

Fawn sitting at the Table. Malinda comes in, looking overwhelmed

FAWN: Hi Malinda, how are you doing? (Malinda sits down - Pause, looks) Malinda, are those tears?

MALINDA: It's not working, Fawn. All my plans are falling apart.

FAWN: What's not working, Malinda?

MALINDA: My business, Fawn. It's not working.

FAWN: Tell me what you mean.

MALINDA: You know, my dream was to write literature, and promote the writing of others. So, I got my college degree in literature and I opened that bookstore. . I put money aside. My parents helped me and we went out on a limb to get a loan and open the bookstore.

FAWN: Well, wasn't that what you dreamed and planned.

MALINDA: Yes, but when I opened the business I didn't expect a recession to happen. You know, books are sort of a luxury. With the economy hurting, sometimes I've only been able to make rent payments for the business by not always taking a salary myself. How long can that go on?

FAWN: I didn't know that, Malinda. You seemed like things were going ok.

MALINDA: Well, the last few months the economy actually seemed to be getting better. As people were more confident, our business was picking up and things were going better.

FAWN: That's good, isn't it?

MALINDA: But, now with all the unrest in the Middle East and oil prices increasing my costs are going up but sales aren't going up. The economy is not stable and, if things go bad . . . I don't know. I've worked so hard. I've put my dreams, my education, my future finances into this. And it all seems to be falling apart.

FAWN: I'm sorry, Malinda.

MALINDA: Fawn, I guess those were tears. I'm just worried. I've done everything I can do, and it doesn't seem like its enough. But, I've done all I can.

Malinda's predicament is not uncommon in human experience. People have always dreamed. Always planned. Always worked. Always built. But, how often are our plans and hopes built on things which are uncertain? In this imaginary scenario, Malinda was hoping and trusting in a lot of variables. She was trusting her education would help her in business. She was hoping and trusting others would be interested in books. She was hoping that others would want spend money on books and thus further good literature. But, who knows when something like the internet would come along and books aren't as in demand as they once were? Who knows when an economic downturn can cause financial distress? Often we build hope for life in the wrong things.

And, while building a business, (an imaginary one in this case) may seem important, how much more important is building a life? How much more important is building a family? How much more important is our eternal welfare? How much more important is building God's church? And, how often do we build even really important things on a foundation that can change? No wonder we can be full of troubles in life.

Even churches and church workers can do this. Did you hear the stress in Paul's words in today's lesson? **8 We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. 9 Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death.** Paul was doing something really important. Paul had a plan to answer God's call to share the Gospel and build the church. But, in spite of Paul's best efforts they were stressed and even in danger.

But, Paul says, God had a plan in this stress and suffering. **But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. 10 He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us,**

In this world there is only one sure thing. That sure thing is the love of God for us in Jesus. We can't always trust in the world economy, or business, or other people, or even ourselves. But, God showed His love for us when Jesus suffered on the cross and died for us. God showed us His love when He rose again. No matter what disappoints us, nothing can take away the love that God has shown us in Jesus. We can "rely on God," as Paul says.

So, when plans don't go as we expected, and we are disappointed, there can be a blessing in our disappointment. We can be reminded that the one thing in life that will not disappoint us is the love of God. When other things let us down, God's love is still there and can't be taken away. There is strength when in the middle of disappointment, we know we can rely on the eternal love of God.

And, if God's love is the one sure thing, it might cause us to ask questions about our plans and our priorities. Are we building things that really matter? Are we building on the love of God? Are we building the kingdom of God? Is there a way, in whatever we do, that we can rely on and serve the Lord who love us and sent Jesus for us?

Even in times of disappointment and stress and suffering, there are blessings to be pointed to the true source of hope, and the real priorities of life.

Malinda sitting at the table. Fawn comes in and joins her.

FAWN: Hi, Malinda. How are you doing today?

MALINDA: Pretty well, Fawn. Why do you ask?

FAWN; Well, you were really stressed last week. I was worried about you.

MALINDA: Well, Fawn, I got to thinking. I want to run a book store, but I really can't control how the economy does. All I can do is do my best. I'm going to try my best to make the business go, but if my best isn't good enough, well, I tried.

FAWN: You seem to be calm compared to last week.

MALINDA; Well, Fawn, no matter what happens to the business, I am sure of some things. Fawn, you attend church with me. You know that God's love is sure. After this life, God has life in heaven waiting for those who trust Him and His love for us in Jesus. So, I know my ultimate end is taken care of.

FAWN; Yes.

MALINDA: And, the fact that God loved me enough to send Jesus lets me know He is with me no matter what Happens. So, I may be disappointed. Plans don't always go as I wish. But, I don't have to be overwhelmed. God is with me.

FAWN You are sure sounding different than you sounded last week.

MALINDA; I got to thinking how the pastor was telling us about 2 Corinthians 1, where it says, **But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God**, When I look at what is really important, God is the one who takes care of it. He gave me life. He has won eternal life for me. And He loves me. Do I really have anything to worry about?

FAWN: What if your business fails?

MALINDA: Well, I have been writing for a magazine and the local paper. I decided to concentrate on that writing. It will make a more stable income and help me to keep the business open. It will give me an opportunity to write about God and His love too.

FAWN: That all sounds good to me. Isn't it interesting how we can face life's troubles when we know God is there to care for us?

MALINDA: Yeah, Fawn. Remember that God is the only one I can rely on gave me peace, and helped me to think. Why do we forget to go to God?

FAWN: I don't know. But, it sounds like God used your business struggles to bless you.