

Fire Walking is Best Not Done Alone

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On the baptismal font in my home church, St. Paul in Oak Lawn, words from Isaiah chapter 43 call out to the world as little ones are brought before the water and the Word in accord with Jesus' command:

"I have called you by name and you are Mine."

In a time of trouble, these simple words led me to the verse in Isaiah for more study, and what I found was a balm to my soul on a weary day. The simple words of God spoken through His prophet touched a deep longing place in my spirit. They brought me His peace.

"Fear not, for I have redeemed you..."

My stress and my anxiety began to lessen and fall away as I found rest in this strong admonition and these words of salvation.

*"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not consume you."*

My troubles had seemed hidden from God or forgotten by God. My thoughts had strayed into the worrying phrases, "God don't you know?" or "God don't You care about me?" As the things of this world began to trouble me and sought to take me under, I found these words and in them I found reassurance and hope. God does know we will have trouble. The prophet says not "if" but "when". And He knows my troubles will be varied and persistent as I hear Him speak about the waters and the rivers, the fire and flames. Knowing He is aware, trusting He is here with me, and hearing Him say that He will not allow these things to take me down gives me the courage to take the next steps.

*"For I am the LORD your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior."*

He claims me as His own! He says that I am a sheep in His pasture and that He is my Shepherd. Nothing I have done, nothing I have hoped for or prayed for has done this, it is the work of His intentional and deliberate Will that He claims me as His own. In this I can have my hope for this day and for all the days to come.

*"Because you are precious in my eyes,
and honored, and I love you,
I give men in return for you,
peoples in exchange for your life.
Fear not, for I am with you;"*

And here in the words of my God, He declares that He loves me. My eyes fill with tears as I consider the worldly things that have been pulling me away from this wonderful truth. I have a God who loves me and claims me as His own. I have a God who knows of my troubles and promises He will protect me and guide me through them. I have a God who tells me I have nothing to fear or be afraid of, because He is my God. And in all this I am reminded again of the words on the font – He has called me by name and I am His. And in that baptismal grace, I find my way forward a bit easier, my heart a bit lighter, and the darkness fades a bit into the background. With Him, and in His love, I find my peace.