

Be Strong #24

“A Crisis of Faith”

I thought my faith and trust in God was strong. I have realized in the past few weeks that even though I have memorized His word about not being anxious (Philippians 4:6-7) trusting in Him, (Proverbs 3:5-6), and that my help is from the Lord (Psalm 121), when reality hits and the crisis of faith comes knocking I must be honest and say what the dad in scripture declared, “I do believe, help me overcome my unbelief.” Mark 9:24.

Since Ashley was nine years old, I have been praying Psalm 121 over her life,

“I lift up my eyes to the hills - where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip - he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD watches over you - the LORD is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD will keep you from all harm - he will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.”

A few weeks ago we loaded up Ashley’s *Toyota Yaris* and headed toward Los Angeles, California. Ashley’s dream for many years has been to find her place in the film industry. They say if you want to make it in that market, L.A. is the place to be!

She graduated in August from college with a Film and Digital Media Degree, came home, got a couple of jobs, and started putting money away so that when the time came she would have enough to make it on the West Coast while searching for God’s perfect job for her. Well, the time finally came and the departure date was set. A farewell party was the icing on the cake as many dear friends sent her off with the word of God and prayers for God’s will to be fulfilled in her life. My prayer as always has been this Psalm, but as time approached to leave, I began to find myself doing everything possible to ensure her safety, provide for every need she had, and give her pages and pages of advice on how to look for a job, how to find a good apartment, good churches to plug into, and words of caution about relationships. I realized that even though I believed Psalm 121, I did not believe it wholeheartedly.

We had an awesome trip. Twenty-five hours on the road together in two days. Lots of time to talk and laugh and cry together. We talked about everything under the sun - our favorite childhood memories, favorite family moments, stories about Chris (her brother, our son), things she was going to miss, family birthdays, Carson growing up, etc. We listened to her music and mine. We spent time memorizing Psalm 121 while driving down the road. We drove 140 miles at one stretch while talking about predestination. We talked about how much we wished mom was with us, but there was just not enough room for one more body in that packed car. I shared with her our excitement that she was fulfilling her dream and that no matter what she could always come home. If she made it a couple of months, or a lifetime, we would always be “home” for her. We thanked God for all the things He had done to get her to this point. We shared beautiful

times of silence and all of our time together was priceless. I will cherish those two days for the rest of my life. We landed in L.A. late Saturday afternoon, connected with friends, unpacked her into the apartment where she will stay for awhile and ate dinner together.

Sunday we walked the Santa Monica Pier and Promenade and bought her a couple of pepper spray containers, filled her car with gas, and went to the Mosaic Church where Erwin McManus is pastor.

After lunch, she drove me to the airport! We hugged and cried! (Wept is more like it from my perspective!) And she was gone! That moment was one of the most difficult moments of my life.

I know the Lord is her helper, *but what if she has a flat tire on the 405?*

I know the Lord is watching over her 24/7, *but I've still emailed every person I know in the L.A. area and asked them to check-in on her.*

I know the Lord will keep her from all harm, *but have you heard about L.A.?*

You see! This is my confession! I do love and trust God with Ashley's life, but I need to trust Him more and more. I need to trust him completely. Everyday I kneel before the Lord and open my hands to him as I release her into his care, as I do with everyone in my family. But it's taken a few days, by God's spirit, to pry open my grip, one finger at a time. I am realizing again that God is ultimately her father and His care, love, protection, and plans for her far exceed mine. She is His---always has been and always will be---both now and forevermore. God gives us our children to love, cherish, care for, teach, train, protect, provide for, and nurture. They are always His first. He simply trusts them to our care for a little while and then they're off to fulfill their dreams and God-given purpose in life.

Throughout the parenting process, He is not only using us, but He is teaching us to trust Him with our lives and those we love. My faith is incomplete! Pride whispers in my ear that I have more trust in God than I really do. The fact is, our faith will not be mature and complete until we enter into God's presence whole and Holy His. Until then, we make it our ambition to forget what is behind and press toward the goal of what is our upward calling in Christ Jesus, to win the prize for which he has called us heavenward. So, I conclude like I always do, by saying,

“Be strong in the Lord and in His might power.”

I am saying that to myself more than every today. And don't forget---you are the parent!

In His Joy,

Jerome
Ephesians 2:10