where is all this taking me? This is what I know at the moment. I feel closer to the Lord than I ever have. I feel a new sense of purpose about what He has in store for me. I am bolder at sharing His word with anyone who will listen. I am reading my Bible more. I pray more not only for myself but for my loved ones as well. This has placed in me a fear to live a life more pleasing to God. (Through love and faithfulness sin is atoned for, through the fear of the Lord a man avoids evil. Proverbs

16:6) The Bible says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Psalm 111:10. Even if the tribulation does not come during this generation I hope and pray that I do not lose sight of the vision that has helped my spiritual eyes to become more focused on what really matters when this life is all said and done. True, I may be what some people would call obsessed but if I am going to be obsessed then I choose to call it the most Magnificent Obsession that has ever consumed my life.

Often times I have been stagnant in this faith that I have claimed to possess over the past 17 years. On rare occasions I sometimes wake up and look around trying to pick up where I left off. I have wasted precious time committing and staring in the face of spiritual suicide as I wonder in the back of my mind would this be considered luke-warm? Revelation 3:15, 16. Now I hope that I have found the will to cross over from death to life in the spiritual realm at more than just a crawl. For it is time to put off the former self along with the deeds of darkness and step out into His marvelous light.

I know that I have friends who tell me how God has used me in their lives but this life is not over yet. God can use anyone and any circumstance He chooses to draw a lost sheep or new follower of Christ to His side. I know full well that He uses me in spite of myself. I often wonder how much more I would have been used as a light to the world and all those I see on a daily basis if I myself had been walking more earnestly in that same light I profess to carry. Even though I sometimes wander aimlessly as if in a fog I still ask Him to please use this lowly vessel in the lives of my friends quite often despite the fact that I know I am so far away from where I should be. Knowing that He has answered those prayers more times than I can remember or have even realized should draw me closer to Him than what I have been. I know we all fall short. The fact that we are but flesh and blood pretty much gives that away because without Him and His Spirit living inside these fragile houses made from the dust of the earth we can do nothing. (But let us live up to what I have already attained. Philippians 3:16)

As long as we are alive and in each others midst we ought to seek out opportunities to grow and learn from one another. What would the Lord have me say and do toward each of my loved ones? No two friends are exactly alike or have the exact same needs and concerns but hopefully the end result would be that I would lay my life down for each and every one of them. So this is my hope for which to me there is no greater or rewarding task; that once my life on this earth is done I would be remembered as someone who reflected the character of Christ.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dennis Sider". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "D" and a long, horizontal flourish extending to the right.