

Update 29 – written April 12, 2014

The past 40 days – inside, outside, here & there

Inside: I was thinking over the past 40 days and someone wiser than myself shared - “The number forty generally refers to a period of testing or evaluation in both the O.T and the New. The rain lasted for 40 days and 40 nights during the Flood. Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit for 40 days...

Moses lived in a palace for 40 years (he was a "somebody" then) and then in the Midian desert for 40 years (he was a "no-body" then) until God could finally use him by showing him what God will do with a "no-body".

In Numbers 13:35, spies were sent out into the Promised Land for 40 days. Then in 14:34 Moses tells us that God consigned the nation to 40 years of wandering 1 year of wandering for each day of spying (which was itself a test to see if the Nation was really ready to trust the Lord). In Ex 16:35, they ate manna for 40 years. In Deut. 29:4-5 Moses tells the people that during that 40 years their neither their clothes nor their sandals wore out, they had not eaten bread or drunk wine ‘...in order that you might know that I am the Lord your God.’”

Bob Hamilton

A period of testing...yes that fits. Noah, Moses, Jesus also did what they were supposed to do and for them it cost even more. But I've caught a glimpse into their world. When I get it how much God loves me, than I trust Him. When I trust God, then it becomes possible to obey from the heart. How much authority God has in my heart is proportionate to how deeply I know His love.

All of that said – often the trust and obey part is hard and other times it hurts real bad too. On March 1st the frame work of my life, as I have known it for the past 16 years, crashed. I lost my ministry, home, most of my things, Ukrainian friends and American teammates. Grief – raw grief – is what I've felt. In my mind, I walk through my friendships, house, projects and plans...all now so far away. I can no longer touch them. Good byes unsaid.

For awhile I held on to the hope that maybe...just maybe things would return to the way I had known them. Now I see that they will not. With the collapse of the known comes a forest full of questions – Why? Where? How? When? I am asking them. You are asking them. And to these questions right now, I have to answer with “I don't know.”

When I copied down this poem from a magazine a couple years ago, I wondered what would be happening that would cause me to return to it...now I know.

Wait

Desperately, helplessly, longingly, I cried;

Quietly, patiently, lovingly God replied.

I pled and I wept for a clue to my fate,

And the Master so gently said, “Child, you must wait.”

“Wait?” You say, “Wait!” my indignant reply.
“Lord, I need answers, I need to know why.
Is your hand shortened? Or have you not heard?
By faith, I have asked, and am claiming your word.

My future and all to which I can relate
Hangs in the balance, and YOU tell me to wait?!
I’m needing a ‘yes’, a go-ahead sign,
Or even a ‘no’ to which I can resign.

And Lord, You promised that if we believe
We need but to ask, and we shall receive.
And, Lord I’ve been asking, and this is my cry.
I’m weary of asking! I need a reply!

Then quietly, softly, I learned of my fate
As my Master replied once again “You must wait”
So I slumped in my chair, defeated and taut
And grumbled to God, “So I’m waiting ...for what?

He seemed, then to kneel and His eyes wept with mine,
And He tenderly said, “I could give you a sign.
I could shake the heavens, and darken the sun;
I could raise the dead, and cause mountains to run.

All you seek, I could give, and pleased you would be.
You would have what you want – but you wouldn’t know me.
You’d not know the depth of My love for each saint,
You’d not know the power that I give to the faint.

You’d not learn to see through clouds of despair,
You’d not learn to trust just by knowing I’m there.
You’d not know the joy of resting in Me,
When darkness and silence were all you could see.

You’d never experience that fullness of love
As the peace of My spirit descends like a dove;
You’d know that I give and I save...(for a start)
But you’d not know the depth of the beat of My heart.

The glow of My comfort late into the night.
The faith that I give when you walk without sight,
The depth that’s beyond getting just what you asked
Of an infinite God, who makes what you have last.

You'd never know, should your pain quickly flee,
What it means that 'My grace is sufficient for Thee'
Yes, your dreams and your plans overnight would come true;
But, oh, the loss! If I lost what I'm doing in you.

So be silent, My child, and in time you will see
That the greatest of gifts is to get to know Me.
And though often My answers seem terribly late.
My most precious answer of all is still – wait.

Author unknown

In all of this, two things have comforted me very much. First, knowing that I was obedient. I knew it that day but it was also confirmed later by Pastor Nicholi, Pastor Misha and Dr. Ludmilla who all said the same thing, "You left at exactly the right time." The second thing is the truth. The truth is that God is still on the throne. His will will be done. He will be glorified. The Bible says it is going to get worse before it gets all good. The truth is the truth and it hasn't changed.

I am in a muddy puddle and have a zillion questions but 'Yes, Lord, in this too, I will choose to trust You.

Outside:

I want to apologize for the lack of communication. The first two weeks I was back, I was just overwhelmed with all that had and was happenings and in jet leg. Then my laptop went down. After I got a new one then we started having problems with the Internet. In short, March was a rough month all the way around. I truly appreciated your patience and understanding. I am extremely grateful for your prayers.

But like Oregon's bleak March skies, bare trees and sodden landscape – over the weeks it all gave way to warmth & color. Winter was conquered by spring (on the inside too). Spring in Oregon and the beauty of my parent's farm has done much to heal. Being so welcomed home by family, friends and churches...meant volumes. The freedom of being able to walk outside and not be watched or feel scared; being able to accomplish many tasks so easily; the fun of being able to drive and being in my first language – in it all I have felt myself able to let my guard down and relax.

In the ministry:

The work goes on!

*Two weeks ago we received the happy news that all the humanitarian aid that had been sent was received! Despite all that has been going on there, not even one box was missing. Thank you Lord!

*This week Vacation Bible School supplies are being sorted & distributed out to 30 churches.

*The program for the outreach to the mentally & physically challenged is in place. Slated to take place the first week of June it is exciting to hear that leaders have been invited and invitations to

the campers are going out.

*A system is in place for VBS. As donations are received here, funding will be given out there to the local pastors that I work with for summer Vacation Bible Schools & teen hikes.

*All three church clinics continue to work as usual.

*In regards to outreaches to the medical students - a Ukrainian/Russian speaking conference is planned for the spring and the conference in English for the international students is planned for the fall.

During furlough I will stay in communication via email and Skype with many of my national co-workers not so much to direct the work but rather to facilitate, trouble shoot and follow up.

In Ukraine:

As you know, the peninsula of Crimea is now under Russian control. The vote was not legal or fair. But, the truth is that more than 50% of the Crimean citizens were in favor of joining Russia.

It doesn't fit into my brain how or why they would want to, but even while I was still there people were telling me this themselves. Even before I left, I saw that families, friends and even the churches were being split by differing opinions. They (pro-Russia) tried explaining to me, "Under Russia rule there was order. Everyone had work and a paycheck. There were no homeless, drug addicts or corruption." This answer still doesn't make it work for me. Only when I remember their history do I begin to understand how different the past 22 years have been for them.

I am very grateful for the Internet and being able to stay in contact via email and Skype. What I hear is varied. One family (Russian), for example, is pleased with the change and these 'bumps' of difficulties along the way are simply normal in the process of change. Another clings to the fact that because everything was so obviously illegal (occupation, vote, new leaders put in place), that she believes truth will come to the forefront eventually and things will go back to the way they were. Another family (Ukrainian) describes the situation as continuing to be very tense. They grieve that they are no longer Ukrainian citizens and now separated from friends and family.

Everyone does agree on one thing - that questions are everywhere. One friend half joked when he said, "You aren't allowed to be born, be buried, get married, buy or sell." Banks and post offices are still closed. Many government offices are closed or working on a limited bases until the new rules are established. The passport office, on the other hand, is swamped as folks line up to get new passports issued. These first few months it will be free. After that you will have to pay to get it done. You are not forced to get a new passport but without it you are considered a foreigner. As such, you must then apply for yearly residency permits and do not have the same rights as citizens.

As weird as this sounds, I know some things that Putin doesn't. For starters – God is in control! Putin can do nothing beyond what God allows. Whether he wants it or not, God will glorify Himself through Putin. Second, for the past 22 years, Ukraine has had freedom of religion and

they have not been asleep in the pews. For a country smaller than the size of Texas and themselves being 1,000 pastors short of having one pastor per church (many pastors pastor more than one church); even so, as of 2 years ago, Ukraine had sent out 500 Protestant missionaries beyond her borders! Third, for the past 20 years in all of Ukraine, Crimea is the region that has had the most active group of church planters and the largest number of outreaches to children (through Child Evangelism Fellowship). Celebrate with me! What I am saying is that Putin is clueless that he has just inoculated his country with a whole slew of Christians!!! God worked it so that the closed country of Russia invited Christ followers in themselves. It makes me grin!!

Do you get it? Do you see what God has done? Do you see how you have been an instrumental part of such a much huge-er plan? As you page back through my updates, especially the past 5 years, you will see every August and September, I am thanking God for still another year of religious freedom. I have had a very real sense of ‘this could be the last one’ feeling. Not to be dooms day but rather a burning sense of urgency to work while we still could. You met me there and stepped up to the plate.

In our availability, God used us to prepare the Crimea peninsula for this day. How humbling. What an honor! What a feeling to look back and say ‘No regrets!’ No regrets for anything that God asked of us. I’m not closing shop. I am simply wanting to stop and point out – ‘Hey guys look at what the Lord has done!’ I just want you to celebrate with me.

Isaiah 55:11 says “... so is my word that goes out from my mouth; It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.” The word of God has gone out and in place today are the Moses, Davids, Esters, Ruths, Josephs, Marys, Marthas, Mathews and Pauls. Today we can’t see beyond that but tomorrow’s fruit is already developing. Someday we will see the little ones, who now are in VBS, take their place as followers of Christ because God’s word will achieve the purpose for which it was sent. Be happy for what God has done! Be thankful and amazed for the privilege of being a part of it all!

Truth A: "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future..." Jer. 29:11

Truth B: "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, declares the Lord. " Is 55:8

Truth A + Truth B = Truth C

God’s good for me may be different than I had planned or imagined.

Ukrainian Pastor

The next step:

While much has changed in Crimea, I am still a missionary to Ukraine. My focus right now is furlough. It has been 3 years since I have reported to supporters so this will be what I concentrate on until the end of the year. So much has gone on in the ministry this past term. You have been a part of God’s work in Ukraine and I am excited to have the chance to show you & share about it in person.

I am here but ministry continues there. My being in the states does *not* stop the work! The many national Christians that I work with are moving ahead with outreach plans. Before I left, I was able to set up a system so that as funding is provided on this side, it will be released on that side for: Vacation Bible Schools, teen hikes, the evangelistic outreach for the handicapped and the Christian conferences for medical students.

Praying for –

- The outreach to the mentally & physically challenged in early June- that in all ways God would accomplish His purpose.
- Courage & wisdom for the local pastors, church planters and those who do outreaches to children – especially in relation to doing Vacation Bible Schools & teen hikes this summer.
- Christian medical conferences for medical students – that in both conferences God's perfect will be done.
- For myself – obedience.

Furlough – big picture:

April & May – next week leaving on a four-week road trip to NE, I will be visiting many individual supporters, family & friends and attending the Christian Medical & Dental Association conference in WI.

June – If things look stable enough there, I plan to return to upper Ukraine for a couple weeks. It would give me a chance to bring in supplies and visit two of the church clinics I work with. I will not attempt to go into Crimea during this trip as a Russian visa is now required.

July & August – home in Oregon; CMF furlough retreat & team meeting at the home office in IN.

September, October and November - visiting supporting churches.

Where I am already looking forward to sharing about the ministry:

Please consider yourself personally invited!

July 6 Gilham Community Church Eugene, OR

3633 Gilham Road 97408

July 13 Tigard Christian Church, Tigard, OR

13405 SW Hall Bv. 97223

Sept. 7 Trent Church of Christ, Dexter, OR

38029 Wheeler Rd. 97431

Sept. 14 Shasta Way Christian Church, Klamath Falls, OR

5835 Shasta Way 97603

Oct. 5 Brookings Harbor Christian Church, Brookings, OR

777 5th Ave 97415

Oct. 12 Noti Church of Christ, Noti, OR

22424 Noti Loop Rd 97461

Oct. 19 Community Presbyterian Church, Cannon Beach, OR

132 E. Washington 97110

Oct. 26 Mt. Zion Lutheran Church, Mountlake Terrace, WA

21428 44th Ave. West 98043

Nov. 9 Twin Oaks Christian Church, Eugene, OR

Church located at Bailey Hill Rd and Lorane Hwy

Nov. 23 Turner Christian Church, Turner, OR

7871 Marion Rd. SE 97392

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