

"It was worth it all..."

by MARIE ZIEMER

A FEW WEEKS AGO, someone sent me this little poem: "Little by little, time goes by . . . short, if you sing through it . . . long, if you sigh."

When I first came back from Viet Nam, a little over a year ago, I didn't do much singing . . . and it wasn't because I didn't have a song in my heart. The reason was that both my ear drums were ruptured. When I'd sing, it just wouldn't come out right. I had the feeling I had a very bad head cold, so I would sit back and listen to the rest of the folks singing.

Tonight, I praise the Lord that just a few weeks ago I was lying on my good ear, and suddenly, I could hear the clock ticking! The hearing had come back in my left ear. Now, I find myself many times during the day singing a word of praise to the Lord!

The Psalms have been very precious to me since I have been home. In the 108th Psalm, there are a couple of verses that are very appropriate to our Christians in the land of Viet Nam: "Give us help from trouble for vain is the help of man. Through God we shall do valiantly for it is He that shall tread down our enemies."

A few months ago, I received a letter from a Raday pastor who had helped my husband so much in the translation of the scriptures. He said, "The VC are promising to overrun Banmethuot during Tet again this year. We realize we cannot depend on man. We are going to have to depend upon the Lord to see us through."

I have come to realize that so often we have come to depend upon man, but it is God who has the answer and will take care of everything."

Another verse that has been so precious is, "Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep." It is very easy to rejoice with others, isn't it? I remember how we'd rejoice to see some of our main Christians going forward to the altar to make things right with God.

Little did I know that a few weeks later it would be my privilege to weep with those who were weeping. One of our fine young men, the son of our local tribes pastor, was severely burned from head to foot by a flame thrower . . . and came staggering into our home for help.

I shall never forget his dear mother, and the look on her face as she walked through our back door, through the dining room, into the living room where her son lay. As she began to weep, the nurses instructed, "Please don't let her stay here. Take her some place else and try to comfort her."

It was my privilege to put my arms around her and pray in Jesus' name that He would comfort her heart.

I did not realize that a few days later there would be those who would be weeping with me.

You know, when reports would come to us at the compound of things happening out in the villages . . . of young men forced out of the villages and made to work for the Communists, we would sympathize and pray with them, but we didn't really understand.

Now, I can! So I do thank God for some of the things He allowed to come into my life.

During those days, the Thompsons, Bob and I, and the nurses would pray, "Lord, confuse the enemy, confound him, and make a way of escape for us just as thou didst undertake so many times for David in the Bible."

Since then, the question has come to me, "Why didn't God allow help to come to us?" Then the Lord brought something else to my mind: "Well, dear child, until you get to Heaven you'll never know how many times your lives were spared."

The work of the missionaries must have been over. I don't know why my life was spared. I can only ask the Lord to keep me humble each day.

Shortly after I arrived in the States and was placed in the hospital in Toledo, I asked for a piece of paper and began to write down a list of my blessings.

Have you ever tried doing that when you are discouraged and you don't know which way to turn? Actually, I wasn't doing much turning in those days. I was just satisfied to be immobile in bed.

The first on my list of blessings was to thank the Lord for His salvation, so full and free. Then, of course, I thanked Him for the wonderful companion He had given me. We would have celebrated our 25th wedding anniversary last year. Third on my list were the names of my three children . . . Beth, a missionary, Tim, Miriam . . . and then, the name of my son-in-law, Rick. He was so wonderful during those days. I was just as important to him as his own young wife.

Then, too, I listed names of different people we had come in contact with through the Gospel.

Shortly after that, three cartons of books arrived in Toledo. Since our house along with the rest of the houses on the compound were blown up, I did not expect to see any of our belongings again. But there were these books. Among them was a tattered and beaten old notebook my hus-

band had purchased back in 1948 in Banmethuot soon after we arrived on the mission field.

In it he had logged the names of every student in the Bible School, the date the student accepted the Lord, when he married, the number of children, his village assignments, his training, etc. There was a place for remarks which included all of the encouraging and discouraging things that had happened down through the years.

One day, I was thinking about all that had happened . . . "Was it worth it all? Why did it have to happen? None of the missionaries had as yet reached the age of 50 . . . couldn't they have been spared a few more years?"

Then, I opened up Bob's old notebook with all the names, and that wonderful verse in the first chapter of John came to my mind, "For as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." And I had to say, "Yes, Lord, it was worth it all."

If the missionaries had not responded to the call of the Lord, perhaps many of these would not have heard the Way.

And then, the thought has stayed with me: "The missionaries laid down their lives, but so many precious Raday pastors are still alive and preaching the Word."

One day, I said to the Lord, "It's all right that You took Bob . . . but I think it would be so nice now if my own mother or my dear mother-in-law who led me to Thee, were still alive."

And then He reminded me ". . . but you still have Me."

He is with me and has promised to be with me. I don't know why my life was spared, but I do know that, as long as He gives me breath, I must praise Him!

MRS. MARIE ZIEMER, widow of Christian & Missionary Alliance missionary Robert Ziemer and herself a survivor of the BanMeThuot tragedy that took his life and the lives of five other dedicated missionaries during the 1968 Tet offensive in Viet Nam, recently shared this poignant testimony at Bible Literature International's 46th Anniversary Banquet in Columbus, Ohio. BLI CRUSADER is privileged to pass this rich blessing on to you, our readers.

