

T R A N S I T I O N S

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by Chris Ann Waters

DISMEMBERMENT

Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

Romans 6:13

Wash, O God, our sons and daughters, where your cleansing waters flow
Number them among your people, bless as Christ blessed long ago.
Weave them garments bright and sparkling; compass them with love and light.
Fill, anoint them; send your Spirit, holy dove and heart's delight.

Music: *The Sacred Harp*, Philadelphia, 1844

Text: Ruth Duck, 1947

Recently attention was given to New York by a story that gripped everyone. Leiby Kletzky, age 8, was murdered in a horrific act of evil. The medical examiner concluded he died of acute intoxication as the child was forced to ingest a large dose of drugs, smothered with a towel, and had his feet severed from him and placed in a refrigerator. Levi Aron was arrested for the crime. Spirits have been arrested with grief and guilt as Leiby's parents, family, and a watching community live with regret thinking that this could have been prevented. Only the Lord knows how devastated his parents are over the loss of their beloved son.

The loss of a child in any manner is an inimitable experience. Time stops. Hope stops. For a time there is emotional paralysis, weariness, and a depth of emptiness that only God fully understands. When children die violently, grief is compounded. Innocence, in every way, is killed and the sense of loss is indescribable and seemingly inescapable. Such pain is only known to those who have borne it. Others look on in compassion and gentleness to offer a word, an act, that may in some small measure soothe and heal. But ultimately, such losses are only for the Lord to cover and comfort.

We are members of the human family. When tragedy of any kind strikes a community, we are all dismembered. Each suffers a loss. A loss of collective hope in what might have been. We are connected to each other, whether or not we are conscious of that connection. What I do for you, I do for the community at large—whatever that community is in size or variety. What you do for me increases my investment in your days as well as those around me. Actions matter. Attention matters. We are linked, not as much by technology or social websites, as by the heart and purposes intended by a holy and remarkable God.

Grief is lessened when we bear it for each other. We bear it with our prayers, our offerings to help with household tasks, with notes, phone calls, and with our silent yet compassionate presence. God wants us—needs us—to bear each other's burdens. We are incapable of walking through challenging seasons in life without the help of others. When grief strikes a heart and a home, the support of others is essential. We become to others the presence of Jesus. The Holy Spirit ministers to us as to how we can help and then the Holy Spirit supernaturally ministers to those through their season of sorrow.

God's plan for your life and mine is one of wonder, fulfillment, purpose, and peace. It is a plan conceived out of love and sustained by love. Although that plan can at times seem lacking when suffering occurs, remembering the life of Jesus and what He did for love's sake insures that our sufferings shall be redeemed as well. God promised. May you trust God's love and promises for yourself. May you be the one to be a witness to hold them true for someone who grieves that needs to be reminded of the same.

Father, You show us throughout Your Word that sorrow is real, and that it is experienced due to all sorts of endings and challenges. Lord God, because of Jesus, Thy dear Son, and the presence of the Holy Spirit, we have been given the capacity to endure for each other as need requires. We only do so by leaning on You for strength, wisdom, and direction. We do this only because it is Your love that is holding on to us. Thank You, Lord, for holding on to us with Your unfailing love. In the Lord Jesus and His precious Name, Amen.