

BECAUSE NOTHING IS TOO HARD

I see their faces everyday as I turn to the editorial section of my newspaper. The faces I see are of the two MICHAELS – MICHAEL SPAVOR AND MICHAEL KOVRIG. These two Canadians have been held captive in China since December 10, 2018. As of August 25, 2020, they have spent 625 days in captivity. The conditions these two Michaels have endured have not been easy:

- *In the beginning they were given very little food to eat.*
- *It was only when COVID-19 started, that they were fed larger portions.*
- *They are forced to sleep with the lights on instead of in the dark.*
- *They have gone long periods of time not being able to talk with family or with representatives from the Canadian Consulate.*

Their situation reminds me of something I heard a former POW (prisoner of war) during the Vietnam War say about his experience:

“Being a POW is the loneliest experience you can ever have”

Each morning when I look at the picture of the two Michaels I think to myself how lonely they must be. There must be some days when they feel not just alone, but isolated and perhaps forgotten. It must be so hard for the two Michaels as they endure this hardship.

Our hardship certainly has not been for as long as the two Michaels. We have been experiencing the hardships of COVID-19 for just 150 days. The hardships we have been going through as a result of COVID-19 do have some similarities to the Michaels:

- Like them, we have had certain freedoms taken away from us,
- Like them, we have had to be alone and isolated at times,
- Like them we maybe had trouble sleeping and trouble coping,
- Like them our minds wonder how much longer this will be and if we will ever be free of this again?

Whenever I think of the hardships we are going through and compare it to what the two Michaels are experiencing it makes me realize they have it far worse off than we do. As I realize this, it helps me not to feel down or discouraged but to remain hopeful.

Realizing others have it far worse than we do can help us emotionally whenever we face hardships. But we don't do this right away. Our human nature is such that whenever we face hardships, we tend to focus first on ourselves. The harder things get for us, the more our mind takes us on a negative line of thinking in the midst of hardship:

- Others have it better than me,
- Others seem to be coping better than me,
- I have lost so much,
- I have it so hard,
- I feel all alone in this.

When we focus just on ourselves in the midst of a hardship, we can experience negative thinking like this. I wonder if Abraham and Sarah went down this negative path of thinking when they were unable to have children. Back in Biblical times, to be able to have children was viewed as a sign of being favoured by God. Abraham and Sarah were unable to conceive and have children by the time Genesis 18 occurs. How many times during the hardship of not being able to become pregnant did Sarah begin to think:

- God is favouring others over us,
- Other families have it better than us,
- I am missing out on so much not having a child,
- Why hope, why believe, why think my hardships and hurt will ever end now that I am beyond child-bearing years?

When our minds go down the path of negative thinking during hardships naturally, we think others have it better than us. Sarah may have felt this way. If she did that feeling was about to change. She was about to discover that we do have it better than we think because **NOTHING IS TOO HARD FOR GOD.**

In Genesis 18 we read that one day three visitors approached where Abraham and Sarah were staying. One of the three visitors happened to be the Lord Himself. While He was there, God made Abraham the following promise:

- **"I WILL RETURN TO YOU ABOUT THIS TIME NEXT YEAR AND YOUR WIFE SARAH WILL HAVE A SON!"**

Sarah happened to be listening nearby in a tent when she heard this. We are told she began to laugh softly to herself at what was said. God, being all-knowing, was aware of Sarah's silent laugh and questioned why she was so skeptical of the promise. Then God said something that reveals why we do have it better than we think no matter what hardships we are going through. God said:

“IS ANYTHING TOO HARD FOR THE LORD?”

Sarah was 89 at the time of this promise and Abraham was 99. They were about to discover that indeed nothing is too hard for the Lord to do. Sure enough, Sarah became pregnant and gave birth to their son Isaac a year later. Just as God said:

- It wasn't too hard for Him to fulfill this promise despite Abraham and Sarah's ages,
- It wasn't too hard for God to end their hardships and make their lives happier and more fulfilled.

For most of their lives Abraham and Sarah thought others had it better than them due to their hardship of not having children of their own. Everything changed for them because of this truth: nothing is too hard for God.

Experiencing the hardships brought on by this pandemic has maybe had you at times thinking others are faring better or doing better than you. One way to overcome that feeling is to do what I have done at times thinking about the two Michaels – realizing OTHERS HAVE IT WORSE OFF THAN ME. This approach will only bring us temporary relief from feeling down about our hardships. A better approach is to remember what God said to Abraham and Sarah:

IS ANYTHING TOO HARD FOR THE LORD?

If we set our minds on this, we will find ourselves uplifted realizing:

- It is not hard for God to provide for my needs in this!
- It is not hard for God to bring joy or lift my spirit in this!
- It is not hard for God to help me cope on this day!
- It is not too hard for God to save my job or my business!
- It is not too hard for God to protect me and keep me safe when I do have to go out!

Thankfully, nothing is too hard for God to do. Because this is true, no matter what hardships or difficulties Covid-19 has been causing us we are in a better position than we think we are because God is in our lives. How much better can we have it knowing that “NOTHING IS TOO HARD FOR HIM”. Let us remember this line of thinking on those particularly tough days during this pandemic.

If you do go down the path that I sometimes do and think about the two Michaels and realize they have it worse off than us, take time to pray for them. Pray for their families at this time as well. Let us say in our prayers:

GOD, I KNOW NOTHING IS TOO HARD FOR YOU. SO, I ASK THAT
YOU FREE THE TWO MICHAELS FROM THEIR SUFFERING AND
HARDSHIP.

Won't it be a joyous day when God does what is too hard for our Canadian Government to do at this time – free our “two Michaels”?

God Bless and Keep Safe

Pastor Dean