The Storms Will Come

Bernard Hoon 13 August 2019



In April 2019, I wrote an article that chronicled the highlights of our family's journey through my brain tumour diagnosis (read it here). Today is the 15th of July 2019, almost one year after the initial diagnosis (August 28th, 2019 will be one year to the day). Over the past 11 months, I have completed 6 weeks of brain radiation and 6 months of chemotherapy. I completed my treatment in May 2019 and had my first post-treatment scan in June 2019. I will speak about where we are now at the end of this post, but first I want to share some lessons learned and insights gained during our journey so far.

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Charles Spurgeon once said, 'I have learned to kiss the wave that slams me into the Rock of Ages.' Wow. This quote hit me SO HARD when I read it the first time. I sat there letting it sink in for the longest time, contemplating it, mulling over what it meant for us in this season. The waves will come; they do for all of us in their various forms (James 1:2-4). We don't have control over this. What we can control is WHERE it slams us to. We could either reject this season and all it could accomplish in our lives, letting it slam us into the arms of bitterness, anger, rejection...or we could embrace it, and let it slam us right into the arms of Jesus and be open to experiencing Him in ways we never had before.

What has this journey taught us? The storms and the waves will come, but it is up to us to choose

how we respond, what the storms and waves will produce in us – steadfastness or doubt; faith or fear. Will it drive us away from or into the arms of Jesus? We have to choose to keep on keeping on towards Jesus.

Deuteronomy 4:29 says, 'But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you seek him with all your heart and with all your soul'. The Lord promises to be found if we seek after Him with all our heart and all our soul, but this is not always easy. The storm rages around us and distracts us easily, our hearts are deceitful above all (Jeremiah 17:9) and can easily lead us astray with emotions, theologically unsound conclusions, incorrect interpretations of Scripture, the well-meaning (but theologically unsound) advice of others, etc. Look at Peter when he climbed out of the boat and attempted to walk to Jesus (Matthew 14). Even with Jesus PHYSICALLY present in front of him, performing the miracle of walking on water in front of his very own eyes and being commanded AUDIBLY by Jesus Himself, Peter still had trouble focusing on Jesus and started sinking in the storm. But God does not abandon us in our times of need. He reaches out His hand to us just as He reached out to Peter. He reveals Himself to us through Scripture, through prayer, in our quiet times, through the voices of loved ones and trusted friends, of elders and church leaders.

What has this journey taught us? We have learned to turn our hearts and souls toward Jesus, and to seek Him with all that is in us. 'As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God' (Psalm 42:1 KJV)

> 'What has this journey taught us?'...God's sustaining grace

I have reflected often on this question, 'What has this journey taught us?' as this is the question we probably get asked most often. We have learned a lot – we have grown a lot, we have cried a lot, we have laughed a lot, and we have celebrated a lot. However, I cannot give a 4-hour monologue about everything we learned during this journey every time this question comes up. When this question comes my way, I have at most one minute, maybe two, to testify of God's goodness and grace. I want to be ready in season and out of season (2 Timothy 4:2) with an answer that would be as honest as possible and, above all, glorify God the most. God slowly revealed this to me over the past months to answer this question: God's sustaining grace. This bridges the gap between honesty and honouring and glorifying God.

It's honest because I am undeniably, constantly, permanently under God's sustaining grace, every second of every day. We all are, whether we think we are or not, whether we think we need it or not. God's sustaining grace allows me to continue to function, to continue to live, to simply continue, even though my body is broken (I am weaker than I was before, I may never again be able to do certain things). And it glorifies and honours God because it points to His sovereignty –

to the fact that nothing can exist outside of God, and His sustaining grace towards His universe and everything that He's created in it. God truly is the great I AM (Exodus 3:14). God IS. He just IS. He IS all things. He IS in all things. He IS above all things. He IS the beginning of all things. He IS the end of all things. His plan for me IS. His will for me IS. He IS all-sufficient grace.

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What has this journey taught us? I am His and I am alive, and I continue to live and function because my God IS. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word of His power (Hebrews 1:3a).

Our whole family has been sustained and carried by Jesus at this time. My eldest daughter said she learned to never cease praying. My youngest daughter told me she believed Jesus could heal my tumour, but if He didn't, He probably has another plan. My wife's biggest lesson was to learn to let go, have peace and trust the Lord unconditionally.

So on to the results of the scan. The tumour has shrunk slightly, the swelling around it has reduced and it presents as "inactive". This is very positive news, and we thank God for it. This is beyond what the doctor expected, but it does not mean that we are out of the woods yet. Now the first thing my wife said when we got the news of my diagnosis was, 'Why NOT us? Why should this pass us by?' This sentiment has only been strengthened for us over the past 11 months. Have we seen one single act of God's grace in the form of miraculous healing? No. Have we seen countless acts of God's grace carrying us along this journey? Yes! Have we seen God's grace as He used our journey to touch other people's lives? Yes! Have we seen our family grow ever closer to God in this journey? Yes! Have we seen God's grace in the fact that our children's faith is being stirred and grown? Yes!

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Is this the beginning of our journey or the end of our journey? Only God in His sovereignty knows. But He sustains us every day while we are getting to know Him deeper on this journey, wherever we are! 'He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the Lord.' (Psalm 112:7)