

**1 Peter 3:15** But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. **Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.** But do this with gentleness and respect...

Katherine and I have been able to face this storm because of our personal relationship with Jesus Christ. He is our Shepherd and we follow Him, He is our King and we serve Him and He is our God and we worship Him. This doesn't mean that we don't experience suffering or pain, but through it all we have a God who loves us and whose master plan is perfect. We have a Friend who knows and who cares.

**1 Peter 5:7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.**

Our relationship with Jesus didn't begin here though. Through reading the Bible as children ourselves we learned the meaning of these words of Jesus:

**John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.**

We discovered that we were sinners (our parents were already very aware of that). But as sinners our relationship with God was broken and it was only an "Act of God" that could change things. We were headed for the "perish" of John 3:16 which is eternal separation from God in a place called Hell, a place not intended for us...But as another scripture says:

**1 Peter 3:9b** The Lord is...**not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.**

Well since we couldn't DO anything to save ourselves we recognized our need for a Saviour, someone to save us from our sins. We found that an angel had told a man named Joseph who that would be:

**Matthew 1:21** "And she (Mary) will bring forth a Son, and **you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.**"

"Jesus" means "Jehovah (God) Saves" and we discovered that He was the One who could save us. We recognized that when "God gave His Son" it was to a cross where He "bore the wrath of God towards our sin". There was no other way for sin to be dealt with...

**Matthew 26:39** He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, **if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me;** nevertheless, not as I will, but as You *will.*"

God was satisfied with Jesus death on our behalf and demonstrated it by raising Him from the dead:

**1 Thessalonians 1:9-10** "...you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, **whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.**"

**1 Peter 1:18-21** For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect...**Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.**

Jesus took our "Hell" and secured entry to "Heaven" for us and simply asked that we "believe it" to enter into the good of it.

**Romans 10:9** ...if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

We "repented of" (turned away from) our sin and "believed/trusted/put our faith in Jesus"...ultimately we realized that we couldn't save ourselves, but that He was able to save and keep us Forever.

**2 Timothy 1:12** Yet I am not ashamed, because **I know whom I have believed,** and am convinced that he **is able to guard what I have entrusted to him** for that day.

With our sin dealt with and our eternal destiny settled we began a journey that has lead us to today. We've not always pleased our Saviour, but He's always been quick to forgive us when we ask. We continue to be awed at His AMAZING GRACE...He gives us what we do not deserve.

But how does that help us today? Or in dealing with the loss of our precious Elysha?

If we lived for this life, or this body, or this world that consists of what we can see and touch then the loss of Elysha would be a tragedy which we might not recover from. But since in our journey with Jesus we've discovered the truth of a place called heaven where "God dwells" where:

**Revelation 21:4** "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain"

An understanding that this life is temporary and as Jesus reminds us through the apostle Paul:

**2 Corinthians 4:13-18** It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak, **because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence.** All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.

**Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.**

We know that we will see Elysha again! She is "with Jesus" now and when we see Jesus by death or when He comes again we will see her too.

**2 Corinthians 5:6-8** So *we are* always confident, knowing that **while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.** **7** For we walk by faith, not by sight. **8** We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be **absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.**

As the little Sunday school chorus goes, "Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world." His care and love for her is far deeper than our own and "each day was numbered before one came to be" as we read in Psalm 139.

**Matthew 18:1** At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

**2** Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, **3** and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. **4** Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. **5** Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.

**10** "Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.

Matthew 18:2 tells me two things:

1. It is possible to "not enter the kingdom of heaven"
  - a. Jesus' horrific torture and death was because to that possibility "If it be possible (any other way) let this cup pass from me"
  - b. Hell is a very real place – the "perish" of John 3:16
2. It is possible to "enter the kingdom of heaven"
  - a. Becoming "like a little child" – Dependant on another

As we close this message, we'd like say that our experience of walking with Jesus can be yours too. If Elysha being taken from us at this time and in this way results in God speaking to you and leading you to pursue a relationship with Him then in "light of eternity" we will say "it was worth it all".

Before Elysha was born we prayed that she would grow to "praise the Lord" with her voice. Her song of praise is perfected now and as such our prayer has been answered. With purer lips than our own she is singing to Jesus.

### **Prayer...**

We are now going to try sing a song that we sung at Elysha's great Aunt Betty's funeral exactly one year ago to the date. This song, which is an insert in your programs expresses many of the truths that we've talked about today and it is a further explanation of our Hope in Jesus Christ.

For those who know this song, please join us on the last verse.