

DENIED GRIEF

June 29, 2020

EZEKIEL 24:15-27 NKJV - (15) The word of the LORD came to me: **(16)** “Son of man, with one blow I am about to take away from you the delight of your eyes. Yet do not lament or weep or shed any tears. **(17)** Groan quietly; do not mourn for the dead. Keep your turban fastened and your sandals on your feet; do not cover your mustache and beard or eat the customary food of mourners.” **(18)** So I spoke to the people in the morning, and in the evening my wife died. The next morning I did as I had been commanded. **(19)** Then the people asked me, “Won’t you tell us what these things have to do with us? Why are you acting like this?” **(20)** So I said to them, “The word of the LORD came to me: **(21)** Say to the people of Israel, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am about to desecrate my sanctuary—the stronghold in which you take pride, the delight of your eyes, the object of your affection. The sons and daughters you left behind will fall by the sword. **(22)** And you will do as I have done. You will not cover your mustache and beard or eat the customary food of mourners. **(23)** You will keep your turbans on your heads and your sandals on your feet. You will not mourn or weep but will waste away because of your sins and groan among yourselves. **(24)** Ezekiel will be a sign to you; you will do just as he has done. When this happens, you will know that I am the Sovereign LORD.’ **(25)** “And you, son of man, on the day I take away their stronghold, their joy and glory, the delight of their eyes, their heart’s desire, and their sons and daughters as well— **(26)** on that day a fugitive will come to tell you the news. **(27)** At that time your mouth will be opened; you will speak with him and will no longer be silent. So you will be a sign to them, and they will know that I am the LORD.”

Those whom the Lord calls to ministry often must give up things that they would ordinarily hold dear. Jesus was called to lay down His life and suffer the divine curse on sin (**Galatians 3:10–14**). Ezekiel suffered the loss of his wife. God came to the prophet and told him his wife was going to die but that he should not engage in any of the customary mourning practices, which would have involved wearing sackcloth, lying on the ground, throwing ashes on one’s head, and so on. Instead, he was to don a turban, that is, wear the garments of celebration (**Ezekiel 24:15–18**). This was a great loss indeed to the prophet, for the Lord refers to her as the delight of Ezekiel’s eyes. To not mourn for her would be a great sacrifice for him and cause great pain to his heart in addition to her death.

Such a death seems to be a drastic, almost like a “**Desperate**” step for the Lord to take to get His point across. Of course, in reality, God never finds Himself in a desperate situation. But from a human perspective, the covenant community’s refusal to believe that the Lord would let Jerusalem fall was a desperate situation, and desperate times required desperate measures. The death of Ezekiel’s wife prefigured the loss of the temple, which was “the delight of the Jews eyes.” God strove to make His intent clear so that the people would have no excuse. Despite the hardship in the loss of Ezekiel’s wife and temple, however, all would be for the good of Israel (**vv. 19–27**). Through the trouble, the people would come to know that He is the Lord.

God is working for the ultimate good of His people even in tragedy (**Romans 8:28**). Sometimes, achieving those ultimate goods means suffering in the short term, but one day we will see that the suffering was worth it. The loss of Ezekiel’s wife meant some could look back after Jerusalem’s fall and see that the Lord in whose name the prophet spoke had been right all along. That would lead to them to trust Him for salvation, the greatest good for any human being. Don’t be surprised when close people in your life are removed. They could be dear to you, but to God a hindrance, distraction or even a temptation. It hurts yes, but in His eye, it’s necessary.

SCRIPTURE READING: NEHEMIAH 8:10

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: You never know how strong you are, until being strong is the only choice you have.

“A JOURNEY OF THE HEART”