Dear Open Door Family,

I remember talking to a man who was in ministry. I was 19 at the time and I was at a point where I was starting to get serious about following Jesus and growing in my faith. He seemed so mature as he shared with me that God was a God who loved to fulfill dreams. He said that God loved to bless His people by lavishing His gifts upon them. Then he went on to share a series of examples of HOW God had done that in his own life. Every single example was about something pretty incredible. He was given the opportunity to drive a sports car as he house sat for someone, he had the chance to visit several continents and see amazing things, he had seen God provide financial resources for numerous things he wanted to see happen. Not once did he mention hard times or struggles and difficulties in obeying the Lord. I don't remember hearing anything about surrendering to God. I had already seen some of my own dreams broken and crushed so I was a bit skeptical. And in light of my own sinful motives I had to ask myself if what this man was saying was true? Is God really like a genie in a bottle or Santa Clause who grants wishes or gives gifts to those who have been good? The more I learned and studied the less I believed the things that this man told me so many years ago. I have found wonderful comfort in God's Word as I have gone through struggles and hardships in my Faith.

Hebrews 11:32-38 (NAS) And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, [33] who through faith...

who THROUGH FAITH... conquered kingdoms, administered justice, received the promises, shut lion's mouths, quenched flames, escaped the sword, were made strong, conquered enemy armies, raised the dead. (vs. 33-35)

Hebrews 11:35 (NAS) Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were...

through FAITH - OTHERS... were tortured and refused to be released, faced jeers, were flogged, were chained and put in prison, were stoned, were sawed in two, were killed with the sword, had to wear sheepskins and goat skins, were destitute, persecuted, and mistreated, wandered in deserts and mountains, lived in caves and holes in the ground. (vs. 35-38)

Life Application Bible: "These verses summarize the lives of great men and women of faith. Some experienced outstanding victories, even over the threat of death. But others were severely mistreated, tortured, and even killed. Having a steadfast faith in God does not guarantee a happy, carefree life. On the contrary, our faith almost always guarantees us some form of abuse from the world. While we are on earth, we may never see the purpose of our suffering. But we know that God will keep his promises to us. ...we live in an evil world filled with suffering, even for believers. But God is still in control. He allows some Christians to become martyrs for the faith, and he allows others to survive persecution. Rather than asking, 'Why me?' it is much more helpful to ask, 'Why not me?' Our faith and the values of this world are in CONFLICT with one another."

PRAYER: Lord God, thank You that You are in control of all things. Thank You that You are with me no matter how hard things may be. Thank You that You ALWAYS work EVERYTHING - including the hard, the difficult, and the painful - out for Your honor and my good. (Rm. 8:28) Please Lord, help me to surrender willingly each day. Help me to live my life as a living sacrifice for YOU!

Pastor Mark Kieft
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