



"Send us to bring them in"

## MY LOVE IS YOUR WARFARE by Colleen Wheeler

About a month before Christmas I was browsing for bargains at my favorite thrift shop. I looked at three dozen inexpensive goblets that I thought about buying. Later that week a friend picked them up for me. I purchased rolls of ribbon and a few dozen cinnamon and vanilla tea-light candles. I liked the colors and scents of the cinnamon and vanilla and did not think much about Christmas scents such as evergreen and pine.

Once all the craft supplies were on hand, I made ribbons and glued them onto the goblets. I placed inside each one a scented vanilla candle and wrapped each goblet in clear cellophane. To make the packaging festive, I tied the top of each bag with a smaller cellophane bag filled with two cinnamon candles. There were a lot of leftover candles, out of which I made several small cellophane bags filled with the two scented candles. I planned to give them out at the church.

To my amazement, during the Christmas Eve sermon, both cinnamon and vanilla scents and their meanings were prophetically preached. I held up a goblet to confirm the word.

Cinnamon represents the goodness of God. Vanilla represents the rest, peace, and simplicity of the Lord and also has healing qualities that tend to have a calming effect.

We can easily allow ourselves to become bogged down with the concerns of the world. Anxiety mounts as we try to figure out the answers to our problems. Sometimes it is difficult to understand why certain events occur in our lives. However, when we embrace God's goodness, we find peace, a new level of trust and rest. Proverbs 3:5 (NASB) says, "**Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding.**" Despite our circumstances, He really is working all things together for good, even though it may not seem like it.

### MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT

And He said to me, "**My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.**" Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of



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Christ may rest upon me. (2 Corinthians 12:9 NKJV)

One morning on the way to a service, I was encouraging a friend about the call of God upon her life. I mentioned that God placed a thorn in Paul's side, but he carried on with God's calling despite it. I explained how he pleaded with the Lord three times to have it removed but the Lord denied His requests. Instead He said, "My grace is sufficient for you." God did not want Paul to think all the good work he was doing was in his own strength. He allowed the thorn so Paul would depend on Him and so he would not fall into pride. The thorn buffered him and molded his character. God's grace strengthened Paul to move forward, despite the pain in his side.

Paul did not whine and complain; rather, he trusted that God allowed his circumstances for his good and then boasted in his weakness. Paul's response amazes me. **He said, "Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."**

Like Paul, we cannot do anything in our own strength or we will certainly fall into pride. Whether Paul's was a physical ailment or not, we too have a thorn in our lives that God has allowed in order to keep us humbly dependant upon His grace to move us forward.

Sometimes we end up talking more about the enemy's attacks than the Lord's purposes for allowing them. Of course we must be aware of the enemy's schemes and put on our armor each day. But when I hear, "The devil this" and "The devil that," I tend to ask myself, "Where is the love of God?" God allows attacks for a reason. We must ask ourselves, "What is God trying to teach me through this experience?"

Perhaps you can identify a particular thorn God has placed in your life. Maybe it is physical, mental, or emotional. Perhaps it is a temporary thorn of insecurity, fear, or doubt. Whatever it is, it is there for a reason. He wants us to humbly rely on His strength, not our own.

When we are challenged with a circumstance beyond our control, we must grasp God's goodness and peace (the cinnamon and vanilla of God) and realize that He wants the best for us.

**"We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not**



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**disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us." (Romans 5:3-5 NIV).**

### **MY THORN**

God graced the apostles' endurance in hardship and they considered it "joy" to suffer for His name's sake. Can you imagine suffering whippings and persecution and then rejoicing?

I can remember a time when I was severely challenged with a physical situation, "my thorn," that would affect my entire future. I had endured breast cancer. After surgery, I experienced many emotional ups and downs. The disappointments I experienced were not through the horrific health situation, but I grieved over unfulfilled expectations of others. The fact is, people will always disappoint us, but God does not disappoint.

I had two new scars, but at least I still had my breast. I am a holistic type and do not like medication. I was afraid to undergo chemotherapy, especially since my mother had gone into cardiac arrest after she had taken her first dose of chemo ten years before, and six months afterward she died. I was afraid of the unknown. Would all my hair fall out? Would I be nauseated? Could I still work? How would I support myself? What would be the long-term effects? After exploring all of my holistic options, I accepted that chemo was the best choice for me. Even though the poison would go into my body, it would prolong my life.

During this time of distress, the Lord gave me a Scripture verse to hold on to: **"They will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover" (Mark 16:18 NASB).**

I was like a soldier throughout the entire year of chemo and radiation treatments. I worked cutting hair, ministered to my beginner Bible study group, performed a baptism service, continued my education at Bible College and even taught a course there, ministered the gospel on the street, and preached evangelistic services. I grew my hair extra long, despite my chances of losing it.

My hardest struggle was accepting the rapid weight gain. The chemo had steroids and I quickly gained about forty pounds. I was in the public eye and found this to be very humiliating. But my attitude was "At least I'm still alive!" I praised God and danced before Him anyway and continued to press on like His good soldier.



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I thought the worse was over until I learned about the repercussions after my final treatments. The oncologist told me I would have to take another medication, for prevention, for five years. The weight was not coming off; my thyroid was not functioning properly; I needed to take another medication. To top things off I found out that I had developed the beginnings of osteoporosis and needed another kind of medication. While all this was going on, I still had not grieved the fact that I would no longer be able to have children because the treatments had shut down my reproductive system.

### **CONSIDER IT JOY**

**Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (James 1:2-4 NASB)**

I could not understand why the people in my life could not understand my pain. I was sinking into despair and crashing emotionally. It seemed the more I tried to be understood the more others refused to understand me. This friction opened the door for Satan's arrows to hit me in the new wounds I had as well as the older wounds that God had been healing.

I was in a vulnerable position and expected people to come to my aid. But I learned that others could not identify with me and did not know what to say. Instead of saying something encouraging, their words came out hurtful, making an already grueling situation worse. I can't tell you how many times I heard about Sara being in her nineties when she conceived. For me this was equivalent to being a mourner at a funeral and being told that Jesus could raise the dead.

Someone else told me to consider it all joy. Needless to say, I did not receive this as a word of encouragement. I was angry and hurt on top of all the other emotions I had to endure. My hope was shattered and I needed someone to empathize with me, to hug me and console me. The sadness was overwhelming, bearing the emptiness and the loss of my womanhood. The trooper in me was dying and I had to take a hiatus from ministering. It was all so humiliating, beyond my control, and I was the weakest I had ever been.

**"For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for a lifetime; weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning" (Psalms 30:5 NASB).**

Healing, grieving, and mourning are a process. Joy comes when the nighttime is over, and sometimes it can be a long night. In order to consider horrific facts "joy," we must begin to



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return to "it". During these times, we see glimpses of light to give us the hope of the morning soon to come upon the horizon.

It is sad that others may not come to our rescue when we need them most, but our reliance must be upon the Lord despite our trials and discomfort. He is jealous for us.

When we can get to the point that no matter how much we are misunderstood, how much loss we have endured, or how many people hate us or slander us...when we can trust that affliction is to humble us and that God will use it for His good purposes...then we can consider it all joy.

I believe that God uses situations and people to "kill" us.

**"So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh-for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Romans 8:12-14 NASB).**

### **KILLING ME SOFTLY WITH HIS LOVE**

During worship, the Lord gave me a rhema word. I heard part of an old Roberta Flack song: "Killing Me Softly with His Love." Knowing the title was different from the original; I searched the Web for the words of the song and found the lyrics. Yes, He is killing us softly.

I had a revelation that we must allow Jesus to kill us in order to perfect us before He can use us to accomplish His purposes. If we don't, we can end up buying into Satan's lies and allow him to kill us and thwart God's purposes. We need to surrender to the death process Jesus' way or the devil will do whatever he can to try to kill us his way.

Someone in our church recently said, "The enemy at times tells 90 percent truth and 10 percent lies." A little lie mixed in with a lot of truth taints what we believe to be the truth. We must discern the truth.

### **AN ANT IS AN ANT**

During worship one day the Lord showed me an ant with huge boxing gloves. It looked mean and big, putting up his dukes with the intent to instill fear and beat us down. The enemy wants us to see a twisted version of life, to entice us to anger, and to believe his lies.



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One of the tactics of the enemy is to distort an offense. He disguises the real size of the issue and provokes us to react inappropriately. We need to keep God's perspective of the size of a situation and trust Him with it. When offenses are ignored, the enemy entices anger to mount, which serves as a mask to not deal with the original offense. A huge door opens for the enemy to come in to further distort the original issue; this is when offenses begin to tally up. Reality becomes distorted.

We must get rid of the offense before we can truly enter into God's presence and hear His voice. The prayers of a righteous man release blessings, but the prayers of a man who holds anger in his heart release curses. Praying with unresolved anger is falling into the trap of agreeing with the accuser of the brethren. Praying on behalf of a person in that state is like aiming arrows at the person instead of the issue. Praying with that heart condition is charismatic witchcraft. It causes a lot of harm and the demons wreck havoc in the spiritual realm.

Often prayers have a reverse effect that boomerangs and backfires onto the person praying. I know of someone who was praying against me. In prayer the Lord showed me a huge vise pressing down on that person's head. I was not sure what that meant until months later, when I heard the person had neck surgery. God's Word says, **"Do not touch My anointed ones"** (1 Chronicles 16:22 NASB). When curses are released God becomes our strong tower.

A lady answered her front door to three neighbors who had been persecuting her for being a Christian. They began cursing at her, and one of them hacked up a huge spitball. When he hurled it at her, a gust of wind blew and the "green slimy thing" made a U-turn back on them. Needless to say, they ran for their lives.

Adam and Eve suffered the consequences of sin when they agreed with the serpent and were separated from God. Satan loves to multiply offenses until there is gossip, anger, and division. The situation tends to snowball and becomes much bigger than it really is. The demons laugh while a whirlwind of confusion begins to tear apart lives, ministries, churches, and relationships. Satan is a liar! An ant is an ant; put him under your feet. Release love and mercy!

## **ANOTHER TRIAL**

I recently went through a trial in my ministry that left it shaken to the core. I was still dealing with some of the lingering effects and was wondering when the Lord would send a relief



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blanket from heaven. Suddenly He broke through with words of encouragement. One morning as I was rushing past my friendly doorman, he quoted a Scripture verse to me: "In God I have put my trust; I shall not be afraid. What can mere man do to me?" (Psalm 54:12b NASB).

During my drive the Lord gave me another Scripture to hold on to: **"No weapon that is formed against you will prosper" (Isaiah 54:17 NASB)**. It was as if I heard this Scripture verse for the very first time. God's rhema word ministered to my soul in a deep way.

Much later that day, during a time of church fellowship, I was told a story about Frances Frangipane's experience when he endured a church split. His best friend left and took half the church with him, while slandering Frances's name. Frances was devastated and a weeping mess from it all. He sought the Lord as to why this happened. That night God gave him a dream about a high school friend who kept responding to him with the two words, "So what?" Frances woke up bewildered. Then he realized the Lord was telling him to trust Him, let it go, and move on. The Lord was preparing him for an international ministry and used the situation to form his character and make him more Christ-like.

As I meditated on those Scripture verses the Lord gave me, when I felt tempted to slip back into thinking about my trial I would say out loud, "So what?" My faith began to rise and I could embrace the cinnamon and vanilla of God.

### **Come Up Higher**

Let us repent and get rid of unresolved issues of offense and un-forgiveness. Let us grab on to the goodness of God, His mercy and kindness, and sit in His presence. Then we will be able to identify the lies of the enemy and expose them. We will be able to forgive instead of reacting to offensive situations. Also, we will learn how to make things right with our brothers and sisters by speaking the truth in love, rather than avoiding them. It will not matter what the other person's response is because our hearts will be so filled with God's love that the other person's response will not matter.

During worship I gave out this prophetic word: "My love is your warfare. Come up higher in Me, receive My love, for it is your warfare. Be filled so you overflow with My love. Come up higher in Me, My people."

Rick Joyner once said and I paraphrase, "We can go as high as we want to go in Jesus. Yes, we can and we must go higher in Jesus in order to grasp His heart's desire for the harvest and



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for the times that are coming. I believe the Lord is leading us to go higher in Him this year. God wants our love relationship to be real, just like the passion and excitement we had with our first school crush. When we truly "kiss the Son," we will see the light. It will be like fireworks on the Fourth of July, and we will be walking and holding hands with Jesus. Yes, He is a friend who stays closer than a brother. Through abiding in His love, explosions in the heavenlies will happen. Things will break free and we will know the Lord's purposes and walk in victory.

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