

Letter to a prisoner

Losing sons, dealing with loss, as Christians.

Taking on pain decreases personal pain.

10/2/2017 ns Church date Sept 19th, MARTYRS TROPHYMOS, SABBATIOS AND DORIMEDONTOS (+ 276).

Dear in Christ : I am trying to get through all of the letters that I have been sent. So, your letter comes up as the 1st today, in a break with my usual methods. I had been grabbing letters randomly, but I think your letter deserves a quick response. We share the loss of a son, and that makes both of us, in some way, not completely whole. I am writing on the 114th day after my son [+Daniel's](#) death, and the very fact that I know the number shows that I am not done grieving. I am not sure I will ever be fully done. I am awaiting, as you are, the time when there will be "no sickness, no sighing, no sorrow, but life everlasting". The quotation is from a prayer that we read for the reposed.



I want to tell you that after Daniel's death I created something called "[Daniels list](#)". It is a list of people to pray for. As regarding you and me, on that list it has those who reposed in a sudden way and also those who have lost a loved one in a sudden way. Both of us qualify for both categories, either with ourselves, or our sons. The first order of business my friend, is that I do not remember the name of your son. I may have written it down. I thought it was in "[Daniels list](#)" already but I saw that it is not. Please tell me the name of your son and the date of his repose and I will pray for him every day till the end of my life. If you cannot get to services because of your difficulties of housing, make sure that either ... knows or somebody else who comes to the service or write it to me.

I have learned about lot about loss since my son died on June 11th. Experience is the best, but also the hardest teacher. Since that time, I've even told someone in prison about the loss of their son. It was in another. I told

him about it, in person, literally the day after I buried my son. It was on the day of family visitation. That's a time when, as you know, a person like me is not allowed to come. I had to get permission from the warden. There was so much happiness in that room. You could feel the happiness. And when he saw me, he knew something was wrong and immediately began he began to cry we just held each other and wept for basically 45 minutes. The warden that told us we would only have 15 minutes but he was a man with a heart.

I have to admit that taking on other's pain makes my pain seem to be less. I would advise that for you as well. The more we care about other people's pain, the less we seem to care about our own pain. And as you well know my friend, sometimes the pain is more than we think we can bear.

I cannot pretend to know what it is like to lose a son and not be able to be present in his funeral. And that way your pain certainly is greater than mine, but God knows all things. As Christians we must believe that all things happen either by God's will or by God allowing it. The scripture says all things work to the good for those who love Christ and are called according to his purpose. Those are not empty words, but they are difficult words to believe or perhaps to put into practice when we have deep pain. You and I both know this.

I can tell you by experience that the only thing that really helps me is that I pray. I pray for my son; I pray for others who have had losses; I pray for those who are in my life. Since I've known you I've always prayed for you every day. I think it will work for you too. If you reach out to others that you know, by praying for them and caring for them and feeling their pain as much as you can then the pain that you feel for your son will be less. I can say this from experience I don't say this as a theoretical thing.

I had trouble with meetings at the unit. This is a temporary thing, as you know, stuff happens in prisons. I will continue to come whenever I'm able to come. You will come whenever you are able to come. We can stay in contact by That we read for the reposed mail. Although that is also subject sometimes to unreliability because after all, anything in the prison life is full of unexpected happenings, we can stay in contact more easily and more completely through mail.

Please do not be angry at God my friend. You have things that are left to do. Because you are still breathing, there is work to do. There are prayers to say for people, there is kindness to give to other people. Someone who was also at the Unit, who you may or may not have known told me that being in prison is sort of like being on a ship but never going into port. So, there is a sort of idea that your life is put on hold. I've never been in prison, but I know that that is not true for a Christian. Every moment of your life is a moment when you should be with God. We should be doing His will, we should be feeling His presence. Everything that you and I experience in this life -- good and bad -- will be superseded by the next life. The pain that you and I feel over the loss of our sons will be completely forgotten or perhaps in some way that you and I cannot understand we will still remember it but we will not feel pain. I don't know how that happens to be honest with you but I know it is true.

I encourage you my friend, to pray for your son and to pray for my son. We will pray together. the prayer does not need to be complicated. You can just say:” Lord Jesus Christ have mercy upon my son” or “Lord Jesus Christ have mercy upon Daniel”. There are [other prayers](#); if you are interested I will send them to you.

We must add to these prayers for our sons prayers for those around us who are suffering. What is the military term? I think that it is a “target-rich environment”. That means that if they're shooting at people there's a lot of people to shoot at. Well, in prison and in life, there is a target-rich environment, of people that are suffering. If we feel their suffering and if we act upon it, whether by prayer for them or a kind word or even giving them a soup or a stamp, then we are doing the work of Christianity. The scriptures tell us that if we give even a cup of water to a little one, we will not lose our reward.

I think this is the key to you and I dealing with our grief. Actually, I don't think it; I know it because I practice it. Every day I wake up and the first thing I think about is +Daniel. Probably that's what happens to you too.

Sometimes that thought doesn't feel very good. According to the scriptures, and according to our Christian faith, it is not a sin to feel the loss of a loved one. It is a sin to grieve like unbelievers grieve. I think I understand more about that now. I know that believers grieve by prayer and by good works in the name of their loved one. They do not only feel pain -- they also reach out to others in pain.

I guess that's all I've got for now. I hope this is been of some comfort to you. I hope I will be able to see you next week. Write back when you can.

God bless you!

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