

IN THE WAITING

WHEN I WAS A VERY LITTLE BOY the municipal swimming pool in my hometown was a huge and imposing ocean of chlorinated water. Having revisited that dilapidated container in Riverview Park as an adult, I can see that it was not much larger than a typical backyard pool, but as a boy its waters seemed to stretch to the horizon.

One day those waters got the better of me. I could not swim, but I could walk on the bottom. So, spying an older friend who was swimming the circumference of the pool, I pursued, safely trudging after her as she rounded the shallow end, then headed for the opposite, deeper end. Intent on my pursuit, I failed to notice that the water was deepening, and in moments I was beneath the waves, struggling for air.

Even after the decades that have passed since that incident, I can still feel the claustrophobic sensation of being immersed in that smothering cocoon—of being utterly surrounded by something profoundly unfriendly, cut off from all sound and life-giving air. But then, after what seemed an eternity, a strong hand reached down into my watery grave and yanked me up and out onto the safety of dry land. Just when all seemed lost, my dad reached down into my abyss, and pulled me to safety.

There are days when God seems not to exist. There are days when it seems there must be a thick, iron canopy arched above the clouds, blocking any two-way communication between heaven and earth. Or there are days

when, though He does still exist, God just doesn't seem to care about our mournful, skyward entreaties.

How shortsighted we have become in this age of instant news, instant food, and instant gratification. How short-tempered we have become to expect God to adjust His schedule to ours, to expect Him to acknowledge how terribly busy we are—so would He *please* just take care of this one simple matter of answering our prayer! I mean, how hard can it be?

Immersed in the watery grave of a smothering, narcissistic world, we can feel, at times, utterly cut off from our heavenly Father. It seems, at times, that His voice no longer resounds through the ether, that His hand no longer reaches down to where we live.

But we cannot escape the hard truth of His sovereign will. What good is there in calling upon a God who does only our bidding? That would not be a god at all, but a marionette. The truth of faith-living is found in the waiting, in the dependency, in the strong arm that ultimately reaches down into our abyss and draws us up to safety.



background painting by Susan Rudd

I will praise the name of God with song
And magnify Him with thanksgiving.
And it will please the Lord better than an ox
Or a young bull with horns and hoofs.
The humble have seen it and are glad;
You who seek God, let your heart revive.
For the Lord hears the needy
And does not despise His who are prisoners.

Psalm 69:30-33

All the sea outside a vessel is less to be feared than that which finds its way into the hold. In water one might swim, but in mud and mire all struggling is hopeless; the mire sucks down its victim. [Now] the sorrow gathers even greater force; he is as one cast into the sea, the waters go over his head. His sorrows were first within, then around, and now above him. Many of us know what watching and waiting mean; and we know something of the failing eye when hope is long deferred. Jesus knew how both to pray and to watch, and He would have us learn the like. There are times when we should pray till the throat is dry, and watch till the eyes grow dim. Only thus can we have fellowship with Him in His sufferings. What! can we not watch with Him one hour? Does the flesh shrink back? O cruel flesh to be so tender of thyself, and so ungenerous to thy Lord!

Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Save me, O God,
For the waters have
threatened my life.
I have sunk in deep
mire, and there is no
foothold;
I have come into
deep waters, and a
flood overflows me.
I am weary with my
crying; my throat is
parched;
My eyes fail while I
wait for my God.

Psalm 69:1-3