



December

Through a Dark Glass

BY Lee Ann Wilfong

*“For now we see through a glass darkly;
but then face to face; now I know in part,
but then I know even as also I am known*

(1 Corinthians 13:12).

Have you ever forgotten to take your sunglasses off as you came in from the outside? You stumbled around trying to find your way to a light switch? You are looking through a glass darkly! Take off your glasses, and you will be able to see clearly. Isn't that how life is? Things happen. You worry. You don't know how each situation is going to work out. But then, the crisis is over, and you look back and see God's hand at work, taking care of you, loving you, holding you in His love. No longer are you looking through a dark glass! The old saying, “hindsight is 20/20,” really is true, isn't it?

When my dad was about sixty years old, he was diagnosed with macular degeneration. At first it was a small black dot in his eye, but he could see everything around him—the small black hole was more of a nuisance than anything else. As the disease progressed,

so did the size of the black hole. My dad was eventually declared legally blind. Everything was harder to see around the ever-expanding hole. Driving was no longer an option, and he could no longer read his Bible, (an inability that greatly frustrated him).

He compared it to our Bible verse, “For now we see through a glass darkly.” Thirty years after his diagnosis, he could see everything, everything...brightly, clearly, everything! At almost ninety, he was transported to a place with no dark glass; he saw his Savior face to face; there was no darkness in his destination—Heaven!

Before he could see clearly, my dad had to wait. From the moment he had accepted Jesus into his heart, he had waited to see clearly in his spiritual living. While my dad waited, he lost a baby daughter, a mom and dad, a wife, a son, a grandson, and many other loved ones, but still he waited. Then the wait was over! On that wintry January day, I can imagine my dad peering through the dark glass as that black hole cleared away, and he stepped from life on earth to a heavenly bright light leading him into the portals of Heaven. No doubt he was full of indescribable joy

when he first clearly saw his Savior and fell at His feet in worship! Then he clearly saw that baby daughter, his wife, his mom and dad, that grandson, and son waiting for his arrival. What a glorious reunion that must have been full of rejoicing and shouting and singing!

Many instances in the Bible describe times when God's people waited without knowing the future. They couldn't see or fully understand everything God planned to do while in their waiting. Let's look at several of them.

Noah

Genesis 6:8 introduces us to Noah who "found grace in the eyes of the Lord." The world was evil and full of wickedness, but God saw one man He could use. He had big plans for Noah. Plans that Noah could not possibly imagine because he was looking through "a dark glass." Let's imagine the conversation between God and Noah:

God: Hello, Noah, my faithful servant.

Noah: My Heavenly Father, I have been praising you for being so faithful and good.

God: I know, I heard you!

Noah: Oh, yeah, that's right! Father, it's getting bad down here. So much evil is going on. These people are so far away from you.

God: I know, my son. I see that wickedness, and I know their imaginations and the evil thoughts in their hearts. It grieves me that I made man. I must destroy these people I have created. But you, my beloved, in you I see grace and a love for me.

Noah: Oh yes, Father, I love you with all my heart, and I am your willing servant.

God: Speaking of being a willing servant, I do have a plan for you, Noah. I want you to make an ark from gopher wood.

Noah: A what? What's an ark?

God: Well, it is like a boat that floats on water, but

it's a big boat. I will give you all the details, then in a hundred and twenty years...

Noah: Say what?

God: Trust me, Son, do what I say, and you will be saved from the flood.

Noah: Flood? What's a flood?

God: Well, that's another thing. When you're all done building the ark, you will take your wife and your sons and their wives into the ark. After you have loaded every animal I have created...

Noah: Father! I don't understand any of this! Arks, floods, animals...lions and tigers and bears, oh my...!

God: That's when trust comes in, Noah. Put your trust in me. I will be with you to the end.

Noah: Okay, God, I will put my trust in you.

(But I have no idea what is ahead. I guess someday it will all make sense, because right now...)

God: Trust me, my son.

THINK ABOUT IT: How would you feel if God had a big plan for you to accomplish for Him? Guess what? He does! Can you think about a time you believed God was leading you to do something you thought impossible? In the end, did it all become clear, and you knew God was always with you?

Joseph

Now, let's focus on Joseph, whose story is also in the Book of Genesis. As a young man with ten older brothers (and we all know how older brothers can be), Joseph was aware he was different. He sensed that God had a special purpose for him, even though he didn't know what it was. His name meant "dreamer," and that's what he did—he dreamed! If I could give him one piece of advice, it would be, "Joseph, maybe keep those dreams to yourself!" But he didn't, and his brothers hated him for it. To be fair, the dreams didn't exactly paint his brothers in the best light; they placed Joseph above them. However, what the brothers didn't realize was those dreams were a

part of a plan God had for Joseph.

To fulfill His purpose, God even used their evil act of abandoning Joseph in a pit and leaving him for dead. As a result of their treachery, Joseph ended up in prison in Egypt. Many years later, those same brothers traveled to Egypt, desperate for food—food that only Joseph, whom they believed to be dead, could provide. What a miraculous turn of events!

However, Joseph did not receive an immediate reward. He had to wait. And while he waited, he had no idea what the future held for him. He was sold into slavery, falsely accused, and thrown into prison. Through it all, he continued to have dreams, but God's plan remained unclear. Despite everything he endured, Joseph was essentially looking at his future through "a dark glass," unable to see what lay ahead. Did he ever wonder, does God remember me? Does he really care for me? But finally, in God's timing, one day he saw things clearly! And Joseph knew without a shadow of a doubt that God did remember him, and He did love him.

THINK ABOUT IT: Take some time to read the full story of Joseph's life in Genesis 37 through 50 and learn how God had a plan for Joseph, from beginning to end, no matter how long it took. Are you experiencing "bad" things in your life, making you wonder if God remembers you and cares for you? Can you remember a time when you, looking back on your life, realized that God was there all the time for you?

Martha

In John 11 we see Martha, Lazarus' sister, certainly seeing through "the dark glass" as she mourned her brother's death and waited—dare I say impatiently, for Jesus to come and help. She had faith Jesus could heal Lazarus from the dead, and she trusted that He loved them. But maybe, on the fourth day after Lazarus' death, (when a corpse started to stink) she had to be questioning, "Jesus, didn't you hear me? Aren't you coming?" She was looking through that dark glass, and her faith was weakening. But Jesus

did come; He did raise Lazarus from the dead; He did love her. As she embraced her sweet brother, she saw more clearly.

THINK ABOUT IT: Take a moment to read the familiar story in John 11:1-46. Embedded in that story is a little verse—the shortest verse in the Bible, "Jesus wept." Jesus didn't weep because He couldn't heal Lazarus, or because His friend was dead and buried. Jesus wept because of all

the people who didn't have the faith to believe in Him. I would be devastated to know I made Jesus weep. But I must ask myself, have there been times Jesus wept because of my unbelief? Because I wouldn't trust Him completely? Because I wouldn't look through a dark glass and just trust Him until I could

see His plan clearly? Can you think of a time that you may have caused Jesus to weep because you refused to trust Him?

Mary, Mother of Jesus

And lastly, let's think about Mary, the mother of Jesus, who also had to wait to see through her glass clearly. Mary was a poor, simple, virgin girl who loved God with all her heart. In Luke 1:30, the angel



told Mary, “Thou hast found favor with God.” What a wonderful commendation! And right then, her life was changed, drastically changed! Surely, she felt she was seeing through a glass darkly when the angel told her God’s plan for her life. But she trusted God and allowed Him to use her to fulfill His plan, the plan that would give us a blessed hope of eternal life and joy with Him. Mary also did not see immediate results. She had to look through that dark glass for many years. But she



didn’t lose hope, even when she saw her beloved son, Jesus, mocked and beaten, ridiculed, forsaken, and even killed by her own people. Those three days were quite “a dark glass” as she waited for God to reveal His Plan. What joy on that third day when she witnessed her son’s empty tomb, and she knew He was alive! Her “dark glass” was a little clearer and would be completely clear

when, at her death, she is reunited with her son at Heaven’s gate.

THINK ABOUT IT: Mary, of course, was full of wonder at what happened in her life. But let’s suppose what Mary’s own mother was enduring. We can assume she was a faithful believer since she had raised a daughter eager to serve God. No doubt, the inevitable gossip and rumors were difficult

for her, heartbreaking. How would we react if our child told us God was leading them in a direction we had not considered? Would our faith be strong enough to trust God with our most prized possession—our child?

So, here we are, thousands of years later, wondering about God’s plan for our lives. We can only see through that dark glass for now. Occasionally, we look back on our lives and clearly see God was in control all the time. But we won’t completely see through that “dark glass” until we reach Heaven—when we are face to face with our Savior. Hallelujah! Those faithful individuals we discussed, Noah, Joseph, Mary, have finally witnessed clear sight—no more dark glass for them.

We are still waiting to see clearly...to cast off the dark glass...to meet our Savior and our loved ones in that beautiful city of Heaven. As the old song says, “Won’t It Be Wonderful There?” We can imagine, we can dream, we can study Scripture to learn about Heaven, but we cannot really know—really see—what we are going to experience; not until that dark glass is gone. Only then will we see clearly all that God has for His faithful children.

THINK ABOUT IT: Let’s think about Heaven—that’s not a chore, is it? Of course, we will rejoice when we see our Savior and reunite with our loved ones. But when we dream of Heaven, what are some other things, simple things, that we might imagine about Heaven? I, for one, will be glad sinus infections and allergies will not be present. (I say this as I am wiping my nose and coughing for the umpteenth time!) What simple thing will you have (or not have) when you get to Heaven? What will you be able to see clearly when you step through those pearly gates that, until now, you only see through “a dark glass?” *W*

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