

There are times in everyone's life when we struggle with one thing or another. Some battle with bouts of depression, others fight anxiety, fear, worry, and the list goes on and on. There are any number of trials and tribulations that we must overcome throughout our lives. This shouldn't be a surprise to us because Jesus told us that they would come.

Yet, for the believer, no matter what we go through, there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Indeed, knowing that there is coming a day when there will be no more fear, no more trial gives us hope in the midst of the trials we currently face. Have you ever had the feeling that nothing will ever change? It is a feeling that tells you that you will never see the end of this trial...you will always be like you are right now? That is an awful feeling. It is a feeling of hopelessness and despair as we start to believe the lie that nothing will ever change.

Luke 24:1-12 is the very familiar story of Resurrection morning when the tomb of Christ lay empty. Every one of us have read the story and heard about the miracle of God's grace. However, as I was reading the final chapter of Luke, I was struck by something I had never noticed before. The women coming to the tomb and the Disciples of Christ were in a very bad place. They were in despair and truly hopeless. The one in whom they put their faith as the Messiah of Israel had been murdered and lay in a tomb. Their hopes of salvation from oppression and enjoying the Kingdom of God were dashed...or so they believed.

As the chapter opens, the women are coming to the tomb to finish anointing Jesus' body with spices for burial. You can almost picture the scene as they walked in silence and mourning toward the tomb. They were resolved to their fate. They had no choice but to accept the fact that Jesus was dead and their hope for the Kingdom of God was gone. Now, what hope could they have? How could any good come from this? I can imagine that they were at the very heights of despair.

They had been in this position before with family and friends who had died. When you came to place spices and fragrant items with the body of a loved one, that meant that they were dead...and dead means dead. When a loved one dies, there is no coming back. They had been in this position 1000 times before and they knew from their experience that there was nothing anyone could do about it. This just added to the hopelessness they felt.

Imagine their surprise when they finally came to the tomb and found the stone rolled away and the body of Jesus was gone. They were confused and perplexed, but the Bible indicates that they still didn't understand what was going on. They still knew that reality dictates that dead people always stay dead. Luke records two angels appearing to the women (although only one spoke) as the mourners bowed their faces to the ground.

Just as the women were shocked that the stone was rolled away and the body was gone, the angels seemed to be surprised that the women were even there at the

tomb looking for Jesus. They were surprised that the women were in a state of mourning. One said, "Why do you seek the living One among the dead?" (24:5). The angel asked them, "Excuse me, what are you doing here?"

The angel understood that the followers of Christ should have known better. But, why? Why would the angels expect the believers to have known? They give us the answer, "Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again." (24:7).

If they had remembered His words, they would have had everything they needed to be victorious in the face of the heartache and pain they were experiencing. Despair and hopelessness would have never found a home in their hearts because faith in the words of Christ and hope for the future would have refused to give way. The next verse (24:8) is one that rings with sounds of victory, joy, and fulfillment. "And they remembered His words."

Reading the rest of Luke's gospel, we see a pattern emerge. As Jesus appeared alive to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus and to the disciples in the upper room, He shared with them the words they should have already understood. To the disciples on the road to Emmaus he said,

"O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory? Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures." (Luke 24:25-27)

And to the disciples in the upper room, He said,

These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled. Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,

The common denominator in all these instances is remembering Jesus' Words, remembering what God has said. This is not to say that if we do this all our troubles will somehow vanish into thin air. We are assured that trials will come. Jesus Himself tells us that things will not always go well with us. We will be persecuted, we will get sick, we will battle spirits of fear, anxiety, depression, anger etc.

Everyone will go through something. This is how we are conformed to the image of his Son. What this does teach us is learning, remembering, and trusting in Jesus' words is the catalyst for hope in the midst of every trial. We may not feel wonderful as we are going through the trial, but we should never despair thinking we will never come out the other side.

We are given some of the most wonderful promises in Scripture. We are assured that we are never alone and that Christ is always working for our good. I can imagine myself coming through a trial that I never thought I would survive.

As God proves faithful and Christ's words prove true, I come out the other side to victory and rest...and there is the angel staring at me and saying, "Why are you so surprised, didn't He tell you this would happen?"