

The Cellar

"Nothing has changed," I tell myself. "Things are the same as they were before." This is the line I preach over and over to myself, hoping to convince my mind to believe it. The inner conflict feels like a summer thunderstorm overhead; rolling and sweeping across the sky while the wind of the gathering storm stings my eyes with dust and dirt. "Get ahold of yourself, it's really nothing; you are overreacting!" There is a sinking feeling like a submerging boat down in the pit of my stomach. My mind scrabbles for hope and light, while my thoughts lose their toe hold on reality. Any vestige of happiness melts in the heat of the inner conflict of my thoughts.

The storm pummels my spirit, as my mind slips and swirls this way and that. Reeling and stumbling, I slide helplessly down the slope to my cellar of shame and despair. Not that I want to go, but it is my place away from the outside world where no one can see. A place where I can hide with my wounds, in the festering darkness.

The worn old cellar door slams shut with a thud of finality, shaking loose bits of dirt and debris, while filling the air with clouds of stifling dust. It's quite familiar to me down here in this dark place; the damp smell of old shame permeates the claustrophobic atmosphere. Decaying injuries from the past lie decomposing in the dark recesses of the shadows; adding their pungent fragrance to the already oppressive thick air. Dark salamanders of anger peep out from behind old jars of bitterness. I lay in the semi-darkness, while self-incriminating thoughts beat a steady staccato overhead.

Then, quietly I sense His presence beside me; it seems He should not be here. He sits with me in my wreckage, yet no condemnation comes from His mouth. His presence is comforting and brings some hope in the gloom. This place is too dark and dismal for someone like Him, but He does not seem to mind. In fact, it appears as though He wants to be here. He knows that His presence is really what I need. He also knows that it is not as bad as it really seems. He is so compassionate and full of mercy; He simply sits alongside me in my misery.

I begin to speak to Him; first hesitantly, then with more confidence. "You know Lord everything that has happened, and I really do not want to be in this place. Is there a way out? Is it as bad as my mind is telling me it is? I felt you yesterday when you gave me those verses from your Word; I did not even ask for them. Not only that, I felt your presence in my life before this all happened. I have this question rolling over in my mind, and I wonder; is this something you are punishing me with or was it just something you are using to work a work of purification in my life? This morning the song, "[Humility Thou Secret Vale](#)" impressed me as I read over it in church. It described what I have been feeling in my heart the last few days. So, what should I do Lord? I feel so far away and disconnected down here."

Then softly he begins. "I understand what you are going through; it seems a little unjust. However, I am an opportunist and I use what is given to my children, whether it is good or bad, to show them my love and make them better suited for my purpose. I do not send all these things, but I delight in filling your need when these things happen. I use them to draw my children closer to me. I do not willingly afflict my children, like I said in my Word. See [Lamentations 3:33](#) I have given all my children the option to accept what happens in their lives so I can draw them closer, or reject it and become hurt and offended. Most often, my children draw closer to me and that brings me joy and happiness. I weep alongside my children in their disappointment and pain. I understand how painful memories can be. How else will you learn the pain and suffering that others face unless you yourself go through it? I did that when I died on the cross. I loved you so much. I fully understand your pain because I also suffered pain, rejection, and being misunderstood. I have called you for a purpose, to a work. Sometimes the schooling of life is hard, and overwhelming; after

all you are human. I delight in you, and your purpose and happiness are my plan. In my Word I have told you fire would come, yet afterwards you will come forth as gold. See [1Peter 1:7](#) I have created you with your emotional strengths and weaknesses, to bring me honor and glory. I created you to need me, and others. If you humbly seek me, I will give you all that you need. You will continue to need me, and I will never forsake you. Live today, do not worry about tomorrow, I will be there to help you through whatever it holds. I do not compare you to others; you are exactly how I made you to be. I designed you to fill my specific purpose. If you follow me instead of your fears, I will lead you out of this dark dismal place.”

With a prayer in my heart, and my hand of faith in His, I climbed the steps out of the dark cellar into the sunshine. I am afraid that it will not be easy, and my steps do not feel confident. I know that I will be tempted to run back to my cellar in fear. It seems like that cellar is a part of my DNA; the place I run to whenever I feel threatened, or not approved of. I hate that part of me, so cowardly. I do not want that to be my refuge, there is no hope down there. So, for today, this moment, I will put my faith and trust in the Lord.

Reflections

Perhaps I have over-dramatized this writing, but then again maybe you can relate. Some storms we face in life leave us emotionally shaken and feeling weak. Most of us do not have a literal cellar we go to, but we often find ourselves retreating into darkness, shame, and self-loathing. We may find ourselves face to face with old fears, and traumatizing things from the past which can almost make it feel like a literal storm. During these times our only hope hangs on the love Jesus has for us. It is His desire to lead us through them to peace and happiness on the other side.

To have an actual live conversation with Jesus would be an amazing experience. However, that is not likely to happen in this lifetime. There is comfort in understanding the love of Jesus, and how He would likely speak to us. As we write a conversation with Him, it is bound to examine our core beliefs and how we perceive Him to be. After I wrote this conversation, I had this thought come: “Maybe He does not care for me the way I think; maybe this struggle is His hand of judgment against me.” Yet deep in my heart, I felt the quietness that comes with His peace, despite the discouragement and raging storm. My faith takes Him at His Word, and His Word teaches us His character. The examples we have of His actions give us the framework to have faith and trust in Him. Therefore, we can trust His grace and promises. Even when we sin, He is faithful to draw us back. Take the example of the woman taken in adultery. See [John chapter 8](#). Though she had sinned worthy of death, He did not judge her harshly, but with love and compassion He spoke words of comfort and forgiveness. His Word tells us that there is nothing that can separate us from His love. See [Romans 8:35-39](#).

Experience teaches us that not all stresses in life pass away so quickly. Some experiences affect our emotions and emotions take time to recover and heal. Even now there remains a twinge of something left in my heart, pain perhaps, or a limp in my step. Maybe a limp like Jacob had after his night wrestling with the angel, who knows? I would like to convince myself that the cellar is a thing of the past, and I will never go back; yet I wonder, the path to that place is worn pretty smooth.

There continues to be a little sadness inside; a void where strength once stood. I expect that to heal over time, but we will see. Possibly I can serve the Lord better this way.

There are always lessons for us to learn from the experiences we go through in life: deeper compassion and sensitivity for others, less confidence in self, and greater dependency on God.

It would be nice if trials were all as simple as walking into the sunshine and leaving all shadows behind. It is not always that way though. Sometimes, it is a walk of faith, a trust in God, or a friend to share your burdens with. Despite it all, we can be assured, the Lord is good even when we cannot seem to feel him nearby.

Psalms 23:4 KJV Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

The Unlikely Writer

Jeff Goertzen

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