

Hold On, There's Hope

*"...suffering produces endurance,
and endurance produces character,
and character produces hope..."
Romans 5:3b, 4*

My heart was flooded with thankfulness as I realized how much pain and suffering God had spared my family. Seven years earlier my husband and I were in the throes of an ugly divorce. Paying careful attention to my own pain and the wrongs done to me, it seemed impossible to step back and envision where my children and I would be a little further down the road. I knew that I was suffering unjustly right now and I wanted restitution. Happily, my story didn't end with divorce. Despite two very selfish individuals, God made a way where there wasn't one and kept our family together.

I was grateful at the time, but didn't truly realize the devastation that would have come about if my selfish desires had won out over God's desire for me to focus on my own faults and make changes where I could. I did want him to "pay" for what he had done to me, and I did want *my* needs to be met, but God gave me the grace to see the plank in my own eye and then the speck in his seemed much easier to face (Matt. 7:3).

"A man leaves father and mother, and in marriage he becomes one flesh with a woman- no longer two individuals, but forming a new unity. Because God created this organic union of the two sexes, no one should desecrate his art by cutting them apart." (Mark 10:7-9, the Message)
All these years later it became clear to me the damage we would have done to our children if we chose to selfishly tear apart our lives that God Himself had sewn together.

Heart wrenchingly, I observed a counseling session with a woman who had put herself on the same path I was headed for years earlier. Now I could see clearly what was not so obvious to me then. I saw the aftermath of pain and destruction not only in her own heart and life, but also in the hearts and lives of her three children. They may not have shown the signs right away after the divorce, but in the months to follow their pain was becoming more and more evident. I am no better than this woman- my own selfishness was steering my sons in the same direction. I can only recognize and give thanks for God's grace in sparing my sons from this anger producing pain that would have wreaked havoc all throughout their lives.

I cannot tell you that my marriage is perfect today, but I am sure that the place we are in now could never justify the ripping apart of flesh that would have taken place in divorce. If I could give any hindsight guidance to someone trapped in the idea that divorce is the only answer....it would be to *hold on* (Rom. 5:3,4), *"lean not on your own understanding, but in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight"* (Prov 3:5,6). *Do not be tempted to follow your own heart, "it is deceitful above all things and beyond cure"* (Jer. 17:9). *We serve a God who is far above all our temporary troubles...."I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33)....Hold on, there IS hope!