

Kelsey's Sermon

Romans 8:35-39

Introduction: Kelsey Harris was 16 years old when she died 14 months after learning she had an aggressive form of brain cancer. She died in April of 2009. Her father, Simon Harris presented a lesson about what he learned going through the ordeal of watching his teenage daughter die. He called the lesson "Exceedingly Abundantly," which I would like to relate in this lesson.

I. Praying for Kelsey

A. When the family learned that Kelsey had a terminal form of cancer, the first response was a natural one; go to God in prayer. They prayed a lot in those early months. It made no difference that 90% of patients with this cancer normally died in 9 months. God is able to answer all prayers (Eph. 3:20).

B. Simon's prayer went something like this, "God please use Kelsey to bring glory to your name. We know the odds are against us but we trust in you. Please use our daughter as a living example of your power to heal that all may glorify you as the great God of heaven."

C. However, God didn't answer Simon's prayer as he had hoped. Rather God answered his prayer in an exceedingly abundant way which he later realized was better for him and Kelsey.

II. God was asked to heal a broken body.

A. If God answered Simon's prayer as Simon thought was best, Kelsey would always have to deal with that broken body. Fortunately for us, God's ways aren't our ways (Isa. 55:8-9).

B. Instead God removed the corruptible body and replaced it with an immortal one (2 Cor. 4:16-5:4).

1. This isn't life that we live... what comes after death is life!

2. Do we really want to live here forever?

C. We need to be striving to put on eternity (1 Cor. 15:50, 53).

D. Kelsey got to put on her immortal body sooner than most (Eccl. 12:1-5).

1. Our bodies are not meant to last.

2. Instead of Kelsey having to drag a broken body around the rest of her life, she got a new body for eternity.

III. God removed her suffering.

A. You are probably thinking that dying a slow death with cancer eating at her brain had to be an excruciating way to die. Yet, the pain was the least of her suffering.

1. She suffered the most by not getting to be a normal teenager. As the cancer progressed it caused one side of her body to droop. It was hard for her to see others while being self conscience of her appearance.

2. She hated that she couldn't smile.

B. Yet, she is now in a place without pain, sorrow or death. *"And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away"* (Rev. 21:4).

C. People say it is not natural for parents to bury their children. Yet, it is natural because suffering is life. How many of us would want to go back to being 16 all over again, right now knowing that you can't change a thing? Would we want to go back through all the suffering, making all the same mistakes all over again?

D. Because God answered their prayers; Kelsey won't have to suffer any further.

IV. God removed her fears.

A. Kelsey was afraid to go to sleep at night... she might not wake.

1. What Dad doesn't want to be the knight in shining armor to keep their daughters safe? All Simon could do was to reassure his daughter that everything would be all right. Yet, he couldn't do a thing about the fear she felt.

2. Only God could alleviate her fear and He did.

B. When Kelsey died, she knew she didn't have to be afraid anymore. Upon death, God provides comfort (Luke 16:22).

C. The song, "No Night There" (#220) has found a special meaning for Simon as Kelsey was most afraid at night.

V. Two things that helped Simon personally.

A. He has no reason to worry anymore. Had Kelsey lived, he would have worried about her as she continued to deal with the cancer.

1. She committed herself to the God that never disappoints (2 Tim. 1:12).

2. At Kelsey's funeral, he was comforted by this passage (1 Thes. 4:13-18).

B. God gave him a greater spiritual focus.

1. He admits he was too concerned about Kelsey's physical life. Dealing with her sickness opened his eyes to what is truly important... but it is not here! What is important can only be viewed through the eyes of faith (Matt. 6:19-20). Having a physical focus is foolish because nothing here will last! Not even our loved ones will last!

2. However, with a spiritual focus, nothing can be taken away (Col. 3:1-4). Life isn't about survival here on earth. It is about preparing for the here after!

3. Simon's prayers toward the end of Kelsey's life was, "God, please take her quickly and peacefully"... and He did.

VI. Some reflective thoughts:

A. God is worthy to be praised who answers prayers in an exceedingly and abundant manner (Eph. 3:21). Our praise ought to be louder!

B. We know we can trust God; but why don't we always trust Him? Why do we doubt Him when storms arrive (Psm. 25:10)?

C. In a magazine article he read while sitting in the hospital, "Don't forget in the dark what you learned in the light."

D. Why do we dictate to God how to shape our paths? "Dear Lord, please get me this job... this house, etc." Isn't His ways better than our ways (Isa. 55:8-9).

E. Romans 8:28 is true! Don't try to figure out the good. Just trust in God that He will!

F. Why do we fear death? It is our final test of faith. "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." There is no one else to trust in the day of death! We would all be better off if we would all surrender our lives to Him!

Conclusion: When we see our God who answers our prayers in an exceedingly and abundant manner, how can we not serve Him? How can people hear God's word time and again and not respond to it? How can a person call himself a Christian and not give his all to Him?

Simon never asked, "Why me?" or "Why Kelsey?" However, he did ask, "What now?" When the doctors said it was brain cancer he asked, "What now?" When the doctors told him it was inoperable he asked, "What now?" When the treatments weren't working he asked, "What now?"

You now have an example of how God answers prayers in an exceedingly and abundant way. What now? The answer to that question is up to you!