

# THE PATHFINDER

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## FIELD OF DREAMS — VALLEY OF FIRES

When we see the sun rising over the mountain ranges, the desert floor, or elsewhere in our topographical world, we generally don't give it much thought, no more than noticing the beauty of the morning, and it is ushering in another day that will hopefully bring forth great blessings, but some days it is dreadful sorrows.

Either way, we generally don't give it much thought. We just take it as it comes or we make it as planned by the Spirit. Praise God, we finally know there is no making it on our own. Without the Spirit, our making falls flat.

Due to dire hardships; such as, horrid sicknesses, being forsaken, depression, death of loved ones that leave vacant voids more immense than the size of Grand Canyon, and also the Covid virus over the past couple of years, many have been in its midst, or at least have had many long, dark nights with few bright mornings or sky lit days.

But like the natural nights and mornings, let us recognize such is the same in our daily lives, and most of us know that when the night passes we awaken and rise to live again regardless of the stabbing waves of pain that may reside for awhile.

Of course, some could become so accustomed to the pain that they find themselves reveling in it while ever complaining, gaining sympathy as they chose to stay in their pitiful beds and never venturing onward to greater heights and victory. But such is not an option for the elect of God. That is not who we are, and with the resolve of our Lord's grace we echo the words of David after his son had died:

"While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell *whether* God would be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." **2 Samuel 12:22-23**.

Come rain or shine, we are upon a fixed course and will not turn or take flight as we learn from last night's darkness. With this we borrow from William Wadsworth:

*"Though His radiance was once so bright  
has now been taken from our sight,  
and though nothing can bring back our hour  
of splendor in the grass,  
of glory in the flower  
we will grieve not, but rather find  
strength in that which remains behind..."*

We know that poems like this work well on paper. They sound good in theory and can be presented as good school of thought; but in practicality, well, that can be another story, and so it goes

for the remainder of this writing. Every word herein is good for doctrine, good for, good for encouragement and good for reproof and exhortation; but *when some realities come home* — it can still be hell.

We all may be in a trying place we have never been, but some of us may have made a visit or two therein. If so, from experience, we know that it can become a stalemate, an impasse, and we feel helpless to anything worthwhile. There have been times I have not felt like writing, and I surely wouldn't want to send something out simply because another month has rolled around. And still, I do not want this to ever be the reason for writing. The word must come from on High or it is worth nothing but for entertainment. Such is not an option.

I cannot say that I always have a rush of **new revelation** flooding from the heavens; but hopefully I have been on the mountain of myrrh and the hills of frankincense long enough that help me to feed your spirit and refresh your souls.

I truly pray that the day is breaking with the shadows are fleeing away, also as it is written in **The Song of Solomon 4:6**, "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense." But I must say, if the day is breaking, there seems to be no sweet smelling fragrance of resurrection arising from this death as the mountain of myrrh and hills of frankincense relate. Even so, I doubt that those on this *mountain, which also speaks of crushing*, to smell its fragrance; but some of those round about us may get a whiff and wonder what it is.

Regardless, whether they know or we see any good coming from our sorrow or not, we cannot forget that to which we have been called, and neither will we shirk that honor by withdrawing into self-pity. Every family has had, or will have, their own tragedies, and most continue living in spite of them, and so shall we.

I remember something our dear friend, J. Preston Eby said, "Our problems are no worse than anyone else's, they are just different." Indeed so, they are just different, designed for each of us in particular, and we will make the most of it.

### **FIELD OF DREAMS — VALLEY OF FIRES**

Not only do we understand due to instruction, from what we can see, and have experienced, we also read from a very wise man that there are times for darkness but also for morning. We see them in these examples:

"A time to be born, And a time to die; A time to plant, And a time to pluck what is planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; time to weep, And a time to laugh; A time to mourn, And a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace." **Ecclesiastes 3:2-8**.

Also, by the scriptures (**Isaiah 45:5**) and experience we learn that the bad times work together with the good. You see, as Ray Prinzing first said years ago, "It is the interplay of good and evil." No one, of course, cares much for the evil, I don't; but everyone loves the good. If given the choice, each of us would live only in the good times. We would bask forever in the wonderful rays of the *Son's* life. We would never leave the garden of paradise. But most of us are practical enough to know that

this is not the way the sons of God are made.

Although we attempt to walk in *the field of dreams, the heavens on high*, and sometimes we do, we very often find ourselves in *the valley of fires*, that is, *the valley of the shadow of death*. That valley is as when an hungry man dreams he is eating a delicious meal; but when he awakens, the meal vanishes and he is still with hunger pangs, or as when a thirsty man dreams he is drinking a glass of cool water; but when he awakens his tongue remains parched. **Isaiah 29:8**.

Many most of us have strolled through *the field of dreams* as we reached for the stars. We dreamed the dream and lifted our souls upon high; but when we awoke, our hands were sometimes full of sand.

In this we have seen two results. Some fell into despair, while the others were made stronger by *the valley of fire*. The deciding factor lays on where their hearts and trust were founded, such as, whether around themselves, their church or home fellowship, their theological beliefs, or Jesus Christ and His body.

If our love and foundation is not Him, when the fires of sorrow come we might curse God in anger, rather than praying as Jesus did: "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour." **John 12:27**.

Contrary to what we generally do, as sons of God, we should not pray for the fires of hardships and impossible difficulties to be removed; but to ask God to help us in overcoming such and to preserve us so we can fulfill that to which He called us. If our foundation is Jesus, the grief will not destroy us. It will, instead, aid in making us who we are to be.

It is essential for us to accept hardships as being from His hand, realizing He has a divine plan and purpose for each of us. As it was with Jesus, we are coming to grips with the fact that we are not saved from the fiery hour; but we are kept in His hand as we gain strength and understanding through the hour.

While in the midst of *the dark valley of fires*, it is easy to feel that there is no need to be there, and we can fail to see anything good could come in having to suffer so greatly. But there is a great weight of good to be had whether we understand it or not. Moreover, not only will the burning valley remain until its course is finished; but we have to embrace the pain and accept it as working for good.

If we try to skirt around the valley, or fight against it, we are unschooled, unlearned, immature, and ignorant of God's handiwork in our lives. We should not be so foolish as to think we come to maturity on feather beds of goose down comforters.

Many of us have gone through the most sorrowful times of our lives and there was no escaping it. Some may still be in that valley. So contrary to natural reasoning, the resurrection life of great value is not harvested from *the field of dreams* but from *the valley of fires*.

David knew of this mysterious, secret place of God. He not only wrote of the sorrow with which he was acquainted, but also of the victory that came from it:

"The **sorrows of death compassed me**, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. **The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me** (or *came upon me*, Amplified) In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple..." **Psalms 18:4-6**.

The Lord heard David's voice which came from the distressed place of his temple. I do not understand it; but there is a certain holiness about suffering. How can it be explained? Although I can sense it, I can't explain it. Yet, I know that in the midst of this intense sorrow, there has been a knowing, a vague union, if you please, with the Spirit of weeping of our Lord. He has been partaker of the cup we have been drinking and the bread of adversity we have been eating. We have not been alone, and the pain is surely just as intense and just as real to Him as it has been to us, and that communion has been holy. And it was in this place where David found Him. That horrid place of sorrows was the Lord's habitation for that time and occasion:

**"He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies." Psalm 18:11.** In the midst of the sorrows of death and hell that came upon him is where the Lord was found. And in due season, that is where He will be found in us, in that dark habitation of sorrow. How I long for that day, not to vaguely sense Him, and not the day we have known in part, but that day of knowing Him as we are known of Him.

### **THE POWER OF LIFE — THE POWER OF DEATH**

Death rewards us with such a void, grief, and loneliness. Cancer is so devastating, Sicknesses ravish our bodies, all forms of pain simply **hurts!** And after the above having been said, we still may question, **why it must be this way. Why the deep valley of sorrows?**

Of course, we are sure if there was a better way, it would be so; but what kind of answer is that? Not a good one, for sure. Nevertheless, it is the best I have at the moment. The fact is, the process continues and is immaterial, even though the scriptures bear this out, as well as our own experiences over the years.

I am sure you have been able to tell who has walked through the fires of sorrow. There is something about those who have been refined by the fires of death and hell. They are patient, kind, understanding, loving, and their values of life are pure gems. They are not as shallow rhinestones. They are not artifacts of old church dogma. They are not filled with non-substantial issues and debates of who is right or who is wrong.

They who have suffered the sorrows of death and hell are rare jewels of God's Kingdom that were found deep within the fiery bowels of their earth. They are those you know you can go to during the time of your own sorrow and find solace.

With those tried by the fires of that vast valley, they are not aggravated by you, as if you have intruded upon their *hallowed* time and space. They love you as they love the Lord. They see Him as much in you as they do anywhere or in anyone at anytime.

Those tried and proven by the fires of suffering respect you as they do the Lord. They have time for you, and if you do not shun the fires in your own life, whether it is sickness, the loss of a child, grandchild, business, home, or friends — God will make you the same:

You will be bread and drink for the vanquished of the world. You will walk together with those ***who are made, not after the law of a carnal commandments of what some believe, but after the power of the endless life into Whom we embrace. Hebrews 7:16.***

In the meantime, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, we will not run from the fire; but we will continue in the war against the one who has the power of death:

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself

likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had **the power of death**, that is, the devil." Hebrews 2:14.

A new day may be dawning, and we may be breathing a breath of fresh air; but I cannot say that **the power of an endless life** is already a manifested reality in our lives. Neither can I say that the one who has **the power of death** is totally destroyed. If these two things were so, I could then say that all the old things have passed away, and all things have become new.

If I made such a *confession*, I would be lying. It would not be a true *confession*; for confessions speak of realities rather than suppositions. I could quote the right scriptures concerning such wonderful things; but neither would make it so regardless of how much I persuaded others and myself otherwise. The words would serve are nothing more than adding to the already heaping mounds of religious rhetoric, illusions, and lifeless doctrine. Such has no use or power in the world of reality, and they die like desert mirages in a cloudburst. They vanish as the spiritual realities rain on those apparitions.

I overheard a minister praying as I walked past the information desk in the main lobby of the hospital here in Alamogordo (my dad was there due to knee injuries received in the Alzheimer's unit of the nursing home, my mother was there as well, until she was transported 70 miles away to the hospital in Las Cruces as the result of a fractured vertebrae).

As the man held hands in the circle with three others, I heard him quoting scriptures to God on behalf of one of their church members. You know, reminding Him of what He had said, as if He had possibly forgotten. In essence the man was using the letter of the word as a tool to hold God responsible for what He had written.

No doubt, my frustration had reached its peak after all the prayers on behalf of my parents had failed, not to mention the failure of the thousands that were said on behalf of our grandson when he lay in a coma and died March 19, 2005.

Whatever the reason, upon hearing the man's memorized scriptures, it sounded like an unholy clanging cymbal, and it angered me. Without a forethought, as I passed by I said, **"It ain't gonna to work!"** For a moment I was hoping they hadn't heard me, but then I hoped they had. For it is good to be challenged at times so the refuge of lies can be swept away. I truly hope the person being prayed for was healed and raised up well; for I despise pain and death and every vestige of it; but I am still in doubts that the man's quoting of scriptures to God worked.

Such prayers, religious platitudes, dead doctrines, and various illusions *may* have served a purpose for a season. They certainly pacified us, if nothing else; but truth be known, pacifiers have no substance, and in the fiery valley of the shadow of death they will also fail. Sigmund Freud, a man of little or no Christian leanings, surely knew something about this when He said:

*"Illusions commend themselves to us because they save us pain and allow us to enjoy pleasure instead. We must therefore accept it without complaint when they sometimes collide with a bit of reality against which they are dashed to pieces."*

Don't you think it is time to stand up to the plate of reality, even if that reality is the horrid face of death? Isn't it time to discard the illusions of religious fantasies?

Let us be reminded of a certain reality— death must first come before there can be a resurrection. There is a time when we will be made free from the power of death; but it will never be by our lying mouths laying claim to it, nor will our quotes of the scriptures be honored.

At the beginning of each year, many pray that this new one will be the year of release, the year of peace, of happiness, the year of health and joy throughout the Body of Christ and our nation. They, and I, have prayed it would be the beginning of the end of all dark and painful things; but it has yet to come, and never before have we seen such a contrary first couple of months of 2022, as well as the two years past. Not only in our family, but it has been the same with our friends and with so many around the world. It has truly been a time for the trying of the faith of those who are in Christ, as well as those who are not.

Some have said that all these painful things are not real, that they are only illusions, or adamic dreams, and we should simply wake up and live. How I wish it was so easily done. Moreover, if the sorrows of sorrows and death are not real to them, they will disbelieve only until the *illusions* collide with reality. They will not be able to wake up from the *nightmare*. Only after the fire has run its course will they be freed and given beauty for ashes.

We know the scriptures, and *we know that they speak of all things being for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28)*. Therefore, we can easily fall into the old practice of *religiously* praising God for the storms.

But let us be realistic; unless our praising is not coming from the Spirit, it is nothing more than a religious practice which carries more of the power of death than the power of life. Frankly, our old ways of doing things are coming to an end, and I praise God for that!

When we come to the crossroads of pain, sorrow, and suffering, even death, all the shambles of what is not of Christ will become worthless in our eyes and will be easily laid down. I believe this is happening throughout the Body today.

Let me share a letter from several years ago that a dear one wrote, and I am sure some of you feel the same today as she did back then:

"After reading the last pages of your latest Pathfinder (*The Value of a Life*) I found myself relating so much to where you are. To be honest, I hadn't even read it until Mother called me to ask if I had, and she gave me a summation of what you had said, so I went and read it for myself.

"I haven't been reading anything lately. I haven't opened one of Bro. Eby's papers in several months, my *Pathfinders* are lying around unopened; I cleared my night stand of all the Britton, Hawtin and Warnock booklets and writings. I put my Bibles in the bookcase. I haven't attempted to pray in months.....God has not answered my prayers, so it's really just a waste of time, especially since I've got no 'faith' anymore when I pray — whatever 'faith' is. I know it's not just 'psyching yourself out' to conjure up some feeling that's going to cause your prayer to 'work.' I'm being very open and honest with you; because I feel I know the kind of person you are, and you will be understanding, not judgmental or condemning, especially with all you've gone through.

"My dam broke in December — my dam of hope, I guess. I got a 'feeling' of something bad impending, and I specifically prayed for God to put a hedge around this particular thing and to keep us from harm. A few weeks later, the very thing happened — worse than I had thought, plus I was hospitalized with a kidney stone the very day. I grieved for months — I cried myself to sleep for weeks. I asked God to show me He loved me — because I didn't believe He did, and if that was a weakness, fault or flaw on my part, so be it; but I was in a place where I NEEDED to hear from Him — and KNOW it was Him, beyond a shadow of a

doubt. I fell on my knees, I wept, I begged, and then I told Him I wasn't going to talk to Him again until I heard from Him — that I was tired of the one way thing — always me talking, never hearing from Him or even knowing if He heard or cared — or even if He IS.

"I don't believe in prayer anymore — I don't believe the scriptures — 'The fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much' — that's not true, Elwin, unless I don't understand fervent' or 'righteous' or 'much' — but if it's a puzzle that's hard to figure out, then that's beyond me, anyway. 'God is our present help in time of trouble' — in what way? What does that mean — because I have felt very much alone and abandoned in my time of trouble. I can't imagine how you and Margit have felt lately.

"My church friends are always saying 'Keep so-and-so in your prayers' and I want to say 'I don't pray for people.' What's the point? How many people who were sick, dying, going through divorce, going broke financially, losing a child — have I prayed for, where the prayer did any good whatsoever? I can't think of one. I have a child of my own with health problems that we've wept and prayed for years — he's on \$400 worth of medicine a month.

"People say 'It's all a result of the fall, and of man's sin'. Well, okay — who SUBJECTED man to that fall, NOT WILLINGLY? So, if we were subjected to this curse, unwillingly, by a God who KNEW the result from the beginning — how is this our fault? The way I see it, the responsibility for it all is not ours, but His. And we say 'Christ redeemed us from the curse.' How? Dearest Elwin, how many people do you know, on this planet, who are free from the curse? How many aren't subject to sickness, sweat and toil, fleshly temptation, pain, and ultimately, death? So, in all practicality, who is free from the curse?

"I was telling a dear friend about Christopher the other night, and I began to weep as I told her — I felt your loss and your pain so deeply — I looked up, and she had tears in her eyes, too. There is no doubt in my mind that many, many prayers were said for that precious boy. Was it all in vain? Either I don't understand a thing, or it isn't as we've been taught to believe.

"I admire you so for your statement about not writing just to be writing. I know I can say this without offending you, because you know I love you — but I've made that statement myself before: I wonder if these ministers would just put their pens down and not write if they didn't clearly hear something; or if they just 'churn out' a paper every month, regardless? How many would be willing to silence their pens? I appreciate your integrity.

"I am at a crossroads, Elwin. I'm in a place I NEVER thought I would be — and I can't pretend, and I can't play games, and I can't be 'religious.' God is not who I thought He was, prayer is not what I understood it to be, and I don't know that I can trust the scriptures — when applied to my life, they seem to fail me.

"Please forgive the length of this letter. It would be impossible to express all of this in a more compact way. And know that my love and my sorrow for you and Margit, and all of your family, is very real.

Much love,

Lisa H....."

How would you respond to this sister whose heart had been crushed and all hope dashed to the ground? Perhaps you would say: *"Now, now, Sister, it is not as bad as it seems. Tomorrow will be a brighter day. The sun will shine again and drive back all the dark clouds. Just keep*

*praying and believing." Or maybe this: "Remember, God will never put anything on you that you can't bear. He is always with you. He will never leave you nor forsake you. He took your stripes on the cross, so just have faith and believe. It will work out."*

Such impotent words when they vibrate the ear drums which send them to the brain where they are consciously heard and understood , However, this is not by the Spirit to where the it is heard by the heart as a living word.

When the reality of *the valley of fires* sweeps over our lives, as with Lisa, and everything that's been held sacred and good is gone, that which is presumed to be *sound doctrine* fails, there is not much left. If *the power of the endless life* is lacking, what then?

Quoting scriptures or expounding on what we carnally believe will fall flat when they are void of life. Our natural words bear no weight in the face of the power of death. Only when the risen Jesus Christ embodies the words will the liberty of life be heard! And be quick to know, they will be heard in due season!

Elwin R. Roach

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