



Canaan of God's Comfort, Australia
July 2021

Dear Friends,

As we walk through this year of 2021, and face yet another lockdown and severe restrictions due to the Covid-19 virus, we may have mixed feelings about what good this difficult season in our life could bring. It is hard to know what the future holds. Things we took for granted no longer seem so certain. Do you feel that life is standing still? Perhaps you feel you lack purpose and meaning. Or you are losing hope and desperate for something real to hold on to. Does it seem that day after day nothing changes and that God has forgotten you? No, He hasn't forgotten. He is simply taking the time to prepare you for that which He has called you to. When God puts a calling in our hearts and has great plans for our future, He must prepare us. Preparation, along with obedience and service, is part of God's process in growing us. He must purify us, make us small, humble and repentant.

*You made me, Lord, to bear Your image;
for this You ransomed me.*

*So I'll not rest until Your nature
in my life can be seen.*

*Your blood redeemed me from my sinful
and ingrained attitudes,*

*That as a child of God I'll show forth
the Father's attributes.*

*For this You gave Your life at Calv'ry,
O dearest Jesus mine.*

*And so Your image must shine from me;
it can't be otherwise.*

*So may Your loveliness, Lord Jesus,
cover my sinful self,
That I might radiate love only,
a mirror of Yourself.*

*Grant me Your lowliness, dear Jesus,
who as a servant came,
That I might share Your humble nature,
then one day with You reign.*

*O Lord, endow me with Your meekness,
You who are gentleness.*

*Your blood will save me from annoyance,
anger and bitterness.*

*Give me Your warmth and gentle nature,
You who are goodness alone,
That I might truly bear Your likeness,
Your loving-kindness show.*

*Oh, may Your radiance rest upon me
even in darkest night,
Because I know Your love surrounds me,
and You, Lord, are my light.*

Taken from THE SECRET OF LOVING WHEN YOU CAN'T — by M. Basilea Schlink

We can't judge the rest of our lives by a difficult season we go through. You may be in a time of struggle, a time of loss, a time where things aren't fair. Thoughts tell us, *"It's never going to change."* Don't believe those lies. God promised He will make something beautiful out of the ashes of our lives. There is a key however; allow Him time to prepare us. *Psalm 106:13 says the Israelites "did not wait for God's plan to unfold"* (NIV). They missed the Promised Land because they got impatient and complained; they thought God had forgotten about them. The mistake we often make is that we panic and try to rush ahead of God, whispering, "If it was going to happen, it would have happened by now." We have to learn to trust the Lord through the growth process.

We don't always understand God's ways. Sometimes His leadings seem to plunge us into bitter disappointment and we feel our lives are falling apart, while all the time He is leading us onto His perfect goal for us.

How we wait is important. If we wait with an attitude of discouragement or resentment towards God because of people who have hurt us and things that have disappointed us, we delay God's intervention in our situation. The right way to wait is in an attitude of faith, knowing that God is on the throne, knowing that He's working all things for our good, and declaring His promises. This difficulty didn't come to stay: it will pass. *"God being for you is more than the world being against you."* When we've been through loss, hurts, and disappointments, it's easy to sit around nursing our wounds, thinking about what we've been through, and how unfair it has been.

Psalm 119:91 says, "Everything serves His plan" (NLT). That goes not just for the good things but the disappointments— all are serving His plan. The closed doors. The people who wronged you. The truth is, all this is necessary for God to change us so that we become the kind of person He created us to be. He wants us to fit the calling He has for each one of us.

We have to *believe* that God knows what He is doing while we go through the preparation process. It means above all to *persevere*. Be prepared to go the way of the Cross with Jesus—ways of poverty, temptation and difficulty.

Through disappointments God teaches us to believe in Him, to have faith when we can see nothing—to trust Him when we cannot understand. While God prepares us, it can seem like He leads us into such depths that we almost forsake Him because He seems to contradict Himself regarding the calling and promises He has given. But He gives us grace, so that in these depths, genuine faith breaks through in our life and with a renewed dedication to His will, we can continue on our pathway.

"But you don't understand," we may be saying. *"This has been going on way too long. If I had to wait one year I could handle it, but I have been waiting so many years!"*

God's timing is a mystery. If we start comparing the time we spend waiting with the time others spend, we will be terribly frustrated. God has a unique calling and plan for each of our lives. And because He is a God of variety, our time of preparation and our season of growth will be unlike that of anyone else.

May the most important calling in our life be following Jesus as His bride. Choosing to go ways of humiliation, lowliness, where we are nothing—seen as unimportant in the eyes of others. Only on these pathways can we resemble Jesus, who was despised and not counted of any worth.

It was in His lowliness that His greatness and power lay hidden and only if we choose this way will we be powerful in our commission and in our service that Jesus calls us to. The smaller we are before others and in our own eyes, the greater Jesus can be in us—and then He can speak and work through us.

This means not only believing without seeing, but also persevering, even when we seem to believe in vain a hundred times. Even if it is months or years until we see the fulfilment of promises given to us, the important thing is to persevere!

We want to really impress this upon your hearts: Yes, the main thing is to **believe, believe, believe!** But not with the kind of faith that is quenched like a sputtering flame, but faith that perseveres, true faith that brings joy to God, and that is willing to hold on for the long haul so that He can work on us.

It humiliates us when we don't see any answers to our perseverance in faith. And it costs something, to then believe anew with enthusiasm. But through this pathway of preparation our relationship to God, our Father, will be deepened each time. Our relationship to Him; our God who keeps His promises *always* when He has spoken them.

What is God testing? Firstly, He is testing us to see if we will wait patiently until help comes. Are we patient when God doesn't seem to intervene? When we feel we are wandering in a maze? When every corridor ends in a closed door? When all our pleas to God are to no avail and He is silent?

Be patient. If God is patient, shouldn't we be too, considering that we do not know what lies ahead of us, or why God is still waiting? When our will is completely united with His will, we will receive all that He has promised.

Waiting is not our favourite pastime. We want to skip this whole stage because it is time-consuming and we're anxious to embrace God's calling for us. Maybe we should ask ourselves a couple of questions. *Whose work is it we want to get on with? And whose schedule are we on?* If we are on God's schedule, we can rest in the knowledge that He is in control, His timing is perfect, and He doesn't make mistakes.

Does this time of waiting, this period of preparation, and this season of growth loom over you like a huge mountain? How do you pray a prayer so filled with faith that it can move a mountain? By shifting the focus from the size of your mountain to the sufficiency of the Mountain Mover, and by stepping forward in obedience. Don't spend a lot of your time describing your mountain to the Lord. He knows what it is. Instead, focus your attention on the Mountain Mover – His glory, power, and faithfulness. Then start walking in faith, following His leading, and watch that mountain move!

Secondly, God is testing our humility. When He leads us down this road, He is asking us whether we will let Him be Lord of our life.

What is God preparing you for? You might have some indications about the future as you move through your seasons. It could be a gradual revelation, where little by little you see growth. It could be a complete mystery, in which you have no choice but to walk by faith.

We are the work of His hands. He is eternal wisdom, whereas *"our wisdom and understanding are overcome with darkness."* We cannot possibly understand the great, eternal, holy and almighty God. But we can trust Him. *Psalm 32:10 says, "The Lord's unfailing love surrounds the one who trusts in Him"* (NIV).

*Abba, dearest Father, I trust You,
You will uphold me and carry me through.*

You are with me;

You bring me the help I need.

I take refuge in Your heart.

When I am united with You, nothing can harm me.

You are my Shield and Your angels watch over me. MB

Much of this is gleaned from the writings of Mother Basilea or her talks with us sisters. We pray it will be a blessing for you. For further reading you might like to see: **SOWN IN WEAKNESS, RAISED IN GLORY.**

The Evangelical Sisters of Mary

MY DARKNESS GIVEN MEANING

"A CHRIST-SHAPED LIFE IS NOT A COMFORTABLY SHAPED LIFE, BUT A CROSS-SHAPED LIFE." - ANN VOSKAMP

Testimony by a former Helper

As I was going through a dark period in my life, God was showing me that He had to take me through a time of brokenness because I had so much self-control and inner strength of my soul, spirit and body that was not dependent on God Himself.

He had to take me through a period where my own strength was reduced to nothing so I would not be undertaking my journey in my own strength with my distorted thinking and beliefs, but rather, that I learnt to place my trust and confidence in God.

I felt that God had to take me through a purging process of my faith, so that when everything was stripped away – my inner strength, career, my gifts and abilities – my faith and belief in God would stand strong and become the unshakeable foundation in my Christian journey.

I can remember praying so piously as a young person, that the Lord would grant me true repentance for my sins – never actually realising the process He would use to grant me in response to that prayer. Because my self-will was so strong, it required Him to take me through real inward brokenness.

I think part of me did not want to see myself as a sinner, because of the internal hatred I already had for myself and the deep sense of failure I carried. Allowing God to shine His light into my darkness meant I had to let go of my pride and acknowledge that I was a weak, sinful being.

For a long time I think there was something rooted in me that wanted to contribute, in some way, to my salvation – I couldn't accept it as a free gift from God. I think there was a part of me that believed so much in my own strength that God became more of an "accessory", as if I only needed Him for my salvation but not for anything else.

Because of the things I had experienced in my life and the fact I didn't allow them to break me – I felt invincible in my own strength, but this thinking made the darkness deeper.

I thought it was my own strength that had made me survive and that was getting me through these dark times. One night I was so distressed that all I could do was get on my hands and knees before God and cry. Cry for Him to help me in that moment, just to survive that moment of intense darkness that was constantly telling me I needed to end my life.

Then it was as though Jesus came beside me and said, *"You think you are doing this all from your own strength. This is not true. You think I am not there carrying this with and for you. This is not true."* Jesus said to me, *"If you want to carry this on your own, then you are free to do so, but let Me show you what it truly looks like."*

Then I saw His hand lift up from being over me. He didn't take His hand away, He just lifted it up from being directly over me. Suddenly the dark spiritual battle that I was in at the time intensified. In that moment Jesus really opened my eyes and showed me that although I believed He had forsaken me to my darkness, this was not true.

He was right there. When His hand lifted, there was nothing in me that could withstand the dark spirits attacking me. I realised there was no personal strength in me, no matter how strong a person I was, that could fight those dark powers.

Jesus really showed me that although I thought He had abandoned me, He had been there the whole time, fighting and absorbing the dark spiritual attacks – not that I was spared the pain. Seeing myself as a sinful human being showed me my dependency and gave me a deeper realisation why I needed Jesus in my life.

Transformation began as I submitted to His chastening hand and allowed Him to change me through my suffering. Allowing Him to was vital. Not rebelling or resisting was equally important.

For me I became acutely aware of my sinful self, so I could accept that God was using my darkness to chasten me and mould me towards change. Because of the things I had done, things done to me, because of my character and because of my strong self-will, I knew God had to undertake very hard disciplinary steps if I was to relinquish control of myself and put my dependency in Him.

God kept hammering my soul because He

was trying to create change in my life – so that my selfish, unpurified feelings and emotions would die. Having a deep, personal relationship with Him, founded on unshakeable faith and implicit trust in who He is – this is all He desired for me; this is all He wanted me to think about.

During this time I experienced utter desolation. It was like God abandoning me to death. At times I did not think God would be able to catch me but He did; and throughout that experience, He revealed to me some very deep spiritual insights which He imprinted on my heart.

Even though going through this very dark time in my life was so hard, He kept reminding me of His deep personal love for me, and showing me how He can take bad brokenness and turn it into good brokenness by using it to reach out and help others.

He revealed many personal treasures in the midst of my darkness and continued to give me deep insight into my spiritual journey through Mother Basilea's writings. Somehow, her writings helped to keep my spirit and faith alive.

