

# A Word on Wednesday from Pastor Tonia

## "Long-Term Non-Specific Optimism" 7/26/23

*God has said, "I will never leave you. I will never abandon you."  
So, we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper,  
so, I will have no fear." (Heb 13:6)*

Life is full of difficulties, horrors, injustice, but still we can have hope, we can hold on to the fact we are not alone, God's got this, too, whatever it is. I know in some of life's difficulties it's hard to imagine how God could allow this, too. Some get angry at God for causing it – the cancer, the car wreck, the loss, the crime, the hurt, the pain. But God does not cause it.

I watched a CBS segment on Porter Halyburton who had been held as a POW for over 7 years during the Vietnam war. During his time in captivity, facing harsh conditions, he came up with a principle he called, Long-Term Non-Specific Optimism. Having no clue if the torture would end, let alone if he would ever return home, he held on to the belief he would one day be reunited with his loved one. This Long-Term Non-Specific Optimism strengthened him to survive each day – until he WAS freed.

For me this is a great definition of hope. We hope God hears our prayers, that God will never abandon us to the evil which surrounds us and will always strengthen us to face our foes. This hope, this optimism keeps us going. It gives us peace, allowing us to live each day, to face each trial without fear, to attack the day – and have peace, knowing we are not alone. God tells us we can hold on with hope.

No one ever said life would be easy. Somedays I think "Yeah, but I didn't expect it to get this bad." Not for me, not for my loved one, not for my friend, my community, my country." We hate to see inequality come to anyone, for anyone to face injustice, for the young to be taken, for anyone to suffer, for unwinnable wars which will destroy a culture and rob us all of a generation.

I can't imagine what Mr. Halyburton went through, every day. What went through his mind, how much he hurt, what sorrow he felt. But I am encouraged by his attitude, if he can face what tortured him with so much grace, can I face my trials? Can I face the light slaps which knock me back, the putdowns which touch my heart, the times I feel alone – in my nice house with my two loving and entertaining cats, the times I eat only toast and peanut butter for dinner. How can I complain about anything? But I do. If things don't go according to our plan. If we don't get what we want. If we are uncomfortable. Can we look at our lives and have Long-Term Non-Specific Optimism?

## **Please pray with me:**

God of goodness, God of life, God of healing look upon us, help us to see You, to really know You, to know in our hearts You will never leave us. You will never abandon us. Help us to say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper, so I will have no fear."

**Amen.**