

90. Tongues of Fire



A group of parents take it upon themselves to speak ill of you and spread hurtful gossip about your ministry. The effect is like the burn of a wound. You have served so faithfully in your teaching ministry after all, and this is just not fair.

Or you might experience colleagues whispering and laughing about something less than honourable in your past. Such a broadside blast rocks you, and causes emotions of anger and a desire to indulge in a counter attack. You wonder where your divine protector was when believers succumb to sin and choose to harm you and your ministry.

This sort of horrid mauling can be a blessing in a fierce disguise. God does allow such things to happen contrary to our will. He did the same for Jesus. The Teacher was mocked because of the circumstances of his birth, he was said to be insane by his family, and accused of drunken promiscuity on the basis of his social associations. Further, religious leaders, who could not replicate his miracles, put down his achievements to the outworking of witchcraft. In court all manner of liable and perjury was thrown at him without basis.

How we traverse this passage of malicious gossip is crucial for if we can manage it in a Christ like way, when we emerge from this season we come away tried, true and more aligned to Jesus. We will have been counted worthy to suffer some of the trials of Jesus.

David also knew the sting of malicious words from trusted friends, (Ps 55:12) as did other prominent Bible character. We should love our friends, but we must love God more. Faithfulness and fidelity are dimensions of his very nature.

References:

All my associates abhor me,
And those I love have turned against me.
Job 19:19

For I have heard the whispering of many, "Terror on every side! Denounce him; yes, let us denounce him!" All my trusted friends, watching for my fall, say: "Perhaps he will be deceived, so that we may prevail against him and take our revenge on him."
Jer 20:10

My enemies never tell the truth
They only want to destroy people.
Their words come from mouths that are like open graves.
They use their lying tongues to deceive others.
Ps 5:9

Yes, my own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, who ate bread with me, has lifted up his heel against me.
Ps 41:9

This isn't the neighborhood bully
mocking me—I could take that.
This isn't a foreign devil spitting
invective—I could tune that out.
It's you! We grew up together!
You! My best friend!
Those long hours of leisure as we walked
arm in arm, God a third party to our conversation.
Ps 55:12

My enemies are always twisting my words.
They are always making plans against me.
Ps 56:5

And He answered, "He who dipped his hand with Me in the bowl is the one who will betray Me."
Mt 26:23

I desire, O God, this day to do Thy will, to bear each thing which Thou shalt allow to befall me contrary to my will, meekly, humbly, patiently, as a gift from Thee to subdue self-will in me; and to make Thy will wholly mine.
E B Pusey

In short, I didn't become a Christian because God promised I would have an even happier life than I had as an atheist. He never promised any such thing. Indeed, following him would inevitably bring divine demotions in the eyes of the world. Rather, I became a Christian because the evidence was so compelling that Jesus really is the one-and-only Son of God who proved his divinity by rising from the dead.
Lee Strobel

Laura Story singing *Blessings* with lyrics:
<http://youtu.be/eOOFaAUGfRE>

When friends betray us
When darkness seems to win
We know that pain reminds this heart
That this is not, this is not our home
It's not our home

'Cause what if Your blessings come through raindrops
What if Your healing comes through tears
And what if a thousand sleepless nights
Are what it takes to know You're near
What if my greatest disappointments
Or the aching of this life
Is the revealing of a greater thirst this world can't satisfy
And what if trials of this life
The rain, the storms, the hardest nights
Are Your mercies in disguise