

## HOPE DEFERRED

Pastor Katy Reeves

Proverbs 13:12 says, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but when the desire comes, it is a tree of life."

When hopes are dashed and trust is destroyed, the pain of that incident enters the very heart and soul of a person and if not dealt with correctly, injects a poison that weakens a person in their very character. The word sick in this scripture means just that, sick....weak, worn, wounded, diseased, afflicted. As Bill Johnson says, hope deferred brings discouragement and if not dealt with, discouragement leads to depression and ultimately to the sin of unbelief. Unbelief shuts a person away from God, out of His reach. Faith is what touches the heart of God, not need, not lack, not sorrow, not desire.....FAITH. Without faith it is IMPOSSIBLE to please God! (Heb.11:6) ANYTHING that is not of faith is SIN! (Rom. 14:23)

So, when our hopes are dashed, our faith is assaulted and what we DO during that assault determines whether or not our faith survives and grows stronger or is killed. EVERYTHING in this world system moves in direct opposition to faith, so our faith IS going to be assaulted continuously. One of the enemy's greatest weapons against our faith is hope deferred. Hope deferred just doesn't assault our faith....it's worse than that, it assaults the very core of our being, where faith resides...our heart. If our heart can be made sick, the very atmosphere that produces faith can be taken out. Therefore, faith for the moment isn't what the enemy is after, no, he's after our DESTINY! If he can succeed in making us sick in our heart, he can keep us from operating in the realm of faith for our entire lifetime and therefore keep us living far below our high calling in Christ Jesus!

If hope deferred is allowed to do its work in me, my heart becomes hardened. Trust and belief becomes stupid and childish to me. I lose the childlike wonder and expectation of better things to come and in its place a cynicism develops. I begin taking on a critical outlook on life. Hardness replaces the area that used to be hopeful. I call it "wisdom" but it's really a sickness of the soul. The attitude that I've adopted to protect myself from future pain and disappointment has actually become a wall built up in my heart that keeps me from experiencing God's miraculous interventions in my life. Without even knowing it, in an attempt to protect myself, I've

imprisoned myself and walled God out! The very thing I so desperately need in life....God's involvement...is the thing I can't experience without faith and faith won't operate in a cynical, walled up heart!

In an attempt to protect myself, I've imprisoned myself and walled God out!

Jesus gave us a parable that is a heavenly guideline to protect us from the devastations of a heart made sick by hope deferred. It's found in Luke chapter 18. It's essence is this...even in a world that's operated by ungodly people with absolutely NO fear of God, nor any desire to do the right thing, and even when you find yourself in the most helpless of positions...keep pressing for what's right. Keep asking for a breakthrough. Keep believing God in the midst of EVERYTHING looking totally hopeless! God is HUNGRY for that kind of faith!! That kind of faith PLEASES God!

Look at the story in Matt. 15 about the woman who asked Jesus to heal her little girl and Jesus said it wasn't right for Him to give the children's bread to dogs. Yep....He not only basically said "no"...He called her a dog in the process! Did she quit there? Nope. She simply returned with an answer that basically said, "Your SCRAPS are enough to HEAL my little girl and I'd rather be a DOG under YOUR TABLE than be found anywhere else"!! That answer literally floored Jesus because of her FAITH! He was hilariously happy over her response and gave her what she desired as a result of her not checking out when it looked useless! He LOVED it!! That woman's hope and determination made Jesus' day!

The opposite of this is found in the story of Mary and Martha's conversations with Jesus when their prayers were unanswered and their brother, Lazarus, died. Mary's heart closed up towards Jesus because of "hope deferred", and the Bible says that Jesus GROANED in His spirit. I believe that response in Jesus was a direct result of her hardened heart of unbelief. How many times have I made Jesus groan? How much pain have I caused the heart of God simply because my own pain has been enthroned within me instead of healed? I've had to face an ugly fact. My heart has been made sick because of hope deferred. Unanswered prayer...unanswered questions...painful experiences that have left me afraid to trust again because the pain of believing and not seeing was simply too great. I've had to come to grips with the fact that in an attempt to "protect myself" from the intense pain of disappointment, I have placed myself in an area where I also can't experience the intensity of joy that God

wants me to experience by Him doing for me awesome things that He would do if my faith would just reach for them! I "safetied up" in my faith, like a rough stock rider who's been hurt and lost the sheer, fearless joy of riding and is still competing, but just holding on and waiting for the whistle. Where's the joy in that?

Jesus said if we'd ask according to His will we would receive what we asked for and then He went on to encourage us to ASK that our JOY MAY BE FULL! He WANTS to give to us! Again, to quote Bill Johnson, he said we need to learn to pray WITH God...not AT Him! How many times has our hearts been made sick because we prayed and believed God would do something that WE wanted and demanded a certain way and didn't bother to find out what God was saying about the matter?

The simple fact is, we're just NOT going to know all the WHY'S that something happened the way it did. To demand an answer is to put our intellect on the throne where only God belongs. My intellect should never be allowed to be KING in my life! Simply meaning....I don't always have to KNOW WHY! God is God and He doesn't OWE ME AN ANSWER!

We should be gut level honest with the Lord and TELL Him..."I'm mad"..."I don't understand"..."It looks as if You failed me"...but I CHOOSE to trust You in this.

God doesn't owe me...I owe HIM! I owe Him my trust! His character is ALWAYS being slandered by this world, circumstances, and my unbelief, but the fact is...He's GOOD...ALL THE TIME! He can never be anything BUT holy and righteous and true! The fact that it SEEMS to be the opposite to me in a given incident is because I simply don't KNOW IT ALL! When Mary distrusted Jesus' intentions it grieved Him so that He groaned in His spirit...her distrust hurt Him deeply. He didn't explain Himself. He never tried to convince her otherwise. He simply did what He always did...obeyed the Father. Mary had an awesome opportunity to trust the character of Jesus in the midst of her heart breaking with pain but like so many of us, she failed to trust Him when the pain and disappointment was intense.

Situations like Mary's are going to happen. Great grief and pain is going to come against us in this life. What should we do? I think we're not asking the right questions. Instead of asking God to tell us "why"...we should be simply asking God to take the pain. We should ask God to HEAL our hearts and remove the poison that the painful experience injected into us. We

should be gut level honest with the Lord and TELL Him... "I'm mad"... "I don't understand"... "It looks as if You failed me"...but I CHOOSE to trust You in this. I don't know what You know and I'll trust You. Heal me. Remove this pain from my heart so I can trust again. As Betsy used to tell Corrie Ten Boom when they were experiencing unimaginable horrors in the German prison camps, "there is no pit so deep that God's love is not deeper still". Corrie Ten Boom is a testimony to the power of God to HEAL and RESTORE when the pain is unimaginable and the suffering makes absolutely no sense!

ANYONE can get cynical. God is looking for SOMEONE who can still love after betrayal. God is looking for SOMEONE who can still hope after experiencing hope destroyed. God is looking for SOMEONE who has the courage to trust His character in the midst of the pain of loss. ANYONE can grow critical. God is not looking for ANYONE...He's looking for SOMEONE! YOU can be that someone! I can be that someone! It's my choice! I can choose to be healed and love again, trust again, believe again...FEEL again, or I can build a wall around my heart because I don't want to RISK feeling pain. It's a risk for sure. If I open up my heart I WILL be hurt again. If I step out in faith, I WILL be disappointed again. Sometime it will happen that my faith fails. But isn't it better to live in the miraculous and to sometimes experience failure than to never experience the miraculous at all? Give me one lifetime walking in the very awesome presence of a miraculous God over a thousand lifetimes knowing only the deadness of life void of His presence!

Give me one lifetime walking in the very awesome presence of a miraculous God over a thousand lifetimes knowing only the deadness of life void of His presence!

I encourage you to be real with God. Don't hide how you REALLY feel. He knows it anyway. It may be that you need to admit as I did that your heart has been made sick by hope deferred and you want it healed. You want to believe again, hope again...trust again. You want to experience His presence even if it means opening yourself up to feeling pain as well as joy. Then ask Him to REMOVE the pain that you feel. Ask Him to carry it instead of you. Ask Him to take its poison from your heart and give you a new heart. Repent of the sin of unbelief and begin feeding your mind on thoughts of when God came to your aid, answered your prayer, took care of a need, came to your rescue, etc. Build in your mind strong memories of

when God did awesome things for you and people you know. Rehearse those memories in your mind. Tell God, you let go of your right to know "why" and simply choose to trust Him instead. That will go a long way in restoring your walk with the Lord and giving you back a childlike heart of faith to believe that God is cooking up something wonderful just for you and your future! Good things are headed your way! Once an atmosphere of cynicism has been replaced by an atmosphere of child-like faith....GOD CAN DO AWESOME THINGS IN YOUR LIFE! \*