



Rotting Tree... Inextinguishable Hope

By

Jennifer Hope Webster



ROTTING TREE... INEXTINGUISHABLE HOPE

The 18th of December 2000
Sunday
8:30am-2:00pm
The Lord visited me as I penned these words.
Jennifer Webster
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“Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons.”

Deuteronomy 4:9

APPROXIMATELY 33 AD

Be assured my people...Our Lord...the father, the son who is Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are alive today as He was 2000 years ago as well as within the beginning of time.

Do not lose heart...for God is with us.

2000 years ago...written in the New Testament

Acts 1:4-5 (NIV) Jesus said, “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 1:7-9 “He (Jesus) said to them: ‘It is not for you to know the times of dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’ After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.”

This Holy Spirit that Jesus was referring to arrived.....

Acts 2:1-3 “When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from the heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.

2:14-17 “Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people...’”

2:22-28 “Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you know with the help of the wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. David said about him,

“I saw the Lord always before me
Because he is at my right hand,
I will not be shaken.
Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;
My body also will live in hope,
Because you will not abandon me to the grave,
Nor will you let your Holy One see decay.
You have made known to me the paths of life;
You will fill me with joy in your presence.

Acts 2:31-33 “Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right Hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.

Acts 2:36 “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart...”

This brought upon the fellowship of believers in Act 2:42-47
“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

This same Holy Spirit that was poured out in Act 2:33 two thousand years ago is the same God that the 20th and 21st century men speak. C.S. Lewis has so captured for me a beautiful picture of peace while one retreats with our Savior in heaven even in the midst of chaos. I keep this quote upon my desk to remind myself to this very thing, come in out of the wind.

“The real problem of the Christian life comes where people do not usually look for it. It comes the very moment you wake up in the morning. All your wishes and hopes for the day rush at you like wild animals. And the first job of each morning consists simply in Shoving them all back; in listening to that other Voice taking that other point of view letting that larger, Stronger, quieter life comes flowing in. And so On, all day, standing back from all your natural Fussings and frettings; come in out of the wind.”
-C.S. Lewis

John Ortberg in *The Life You’ve Always Wanted* devotes an entire chapter to “The Guided Life: Receiving Guidance from the Holy Spirit.

Pg 140 “So it is possible that God may speak to us and our thoughts may be guided by him without our knowing that is God’s guidance. This happened to Samuel when he was a boy. God spoke to him directly one night, but Samuel did not realize that it was God speaking. Samuel needed the help of Eli the priest to learn to recognize the voice of God.”

1 Samuel 3:1-21 Read quote

Page 141 John Ortberg continues on the subject of receiving guidance from the Holy Spirit:

“Hearing God speak to us is no indication that we are unusually spiritual or mature or important. God is able to communicate with whomever he

chooses.”

“He reveals his thoughts to man.” Amos 4:13

The Valley of the Dry Bones (the people of God in the O.T.)

God makes the dead living once again...it’s really true!

See Ezekiel 37:1-14

Ezekiel, an Old Testament prophet, approached a valley of dead bones.

The dry bones are a picture of the Jews in captivity...scattered and spiritually and physically dead:

“The hand of the Lord was upon men, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. He asked me, ‘Son of man, can these bones live?’

“I said, ‘O Sovereign Lord, you alone know.’

“Then he said to me, ‘Prophesy to these bones and say to them, ‘Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord.’

“So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone by bone. I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.

“Then he said to me, ‘Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live.’ So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet – a vast army.

“Then he said to me: ‘Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, ‘our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.’ Therefore prophesy and say to them: ‘this is what the Sovereign Lord says: O my people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. Then you, my people, will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and bring you up from

them. I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the Lord have spoken, and I have done it, declares the Lord.”

This Old Testament history is powerful and true.

It has been since 1991 that God has change my position on the significance of prayer and the reading of the word of God on a daily basis. My priority was upon ministry prior to sitting before the Lord; I was Martha not sitting at the feet like Mary.

“Busyness in the King’s business is no excuse for neglecting the King.”
Friday, 15th of September 2000 The Daily Walk The World Bible Society

But due to the surmounting stress upon my life I was not able to stand without abiding in Christ, fully devoted to him. In the book of John, Jesus assuredly states: “I am the vine and you are the branches. Apart from me you can do nothing.”

For the next six years I walked through the valley of death...a spiritual battle warned to us in Ephesians 6:10-19 regarding the full armor of God. I spent many days lying prostrate on the floor weeping into a puddle of tears.

“A life watered by the tears of tragedy and suffering often becomes the most fertile soil for spiritual growth.” The Daily Walk The World Bible Society

(Read) Ephesians 6:10-19

But it was then and only then did I realize that the power and glory of Jesus Christ lives today so profoundly as in the days that Peter testified in Acts chapter 2...yet I was the one in awe as my Savior in heaven performed many wonders and miraculous signs before my very eyes. Joel 3:10 in my devotions today capture the very essence of my thought, “Let the weakling say, ‘I am strong!’”

MIRACLE ONE:

Dare to Pray a “Big” Prayer~

I have more to share with you...that will move even the stubborn, non-believer in his seat. In November 26th 1991, God gave us the blessings of another son...YES! Austin was his name...named after the famous car, Aston Martin. (My other son's name is Morgan and my husband's initials are B.M.W. We do love cars!) Breezing forward to the personal trial that I mentioned above in 1992...the trials kept coming. For my sanity and survival, I by choice put on the full armor of God stated in Ephesians 6:11-17...all day...every day. I had to. I was only twenty-seven years old at the time...though my legs trembled and my heart beat a bit faster, I wasn't going to give up!

“For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline (2 Timothy 1:7).” God calls us not to be timid but confident in Him even when all appears to be lost.

In the current adversity, I recalled Biblical history of the Old and New Testament and the stories told of our forefathers. I became a student of the Bible. This gave me faith. These Biblical accounts were not fairy tales...but truths of my brothers and sisters of old.

“You saw the suffering of our forefathers in Egypt; you heard their cry at the Red Sea. You sent miraculous signs and wonders against Pharaoh, against all his officials and all the people of his land, for you knew how arrogantly the Egyptians treated them. You made a name for yourself, which remains to this day.” (Nehemiah 9:9-10)

“Because of your great compassion you did not abandon them in the desert. By day the pillar of cloud did not cease to guide them on their path, nor the pillar of fire by night to shine on the way they were to take. You gave your good Spirit to instruct them. You did not withhold your manna from their mouths, and you gave them water for their thirst. For forty years you sustained them in the desert; they lacked nothing, their clothes did not wear out nor did their feet become swollen.” (Nehemiah 9:19-21)

In February 1992, I confess to the world that my son, three months old, was blind due to glaucoma...unable to be reversed by surgeries administered by doctors. White covered his eyes. The eye pressures

reached their highest at fifty (normal range 9-15), damaging the nerves and eyes permanently. It's like an inflated tire that has too much air and it bursts. Blindness was the result. I had one of two options to make at this time of being informed, depend on my weak and hopeless flesh or hold the right hand of a mighty God.

While sitting in the hospital waiting room, my family was informed by the finest Glaucoma Specialist in the Nation along with the top ophthalmologist within our health system of this heavy burden. My family, husband, and I mourned the loss of sight for our child. These surgeons instructed us that there were fine support systems and blind institutes. They assured us Austin would adapt and so would his family. I don't remember much more. My throat got choked up. I shed the only tear I had left. I'm sure there were prayers, support, and lots of hugs...The people around me left... My mind went limp.

That evening I joined Austin in the hospital room. Even in my utter despair, I was certain that God was in this. I comforted myself, "My Lord would not leave me alone." There was a purpose. I was confident of the unknown. Where did this peace come from? The Holy Spirit! "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-25)."

A Last Plea to God~

I don't remember going to sleep that night at the hospital. I just remember tucking our three month old baby that slept so peacefully in the metal, hospital crib. (I so desperately wanted to crawl over the metal bars that separated us.) This was my child. I was his only advocate...I fought for Austin with a last plea to God begging Him to help us fight against the enemy and heal my son.

A thought came across my mind. I remembered Jesus walking the earth, healing the sick, lame and the blind (Mark 8:22-26). Our Lord said that He leaves for us these same tools through the Holy Spirit. (See Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and the book of Acts on the Life of Jesus and more.) If the Word of God is true (and it is! See: John 1:1) and I believed in the power coming from an Almighty source, I would have to say a prayer...for a little guy, Austin, who couldn't speak for himself. I murmured a simple prayer:

“Lord, if this child will invest his life to unhealthy, unfruitful entertainments such as pornography or sin that will affect negatively the kingdom of God, take his sight. But if the child is to merely be blind for no cause, I ask that he would be anointed and healed.”

I formed the symbol of the cross on Austin’s forehead and kissed him tenderly on the cheek good night.

“...they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.” (Mark 16:18)

The morning came so quickly...I felt so rested in the midst of the trauma of life. The doctor entered the room swiftly making his rounds visiting the patients under his care. I slept all night on a nearby chair which expanded into a bed...Responding to the specialists call, I leapt to the side of the crib. The doctor and I found ourselves peering over the bed rails fixing our eyes intently onto the child who slept so peacefully. It was a tranquil moment...like my Lord’s presence hovering all around us.

The ophthalmologist whispered delicately, “Austin, wake up.” Austin’s little body stretched with ease waking up from a good night sleep. With the power and might that only a living, loving God could, our Lord brought sight to this child. Austin glanced deliberately and slowly throughout the room...turning his head towards mine. He gazed into my eyes and smiled. To my amazement, my son’s beautiful hazel eyes glistened. The white, which formed over his eyes, was gone. The pain from the exposure to light left him! His helpless body with I.V. attachments faded out of sight against his porcelain skin. I had seen the miracle of God upon our fleshly existence. Austin’s sight began a restoration process. I shall treasure that moment forever. No earthly terms could have expressed my exhilaration. Jesus is alive! This one act of supplication has begun to change my thoughts on prayer: (1) ask believing; yet, not doubting, (2) dare to ask God, and (3) ask with the proper motives. This was to form a paradigm shift of my prayer life. I was moved to a Biblical truth.

“...Your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.” (Mark 5:34)

Profoundly, God continues as I pray to heal my son’s vision year by year. Austin was fitted with hard contact lenses in May of 2005. For the first time, he was able to see 20/20. With new health insurances, brings up the questions and evaluations. The ophthalmologists see no damage with their 21st century equipment even with the nerves. It’s as though nothing ever happened. I remain shocked at God’s generosity.

Update: Austin is now 25 years old in 2017. He just graduated from Concordia University with a B.A. in Communication and has a successful full time job. His likability factor in his personality is one of his dominate skills. We continue to have a unified and loving family that is so awesome. He travels and enjoys soccer. I pray you too are moved with this life story.

MIRACLE TWO:

My Sister, Faith, and I caught the Red Eye Flight...from LAX out to see my grandmother in Oklahoma City, USA. We arrived at the hospital and entered a room near the nurses' station. My grandmother lay in bed without medication in a comatose state...the state a day or moment away from death...only the Lord knows man's last hour.

As my Christian sister and I wept over the state of my grandmother, we began to pray healing and rub my grandmothers' body with oil and lotion. What else could we do?

We recalled the beautiful moments with her and laughed at the funny moments of life. Grandpa's great spaghetti dinners, the daily watermelon treats, and bubble baths...the stories went on...the confessions went on. I told my grandmother that my child was not blind. My only wish was that she did not get to see God's healing on a beautiful child, her grandson Austin.

She began to stir and wake...chatting numbers...22 44 58...she pointed to me and gave me a number...my sister, guests and nurses were given a number. We sat in a state of shock.

Numbers became thoughts of World War II. We became people in her past. She asked for her purse and insisted that no one touch it for it contained war rations for butter, eggs, milk, and the oh precious chocolate.

Then my grandmother did the most amazing things...she came to her senses, spoke clearly and soundly, and after 3 days she walked the hallways...yes, you could hear a pin drop. All eyes were engaged on the miracle set before them. Everyone who had been there had seen the hand of God.

Grandma Nina lived another 3 years. She witnessed the healing hand of God...her grandson had sight. She lived to see and touched Austin as he

played with toys near her feet.

It too was her full desire to enter heaven after her husband. Grandpa Jason died a couple years later and she soon followed him into God's eternal glory.

MIRACLE THREE:

My mother-in-law was facing her last days of stomach cancer. Pat lay in bed suffering with cancer. It was obvious that her days were final. She was a "fierce" woman so I was intimidated to share Christ and pray for healing. I was afraid of her quite honestly. In the presence and the conviction that all people deserve the right to know Christ, I went forth to see her. I suppose I felt like Jonah not wanting to be obedient. As I said, Pat was a "fierce" woman and did not uphold my Christian beliefs... and made this known to me...verbally and out loud.

Dragging my steps, I went forth with only the power of Jesus moving my feet. I asked Pat if I could pray and share Christ with her. Before I knew what happened, I was laying hands on her asking God for complete healing of her body, mind and spirit. She accepted Jesus as the Lord of her life...

We did not have this type of relationship...but in the face of death, the desire of living eternally has amazing possibilities with God.

My blessed Pat lived another 8 years...this time not offending my Christianity.

Pat again faced eternity but this time God was calling her home. I was with her in her last 6 months of terminal cancer...but she asked me once again to repeat the sinner's prayer. I did this graciously singing to her many of the precious Christian songs I could remember until she too fell into a coma. I continued to read her the scriptures...I had to say good-bye. It was evident that this time her spirit was to enter heaven. I laid my head on her chest and cried...her hand touched my hair. It was a glorious moment. Pat's soul now rests eternally with Jesus.

God is with us...I look forward to his eternal presence. Revelation 21:3 blesses with me with encouragement:

"Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no

more death or mourning or crying or pain.”

I am once again convicted by Revelation 3:15 which is also my conversion scripture that led me to Christ at the age of 13.

“I know your deed, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm – neither cold nor hot- I am about to spit you out of my mouth.”

I try to grow and mature each and every day of my life eventually accepting my failures along with God’s great mercy and grace.

But I testify that Christ lives today in my heart. The scriptures I study confirm in my soul that they are true. As I write in a prayer journal, I am able to worship God in heaven, confess my of daily sins, thank him for being involved in this world, and pray for all things great and small...the daily duties...to the unexpected expected parts of life.

I expect a miracle...Jesus is my only hope. This is why I urge others to Chat with God. I live because My Lord lives within my heart.

CLOSING.....

Frank Laubach states: page 146 of *The Life You’ve Always Wanted*
“As for me, I never lived, I was half dead, I was a rotting tree, until I reached the place where I wholly, with utter honesty, resolved and then re-solved that I would find God’s will and I would do that will though every fiber in me said no, and I would win the battle in my thoughts. It was as though some deep (artesian) well had been struck in my soul... Money, praise, poverty, opposition—these make no difference, for they will all alike be forgotten in a thousand years, but this spirit which comes to a mind set upon continuous surrender, this spirit is timeless life.”

“The story of the human race is not just one of universal disappointment, but one of inextinguishable hope...the gospel is true...the kingdom of God has come near. Repent, and believe in the good news.” Pg 19 Laubach

AMEN

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