**Looking at Perfect Praise**
**(The Karen Swecker Story)
Part III**

   We brought little DJ home; soon after things began to change: The dark cloud of blame had set in and I felt that this gloom would become my reality!  How could this have happened?  I did everything I was supposed to do, yet, “I” managed to mess it all up!  I placed all the responsibility of having a healthy baby on myself, never realizing, not even once thinking, “The Lord giveth” and He has a purpose in all He allows in the lives of His children.

​I tried my best to look as though we were living a normal life… we were just a young couple enjoying our first baby, and, actually became very practiced in my effort to make our life “look” normal!  Hiding my thoughts, and with some effort, to camouflage the turmoil of hurt and grief within me.  My conversation internally was between me, my heart, and my mind… the three of us were in a whirl, sort of an internal windmill racing around and around, never stopping, never trying to “be still and accept that He is God, and knows exactly what He is doing.”  The enemy is good at lying in his effort to destroy, to kill!  What Satan desires most is our “Faith.”  If he can rob us of our trust in our Almighty, all-seeing, all- knowing God, he knows it will become impossible to our loving God and our relationship with Him will suffer, often, catastrophically!  But I began, very slowly to learn who He really is; I began to Know who I believed in and discover, truly, He is able!”

   Mercy has an assignment; it forgives, has sympathy for the broken and hurting; Grace fulfilled its purpose, as well, giving me strength when I was too weak to stand: Grace assured me I was loved by this wonderful Heavenly Father and He grieves for us in our pain.  The Holy Spirit did not desert me, and God’s unconditional Love began to hold me, even in my darkest hours.  God kept His promises, and even when people began to stare at my little darling, I began to hang on to a God who never leaves or forsakes one of His little children!

   DJ began to grown from an infant to a child, but somehow never hit those expected milestones: holding a bottle, rolling over, sitting up, not even holding his little head up as he should be.

   Folks made an effort, somewhat to be kind… “Oh, look, he’s sleepy,” or, “he’s shy.”  This happened over and over again!  I had to face reality.  I drove an hour each way to his therapy appointments, and, oh, how difficult; he screamed all the way, often until he foamed at the mouth!  For five long years my little boy and I made these day long journeys.

   I even went so far as to take him to Poland for a month for intense therapy treatment, then to Russia twice for surgery.  I carried DJ all his life, but at age four, the therapists told me my baby needed to be in a wheelchair.  More pain, disappointment and frustration!
   Other mothers were taking their children to practice football, baseball, but not mine… we were buying a wheelchair!

   I could not find my way to the feet of Jesus; I could not find those blessed feet that bore scars of nails that were there to redeem my soul, to allow me to cast all my cares there!  I knew Jesus cared for me, but my doubt hid His feet from me!

  I had left Him out of this dark, painful, painful picture while I endeavored to do it all on my own!  It wasn’t easy caring for a child seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day, running a household, working forty hours a week, enduring a miscarriage, for which I blamed myself!  But our life was about to take a sweet turn.  That “Hope,” small as it was, was being fulfilled; not to heal and change everything, but to brighten our life!  You know God has intervened and you can rest a little while.  (Don’t miss part IV)

**Looking At Perfect Praise
(The Karen Swecker Story)
Part II**
During the first two months of the hospital stay, doctors gave us such hope!  They told us that DJ was healthy, that he just needed “to grow.”  You can imagine our excitement and joy over this news, not knowing that it would not be that way at all!
          The next two weeks, the promises of these doctors were crushed, and so were we.  Because DJ was so pre-mature, there was a real risk of a brain bleed, so, an ultrasound was done on his brain.  We were not prepared for the heart-breaking result:
          On a late Friday evening, July 20, 1990, we received the news that would predict the life we would live from that moment on!  One of the doctors came to us, pulled up a chair, and with no preparing our hearts, no easing into the life changing report, he gave us the news.  He was very blunt, very flat, no emotion, no tenderness, his words broken our hearts.
          “Your son has ‘Cerebral Palsy’: he has brain damage!” Total devastation!  In one instant, with only two words, “Cerebral Palsy.”  What an odd thought came to mind: (surely, someone has taken my little baby boy and give me someone else’s!) This absurd thought came from total shock!  I would not, could not, allow myself to hear, much less process such an awful thing!
          Hysteria!  I learned what it was to be hysterical!
          It means that nothing is real; this isn’t happening…not me…. not to my precious little boy.  With my husband’s help, we made our way to the hospital chapel!
          But I had no words.  My mind was not my mind; my thoughts were not my thoughts; but the tears running down my face…I realized they were my tears, and only the beginning of the many tears that were yet to be cried.
          I couldn’t pray; I couldn’t grieve; I hardly knew who I was…I had nothing.  Just nothing.  Nothing but tears…painful tears.  That is all I had that I could identify as reality…pain and tears. These were a preview of what my life would be for a while.
          And where was this merciful, compassionate God of mine?  He was there; I could not feel His presence, but He was there!  He knew every pain, saw every tear; each step we took, God walked with us; He was true to His promise, “I will neve leave thee, nor forsake thee.”  (Hebrews 13:5)
          It would take some time before I could realize that God is truly all He said He would be; as the Apostle Paul writes to the church at Corinth; “God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (I Corinthians 10:13).
          Yes, I was tempted; in my confusion and pain it crossed my mind, (can I really trust God?  Will He make a way for me to escape?)  I can testify; “My God made a way for me to bear it…to trust Him!”

Until next time,
​Karen