

Dear Friends

I'd like to share a few excerpts from my journal concerning the events of the past two weeks' fires on and around Beulah.

(Note: These excerpts are from my personal journal, reflecting my reality at that specific moment. If I fail to mention certain people or ways in which I have been blessed, please understand that this is not about people, but about moments of my relationship with my Father as I experienced it at that time. I passionately believe that God IS and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. In these moments I have experienced elements of Him and could hold on to His promises in the midst of circumstances where I could potentially lose my family, my home, my livelihood, my belongings and even my faith. It is times like these when I want to totally surrender in faith, drawing from these deeply emotional experiences and channeling it towards growth in my First Love relationship.)

[23:24, 10 January 2017, Tuesday]

A fire erupts in Dal Josafat, to the south of Beulah. Hanneke and the children leave Beulah with only the bare necessities. Suddenly worldly possessions no longer matters – spiritual journals and conversations with Abba and statutory documents are the first things to be packed. The fire hazard is overwhelming. The fire moves down along the neighbouring property and around the hill lower down before it turns back in the direction of Beulah. By the grace of God our prayers are answered when the fire does not move through the olive groves adjacent to our grounds, but miraculously burns right around it. All this time Dirk keeps vigil by my side and later Dan and Cobus also joins in clearing out the vegetation. Only at 15:00 can the family return back to Beulah. The fires stopped 150 m from our boundary fence this afternoon when the helicopters stopped throwing water. The Fire Marshall just informed us that only two areas would be monitored right through the night, being the farms directly adjacent to and below us. (He who keepeth us neither slumbers nor sleeps.) Thank you, Father.

We received Word: "Beloved Truters, I see Father standing on your property (like the statue of Christ in Rio), drawing a clear circle with His arms ... that is where the fire will stop. He gave me Psalms 121:4 – 5: 'Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand.' Together with you we declare it and speak it forth ... thank you Lord. Be strong and courageous in the Name of Jesus."

Tonight the girls and I pray for rain and listen to the song "Let it rain". An hour later it starts raining and Hanneke takes a picture of the rainbow from our stoep. See the bottom of the rainbow to the left: we can't explain it – it looks like a sword. To the upper right there is a



face with an arm stretched out towards the left. “The shade upon thy right hand.” To the lower right there are two cupped hands holding a shiny object, like a pearl. Father, could this be your revelation for us? In Romans Paul says the whole of creation proclaims that you are God. On the valley’s emergency WhatsApp group somebody declares: “God sent us rain!!!”

[03:03, 11 January 2017, Wednesday]

I seek You early in the morning, after the events of yesterday. I walk out into the night and up to the front gate. My spirit cries out to You whilst the rain gently starts sifting down on me. You drench me in your presence. You are still God. In the windless night, with the sound of the soft rain, I cry out to You o Spirit of God and I feel the wind gently urging me on from behind. You are with me, I shall not fear. My First Love.

[17:33, 15 January 2017, Sunday]

After the promises and miracles of last Tuesday, we sincerely hoped that the fire was something of the past. On 10 January the fire came from two sides and was stopped late afternoon by the helicopters and the “water bombs”. Saturday 14 January we were just looking forward to getting off the property to join in blessing a youngster who grew up before us. Later the evening there would be the excitement of Maria’s 50th birthday. She is a precious friend of ours who has supported us throughout these years on Beulah. Little did we know that the events of the previous week would only be a warm-up and preparation for what was still to come and that our plans for the evening would have to be cancelled.

During the blessing event calls begin to come through of a fire behind Beulah. We raced up the mountain and discover that the fire has flared up again, in the plantations where it was stopped on Tuesday. Untill dark we fight the wind and manage to hold back the flames behind the gate on the boundary between Beulah and the plantations. Once again teams of firefighters monitor the situation during the night and Sunday.

Sunday afternoon I get a call from an intercessor for whom I have great respect and whose words have always had an enormous impact on our lives. Her first words are: "I am who I am. I am the all sufficient one." Later she calls to say that ABBA has audibly spoken to her to tell me: "Speak to the fire".

[01:14, 17 January 2017, Tuesday]

Sunday night 23:30 I'm working on study material when I suddenly experience an urgency to check the area where the fire was stopped the previous evening. As I approach through the bushes, I see a bright glow and realise that the fire is in the grove of trees behind Beulah. The grove is on my neighbour's side next to the boundary fence and within 10 meters of the Cottage, Shed and Storehouse buildings. I run home and tell Hanneke and the children to



immediately leave the property. Thanks to the preparation of the previous week most items are already packed and they can just load and rush down the mountain. I'm on my own, but grateful that at least I do not have to worry about my family. Within 15 minutes the fire reaches the back of the Cottage. I slash open the water supply behind the Cottage in order to contain the fire in that area. However, the wind is strong and in spite of all my efforts the fire spread to the back of the Shed and the Storehouse buildings. The smoke and heat is unbearable and my lungs and eyes burn from exposure. In the meantime a friend has arrived.

Neighbours join in and the fire brigade arrive, but the wind keeps pushing the fire in the direction of the main house. In the heat of the struggle I experience one of the most touching moments. Workers from a neighbouring farm arrive to help fight the fire. For a moment I hand the fire hose to someone else, when the smoke and the heat start to

overwhelm me. When I walk from out of the smoke, two of the farm workers come up to me and wrap their arms around me in deep compassion for my situation. In that moment I realise that I'm not alone and I experience a love and companionship beyond the divide of ethnicity or language. We are in this battle together and the pain and fears of the one is as much the reality of the other. My tears are not as a result of the smoke. Father knows and fills up my heart from the most unlikely source.

I remember the Word from Eunice and repeatedly speak to the fire. We see the wind subside, allowing Max and I to move in with a hosepipe directly in line with the movement of the fire to prevent it from spreading closer to the main house. I can just remember how we both moved through the trees in worship, taking authority over the fire. My Jesus my Saviour, Lord there is none like you ... I shall praise the wonder of Your mighty love. Here I once again realise the importance of an armour bearer who will not forsake you in the midst of the battle, but will stand in his role and position, because if that water supply is interrupted, the forerunner is totally exposed to the onslaught of the elements.

But alas! The wind has picked up again and is pushing the fire at the higher end of the property, down to Beulah's front gate. The fire brigade is resolute that the fire would be stopped at the front gate, but the next moment the fire jumps 100 meters down the road into the pine forest, next to Beulah as you would follow the road down the mountain. More smouldering cinders drop in the vegetation in front of the main building and flames starts running down the mountain. Flames are also creeping back up the mountain in the direction of the main house, burning right up to the lawn.

At this stage I'm just so grateful for the preparation work we've done after the initial fire the previous Tuesday, when we cleared out bushes and trees close to the home. This is the very



area where the fire is contained and cannot get closer than 10 meters from the main building. I'm so thankful for friends who took time off and also sent workers to help clear out the vegetation. At the time it seemed like unnecessary effort, but in the midst of the struggle that is what would give us victory over the onslaught of the fire. I just realise that there is not one contribution that can be considered less vital than the other. Everything works together towards a bigger victory. Even a friend who was adamant about clearing away the vegetation around the borehole and took this task upon himself: Dan's contribution ensured that the vital water supply from the borehole was not destroyed. I should never underestimate the value of preparation or disregard the importance of my contribution.

The fire behind the Storehouse, Shed and Cottage melted the water pipes and power cables and caused the window panes to crack. The heat caused the plaster to fall off the walls of the Storehouse, but right next to that very spot is a wooden door that wasn't even touched by the fire. The flames also came right up to the walls of the Cottage and incinerated the garden plants, but the wooden stoep and railings were totally unscorched. Three meters from there the intense heat caused a wooden garden bench to disintegrate – a heap of screws the only indication of where it stood. Hot ash and smoke was blown into all the buildings, but none of the lace curtains or even the toilet paper on which the ash fell, was set alight. It is a miracle that the buildings could be saved, but water supply and storage have been damaged and we will only be able to start repairs on Tuesday.

Monday afternoon we visit with friends on the other side of Wellington to swim and clean ourselves up after an 18 hour struggle. As we leave their home, we see the beginnings of a fire in Du Toitskloof Pass. Although the fire is quite a distance from us, it is disturbing to realise that somebody might be behind this inhumane action that is causing such damage, trauma and heartache for all the inhabitants of the valley.

I look up to the mountains and pray against the power of the fire. The flames form a line that looks like a fiery wall.

[02:30 18 January 2017, Wednesday]

We approach Monday night with the assurance of victory – after all, with the vegetation burnt down and the buildings saved, there can't possibly be anything left to burn. To top it all the fire brigade stay over on Beulah and we have protection throughout the night. I keep watch until 01:30, giving feedback to family and friends. Tuesday morning 17 January at 05:00 Willemien wakes me up to say that she smells smoke. When we walk out the front door, we enter a thick black smouldering cloud. The wind carries embers and ashes along in the cloud of smoke. However, the biggest crisis is the enormous tongues of fire being blown high up into the air. We realise that in less than three hours, the fire has burnt down from

Du Toitskloof Pass right up to our front gate. We just have time to jump in the vehicles and race through the fire, down the mountain. It all happens so fast that I do not even have time to close the front door. Our biggest concern is that we do not know what the situation lower down the mountain is or if we will have a safe escape route.

We get down the mountain safely and while Hanneke approach friends to house her and the children in our desperate circumstances, I rush back up the mountain to fetch the dogs. I cannot get back to Beulah the same way, but find an alternative route via a neighbouring farm. Upon arrival I find a fire in a southwesterly direction from the main house. The fire must have leapt a distance of 180 meters, from a southeasterly direction, over the main house, into a pile of branches next to the main house. These branches formed part of the branches we removed the previous week to create a fire break between the field and the house. Thanks to the presence of a fire engine they manage to put out the fire. But they run out of water and have to fill up again at the bottom of the mountain. While they are gone, the next moment I see a fire on the western side of the house, with flames reaching up higher than the house. The fire has burnt up the slope against the wind, into the reed bush and olive tree next to the western wall of the main house (near the prayer room). I feel my heart sink. After all the victories and miracles to now lose the battle and see the buildings go up in flames is more than I can bear. Once again I speak to the fire. The next moment I hear the fire engine's pump start up and they start pushing the fire back, away from the walls. My olive tree, fig tree and vine survive the inferno.

I see the humour in the situation. Father, there might be many things I do not know; I might be a Job, but I'm surely not a Habakuk, since my fig tree, vine and olive still happen to be standing, full of fruit, on the very spot where the fire stopped!



Hab 3:17 – 18 Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls –yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. [NKJV]

You are still God.

A few thoughts gleaned from this experience:

The fires have mobilised the community of Wellington to work together. People I haven't seen for years have pitched up to help us. So, in the midst of the fires, it was like a big reunion. Strangers showed up to help clear out the vegetation and fight the fire. We were showered with supplies of cooldrinks and sweets – if I am to help work my way through them I'll have to postpone my intention of cutting out sugar. I am indebted to friends who devoted their time to physically lend a hand, others who made means available, stopped their own endeavours, offered and also brought workers. I know of others who cried out to Father for breakthroughs. This morning I had to listen to 24 voicemails and that does not even account for the many calls I have received or the messages that went via Hanneke. I can only say thank you, thank you, thank you to everyone who helped to hold up our hands.

I've learnt that everyone's contribution makes a difference. For example, yesterday I could keep watch over an area on another farm, armed only with a rake to push away embers so that the fire would not spread down the course of the Spruit River, or transport food and cooldrinks to the firefighters, or offer a bed for one hour to an exhausted fireman at 02:00 in the morning when he fell asleep on a slab of cement after a shift of 25 hours. His words were: "I drove down the road and saw a 'speed bump', but it looked like a wall. That is when I knew if I did not stop for just one hour, there would be trouble." He could take a nice shower and dry himself with a towel that did not smell of smoke, because earlier that day a woman arrived here with her Mercedes, terrified of driving up the mountain with all the fires, but she has heard her Beloved ask of her to deliver two towels to us. I see Riaan, a businessman from town, who worked through the nights to help fight the fires and extinguish the flames with the poisonspray container he uses for killing garden weeds. In spite of the fact that he only has one hand because of a childhood accident, he gave more than a man with two hands. A man who gave his all for his fellow man, when the people he helped did not even know who he was. I see Jesus. Scripture says that from the midst of the thick cloud, the glory of God shines forth.

Yesterday afternoon I drove up the mountain to the burnt plantations. The devastation reminds me of old war movies, with the smouldering tree trunks blackened by the fire. Everywhere I see death and destruction. Whirlwinds sweep powdery clouds of blackened ash up into the air. However, when I take a closer look, a deeper look, I notice ... rivulets

starting to form because the trees no longer use all the water. The smell of the fire – but when I take a deeper breath I detect the sweet scent of the pine trees refreshing the air. The lifeless branches of the burnt protea bushes suddenly make way for the gold dust of the protea seeds, bringing new life to the soil underneath. In the midst of devastation and trauma, the protea could shed its seed. Gold dust that would bring new life. A few friends encouraged me: “Watch and see what will arise from the ashes. New life will sprout. Life in abundance.”

Perhaps we as a country can learn from our national flower, that in order to bring forth a new nation, we need to die to our own selfishness and self-preservation, so that new life can be brought forth from the dry and scorched land. Perhaps we should take a closer look at those areas where we are praying for rain and see the streams of living water already flowing on the barren earth, see the promise of growth in the golden seed on the accursed soil and smell the sweet scent coming forth from the burnt trees. Perhaps I can also obey my Beloved, overcome my fears and present His love as seed to someone exerting himself to preserve the livelihood of a stranger. Perhaps it is my very flaws and imperfections which can give hope to others. Father, do I still see your hand, or only the fear of my circumstances?

In Conclusion:

Right now we are faced with lots of structural repairs. We also haven't had opportunity to sit still for long enough to process the emotions surrounding the events. For instance, we notice that Johannes and Willemien are reluctant to be alone on Beulah or to go to bed, since we woke up that morning just in time to flee from the grounds.



Structurally the buildings need to be repaired, water supply have to be replaced and reconnected. The non-availability of accommodation has a further financial impact. We have already started the process of planning and repairs and are grateful for the help and support in this regard.

We're not only looking at the present situation, but how to extend our vision in future. For this purpose we are investigating the possibilities of planting crops, going off the Eskom grid, refinancing Beulah's loan account, building a dam, establishing overnight camping facilities, building prayer shelters since there are no more trees, making the Cottage available for timeshare and taking in students for three months' discipleship.

We would appreciate the input of friends to make sure that Beulah continues to be a spiritual lighthouse in the gates of Cape Town. It is a place of hope and overcoming in the battle raging in the valleys of our lives. A place for spiritually and emotionally lifting up your expectations to once again rise above circumstances and time. Please help us, for we are not just fighting our own battle. We value your input.

Love and blessings.

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