

THOU ART WITH ME

Roger Shouse

2 Kings 6:28

*“And the king said to her, ‘What is the matter with you?’ And she answered,
‘This woman said to me, give your son that we may eat him
today, and we will eat my son tomorrow.’”*

Our passage is one in which we hope we never live to see. It was one of the darkest hours for Israel. The Syrians, led by Ben-hadad had taken the capital, Samaria. On top of the siege, a famine, called a “great famine” took place. And, it is here, where all hope seems to have vanished.

A donkey’s head sold for eighty shekels of silver and people were buying bird droppings to eat. Tough times does not begin to describe the hopelessness and despair of these people. In our verse today, a woman cries out to the king. Something unfair had happened. She and another woman had boiled her child and ate him. They were to do the same with the other’s child, but she had hidden him. This woman was complaining to the king.

Cannibalism. May we never see such times in our lives.

The steps of hopelessness are easy to recognize.

First, they begin when problems seem too great for us. In our passage, starvation, or cannibalism. What a terrible choice to make. It doesn’t have to be that extreme for us. A broken marriage. Unable to find a decent job. Health problems and bills that seem a mountain high. The words “never,” and “impossible,” become the way to describe the situation. Things will never get better, we say. It is impossible for us to get back on our feet, we believe.

Second, desperation leads a person to doing things that he thought he never would do. In our passage it was killing, boiling, and eating their own child. I’ve never been so hungry that I had that thought. Most would conclude, “I’d starve to death first, before I did that.” Yet we say that with bellies and pantries filled. Would we?

So desperate, one turns to cheating and dishonesty to find money. So desperate, one turns to an affair to find enjoyment. So desperate, one drowns in a bottle of alcohol. On a regular day, those choices would never be made. But when things are bad, really bad, one can think thoughts that he never had before.

Third, in desperation and discouragement, one walks away from God. Their faith becomes shipwreck. They abandon God. Oh, their reasons seem solid. “I’ve prayed and prayed to God, but nothing,” they say. Or “I’ve done everything that I was supposed to, and now look at my life.” Heartbroken, disillusioned, and without options, one gives up on God.

WHAT’S THE ANSWER? What would you say to these women who were eating their own children? How does one hang on when there is nothing to grab hold of? Cute little quotes won’t help. Just handing someone a verse doesn’t change much. What can one do when all hope seems to be gone?

First, all hope is not gone. Two factors remain: God is still on the throne, and you are still alive. A live dog is better than a dead lion, the Scriptures remind us. Pray. Pray. And keep praying. Lion’s dens. Fiery furnaces. Prison bars. Fortified cities. God was there for his people. Yes, the journey was often long and hard, but they were not forsaken.

Second, seek help. Let others know. By the end of this chapter, four lepers become the heroes. They go to the Syrian camp realizing that if they stay put, they will starve. If they go to the Syrians, they might be killed, but at least it would be swift and over. But God caused the Syrians to run in fear, leaving all their food and supplies. The lepers race back to tell Israel the good news. God had provided. God was there. Salvation had arrived. God’s family is large. There are many people that can get engaged and help. They need to know.

Third, hope is wrapped around faith. When faith is uncertain, so is our hope. Understand, as hard as this may sound, there are things worse than death. When we think God has left us, all hope is gone. Getting through this life isn't the battle. Finding rest, peace and enjoyment is not our pursuit. We are after God. Our hope is eternity with the Lord. Keep believing. Keep trusting. Keep walking towards the Lord.

Troubles. Hopelessness. Fear. These all seem much larger when God is out of the picture. Eating bird droppings and your children is not the worst thing in this passage. It is giving up on God and allowing troubles to drive out hope and being conquered by fear.

"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, Thou art with me" ... Do you believe that?