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## ***In your hour of grief...***

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***By: Jocelyn A. Soriano***

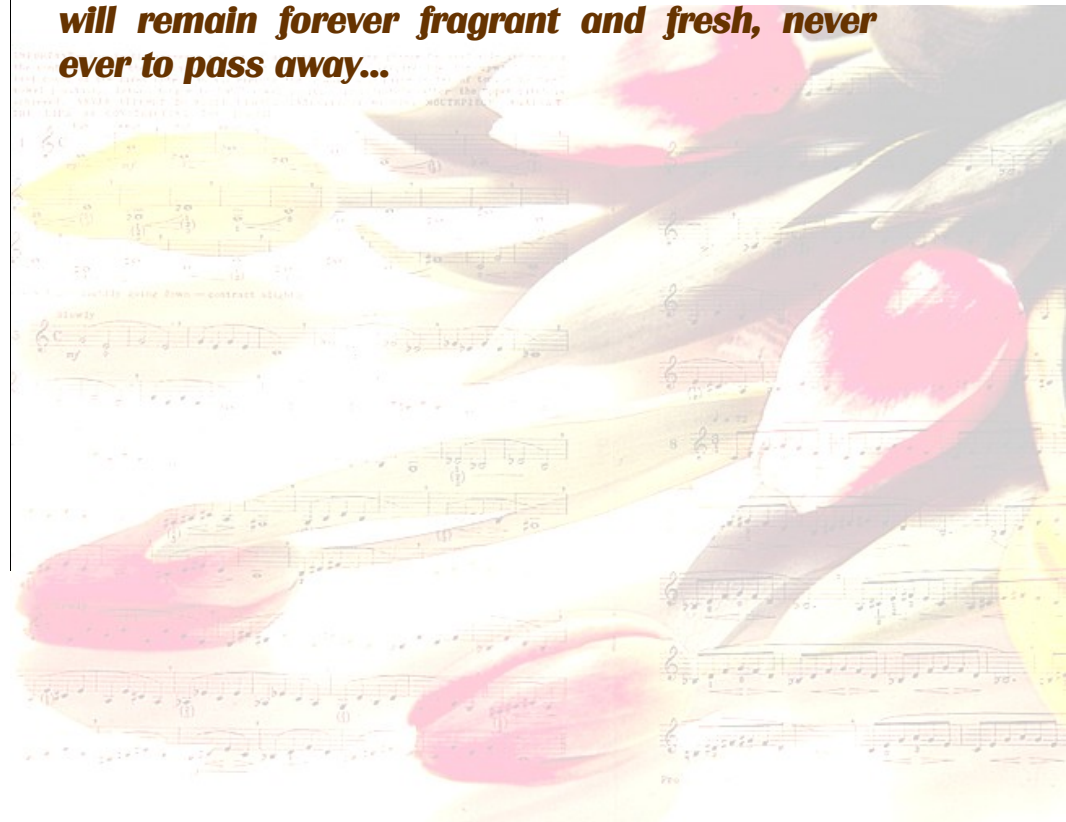


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***“I walked in the garden of life, caressing soft petals here and there. And lo! After a while they are no more, and my heart bled for each fragrant petal that fell. If every flower withers, never to return to its full blossom, then what good indeed is passing by in the garden of life?”***

***Herein lies my hope: That for every flower that withers, another one blooms within me, one that will remain forever fragrant and fresh, never ever to pass away...***



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### **Poem of One Grieving the Loss of a Loved One**

*where would you go  
that i cannot follow?  
for how long must i wait  
until we meet again?  
what would i do  
in times that i miss you?  
where would i go  
in times when i long to see you again?  
how must i spend  
the nights without you?  
how do i bear  
each morning that you're not there?  
shall i ever smile again?  
will i ever laugh again?  
will i ever face the world again  
knowing that im not alone?  
why must you leave me?  
why must i cry these tears  
when you're not here  
to wipe them all away?  
why must i suffer  
the empty days without my beloved?  
why must i dream  
without you by my side?  
the days shall never be the same again  
i will never be the same again*

*without you  
the life of my soul,  
the joy of my heart,  
the light in my eyes,  
the hope of my dreams,  
the comfort of my lonely nights,  
without you my beloved,  
i grieve and cry,  
i grope and stumble in the dark,  
i weep with all my soul  
i desire with all my heart  
i let go of all of me that you took away with you  
i keep all of you that is in me,  
and will always remain in me  
wherever i may go*

*i wait and pray and hope  
i will look forward to each brand new day  
thankful for all that i've had and will always have  
thankful for the sun that shines again  
believing and hanging on  
believing that life will go on  
it can't help but go on  
it shall go on  
and in so going  
there really is no end  
only mornings and evenings  
and life that never ever ends.*

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## **GRIEVING THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE**

When my grandfather died, the first question that crossed my mind was, "**Shall we ever, as a family, be able to smile again?**"

He was a very kind man, a sweet and loving man who also happened to be a retired Captain of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, a proud veteran of the USAFFE in World War II. I loved him - very much, and regarded him as my very own father. He used to carry me up his shoulders when I was but a little girl. I never saw him mad. He was always calm and gentle, but with that certain kind of strength in him that never needed to be boasted about anymore. Maybe this kind of admiration was the source of my childhood dream of being a lady cadette officer. Well, I didn't realize that dream, but in my heart I knew I've acquired that kind of courage he had, and it sort of stayed with me through the years.

I also admired the kind of love he cherished with my Grandma. Something that lasted for fifty golden years, the 50th year being the year of his demise. I often told myself that theirs was the kind of marriage I fervently pray to have - simple, sincere, lasting, abounding in love, courage and understanding. The day my Grandpa died, my heart broke, not only for my own grief, but for the grief of seeing such a blessed marriage come to a sudden end right before my eyes.

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How indeed are we going to go about our lives after his passing? How do we spend our late evenings without his stories? How do we celebrate Christmas without his jolly smile?

The seat he occupied at dinner will remain vacant thereafter. The sight of him and Grandma embracing each other after a petty quarrel will be nothing more but a sweet memory to look back to.

The funny thing was, I never really considered him old. He had always been strong and healthy and happy. I thought he'd always be there, for me, for my Grandma, for everyone who has ever gotten to know the wonderful person he is. But I guess death is like that. It takes from you in an instant the people you've cherished for a whole lifetime. Just like that. As simple as that. And you are suddenly left with two things: anger for having been deprived of your beloved for no reason at all; and emptiness, a vacuum that gnaws right at your heart where all the joyful moments once had been.

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And how will it be for people who have lost not only their fathers, but mothers, children, both parents, lifetime partners who spent their lives through thick and thin, who dreamt together and journeyed together and found meaning in each other's lives?

How are we to begin grieving for them? Where could we ever find the tears to weep, tears that will pour out and cry in behalf of our torn and shattered hearts?

## **1. Cry**

Find those tears. Try to let them out however painful the process is. Let them out. Let them pour showers that will cleanse away every bit of darkness and bitterness from your heart.

Shy not from crying out aloud. You have every right to be heard, and all the right to be hurt. No one's going to stand in your way even if you wail. Let your cries rise up to the clouds, unto the ears of heaven who understand what sorrow mortal men go through in this valley of tears.

Cry for the pain of parting. Cry for the sad mornings that will greet you without your lover's arms. Cry for the words that shall remain unspoken and unheard. Cry for the places you will never be able to walk together anymore. Cry for the dreams that will remain as dreams. Cry for the memories that will remain as memories. Cry for the hand that can no

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longer caress you. Cry for those eyes that can no longer see your tears.

Cry your heart out. Because the truth is - it hurts, and it really hurts so much!

## **2. Forgive**

There are many things we don't want to admit in times like these; things we believe would only dishonor the memory of our loved one, or things that would dishonor us before their memory. But unless we deal with these things, we would always be burdened by things that should have been buried with passing of our loved ones.

### **a. Forgiving our loved ones**

People are not perfect. No matter how much we love them or no matter how good they are, they may have hurt us at one point or another. They may have judged us and disappointed us. We have to admit how they failed us, and then forgive them with a forgiveness that comes out of the generosity of our hearts. We know that we do not have time anymore, we can no longer wait for them to see their faults and ask our forgiveness. So we forgive them. We let them go with no bitterness in our hearts.

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### **b. Forgiving ourselves**

When our loved ones pass away, there is always a feeling of guilt left in us - how we haven't loved them enough, how we could've saved them, how we could've made them happier. But when we come to think of it, how much more could we have really done though? Even if we could've made a difference, could we be able to turn back the hands of time?

Forgive yourself. Admit your faults, go to confession, slap your face hard, observe fasting for a week, shave your head even! But don't punish yourself forever for being unable to make the proper retribution. You can no longer do that. It's not your fault anymore. Blaming yourself could never earn for you the forgiveness you so desire. If you can't be content in praying for forgiveness alone, if you really believe you still have to do something to be forgiven, then do this - love those people still within your reach. Do this, and you'd have earned more than forgiveness; you'd have loved. Love heals. Love forgives.

### **3. Deal with the pain one day at a time**

Grieving for our loved ones who passed away is probably one of the most painful things we'll experience in life. Deal with it one short day at a time. Don't think of the whole 25 or 50 years ahead of you. Just think of today, and of all the support being given you just where you are. It is times like these when we get to know who our true friends are, people

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willing to extend their hands and their hearts to help see you through. Accept the help given you, and you'll make it today.

### **4. Honor/ treasure their memory**

Many people will suggest to you to move on, which is a fine thing. In the process though, they may also urge you to forget all about the past, and start letting go. Now letting go is not such a bad thing, it could mean giving up all our unrealizable expectations and all of the things we cannot do anymore. But to forget all things completely - to do so would be to start cheating on our true feelings for our beloved who passed away.

We can't just act like we had amnesia all of a sudden. We can't pretend that the things that happened didn't happen, and that the precious moments we've spent with our loved ones don't mean anything to us anymore. Something happened in the past. Souls touched in the past. Lives changed. Souls were inspired.

Our grief is only amplified with the thought that we are forever parting with every remaining essence of our loved ones. That's what makes our mourning even worse, to believe that we are forever losing that part of our lives that changed us and made us happy. Don't throw it all away. When inspiration comes upon you, they need not leave. They never leave. They inspire us forever.

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When my Grandpa died, I thought it was the end of the wonderful love he had with Grandma. But I was wrong. It did not end there. It cannot be ended that way. Up to this moment, I am still a witness on how true love is kept alive in the hearts and minds of those who carry on the radiance of its warmth.

### **5. Think of the legacy they left behind**

I've always thought that when our loved ones go away, they take a part of ourselves with them. It's like a part of us withers away and dies. We feel like an arm or a leg had just been taken away and we can never be whole again. We feel we are lesser people than we used to be. We then wonder why people had to meet at all only to be separated in the end, only to feel broken and incomplete.

But then I've also learned that when people become part of each other's lives, their lives become richer from the whole new world opened before them by one another. They gain a new perspective, they get a deeper understanding of themselves, they learn new skills and hobbies, they discover new places, they get to love a new song. Each one leaves a mark, a precious legacy, a part of their very selves to the people they love.

Even after their lives together had ended, even after one has gone and passed away, that part they have given to us will remain. Because when people become a part of us, a

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part of their own souls remain in us, forever enriching us, and we are never the same as before.

My Grandpa had been gone for 16 years now, but the things he left me, the imprint he left in my soul will always be there, guiding me through my journey ahead. Love of country, courage, dignity, love of family - these are the things I will always be thankful for.

### **6. Schedule activities that help vent out your emotions**

You cried, you wept, you wailed. But as you miss your loved one more painfully with the passing of each day, you feel the emotions within you continue to surge, emotions that need to find a proper outlet to let go.

#### ***Schedule those activities with a friend that will encourage you to perform them:***

- Play badminton, let go of all the hurts you feel everytime you hit the shuttlecock. Hit it hard! Hit it as far as you can.
- Run the treadmill. Everytime you feel the urge to escape, walk tirelessly. Walk like you never walked before. Run. Run and release the pain you keep within you.
- Swim, imagine your tears being washed away. Do your most powerful strokes, and glide away from all the expectations the world thrusts upon your shoulders. Just make sure a trusted friend and lifeguard is watching over you, okey?

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-Grab a crayon and a sketch pad. Draw the abstract feelings you can't and don't want to decipher at the moment. Draw in hard wild strokes. Then tear the sheet in pieces.

### **7. Replenish your soul**

Once the strong feelings begin to subside, replenish your soul with activities that promote peace, wholeness and a fresh beginning.

-Plant a seed and watch the new plant emerge from the ground from which it was buried.  
-Take care of a chick and help it grow into a hen. You can even enjoy the eggs she will lay for you later!  
-Watch a sunrise with a trusted buddy. See how darkness transforms into a magnificent rising of a brand new day.  
-Travel somewhere you've never been to. Get to know the locals and try to enjoy their way of life.

### **8. Give yourself time to adjust and recover**

It will take time for you to carry on your usual routines each day. Just be patient with yourself. One day survived is one day of battle won. The more days you survive, the more confidence you will gain that you will make it.

If it's really difficult for you, you can try to write letters to your loved one as though you were only miles away. This will help you cope with the abrupt change of suddenly not being able to talk with your loved one. This will also

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help keep your life in check as you literally report what you're doing with your life.

### **9. Think of the legacy you wish to leave behind**

The torch has been passed on to you. Your life has been made richer by the legacy you received. What do you do now with what you have? What legacy do you want to leave behind to the people that matter most to you now? Remember that you are now a different person by having been a part of someone's life. Everything you do, any difference that you make in this life is not only because of you, but also because of the one who loved you. When you leave your mark unto this world, you leave a mark formed also by every person that truly touched your life.

### **10. Believe that God will see you through**

God knows your grief. He weeps with you. He hopes with you. He cares for you so much that He willingly died for you to conquer death forever and to give you the perfect and eternal life He wants you to enjoy. Things have not ended here. They have only just begun. Take heart! He will see you through. It is Jesus Himself who said, "The girl is not dead but asleep." (Matthew 9:24)

***When my Grandpa died, I used to doubt whether we can still smile again, now I know the answer: WE CAN***



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***“I Will Smile Again...”***

***I will smile again  
Though tears flow from these eyes  
I will smile again  
And trust tomorrow the sun shall rise***

***Though darkness may enfold me  
Though heavy rain can't help but pour  
Though shattered, lost and broken  
Though heart could barely bear it all***

***Though tired and weary and confused  
Though badly hurt and bruised  
I know that I will smile again  
And I will smile again!***

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***You will smile again!***

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## ***“WHEN YOU’RE IN PAIN”***

***“Yes, I understand why things had to happen this way. I understand his reason for causing me pain. But mere understanding does not chase away the hurt. It does not call upon the sun when dark clouds have loomed over me. Let the rain come then if it must come! And let it wash away the dust that hurt my eyes!”***

***There are times when life suddenly casts a shadow before us: we suffer for sins we did not even commit, we go through situations we certainly do not deserve to be in. In such times, we have so many questions throbbing at the back of our minds, but the biggest of them all is “WHY?”***

***We want to know the reason why we had to go through such excruciating pain. We want to know why we were not able to do anything to prevent the terrible things that happened. We want to know why God failed us, why He let us down at the time we needed Him most.***

***Yet even after we are able to answer these questions, the pain remains, life stands still, and we can do nothing but wait ‘til everything’s over, until we can move on again like we used to, when our hearts weren’t shattered yet into the thousand lonely pieces they broke into. We then come into***

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***answering our second biggest question, and that is “HOW?”***

***How do we deal with the awful feeling of brokenness? How do we start to move on? How on earth are we ever going to smile again?***

***Like many people, I’ve been through dark and painful moments in my life as well, moments I wanted to skip, moments when what I really wanted the most is to have my own time machine so I can either go back where I was happy, or fast forward anywhere in the future where I can find myself again. But no machine like that has ever been invented yet, and the only way to move from the terrible place where I stand is to go through the dark tunnel ahead that will lead me towards the new beginning I’m looking forward to.***

***If you’re willing to go through that dark tunnel with me, let us begin. Let us try to answer the only question that can lead us into a better place. How indeed can we ever deal with our grief?***

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### **1. Accept the challenge and do my best.**

We can never move on anywhere unless we acknowledge where we stand at the moment. Acceptance is the shortest route to peace. Acceptance will help you let go of your WHYs so you can start focusing on your HOWs. Accept that things have already happened. Accept that you can do nothing to turn back the hands of time to undo everything that's already been done. You can blame everyone, you can blame God, you can even blame yourself but that would never change your situation. That would never help you get out of the pit that you're in, the suffering you're going through. Find the way to acceptance, and you can begin to find the strength and the will to move on.

### **2. Rest when I can no longer carry on.**

It is a good thing to cry and mourn for your sorrows. It is good to release your tears, your anger, your pent-up emotions. But there are limits to our powers, to our physical and emotional strength as human beings. We need enough time to rest in order to renew our strength so we can have a better cry next time. Have enough sleep. Force yourself to watch television or buy groceries and give yourself a break. Try to forget your troubles even if only for an hour or so. That way, you do not exhaust yourself to the point where you no longer have enough strength to face the challenges of the coming day. Reserve some of your strength until you are able to make it through.

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### **3. Take comfort in God's greatness, love and strength.**

Many people may criticize me for this. But those who knew torment and have survived from it a better person understand the comfort of knowing someone is there listening to you, someone who understands you, all those hurts you're going through. Someone who doesn't judge you or condemn you, just someone who loves you and trusts you that if you will only hang in there a minute more, you shall surely make it through.

It may be quite ironic, but I have found my greatest joy in the arms of my God in my darkest hour. I felt him hugging me, comforting me, crying with me. He didn't just watch me. He didn't scold me and reprimanded me to get up and be strong and stop being such a fool. He cried with me. He knew my pain and he claimed it as though it were His own.

### **4. Bear the pain and be patient.**

This seems to be the hardest part of all. Pain is pain and suffering is suffering. There is no pill or any kind of painkiller that we can take to prevent us from feeling our hurts. We have to bear it head on and cling to the thought that things will definitely change for the better.

"I have deep sorrow today, and an unclear vision of the future. But nobody ever died of loneliness – only of hopelessness! As long as I have hope, no problem is ever

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too difficult, no night ever so dark that it can prevent the rising of another day!"

There are times when we are so lost in the dark that no matter how hard we try to find our way, we find not the roads we're looking for; no matter how desperately we seek, we grasp not the answers, and we continue to grope in the shadow of the night.

But faint not, and fear not the voices that creep in the dark. For in your hour of need, help shall come upon you. In your moments of greatest fear, a flame of hope shall arise and give you peace. The night is short and the voices will soon fade away. Darkness shall falter and surrender to a brand new day.

Take heart; stand firmly and strong, for it will not be long before the awaited dawn.

### **5. When it is time, stop dwelling on the pain**

There are times when the pain finally subsides, and we are given a chance to move on a notch higher. Finally, we have the chance to break free from our pain. The problem however is that many of us choose to cling to our hurts. We let the pain linger longer than they should. Maybe we got so used to it, we don't know anymore what we're going to do without it. Maybe we feel mad at ourselves and we choose to punish ourselves for the things we thought we did wrong.

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Maybe we're mad at someone else and we want to punish him by punishing ourselves. Whatever it is, it will not help you find your path to living the full life you should be living. Let it go. Let go of your pain and move on.

### **6. Live from day to day. Or if that is too long, from moment to moment.**

There are some wounds that take a longer time to heal than others, and there are some hurts that take a while longer to subside. The important thing is that we stay afloat one day, one moment at a time. Don't think of how hard the whole process is going to be, you'll go nuts doing that! Don't think of all the lonely days ahead of you. They haven't even arrived yet! Just think of the moment. If you can live and make it for the moment, that is all that is needed to make it through.

### **7. Claim the strength God gives me to rise above the situation.**

There is a strength God gives you in times when your strength is no longer enough. However you may call Him, there is a Higher Power that will see you through. I've received it. I've felt it coming just in time when I can no longer see how I'm going to carry on. That is why we should never compare our strength with the weight of our problems. We'd probably make a wrong estimate doing that! There is a strength that comes to you to help you

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overcome whatever you're going through. Wait for it! It will certainly come and will not delay.

### **8. Learn everything I can from the process.**

When we're in pain, we seldom realize what lessons we can learn from the process. Though it is quite understandable why we do not give attention to things like that in times of grief, the truth remains that we do learn many things during our darkest hour. It is a time when everything we know and have ever learned are being challenged in an instant. It is a time when we come to realize what it is we value the most in life. It is a time when we get to understand other people better. Let us take advantage of those times when we see things more clearly than we ever saw them before.

### **9. Protect my joy at all times.**

Sounds crazy doesn't it? This thing you can ignore if you want to, but I believe that joy and sorrow can definitely exist at the same time. Yes, we are hurt. Yes, we're broken. But yes, we know we're going to make it. And yes, we know we'll get out of it better persons than we used to be. Somewhere in our hearts, there is a chamber of joy that should remain intact, untouched, forever guiding us in our most troublesome paths.

It is indeed a painful thing to grow, but afterwards, you will be glad that you have undergone the process. You will feel stronger. You will feel like you have just been released from

your self-made prison. You will carry with you the joy of God being there for you, comforting you in your darkest hour. You will have greater confidence as you learn more about the true beauty that lies within you. And you will move forward in life with greater strides knowing that the things which have caused you pain could no longer touch you and torment you the way it did before. You will overflow in spirit realizing that you have just risen from your former horizon and moved on to greater heights. And you will look forward to His guiding hand that will carry you farther from one God-destined glory to the next

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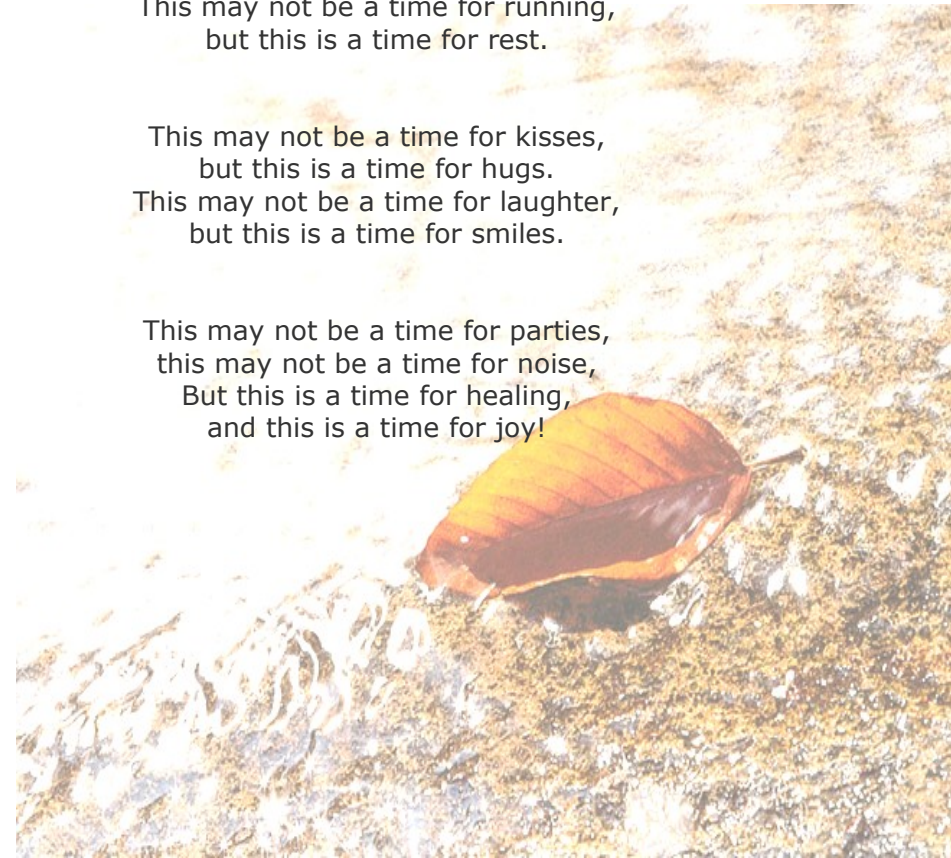
### **A TIME FOR JOY**

This may not be a time for dances,  
but this is a time for prayer.  
This may not be a time for clapping,  
but this is a time for songs.

This may not be a time for merriment,  
but this is a time for awakening.  
This may not be a time for running,  
but this is a time for rest.

This may not be a time for kisses,  
but this is a time for hugs.  
This may not be a time for laughter,  
but this is a time for smiles.

This may not be a time for parties,  
this may not be a time for noise,  
But this is a time for healing,  
and this is a time for joy!



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## **WHY IS MY CROSS HEAVIER?**

Have you ever felt those times when the cross you're carrying seems heavier than it should be? Much heavier than you can bear? Much heavier than the crosses other people are carrying?

Our crosses it seems, vary greatly in the burden and the difficulties they inflict upon us. Why do some crosses appear to be far easier? And why do some appear to be so huge, our trust upon God's wisdom and justice is already shaken to its very core?

We see rich, beautiful people whose only problem it seems, are the next orders they're going to pick from the menu. And then we see beggars who don't even have a place to sleep at when night falls. We see celebrities gambling loads of money in a casino. And then we see parents doing back-breaking work day after day, just so they could send their children to school. We see politicians squandering the wealth of the nation, and getting credit for the small portion of funds spent in useless undertakings. And then we see cancer victims, fighting for their next breath, not knowing where in God's hands they're going to get the amount needed to provide for the family they're going to leave behind.

Where indeed is fairness in this life? Where is the easy yoke we have been promised to bear? Is God already playing

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favorites here?

Oftentimes, when people start asking these questions, the only response they get is something like one of these:

"God works in mysterious ways."

"Stop that! You're doubting God's wisdom."

"See? There is really no God who guides His people. Either He isn't real, or He isn't really good."

I would not be content with those answers though. There must be some answers more satisfying than those. Following are some of the answers I believe in:

### **1. We don't really know the burden people are carrying within**

People may appear happy on the outside, but they may actually be crying terribly within. However well-off they appear to be, secret hurts may just be tearing them apart.

Never ever believe instantly the external strengths you see, the smiles that greet your eyes. For sometimes beneath those smiles are tears, and beneath that strength is a yearning to break out and to be understood.

Do we see people who earn more in a day what we could possibly earn in a year? Do we see people who look so happily established in their married lives? Do we see healthy people who can do whatever they want to do be it mountain climbing or spelunking or sky diving? Do we see them and

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envy them and wish so hard we were the ones in their shoes?

The fact is, there are some things we don't really see. We don't see the sad children whose parents are so busy working their way up the corporate ladder. We don't see lonely wives who have lost their self worth and sunk unto the everyday routine they needed to keep. We don't see consciences being seared just so money can be earned and ambitions can be reached. We don't see hearts crying out in loneliness amidst all the external blessings the world believes them to possess.

We don't see many things. Surely not the things people wanted to hide. They are the only ones who know the true weight of their crosses, and there is no way we could possibly get in their shoes in order to make a fair comparison with the burdens we carry upon our shoulders.

## **2. We sometimes carry crosses that are not really ours**

If you feel you're carrying so much more burden than you could possibly bear, pause for a while and ponder whether the cross you're carrying is your own cross and not another one's burden.

Ask yourself, "Is this cross the one God really wants me to bear? Or is this suffering something I have only insisted on inflicting upon myself?"

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There are many crosses we insist on carrying, loads we are not suppose to carry in the first place. Due to our stubbornness however, we refuse to let it go.

We refuse to forgive the people who have hurt us, because we do not believe they deserve to be forgiven. We refuse to forget our past wounds because we want to get even with those who have caused us pain. We refuse to lay our burdens to God because we don't trust Him enough to believe everything will be taken care of. Sometimes we even refuse to let other people carry their own crosses because we believe we are the only ones capable of doing the right thing.

Carry only your own cross, my friend. That is all that is asked of you.

## **3. We do not see that our crosses are in proportion to the strength given us**

We may be carrying a far bigger cross upon our shoulders, but have we ever cared to know the resources given us to be able to carry that cross? We were so busy comparing the size of our crosses with our neighbors', but have we ever cared to compare the strength we have with the strength that they possess?

My friend, the cross given you is in direct proportion to your strength. The pain you bear is in direct proportion to the



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tolerance that you possess. We may be carrying different kinds of burdens, but we cannot really say that the difficulty we encounter are far different from the troubles others are going through.

Are you in pain? So am I. Were you hurt? So have I. But you can never say you were more hurt than I have been because you have never ever been me, not even for a single moment. You do not have my weaknesses. You do not have my strengths. I do not have the wealth of your previous experiences. And I do not have the people who support you in your hour of need.

Stop comparing one another's crosses, because in truth, there is no way that we can really be able to compare them.

#### **4. We do not avail of the unlimited strength being offered by God to help us carry our cross**

There are many times when all that we can see are the huge crosses we carry upon our shoulders. We see how weak we are. We see how tired and exhausted we have been. But we do not see God's hand reaching out to help us. We do not see the strength being offered us when our own powers are no longer enough.

Maybe our financial condition is just enough to feed one child, but just when we're least expecting it, another one comes along contrary to what we have planned. Maybe we feel so alone, and the only person who has ever been there

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to support us suddenly leaves, never ever to return. We feel helpless and broken. And we do not have the strength anymore to face the challenges that come our way.

It is during these times that we should keep our hopes up and believe that a Higher Power will see us through. Help will come just in time, just when we needed it, just when we have given our last ounce of strength.

You may think of how limited your resources are at the moment, but a better opportunity may already be on its way. You may think you've lost everyone who has ever cared for you, and yet the one who will love you like you've never been loved before may just be standing outside the door, knocking, hoping you would just open the door and let him in.

There is a God who watches over us, and who sends His angels before us to guard us and to guide us along the path He has prepared for us. He will never let us down. He will not give us crosses too heavy for us to bear. And just when we think our crosses are getting bigger, He will give us more strength, more power than we believed we could ever possess. So just hang in there a minute more. Hope. Believe in miracles. They still come true, you know.

#### **5. We see no purpose in carrying our crosses**

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you want to come with me, you must forget yourself, carry your cross, and

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follow me. (Matthew 16:24)

“Follow me.” That’s what Jesus said. And in following Him, we are to forget ourselves and carry our crosses. Our goal would be to follow Jesus, not to be able to carry our crosses.

Have you ever had such a great drive to achieve a dream? A drive so great you are tremendously inspired to reach for your dream whatever sacrifices you may have to make along the way? Have you ever had such a loved one, someone so special you were willing to undergo hell just so you can always be with the person?

It’s the same with **carrying our crosses**. Carrying our burden is merely incidental to our true goal. We must be passionate enough, enamored enough, enthralled, raptured, captivated, powerfully moved in following our life mission, it doesn’t matter whatever difficulties may come along. We know we could overcome anything, for the prize ahead is worth far more than the sacrifices we are to make along the way.

We have to know our purpose and our destiny. Otherwise, we would just be focusing on our crosses, complaining how heavy and difficult they are.

It is only in being driven towards our greatest and utmost passions and desires that we are able to forget ourselves and bear the burdens we never knew we’d be capable of

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The crosses that come our way were never meant to hinder us from reaching our God-given destiny. They were meant to help us and strengthen us so we can be the kind of persons we are supposed to be. The greater one’s cross is, the greater is the opportunity and the gift attached to it, if only we could take our eyes off our suffering for a moment, and see the blessings being poured upon us in the process.

**Every test that you have experienced is the kind that normally comes to people. But God keeps his promise, and he will not allow you to be tested beyond your power to remain firm; at the time you are put to the test, he will give you the strength to endure it, and so provide you with a way out. (1 Cor. 10:13)**

***Come to me, all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke and put it on you, and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in spirit; and you will find rest. For the yoke I will give you is easy, and the load I will put on you is light. (Matthew 11:28)***

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## ***“BIRTH PAINS”***

Sometimes I wonder why we have to undergo living in an imperfect world such as ours. If there is really a God, is He powerless to bring us immediately into the perfection we desire? I believe God can surely do it, were it not for the gift of freewill He has bestowed on every man. For if He immediately brings us to such a state, wouldn't it be His will anymore and not ours?

But what good is that will, you may argue on. Isn't there more disaster in it than blessing? Isn't the evil and suffering around us proof enough of the doom it has brought upon His creatures?

Birth pains, my friend. Only birth pains, with which His children shall be born. For without it, all that God can ever make are puppets with no real right to their Divine heritage.



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## ***“HOW DO YOU CARRY YOUR CROSS?”***

You've accepted your cross, you've welcomed to carry it with all your heart, you believed that the difficulties that loom in calvary is nothing compared to the glory that awaits you. Still my friend, you have to carry it, you chose to, and the burden you will carry is a reality you will go through, not an illusion you can skip or vanquish with the best and purest of your intentions. How do you carry your cross? How do you remain steadfast to the very end?

I believe that if there is anyone who can show us how, it is Jesus himself. It wasn't until recently though that I truly believed in the reality of his suffering, in the turmoil he felt within as a man to give him the full credit due for his sacrifice. I guess I've always seen him in my mind as a God more than I've seen him as man. In my mind I'd say, "I can't do it, I'm not God. I'm not as strong, I'm not as good, I'm not as holy."

Surely I was familiar of what he went through; I thought I was. It was something I've always been familiar of, being in a predominantly Catholic country, and having performed church practices such as praying the rosary and the stations of the cross during holy week, not to mention the PASYON, a holy week practice in the Philippines where people gather and recite the passion of Jesus through singing that goes on for days.

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Yet not even Mel Gibson's THE PASSION OF CHRIST, which enabled me to vividly see the severe physical tortures Jesus went through was able to convince me of following his last footsteps as a model which a mere person like me can take. He was still a God, someone who though experiencing all those pains he had should have had more holiness in him than all of us combined to carry him over his ordeal.

It was only at a latter time when I've experienced some rather difficult times that enabled me to really understand. It was a time when I felt so alone. It was a time when I felt that even God had abandoned me.

And then I remembered. I remembered one of the few words Jesus said at the cross, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" And then I realized, that what Jesus went through was real, what turmoil he felt was real as to make him say those words. He who knew his mission so clearly, He who believed He would rise again, He who performed great miracles in the presence of many was able to utter those words. How could he utter it had he not been a man, as real and as born of the flesh as you and me?

He struggled, he really did. It had not been any easier for him. It had not been any less painful. He knew the weight of his cross, he took it, he cried out in pain, and he struggled to carry it to the very end. How did he carry it? Let's try to walk the path of the cross where he tread.

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### **1. Jesus falls but he perseveres**

Feeling all wonderful inside for our God-given mission and deciding to carry our cross that comes along with it doesn't mean we'll never encounter any difficulties anymore in carrying it. Along the way our faith may be challenged, along the way this world may wear us down and we waver in our stance. In our weakness we may stumble and fall. At times we fall slightly, at times we fall real hard we don't know if we could ever get up again. But let not such times discourage us. Let it not imprint in our minds that the cross we carry is **heavier than we can bear**. Accept that such things happen. And that what matters really is not how hard or how many times you fall, but how you get up and carry on.

### **2. Jesus gets hurt but he forgives**

Jesus was mocked, scourged, spat upon, even nailed! Add to that how he was abandoned by his friends, how he was betrayed, how Peter denied he even knew him. Jesus had all the right to be angry, to be furious at all those people who hurt him, especially with those he called his friends. He had every right to, and I believe he struggled with such feelings that naturally comes upon every man. Yet he didn't. He decided to forgive.

When I was younger I thought this was only because he was a God, that it was all a sign of his goodness and

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righteousness. Now I know such an act is not necessarily reserved for him alone. Now I know that this is something I'm being called upon to do not merely to be good, but moreso because this is what's good for me to do.

The burden of the cross is already enough for you to bear. You cannot carry additional loads with you. Not your grudges, not your anger, not your bitterness. If you are to carry your cross, you must learn to forgive, and unload that burden from your heart.

### **3. Jesus was in pain yet he encouraged another**

All of us carry a cross of our own, but that doesn't mean we are already excused from showing concern for one another, and from sharing our hopes to those who have none. When the thief asked Jesus to remember him, Jesus never said, "Hey, can't you see I'm also crucified over here? Can't you see I'm dying too? Why don't you mind your own nails and let's talk about that paradise later when I'm no longer in pain?"

None of those words many of us might have said in disgust. But rather, in the midst of all his pain, thirsty and wounded, drenched with his own blood, Jesus uttered, "Today, you will be with me in paradise."

### **4. Jesus struggles to the point of feeling forsaken, but he rises above his feelings and rests his trust upon the Father**

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In your despair, in times when the difficulties around you seem greater than the flame of hope that remains burning within you, in moments when you can't even feel God's presence anymore, believe it or not my friend, but even in such a time, we still have a choice.

We can choose to be angry, we can choose to give up all hope, we can choose to have a soul far darker than the darkness surrounding us. We can choose to go spiralling downwards and sink forever in our misery.

But we can also choose to protect what little hope we have left. Though we cannot change the darkness outside of us, we can choose to have a little light burning deep within our soul. We can choose to cling on to that remaining sign of life in our hearts. We can choose to surrender when we know we've done our best and we can no longer carry on. Jesus did. For how can someone who cried out, "My God, why have you abandoned me?" say later on, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit"? How could he have said that to the same God he felt had forsaken him if he had not been convinced God had been there for him all along?

It was a very close call. But Jesus chose life in the midst of darkness. He conquered even death. He was victorious. He rises again and lives!

The cross is real, as real as Jesus himself experienced it. He showed us the way to carry it, thus making the rough

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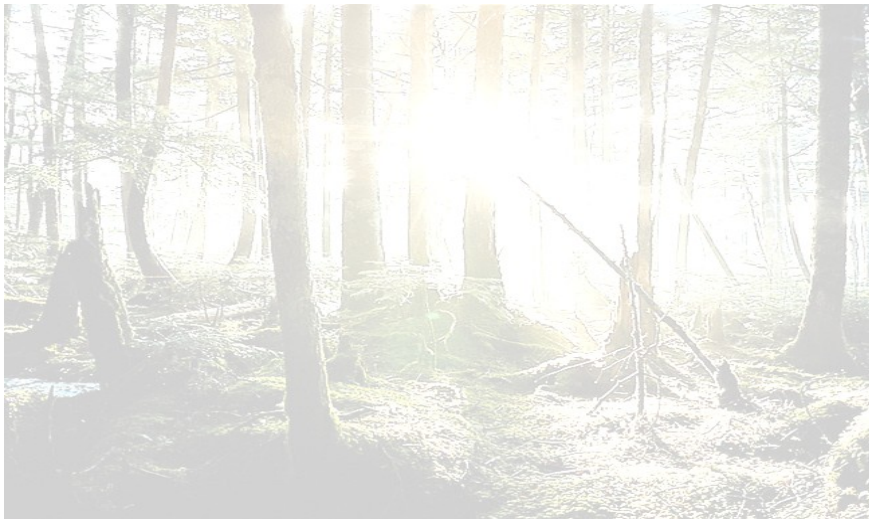
symbol of shame and death **a true emblem of trials overcome, of light in the midst of darkness and of faith that triumphs no matter what kind of burden we bear upon our shoulders.**

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### **THE SKILL OF CATCHING JOY**

If there is one skill God wants me to learn, it is the skill of being able to find joy out of life's varied situations. It is true that life often presents to us things that frustrate us, irritate us and trouble us. But life also presents us things to be happy about and to be really grateful for. We need only to find these things, separate them from the dross, and focus our hearts upon the treasures we can find.

If you are to stand in front of a crowd who starts throwing both stones and jewels at you, will you not try to evade the stones and then try catching as many jewels as you can? Will you weep because of the stones, or will you rejoice for the jewels that you find? Surely, I believe the time shall come, when joy stands so firm in our hearts that we can even turn the stones coming our way into sapphires and emeralds, into diamonds and pearls, into treasures beyond any measure or price!



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## **“HOW DO YOU SAVE SOMEONE WHO IS LOST IN THE DARK?”**

Someone groans in the darkness. Someone cries endlessly and writhes in terrible pain. Someone wants to find her way out of the pit she's sunk into, but she's frozen in fear and does not know the way. How do you save her? How do you bring her into the light?

Shall you shout unto her and tell her she's got to get up and try to find her way out? Shall you direct her shaking knees to go to the left, to the right, make a u-turn, crawl under, jump, tread the narrow and winding path that lies before her?

Shall you encourage her how wonderful it is to bask in the light? Or shall you tell her stories of people who made it through the difficult path she's going through?

Shall you tell her to group with the hopeless man nearby? Shall you tell them to lead each other out of the pit they're both in?

You must have guessed it. There is no other way but to go into the darkness where she is and lead her back into the light!

No, it's not an easy thing, never will be. But if we are to truly desire to share the happiness we have where we are,

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we must be willing to leave it for a while so we can accompany those who do not know their way.

Are they in poverty? Then you must be willing to eat the bread of the poor. Are they in prison? Then you must be willing to sleep where homeless men dwell. Are they weeping? Then you must be willing to have your heart broken, so you may understand, and so you may not judge where their tears are coming from.

But make certain also that you bring enough light with you; otherwise, you will both be stranded in the darkness.

Bring as much light as you can, as much joy in your heart as you can possibly save. For it will usually be a long journey, and you do not want your light to be swallowed up by the deep darkness that will surround you.

Be prepared for opposition, especially from the one you're trying to help. Change is never an easy thing, and fear is probably the greatest enemy to overcome.

Keep the vision of your home always fresh upon your memory. Do not forget who you are, where you came from, and for what you have set forth to accomplish. Otherwise, the people around you, who do not know of it may convince you that the darkness you see is all that's ever existed.

Such is the way to rescue someone who is lost, and such is the way each and every one of us have all been saved.



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For God Himself stripped His Glory and Divinity, becoming flesh and man like us, that He may bring upon this dark and lonely world an inextinguishable flame of hope, and life beyond everything we've ever hoped to have.

I have never heard of any other God who would do the same so He can save His people, who would do the only thing possible to bring them all into the Light, which they do not know.

And yet that was what He did. He knew hunger for us. He knew how it was to be tempted. He laughed, He got angry, He wept. He was judged, and mocked and betrayed. He knew how it was like to be deserted by all of His friends in His darkest and most painful hour. He even knew how it was like to die. He who is Life itself, has hung upon the cross until His very last breath had been taken away from Him.

All these He did that we may understand and believe, and that we may know what we should pray for. Heaven is so far above us that we could not possibly figure it out no matter how hard we try. We needed to witness the truth right before our very eyes. We needed to be healed so we may know wholeness. We needed to be truly loved so we can give true love away.

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***How do you save someone who's lost in the dark? Take a very good look at the cross today, you may just realize what it really takes.***

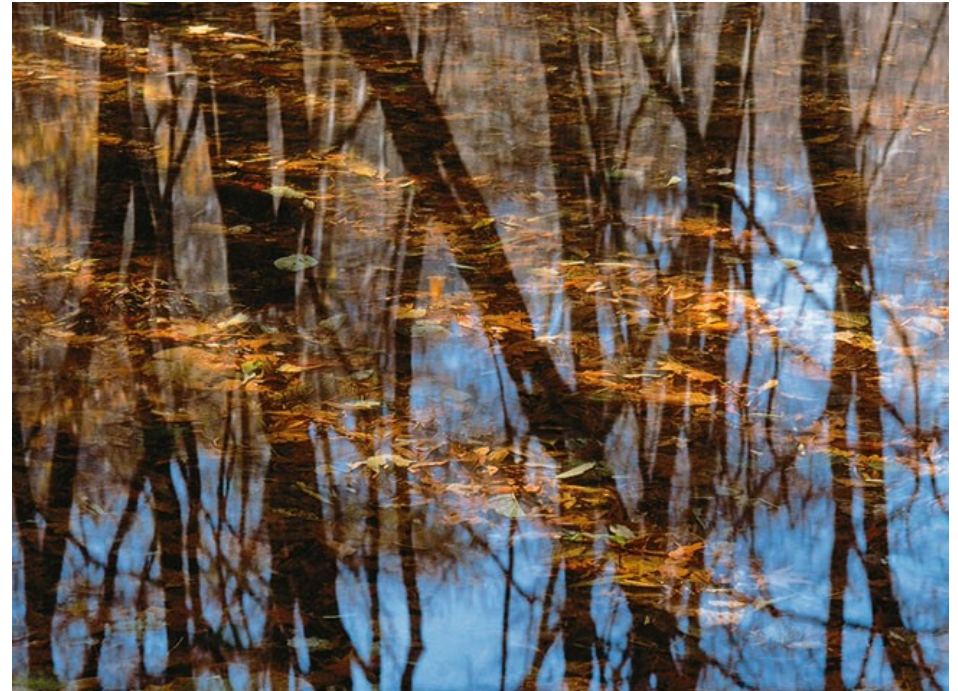
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## **WHAT DO YOU SEE IN THE EYES OF SORROW?**

Have you ever looked unto the eyes of true sorrow, the kind that is free of any bitterness or regret, the kind whose tears are so pure it cleanses your soul? If you'd have looked carefully, you must have seen the resemblance, how the eyes of sorrow so closely resemble the eyes of purest joy. How they both touch us and move us to be our better selves; and how they both give meaning to the life we're living in today.

Why are we so afraid then of sorrow? Why pretend you're happy when what you really wanted to do is cry? There is more to life than laughter. There is more to life than the absence of difficulties that try our spirit. For trials give unto us a gift, which comfort can never bequeath upon us. And above all laughter are tears that tell us our souls have just been sanctified.

In truth, the most beautiful moments in our lives are the moments when both joy and sorrow dwell upon our hearts, embracing us, moving us, creating a tapestry of holiness and love, forever enriching us and blessing us through the mystery and power of our tears.



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## **PRAYER OF LETTING GO**

*Dear Jesus, I come to you now with a broken heart and a weary spirit. I don't know how I can carry on each day knowing that a part of me had already gone, never ever to return. Can I ever be complete again? Can I ever smile again at the coming of a new day? Day after day I miss him more and more. Day after day my longing grows but it can never be fulfilled. How can I possibly live my life again? How do I overcome this feeling that I am now all alone and I shall always be alone or the rest of my life? The places we've been to, the celebrations we had together, they will never be the same. The emptiness in my heart is so big I can no longer breathe sometimes.*

*Help me O God! The pain of separation seems more painful to me than death itself. I don't know how much longer I can carry on. Help me carry on this day Lord. Though I may not forget, help me to remember how you have always carried me through. Though the pain may not yet go away, assist me in carrying this cross with hope in my heart.*

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*Let me not forget the people who love me and assist me in this hour of need. May I find strength in them, consolation in the generosity of their hearts. And whenever I'm afraid, let there always be a hand to hold on to, a smile to brighten up my path.*

*Send down your angels Lord and may I recognize your hand upon your every gift and blessing. Give me something to do that I may not feel useless, yet teach me also to rest knowing all will be well after the long dark night. You are my Rock and my Provider, Savior and Defender, Friend and Lover who will never ever let me down. You will lead me through this day. You will fill my every hour with peace, my every moment with thoughts of your love. I cannot bear the burdens of tomorrow but I will offer you all that I have today. Today is yours O God. This moment is yours. Embrace me and take my hand. I am in your heart. I am safe. I am loved.*

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## **LET GO**

Let go of your tears,  
and you will see the light.  
Let go of your worries,  
for tomorrow is alright.

Let go of your troubles,  
or you might lose your peace.  
Let go of your fears,  
and you will find your dreams!

You will find your life,  
is more meaningful to live.  
You will find your burden,  
getting lighter like your soul.

You will find happiness,  
always waiting on your way.  
You will find heaven,  
getting nearer each day

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## **“WHEN GOD PRAYS”**

*Have you ever wondered what kind of prayer God would ever pray? You heard it right, we're talking about God's prayer, and you're definitely not reading an article from an atheist, but from a sinner who truly believes in the Living God. I believe in God. I believe He listens to our every prayer. But the real question is, do we ever listen when God prays?*

**My beloved, why do you cry? Why do you fill your heart with gloom and hopelessness? Why do you hide from me? Why do you bear this burden that is not yours? Was the night so long you never thought it would surrender to another sunrise? Was the winter too cold you never thought you could feel warm ever again? I am deeply troubled with your troubles. I am utterly concerned that I could not sleep. I know your wounds for they are mine as well. I know your tears and I would like to take them away.**

No reply.

**My beloved, it's been so long since I heard your voice; so long since you poured out your heart to me. How I long to hear them once again. How I missed it! How I**

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**miss the songs you used to sing. How I miss you! How I yearn to enjoy your presence once more.**

No reply.

**My beloved, has the world deafened the ears that used to listen to my voice? Has the noise of the world been so loud you couldn't hear my gentle whisper? How I'd like to shout upon you like thunder! To reach out to you like the crashing waves! But it is not my way, beloved. I am not among the fire nor the lightning nor the storm. I am the soft breeze that whispers unto you with unfailing love.**

I do not have the love that you have, or the patience that you have for me. I do not care if you bring me fire or thunder or rain for it is just the same! This life is not good to me. It would have been better had I not been born at all!

**Why do you despise life; life that I have given you? Have I not formed you in your mother's womb? Have I not chosen you before the birth of the earth? Have I not fashioned you intricately, passionately, wonderfully, uniquely, perfectly beyond any conceivable thought or miracle? Have I not breathed on you? Have I not given you my own heart? Have I not made you in my own glory and immortality?**

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I can see no beauty whatsoever in the creature that I am.

There is no hope for me for I am wretched and most unfortunate of men. Men will never look upon me with admiration or respect. Men would never even notice me, for who am I? Who am I that anyone should care about me?

You say you fashioned me. You say you breathed your life unto me, but I have none. Death has more mercy for one such as me.

**Why do you choose death? Why prefer darkness to light? Sorrow over joy? Despair over hope? Have I not given you freewill? Have I not given you a mind such as my own?**

Freewill belongs only to those blessed upon the earth. Men such as me have no choice whatsoever. Why hope when you will be frustrated in the end? Why desire light when you cannot prevail over darkness?

**My beloved, have I not given you strength? Have I not poured out Wisdom unto you? Have I not armed you with everything you need to face the battles of this world? And have I not come before you and claimed victory over the war you cannot win?**

Why do you talk to me? Don't you have any other business

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to take care of? Why waste your time on me when you can convince a multitude with your words? I am not your only love. I am not the only one you care about so be gone from me! I am nobody's beloved.

**Why do you not trust my heart? Do you not know the love I have for you? And why send me to the crowd when my beloved is here? I leave the ninety-nine sheep for the one I seek. For the one which can never be replaced. For the one whom I will hide in the shadow of my wings. For the one whose name is written forever in the palm of my hand.**

You speak so wonderfully as though it is the truth. As though you know how I feel.

**There is no truth but I. And the truth is that I have loved you so much that I despised my life so you can have yours.**

What is this life you're talking about anyway? If there is heaven, why don't you bring me there? It is different to walk the face of the earth. It is different to face the people that I face. To struggle with the problems I'm going through. To remain standing when a thousand await for me to stumble so they can trample upon me. So they can spit

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on my face when they have the chance. Where is the glory you're talking about? They do not even respect me. Where is hope when I don't even know which road to take?

**What is it that you want, my child?**

No reply.

**What is it that you desire me to give you?**

No reply.

**Why do you not knock upon the door which waits to be opened up for you? Why do you not ask for the grace that was meant to be yours? Why do you content yourself with garbage when you can seek a treasure, which nobody can ever take away from you?**

I am just so tired and worn out. I don't even have the strength to argue with you anymore.

**Then what is it that you want, my beloved?**

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I'm just so lonely; I wish there could be someone to hold my hand.

***He holds our hand.***

***He carries us when we can carry on no more.***

***He restores our strength.***

***He renews us.***

***He picks up the broken pieces of our hearts and mends it***

***as though it were never broken at all.***

*God speaks, God seeks us in the darkest chambers of our hearts. God longs to hear us, to touch us and comfort us at times when we needed it most. But we are cold and tired and deaf. We hear Him knocking, but we dare not open the door. We hear Him praying, but we pretend not to have heard it, and we turn away.*

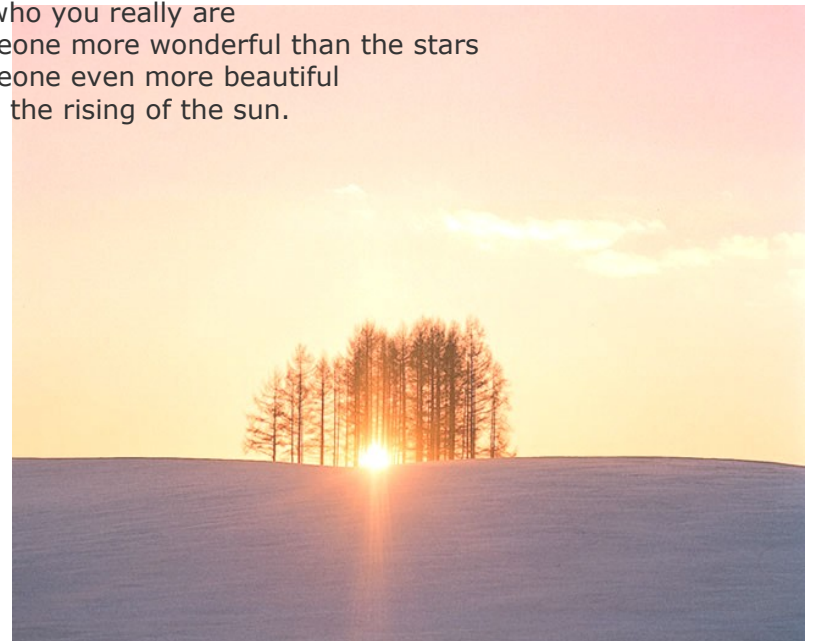
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## ***“BE STILL”***

Be still my heart  
and let your troubles melt away  
You are loved  
You are free  
Yours is the earth and more  
for great indeed is your inheritance  
You need not be troubled  
You need not fear of anything  
You need not wear yourself out anymore  
by efforts that have brought you nothing  
You need only to rest  
to trust  
to believe  
that everything's going to be just fine  
It will be taken care of by the Hand of God  
Your prayer has been heard  
even before it had been uttered  
Your desires shall come to be  
and no one can steal your dreams away  
No one can snatch you away  
from the Love of God  
for you are His  
and His alone  
forever  
Be still  
and rest your weary soul

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Let not your confidence lay  
upon the workings of the flesh  
but upon the power of the spirit  
whose power is greater  
in times when you rest  
than in the many days that you toil  
Be still  
be whole  
be joyful  
just where you are  
for who you really are  
someone more wonderful than the stars  
someone even more beautiful  
than the rising of the sun.





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### **THE MISSION OF LITTLE CHILDREN**

**(An Excerpt from "The Crown of Thorns – A Token for the Sorrowing by E.H.Chapin)**

*One of the discourses in this volume-"The Mission of Little Children"--was written just after the death of a dear son, and was published in pamphlet form. The edition having become exhausted sooner than the demand, it was deemed advisable to reprint it; and accordingly it is now presented to the reader, accompanied by others of a similar cast, most of them growing out of the same experience.*

III. Children waken in us new and powerful affections. Nobody but a parent can realize what these affections are, can tell what a fountain of emotion the newborn child unseals, what chords of strange love are drawn out from the heart, that before lay there concealed. One may have all powers of intellect, a refined moral culture, a noble and wide-reaching philanthropy, and yet a child born to him shall awaken within him a depth of tenderness, a sentiment of love, a yearning affection, that shall surprise him as to the capacity and themystery of his nature.

And the relation of a mother to her child; what other is like it? Without it, how undeveloped is the great element of affection, how small a horn of its orb is filled and lighted! What was she until that new love woke up within her, and her heart and soul thrilled with it, and first truly lived in it? Of all the degrees of human love, how amply is this the highest! In all the depths of human love, how surely is this

the nethermost! When illustrations fail us, how confidently do we seize upon this! The mother nurturing her child in tenderness, watching over it with untiring love! O! that is affection stronger than any of this earth. It has a power, a beauty, a holiness like no other sentiment. When that child has grown to maturity, and has gone out from her in profligacy and in scorn; when the world has denounced him, and justice sets its price upon his head, and lovers and companions fall off from him in utter loathing-we do not ask, we know, there is one heart that cannot reject him. No sin of his can paralyze the chord that vibrates there for him. No alienation can cancel the affection that was born at his birth, that pillowed him in his infancy, centred in him its life, clasped him with its strength, and shed upon him its blessings, its hopes, and its prayers.

And no one feels the death of a child as a mother feels it. Even the father cannot realize it thus. There is a vacancy in his home, and a heaviness in his heart. There is a chain of association that at set times comes round with its broken link; there are memories of endearment, a keen sense of loss, a weeping over crushed hopes, and a pain of wounded affliction. But the mother feels that one has been taken away who was still closer to her heart. Hers has been the office of constant ministrations. Every gradation of feature has developed before her eyes. She has detected every new gleam of intelligence. She heard the first utterance of every new word. She has been the refuge of his fears; the supply of his wants. And every task of affection has woven a new link, and made dear to her its object. And when he dies, a

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portion of her own life, as it were, dies. How can she give him up, with all these memories, these associations? The timid hands that have so often taken hers in trust and love, how can she fold them on his breast, and surrender them to the cold clasp of death? The feet whose wanderings she has watched so narrowly, how can she see them straitened to go down into the dark valley? The head that she has pressed to her lips and her bosom, that she has watched in burning sickness and in peaceful slumber, a hair of which she could not see harmed, O! how can she consign it to the chamber of the grave? The form that not for one night has been beyond her vision or her knowledge, how can she put it away for the long night of the sepulchre, to see it no more? Man has cares and toils that draw away his thoughts and employ them; she sits in loneliness, and all these memories, all these suggestions, crowd upon her. How can she bear all this? She could not, were it not that her faith is as her affection; and if the one is more deep and tender than in man, the other is more simple and spontaneous, and takes confidently hold of the hand of God.

Thus, then, do children awaken within us deep and mighty affections; and is it not their mission to do so? Do we not see many beautiful offices created and discharged by these affections--tender and far-reaching relationships into which they run? Do we not see how they win the heart from frivolity and selfishness, and make it aware of duties, and quick with sympathies? I shall not enter into detailed considerations of the results of this affection thus awakened in us by children. A little reflection will render them obvious

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to you. Let me simply say, that in awakening these affections children discharge an important and beautiful mission.

IV. I might speak of other offices discharged by little children; of the influence upon us of their purity and their innocence; their importance in the social state; of the benefits conferred upon us by the very duties which we exercise toward them. But merely suggesting these, I will speak at this time of but one more mission which they perform for us. and this, my friends, is performed through sadness and through tears. The little child performs it by its death. It has been with us a little while. We have enjoyed its bright and innocent companionship by the dusty highway of life, in the midst of its toils, its cares, and its sin. It has been a gleam of sunshine and a voice of perpetual gladness in our homes. We have learned from it blessed lessons of simplicity, sincerity, purity, faith. It has unsealed within us this gushing, never-ebbing tide of affection. Suddenly, it is taken away. We miss the gleam of sunshine. We miss the voice of gladness. Our homes are dark and silent. We ask, "Shall it not come again?" And the answer breaks upon us through the cold gray silence, "Nevermore!" We say to ourselves again and again, "Can it be possible?" "Do we not dream?" "Will not that life and affection return to us?" "Nevermore!" O! nevermore! The heart is like an empty mansion, and that word goes echoing through its desolate chambers. We are stricken and afflicted. But must this, should this, be always and only so? Are we not looking merely at the earthly aspect of the event? Has it not a

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spiritual phase for us? Nay, do we not begin to consider how through our temporal affection an eternal good is wrought out for us? Do we begin to realize that in our souls we have derived profit from it already? Do we not begin to learn that life is not a holiday or a workday only, but a discipline,--that God conducts that discipline in infinite wisdom and benevolence,--mingles the draught, and, when he sees fit, infuses bitterness? Not that constant sweet would not please us better, but that our discipline, which is of more importance than our indulgence, will be more effectual thereby. This is often talked about; I ask, do not we who are called upon to mourn the loss of children realize it,--actually realize that that loss is for our spiritual gain? If we do not, we are merely looking upon the earthly phase of our loss. If we do not realize this spiritual good, we may.

Yes, in death the little child has a mission for us. Through that very departure he accomplishes for us, perhaps, what he could not accomplish by his life. These affections which he has awakened, we have considered how strong they are. They are stronger, are they not, than any attachment to mere things of this earth? But that child has gone from us,--gone into the unseen, the spiritual world. What then? Do our affections sink back into our hearts,--become absorbed and forgotten? O, no! They reach out after that little one; they follow him into the unseen and spiritual world,--thus is it made a great and vivid reality to us,--perhaps for the first time. We have talked of it, we have believed in it; but now that our dead have gone into it, we have, as it were, entered it ourselves. Its atmosphere is around us, chords of

affection draw us toward it, the faces of our departed ones look out from it--and it is a reality. And is it not worth something to make it such a reality?

We are wedded to this world. It is beautiful, it is attractive, it is real. Immortality is a pleasant thought. The spiritual land is an object of faith. But the separation between this and that is cold to think of, and hard to bear. It needs something stronger than this earth to draw us toward that spiritual world; to break some of the thousand tendrils that bind us here. My friends, though many powerful appeals, many solid arguments, cannot break our affections from this earth, the hand of a departed child can do it. The voice that calls us to unseen realities, that bids us prepare for the heavenly land, that says from heights of spiritual bliss and purity, "Come up hither;"--that voice that we loved so on earth, and gladly can we rise and follow it.

Behold, then, what a little child can perform for us through its death! It makes real and attractive to us that spiritual world to which it has gone, and calls our affections from earth to that true life which is the great end of our being, which is the object of all our discipline, our mingled joy and suffering, here upon this earth. That little child, gone from its sufferings of early,--gone

"Gentle and undefiled, with blessings on its head,"-- has it indeed become a very angel of God for us, and is it calling us to a more spiritual life, and does it win us to heaven? Is its memory around us like a pure presence into which no

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thought of sin can readily enter? Or is it with us, even yet, a spiritual companion of our ways? From being the guarded and the guided, has it risen in infant innocence, yet in the knowledge and majesty of the immortal life, to be the guard and the guide? Does it, indeed, make our hearts softer and purer, and cause us to think more of duty, and live more holy, thus clothing ourselves to go and dwell with it? Does it, by its death, accomplish all this? O! most important, most glorious mission of all, if we only heed it, if we only accept it. Then shall we behold already the wisdom and benevolence of our Father breaking through the cloud that overshadows us. Already shall we see that the tie, which seemed to be dropped and broken, God has taken up to draw us closer to himself, and that it is interwoven with his all-gracious plan for our spiritual profit and perfection. And we can anticipate how it will all be reconciled, when his own hand shall wipe away our tears, and the bliss of reunion shall extract the last drop of bitterness from "the cup that our Father had given us."

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## **OUT OF THE DEEP OF SUFFERING AND SORROW**

**(An Excerpt from OUT OF THE DEEP – WORDS FOR THE SORROWFUL by Charles Kingsley)**

*I believe that the wisest plan of bearing sorrow is sometimes not to try to bear it--as long as one is not crippled for one's every-day duties—but to give way to sorrow, utterly and freely. Perhaps sorrow is sent that we may give way to it, and, in drinking the cup to the dregs, find some medicine in it itself which we should not find if we began doctoring ourselves, or letting others doctor us. If we say simply, "I am wretched, I ought to be wretched;" then we shall perhaps hear a voice, "Who made thee wretched but God? Then what can He mean but thy good?" And if the heart answers impatiently, "My good? I don't want it, I want my love!" perhaps the voice may answer, "Then thou shalt have both in time."*

**Save me, O God, for the waters are come in even unto my soul: I am come into deep waters; so that the floods run over me.--Ps. lxxix. 1, 2.**

**I am brought into so great trouble and misery: that I go mourning all the day long.--Ps. xxxviii. 6.**

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**The sorrows of my heart are enlarged: Oh! bring Thou me out of my distress.--Ps. xxv. 17.**

**The Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping: the Lord will receive my prayer.--Ps. vi. 8.**

**In the multitude of the sorrows which I had in my heart, Thy comforts have refreshed my soul.--Ps. xciv. 17.**

Each heart knows its own bitterness; each soul has its own sorrow; each man's life has its dark days of storm and tempest, when all his joys seem blown away by some sudden blast of ill-fortune, and the desire of his eyes is taken from him, and all his hopes and plans, all which he intended to do or to enjoy, are hid with blinding mist, so that he cannot see his way before him, and knows not whither to go, or whither to flee for help; when faith in God seems broken up for the moment, when he feels no strength, no purpose, and knows not what to determine, what to do, what to believe, what to care for; when the very earth seems reeling under his feet, and the fountains of the abyss are broken up.

When that day comes, let him think of God's covenant and take heart. Is the sun's warmth perished out of the sky because the storm is cold with hail and bitter winds? Is God's love changed because we cannot feel it in our trouble? Is the sun's light perished out of the sky because

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the world is black with cloud and mist? Has God forgotten to give light to suffering souls, because we cannot see our way for a few short days of perplexity?

No. God's message to every sad and desolate heart on earth, is that God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all; that God is Love, and in Him there is no cruelty at all; that God is One, and in Him there is no change at all. And therefore we can pray boldly to Him, and ask Him to deliver us in the time of our tribulation and misery; in the hour of death, whether of our own death or the death of those we love; in the day of judgment, whereof it is written--"It is God who justifieth us; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ who died, yea, rather who is risen again, who even now maketh intercession for us." To that boundless love of God, which He showed forth in the life of Christ Jesus; to that perfect and utter will to deliver us which God showed forth in the death of Christ Jesus, when the Father spared not His own Son, but gave Him freely for us; to that boundless love we may trust ourselves, our fortunes, our families, our bodies, our souls, and the bodies and souls of those we love.



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## ***"PRAYER"***

***(By Ella Wheeler Wilcox)***

I do not undertake to say  
That literal answers come from Heaven,  
But I know this--that when I pray  
A comfort, a support is given  
That helps me rise o'er earthly things  
As larks soar up on airy wings.

In vain the wise philosopher  
Points out to me my fabric's flaws,  
In vain the scientists aver  
That "all things are controlled by laws."  
My life has taught me day by day  
That it availeth much to pray.

I do not stop to reason out  
The why and how. I do not care,  
Since I know this, that when I doubt,  
Life seems a blackness of despair,  
The world a tomb; and when I trust,  
Sweet blossoms spring up in the dust.

Since I know in the darkest hour,  
If I lift up my soul in prayer,  
Some sympathetic, loving Power  
Sends hope and comfort to me there.  
Since balm is sent to ease my pain,  
What need to argue or explain?

Prayer has a sweet, refining grace,  
It educates the soul and heart.  
It lends a lustre to the face,  
And by its elevating art  
It gives the mind an inner sight  
That brings it near the Infinite.

From our gross selves it helps us rise  
To something which we yet may be.  
And so I ask not to be wise,  
If thus my faith is lost to me.  
Faith, that with angel's voice and touch  
Says, "Pray, for prayer availeth much."

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