No Suffering Wasted

Bernard Hoon 30 April 2019



It all started in October 2017, during the annual Four12 Conference in South Africa. My left foot was ever so slightly numb, like very, very slight pins & needles, almost imperceptible...almost, but not quite. I ascribed it to the conference, as we were sitting for most of every day through the teachings. I didn't think much of it and it didn't get any worse.

During a routine doctor's visit in February 2018, I asked the doctor about my foot. After checking my back, foot, leg, etc., the doctor concluded that it was probably a pinched nerve in my back. He said I should give it up to 12 months to recover, as nerves take a long time to heal.

A few months later, in July 2018, my foot was more numb than ever, and I began to lose control of it too. My left leg started becoming weak, sometimes buckling out from underneath me as I was walking. It was then that I was referred to a neurosurgeon, who ordered scans of my back, neck and brain. On 28th August 2018, I received a call from the neurosurgeon: the results of my scans arrived.

> We were brought to tears, shocked and devastated by the news

I still remember how I felt when he first told my wife and I that I had a brain tumour, which was damaging the nerves on the left side of my body. We were brought to tears, shocked and devastated by the news, and felt entirely unsure of what the future would hold for us. That being said, even as those tears seemed to overwhelm us, we both still knew that God had not been

caught by surprise. We reminded ourselves that He was in complete control. Matthew 6:26-34 speaks about how valuable we are to God, how God feeds the birds, lets the lilies grow, and how we should not worry about tomorrow. The comfort of those verses would be the start of this journey for us.

After a biopsy and some more scans, the doctors concluded that the tumour could not be removed surgically. The condition is medically incurable, and so their best hope was to slow down the tumour's growth. There was suddenly a life expectancy hanging over me, which was very hard for us to hear and process. Thereafter, I received 6 weeks of brain radiation, which I completed in November 2018. I am now currently on 6 months of chemotherapy, which is due to end in May 2019. I will have another scan in June 2019 to determine the effects of the chemo, after which the doctors will decide what to do next. I have developed epilepsy (possibly from the tumour, possibly from the biopsy), which prevents me from driving until I am epilepsy-free for 6 months (at this point that would be in September 2019), and the nerves to my left leg and foot have been permanently damaged, which impairs my mobility and prevents me from cycling/running etc.

> "Do you only want Me to use you when it's convenient for you? When it's comfortable for you? When it's easy for you? When it's exciting for you?

The storms of life continue to force us into the arms of Jesus, as there is nothing else for us to put our hope in. Jesus says in John 10:10 that He came to give us abundant life. This trial has made us question our understanding of what it really means to have abundant life in Jesus, and it is in the midst of the storm that we have found that, for us, abundant life is to have true comfort, rest, joy and peace in Jesus, despite our circumstances.

In my Christian walk, I have often prayed for God to use me. God spoke to me about this, saying, "Do you only want Me to use you when it's convenient for you? When it's comfortable for you? When it's easy for you? When it's exciting for you? Or are you willing to lay your life down for Me as I laid down My life for you? Are you willing to give Me your all and then trust me with it?" In Phillipians 1:21, Paul says, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain". Could I really say that for me, to die was gain?

"But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh" (2 Corinthinans 4:7-11). Nothing in our journey so far has stood

more like a lighthouse of hope for us as these verses. This has been our prayer right from the start of this journey: that our suffering would not be wasted; that we would never curl into a ball, shrink back and hide behind the diagnosis and its physical effects on my body, but that we would continue to run hard after Jesus, serve Him with everything in us, and shine Him wherever we go and in every situation.

> No matter what we face every day, we have God on our side.

We have many more testimonies of God's goodness over the past few months of our journey, of prayers answered in some way or another, of community rallying around us and carrying us in prayer. As we go through the medical treatments, we continue to pray for healing, for the disappearance of the tumour (which is medically impossible), for the complete restoration of my left leg's nerves and foot (also medically impossible). We haven't seen any healing yet, but as Romans 8:25 says, "But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience". No matter what we face every day, we have God on our side.

Ephesians 2:10 says, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them", and Acts 13:36 says, "For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption". God showed us how we have all been created for His good purposes and that, like David, we will not be taken away from this earth until we have served His purposes and walked out all the good works that He created for us. These Scriptures provide comfort to us – our lives are wholly in the hands of our good, good Father.

> How can we be afraid of bad news if our hearts are firm, trusting in the Lord, in His goodness?

We are trusting that God will work in our situation for **HIS PURPOSE** according to **HIS PLANS** through **HIS POWER.** "He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the Lord" (Psalms 112:7). How can we be afraid of bad news if our hearts are firm, trusting in the Lord, in His goodness? Even though we have not yet seen physical healing, our faith has grown in steadfastness and genuineness as it continues to be tested. We continue to trust that God's plans and purposes will work through us, and we are grateful for every day that we can wake up to love and serve Jesus.