

## IN A TROUBLED WORLD THERE IS HOPE

### DAMAGE

*Aileen, Ophelia, Brian, Caroline, Dylan, Eleanor, Fionn, David, Georgina, Emma.*

These are the names of storms that arrived in Ireland and the U.K. between September 2017 and March 2018. The ones that will not be forgotten are hurricane Ophelia and the 'Beast from the East', a severely cold wind, snow and arctic weather blowing in from Siberia, mixing with storm Emma.

The heavy snowfall and high winds caused devastation, resulting in loss of life, serious injuries, structural damage to homes, power outages and closure of schools. Many roads were impassable, resulting in the army being mobilised to transport some patients in need of cancer treatment, dialysis and other serious illnesses to hospitals.

The arctic weather came at the worst possible time for farmers, leaving many of them facing financial ruin as a result of delayed Spring. Sheep farmers were particularly affected, as blizzard conditions claimed the lives of new-born lambs. The storms may have gone, but they have left in their wake a legacy that will not be forgotten.

### DESPAIR

*Unemployment, Homelessness, Addiction, Discrimination, Depression.*

These words describe what is the everyday experience of many people. Consequently, the number of people requiring treatment for mental health problems has risen alarmingly. Young people in particular are struggling to cope with the various pressures they find themselves having to deal with. For some, the stress proves to be too much, and can lead to depression, self-harm or suicide. Devastated families whose homes have been repossessed find themselves struggling to cope with living in emergency accommodation. Many who find themselves in these difficult circumstances lose all hope of seeing things improve.

### DANGER

Some countries may have nuclear weapons. While many people believe the existence of nuclear weapons can act as a deterrent to conflict between the world's superpowers, there is an underlying fear that nuclear war is just the 'press of a button' away.

### DELIVERANCE

*Bethlehem, Galilee, Nazareth, Jerusalem, Calvary.*

These places in Israel are known world-wide because of their association with Jesus Christ, the person who changed the course of human history. His message was profound, yet simple enough to be understood by all. Jesus said, "*Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.*"<sup>1</sup> This is not only an invitation to all who are weighed down by life's problems, worries and burdens, but it is also a promise that offers deliverance from our heaviest burden, which is a spiritual one. Our greatest problem is that of being separated from God. Adam's sin of disobedience in the garden of Eden resulted in separation from God. We, as Adam's descendants, inherited his sinful nature and consequently are liable for sin's penalty. As the Scriptures say, "*No one is righteous—not even one.*"<sup>2</sup> *For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.*<sup>3</sup> *For the wages [penalty] of sin is death.*<sup>4</sup> This includes separation from God for all eternity. It means

that all who die unrepentant and unforgiven will spend eternity in Hell, paying sin's penalty in the lake of fire and brimstone. We cannot earn and could never merit forgiveness of our sins. We could never, through our own efforts or religious activities accumulate merits that would be acceptable to God as payment of sin's penalty.

The Scriptures make it clear that *'All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own'*.<sup>5</sup> However, there is hope, for *'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners'*.<sup>6</sup> Jesus said, *"The Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost."*<sup>7</sup> Sin separated us from God, but Jesus, through His sufferings, came to bring us back to God: *'Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God'*.<sup>8</sup> Jesus became our substitute and sin-bearer. He took upon Himself the guilt of our sins and, through His death on the cross, paid the penalty for our sins.

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead was evidence that God the Father has accepted the ransom His Son offered to secure our release from sin's penalty: *'For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son'*.<sup>9</sup> Payment of sin's penalty resulted in reconciliation between God and us.

Through faith in Jesus Christ we can have peace with God: *'Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us'*.<sup>10</sup> God the Father will accept Christ's sacrifice on behalf of the individual who will repent of his sins and believe that Jesus, through His death on the cross secured forgiveness for him.

Friend, this means that you can come to the Lord today and receive forgiveness of sins and the peace you have been longing for. Jesus said, *"I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid."*<sup>11</sup>

## **IN A TROUBLED WORLD, THIS IS OUR HOPE.**

### **STEPS TO FAITH IN JESUS**

Jesus purchased for us a pardon by paying the penalty for our sins when He died on the cross as our substitute and sin-bearer. This pardon will be put to your account when you:

**ACKNOWLEDGE** the fact that you are a sinner, and that you cannot earn or merit salvation.

**BELIEVE** that when Jesus died on the cross He paid, on your behalf, the penalty for your sins.

**COME** to the risen Saviour in sincere repentance, confessing your need of His forgiveness.

**DECIDE** to reach out by faith and receive from God the gift of eternal life.

The following is a suggested prayer:

*'Lord, I know I am not worthy of your mercy, but I believe you will not turn me away, for I come to you in sincere repentance, asking you to forgive my sins and to grant me the gift of eternal life. Thank you, Lord, for hearing and answering my prayer.'*

## **STEPPING STONES**

If you have trusted Christ as your Saviour you are now a member of God's family and can call Him Father. In order to grow spiritually it is important that you:

**LISTEN** to your Heavenly Father. God will speak to you through His Word, so Bible reading is very important.

**LEARN** to spend time with your Heavenly Father each day. You can speak to God in prayer.

**LOOK** to Him always for direction for your life. God's Holy Spirit, who indwells you, will guide and instruct you as you read the Bible and pray.

## **Scripture References**

1: Matthew 11:28	2: Romans 3:10	3: Romans 3:23	4: Romans 6:23
5: Isaiah 53:6	6: 1Timothy 1:15	7: Luke 19:10	8: 1Peter 3:18
9: Romans 5:10	10: Romans 5:1	11: John 14:27	

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