

TALES OF TRIUMPH



ANSWERED PRAYER

IN MAY OF 2019, OREGON EXPERIENCED THE WORST THUNDER AND LIGHTNING STORM IN OVER 10 YEARS AND EVEN UP TO THIS DAY NOTHING HAS TOPPED IT. THAT IS SIGNIFICANT BECAUSE OF WHO WAS LAYING IN THE WOODS FOR THREE DAYS AS THAT STORM PASSED OVER OUR STATE. LET ME BACK UP WITH YOU ALL AND TAKE YOU TO HOW THIS HAPPENED, FOR THE MOST EXCELLENT WAY PLAYS A HUGE ROLE IN THIS TALE OF TRIUMPH.

PASTOR RICK MCCLUNG, WHO LEADS THE MOST EXCELLENT WAY IN PANAMA CITY FLORIDA, CAME OUT JANUARY 2016 TO SPEAK AT OUR ANNUAL MEN'S RETREAT UP AT A PLACE CALLED "CAMP TADMOR" NEAR SWEET HOME, OREGON. WE HAD A YOUNG MAN AT THAT RETREAT NAMED DUSTIN AND HE HAD RECOMMITTED HIS LIFE TO CHRIST AT THE MOST EXCELLENT WAY AT OUR CHURCH. DUSTIN ASKED ME IF HE COULD BE BAPTIZED AT THE MEN'S RETREAT. NOW HERE'S THE THING: JANUARY IN OREGON IS WET AND COLD, AND THAT SATURDAY WAS EVEN SUPPOSED TO BE SNOWING. AND IT DID SNOW THAT MORNING, BUT DUSTIN WAS BENT ON BEING BAPTIZED, AND SO THAT DAY, HE MADE HIS DECLARATION OF FAITH BEFORE ABOUT 200 MEN. IT WAS A SPECIAL WEEKEND FOR SURE.

AS THE MONTHS PASSED, AS OFTEN HAPPENS AFTER A PERSON PUBLICLY DECLARES THEIR FAITH, DUSTIN EXPERIENCED INTENSE WARFARE AGAINST BOTH HIS FAMILY AND HIMSELF. SADLY, HE WENT BACK TO DRINKING AND AS WE CAME ALONGSIDE HIM TO SUPPORT HIM AND HIS FAMILY, HE THEN FLED TO ISOLATION. WE CANNOT FOR THE SAKE OF SPACE HERE IN THIS NEWSLETTER GO INTO ALL THE DETAILS, BUT TIME PROGRESSED IN HIS REBELLION AND ONE DAY HIS DAD, WARREN CAME INTO TMEW AND ASKED FOR MORE PRAYER FOR HIS SON AND THE FAMILY. DUSTIN HAD RUN OFF AND NO ONE COULD GET A HOLD OF HIM. WARREN AND I WENT TO PRAYER AND HERE IS WHAT WE PRAYED TOGETHER THAT DAY: "FATHER PLEASE DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO BRING DUSTIN TO HIS SENSES. PLEASE SPARE HIS LIFE, BUT PLEASE HAVE CIRCUMSTANCES UNFOLD THAT WILL BRING HIM BACK TO YOU, SO THAT HE WOULD LOVE YOU WITH ALL HIS HEART, SOUL, MIND, AND STRENGTH." WE PRAYED MORE THAN THAT, BUT THAT WAS THE THEME. WE PRAYED ALL OF IT IN JESUS' NAME AND THEN WE PROCEEDED TO LEAD TMEW THAT NIGHT TOGETHER, ALONG WITH THE REST OF THE STAFF.



FAST FORWARD TWO WEEKS TO MID-MAY OF 2019. I RECEIVED A CALL FROM WARREN THAT DUSTIN'S CAR WAS FOUND UP IN THE WOODS NEAR SWEET HOME. MANY SEARCHED FOR HIM FOR TWO DAYS, INCLUDING THE AUTHORITIES. THEY HAD VIDEO OF DUSTIN IN SWEET HOME BUYING ALCOHOL, SO THEY KNEW THE DAY HE WENT UP INTO THE WOODS AND EVERYONE WAS VERY CONCERNED. AFTER THE SECOND DAY OF LOOKING FOR HIM, THE CAR WAS TOWED, AND THE SEARCH WAS CALLED OFF. OREGON WAS EXPERIENCING EXTREME WEATHER, THE LIKES OF WHICH WE HAD NOT SEEN IN A VERY LONG TIME. WARREN AND DUSTIN'S STEPDAD, ERIC, BOTH DECIDED TO GO BACK UP TO THE WOODS, THOUGH THE SEARCH WAS CALLED OFF. THEY WENT BACK TO WHERE THE CAR HAD BEEN, TO START SEARCHING AGAIN FROM THAT POINT. WHEN THEY ARRIVED ERIC WENT OVER TO A CLIFF NEARBY WHERE THE CAR HAD BEEN FOUND AND SAID, "WHAT IF HE'S DOWN THERE?" WHAT IF HE HAD FALLEN OFF THIS EDGE? WARREN HAS A BAD LEG AND WALKS WITH A CANE, SO HE COULD NOT HELP IN SEARCHING THE GULLY BELOW, BUT ERIC BEGAN TO EASE HIMSELF OFF THE EDGE AND MAKE HIS WAY DOWN.

MANY YARDS DOWN HE FOUND DUSTIN'S HAT AND YELLED UP TO WARREN TO CALL FOR HELP. DUSTIN HAD FALLEN ABOUT 300 FEET AND WAS LAYING IN BRIARS. HE HAD STRIPPED HIMSELF OF CLOTHES DUE TO HIS DETOX, HYPOTHERMIA, AND DEHYDRATION. THE BRIARS HAD SHREDDED HIS SKIN, UP AND DOWN HIS BODY, HIS FACE INCLUDED. NOW HERE IT IS, HE HAD LAIN THERE, MOSTLY NAKED IN THE WOODS AS THE WORST LIGHTNING STORM IN A DECADE PASSED OVER HIM.

THE NEXT DAY AFTER HE WAS FOUND, I DROVE UP TO PORTLAND, OREGON, WHERE THEY HAD TAKEN DUSTIN TO A HOSPITAL. HE LOOKED TERRIBLE AND WAS STILL TREMBLING FROM THE EXPERIENCE AS HIS BODY WAS REACTING TO THE TRAUMA. HE SAID TO ME, "PASTOR MATT, I WAS ASKING GOD, IF I DIE, PLEASE TAKE ME TO HEAVEN." HE SAID HE HAD ALL KINDS OF HALLUCINATIONS THROUGHOUT THAT TIME IN THE WOODS. GOD HAD DONE BUSINESS WITH HIM. MY RESPONSE TO DUSTIN AT SOME POINT IN THE CONVERSATION WAS THIS, "GOD SAID 'NO. IT'S NOT YOUR TIME TO DIE.' DUSTIN, GOD WANTS YOU TO LIVE FOR HIM NOW."

DUSTIN HAD FALLEN JUST A FEW MILES FROM WHERE HE HAD BEEN BAPTIZED AT CAMP TADMOR. GOD ANSWERED ALL KINDS OF PRAYER, FROM MANY OF HIS CHILDREN WHO HAD PRAYED FOR DUSTIN, HIS WIFE, AND THEIR CHILDREN. WHEN DUSTIN FELL, DUSTIN'S MARRIAGE WAS ENDING, BUT AS GOD ANSWERED PRAYER, THEIR MARRIAGE ALSO SURVIVED. DUSTIN NO LONGER DRINKS ANY ALCOHOL. HE AND HIS FAMILY ARE NOW FOLLOWING OUR SAVIOR AND ARE CONSISTENTLY AT CHURCH. THEIR LIVES HAVE BEEN RADICALLY TRANSFORMED THROUGH A RISEN SAVIOR WHO MAKES PEOPLE WHOLE.

HERE'S WHAT WE CAN KNOW AS LEADERS OF THE MOST EXCELLENT WAY: OUR GOD IS SENDING ANSWERS TO OUR PRAYERS FOR OTHERS AS WE LEAD THEM TO THE ONE TRUE SAVIOR. GOD RESCUES FROM ADDICTION AND MAKES TRUE WORSHIPPERS IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH! AND WE ALL GET TO BE A PART OF HIS TALES OF TRIUMPH. IT IS AWESOME TO WATCH GOD SHOW OFF! AND IT'S AWESOME TO SERVE WITH YOU ALL. MAY THE LORD RICHLY BLESS YOU AND THE MINISTRY THERE!