

Trusting God in Trials and Sorrow

By Mary Lambrecht, M.S. LMFT

Journal. Pen-in-hand. Bible. I settled in on the couch, closed my eyes, and asked the Lord to show me clear, systematic, workable goals for my New Year's resolutions. With a gentle presence, He seemed to settle in too. He reassured me that my heart would be kept safe while He shepherded my mind through a distant memory.

There was a memory where a pasture of inconsistent, rough sod and forlorn brambles hid wide blades of grass. The kind of grass that if held between two thumbs become shrill whistles if children blow them. But the grass whistles would have to wait for these two children. Wait until horses' hooves pounded them awhile. A big white horse carried a tall, lanky eleven year old sister, and a big brown horse carried a tow-headed, nine year-old brother. We had done it! My carnival glass piggy bank, and Ted's tin globe bank had produced enough to convince our parents to bring us to the big horses. No more pony rings, straps on saddles, and scenery that repeated itself again, and again, and again. We were cantering, galloping, running!! Coarse mane-hair sweated inside my fists. I grasped the strands tighter and quickly glanced back. Ted was still on! "OK...big white horse...faster, then! We are a team of veteran riders, my brother and I, and we will gallop until the sun goes down." And so, eventually, it did. A bright, fire-orange sun came down all about the pasture.

The horses slowed to that familiar pony-ring trot. I lingered on my tall post, my feet dangling out of the stirrups now. The guide sauntered stiffly over to me. His cigarette-laden, sun-creased face gave me a nod. Time to get down. I remembered a horse book calling it "dismounting". So I did what I remembered from pony days. Leaning a little sideways, my long eleven year-old arms reached out toward the guide. The horse shifted slightly beneath me, and the guide seemed to shift his weight too. There as an awkward pause and then the guide looked away. My arms still stretched out toward him, beckoning him to take notice and lift me down. My face was hot with embarrassment and my mind told me to withdraw my arms. There was a different way to dismount a big horse, and I didn't know how. But Ted's arms were outstretched too. Waiting for the master of the horses. Then, suddenly,...solid ground beneath my feet! The horse-master rescued me, and he rescued Ted too.

"So why," I asked the Lord, "do you cause me to remember this? An adolescent moment, which really should be forgotten?" "To ask you to stretch out your arms again," He said. "For I am turned toward you, not away, and I will lift you up, not down, but up toward me." It was a New Year's promise from my Master Redeemer. Though the horse-master hesitated, He will not hesitate. I can trust Him for whatever the year brings. There is safety and strength in the shadow of His wings, and His right hand is upholding me (Psalm 63, vs. 7 & 8).

What a privilege it is to pass this message on to my clients, and on to you, the PFL readers. The prophet Jeremiah assures us that our Redeemer is strong: stronger than any earthly master, because “the Lord of Hosts is His name” (Jeremiah 50: vs. 34). So often when trials come our way we feel like David did, thirsting for water and longing in our flesh for some sign of life in the midst of our problems. Depression, anxiety, and a host of other moods, feelings or circumstances can threaten our emotional wellbeing and even cause us to despair of life itself. But Psalm 63 states that the Lord’s loving kindness is better than life itself. Lift your arms to Him first “who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in guidance” (Is. 28:29). He takes great delight in receiving our outstretched arms, comforting us as our Abba Father, and then equipping us with the courage to live life again. Run the race with Him. Gallop until the sun goes down, pressing “toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:14).

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