

GOD'S MIRACLE OF SEBASTIAN

A CHRONICLE OF GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

Susan Bratten Ison

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CONTENTS

PART ONE: Preface	5
An Urgent Letter to the Reader	7
Saint Sebastian	11
Acknowledgments	13
Prologue: The Phone Call	21
Therapeutic Abortion	23
Oligohydramnios	25
PART TWO: Dangerous Times	29
CHAPTER 1: March	31
CHAPTER 2: April	75
CHAPTER 3: May	121
CHAPTER 4: June	133
PART THREE : A Guard of Angels	151
CHAPTER 5: July	153
CHAPTER 6: August	187
CHAPTER 7: September	207
CHAPTER 8: October	213
CHAPTER 9: November	221
PART FOUR: Appendix	233
Helpful Notes for Parents	235
Baby Feeding and Medication Guidelines	259
Stories and Blogs	263
The Psalms and Obadiah	317

PART ONE:

PREFACE

AN URGENT LETTER TO THE READER

Dear Reader of “God’s Miracle of Sebastian,”

It is my hope that you will read this book from Part One to its end so you will truly know of God’s miracle of Sebastian. But if you do not read it all, it is my sincere hope and prayer that you will for certain read Part One as well as “my plea to you” immediately before the appendix.

This book is written for two purposes. First, it is to exalt and glorify our Lord. Second, it is to save lives of other little ones and unnecessary heartbreak for parents.

God gave me no choice as to whether or not to write this book.

It is important to understand that many times the medical community truly believes they are saving the life of the mother or preventing her from carrying a doomed baby by terminating a pregnancy. Because of their own experience, they hold out little or no hope.

But sometimes the problem corrects itself. Such was not our case.

And sometimes God performs a miracle. Such was the case with our Little One.

In spite of a zero percent chance for life predicted by doctors, God undeniably and resolutely has performed a miracle in our family by giving and sustaining life in dear Little One, who would be named Sebastian.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

Some might say everything is a miracle. A tiny leaf is a miracle. I used to say that too, so I will not argue with you who might think that way.

This book is a testament to God's miracle of Sebastian. It is written down so it will not be forgotten.

“One generation will commend Your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts. They will speak of the glorious splendor of Your majesty and I will meditate on Your wonderful works.” Psalms 145: 4-5

“In the future when your children will ask you, ‘What do these stones mean?’ tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord....These stones are to be a memorial.” Joshua 4: 6

As Matthew Henry, great Puritan commentator, wrote about Joshua and the memorial, “But God, knowing their frame, and how apt they had been soon to forget His works, ordered an expedient for the keeping of this in remembrance to all generations, that those who could not or would not, read the record of it in the sacred history, might come to the knowledge of it by the monument set up in remembrance of it....and would remain a standing evidence of it to those who in after-ages might question the truth of it.”

How could I not make an ardent effort to preserve the memory of God's miracle that I have been so humbled to witness so that others might have knowledge of it?

It is my hope of hopes that our children and grandchildren for years to come will remember and know and talk about God's miracle of Sebastian.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

In His Service,

Susan Ison

P.S. Please have mercy on this messenger, who you will soon learn is not a professional writer, but rather one who was given a mission to chronicle God's Miracle of Sebastian by the One Who performed it.

Little One is well named after Saint Sebastian.

Saint Sebastian

Saint Sebastian is represented in many paintings. He was an early Christian martyr who became popular in the Medieval and renaissance periods. Saint Sebastian served as a soldier in the Roman army, but he was discovered to be a Christian and so sentenced to death by the emperor Diocletian. He was to be shot by his own archers.

He survived the arrows, which miraculously failed to pierce any vital organ....

Acknowledgments

Most acknowledgment pages are written to thank those who have helped the author with the book. This acknowledgement page is to thank those who made this true story possible. Without them there would have been nothing to write about.

Without our merciful and loving Lord, others would not have been able to play their role for there would have been no role to play. Through the many months described in this book and the ones that have followed, I have learned what it means to trust in God in ways I never understood before.

I recently read that if we pray for gentleness, a temptation will come to be harsh. If we pray for our faith to be increased, our children will become alarmingly ill. I am not certain I ever prayed that I would trust God more, but my faith has been strengthened in ways I find difficult to describe. As our pastor said, “Rob and Taylor’s home is a home of rejoicing rather than of mourning.” As a dear friend’s daughter said, “Our family and friends have been changed because they know Sebastian’s God is their God.” I am in awe of His wondrous miracle of Sebastian and forever thankful to my Lord and Savior for His mighty deed, for His undeserved love and mercy, for all He shows us about ourselves and about Him.

In my over sixty years on this planet, I have seen many people travel through almost unbearable hardships. But never before have I seen a finer example of how to live through such troubled and dangerous times. The innocent child of Rob and Taylor, our eldest son and his wife, was safe and healthy inside his mother’s womb but was given a zero percent chance of living once he left the womb. His parents

God's Miracle of Sebastian

remained unflinchingly steadfast in their decision not to give up in spite of the odds and in spite of the pressures to do so. This book is a tribute to them.

No one has inspired me never to complain about anything more than dear Little One also known as Sebastian. From the moment he was born, he was swept away from his parents so he might be given life sustaining measures. Throughout months of neonatal intensive care and hospital stays and one therapist and doctor after another, he not only continues to persevere, but he absolutely delights each person who meets him with his bright eyes and his adorable smile.

One person seemed always to be there when we received good news followed by bad. Always this little man cancelled out our heartache with joy. Not only for me but for his parents, Sebastian's big brother Luke has always been there to lift our spirits. Finding pleasure in anything and everything, he continues to invite us to join him in his explorations and in his happiness.

There is no way to thank all of the family members who have supported and sustained me through this time. My husband has always been there. Answering calls in the middle of the night, stopping whatever he might be doing to pray with me, catching flights at a moments notice to be by my side. I cherish him and thank God for him more than words can say.

Our son Jon and his wife Allison and their two little people, Zoe and Alex showed their love and concern in so many ways, never hesitating to put everything on hold to be there for Rob and Taylor. Without the ongoing love and encouragement of daughter Liz and her husband Clay and their two little ones, Nathan and Libby, I cannot begin to imagine how I could

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

have been available to be in DC for Rob and Taylor. The love our children and grandchildren have shown for each other during these times has touched me to the core of my being.

I thank my parents for their love, for encouraging and upholding me in ways only parents can. My sister and brother in law, Kathy and Stuart visited and called and emailed, offering unequalled empathy. My brother and his wife, Dave and Flora, called and prayed and helped with our parents when I could not be there. Our dear nieces often lifted me when I was down by their emails and love of this Little One. Much of the time Taylor's Mom Cynthia could not be in DC because of her work, but the love and concern she and Taylor's Dad Bob showed never faltered.

My friends were among my greatest source of strength. There are no words to thank them. I will be forever grateful to them for they never seemed to weary in doing good by continually sending emails filled with Scripture and hope, by calling just to leave a word of encouragement, and, most of all, by praying to our heavenly Father to perform His miracle of Sebastian.

I thank those at the hospitals and doctors offices. So many adore Little One and do not hesitate to let him or us know. Not all of these were medical people. Some were cleaning people or parking attendants and some were other families. Their smiles and compassion often offered just what we needed.

And last I am eternally grateful to all those we never met. I am forever indebted to those who have prayed from all over the world. I thank those parents whose little ones who went to be with the Lord early and who chose to set their own

God's Miracle of Sebastian

heartbreak aside and offer invaluable and compassionate counsel to us.

I am also deeply thankful for those many little ones who have gone on to be with the Lord. They inspired me because they tried so very hard to survive. One day we will meet on the other side. And then there will be no more tears.

There have been countless players on the stage during God's Miracle of Sebastian. Each has profoundly touched me and I am eternally grateful.

MIRACLE

an event that appears unexplainable by the laws of nature and so is held to be supernatural in origin or an act of God.

THERAPEUTIC ABORTION

termination of pregnancy to save the life of the mother, preserve the health of the mother, or prevent the birth of a child with defects incompatible with life or associated with significant morbidity.

GOD'S MIRACLE OF SEBASTIAN

PROLOGUE

The Phone Call

As the praise and worship team sang at church tonight, the haunting rhythm of the song reminded me of the rain beating down on Rob's car as I drove it to Baltimore late that night. There were few cars out and the highway looked particularly dark and lonely and quiet.

Nineteen weeks ago I received the phone call from our son Rob. His voice was rather monotone and all he said was, "It's time."

There was not the excitement that you normally expect when your son is calling to tell you that his wife is in labor and their baby is on the way, that it is time for you to make your way to the hospital.

I had driven back to DC from Johns Hopkins Hospital earlier that day to have a "maid's day off" as Rob called it. I had noticed a restaurant in Bethesda that Rob had told me was really good so I stopped there and ate dinner. After that I filled the car with gas. It was a beautiful night and it felt good to be out and about doing some normal things. I opened the sun roof and drove back to DC.

When I arrived at my son's and his wife's house, I let Pickle the dog out and I fed the cat. I took my bath and washed my hair. In preparation for my planned return to the hotel the next morning, I got together some things they needed in Baltimore for their son twenty-one month old Luke and for Mommy Taylor who had been in the hospital pregnant with their second child.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

I crawled into bed. Then the rain began to fall. What a good night's sleep I would have I thought as I pulled the covers up around me. There were no responsibilities except the cat and the dog. I had not had a night like that in months.

But as I lay my head upon the pillow, uneasiness once again filled my soul and I could not sleep.

I thought of Taylor who had been in the hospital for a week now and how she had so valiantly been on bed rest for the three months before.

I thought of Rob giving me the night off. He was taking my place by staying at the nearby hotel with Luke.

As I lay there, the words of so many medical people continued to echo in my mind. They wanted to terminate this pregnancy because there was no hope and much possible risk.

I thought of my verse God had given me that day and so many others He had given me other days. I thought of the illogic of the hope we had.

As the thoughts continued to patter around in my mind and as the rain pattered on the window pane, I was lulled into a surrealistic state.

That is when the phone rang and I heard Rob say, "It's time."

This is the story of our journey, a journey of devastating facts and our faithful God.

This is the story of God's miracle of Sebastian.

Therapeutic Abortion

One of the weekends after Sebastian's birth I was home and we went to church

"Susan!" I heard my name being called across the sanctuary after the service. I looked through the crowd and saw a nurse friend making her way to where I stood.

She looked very serious.

"Please remind me," she asked, "what was the condition your daughter-in-law had during her pregnancy?"

I responded that it was low amniotic fluid.

Her face fell and with great concern, she then asked for an answer she already knew, "And your grandson is ok, right?"

I replied that he was doing well and making progress and that indeed he was God's miracle.

I could tell there was more on her mind and listened as she said, "A young, frightened pregnant woman came to the medical office where I work this past Tuesday. Her Ob-Gyn had told her to come because the baby inside her could not live with low amniotic fluid."

So very reluctantly, I asked, "What happened?"

"The surgeon where I work agreed with the Ob-Gyn. One nurse and I refused to go into assist in the room where the pregnant woman and surgeon went. But they went

God's Miracle of Sebastian

anyway.”

“And they took the baby?” I asked.

“Yes,” she replied.

“They call it therapeutic abortion.”

Oligohydramnios

Oligohydramnios or low amniotic fluid is just one of thousands of things that can go wrong in pregnancy. We are indeed fearfully and wonderfully made.

Amniotic fluid is the fluid surrounding the baby and it serves many purposes, some of which are vital. Often oligohydramnios occurs as a result of a tear or a rupture in the amniotic sac and fluid leaks, lowering the level of fluid surrounding the baby.

Low fluid can result in many dangerous scenarios.

With such a tear, bacteria have an open door to this necessarily sterile environment. The risk of lethal infection to the mother and the baby is high. The stories we were told of babies who are born infected are pictures that will never leave my mind. As a result of the stories and the fears, many parents are encouraged to terminate their pregnancies and many do just that. Many try to carry their little ones to full term and hold their precious ones for only moments only to see them die.

Without fluid the cord can become compressed cutting off the oxygen supply to the baby.

Much of the amniotic fluid is comprised of the baby's urine and low fluid may indicate poor or no kidney function in the baby.

Fluid is needed so the baby can move around and develop his muscles and bones.

Adequate fluid is essential for the baby's lungs to develop and lungs are at their greatest stage of development between

God's Miracle of Sebastian

16 and 25 weeks.

During the months following March 9, I communicated with many of those Moms and Dads grandmothers and grandfathers whose babies and grandbabies had passed away.

Amazingly, they were the ones who were most stalwart in telling us not to terminate, even with the risk to life of Mom and Baby and heartbreak to Dad. They were the ones most honest in telling us of the heartbreak that might well come. They were the ones who told us of holding their precious babies only to bury them soon after. You will read of some of their stories in this book. We are forever deeply indebted to them for they encouraged us and went ahead of us.

Many Moms and Dads unknowingly give into the “counsel” of unknowing medical people, who say the risk was too high, who say a therapeutic abortion must be performed to save the life of the Mom. Many Dads unknowingly agree to that counsel. They would not have terminated their pregnancies had they known what we learned. Some Moms do reseed and sometimes God performs a miracle.

The earlier in pregnancy oligohydramnios occurs the more lethal it is for the baby.

The diagnosis in the first trimester is deadly and rare.

Such was the diagnosis we faced.

Doctors gave Little One a zero per cent chance.

From the beginning God led me to name this precious child Little One. I did not learn his sex until many weeks later. The more we learned about oligohydramnios in this early

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

stage of pregnancy the more ominous the news of Little One's situation became.

Although there were some scares in delivery and after, each of my three children were born healthy with no major complications. I was as unfamiliar with difficult pregnancies as anyone on the planet.

But my view of pregnancy and delivery and newborns will never again be the same.

PART TWO:
DANGEROUS TIMES

MARCH

“Mom,” he said that March afternoon, “I only have a minute. We went to the doctor and Taylor is twelve weeks pregnant. But there are serious problems.”

“The baby may have no kidneys. He may only have one. They see renal arteries that may lead to nothing. Taylor has little amniotic fluid. It is essential for the baby’s lungs to develop. The doctors have told us horror stories of what to expect.”

But for the overwhelming pain in our eldest son’s voice, disbelief would have been my immediate response. It is one thing when you have a painful thing occur in your own life, but when it happens to your child, no matter how old he is, it rips at your soul. And you just want to make it all ok.

This sixth grandchild we had prayed to be conceived was now growing in his mother’s womb.

So much of a Little One had already developed at twelve weeks. His tiny heart was already beating, but he was totally dependent on his mommy for oxygen at this stage. His own kidneys and lungs were not essential for his life, because his Mommy was taking care of all that.

This Little One was likely quite content and certainly unaware of the dangers lurking.

My sister was in town and was visiting with me when the call came. I listened with a slowness of comprehension to Rob’s words and had no better comprehension of what he had said when I repeated his words to Kathy.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

That night our family came to our house for dinner. We talked of this situation we did not understand and we ate and visited and prayed. Then they left.

Immediately I went to my computer and typed in the words Rob had used to describe the situation, "oligohydramnios in the first trimester". The two part entry resulted in a deadly combination.

I discovered the degree of this threat and the next to nothing odds battle our innocent Little One was facing. Low amniotic fluid later in a pregnancy allows time for development and assures functioning of vital organs.

But early in pregnancy there is no such allowance.

I thought it through as far as I could. Amniotic fluid is essential for the development of lungs. Tiny unborn babies swallow the fluid and in a way only our Creator could design, lungs develop as a result of the swallowing. But with no fluid, there would be nothing to swallow. With nothing to swallow, no lungs would develop.

A baby can live a long time in his mommy's womb with no lungs because he doesn't need to use lungs to breathe there.

But he cannot remain inside forever.

With no lungs at birth.....I could think about it no further.

I understood more clearly the horror stories the doctors had told my son and his wife.

For those months we would cherish each day Little One remained unborn inside his mommy.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

* * *

On some of the days of the chronicle which follows God would give me verses that I have included. On some days I would send or receive emails that I have included. On each and every day our merciful Lord was and remains faithful.

* * *

March 9 Thursday

Overwhelming emotions and disbelief filled all of us. Actual conversation was all but impossible between our son and us, so most of our communication was through email.

From the very beginning, God led me to pray, as He always does and that afternoon I emailed Rob.

Hi Rob

This is the prayer God has given me to pray for your child..... may you and Taylor also pray it and not doubt it:

Lord, You do all things in a perfect way. We pray in Jesus name that You mercifully knit this baby together perfectly in Taylor's womb even in these moments as we pray. We will not doubt that You will do as we ask. Our faith in Your omnipotence will not be shaken! In Your Name we pray.

Our son Jon was in the midst of completing his thesis for his PhD in Texas and he has always been our science and computer resource. Rob had told me enough about the

God's Miracle of Sebastian

concern over no kidneys that I could send what I understood our situation to be and Jon could begin to research actions we might take.

By late that night we were getting more information about this dangerous situation. We learned that absence of the kidney could be unilateral or bilateral. If it is unilateral, it means only one kidney is absent. However, if it is bilateral, it means both kidneys are absent. Unilateral absence of the kidneys is compatible with life whereas bilateral absence of the kidneys is incompatible with life.

In bilateral renal agenesis, the fetus is usually still born in more than 40% of cases while the majority of infants born alive usually die within four hours of life. Death shortly after birth is attributed to either pulmonary hypoplasia or renal failure.

My heart began to break.

Soon I sent out the first of many prayers requests to God's wonderful, faithful praying body of believers.

I explained that Taylor was 3 1/2 months pregnant but there seemed to be the possibility of serious problems. The baby might have no kidneys or only one.

Our prayer is that God knits us together in our mother's womb and that He will knit this child together perfectly and that the baby and mommy will be perfectly healthy and defy the logic of doctors and tests. Please pray that He will be glorified for His mighty deeds before men for the miracle of another healthy baby in this world! Pray for Rob's and Taylor's peace and wisdom - this is all so very hard for them.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

They go tomorrow at 10:30 our time for another ultrasound and then for a meeting with the geneticist.

Thanks so much.

March 10
Friday

Years ago God taught me how to have my quiet time with Him. He knows me well enough to know I just cannot seem to listen to Him until I have said all I want to say.

I write out my requests in abbreviated form, along with my thanks and praise to Him.

Once that is completed I ask Him for a verse to help me through that day. I have never found Him to be unfaithful in giving me just what I need for that day.

That morning I poured my hurting heart out to Him and I opened to my two pages, needing so desperately His word. His unfailing comfort was there.

Surely God is with you, and there is no other; there is no other God Isaiah 45:14

In the Lord alone are righteousness and strength. Isaiah 45:24

As I look back on those verses now, it is as though God were telling me then what to expect.

But I did not see it then.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

For by March 10, we were all well underway for a search for a cure.

That afternoon Rob, Taylor and Little One met with the geneticist and another doctor. Rob sent me a text message and I sent it out so people could pray.

Please let everyone know that much to the doctor's dismay, there is a bladder and renal arteries leading to what could be kidneys. While this is encouraging the fluid level is a three when it should be between 8 and 9.

Her doctor seems not to have any hope whatsoever of this turning around. However, the doctor at the hospital holds out a bit of hope. The fluid level must be up next week to normal levels or action that we do not want to take will become necessary. We're going to meet with another doctor now.

The words Rob had written, “*or action that we do not want to take will become necessary*”, were breaking my heart even further and their hearts, as well.

In such situations, life does not stop. And joyous news comes along with the heartbreaking news.

Our son Jon, completing his PhD, was beginning to look for post doc opportunities which would involve a move for him, his wife and their two children ages 4 and 3.

He had just finished the first round of several telephone interviews and had told me the first one had gone so well. I emailed him a note of congratulations and included an email I had received from Rob.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

Again congrats on your call going so well!!!

This is Rob's last text message...I think he is referring to either the condition or the specialist when he says it starts with an O and is long.....can we find such a specialist?

"See if you can talk to a couple of docs to see if there is anyone out there who specializes in this area. It starts with an O and is long but it's basically low amniotic fluid. The issue here is that we're at week 14. They can do things later on but this is too early. The stories they were telling us today were simply horrific".

It was not until much later that the details of those horrific stories Rob and Taylor were being told began to unfold.

Taylor could not talk. She could not email. All she could do was sleep. It was the only escape from what she had been told.

That night I emailed her.

Hi Taylor

Just want you to know I have never prayed more fervent prayers.....prayers for God's mercy and miraculous touch to bring this baby to full health....to give you and Rob wisdom and strength.....to give you peace which overrides all worry.....

".....Not by might, not by power but by my Spirit, says the Lord Almighty.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

May His Spirit do this great work.

Much Love, Susan

Much of our in town family came to dinner at our home that night. It had been planned because my sister was in town and our family always looks for opportunities to eat and celebrate. My Mom asked that we all hold hands and pray to our God for this precious Little One. After they left I returned to my computer.

That Friday night I sent out this email:

Please thank God that the renal arteries and bladder and probably the kidneys are fine. Even the radiologist was amazed at the health of this child. The first critical concern seems to be answered with a miracle. Praise be to God for His mighty deeds before men!

So please pray for the next miracle....

*First, pray that the amniotic fluid will replenish immediately.... they have an appointment Thursday but it **must** be replenished by then...the next few days are critical in order for this child to live.*

Second, pray for wisdom for Jon and others who are seeking to find experts knowledgeable about treatment for low amniotic fluid during the first trimester. Pray they will be located and will have needed information on how to proceed. Jon is contacting people even now and into the night.

Of course please pray for Rob and Taylor to have God's strength, His wisdom and His peace.....

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

They cried to You and were saved; in You they trusted and were not disappointed.

Although I ended that email with a verse, I did not write down where the verse came from. God gave it to me and I lost the reference.

It was to become the verse we would claim again and again during the days that would follow.

Over and over we would cry to Him.

That verse remains His promise to us.

Late into that Friday night, Rob, Jon and I text messaged and emailed back and forth about resources we had found, possibilities where people were researching our situation.

Rob could not talk either. It was just too painful to talk about. Email was a safe, unemotional way to communicate...to do the job we had to do...to find a way to save Little One. We could not falter or give way to emotion.

We did not yet fully realize that saving Little One was something only God could do.

I finally headed for bed, but God drew me back to my computer. I have no idea why I would do this except at His leading. I typed in a search for "Johns Hopkins."

Honestly, I am embarrassed to say I did not realize where Johns Hopkins was located.

Soon I would find it was in Baltimore so close to their home in DC. I would learn another of many terms that until then had been unknown to me. Johns Hopkins has an entire

God's Miracle of Sebastian

department of perinatology, doctors who specialize in high risk pregnancies.

Before I went to bed I emailed both sons.

I don't know if Johns Hopkins is the best at everything, but they sure have a good reputation and I did not even know there was a sub-specialty in obstetrics for high risk pregnancies of which they have several. Maybe a second opinion from a place like them is worth at least a prayer...I am copying Jon for any thoughts he might have...sleep well

I had attached a link to Johns Hopkins Dept of Perinatology, a place not yet known to any of us, but where over the next six months we would spend endless hours in anguish as well as endless hours in awe of our God.

I went to bed knowing beyond any doubt that our Almighty God was with us, that He was leading us.

(I must add that as I write this, it is actually now 8:13 PM on March 18, a Sunday night and a little over a year after the above was taking place. Taylor just called and said, "We have a tooth!" God's miracle of Sebastian has his first tooth at almost 8 months of age!)

Much would happen between the finding of Johns Hopkins and that first tooth.

March 11 Saturday

During my quiet time that day I knew God was burdening me with the truth of the spiritual battle we were facing. He

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

made it so undeniably clear that we must pray for Little One's protection from Satan. Over all the months since then this eminent danger is the one our omnipotent Lord has urged me to pray about over and over. It is impossible to express how urgent and imperative His urging continues to be.

That day He led me to these verses.

But on Mount Zion will be deliverance; it will be holy...

Obadiah v17

And the kingdom will be the Lord's v21

To our family I sent this prayer.

"Please pray that this Little One will be protected from Satan and danger and physical and emotional harm. God reminded me once more of the spiritual nature of attacks and how Satan does want to attack our believing family. So please pray that we all, including this Little One, will be protected from Satan and danger and physical and emotional harm. Spiritual warfare requires spiritual tactics"

As we desperately sought help, emails continued throughout the day. We were beginning to understand the importance of time. The time for lung development was during these weeks of gestation. No fluid, no lung development.

I sent an email to Rob telling him Jon was at the library and that he had found two pertinent research papers, one by a researcher in Greece who dealt with anigohydramnios (no amniotic fluid) as opposed to oligohydramnios (low amniotic fluid). The second dealt with infusion (Injecting fluid into the womb – a very dangerous proposition) in early pregnancy.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

I told him for more than one reason I was not at peace with what doctors had told them. He had since shared with me some of the horrific stories he had referred to earlier.

“For one thing”, I wrote,” it seems unconscionable to me that you were told about a baby suffocating on a table”. I told two medical people about that comment and they agreed such stories were unnecessary. Emotions were high enough without that.

It was clear a second opinion from a perinatologist was essential.

I told Rob about our family holding hands at dinner and praying for precious Little One and his Mom and his Dad.

I ended my email by saying,

“Love you.....You said Taylor is still in bed.....Have ya’ll talked?Could I call and just leave her a message, even if she doesn’t answer?”

* * *

Not knowing how many opportunities I might have for doing so, that Saturday night I wrote a letter to my grandbaby, Little One.

Underneath the Same Big Sky

Dearest Little One,

For Christmas your Mom and Dad gave Mick and me a night at a beautiful bed and breakfast in Mississippi. Little did we know how perfect the timing would be for us to be away at

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

such a quiet place.

You are just fourteen weeks old being woven together in your Mommy's womb and some would like us to believe you will not enter this world. Thursday's doctors and tests suggest problems with the level of amniotic fluid and maybe your kidneys. Prayers began from many.

And yesterday an ultrasound showed renal arteries leading to probable kidneys and a bladder. Today your Uncle Jon has found research showing amniotic fluid lower than the level surrounding you can be ok.

People are praying for you all over the United States, as well as in other countries. You are in the prayers of untold numbers of people.

This morning our almighty, omnipotent God led me to scripture reminding me that all battles are spiritual... including this battle for your life. A strong prayer ensued as did the unshakeable knowledge that our Lord is battling for you. Your Aunt Liz experienced the same victory in her prayer against the evil one as I did.

Today Meme and I have been at this beautiful place, sitting on benches overlooking lakes, walking on paths, sitting in a chapel...praying for you, for your Mommy and Daddy.

Last night Kathy, Rebecca, Liz, Dave, Flora, Meme, me and your great grandparents BobBob and Google (who suggested we all hold hands and pray) all did hold hands and we prayed for you Little One, for your Mommy and Daddy, for your brother.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

Long ago there was a song that became in my heart the song that would always make me think of your Daddy. Some of the words are "somewhere out there beneath the pale moonlight, someone's saying a prayer.....even though I know how very far apart we are...it helps to know we're sleeping underneath the same big sky.....Love (God) can see us through..... "

And so Little One it helps to know that you and I are sleeping underneath the same big sky.....and that someone's saying a prayer.....you are in the hands of our merciful Lord and Savior and there is no better place to be.

With so very much love and prayers, Your grandmother CC

March 12 Sunday

By that Sunday night God's urging regarding the spiritual battle we were in had become so much stronger, so an email went out to all our prayer warriors asking that they pray this verse.

"I call to the Lord, Who is worthy of praise and I am saved from my enemies. "

The night ended with my booking my first of many flights to DC.

I would be leaving in 9 days. In God's loving sovereignty, Taylor's parents had planned long before to be there the week of March 13.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

March 13

Monday

I would periodically forward encouraging verses and emails on to my son:

Hi Honey

A friend sent me an e-card with some verses I want to give you

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:7

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Jeremiah 29:11

And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" Matthew 28:20

So this is my prayer for you, Taylor; Luke and Little One:

May the God of peace guard your hearts and minds in Christ; may the God of hope fill each of you with joy and peace as you trust Him-may each of you overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit; may you each know His plans are good - not to harm you; may you know He is with you always.

May Little One be woven together perfectly in Taylor's womb and may both Mom and Baby be healthy and may Little One come into this world perfectly healthy, safe and sound in about six months. May you, Taylor and doctors

God's Miracle of Sebastian

have God's wisdom and seek Him and find Him. May He go before each of you and pave the way in every aspect of today so the good plans He promises will come about. By His omnipotent power, may you each be kept safe from Satan and danger and physical and emotional harm.

In Jesus name Amen

With much love, Mom

And our almighty Lord did not waiver in giving us strength. In my quiet time that morning He gave me this verse for that day:

Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God....Luke 12:6 Do not be afraid, little flock.....v 22

We had asked for counsel from others and all our medical resources agreed Hopkins is the place to be.

Around noon I emailed Taylor.

Hi Dearest Sweet Taylor

I know I cannot talk with you now, but I hope you know I am with you in spirit. I have no magic words for you - no magic wand to make it all better.

All I can say is what I know....I love you, God loves you, God loves Little One inside of you.....and multitudes of prayers are being lifted up for you and your family to our omnipotent and merciful Lord, who is the God of hope.

When I am the most distraught His music and His word are where I turn...the Psalms particularly.....I have

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

spent hours listening to the CD I gave ya'll called "Sing Ye Heavens"

I do not know that you will even read this, but maybe my life verse will help you now...the verse that has seen me through so many difficulties.....

For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, they are plans of good and not of evil to give you a future and a hope. Jeremiah 29:11

That is His promise for each of us, even the most helpless of His people. Hold on to that promise, Taylor...I am praying Satan will leave you alone and that our God of hope will fill you and bring your Little One into this world in perfect health.....

May you have His amazing peace and His unending hope

*With much Love
Susan*

Throughout these most difficult days I received endless encouraging emails and calls from believers like the ones below.

I had just finished praying for God's peace and strength and hope to fill Rob and Taylor's hearts when your email came on my screen. Thank you so much for keeping me updated. I am praying also for you and all of your precious family. Will you be going up there any time soon? How can I help you? Know that I am here and on call for you. May our gracious and merciful Father surround you with His loving arms as you find perfect rest in all of His promises given to his beloved Susan today

God's Miracle of Sebastian

And this one.....

You know that I will focus my prayers on your requests. We never lose out faith or give up hope. We know that God is in complete control and He loves us so much that He will provide the strength and wisdom for whatever we face.

Although we were encouraged spiritually, our medical leads seemed to offer much information but no encouragement.

We learned that many women experience low amniotic fluid, but we continued to hear that the risk increases significantly the earlier in the pregnancy it occurs. Because it occurred in Taylor's first trimester and we really did not know exactly when...it may have been an issue from the beginning because the first measure at the first appointment was so very lethally low.

We tried to find medical people who had done experimental things in the first trimester. Endless phone calls and emails, following every lead, we heard hopeless responses over and over. Even possible leads ended up being dead ends

March 14 Tuesday

Throughout these days our merciful Lord sustained us in so many ways. His promises and His word became more precious to me than I had ever imagined. In a world of seemingly endless hopelessness, He continually gave us hope.

On that March 14, Mick's and my wedding anniversary, He led me to this verse.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God forever and ever. Rev 7:12

I often think of Peter walking on the water and keeping his gaze upon our Lord. He only began to sink when he looked at the waves. But it is so difficult not to look at the waves when they continue to come. Your logic about their danger is difficult to ignore.

By noon I had received this email from Rob:

Taylor is having a lot of discomfort please pray that it is nothing major. This started about 30 minutes ago. It is uncomfortable for her to sit up.

So began what were to become repeated threats against the life of our precious Little One. As always with such news, I would pray to our merciful Lord and send Rob's email to our prayer warriors.

And we waited.

March 15 Wednesday

The next day Rob and Taylor would meet with the high risk pregnancy doctors and a radiologist at Hopkins. We requested prayer and we found strength in His words in the Psalms.

May the Lord answer you when you are in distress: may the name of God protect you. May He send you help from the sanctuary and grant you support from Zion....

God's Miracle of Sebastian

May He give you the desire of your heart....

We will shout for joy when You are victorious and will lift up our banners in the name of our God. May the Lord grant all your requests.....

Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.....through the unfailing love of the Most High, He will not be shaken.

Your hand will lay hold on all your enemies; Your right hand will seize Your foes.

At the time of Your appearing You will make them like a fiery furnace. In His wrath the Lord will swallow them up." (from Psalms 20 and 21)

I told Rob and Taylor that very day March 15, our gracious Savior gave me the verse I would claim over and over through the unbelievably heart rending days that would follow.

God provided it not a day too soon or too late for the news of the next day would bring dreaded words we would hear over and over.

They cried to You and were saved; in You they trusted and were not disappointed

**March 16
Thursday**

A week had passed since his first phone call and around noon that Thursday we heard from Rob and I sent out the

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

following email:

We have heard from Rob and he and Taylor are now at lunch.

Rob wrote, "The doctors are saying there is basically a zero percent chance.

She will have amnioinfusion and a placenta test this afternoon."

Hopefully the docs will consider some of the research Jon has sent.

Our prayers for Little One remain the same.....may we all trust in the hand of our Almighty God

They cried to You and were saved; in You they trusted and were not disappointed." Psalm 22:5

Soon my computer was flooded with responses from the body of believers:

* * *

I just read your email. I was watching the clock today, thinking of their schedule. I opened my Bible today looking for a word, and it turned to the part in Daniel when Shadrach et al were in the flames and unhurt. God is sovereign and He is mighty. No prayer goes unheard or unmerited, I am convinced. God is not finished yet. We hold fast and steady as the headwinds increase, and wait for Him to show us the answers. We know He cares about His children.

Love to you as always,

* * *

God's Miracle of Sebastian

I know how difficult it is for you to be here and really just waiting for phone call. Your strong faith will never fail you. You are in my thoughts and prayers as are the rest of your family.

* * *

We are all praying, this must be close to unbearable

* * *

All we can do now is to keep praying. I am so sorry that the news was not what we wanted it to be. Our family has, as you know, had so many disappointments these last few years, and I know how much it hurts. But in the midst of this, we have always found the Lord to be faithful, our faith to increase, and our needs to be met. I pray whatever happens Rob and Taylor will know God's presence and peace in their lives.

* * *

No, things don't look so good, but things are not yet hopeless. All doors have not yet closed, and we cannot say that they will close. We must wait and pray and stand firmly in the love of God. How achingly hard to think of Rob and Taylor watching their little baby moving about unaware of her difficulties, moving with life within her, holy life created by God through the Holy Spirit. It is heart crushing, yet there is a searing, yearning beauty to it, the beauty of love. I'm so glad you are going on Tuesday, for their sakes and for yours. This we know - Little One's soul is alive and well and will be for eternity. You do have six grandchildren, Susan. Everything she is meant to be was present at conception, and

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

her soul arrived from the sovereign hand of God. She lives. Good night, my sweet and dear friend. You and all the children are in my prayers.

N.

* * *

“It is the least I can do; I wish I could do more. Prayers from NZ. My heart goes out to you, my friend. Know that I am thinking of all you. Miracles do happen.”

* * *

That night I went to bed pondering those words Rob sent, “*basically a zero percent chance*”.

“*Basically a zero percent chance*” would become almost a mantra. Maybe not the same exact words but repeatedly we were told in one way or another that there was no hope.

But I also went to bed pondering those words of the emails, one in particular I shall cherish forever,

“Little One’s soul is alive and well and will be for eternity. You do have six grandchildren, Susan. Everything she is meant to be was present at conception, and her soul arrived from the sovereign hand of God. She lives.”

And I pondered one other. “*Miracles do happen*”

But most of all, I went to bed clinging to the verse, that promise I knew our Savior had given me.

They cried to You and were saved; in You they trusted and were not disappointed

God's Miracle of Sebastian

* * *

Many Thursdays I spend fasting and praying about whatever the Lord puts on my heart. And for years he has given me little stories to write. On that Thursday He gave me a story you will find on this date in the appendix, as are many others that were written during these months.

* * *

March 17

Friday

That Friday morning I emailed Rob about some research Jon and I had found and the hope that repeated amnioinfusion might offer. It just seemed logical to me that fluid could be injected into the womb to provide what was needed for Little One's lungs and life. I had not begun to comprehend just how fearfully and wonderfully we are made and that man cannot do things only God can do.

I told Rob that we all were praying that God continue to give him and Taylor wisdom and strength and peace. I told him we were continuing to pray that God do the impossible in bringing healthy Little One into this world with healthy Mom and Dad.

I told him that the updated prayer requests were out to many people, along with these verses...

You, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek You (Ps 9:18) Arise, Lord! Lift up Your hand, O God. Do not forget the helpless (Ps 10:12) Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help (Ps 22:11) Let the morning bring me word of Your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in You. Show me the way I should go....Psalms 143:8

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

Rob's response to my email hit like a ton of bricks and indeed made the risk crystal clear.

He wrote, Maybe I haven't been clear, infusion was a one shot deal simply to see the baby better on the ultrasound. It is not an overall strategy. One time that's it. You and I discussed this I am quite sure as well as the risks of continued amnioinfusion. Hopefully this is crystal clear now. There is no treatment plan in any way shape or form being implemented or suggested by any of the doctors we have met with.

To me his words meant there is nothing more to be done.
"There is no treatment plan."

And once more I returned to our verse, our promise.

They cried to You and were saved; in You they trusted and were not disappointed."

March 18 Saturday

I updated prayer warriors that the first chromosome test had come back showing every thing to be perfectly normal in Little One. We requested prayers that everything would also function perfectly.

From that date on everything I sent out, every prayer I prayed ended with that verse that I clung to as a promise from our Lord.

Many have said they never doubted Little One would live.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

I can only say I never doubted my merciful and loving Lord.

We cried to Him over and over and over.

And we trusted Him

March 20

Monday

There was so little to be done. In a crisis, I am a doer and a fixer. And there was no doing or fixing. My heart was so burdened for my children, for my grandchild.

I suppose part of the reason I love to write is that it is a way for me to act when there is no action I can take. I longed to hold our little grandbaby. I longed to tell him in person the things I had told his five cousins. So that day I wrote our precious Little One a second letter.

“Dearest Little One,

I have begun writing letters to each of our grandchildren for their birthdays. Zoe will be five in April. Alex and Nathan just turned three. Luke is sixteen months old and Libby is seven months old.

And you, Little One, are four months old in your Mommy's womb.

When your Daddy called me on March 9 to tell me your Mommy was pregnant with you, he simultaneously told me of the serious problems with the pregnancy. The medical

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

odds of you coming into this world because of low amniotic fluid are so very slim. The medical odds of you coming into this world healthy are even lower. We have pursued many avenues. God led us to Johns Hopkins where specialists have met with your Mommy and Daddy. Your Daddy sent a text message to me saying that things look bleak...

At 10:46 on March 16, 2006 He said, "Things look bleak. We're still in the appointment so I'll message you later. Pray fluid has decreased significantly. At one point he wrote, no fluid left "

At 11:19 He wrote, "They are saying basically a zero percent chance. She's going for some blood work and then an amnioinfusion and a placenta test. Nothing remotely positive to report in any way shape or form"

About 11:20 we text messaged each other about studies in Japan and Greece. At 1:38 he wrote that the "amnioinfusion is complete." Your Mommy and Daddy were able to see you moving around.

You have touched an untold number of hearts, Little One. So many people are praying for your safe entry into this world. We love you yet we have not yet seen you. We prayed for your Mommy to become pregnant, for your brother Luke to have a sibling.

Your Mommy's parents have been in D.C. with you all for almost a week. It will be so hard for them to leave tomorrow. I come tomorrow and your Mommy and Daddy will have been to their appointment. They will know more. The chromosome tests came back normal, but more tests will show if your tiny kidneys are functioning. The fluid needed for your lung development comes as a result of your kidneys

God's Miracle of Sebastian

functioning properly.

It is so hard to tell you all that is in my heart about you, Little One. You are so tiny – only about four inches long.

I do not know God's plans for you, Little Precious One. If He does say the word and allow you to come into this world healthy and whole, we will all be so thankful and so humbled by that undeserved grace and mercy. We must proclaim this mighty deed of His throughout your lifetime. We must never forget that the medical odds are insignificant to our God!

But, Little One, should His plans be to take you to Himself now or soon, then I will look forward to the day when I will see you and know you. But my heart will be broken. So will your Mommy's and Daddy's. So will so many others.

Little One, you must know that regardless of what our Loving Father does, we will trust Him...we will not be disappointed.....in the end we will not be disappointed.

So, my dear Little One, tomorrow we will likely know whether or not you will be a physical part of our lives on this earth. But this I know, my God holds you in the palm of His hand, as He holds us. And He never leaves us. As I read from Peter Marshall once, no matter where we are, you are with Him and I am with Him, and therefore, we can never be far apart.

Though I long to hold you and care for you, I long more for our loving Lord to do what is best and only he knows what that is...So may it be to us all as He has said...

May we know that there will be a time of no more tears...

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

*But for today.....for this moment I will hold to hope.....
and I will look for the time when He, Our great and awesome
and sovereign Lord....when He will do great and awesome
things that we did not expect (Is64:3)*

*You know, Little One, this God of ours can say, let there be
light and there will be light!
He can also say the word for you to live and be healthy!*

*So, my precious Little One, I will say goodbye for now.
Maybe in six months I will see you and we will share many
wonderful times together.*

*But maybe, it will be only when I go to you, for maybe He
will not have you come to us.*

*I love you much
CC*

Tuesday March 21

Each moment was like a never ending roller coaster ride.
Up, up, up we would go with a tiny bit of good news that
would give way to hope, only to be dashed to the ground
once more in despair.

I arrived in DC on the afternoon of the 21st for the first of
many visits over the next year.

And devastating news followed that good news of a few days
before. And I sent it out to the faithful prayer warriors.

Little One's kidneys are not functioning and that is the reason

God's Miracle of Sebastian

there is once again no amniotic fluid. Johns Hopkins doctors are meeting tomorrow to determine if they can ethically give Taylor repeated amnioinfusions. These are 12" plus needle injections at least once a week. They will let Rob and Taylor know. If they cannot, Little One might be carried to full term or Taylor may have a miscarriage.

If they can, then there is a chance Little One might be born with lungs. If she is not born with lungs, she will die within minutes.

If she is born with lungs, doctors would then have to determine if she is a candidate for dialysis. If she is, then she would have dialysis for two years.

At age two, they would see if she would be a candidate for a transplant. If she survives the transplant, then they would begin physical therapy for other problems that would likely occur.

So that is where we are.....

Please pray for our omnipotent Lord's mercy.....

March 22
Wednesday

I sent out the following email:

The Hopkins perinatologists met today and described the repeated amnioinfusion proposal as 'maverick' but have not disallowed it. Tomorrow Rob and Taylor talk to the kidney specialist, who will explain to them in more depth exactly what they will be getting into should Little One be born with lungs and with non-functioning kidneys.....please continue to pray

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

March 23
Thursday

I sent out the following email:

Rob talked with the kidney specialist who said if Little One is born with lungs she will be a candidate for dialysis, barring any other serious defects. She would have a transplant at around age two. They talk to the perinatologist tomorrow. All of this will require a miracle.....

March 24
Friday

During my quiet time that morning, God gave me this verse:

...He had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So He began teaching them many things....Mark 6:34

I continued to receive wonderfully encouraging emails that I would share with Rob and Taylor.

At this point Taylor had returned to work. Luke and I met her for lunch. When we returned, I sent the following email to her there ...

Hi Taylor

My email is not working right so please let me know you get this...you can just email back that you did...thanks

An adorable little man is sleeping in the room next door...we

God's Miracle of Sebastian

held hands and walked down the sidewalk this morning just like two real people!

I came in "my room" to have my quiet time and I asked God to give me a verse for you...just for you...I opened the Bible to two pages and nothing really struck me as the one He might have.

Then I opened my email and there it was in an email straight from God...L. thinks it is for me which I am sure it is...but I believe it is also the one I asked God to give me for you... may you find your comfort and hope in He who loves you with an everlasting and perfect love ...

I love you dearly,

Susan

My friend's email that I sent to Taylor read:

Hey Susan! Just wanted you to know I'm praying for you. Liz and I spent last night visiting and praying. She told me more about what is going on with you all in D.C. I shared with her a verse God showed me in the Psalms. I wanted to share it with you too.

Psalm 31: 22-24 'In my alarm I said, "I am cut off from your sight!" Yet you heard my cry for mercy when I called to you for help. Love the Lord, all his saints! The Lord preserves the faithful, but the proud he pays back in full. Be strong and take heart all you who hope in the Lord.'

Continue to hope in the Lord, and He will renew your strength. You will soar on wings like eagles. You will run and not grow weary. You will walk and not be faint. Love

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

you and miss you

Then I replied to my friend...

God has used you once more in a mighty way! I was having my quiet time and asked God to give me a verse for Taylor... I opened to 2 pages and did not really believe any were the ones He had for her...then I opened my email and there were the ones you sent...I forwarded them to her...please pray those words for them.....thank you, Dear One.....Love you and miss you too

Taylor replied:

Got it. Thanks. It was fun seeing you at lunch!

Those were the ways we passed those days as we waited.

March 25 Saturday

Emails went out to prayer warriors telling them that Rob had talked to the perinatologist and that Taylor was scheduled for amnioinfusion Wednesday morning at 8am. I explained that they would return one week from Monday to see if the life giving fluid essential for lung development had remained. I asked them to praise our Lord for the strength He continued to give Rob and Taylor.

We had contacted medical people asking them to let us know what they would recommend in order to pursue an alternative course of hope and action in this situation. We would tell them our son and his wife would be willing to go wherever help might be found. And medical people would respond.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

First one,

I do not know of any use of amnioinfusion (other than diagnostic as was done) prior to late 2nd trimester at the point of borderline neonatal survival (in order to prolong the pregnancy, possibly help the fetal lungs).

The risk to the mother for repeated procedures, especially starting early, is unknown and I would guess low but not insignificant.

If infection were to occur the baby would need to be delivered regardless of gestational age.

Reports about attempts to use it for therapeutic purposes did not show any improvement in outcomes for the babies. I have never done it via amniocentesis and do not know any colleague who has. Replacing the fluid may help ameliorate some of the effects of the oligohydramnios but does not fix the cause.

Hope this helps. I pray that the Lord gives them wisdom and peace at this time.

and then another,

I am so sorry to hear that your son and daughter in law are facing such a difficult situation.

I consulted for you with one of our maternal fetal medicine people at our medical school and unfortunately she could not offer anything to help you. She states that amnioinfusion at this early date in pregnancy has been tried here in the US but was abandoned for lack of success. She does not know of

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

anyone doing it now.

I am sorry there is not more I can come up with for you.

These situations are heartbreaking.

I thought, yes, they are indeed heartbreaking.

March 28
Wednesday

Indispensable believing family and friends walked through these days with us. Our mighty Lord used them over and over to strengthen us during those times when we needed them so much.

Simultaneously, we would receive words of the doctors saying this Little One would not survive. I remember their very own doctor telling me the best and worst case scenarios which to this day I can not speak of.

As I look back over a year later, I am overwhelmed with sorrow as I remember those days, but so much more overwhelmed and so very humbled by our God's faithfulness over and over and over.

The following is an email I sent to one friend March 28:

My Dear Friend

Thank you so much for the Scriptures, the prayers, the compassion, the love you continue to give.....

Tomorrow at 8am DC time is the scheduled amnioinfusion.....

God's Miracle of Sebastian

please just pray for every aspect the Holy Spirit brings to your mind, both today and the days that follow... please pray for their wisdom and courage as they listen to horror stories and sometimes discouraging counsel from many sides....pray they will follow the lead of our Great Shepherd and not be afraid.

My much needed verse today when I opened to my 2 pages....

But as for me, I watch in hope for the Lord, I wait for my Savior; my Savior will hear me. Though I have fallen, I will rise. Do not gloat over me, my enemy! Though I sit in darkness, the Lord will be my light. Micah 7:7-8

And she wrote back:

Tomorrow at 9:00 central time is on the calendar of my heart, and many others are praying, too. We pray for a miracle, which is to say we pray that God will 'speak it so' by His almighty power and love, all the while we thankfully rest within His providence and His sovereign will and plan. Therein is safe harbor in the storm.

I thought of our verse we prayed so much, from Jeremiah 33:3: "Call unto me and I will answer you and show you great and unsearchable things that you know do not know." For the first time I saw that He does not reveal what His answer is, only that He will answer with great things, unknown to us even to ask for. And Jeremiah 32:10: "I am the Lord, the God of all mankind. Is there anything too hard for me?"

Was reading in Streams in the Desert, having looked onto various pages, and stopped at February 29: "Launch out into the deep," from Luke 5:4. This is what followed: "How

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

deep He does not say. The depth into which we launch will depend upon how perfectly we have given up the shore, and the greatness of our need, and the apprehension of our possibilities. The fish were to be found in the deep, not the shallow water. So with us. Our needs are to be met in the deep things of God.

Into the deep of the Father's will, until we apprehend it in its infinite minuteness and goodness, and its far-sweeping provision and care for us.

Into the deep of the Holy Spirit, until He becomes a bright, dazzling, sweet, fathomless summer sea, in which we bathe and bask and breathe, and lose ourselves and our sorrows in the calmness and peace of His everlasting peace.

Into all these things, Jesus bids us launch. He made us and He made the deep, and to its fathomless depths He has fitted our longings and capabilities."

*You and Taylor and Rob and Little One are **launched into the deep**, where the Scripture specifically tells us what to look for. That 'what' is God Himself, the only balm there is. In His strength is our solace and home place and source of all wisdom, beyond our own as far as we can imagine and then some. The fishermen caught no fish in the shallows. But their nets were filled to almost breaking when they fished the deeps with the Saviour.*

"Jesus loves us, this we know, for the Bible tells us so." There is only one Truth, and it is ours. We would sing to Little One this same song, "Jesus loves you, this we know. For the Bible tells us so." We can trust her to Him because He is Love. We can pray for the miracle we are seeking because we know He is the God of all possibilities. "Is

God's Miracle of Sebastian

there anything too hard for Me?" Rest in the Lord even as we do battle in prayer with all that would persuade us away from His loving power, knowing we are yet always in His will, where we do want to be.

We pray for the doctor specialists who are making decisions and advising you. Pray God will give them perfect wisdom, that there will be no mistakes in judgment, that boldness will prevail where needed, and that God will shape the outcome, only God; that Taylor will be protected in her health as she undergoes these procedures and in her heart as she yearns for this to be successful, and for courage and strength and peace for all. May all discouragement be put aside as well meant but useless. May encouragement be valid and true and dependable by God's grace and merciful heart. May we be sure to trust in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him.

You stay on my mind and in my heart and prayers, and in a host of others'.

*Much, much love to all,**

If you are ever in pain or you ever wonder what to say to those in pain, my friend offers the most wonderful way to be.....just be like Christ.

(*This and countless other emails were sent to me from the beautiful heart of my dear praying partner friend who remains in the hospital following lung cancer surgery at the time of this writing ...who herself is launched into the deep.)

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

March 29

Thursday

A morning email from the same dear friend read:

By the time on the clock, Taylor should be about to have the infusion procedure, if not already underway - hospital procedures not always being right on the money clock-wise. She was on my mind first this morning, and is now, and I pray she will be unharmed, the procedure will be successful, and Little One will thrive. God knows, God provides, who can know the mind of God? We do know His love. We can see His provision in the past and thereby trust it now and forever.

Taylor and Rob have opted for life, have opted for everything that is humanly available to be done, and they have opted for God. These decisions are now part of them forever, and will forever bless them and you and Luke. As we pray and look for what we would call a miracle, we can clearly see that God has not shut the door on that possibility, on that hope. "We wait in hope for the Lord; He is our help and our shield. In Him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in His holy name. May your unfailing love rest upon us, O Lord, even as we put our hope in you." Psalm 33:20-22.

"For I know the plans I have for you, "declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11.

"But I am like an olive tree, flourishing in the house of God; I trust in God's unfailing love forever and ever. I will praise you forever for what you have done; in your name I will hope, for your name is good. I will praise you in the presence of

God's Miracle of Sebastian

your saints.” Psalm 52: 8,9.

Holding you and your precious ones close, C.C.

And my heart aching response read...

Please pray they continue to opt for life even with so much pressure not to....

Thank you so much for your words....I hold them in my heart and mind...

Love you much

It was becoming painfully clear there was a more clear and present danger on the threshold threatening the life of Little One than the threat of low amniotic fluid.

The next day we would find ourselves on one the most horrendous battle fields we could ever imagine.

March 31

Friday

All had been quiet and as good as could be expected. We continued waiting and carrying on with life.

On Thursday Rob left Taylor, Luke and I in DC for an important meeting in Atlanta.

Friday the three of us went to Hopkins for the scheduled amnioinfusion. It seemed not to be helping. Within five minutes of much solution entering the womb though a needle, it could be seen flowing completely out of the womb. Rob had described it to me before. You would see Little One happily floating and swimming when the fluid was in, and

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

within minutes it was as if shrink wrap surrounded him.

There was joy when we learned that the kidneys that could not be found had now been found. The kidneys that were not working were now working. Some hope, some good news. God was clearly working.

But now it seemed there may be a leak in the amniotic sac.

We returned to DC and that night my pregnant daughter-in-law, 17 month old Luke and I went to dinner. When Taylor stood up after dinner, she was concerned that her water may have broken, a life threatening situation for her because of possible infection and for Little One because of being only four months in utero..

We called her doctor. The voice on the other end of the line spoke words to me that I could not absorb.

We needed to drive to the hospital.

They would need to take Little One. If water had indeed broken, the risks were too high.

God had blessed us by having Rob's and Taylor's neighbors in town so they could stay with Luke.

It was dark and silent and late and the highway was all but empty as we made the long surreal drive to Hopkins. I was unaware of my driving that hour and a half drive to the hospital. It was as if the car silently floated along the dark highway to the place we did not want to go. Taylor spent much of the time on her phone listening to a priest from her church pray.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

In the hospital room that night one test after another, it was one overwhelmingly heartbreaking scenario after another. And Rob was not there.

I wondered, did her water really break? Could this have been fluid from the amnioinfusion earlier that day?

We would put Rob on the speaker phone so he could hear the doctors.

The anguish in his heart was again overridden by his determination to save his wife and his child.

More tests – the urgent and repeated question whether or not to take Little One – Rob continually asked the doctors to tell him the degree of the danger Taylor was in. Was there infection? Was there any indication of infection?

From the beginning this husband and father had made it unquestionably clear that if Taylor developed even a degree of fever, or if there were any sign of infection, both the life of the mother and the life of the child would be in too great a peril. They would have no choice.

But our omnipotent God did not let her temperature budge. He let no sign of infection occur. His hand was clearly and strongly evident. All else was failing, but He was not.

The doctors said there was no evidence to make them think she was in danger yet but that the possibility of infection loomed at any moment.

They said they now believed there must also be a tear in the amniotic sac. That accounted for the fluid leaving the womb so quickly.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

One more test would be done as soon as Rob arrived to try to determine if in fact her water had broken. So far all tests were inconclusive and the doctors were not so anxious to move ahead with their original plan just yet. They would wait until Rob could land in DC, rent a car, pick up Luke and drive to Hopkins to make the final decision.

As I sat in the corner of her dimly lit hospital room late that night, I listened as the young dark haired resident leaned over her bed and gave her all the horrific details of how they would end this precious little life, this little person who we had just seen a few hours earlier moving about so freely, so happily.

I prayed for him, for Taylor, for my son who could not get to the hospital for this heart rending time. He had even tried to charter a plane, but to no avail.

And the anguish and pain for all of us was unbearable, for what they were experiencing was unbearable.

How deeply I hurt for them. How deeply they hurt for their precious Little One.

Finally in the wee hours of the night after what seemed like forever, the young dark haired resident left Taylor's bedside and the room. No more questions, no more stories.

I went to Taylor's bedside.

We hugged each other and wept and waited.

APRIL

April 1 Saturday

As I sit here tonight and remember March 31 and April 1 of last year, I think of how we never know from moment to moment how life will unfold. My dear friend, whose emails I have pointed out, and her husband had a dinner party to celebrate their anniversary.

That was Friday, April 20 and on April 23 she went to a doctor. On April 26 she had tests and on May 3 she had lung cancer surgery.

Two weeks after the time she was preparing for her dinner guests, she was recovering from serious lung cancer surgery. She remains in the hospital even now, over a week after surgery. I have watched her in her continual loving ways as she talks with her four sons and her husband at her bedside.

Each moment we have is a gift from the Lord.

Dangerous times are always around us.

Around 1pm on Saturday Rob and Luke arrived at the hospital. I took Luke and these parents of Little One went for the test.

As Luke and I wandered about, the hours passed and no word. Praying and waiting and walking the halls and grounds of the hospital became a way of being that I would live again for many days in the future. Luke and I learned where the courtyards and the digger trucks and the aquarium and the ice cream were all located.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

Even at 6pm that night there was still no decision. Stay and take Little One or wait and go home. I kept remembering even if we waited, doctors had said with no amniotic fluid, there would be no lungs. Concern remained for Taylor's health and possible infection if in fact her water had broken.

The thoughts tormented me, but our Lord sustained me.

Around 6pm or a little after, Luke and I rested on a sofa by the aquarium in one of the waiting rooms.

My heart jumped as my cell phone rang. I had imagined many scenarios of Rob's words and my response.

But none I imagined could be as beautiful as the words our son gently said.

“We are going home.”

Tears filled my eyes. We would be going home. They were not going to take our precious Little One.

We met in the lobby, got the cars and drove the long way back to DC – Rob, Taylor, Luke and Little One still in his mommy's womb in one car and, me following behind in the other.

God always seems to provide comic relief when it is most needed. Although I had been trying so hard to follow them, I got lost in the worst part of Baltimore and for the longest time they could not find me. We talked on cell phones and Rob told me to identify the intersecting streets where I was and to just park my car and wait.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

So picture, at this very late hour, a very weary grandmother parked outside a bar in downtown Baltimore and you will be picturing me. Inside the bar were strangely dressed young men yelling and raising their hands at something in the corner I could not see.

Rob and Taylor finally found me. As I pulled in behind them, I could now see these young men were yelling and raising their hands to the TV in the corner, as they cheered on the Orioles in game they were watching. I mused over our Lord's timely humor.

As I followed their car the long drive back to their home I thought of what a long thirty- six hours it had been. The drive home gave me lots of time to be with my Lord, who we had cried to and who had saved us once more.

I knew their next appointment was Monday and that the outlook was not good.

When we arrived at their house, I went to my room and around ten thirty that night, I sent out this email:

We just got home a few minutes ago....it is so difficult to explain the situation and its difficulty....please continue to pray for a miracle - and that Rob and Taylor wait on the Lord....I really don't know the details of the results of the last test...they just can't talk about it...

I did see Little One last night and again this morning...I saw her tiny hands and body.....Thanks for your prayers....

They cried to you and were saved, in you they trusted and were not disappointed Ps 22:5

God's Miracle of Sebastian

Then I emailed Jon:

Liz told me she got your graduation invitation and how great it looks...when we got back from Hopkins tonight I called Mick and he said ours has arrived too and he is waiting for me to come home so we can open it together so I am resisting the temptation to look at Rob's and Taylor's....although Rob did read it aloud to me!!! PhD!!!! PhD!!!! PhD!!! Can you believe you have almost done it!!! We are soooooo thrilled!! CONGRATS!!! love you much Mom

We do seem to walk hand in hand with sorrows and joys all our days on this earth.

April 2 Sunday

Luke and I went to church. The priest in the children's sermon began, "Are you ever sad? Are there times when things are not working out as you want?"

This is the time of the desert – the time of Lent.

But Easter is coming!" I listened to the prayer to God asking that we would have the strength to do God's will.

Sunday afternoon Rob and I planted Taylor's dream garden while she slept. It was a beautiful day. It is a day I will cherish forever. It was a symbolic day. She was thrilled when she stepped out the front door...so were we!

Looking back, if I were to be totally honest about my concerns on April 2, I would say that I was concerned that because of the possible risk and because there seemed to be

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

no other place to seek help, the doctors might try once again to convince Rob and Taylor to end the pregnancy during their appointment the next day.

It was such a time of waiting. There seemed to be no place to go, no way to turn, no way out. Job once wrote, "He has blocked my way so I cannot pass; He has shrouded my paths in darkness."

It seemed that Saturday had just been a postponing of what doctors believed was inevitable.

Sunday night I earnestly sought my Lord and Savior and His two pages for me. And I wrote to Rob who lay in the nearby bedroom with his wife and their unborn child.

Dear Rob

As you know periodically God gives me verses for others. I never really understand the full implications of the verse for the person, but do believe it is one He will use to help the person. Yesterday He gave me the verse that follows for you. "Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him." Psalms 37:7 I pray He will use this verse to help you. I love you and am praying. Mom

Within minutes I sent another to him.

As I began to send that last email I felt God telling me to get my Bible to look up the actual verse, but I did not get it. Instead I searched a Bible website putting in the words as I thought I remembered them, because I did not think I had actually marked the page in my Bible. When I came to bed to have a little quiet time I saw I had actually folded the page of the verse in my Bible. Since the exact verse is important, albeit similar, here it is; "I will wait for the

God's Miracle of Sebastian

Lord, Who is hiding His face from the house of Jacob. I will put my trust in Him." Isaiah 8:17

May our gracious Lord and Saviour use this verse to help you...

I ended my night reading emails from faithful prayer warriors who seemed never to rest, who also seemed to find hope when all seems hopeless. Our Lord's word and encouraging emails restored my hope once again.

And I went to sleep.

April 3 Monday

Just as heavy dew sets in on the grass, heaviness had set in on my heart by the time I awoke on that Monday morning. Knowing they would soon be on the way to the hospital to decide on next steps, knowing I would be leaving DC the next day.

Before they left, Keyla their nanny arrived. She absolutely adores Luke and we all adore her. She was returning after three weeks of maternity leave. She had given birth to tiny baby Angela and had brought her to work. We never spoke of it but I imagine Rob's and Taylor's emotions and thoughts were similar to mine as we all admired this perfectly healthy little girl.

Shortly after Rob and Taylor headed for the hospital, I made some calls to share and to pray with a couple of loved ones.

Then God led me to do something.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

It is a curious truth that hearts can be simultaneously heavy and hopeful.

I do not know why or how, but God led me to do a search typing in the words “*tear in amniotic sac*”.

Although the full text is in the appendix, what appeared on my computer screen is abbreviated below.

Acting as quickly as possible, at 10:18 that morning the subject line in my email to Rob at the hospital read: *let me know you get this*.

The first paragraph of the attachment I opened read as follows:

Sent: Monday, April 03, 2006 10:18 AM

Source: New York University Medical Center And School Of Medicine

Posted: January 26, 2001

Pioneering Surgery Seals Ruptured Birth Sac NEW YORK, January 23, 2001 - Three months after an unusual operation to seal a rupture in the fluid-filled sac protecting a pregnant woman's growing fetus, a healthy baby boy was delivered at NYU Medical Center. Bruce Young, M.D., Director of the Division of Maternal and Fetal Medicine and the Fetal Therapy Program, performed the reparative surgery, which has only been attempted by one other physician in the world.

Had Rob not responded quickly to my email, I would have called him. My concern was overwhelming for the pressure I feared they were receiving by doctors.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

But he did respond to my email: "*Got it.*"

I know it is unlikely you can gauge excitement or hope or any other emotion in an email, but if you could, I knew there was hope in our son's two word response.

Gratitude to our Lord and joy and hope filled my being once more.

By God's leading and by Rob's response I knew we were off and running again.

At their appointment that Monday, Hopkins made it clear they have done all they could do.

But they did agree to call Bruce Young at NYU to schedule an appointment for Rob and Taylor.

Rob, Taylor, Luke and Little One would journey to NYU for tests on Monday, followed by a consultation with Dr. Young Tuesday afternoon at 3:30 NYC time. He told them he did not even know if Taylor would be a good candidate for this experimental surgery. Insurance would cover none of this.

A tiny bit of hope remained.

Prayer warriors were updated. And we asked they pray as our Almighty God would lead them. And I added, "*We desire a miracle and life. Thank you so very much.*"

Early that afternoon I received this email which I have quoted in part from my dear friend in the hospital:

* * *

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

"Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you. He rises to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him." Isaiah 30: 18

Selected from Psalm 46:

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble; therefore we will not fear.

The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Be still and know that I am God.

Per the internet revelation about the pioneering surgery to repair the leak in the amniotic sac: God is at work. Another flag of hope has been raised.

I am praying for what we call a miracle, but is actually an awesome manifestation of an awesome God who is all powerful and whose name is Love. I pray for His definitive answer today. Only His. I pray for Rob's and Taylor's ears and hearts and minds to be tuned to one station only: GOD.

Much love always every day,

** * **

And late into the night I sent emails.

Please continue your prayers...it has been a roller coaster, but God has been driving! The last ray of hope is a specialist they meet with on Tuesday at NYU...hopefully he will find Taylor a good candidate for repairing the tear in the amniotic sack...thank you so much for your concern. Love Susan

God's Miracle of Sebastian

Thank you so much for your prayers..much has happened.. but where we are now is that Johns Hopkins will do no more...But today God led me to a doctor at NYU who has repaired tears in the amniotic sac..so Monday they go for tests and Tues for a consultation...our last bit of hope...but days ago we had what seemed to be nonfunctioning kidneys that are now functioning....so please pray for His miracle....

They cried to You and were saved, in You they trusted and were not disappointed. Psalm 22:5

I continued to hold fast to the truth that I knew the verse He had given me was His promise to us. Although I thought I understood that verse, it would not be until Easter weekend, over a week away, that I would really understand the meaning of “*in You they trusted*”.

April 4 Tuesday

I returned from DC that Tuesday and would head to Houston the next day for Jon's defense for his PhD thesis.

April 5 Wednesday

Rob emailed me that morning telling me the appointment with NYU would now be Monday instead of Tuesday.

God gave me my verse for the day and I sent it out.

I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

can say to this mountain, "Go throw yourself into the sea" and it will be done. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer. Matthew 21:21

Each prayer and email I received from other believers was pondered and cherished.

When you respond to someone who is in a valley, you never know how mightily God uses your response. And the prayers like the one sent to me that morning continued to sustain us.

Oh dear Susan,

How can I thank you enough for taking the time to e-mail me, precious sister. I am praying for His miracle for Little One and for His strength and peace and guidance to be felt by you all. I will lift up Dr. Young as Taylor meets with him and hopefully she will be a candidate for this incredible surgery. I am so grateful that you were able to be with them. I know how much of a blessing that was to you all. I was reading Amy Carmichael and thought of you....

*"I want to give you a word that helped me all yesterday and will help me today. It is the 'through' of Psalm 84.6 and of Isaiah 43.2, taken with Song of Songs 8.5. **

We are never STAYING in the valley or the rough waters; we are always only passing through them, just as the bride in the Song of Songs is seen coming up from the wilderness leaning upon her Beloved.

So whatever the valley is, or however rough the waters are, we won't fear. Leaning upon our Beloved we shall come up from the wilderness and, as Psalm 84.6 says, even use the

God's Miracle of Sebastian

valley as a well, MAKE it a well. We shall find the living waters there and drink of them."

**Psalm 84.6: Passing through the valley of Weeping they make it a place of springs*

Isaiah 43.2;: When thou passeth through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee.

Song of Songs 8.5: Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?

Keep leaning, dear one, keep leaning !!!!! By His grace!!!!!!

All my love,

As I flew to Texas that Wednesday afternoon to be with son Jon and his wife and their two little people for the defense of his thesis, I could not comprehend how far our middle child had come. His children have me tell over and over the stories of their Daddy as a little boy sneaking books under his covers in bed and reading with a flashlight. Now this little boy was going to be a PhD!

On the plane, I remembered loved ones who had told me that if I was tired of praying or if for whatever reason I could not pray that I should remember they would be praying for God's miracle.

So for those days in Texas I basked in the blessings our Lord had bestowed upon Jon, how He had brought Jon's gifts to this place and this time, how his loving wife had been there for him.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

And we enjoyed our time together and we cherished this moment Jon and Allie had worked so hard to achieve.

What a memorable time and special celebration we had.

It was not the first time I had experienced our loving Lord in His mercy to allow such joy in such time of trial.

My day ended pondering words in email sent from a dear friend that day.....

"Thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons" (2 Kings 4:4).

They were to be alone with God, for they were not dealing with the laws of nature, nor human government, nor the church, nor the priesthood, nor even with the great prophet of God, but they must needs be isolated from all creatures, from all leaning circumstances, from all props of human reason, and swung off, as it were, into the vast blue inter-stellar space, hanging on God alone, in touch with the fountain of miracles.

There are times and places where God will form a mysterious wall around us, and cut away all props, and all the ordinary ways of doing things, and shut us up to something Divine, which is utterly new and unexpected, something that old circumstances do not fit into, where we do not know just what will happen, where God is cutting the cloth of our lives on a new pattern, where He makes us look to Himself.

Most religious people live in a sort of treadmill life, where they can calculate almost everything that will happen, but the souls that God leads out into immediate and special dealings, He shuts in where all they know is that God has hold of them, and

God's Miracle of Sebastian

is dealing with them, and their expectation is from Him alone.

In the sorest trials God often makes the sweetest discoveries of Himself. --Gems

“God sometimes shuts the door and shuts us in, That He may speak, perchance through grief or pain, And softly, heart to heart, above the din, May tell some precious thought to us again.”

April 8 Saturday

Although the reality of Little One's situation never left my heart or mind, it returned to the fore front when I received my email reminder from the airline that Saturday morning to check in for my flight from Houston George Bush Intercontinental Airport, leaving the next day.

April 9 Sunday

Rob, Taylor and Luke arrived in NYC Saturday night, went to church Sunday morning and to the zoo that afternoon. Rob sent us pictures of Luke at the zoo and I sent it out to our prayer warriors.

It was always so uplifting to know the joy this little family found in the middle of all they were facing.

We learned that Little One is a boy and we asked for prayers to our merciful God for Luke's little brother.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

I emailed that the ultrasound appointment would be Monday and that the consultation with Dr. Young at NYU would be at 1pm. I asked that people please pray God will keep Satan from every aspect of this entire situation and that a miracle would be done by our Almighty Lord.

April 10 Monday

Dr Young met with Rob and Taylor and scheduled tests for Tuesday and the surgery on Wednesday. I would fly to NYC that afternoon.

The doctor says he has concerns for Little One, that he has never seen a case like this. He told Rob and Taylor miracles happen.

I emailed prayer warriors

We cannot thank you enough for your continuing prayers that Satan will be kept from all of this and that we will all see our Lord's miracle and glorify Him for it this Holy Week of life.

I pondered this renowned doctor's words:... *concerns for Little One..... has never seen a case like this..... miracles happen.*

Even as I remember those words now, my eyes fill with tears for I cannot express the emotions that come with such words from such an experienced medical person who had seen so very much.

Before I left for NYC I sent this email to our dear daughter.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

You left our home a little while ago with your little man and I just want you to know how very much I love you, how so very thankful I am that you are my daughter, how much it means to me to have you to go through life with, how very much I miss you, how very, very much I love you. There are no words to tell you what is in my heart. Sometimes we share a look as we shared many today that express what words cannot. Love you much

Liz and I are very close in so many ways, not the least of which is that we live two doors away from each other. God does give us the desires of our heart but seldom do we know what our desires really are.

Little would I ever know the joy I would have sitting in our home looking out our window and seeing my daughter and her dear husband Clay and their two little ones Nathan and Libby living their lives.

Children are truly a gift from the Lord.

Our grandchildren are such a joy to us. Our children are such a joy to us. As my husband and I watch our children interact with their own children, my husband often says, "They are us."

Liz stepped forward and ran my small tutoring business that entire year and continues even now, for we never know when I might be called away. It is May a year later as I type these words and dear Little One is in the hospital again on IVs because he caught a bug from his two year old brother Luke and his little system just needs to have pro-action to such events.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

Liz and I are used to leaning on each other through good and bad because we are dear friends. We share the ins and outs and ups and downs of life together.

The words of her response were brief but touched my heart because I could read between the lines.

I love you too,,,it was just nice to be with you sharing what I feel for even a little while,,,,I am so thankful for that. Know that I will be continually praying for your strength mentally, emotionally, and physically this week.

I went to bed reading Scripture included in an email received from a friend late that night.

I am praying with hope and expectation for the miracle.

“But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one.” II Thessalonians 3:3.

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.” Hebrews 10:23.

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” Hebrews 10: 1.

April 11 Tuesday

I received this email from my sister that Tuesday morning in our NYC hotel.

I looked at your hotel...it looks beautiful! Your son really knows how to find them, doesn't he? I've been watching the

God's Miracle of Sebastian

today show and it looks like a beautiful day there!

You and Luke should go to FAO Schwartz.....on 5th Avenue across from Central Park...very close to you!

I'd go to the park too....you know they have the carriage rides! You will have a good time with him and I know Taylor and Rob really appreciate your willingness to help. This has been such an emotional journey....I have no idea how you have all held up. You are a VERY special mom, grandma, mother-in-law, wife and sister. Don't EVER forget that.

Have a fun day with Luke...as you well know, the time slips by so quickly and tomorrow he'll be a teenager! Love you lots and PLEASE let me know any updates! Me

Each person in the body of believers fills different needs when things are tough. My sister offers a listening ear, a perfect word, and always a good idea of something fun to do!

It kept occurring to me that this was Holy Week, a time we celebrate when our Lord defeated death.

What better week to be in NYC with such hope and such promise!

Before Luke and I started out for the day, I read this email from my dear friend.

Yes, this is Holy Week, and we are praising a Holy and Almighty God who loves us and knows every detail of this day and the next and the next and loves us with an eternal, ever-present, ever-active Love. He is a God of miracles.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

We hold fast to our faith in this faithful God.

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.” Hebrews 10:23. ”

He who calls you is faithful.” I Thessalonians 5:24.

“For the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one.” II Thessalonians 3:3. God is faithful, by Whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.” I Corinthians 1:9.

All of Psalm 91, a Psalm of protection, security, hope, strength, and promises, including this: “For He will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.”

I will be waiting to hear. Prayers are all around you.

Rest, CC, delight in little Luke. Walk on God's Word and His presence.

We believe, and therefore we know, He is faithful. Much love to all,

From my parents who are always there under girding us with their love and prayers, I received this email that night:

You must know our prayers are with y'all as tomorrow comes. If we were there we'd give each of you a big hug and tell you we love you. The Lord works in mysterious ways but they are always the ways that are best for us because He loves us. Thanks for keeping us informed.

From the hotel that night at 930 PM I sent out this email

God's Miracle of Sebastian

They cried to You and were saved, in You they trusted and were not disappointed. Psalm 22:5

Taylor and Rob spent several hours with Dr Young and others at NYU today. Luke and I spent those same hours at FAO Schwartz and looking at pigeons and horses at Central Park. Early tomorrow morning they leave for NYU. The surgery is scheduled for 10:30 am. Dr. Young says he has had a 75% success rate in the 30 surgeries like this he has done. Please pray the tear will be repaired and the fluid will remain, that Taylor and Little One will be perfectly healthy in all ways, that the doctor will have wisdom and God's guidance as he proceeds.

We continue to pray for God's miracle on all fronts

I had taken my sister's advice and Luke and I had had a glorious day.

I went to sleep knowing God had led us here, confident He would use Dr Young to perform this miracle we so desired.

At the time I did not know just how mistaken I was.

April 12 Wednesday

On this hopeful morning in NYC, I sent an email to Rob and Taylor at the hospital where they waited for surgery. I told them Luke is sitting in a chair by the window watching the garbage men... and talking to them and his stuffed animals.... he loves OJ...ate lots of fruit and some bread...

I forwarded this encouraging email to them.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

Dearest CC,

I believe that God Himself revealed Dr. Young's name, and for His purposes. In His will we trust. Taylor and Rob have chosen at every turn to honor Him in choosing life, in fighting to save this new life given to them by His hand. We remember that Little One belongs to God, as do we. God says in I Samuel 2:30 "For those who honor me, I will honor."

I will be praying for this procedure, for Taylor's safety and for the repair to be successful, for her peace of mind and quietness of soul and sturdiness of faith, and complete reliance upon God the Father, and for the awareness that He is right bedside her in that hospital room this morning.

I will be praying for Rob, for his strength, for his comfort, for peace of mind, and strength of abiding faith in God the Father, and for his presence as a source of strength for Taylor. They are in God's hand and I believe He has guided every step of this journey. I pray they will strongly feel His presence with them, and that His own hands will be upon the doctor's hands guiding them through the whole procedure.

I pray for the team who will work with him. I pray for you that you will be comforted and given peace of mind and heart and spirit, a sure knowledge of His presence with you, and the strong wind of faith to fill the sails of every minute today.

The time here will be 9:30. God bless this man who can do these astounding things.

I ask great things of a great God.

"I am the Lord, the God of all mankind. Is there anything

God's Miracle of Sebastian

too hard for Me?"

"They cried to you and were saved. In you they trusted and were not disappointed.

Love you, CC,

Luke and I headed out. The day before, I had bought Luke a little adorable white lamb at FAO Schwartz. God led me to this symbolic gesture to return to buy another little lamb for Little One. So we did.

Luke and I shared an ice cream drink and a delightful time together. We walked through Central Park and talked to horses. We stopped and talked to a lady with a puppy dog. It was a beautiful day for a miracle! The hours passed.

In the midst of the cheerful sounds of birds singing and children laughing, I heard an unusual sound and realized it was my cell phone ringing. I looked at caller ID and quickly answered.

It was Rob.

"The doctor thinks he has repaired the tear, but he is not sure! At 4 or 430 they will do another ultrasound."

This Daddy and I prayed together and I wept deeply, overjoyed with that news.

He and I ended our call and Luke and I continued walking through Central Park, I filled with tiny bits of apprehension blended with tons of joy. Luke was filled only with joy.

Praises be to our Lord forever and ever!

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

As I think of those moments, I actually felt as if I were floating...floating on news of a miracle.

I took Luke back to the hotel around noon and sent this email.

Subject: Re: Little One in NYC Very Important They cried to You and were saved, in You they trusted and were not disappointed. Psalm 22:5

Praise God...Doc thinks he has repaired tear, not sure

At 4 or 430 DC time they will do another ultrasound...

Fluid must reaccumulate by that time...they have put in fluid, Little One must swallow and urinate...all must happen by 4....Please pray!!!

Then at 515PM hopes were dashed once more as I read Rob's text message.

"...in bad shape again...lots of leakage..."

How could these parents continue to bear such news, such continuing heartbreak?

Unspoken protocol remained that there would be no phone calls when news is not good-only emails and text messages. Heavy with pain, I turned to my balm, my eighteen month old Luke, and I pulled him onto my lap and held him ever so close.

Throughout these days and weeks and months, no human being brought more joy than this precious Luke. His age, his antics, his lack of comprehension of the times all combined

God's Miracle of Sebastian

equaled joy for all of us.

I emailed to so many who waited and hoped and prayed:

We first had good news, then news that there was lots of leakage....please continue your most appreciated prayers to our Loving and Almighty Heavenly Father

They cried to You and were saved, in You they trusted and were not disappointed. Psalm 22:5

Compassionate emails poured in...

One at 430 from one of our pastors read,

Susan,

My prayers are with you and the baby.

My prayer for you follows-

Sovereign Lord, your great mercy is beyond measure. Please protect this young child with extraordinary care and grant wisdom to the physicians who offer care. Deliver this child from harm and grant that he may know the care of Christ our only Redeemer, who ever lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God forever. Amen.

From friends

Oh, Susan. I have called others . We are praying. You must all be rung out emotionally and physically.

Please tell Taylor, Rob, and Luke we all send our love

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

I sent this around 930 that night

Luke and I took a cab down to have dinner with Rob while Taylor slept. It is so impossible to express in words the anguish.

“Be merciful to me, O Lord, for I am in distress; my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and body with grief. My life is consumed by anguish.....” Psalm 31: 9

David expresses so well what we all often feel.

Our continuing hope and prayer is that our Merciful and Loving Shepherd will reach out and heal this amniotic sac and bring Little One into this world as a healthy, full term child of His.

Another ultrasound will be performed in the morning....no doctor can perform this miracle...no action of any man or woman can at this point do what must be done.

He performs wonders that cannot be fathomed, miracles that cannot be counted.

We trust in You, O Lord; We say, “You are our God.” Our times and the times of Little One are in Your hands. We pray you deliver us and him from our enemies.....

Luke is sleeping and we are in the hotel room. Rob, Taylor and Little One are at the hospital. Thank you for your faithful prayers.

They cried to You and were saved, in You they trusted and were not disappointed. Psalm 22:5

God's Miracle of Sebastian

And then to my son and Taylor at the hospital at 946pm, I included the prayer I had sent out and wrote,

This is the most recent prayer request I sent out tonight.... wanted you to have it too.....also just read one more verse before I go to join cute Lukester in bed...

“Be strong and take heart - all you who hope in the Lord’

Love you all so very much,

And I read another email to encourage me, so I might encourage...

Dearest Susan,

Decided to take one more look before going to bed, and found your email. So glad our pastor got you. He prayed the most beautiful, meaningful prayer on the phone when I called him. I also called another who prayed on the phone and would continue to pray and said that others would be praying tonight, too.

I know the anguish is almost unbearable, except that it must be borne. Fighting so hard for this little life created by God and loved by Him has so much caught up within it – hope, fear, faith, despair, encouragement, discouragement. Yet we continue to pray and have faith that every prayer is heard by a Father God who loves us, who holds our future, who determines our very next breath.

Susan, you are right. No human can do this. Only God. Perhaps this is the answer. It cannot be of man, not even of the skill of the specialist who has done this procedure before.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

The battle is God's, the glory is His. By His own mighty hand, the tear can be mended, the fluid restored, and it will be a miracle. There is nothing too hard for Him. We are in His hands as is the life of precious Little One. We now look not for God's help in a medical procedure, but for an outright act of His that will renew and provide life. A miracle.

I pray for a restful night by God's mercy for Taylor tonight, and for Rob. What a journey for these two, what mountains whose tops are hidden from view are given these so young to climb. They now have the true measure of each other as they have never had before. May God bless mightily this marriage and this home in every way as they live their lives together.

I pray that CC will rest this night, and walk on the blessings of Luke and of being there and being able to care for Luke and have her spirit refreshed in him. Thank God you could be there.

Susan, the sentence our senior pastor spoke in his sermons comes back to me again, about Peter when he was in prison with 16 guards, and destined to be killed the next day. Enemies all around. Bound with chains. "Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him." It's in Acts 12. And it was at the time of Passover. But the Lord sent His angel to deliver Peter. He walked right out between the guards. Peter thought he must be having a vision, as this could not be true. But it was. It was a miracle. The sentence was this: "Peter was asleep, but God was at work."

I pray that this very night, God is at work and healing is taking place. We know He is sovereign and knows what we do not know, and His thoughts and mind are above ours. We also know He is a loving Father, and He is all powerful over

God's Miracle of Sebastian

all things.

This miracle will be His and His name shall be praised and this will be a witness to many. The fight Taylor and Rob have chosen honors His name, and will witness to many, as will the heart and faith of Little One's grandmother CC.

Sleep well tonight, dear friend of my heart. We are restored in sleep. I pray for angels to guard you and your children this night. I pray for the work of God while we sleep.

Much love, N.

And then I wrote this before I went to bed. It was a personal writing not sent out.

It was for God.

April 12
Wednesday
NYC

BUT

You and I will not let my faith be shaken, for You are My Rock and My Redeemer. You are omnipotent and can do all things. Ploys by Satan to undermine our faith will not work, for he is a deceiver and a liar and hungry to destroy.

You are the Author and keeper of Life. You always protect for You are love.

You are our Shepherd. You paid a mighty price for us and we

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

are Yours and valuable to You...each of us....even the Little Ones....

So Lord I will believe. I will not doubt. I beg in Your most powerful name that You do what is necessary to preserve the life of Little One and to bring him into this world healthy and unharmed as Daniel was with the lions.

I pray that You, my precious Lord do this, not for our sake, but for Yours.

You are mighty to save Father.

I do not doubt You will perform this miracle.

Praises be to You forever and ever.

I remember so clearly kneeling that night at the feet of my Lord. From my place at the window sill, I looked up at the leaves of the tree outside our hotel window. They were sparkling so white with the light that shone through them against the dark night sky.

On I looked past those leaves, up to the heavens where my Lord reigns.

And then I went to sleep that night with ardent prayer on my lips and oh such deep pain in my heart for my children, for my grandchildren.

April 13
Thursday

The next day was Maundy Thursday and that morning I

God's Miracle of Sebastian

received the following email from dear sweet L. that foretold the course of action for all of us:

I will put in the desert the cedar and the acacia, the myrtle and the olive. I will set pines in the wasteland, the fir and the cypress together, so that PEOPLE MAY KNOW, may consider and understand, THAT THE HAND OF THE LORD HAS DONE THIS, that the Holy One of Israel has created it.”
Isaiah 41:19-20

People will know that the Lord is the One doing this. Susan, Psalm 31 goes on to say, ‘ Let me not be put to shame, O Lord, for I have cried out to you... How great is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you... “In my alarm, I said I was cut off from your sight!” Yet you heard my cry for mercy when I called to you for help... The Lord PRESERVES the faithful... Be strong and take heart, all you who HOPE in the Lord.”

Love you, Susan!

Take heart-

Unknown to me, L made a ceramic plate that weekend with a rainbow and that verse on it which she would present to me months later. On it was the verse

so that PEOPLE MAY KNOW, may consider and understand, THAT THE HAND OF THE LORD HAS DONE THIS

And more scripture from friends arrived.

For it is the God who said, “Let light shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts... We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down,

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

but not destroyed. 2 Corinthians 4:6, 8-9 Lord, sometimes the weight of circumstances feels too heavy for me, but I know that you promised not to give me more than I can bear. So today as you give me strength to lie, help me not carry the unnecessary concerns of tomorrow. Show me the light of your truth and the promise of your goodness as I learn to trust you.

And I thought of the light shining on the leaves from the night before and the dark sky behind them.

Then I sent an email to prayer warriors:

Rob and Taylor are leaving the hospital now. He text messaged me... there is no fluid...there is no reason to stay... please pray

I sent the following email out to medical people:

They are back here at the hotel after being dismissed from the hospital...at a loss as to what to do next...please offer any help you can....thanks so much

And responses from medical people I have never met came in.

Dearest Susan,

Your last message came when I was in Cambodia. How are you doing and what is the latest news on your Little One, for whom you are crying and praying? Love,

An email from a dear prayer warrior...

I took Liz's words from you earlier this morning to heart immediately. We do not, cannot, mourn, for Little One

God's Miracle of Sebastian

lives.

My prayer for Rob and Taylor after we talked this morning, and they were walking in the door, was for God's sure and sturdy presence with them to comfort and guide them, and for Him to do what is needed next. Only He can do it. And I prayed to say that we do wait upon Him. I prayed that Little One would be kept safe in His care.

I looked up the word "wait" last night, as I said before, and found these two references in the Psalms. I don't think I have ever looked up the word wait before in the concordance. The Lord must have given it to me.

We cannot come to an abrupt hope stop, faith stop, because of circumstances until God has clearly closed a door. We wait upon the Lord.

Psalms 27: 13,14 "Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord."

Psalms 130:5,6 "I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in His word I put my hope. My soul waits for the Lord as the watchmen wait for the morning, more than the watchmen wait for the morning."

We waited, and kept praying and expecting and hoping for His own direction. Now there is something again on the horizon. God is at work, surely, and we wait for Him because he has everything under His own hand.

Love you, N.

FINALLY AT 932 that Thursday night, we really began to understand what our Lord was saying to us. The subject line

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

to an email I sent to many who had sent emails to me

Is it as amazing to each of you as it is to me that unbeknownst to each of us the following happened;

*This is the verse I sent to Rob and only Rob last night:
"Be strong and take heart - all you who hope in the Lord"*

*This is the verse N sent to me this afternoon:
Psalm 27: 13,14 "Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord."*

*This is the verse Liz forwarded to me today from L email to her:
BE STRONG AND TAKE HEART, ALL YOU WHO HOPE
IN THE LORD*

*At 939 from L
HOW GREAT IS OUR GOD!!!! Praise be to Him!*

*And this very night, many years ago, Jesus prepared to go to the cross to die...
for me,
for you, and
for Little One.
He is a good God, indeed.
Love you, in His strength, L*

*At 945pm from Liz
We see the Almighty's hand everywhere....May we continue to "add to the list" of His faithfulness to us. Tonight our pastor spoke on why Jesus and the disciples sang "on such a night as this" before they left the upper room. These were they...*

God's Miracle of Sebastian

- 1. We trust Him*
- 2. We are thankful for all He has done and will do*
- 3. Our hearts are truly made glad*
- 4. Our hearts, in singing His praise, are all together-as a family we thank, trust, and rejoice*

If Jesus could sing the Hallel (Psalm 113) before his betrayal, may it also be that we sing now.

It had become clear now this Holy Week that it would not be by doctors, but by God that this miracle would be performed.

April 15 Saturday

Although it might seem because of the circumstances, these should be days when hope was gone, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday in NYC were not hopeless at all.

For me they were more the days of deeply understanding that this would be God's miracle. It would not be a hospital or a pioneering surgery or another possible treatment.

We took the train home and arrived in DC Friday night, praying the sac may heal itself in the next 4-5 days...50% chance....

Back in "my room" at Rob's and Taylor's house I read an email from one of our two nieces who are like our own daughters.

Hi Susan,

There is something that I really want to share with you that I

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

have realized in abundance since Rob and Taylor and Little One's struggles began....

You and I have had so many conversations about your beliefs on abortion and I know where you stand. I never thought that you would ever have this type of struggle in your face; of course, I know that it is not your body that is going through this, but your heart is so involved. What a scary thing for all of the family to face.

I know you very well and I will make the assumption that you see this as a test, and God will never give you anything that you cannot handle. Well, Susan, you continue to be such an inspiration and such a rock to so many people. Your faith in God has been revealed in such a powerful way through this situation.

I just want to let you know that you really are showing a faith that does not waiver, a faith and devotion to God. It is such an uplifting and strong message that you are exhibiting just through your devotion. You are a breath of fresh air, you are so strong and solid, you are so sure and devoted, you know what you believe is real, and you are incredible! I just want to share this with you because you might need it. No matter who you are, where you are from, who you know, what you believe, anyone can learn from the example that you set. Thank you so much! I love you.

And my response to her read,

Because my eyes are filled with tears and because I am so very weary, this response will be short. But please know how sincere I am when I say your email could not have come at a better time. Thank you for taking the time to send it.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

As you know this has been so very difficult for Rob and Taylor and all of us who go through this with them.

Yet our God has never left nor forsaken us. He used you tonight to remind me of His presence and His faithfulness and I cannot thank you or Him enough. Tomorrow we celebrate the most glorious day of resurrection and life so we must have hope and wait patiently for our Lord, hard as that sometimes may be.

My verse today is "We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed."

*Much love
Susan*

Before I went to sleep that night before Easter Sunday, I sent this email to Rob and Taylor

Dearest Rob and Taylor,

It will be very hard to leave you tomorrow. There are so many things I want to say and to do to help, but the thing that would help the most I do not have the power to do.

If you need me to come again or go with you anywhere or help in any way, I will be there, God willing.

I have told you both that as you watch Luke walk, then fall and maybe cry and yet always pick himself up again and keep on trucking, know that is how I see you both. Sometimes he may even crawl for a bit, but he is determined to keep on trying. You both have been remarkable and I admire no two people more than you two. You have set such a godly

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

example for so many by the actions you have taken to save your child.

I am sitting in your guest room, having prayed with Mick for your and Luke's peaceful rest tonight, for your good Easter tomorrow, for your Little One to be protected.

May our merciful and Loving Father continue to sustain you, giving you His wisdom and His peace, being your ever present help. May you know that our God of life and the resurrection is with you always.

*With Much Love
Mom Susan C.C.*

April 16 Easter Sunday

With hope and sorrow intermingled in my heart I sent out the following, along with a picture of this family I adore.

It is now Easter afternoon and I have just returned from Washington DC after having left this precious little family (Taylor, Luke and Rob) for whom you have been praying. This pic was taken in their front yard before we left for church this morning.

The surgery was Wednesday and at first there was fluid remaining and joy and thankfulness to our God for what he had done. Then within two hours the fluid was gone and they left the hospital Thursday. Good Friday we walked up Madison Avenue and 5th Avenue in NYC. We went to part of a Good Friday choir service in a woman shared the loss of her dear friend's 11 year old daughter the Friday before....

God's Miracle of Sebastian

how devastated the parents are.

After we left the church service, Rob and Taylor shopped for and bought maternity clothes.

Friday night we took the train back to DC. Yesterday Rob did yard work, I did laundry and watched Luke and Taylor slept.

We awoke to a beautiful Easter morning, signs of life and hope bursting everywhere.

We still have hope and pray that the amniotic sac may heal itself – 50% chance 7-10 days after the procedure. We still have hope and we pray that another doctor somewhere may help. We still have hope and we pray that our Almighty God, our God who has defeated death will perform a miracle.

We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. 2 Corinthians 4:8

*“The strife is o’er, the battle done, the victory of life is won;
the song of triumph has begun. Allelulia!”
(stanza we sang at their church this morning)*

He is not here; He has risen just as He said! Matthew 28:6

They cried to You and were saved, in You they trusted and were not disappointed. Psalm 22:5

Thanks once more your faithful prayers and concern.

To this day I remain amazed that these parents steadfastly defied the news they had received from doctors and that

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

Thursday they went shopping for maternity clothes!

After 9/11 Americans were encouraged to continue as normal.
After Virginia Tech students came back to class.

Our God teaches us that perseverance produces hope.

After the crucifixion Christ came back to life.

April 18
Tuesday

All medical doors and possibilities were now closed.

And our faithful and merciful Lord opened another most amazing door. God led Rob to this website: <http://www.homeschoolblogger.com/iluvtheland>

With that website and another one God led us to, an entire new world of information, experience, and support were opened to us.

Stories of hope were also there.

We discovered many families knew about that “long o word”.

They called it PROM or premature rupture of membranes.

I emailed my first concern to one of the ladies.

As of today April 18, our daughter in law is 4 ½ months pregnant and she and my son have been told there is no amniotic fluid. Doctors have tried amnioinfusion and they

God's Miracle of Sebastian

have tried to seal what they thought was a tear in the amniotic sac. Now they are saying it might be chronic abruption. We really need help and would appreciate any thoughts you might have. Please email me as soon as you can. Thank you so much, Susan

And the first of many responses that would change our lives and how we handled this came in from people we never met.

Hi, I am so sorry to hear about your daughter, she must be really scared right now.

I am happy to help.

I have given you some basic points regarding PPROM below:

- 1. Your daughter is facing some very very hard times ahead of her now and is going to need her family more than anything. In my experience amnios rarely work.*
- 2. Your daughter needs to go on FULL bed rest to try and stop her body from going into labor for as long as possible.*
- 3. Start drinking heaps of water to replace the amnio fluid lost*
- 4. keep extremely clean to stop infection and do not have any internal examinations*
- 5. Start taking vitamin e, zinc and vitamin c*
- 6. Get a high risk pregnancy doctor*

Please feel free to email me with further questions. Also

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

check out a website <http://www.kanalen.org/prom> for more info

Regards

P G

Dr. B at Johns Hopkins would hang in there with Taylor and Rob and Little One. Taylor would now be on complete bed rest.

We all praised our Lord once more for it is to Him the glory is forever due.

My verse that morning was, *“And I will do whatever you ask in My name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father.”*
John 14:13

I would ask.

April 20
Thursday

So began a regimen that changed how we handled this pregnancy. More about that regimen and suggestions we received are in the appendix to this book.

As I have mentioned and as you know, life does go on when hard things hit. And some are so wonderful and so needed. Such was the case with our trip to Texas for dear granddaughter Zoe's fifth birthday celebration.

Clay and three year old Nathan would fly in on one flight, Mick and I and eight month old Libby on another. Rob also bought a one way ticket for me from Houston to Dallas

God's Miracle of Sebastian

for that Friday, so I could have a boarding pass to come through security to get Luke so Rob could hurry to make his connection from DC to Houston to Las Vegas.

April 21 Friday

My verse that Friday morning brought peace once more so that those days in Texas could be totally enjoyed.

*...for I am the Lord their God and I will answer them....
Zechariah 10:6*

*They and their children will survive....v 9
I will strengthen them in the Lord and in His name they will
walk, declares the Lord ...v 12*

Our Most High Lord was telling me something. And there was no way to misinterpret what He told me through His word. Our choice is always whether or not to believe that what He tells us is true.

Mick and I and the children and grandchildren take a vacation together each year. This year our plan was to go to the beach, but we knew that would not happen now, so plans were underway to figure out something else.

I wrote Rob and Taylor asking them to talk about our coming family trip, telling them we had made tentative reservations in DC for Memorial Day week. I wrote that if they just flat out did not want us there for any reason to please just say the word. I wrote that the goal of the family trip is to be together and that we want to be as “together” as is reasonable. I reiterated that this would only occur if it was okay for them at this most important time in their lives...I added that we

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

didn't know if they would view it as a good thing or just too much of a pressure

And the days passed and the emails continued and my thoughts were always thinking of Little One in his secret and safe place inside his mommy.

And I knew he did not need lungs there.

April 24
Monday

I wrote my sister.

We did go to Houston Saturday and came back last night. We took Libby with us and Mick and I came back on the plane last night with eight month old Libby and seventeen month old Luke.

Rob dropped off Luke on his way from DC to Houston to Las Vegas. Wish you could have seen us...double stroller, two diaper bags, etc...

We'll have Luke until Thurs night – he has had such a good day...played with Libby this morning and ate lunch with her- Nathan gets back this afternoon.

Rob is in Las Vegas right now and we are keeping Luke until he flies back through on Thursday. Taylor is on bed rest.

April 28
Friday

God's Miracle of Sebastian

My verse and notes in Matthew Henry's commentary read:

"...the One Who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world..." I John 4:4

"The Spirit of God hath framed your mind for God and heaven.....but others are led into this world and they are addicted to it; they study the pomp, the pleasure and interest of the world; and therefore speak they of the world; they profess a worldly messiah and saviour....forgetting that the true Redeemers kingdom is not of this world".....Matthew Henry commentary

April 29
Saturday

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in Me. John 14:1

The verse for that day has become among my favorites.

Matthew Henry wrote about this verse, "Though the nation and city be troubled, though your little family and flock be troubled, yet let not your heart be troubled. The heart is the main fort; whatever you do, keep trouble from this, keep this with all diligence. The spirit must sustain the infirmity."

And we would strive to have our hearts sustain the infirmity we faced.

Emails continued to pour in from family and friends and PROM ladies who had gone before us.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

One read:

I was told at 6 weeks to have a D&C because the baby wouldn't make it. I decided to wait and by some miracle I'm 30 weeks today. I don't want to give you false hope, whatever you decide and whatever happens come here for support. Prayers are being said for you. Hang in there and remember the Dr's don't get to call the baby home, only God can do that.

I sent out an email to our children to make sure the change in location for our vacation would be okay. I would continue to correspond with the PROM ladies and much of their invaluable information can be found at the end of this book

And another month ended. Another month closer to a day we knew would come, but we knew not what it would hold.

MAY

May 2 Tuesday

The month began with the firm realization that nothing else medically could be done to seal this secret place where Little One lived. And with it came the truth that our Lord was sustaining us through His word, His body of believers, and His Spirit.

*Stretch out Your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.
Acts 4:30*

*For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God.
Acts 5:38-39*

Rob, Taylor and Little One would go to the doc the next day for the first time since being at NYU before Easter. During their 9AM appointment at Johns Hopkins, they would see the person above their normal perinatologist.

We continued to solicit prayers that every aspect of questions, answers, and decisions, would be in accordance with God's perfect will and that Satan would be kept from this situation.

And we would hold fast to our verse and His promise.

They cried to You and were saved; in You they trusted and were not disappointed

God's Miracle of Sebastian

May 3 **Wednesday**

Dismal news from doctors darkened each appointment, but the tender love of our Father in heaven continued to soothe and comfort and offer hope.

I sent out my verse for the day and an update.

He tends His flock like a shepherd; He gathers the lambs in His arms and carries them close to His heart; He gently leads those that have young. Isaiah 40:11

Things seem about the same with Little One. The ultrasound showed no fluid and because Little One's chest seems so tiny, the doctors are concerned there is no lung development. They will return to the doctor on May 17. Please pray for Rob's and Taylor's faith, peace, wisdom, and health.

They cried to You and were saved, in You they trusted and were not disappointed. Psalm 22:5

I sought counsel from other PROM ladies from the website

Docs did an ultrasound today and are concerned because Little One's chest is so small in proportion to the rest of his body which they say may mean no lungs. She still has no fluid. Any thoughts?

May 4 **Thursday**

Along with the heartaches, He never failed to remind me

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

where to place my hope and what to hold as my highest joy.

*May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember You, if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy.
Psalm 137:6*

Matthew Henry's commentary helped me understand His word for me that day. "How these pious captives stood affected to Jerusalem. In their daily prayers they opened their windows toward Jerusalem; and how then could they forget it? Their hearts were full of it. They preferred it above their chief joy, and therefore they remembered it and could not forget it. What we love we love to think of. Those that rejoice in God do, for His sake, make Jerusalem their joy, and prefer it before that, whatever it is, which is the head of their joy, which is dearest to them in this world."

* * *

I emailed the story below that I had written a year before to encourage one of the PROM Moms who was having a very hard time. It was as much for me to read again as for them.

* * *

This Cup
March 3

While I was having my quiet time yesterday I read about Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Several years ago we went to that area right outside Jerusalem. I still remember that time. We all sat and pondered what Christ went through there. That spot was as meaningful a spot for me as any we saw on our Holy Land Tour.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

In reading the Bible yesterday, I was reminded that three times Christ went back to His Father and asked that this cup be taken from Him. Being one with the Father, He surely knew what was to come. I would never presume to ask why He went to His Father, except that as surely as He was fully God, He also was fully man.

As a man, I suppose He would dread such an undertaking with every fiber of His being. As God, He knew what would come. Unlike our dread of an undesirable thing coming our way, He actually knew how horrible it would be. He said His soul was “overwhelmed to the point of death”. Even those words are incomprehensible to me.

I wondered if He were asking the Father if there might be some other way to proceed. Was this the only way to accomplish the task of payment for the sins of the people?

Three times He went back and asked the Father if it might be possible to take this cup from Him.

There are so many times in the Bible when we read of others who ask that God not proceed as He has indicated He would. Jonah begged not to go to Nineveh. David begged for the life of his son. Moses surely did not want to lead the people.

But not one plea strikes as does the plea of Jesus. We really didn't have anything to do with Jonah or David or Moses.

Jesus' plea strikes at the core of our being, because we know this cup He must drink is our doing.

So it is with us. One cup after another we do not wish to drink. We want Him to take them away. We lose a job or

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

a home or a loved one. We become ill or have financial difficulties. We have a relationship problem. Someone we have struggles with some awful illness or problem. We see the horrible things that occur in the world. We read of injustices and threats and awful acts.

And we either ignore them all by burying our heads in the sand.

Or we become so desensitized that they are just another thing to hear about or read about and we become indifferent.

Or we turn to alcohol or some other drug of choice, because that is the only way we can get a little high.

It's too hard to drink of the cup. It's too hard to hear the news, to face the situation.

The second part of each time Christ asked that the Father take the cup is actually the most amazing part. Each time He asks if it possible to take the cup, He follows by saying, Your will be done.

What a hard prayer!

Sometimes I really think I have such a long way to go in my walk. I know His will is best. I know His plans are good. But when I am in a really hard place, I have no trouble asking God to take the cup.

I do not always easily say, Your will be done. Hopefully, one day I will move into that mindset as easily as David seemed to when he feared for his own life. He said of God,“let Him *do to me* whatever seems good to Him.”

God's Miracle of Sebastian

I can fairly easily say, "...let Him *do with me* whatever seems good." If He wants me to serve here or to serve there, or to give up this or to give up that, I seem to do ok. I really want Him to use me however He wants. I'm just still not real comfortable with Him *doing to me*.

Because that not only means a change in my comfort zone for me, but it also means a change in my comfort zone for my loved ones.

I truly want them to serve in whatever way the Lord leads them. But I do have a difficult time with the "*do to them*" part.

When Christ spoke of "this cup" what was He referring to? Was it the physical pain, emotional, mental or spiritual pain He would undergo? Was it the pain His death would bring His loved ones who would for a time not understand? I don't presume to guess.

All I know for sure is that whatever He was referring to, He wanted it to be taken away, yet He succumbed to His Father's will.

In my almost sixty years of life, I have learned that how I think about things greatly influences my reactions. Succumbing to His will involves a major thought change.

Yet it is still so very difficult. I am so reassured because I know what our Lord did was so difficult for Him. It is not easy to take the cup.

* * *

The young Mom I sent it to responded,

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

I really hope I can be of some help - even if it's just someone to talk to. It's such a hard situation to be in. My heart aches for you & your family.

Doctors can speak about what they've seen in the past. Who is to say your grandbaby will not be the first to have overcome such statistics.

Thanks you so much for sending that story - I'm having a rather difficult time and there is a Cup I soooooo want to give up - How ironic that you sent the story today.

Tell your Daughter in Law to feel free to contact me anytime, for anything. Sometimes it's hard to discuss concerns with family because you don't want to scare them. If she needs to vent to someone - I'm here.

* * *

Such dear ones we have never met, such heart felt connections as these are cherished gifts from our precious Lord and Savior.

May 22
Monday

God continued to teach us and to hold us.

Ten days later the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah. Jer 42:7

If you stay in this land, I will build you up and not tear you down.....Do not be afraid of the king of Babylon, whom you

God's Miracle of Sebastian

now fear...for I am with you....Jer 42:11

The people were afraid of the king of Babylon and did not want to remain as God instructed through Jeremiah. They disobeyed and suffered horribly for it.

As Matthew Henry says, "We know not what is good for ourselves; and that often proves attractive and sometimes fatal, which we are most fond of and have our hearts most set upon."

I emailed Little One's parents:

Hi Rob and Taylor!

Hope last night went as well as Saturday night re Luke's sleeping...

Just want you both to know I am praying for God's wisdom for Dr B and ya'll as you decide next steps....today's verse seemed particularly appropriate in view of decisions you face re hospitalization, steroids etc..... But we know if we pray for God's wisdom He will give it and we must believe He does give it...otherwise we are like a wave tossed about on the sea.....

Lotsa LoveMe

I responded to a friend about our plans.

We are going to DC...We take an annual family trip to the beach, but have decided to go to DC this year to be with them. Taylor is on bed rest all of the time and has been since Easter. Jon and crew will fly from Houston and we will all fly from Memphis, leaving this Saturday and returning the

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

next one. Thanks for your continuing prayers for all aspects of this most difficult situation, but one in which we find the Lord so mightily involved

May 23
Tuesday

Rob and Taylor went to the doctor today and the plan is to induce at 34 weeks which is 9 weeks from now.

It began to register. We now had a date and a time frame.

It was growing closer and only our merciful Lord knew what would unfold.

I tried so hard not to borrow trouble from tomorrow.

May 25
Thursday

My verse that day read:

On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on the throne and delivered a public address to the people. They shouted, "This is the voice of a god, not a man." Immediately because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died.
Acts 12:21-23

Matthew Henry quotes Jewish historian Josephus...." That he did not refuse nor correct this impious flattery".... As Henry himself says, "The angel smote him because he gave not glory to God; angels are jealous for God's honour, and as

God's Miracle of Sebastian

soon as ever they have commission are ready to smite those who usurp His prerogatives, and rob God of His honour.”

As I sit here at my computer writing, one year after those words were typed, I think of how I had sometimes referred to this miracle as “The Miracle of Sebastian”. Then always correcting myself, I would change my words to “God’s Miracle of Sebastian.”

God would continue to lead us through many more troubled times.

He proved always to be there with precisely what was needed, at precisely the right time. Even during my quiet time that day he was preparing the way for today when I would attempt my best, my crude attempt, to give the glory to Him, this awesome God of ever present help.

You need not experience the moment by moment day in day out times we experienced and continue to experience. You only need to read this book to know it is His doing and His alone.

I had begun to understand what His promise, the verse He had given meant. It would not be by man. It would be by Him. We were to trust, to be still and to know that He is God.

As my Bible, which sits open and next to me reads in Psalm 115:1, “Not to us, O Lord, not to us but to Your Name be the glory, because of Your love and faithfulness.”

Even this day in May a year later, Sebastian has just been dismissed from the hospital once more.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

Little One continues to be God's miracle.

May 26

Friday

Daily His strength continued to be poured into me. My verse read,

...they should always pray and not give up. Luke 18:1

I read somewhere that our importunity, defined as asking insistently and repeatedly, is pleasing to God; the prayer of the upright is His delight.

We realized that 34 weeks of gestation was 9 weeks from that day. Nine weeks.

May 27

Saturday

...the God we serve is able.....Daniel 3:17

As the day of Little One's entry into this world drew closer, in spite of the zero per cent chance given by experts, I trusted more and more in this God we serve who is indeed able.

JUNE

June 5 Monday

Our Memorial Day trip with our children and grandchildren had been wonderful. I sent out an email update with the picture on the back cover of this book and the story, “Our Memorial Day Trip” found in the appendix, to many.

Hi Everyone

This is a picture of the cousins last week in DC after the Memorial Day parade. Luke is the one in the big stroller and his little brother is Little One, the one for whom you have been praying.

As it stands now, Little One is growing and is healthy in all observable ways. The problem is his lungs and now the docs say there is only a 5 to 10 per cent chance he will live after he is born.

We are looking for a delivery date the end of July and a miracle from our most merciful and loving Father. I head back next Tuesday for two weeks.

They cried to You and were saved, in You they trusted and were not disappointed. Psalm 22:5

June 6 Tuesday

*...for I am the Lord their God and I will answer them.
Zechariah 10:6*

God's Miracle of Sebastian

...I will strengthen them in the Lord and in His name they will walk, declares the Lord. Zechariah 10:12

I emailed our prayer warriors and the PROM ladies:

Taylor is now at week 26 and last week they told them Little One has only a 5 - 10 % chance of living after his birth, but we continue to pray for God's miracle.

Taylor has been on bed rest since Easter and they are planning a c-section the end of July. She has a lot she can do and is not horribly bored, but we were wondering about any exercises or anything she can do that can help her physically. Do you have any ideas or resources?

Thanks for your help.

As I read that email even now I am in awe of how I could write these words, *"Little One has only a 5 - 10 % chance of living after his birth, but we continue to pray for God's miracle"*

And I wrote these words within seconds of previous ones.

" but we were wondering about any exercises or anything she can do that can help her physically ."

We had truly learned to function and to think on this battlefield with bullets flying everywhere. Taylor spent her days reading books and watching movies Rob would bring her. She drank water constantly.

I never heard her or Rob complain.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

It was so very clear our God was with us.

June 7

Wednesday

For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother. Matthew 12:50

The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful. But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what is sown. Matthew 13:22-23

One thought was forever with me.

This miracle God was performing with Little One would be a testament to this Living Lord Who defeated death. Part of my role was never to let the worry of this life keep His word from being unfruitful in me, so that what was sown in me might also be sown in others.

Each day I would tell of His faithfulness in every way I could.

June 8

Thursday

See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of My Father in heaven. Matthew 18:10

God's Miracle of Sebastian

I read Matthew Henry's note on this verse which said, "*Some have imagined that every particular saint has a guardian angel; but why should we suppose this, when we are sure that every particular saint, when there is occasion, has a guard of angels?*"

That promise continues to help me through each day as my loved ones and I walk through this life. Dear Little One and each of us might have a **guard of angels!** Each moment this day, each moment in the NICU and hospitals for months on end, a guard of angels would surround him.

Help and counsel would arrive from those dear PROM ladies.

Most docs pick 32-34 weeks to deliver if there is no resealing. The reasoning is that the baby has reached a very viable point in gestation and to have avoided infection and any other complications such as cord prolapse or cord compression that it is best to take the baby before anything can go wrong.

Babies usually do quite well with minimal NICU support at that point. Most of the medical literature will support taking the prom baby at this point. They feel that it is better off outside than inside at that point. So GLAD to hear that she is at 26+ weeks. Tell her we are all rooting for her. Prayers continue. Many blessings, P

At this same time Jon and Allie were talking with folks at different post doc programs and Liz was finishing VBS and as a pilot, Clay was flying here and there and the other grandchildren were enjoying the spring days. Prayer requests

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

regarding those activities went out as well as the one on all our minds: *pray for all aspects of pregnancy and delivery for Taylor and Little One to be perfect*

It was getting close to Father's Day and to Taylor's birthday so she and I began emailing about gifts, what I could do for her and what I could do for him.

Where there is a will there is a way and by now Taylor had mastered the talent of internet shopping, so she had ordered gifts for Rob. She would continue to tell me of books she wanted and I would get them for her. Rob would continue to provide movies for her.

And he would always keep her room filled with flowers.

June 9

Friday

The days passed.

God would strengthen us.

And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men. Luke 2:52

Heartbreaking stories came from Moms in the PROM group.

I was hoping and praying for a different outcome, but the Lord has called my baby boy home.

Thank you so much for your support over the past 8 weeks. This morning at 4:13 my baby boy was born by emergency c-

God's Miracle of Sebastian

section. I woke at 2 this morning with heavy bleeding and he had to be delivered. They made extra efforts to save his life, but his little lungs just could not develop with such low fluid. He died in my arms, looking like a prefect little angel.

He was 1.7 lbs and 11.25 inches long and the most beautiful baby boy.

I would weep and pray then as I weep and pray even now.

And yet that same day, God sent joy and news.....

I emailed Jon and Allie.

I just cannot get over the fact that you guys are moving and that Jon has such a great job and that there are such great schools and that you will not have to drive hours to get places and that etc etc etc etc!!!!

I know there is so much to do to make this all happen, but thankfully God is in control and has it all figured out!!

I head for DC Tues through June 26....when I return we could keep the kids for a few days or whatever would help.

As of now they are hoping to deliver Little One on July 28 and I will probably go back around July 4 for a couple of weeks, then home, then back the week of delivery....roughed out schedule...sooo just lemme know how I can best help...

I am so thankful to God for making this decision so clear to you both...what an awesome God He is!!!! Love ya'll lotzzzzzzzz

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

June 12
Monday

Our Lord continued to remind me of one of the roles He had given me.

Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Acts 8:4

I would go to DC the next day with plans to return Monday June 26.....

No matter what occurred in a day, we were constantly heartbroken and reminded of the gravity of Little One's situation by emails received from other PROM ladies.

Just wanted to let you all know that our daughter was born via emergency c-section because of cord prolapse. The contractions were probably started because of a bladder infection which I was in the middle of getting treated for. She was born alive and lived long enough for us to hold her.

Nothing we did would have helped since her lungs were too underdeveloped because of the low amniotic fluid. The steroid shots weren't enough either. Thanks for everyone's support here. We named her

Even as you read these stories, please pray for these families to have our merciful and loving Lord's comfort and hope
I responded to her email

I sit here with tears in my eyes and such heaviness in my heart mourning deeply with you.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

May our loving God give you comfort and peace and hope

Susan

I would cry and pray and then go on, holding fast to the hand of my Lord, waiting for what might unfold next.

June 23 Thursday

At 29 weeks of age inside his Mommy, Little One was only in the bottom 3% in size.

When she heard this, one lady commented, "Little One may be little, but our God is big."

June 26 Monday

As Rob and I sat on the sofa downstairs in their home that Monday night Taylor called from her upstairs bed. He looked at me and went to her, both of us knowing by the way she called that things were not ok.

He found she was bleeding and they called the doc who told them to drive to the hospital.

The days before had proved to be nothing short of crazy.

They had decided to install central air to help Taylor stay cool during these summer months. The unit had to be put above the ceiling in their bedroom and it began to leak through

their plaster ceiling.

The night before torrential rains had flooded much of DC, including their basement in which their washer and dryer are kept.

They left for the hospital and, in my dazed state, I began doing the household chores. As I tried to wash blood from the sheets in the bathtub, I thought of that blood and that it was my daughter in law and that it might be Little One.

The phone rang. It was their doctor. She said she was trying to reach them in labor and delivery but could get no answer on Rob's cell phone. I tried so hard to focus on the truth and not my imaginings, once more trying to remember not to borrow trouble.

As I looked in at Luke all snug and dry in his bed and as the rain poured and the thunder crashed outside his window, I became confident once more that my Lord continued to reign.

June 27

Tuesday

The hospital kept Taylor for about twenty four hours and she received her first steroid shot that Monday night.

I went to the hospital Tuesday morning and incomprehensible as it remains, I got to see Little One's face on the ultrasound.

There are no words to express what I felt and I can only imagine what his parents felt. We saw Little One's tiny eyes

God's Miracle of Sebastian

and nose, his hands and legs. We saw his tiny heart beating. We saw his tummy.

This Little One was being woven together in his mommy's womb by our most amazing Lord and Creator.

When Taylor came home that night she told me the NICU people had come into her room after I left. Her doctor had warned her they might come. They told heartbreaking details of what to expect.

I asked if they offered any hope. She said no.

I responded, "We will have hope because our God tells us to."

But holding to hope in such desperate times was not easy.

Before I went to bed, I read this email sent out by one of the ladies and the subject line read, "I'm Back".

Hi Everyone,

I un-subscribed from the PROM list a few months ago when I went into the hospital at 24 weeks gestation. We had our precious baby B. on May 9th (at 29w4d) and unfortunately he died the same day of pulmonary hypoplasia.

But I am so thankful every day that we were able to meet him and hold him if only for a few hours. And I am so, so thankful we did not terminate the pregnancy. He was a precious soul who was meant to be on this earth for whatever time he was given.

Just wanted to say hi and to all the ladies who have recently

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

experienced PROM - Don't give up. Stay positive because there are many, many stories of hope! Keep the faith, E.

For those ladies, their precious little ones, for all our loved ones, and mostly, because our Lord tells us to, I did as she requested and kept the faith

June 28 Wednesday

Since March 9, I had been sending out individual emails. Then on June 28, I tried another way to keep people and soon to be more people than I imagined informed.

-Just wanted to let you know that I will probably not be sending individual emails over the next several weeks. Instead I will try to post updates each day so you will know where things are and what to pray. Please just go to the website below and keep us all in your prayers, particularly Little One, his Mommy and Daddy and big brother.

There is no way to express our gratitude to you for your prayers. God answering your prayers is the only explanation for our health and for our joy most of the time. His goodness and mercy is following us. Your love and prayers mean more than I can ever say. As the time draws near for Little One's birth please know your faithful prayers and our almighty God will sustain us.

<http://miracles-littleone.blogspot.com/>

That night my dear friend wrote;

God's Miracle of Sebastian

No, there are no words for some things. No words for leaving Taylor and Rob and Little One and Luke. I'm glad you can come home. I'm glad you can go back to them. You are truly indispensable.

We know that Little One's healthy birth will be God's miracle. NICU personnel speak from their experience. They are not speaking the language of hope, of miracle, of an all powerful and all knowing and merciful God. Our God knows that this young mother and father have honored His Word and His gift of life in every possible way two parents could. To fight for life is to be on God's side. There is present comfort and reserve comfort in knowing this.

I know that you are fatigued beyond measure. I hope you can physically rest while you are home, so to be ready to go back. I wish I could be there to help in some way. My love and my prayers are there with all of you.

Taylor is such a soldier for Christ in this travail. And dear Rob – filling the house with flowers, taking Taylor to a very nice hotel for two nights, being there. There is a Chinese proverb that says, "In family life, be completely present." He is, and you are.

"Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And He who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God."

My, how this Little One is loved. From Heaven to earth and back.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

And more emails from those I have never met.....

Subject: Re: Susan, How is Taylor doing??

I have been away from home at my daughter's house, so have just now read about Taylor and Little One. Our daughter had bleeds several times, and it was always such a scare. Hers were due to the placenta gradually detaching from the lack of fluid, but I am sure there are other reasons this could be happening, too. I am so glad that she has had the steroid shots, and so now they are prepared for an early delivery if necessary. Please know that I pray for Taylor and Little One, and your son daily, and they are constantly in my thoughts and prayers. Sending good thoughts and lots of prayers!

Your fellow PPROM Grandma

* * *

That same day I wrote God another letter.

Dear God,

This is a letter to You. I was just reading a book by Douglas McMillan. He was addressing preachers and their need to spend much more time in prayer than in reading the commentaries when they prepare for a sermon.

So in important things particularly, we obviously need to spend time in prayer. So this is my prayer "letter" to You, God. This is my prayer to You about Little One. As You of all People know, I remain more focused when I write. So this is a written prayer.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

There is much to pray about now. Allie's medical tests which possibly indicate lupus. Jon and Allie and Zoe and Alex move to UNC within weeks, going to pick out a house tomorrow, leaving the kids with her mom. Rob is having some heart issues. Liz has swollen lymph glands again. Clay is flying in tumultuous weather. So much to pray about and I have and will continue.

But yesterday I saw Little One! I saw his precious and miraculous little face. As the technician performed the ultrasound, she would tell us what we were seeing. I was so overwhelmed seeing his face. Taylor and I said his little face looks like his brother's little face. We saw his full tummy and we saw his brain and we saw his legs and his hands.

Then a doc came in and said he has slightly dilated ventricles in his head which could correct themselves or which could be the beginning of a problem. Other docs came in later from the NICU and told Taylor more of the horror stories we have all heard.

Since March 9 we have tried to live with this information the docs keep telling us. We have tried to understand why there is no amniotic fluid they can see. We have tried every source we know to try to have this matter corrected.

And yet no man can offer help. No man can reseal and have fluid build up for lungs to develop. No man can prevent labor or infection.

Taylor was in the hospital yesterday because of bleeding which began Monday night, the night before. No man could stop that bleeding.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

So here we are this day only about four weeks before the planned date to deliver Little One. And although we and their own perinatologist remain hopeful, without You so much of what lies before us can seem so dim, so desperate, so heartbreaking.

But, You, God. You can do this. The Nicene Creed says the Holy Spirit is the giver of life. So I know You can do this. My Bible that I read almost daily and think about continually assures me You can do this miracle. You are able. You are everywhere. Nothing is impossible with You. My faith that You will do this miracle is no doubt not as strong as it needs to be. But You know this – I do not know how to increase my faith, so I ask You to do that. If my faith is the determining factor then I call on You to give me the faith I need.

But my lack of faith does not nullify Your faithfulness. My lack of faith does not make You less powerful, less able.

You tell us to call on You. So I am. You tell us to trust in You. So I do. You tell us to pray without ceasing.

So, my loving and most merciful, most faithful Heavenly Father, I beg of You to spare this little life. I beg of You to show Your mercy, Your miraculous way. Honestly, for us I desire that, but also so we might boast of You, our truly awesome God. For no man has been able to do what only You can do. I do ask for us too. Spare this precious Little One. Protect our family from Satan and danger and physical, emotional and spiritual harm. May we be people after Your own heart, walking in your ways glorifying You through all.

I know You will be with us and help us if it is not Your will to grant my request that I lay at your feet. I know You will

God's Miracle of Sebastian

heal our broken hearts. I know a day will come when there will be no more tears. I know Little One lives anyway...he will live with us or He will live with You. And one day we will all be together. And You do know best, not I.

But I lay this request at Your feet, asking You, humbly asking You for this gift, this undeserved gift, this gift of another precious Little One to hold, to teach Your ways, to speak of You all the days of His life. I ask You Lord in the same manner in which I have asked You at other desperate times. Come to our aid. There is no one else to help. We are Your sheep and You are our Shepherd and I come to You asking for a miraculously healthy little boy with lungs that work, with feet which are not clubbed, with no restricted arms or legs, with no dilations in the ventricles, with no health problems whatsoever. I ask You for a perfectly healthy Mommy and Baby and Daddy and brother. I ask that You protect our family and be merciful to us.

It is not that we cannot bear what You give. For we know You will give us no more than we can bear. We know You walk with us through all the valleys. We know You never leave us or forsake us. It is just this one, this burden is so very heavy, so very hard. The possibilities the docs tell us, the ones I have read about...they are so very heartbreaking. Does our family need such a thing to happen? Do You need such a thing to happen? I know You work all for good for us. It is simply one of Your humble servants asking that You forgive, that You hear our plea, that You let him live merely because Your people who call on You ask that you do, because You can and because You love us.

For such imagined heartbreak that the alternative offers is unimaginable. I lay this matter humbly at Your feet, trusting You to see us through this as You have seen us through the

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

past....praying to You for Your miracle.

I love You, Lord.

In your name

Amen

* * *

June 29

Thursday

Sixty-six days of bed rest so far and twenty-eight to go, if delivery is actually July 28 as scheduled. We have seen the Lord's hand in so many ways. God does work in mysterious ways and Taylor has been able to work from home because her building was closed from the flood. Uncertainty regarding the timing of steroid shots was decided because of her admittance to the hospital when docs decided to give them.

Our Lord remains with us.

June 30

Friday

That morning He led me to this verse reassuring me of how to be during these tumultuous days.

"...and so, your faith and hope are in God." I Peter 1:21

"But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God." I Peter 2:20

God's Miracle of Sebastian

Another month had ended. Only God knew what this next month, this month of this awaited birth of Little One would bring. Only He knew the faith and the hope that would be required to sustain each of us.

PART THREE:
A GUARD OF ANGELS

JULY

July 1 Saturday

Many times Liz had said, “You know, Mom, God only needs to say the word and Sebastian can come into this world perfectly ok. That is what He did when He created light and that is what He did when He healed the centurion’s son.”

And that truth was the verse our Lord led me to that first day of July, the month of Sebastian’s birth.

*But say the word and my servant will be healed. Luke 7:7
Jesus said, “I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel.” Luke 7:9*

Matthew Henry wrote, “The centurion seeking to have his servant healed illustrates his faith by a comparison taken from his own profession, and is confident that Christ can as easily command away the sickness of his servant as he can command any of his soldiers, can as easily send an angel with commission to cure this servant of his as he can send a soldier on an errand. Christ has a sovereign power over all the creatures and all their actions, and can change the course of nature as He pleases, can rectify its disorders and repair its decays in human bodies; for all power is given to Him.”

July 7 Friday

This morning Taylor was rushed to the hospital again due to complications, but by evening she was able to come home

God's Miracle of Sebastian

again. Easy and brief to write, not so easy and brief to live.

July 10, 2006

Monday

Most days my faith was coupled with heartbreak. The PROM women would continue to share their stories. I include these stories so these precious ones and their loved ones might be remembered and so you might better understand.

I include them also because this is the truth we were facing and living each day.

I opened my email and read,

Well I was kinda hoping that mine would be one of those miracle stories, however it wasn't meant to be....

I went into labour in the early hours of Wednesday 5th July (at 37 weeks exactly - I prom'd at around 14/15 weeks) and delivered a beautiful baby boy who we named B by c section at 10am.

Unfortunately he had pulmonary hypoplasia and they couldn't get oxygen into him, he died very shortly after birth.

He weighed 7lb 15 oz and was perfect in every way, except his lungs didn't work. He looked just like his big brothers and when I held in him my arms he just looked like he was asleep.

I held him in my arms for the rest of the day and I cherish that time so much (this is something I am so glad I did). I sat and kissed him, cuddled him and stroked him and studied

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

*him so much so that I can see him now when I shut my eyes.
He was lovely.*

*I thought I could imagine how this would feel, however there
is no way I could of imagined the pain I feel right now.*

*My heart goes out to anyone who has gone through this or
will go through this.*

I wept and prayed and wrote her.

Dear L

*I have read and reread your email and the outpouring of love
and concern from these wonderfully supportive ladies.*

*Thank you so much for sharing the beautiful story of B. I
am sure there are more people than you can imagine who
are so full of sorrow for you and with you.... more than you
can imagine who are praying for you....all of us wishing we
could give you more than cyber hugs.*

*As a grandma living this day to day with my son and daughter
in law, living in their house, going through the challenges of
now 73 days of bedrest for Mommy, and Daddy trying to
work and be a husband, having a delightful 20 month old
who keeps us so often from going into the doldrums, I remain
hopeful for a miracle from God as you did. Taylor has had
no measurable fluid the docs can see the since week 12 when
she only had a three.*

*We are now at week 31 waiting for delivery at week 34 or
36.*

Once again I say thank you for sharing your story of B.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

Although I cannot imagine his face as you can, I imagine the picture of the two of you and it is a beautiful picture.

Regardless of what God's plan is for our Little One, I will hold onto words like those of the hymn we sang at church yesterday. May such words help you too.

*How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent word!
What more can He say than to you He hath said,
To you that for refuge to Jesus have fled?*

*"Fear not, I am with thee; O be not dismayed!
For I am thy God, and will give thee aid;
I'll strengthen help thee, and cause thee to stand,
Upheld by My righteous omnipotent hand."*

*"When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
my grace all-sufficient shall be thy supply;
the flame shall not hurt thee; I only design
thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine"*

*The soul that to Jesus hath fled for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to its foes;
That soul, though all hell shall endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no, never, no, never forsake."*

As a woman who has lived a lot of years and has seen her son go through many trials, this is truly one beyond my wildest imaginings. At first the pain of what seemed inevitable was unbearable. To see your child in such anguish is unbearable without God.

Now it is as if God has actually taken this burden onto Himself.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

One thing keeps striking me too. If it is His purpose to take Little One to Himself at birth, then I know we have not lost Little One because we know where he will be.

An older, wiser friend also told me to know in my heart and mind that Little One will either live here or with God, for no matter what he lives.

So it is with B. He lives.

And we will see him again. For we grieve, but not without hope.

May you feel God's everlasting arms beneath you as He sustains you.

Please forgive my lengthy email, but you have been on my heart so much and I wanted to give you words to comfort you, in addition to the prayers I lift up for you and your family.

*May you know His comfort and peace today and always,
Susan*

July 14 Friday

Problems began around 6:30 PM tonight and they drove to the hospital once more.

Each time this happened I would think this one could be the time. We all would. This was the third time in as many weeks that these parents had driven the over an hour drive

God's Miracle of Sebastian

to the hospital. Each time I would relive the horrible night when Rob was out of town and wonder what decision would be made.

And then God would stop me and still my heart. And He would remind me of the verse, my verse, my promise from God and once more He would give me strength and peace and hope.

They cried to You and were saved. In You they trusted and were not disappointed.

July 15 Saturday

This time they decided to admit Taylor and keep her at least a few days. The bleeding had slowed but not stopped. Their normal doctor, who knew and understood, was out of town.

Early that morning, the doctors met to talk about the best time to induce, even as early as this day. By late morning, they had decided to wait. Hubby Mick was on standby to catch a flight should things change.

I remembered the PROM ladies saying each day delivery could be delayed provided a bit more hope for this Little One to have strength to battle for his life.

I sent out this email.

Rob asked for specific prayers that there will be no further complications for Taylor or Little One, that they can delay delivery, and that Little One will truly be God's miracle Little one born healthy and with lungs. Thank you.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

I spent my days with 20 month old Luke. We read the morning's children's devotional entitled "Help with Problems". There was a picture of two little children with a big doggie in a wagon. One little person was pulling the wagon, the other pushing it.

The devotional read, "Oh, no! Parker and Jack have a big problem! They are trying to help move the dog, but he's too heavy. Even when we try to help others, we can still have problems. Even if we learn a lot about Jesus, we can still have problems. God never said that we won't have problems. But He does promise to help us when we do."

The paraphrased verse read ...we may have many problems, but the Lord will solve them all.

The prayer read, "Lord, thank you that you will help me today if problems or troubles come my way."

July 16 Sunday

Luke and I went to church in DC this morning and sang "Amazing Grace." Then we packed up a bunch of things and drove to Baltimore where we spent the day.

We arrived to see Taylor with the heart monitor attached to her belly and we all listened to Little One's perfect heart beat...doing just what a little heart is designed to do.

After Luke played with toys in the hospital room for a while and entertained his Mommy, he, Rob, and I went down to the inner harbor and ate fast food and walked over to Best

God's Miracle of Sebastian

Buy so Rob could buy a small refrigerator for Taylor's room. Rob has gotten a hotel room nearby so he could go there during the day to work

Rob and Taylor seem as well as can be expected. As long as there is no more bleeding, it seems the docs will let them wait. So they will remain in the hospital until delivery which could come at anytime.

Luke and I returned to DC and he had his bath and went to bed, hopefully for a bit.

It seemed so odd not to have Taylor down the hall, not to have meals to prepare, laundry to do, snacks to bring her, errands to run, so odd not to have Rob downstairs working or busy doing something.

Often Luke would wake up within an hour or so of having been put to bed. He would want to come into bed with me. Although he would wiggle, it was so very nice to have him nearby.

For the moment things were a strange quiet

July 18 Tuesday

I was given the night off. Taylor remained in the hospital, Rob took Luke to the inner harbor of Baltimore for dinner and then back to his hotel room. I returned to DC.

So often when I have been going through other difficult times, other things have prevented me from being able to think much about the difficult time. I think God may plan

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

it that way. That day Rob's and Taylor's beloved cat had escaped while the workmen were laying carpet in the recently flooded basement. As I tried to record the events of the day that evening, their dog whined from her kennel. Finally, the kitty was prayed for and found. And for the moment, the dog was quiet..

I thought about what tomorrow would hold. The workmen would come to repair the plaster ceiling from the air conditioning leak into the master bedroom. The yard people would complete the mulching and the lady who cleans the house would come. Keyla would come to keep Luke, who would not be there.

I would drive to Baltimore and bring Luke back to DC.

And we would wait some more.

We would cherish each moment and each beat of Little One's heart.

And we would be ever so still when Taylor would say, "He is moving around now – put your hand here and feel him."

July 19 Wednesday

Today is Jon's and Allie's ninth anniversary! I love to remember the day of our children's weddings. I will look at the clock and think about what we were all doing at that time nine years ago.

We are ever so thankful to our Lord for bringing Taylor and Rob together, Jon and Allie together, Liz and Clay together. I

God's Miracle of Sebastian

have a picture on my desk of the six of them doing some sort of dance at Jon's and Allie's wedding. They are one behind the other, hands on the shoulders of the one ahead of them. The dance has a name but I don't remember it.

Their faces are so filled with joy and I smile each and every time I look at it.

On it I have a verse from 3 John that reads,

"I have no greater joy than to hear my children walk in truth."

I returned to Baltimore for the night.

July 22, 2006

Saturday

Early Saturday morning all appeared to be the same and I returned to DC..

Their doc, who remained out of town, would see Taylor August 1. We were told that unless things changed, they would decide on a delivery date then.

I remained at their house in DC while Rob and Luke were with Taylor and Little One. I planned to return Sunday so Rob could come into DC to work.

As we drew nearer to Little One's birth date, our looking to our God became even more constant and essential, for without Him we would surely fall.

The prayer in Luke's little devotional book that day was

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

good for us all. 'Lord, please help me not to fall, for You can help me most of all.'

As I went about my day, I thought about sitting in Taylor's hospital room, watching Luke play with the train set his Daddy bought him and listening to Little One's heart beat so strongly. It was just impossible to imagine anything but joy to follow in the days to come.

As we would see and hear adorable newborns all around her hospital room, we longed even more for Little One's lungs to fill with air so his newborn cries would join the chorus of these others.

Jon and his family were packing to move from Texas to North Carolina. They planned to spend a few nights at our home in Memphis on their way. My NC sister was in Memphis now with our parents and her daughters would be there to visit the next weekend.

Liz and eleven-month old Libby planned to come to DC from Memphis next weekend for a few days. It would be so very good to see them. Mick would come as soon as we knew the date of delivery. He has always come when I have needed him.

That night I played beautiful hymns on my computer as I wrote and contemplated the days to come. Hymns bring such peace and joy and hope.

One of Taylor's favorites is "Lo, He comes in clouds descending." It is about Christ's return and below is the last verse.

I could almost hear her beautiful sweet voice singing the

God's Miracle of Sebastian

words.....

*View Him smiling, now determin'd, Ev'ry Evil to destroy!
All the nations now shall sing him,
Songs of everlasting Joy!*

O come quickly! Allelujah! Come Lord, come!

Then one of my favorites began...

*Let all mortal flesh keep silence,
And with fear and trembling stand;
Ponder nothing earthly minded,
For with blessing in His hand,
Christ our God to earth descendeth,
Our full homage to demand.
Rank on rank the host of heaven
Spreads its vanguard on the way,
As the Light of light descendeth
From the realms of endless day,
That the powers of hell may vanish
As the darkness clears away.
At His feet the six wingèd seraph,
Cherubim with sleepless eye,
Veil their faces to the presence,
As with ceaseless voice they cry:
Alleluia, Alleluia
Alleluia, Lord Most High!*

I thought about the truth that Little One is God's creation. God loves him far more than all of us together could ever possibly love him. He is the One Who makes that little heart beat so strongly. He is our Lord...the One who gives and the One who takes away.

But most of all He is the God of Hope.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

And then "Amazing Grace" played....

*Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come;
Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.*

*When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun,
we've no less days to sing God's praise than when we'd first begun.*

I thought about how we must humbly wait for our merciful Lord.

And I played once more the hymn that brought me such peace.

*Let all mortal flesh keep silence,
And with fear and trembling stand;
Ponder nothing earthly minded,
For with blessing in His hand,
Christ our God to earth descendeth,
Our full homage to demand.*

It was not until some hours later that day that we would know for certain that Little One was already making his way into this world at those very moments I was listening to those hymns.

Let all mortal flesh keep silence.....

* * *

At about ten Saturday night Rob called to say, "It's time."

God's Miracle of Sebastian

I felt the lump rise in my throat and I got dressed.

I got in the car and began again that long, dark, silent drive to Baltimore.

Soon prayer warriors were alerted and began their work. As I try to recall that night now, I remember things like being so thankful I had filled up the gas tank at dinner. I remember thinking how hard the rain was coming down and how careful I needed to be.

I called Mick and Liz and Jon and other dear ones.

I prayed and I drove.

I arrived at the hospital and joined Rob and Luke who had come from the hotel. By now Luke was asleep on the cot and within seconds Rob left to join Taylor in labor and delivery.

I curled up in bed beside by precious, grandson who was so peacefully sleeping, so unaware of the battle for life occurring just a few doors away in the delivery room where his mommy and daddy and little brother were.

By then it was Sunday, July 23.

My dear friend G. says there is something very special about being born on a Sunday. I hoped so.

As I cuddled with sleeping Luke, Rob would text me from the room so nearby with updates.

I would try to remain calm and quiet, as I learned that the long feared and dreaded possibility of infection was causing Taylor's and Little One's heart rates to accelerate.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

I would quietly report what was occurring to Mick and to Cynthia and to Jon and to Liz. Into the wee hours of the night, Liz would post to the blog so those who had been alerted could check and know what to pray.

I would call Cynthia. And we would pray.

During these middle of the night hours, I would also call my dear friend, who was at the beach with her family. She would rise from her bed and pray. She would encourage me, telling me how beautiful the moon was and how peaceful the ocean was and that God was with us.

There is no way to describe what I thought and felt when Rob sent this text message at 2:09AM, “Right now being born call Cynthia please”

And one message followed another from this Daddy as he watched and waited wondering if his wife and his child would be ok. Infection had been among our worst nightmares. Doctors and NICU people had described it in detail.

But our almighty God had combated every one of those dreaded scenarios with His promise of hope

At 210AM, Rob text messaged...“literally this minute...”

Followed by the 214AM message in which he simply wrote... “Born”...

Then at 215am... “Already born”

Inside this room where I was cuddled with Luke, I had no idea what was actually happening. How was Taylor? How

God's Miracle of Sebastian

was Little One?

I continued to update and pray with Cynthia and Mick and Liz and Jon.

We could all only imagine and pray and hope.

Finally I asked the question I feared asking.

I text messaged my son, "How are they?"

And the reply seemed to take an eternity and I waited.

Then across the screen of my little phone, I read words I shall never forget, words I cherish and weep over even now.

Little One's Daddy wrote at 223AM:

"Alive. Give me a few minutes."

* * *

In the whole scheme of life, never will things upset us as they have in the past.

The message, "Alive. Give me a few minutes" dwarfs every other concern.

Early that Sunday morning Liz posted to the blog:

"We know that Sebastian's life has been a miracle...the working of God."

Little One would face many dangers and we would face many scares that Sunday.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

The priest was called to baptize our Little One because things did not look good at all.

Concerns remained over Taylor's blood pressure

But this battle for Little One's life truly belonged and continues to belong to our Father in Heaven.

When I left tiny Sebastian that night, he looked so very weak and so very still.

I leaned over into his little incubator and kissed him and he responded. I cannot tell you exactly how I know he responded. I just knew that he knew he had been kissed and that he liked it.

That night I finally returned to the hotel and put Luke to bed.

But I could not go to sleep that night without writing another letter to my precious grandson, our amazing gift from our awesome Lord.

* * *

Sunday
July 23

Dear Little One now Sebastian

Last night I went to bed at your house to wake up to your Daddy's call saying "It's time". Your Mommy had been having contractions off and on most of the day.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

I drove in the rain to Baltimore and went straight to your Mommy's room where she had been for a week. She was already gone and your Daddy and brother Luke were there. Of course your big brother was asleep. Your daddy left and soon he sent me a text message saying you were being born at that moment...it was a little after two in the morning today, Sunday, July 23, 2006.

Twelve docs were there. None believed you would be alive. Mommy had no fluid docs could see since March 9 and fluid was essential for your lungs.

But Mommy and Daddy heard you cry! And you were alive!

Daddy cut your umbilical cord and off you were taken to NICU.

At 209 am your Daddy text messaged me, "Right now being born call Cynthia please" At 210..."literally this minute..." At 214 :Born"...215 "Already born"

I quickly wrote, "How are they?"

Then words I shall never forget and cherish and weep over even this moment.

Your Dad wrote at 223AM:

"Alive. Give me a few minutes."

During your birth your BP and your Mommy's BP skyrocketed...it was scary...we all prayed. Then you were born and seemed ok.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

As your Daddy said you were *pink and crying, not blue...*

Then, he wrote, "*complications, things not good*"

At 525 this morning your Daddy came in.

Extremely bad...they are calling in the chaplain...you were baptized.

Many prayed again. Immediately, your big brother Luke and I went to the chapel at the hospital and prayed for you. "The Lord is my shepherd" is on the mosaic type wall in that chapel. I text messaged your Daddy the verse I opened to in the Bible there, "I will wait for the Lordand I will have hope in Him Is 8:17

Then you were described as critically stable.

Around 11 am today I got to see you. Little tiny tubes and cords were running out your mouth and tummy and all sorts of monitors were hooked up to your small body.

When I left you the first time, I went to the bathroom and wept. Some crying because we are so thankful you are alive and some because you are so tiny with so many tubes.

I saw you several more times this day. Each time your tiny hand would grasp my finger. Over and over I sang to you, "Jesus loves Sebastian this I know." I prayed with you and for you.

I talked with you and told you these tubes and wires would not always be there.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

I told you God would be strong when you felt weak. I told you He is with you always. Tonight MeMe and Cynthia and Jon and Liz and I and so many others have all prayed that His angels surround and protect and guard you from Satan and danger and physical and emotional harm.

Your little four and one half pound body seems so frail yet so strong.....as your Mommy says, you are such a fighter.

Our most gracious heavenly Father has indeed granted us a miracle this day....your life!

When the people said no, our God said yes.

My little verse I have been carrying on my cell phone says, "Then they will know that I am their God."

Psalm 22:2 has been our verse for you for months now....
They cried to you and were saved; in You they trusted and were not disappointed.

I pray you will live a long full life, little Sebastian not even yet 24 hours old.

May our gracious God hold you in the palm of His hand as we all pray for your precious life which is so endeared to us.

Rest well this night, Little One. May you know God's peace as you rest. May His angels of protection be with you this night and always.

I love you, Little One.....

July 24
Monday

Little One would spend many days in the NICU and then many months in another hospital. As the days went by medical people would add to his little chest a tube and to his little mouth and lungs a ventilator, and plaster casts onto his tiny legs and splints on his arms.

And I would stand in awe of God's miracle that was before me.

An air pocket in his lung right after birth, problems with the output of his ventricles became the kind of news we would receive. One thing would resolve itself and another would occur.

As always, that Monday morning God led me to the verse I needed for the day.

“And they will call Him Immanuel-which means ‘God with us’...” Matthew 1:23

I knew He was with us.

Little One held my finger each visit as I sang “Jesus loves Sebastian’ to him. All life is precious and each life totally dependant upon our Lord's mercy. Little Sebastian just seems so much more dependant...so very frail, yet such a fighter. I still tell him to this day that God is with him and that when he feels weak it is OK, for God will be his strength.

That night Luke and I went to the hotel. I spoke with Rob before bed and he said that things were status quo with little precious Sebastian. I talked with Mick and with Liz and

God's Miracle of Sebastian

Jon.

Liz told me that when she was at our church the day before, she told one of our very faithful prayer warrior pastors about Little One coming into the world crying. That amazing man of God stopped where he was in our most traditional church hall and fell to his knees and lifted his arms to praise our merciful Lord.

We posted to the blog our request for prayer that God's angels continue to minister to Sebastian as there are so many wonderful medical people, but so many errors that can be made.

We reminded readers that twelve doctors were in the room to see Little One be born either not alive or to live only moments.

We reminded them that no man has given much hope, but that this is not about man.

We thanked them once more for their faithful prayers to our omnipotent and loving and most merciful Father, for He is with us all.

We ended the post with His promise to us.

They cried to You and were saved; in You they trusted and were not disappointed. Ps 22:5

And then we added the verse I had been carrying on a post-it on my cell phone.

Then they will now that I am the Lord...Ezekiel 25:17

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

I went to bed that night and was awakened with word from Rob:

Please pray that the output of Sebastian's ventricles remains between 120 and 160 and that it does not drop below 100. This is very important.

July 25 Tuesday

The sound that alerts me that a text message has come in on my cell phone is a sound that I do not imagine I will ever forget. It is a sound that is piercing and brief and can now wake me from my deepest sleep. After a not so sound sleep, I awoke at 5:30 that morning to that sound.

I grabbed my phone and with fumbling went through the procedures to read:

Sebastian had a pneumothorax overnight that caused his vital signs to drop to a worrisome level. They are back up at this point but they seem extremely concerned about this issue. The pneumothorax was roughly 40 ccs in size. He was down to needing 70 percent oxygen and is now up to 100 percent. The 70 number is much more preferred. Ideal would be less than 35.

Another new term I had never heard.

What on earth is a pneumothorax? I read on my computer screen.

“A pneumothorax is a pocket of air between the two layers of pluera, resulting in a collapse of the lung....ventilators

God's Miracle of Sebastian

can cause pressure damage to the lungs that leads to pneumothorax. Pain may be felt in the shoulder, neck and abdomen. A recurring pneumothorax can cause considerable disability.”

While I slept with little Luke in his Mommy's and Daddy's bed the night before that message, he cried but with no tears and not awake. His face would grimace and he would cry out...a cry unlike any I have seen him ever have. I would kiss his little face and talk softly to him until the crying stopped, but it would happen over and over.

Before I went to bed that night another text message from Rob arrived.

“Major prayer for tonight is that there are no more pneumothorax and that the doctors are able to lower the pressure on Sebsatian's ventilator while maintaining “good gases” something they check every hour or two. All of this is extremely important and a fine balance is critical.”

I posted to prayer warriors again. I sent them Rob's prayer request, as I would each that he would text. And I added,

“When I saw Sebastian today, the emotions are overwhelming to see our tiny little grandson with so many tubes yet fighting so hard. Again I sang Jesus loves you,.....

Little Ones to him belong,

They are weak

But He is strong.....

.....reminding dear sweet Sebastian that he has been Little

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

One since his birth

and that he needs to rest because he is weak,

but God is strong.....

Before I went to bed that night I thought of other PROM ladies and grandmothers who had suffered such heartache and anger. I longed to offer them comfort and hope. That night I wrote to them.

Hello everyone

As you know we are in the midst of a battle for Little Sebastian's life...but the battle is God's and He will be victorious.

I have lived much longer than most of you ladies and have seen much heartache and sorrow. It is never easy. Our spirits are overwhelmed. I hope it never is easy.

A young man I met recently had suffered much loss and said he was just used to it. I imagine he has found that trying to be used to it protects him in some way. We all try to find ways to cope..... drugs or endless activity or eating or not eating or being angry or being depressed.

Christ knew Lazarus was dead and He knew He would raise him from the dead but He still wept. Before He was crucified even Christ was overwhelmed. He asked God to take this cup from Him, but relinquished to His Father's will. Many times the Bible tells us He deeply mourned or was saddened. We are created in His image and we will feel all that depth of sorrow as He did and does. Sometimes it is excruciating, seemingly unbearable. Loss through death is never something God wanted.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

Even when we know we will see the person again, we are still broken hearted. Yet even in our sorrow, we just must maintain hope. Without it despair will set in. But if we persevere, hope will come...it always does.

We must not allow the evil one to have the tiniest bit of pleasure thinking we have no hope. In spite of our deepest trials and deepest sorrows, we know what we experience today is like a blink of the eye for God.

There will be a time of no more tears. We must wait for it knowing it will come, living in the hope of that day. Someday this earth as we know it will pass away. The lion and the lamb will lie down together. And there will be peace. And death will be no more.

As we live moment to moment watching our tiny grandson fight for his life, I hold tenaciously to those truths as much as I ever have. I see my oh so sad son return from the NICU tonight – he has talked to docs....He says if their son lives, we may be here months....I tell him we can do months ...we have already done five.....I say that because I trust my God..... no matter what.

I know what we see is not all there is....I recently lost a dear life long friend. It was so hard. Yet God reminded me it is as if that person is on the other side of a windowless wall...I just cannot get over there right now.....but God above sees us all as alive....that helps me a lot....

July 26
Wednesday

Rob would go to the hospital very early each morning. At 605AM I received this text from him and posted it to the blog.

“Sebastian had a good gas this morning. They brought oxygen down to 80% overnight and there were no more pneumothorax. His billirubin is up so they have him on more lights to help get under control. The phrase for the night was “Good eventful” He is still not stable. Pray for no more pneumothorax, that he keeps having good gases, and his vitals stay where they are.”

I added some news I hoped readers would want to know

Our Lord has been so faithful and so merciful to us.....your prayers and concern have been so deeply moving....there are now words...

Little Luke still sleeps in the big bed in our hotel room down the road from his little brother he has not yet met. But when he saw Sebastian's picture the first time, even with tubes and tape and all....little Luke's face broke into a grin.

Children are a gift from the Lord...Babies are His reward.....We cherish each moment.....

Taylor left the hospital yesterday and they spent one night at one location and now have another place nearby through Aug 9, then another starting after that. Thank you for your prayers regarding their housing.

Little Sebastian is not stable. But our hope and our prayers

God's Miracle of Sebastian

are strong and our God is omnipotent.

Rob talked with a doc today and it seems that if Sebastian lives this will be a very long stay at NICU...maybe months.

So, we can do months, right? If Sebastian can fight, we can too! If God wants it, He will supply what is needed.

Please pray Sebastian will become stable and that his vitals and gas remain good....please pray for healthy heart and lungs...that no damage will be done to them. Please pray for no more complications, no more pneumothorax or heart problems, pray the infection and jaundice will clear up. Please pray for all aspects of his health to become excellent.

Pray God's angels of protection will continually minister to Sebastian giving him all he needs and keeping from him that which might harm him. Please pray Satan will be kept from him. Please continue to pray for Rob and Taylor.

Mostly thank this God of ours Who has in His mercy and love brought this little miracle baby so many days into this world, when no man believed it could happen. Praise Him for the many who have prayed so faithfully for this little precious and much loved gift from the Lord.

By the way I don't think I told you, but the dark haired resident doc who planned to take Little One months ago, who sat by Taylor's bed that night when Rob was gone while I sat praying in the corner of her hospital room, the one who did not offer any hope.... That young dark haired resident is the one who God had on call the night of July 22 and he is the one who delivered Little One!

July 27
Thursday

I posted to the blog this text from Rob that arrived at 6:05am.

“His PIP count went up overnight from 30 to 31. Want it to go down. It’s the pressure count they are using on the ventilator. Pray his next gas looks good and no more pneumothorax.”

And the update that followed read,

Please keep in mind each of these measures they take have extreme risk that accompanies them.

As in the miracle of Sebastian’s birth and his first cry that surprised all who heard, the miracle of his survival and healthy life will surprise all....and everyone will know it has been the almighty hand of our merciful God at work.

They cried to you and were saved; in You they trusted and were not disappoint

July 28
Friday

Rob sent the morning text and I posted it to the blog, knowing prayer warriors were ready.

600AM Not good morning Lots of issues. Rate and pressure are both up this morning. Fellow is on with attending to see what to do next

God's Miracle of Sebastian

614AM They have brought up rate to 480 and PIP to 34 due to bad gases. The doctor said it is a step back. Be praying that his next gas in an hour or so improves.

815AM Gases were not so great so they've gone up on the PIP to 35. Next one in next hour or so needs to be better.

They cried to you and were saved; in You they trusted and were not disappointed.

July 29 Saturday

Prayers were answered and the previous day proved after all to be a most eventful day. After the first hours of the morning our merciful Lord once again showed His power. They moved Sebastian from one type of ventilator to another...a good thing.

They took out his catheter and the missing tubes and the quieter ventilator made all the difference as our eyes looked on this most tender and blessed Little One.

But by Saturday morning Rob's text message arrived at 5:24AM.

“Not a great night. Gases not good they are doing another right now. They had to increase rate to 40 from 35 and pressure from to 22, reinsert catheter as he has not been urinating on his own all night”

Each moment, as you can see, we fluctuated between good news and bad, and not that we liked it, this was becoming a

way of life quite familiar to us.

July 31
Monday

We solicited prayers that Sebastian would have a bowel movement. His bilirubin count was varying so he was put back under the light which should help. However, in the past it had even gone up with the light on. I learned the possible reasons for bilirubin being up are many, but as I understand it when our red blood cells die they must be able to leave our body, being processed by the liver and going out as waste. The light helps process them and having a bowel movement would help too.

I wrote to our blog reading audience,

Luke's little devotional book title for today is "Saying Thank You." It is about one little boy giving another a birthday gift and the first said thank you. It goes on to say that God gives us presents everyday and how we need to remember to say thank you to God for everything He gives you everyday.

The verse is Ephesians 5:20 and this version reads, "Always give thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The prayer reads, "Thank you, God, for gifts You send. In Jesus name I pray. Amen"

Please thank God today for Little Sebastian, for His mercy and continuing protection of this Little One. Please thank God for his first week birthday, for the precious gift he is from our gracious heavenly Father.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

I included text messages received from Rob and knew we were all being upheld by our Lord and the prayers of His people.

554PM last night

Down to 55 % oxygen, 6 on dopamine, 5 on fentanyl. His blood count is low so they have him on blood products to raise. Otherwise sounds like a positive day thus far.

1146PM last night

His gases have not been good. They raised breaths per minutes again to 45. If they do not improve in the next few hours, he'll have to go back on the jet ventilator.

526AM today

Bilirubin is back up so lights back on. They've taken down oxygen to 40%. Dopamine down to 4. last night. Oxygen level has dropped lower than they would like. Otherwise not a bad night.

I asked what I did not even need to ask for these faithful prayer warriors knew what to pray, *“Please continue to pray for Sebastian’s heart and lungs and overall health to just be perfect. The Lord tells us to aim for perfection, so that is our prayer! Pray His angels of protection will guard Sebastian in all his ways.”*

I told our readers my dear hubby Mick had been with us for this week and that he would return home after his time here with our newest grandchild. I told them that Liz and their 11 month old Libby had arrived the night before. I closed by telling them how we thank God for each of them who continued to be such faithful prayer warriors for this precious gift from Him. I understood even more than ever

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

that our true help is in the Lord.

Innumerable procedures and changes were taking place every day. But the one thing that has remained constant and unchangeable has been the hand of our Sovereign, loving and merciful Lord. Indeed He does not change and He has been steadfast in His protection of Little One. Through many dangers dear Sebastian has already come. The day Sebastian was born I went to the chapel with Luke.

I saw and read this verse:

Help me O Lord my God, save me in accordance with Your love. Let them know that it is Your hand, that you, O Lord, have done it. Psalms 109: 26-27

At 848PM I received a text message from Rob. *Sebastian did have a bowel movement and they have taken another line out so hopefully they can begin to feed him through his IV...*

What a way to end a month!

* * *

In the days to follow Little One and we would continue to experience the faithfulness of Divine Love. August and September in the hospital and November to his own home.

Famous preacher Charles Spurgeon wrote, "If one is looking for anything whatsoever from the world, it a poor "hope" indeed. But if we look to God for the supply of our wants whether in temporal or spiritual blessing, our "hope" will not be in vain.

AUGUST

August 1 Tuesday

I opened my Bible that Tuesday and read,

“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him Who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
Romans 8: 37-39

I wrote:

A bird is sitting on the window sill outside the little house Rob has rented across from the hospital where Sebastian sleeps. He looks in at me periodically and I out at him. We are not two feet apart but glass separates us. I am listening to music on my computer playing, “Christ the Lord has risen today!”

Liz is downstairs with Libby, as Taylor is with Luke. Jon and his little family are doing the last few things at their home they are moving from this afternoon. Rob is at work.

Today Liz went up with Taylor to Sebastian’s room at the NICU. I kept the two little people. We watched digger trucks from a hallway view out to the work sight. We then went to the hospital bear room, a little area where stuffed animal gaze out of windows to little eyes returning the look.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

Soon Liz came down with a light in her eyes...”You must go up Mom!”

“Is she holding him?” I asked.

“Yes,” she said tenderly, “she is holding him.”

I hurried through the hospital halls with tears filling my eyes.

There they were... a sight not my eyes nor my mind could comprehend. Little Sebastian for the first time being held close to his Mommy’s breast

Never such a look of peace had I seen on his sweet face.

I visited briefly and left the mother and child to be as alone as is possible in a hospital.

I returned to the now familiar chapel and thanked our Lord once more for what doc after doc said was impossible....for the life of little Sebastian, for His leading and hand throughout all of this, for His angels, for the amazing and caring staff, for his Mommy now holding him, for his Daddy’s steadfast resolve.

I thanked Him for those who had been praying. Mick told me yet today of another email he received in which a woman he does not know who said her entire church is praying for Sebastian. Seems thousands must be praying for this Little One.

Nursing this Little One was out of the question so soon began tube feedings. We asked for prayers that all aspects of his digestive system would function perfectly – that he would

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

digest and eliminates perfectly. We asked for prayers as docs would put casts on his legs for club feet. We sought prayers that there would be no new complications and that Sebastian will continue to grow in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man

August 2 Wednesday

What a wonderful day!

The ultrasound technician who had gone through the entire pregnancy, who had seen this Little One with is inside his mommy's womb, who had heard the dismal predictions, came by to see him.

As we stood over Sebastian's "little house", we hugged and cried....for this tiny child, this awesome miracle of our Lord's.

August 3 Thursday

Readers of the blog that day saw my verse and read our update.

I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. I well remember them and my soul is downcast within me. Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope.

Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, "The Lord is my

God's Miracle of Sebastian

portion; therefore I will wait for Him."

The Lord is good to those whose hope is in Him, to the one who seeks Him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord. Lamentation 3: 21-26

Today I was in Sebastian's room and a lady was so quietly cleaning his room you might not notice her. I had been holding his little hand and singing to him through the port hole of his little house.

She and I spoke to one another and then we were both quiet.

I am really not sure who spoke next but we exchanged words...her comments were sort of broken, but so very clear....

She looked at me and then at Sebastian.

She said, "he will be ok...the spirit...I say a prayer each room..... I mop the floors...not my job... I do it for the babies..."

I asked her name. She said Ethel. I told her I would pray for her.

I have not told you yet about Frances. I did not know why she took a seat nearby Mick, Luke and me last week on the completely empty hospital patio. We said hi to each other. She is a security guard here. Somehow we communicated that we are both Christians, that we love the Lord.

I told her very little about our dear Sebastian. I did not need to tell her much. She seemed to know.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

Her eyes were so deep.

I can still picture her eyes as she looked far away into the distance, a look I do not think I will ever forget. They were focused on whatever she saw so far away and she said, "He will be all right. I see it....."

When we parted, I asked why she sat by us when the patio was empty.

She said the Lord told her to.

Luke and I had found things to do at the hospital. It had been so very hot, so we found indoor activities. We would get ice cream. We would go to the bear room. We would go to the flower shop.

We would sit and look at fish in the aquarium in the waiting room. On that particular day two fish actually came right over to me and began looking me in the eyes.

I am not exaggerating when I say they were so very close to me. Even Luke giggled.

It was as if they were talking to me. I used to have an aquarium and I identified them to Luke telling him that type of fish is called an angel fish.

I named the fish Frances and Ethel. Had God shown me these angel fish? Had He sent angels, Frances and Ethel, to minister to us and to Sebastian?

I saved what I am about to say for the last part of the blog that day. The memory still makes me cry and it is hard to see

God's Miracle of Sebastian

the keyboard with tear filled eyes.

Yesterday they took Sebastian off the ventilator and just put a special pressure oxygen tube in his nose. That means that for the first time since the moment of his birth there was nothing down his throat.

I was the first to be in his room after the docs finished taking him off the ventilator.

At that moment I heard something wonderful and amazing.

For the first time I saw our Little One open his mouth.

And out of that little precious mouth, I *heard* the beautiful cry of our tiny grandson.....our precious gift from the Lord

August 4 Friday

Have faith in God, Jesus answered. I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, Go throw yourself into the sea, and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

Forever I will be thankful to my merciful God for not allowing my doubt to prevent His miracles, for not allowing my lack of faith to nullify His faithfulness.

Forever I will be thankful to Him for those prayer warriors who never doubted in their hearts the miracle of Sebastian.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

As the days passed, our little man continued to need prayers. As he fought his addiction to fentanyl, they put him on morphine. We watched his fretfulness and flailing arms and heart racing, and we knew it was only God's almighty hand that sustained and protected him. And our hearts remain continually humbled.

When I left him that day, he tightly held my finger and looked at me from his little clear plastic house.

Once again I prayed with him and sang to him. I talked softly to him and loved him.

August 5 Saturday

Blessed is she who has believed what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished.

Take a moment and look at the first joint of your pointer finger. All four of Little One's tiny fingers could wrap around the first joint of my pointer finger. In comparison, his 21 month old brother Luke's four fingers wrap around my first two joints and their daddy's four fingers extend past the length of my entire finger. I have now held each of those three hands many times.

Sebastian's head is about the size of my palm.

When I entered his room today, M, the nurse who yesterday received a sad face sticker from her superior because she complained when she was not allowed to be Sebastian's nurse for the day, asked me if I wanted to hold my grandson.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

I put on the yellow gown and sat down. Each entrance into the NICU involved security and then scrubbing your hands with two solutions up to your elbows. The gown offered these little ones additional protection from the dangerous bacteria possibly lurking on you.

M. arranged all Sebastian's tubes and hoses. Then she handed the little bundle to me. And for the first time I held him.

Those tiny fingers automatically wrapped around the first joint of my pointer finger. After an indescribable hour, I floated out of the NICU and out of the hospital.

As I walked back to the little place we were staying, I called Mick. I told him about holding Sebastian.

I also told him that at that very moment the bright blue sky held one white billowy cloud which blocked the sun and truly caused a silver lining with rays that spread out across the sky.....

August 8 Tuesday

Before I left Baltimore Monday to meet Rob's brother and his family in NC and to wait for the moving van, I held Little Sebastian so close to me in his NICU room. Holding his little head in the palm of my hand, I sang to him. He yawned. I laughed.

Love had blossomed.

He was moved to a bassinet. Such a seemingly insignificant thing as a bassinet, we used to take for granted but will never

again.

Attached to his bassinet is the verse from Zephaniah that Liz wanted read to him about how God will quiet him with His love and rejoice over him with singing. Attached also is a circle drawing from his three year old cousin Nathan and a sticker art work from his brother. Zoe and Alex had selected a fabric zebra for him that he adores even today.

He is still on oxygen and is being fed from a feeding tube. He has little casts on both legs. He has lots of monitors hooked up to him.

But he has lots of love too.....especially from our most gracious Lord Who has also held him in the palm of His hand and blessed and protected him.

Rob spent last night in DC. Taylor's parents and Luke are with her and Sebastian in Baltimore. I plan to return to Baltimore Thursday and then home on Friday for my Dad's 88th birthday.

Yesterday as I was driving to NC, my tears flowed as I tried so hard to thank my God for His miracle of Sebastian. I have been touched to the core of my being...changed forever, as many have said they have been by this miracle.

I felt God asking if I felt as overwhelmed, as touched, as changed by the miracle of His Son.

August 11 Leaving DC

Yesterday terrorists were arrested in Britain and I am now

God's Miracle of Sebastian

sitting at the DC airport. Security is tight! There are no empty seats where I am sitting. I just went through a weird new security machine that you step into and it blows air at you from different little pockets. I wonder if that is what it was like when Scotty was beamed up.

I returned to Baltimore from NC last night after a wonderful visit with our son and his family settling into their new home and then a brief visit with my sister who lives in a nearby town.

I ate dinner with Luke and his mommy and her parents. Then I went to the hospital and stayed for the night. As I held Little Sebastian this morning, I knew I was holding a miracle. The feelings that transpired between us are indescribable. How does a grandmother express the love she has for her grandchildren?

His hands are in splints much of the time now, but his hands were free this morning so his little fingers wrapped around my pointer finger. He was receiving mommy's milk through a tube that leads down his throat into his tummy. His eyes were opened much of the time and we just gazed into each other's eyes.

I knew the time was coming when I must leave and drive to DC and meet Rob so he could take me to the airport to catch my flight. I softly stroked Little One's blonde hair and spoke gentle grandma things to him.

The tears were difficult to hold back.....they still are as I sit in this crowded, security filled airport....

I hugged Sebastian's daddy goodbye and got out of his car. My body then entered another world, the world most of you

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

have been in.

Yesterday we received word Sebastian will be moved to a step down unit at another hospital. The hope is he will no longer require NICU by next week. Decisions must be made about what is best for him.

I requested that our prayer warriors continue to praise our Lord for all he has done and continues to do, as well as praying for His continued protections and wisdom as decisions are made...

I had not been home in almost six weeks and even then for only a few days. I had been in DC or Baltimore most of the time since before Easter.

Our three year old grandson at home called me three times yesterday to tell me it is only one more day!

Today is my Dad's 88th birthday and I will be home to see and to kiss him and Mom...to celebrate life with them.

August 13 Sunday

I was uneasy as well as pleased that the hospital wanted to move three week old Sebastian from the NICU to a step down facility within the next week.

As a result of my uneasiness and need for reassurance, I sought counsel from wonderful nurses who adored Little One and continue to keep in touch with us. In my email I thanked them once more for their care and love for our Little One.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

And I asked what they thought of this proposed move.

And the response came.

You were wondering about my thoughts on Sebastian's upcoming transfer.....I think it is an exciting time, since it is the next step before coming home!!! He is doing so well that he does not require intensive care anymore!!!!

And yes, most parents/families are anxious about transferring their babies to a lower-level care facility, especially after having spent a significant amount of time in the NICU with all of our strict rules and constant observation! It is normal!!

But it is time for Sebastian to be treated like the healthy little guy that he is, he will get to sleep more and not be poked and probed as frequently, he will be able to be held more, played with more, and he will be able to focus on eating, sleeping, growing and being loved.

Staying in the NICU for longer than medically necessary usually increases the risk for a hospital acquired infections and all of our rules prevent him from spending most of his time with all of you guys, which is what he needs most now!!

So, put your worries aside and embrace the next step of Sebastian's journey, he is an amazing little guy and he is showing all of us that he wants to come home as soon as possible!!!

And then another.

I think he is making progress leaving here and will have

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

more stimulation in other centers with child life specialists who come play with the children. I believe they are talking about transferring him in the next few days. The docs here are very good and wouldn't let him leave if he wasn't ready to go. If you have any problems don't hesitate to call us or email us.

Take care and keep in touch

Such help, counsel and encouragement was invaluable.

We will be forever grateful for those people God brought to us to help care for Little One.

August 14 Monday

Daddy's 88th was wonderful and his 82 year old brother who has the same birth date flew in from Texas and they along with their 86 year old sister (who five months later went to be with the Lord) celebrated that night. Mom and my other aunt were there as was Mick.

I have prayed many times that Sebastian would have a good long full life, maybe even live as long as my Daddy. He is now 3 weeks old!

We sought prayer that the casts on his legs might only need to be changed once more and that his legs would be fine. That he would continue to be able to eat from a bottle- he did very well today in his one feeding, but he still gets most nutrition from a tube into his little tummy. That his lungs would develop and be healthy-he is still on oxygen and his saturation levels vary.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

It is so difficult to explain how little dear Sebastian has changed our lives forever. He has been through more than all of us put together and yet is so very tiny. I cannot describe to you the anguish I have seen on his little face....the bruises and injuries to his fragile body.

But our Lord's touch in his little life and tiny body has touched our lives forever.... leaving us without words or even thoughts.....just so very humbled and so very thankful..... in a way which once again makes me want to echo words of the hymn we sang at church yesterday....

“Let all mortal flesh keep silence.....ponder nothing earthly minded”

Interestingly enough, that was the same hymn I was listening to before I received Rob's call the night of July 22 saying, “It's time.”

August 15 Tuesday

It is I; don't be afraid. John 6:20

Matthew Henry writes about this verse that, “..... nothing more powerful to comfort the saints than this, “I am Jesus Whom thou lovest; it is I that love thee, and seek thy good; be not afraid of Me, nor of the storm. When trouble is nigh Christ is nigh.”

Mick and I wanted to have a small praise and worship service with these most faithful group of people who continue to pray for Sebastian. To lead it we contacted the pastor who fell to

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

his knees when he heard of Sebastian's birth. He replied that he would be honored to do so and added,

This young man is a gift of God to so many of us who have prayed and wept over his hard coming into this world. Now we can thank the Lord who has shown such favor. When they come to town I am eager to see him, please. Now that he is in this world with a name let us pray that he may know the Lord from the earliest times and that his name will be written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

We also invited people via email as well as on our blog site.

<http://miracles-littleone.blogspot.com/>

We wrote:

From the beginning of this journey God has given this verse from Psalm 22:5

They cried to You and were saved; in You they trusted and were not disappointed.

Then after a few weeks He gave me another verse that He had me know I would one day pray and claim. I have had it written in the front of my prayer journal for months....It is Isaiah 25:9

Surely this is our God...we trusted in Him and He saved us.

God has made it so clear that Sebastian's birth is His doing. Docs at Johns Hopkins were ready to take him months ago, but Rob and Taylor refused. Docs at NYU tried their procedure, but to no avail. NICU docs and others said he would not live. Only a few held out hope.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

Over and over they were told, amniotic fluid is essential for lung development. There is no measurable fluid. He cannot live.

But on the Saturday that Taylor went into labor God gave me this verse:

Ezekiel 47:11 the water from the sanctuary flows to them....

I have taken many seminary classes and I know there is huge danger in taking verses out of context, but I had chills over my entire body when I read that verse. I knew my God was speaking to me, reassuring me that He would provide the water that would be needed for these lungs.

Then within hours these lungs that would not be there, this baby who could not cry...this Little One cried.....

So please come join us for,

Surely this is our God...we trusted in Him and He saved us.

**August 16
Wednesday**

The time had come for Sebastian to move and the nurse had me pegged when she said some families are fearful of the move. God once again gave me the verse I needed for that day.

..we and the people there pleaded with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, "Why are you weeping and

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”
Acts 21:13

Matthew Henry's note clarified...."In the turning of the hearts of our friends or ministers, this way or that way (and it may be quite another way than we would wish) we should eye the hand of God and submit to that."

I asked for prayers telling the warriors that Sebastian would soon be moved to a step down unit in DC. I asked that they pray for every aspect of that move to go perfectly explaining that traffic between Baltimore and DC can be awful or wonderful.

I asked for prayers for every detail of his oxygen, his care in the ambulance, his feeding, his dealing with the change, leaving his current situation and having new docs and nurses...I asked that they please pray for our omnipotent Lord's hand of protection to remain with Little One.

And as always I tacked on our verse, His promise.

They cried to You and were saved; in You they trusted and were not disappointed.

August 19
Saturday

Sebastian was moved that Wednesday to a hospital in Washington DC and seemed to adjust fine. Although I had concerns about the move and the change, God reminded me through His word that He was with Sebastian.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

David said about Him, "I saw the Lord always before me. Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken." Acts 2:25

August 20 Sunday

I wrote my sister.

*"From the fullness of His grace we have received one blessing after another"
is my verse I just read.....it is so true, isn't it?*

When you look at your life and I look at mine, we see how He has truly blessed us and certainly not because we deserve it.

Sebastian is truly a result of God's mercy and His love.... four weeks old today! You may have seen we are having a prayer time for Sebastian at church today at 5. The minister who fell to his knees the day Sebastian was born will lead it...

Liz will sing..."Let all mortal flesh keep silence..."

August 23 Wednesday

I emailed Rob and Taylor a summary of the amazing Prayer Service which is in the appendix.

My day began with God's sweet verse for me.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

He tends His flock like a shepherd; He gathers the lambs in His arms and carries them close to His heart.

I posted to the blog and asked for prayers.

Sebastian was one month old yesterday and we are so thankful to our merciful Lord for this precious Little One! At the family meeting today, Rob and Taylor learned Sebastian will be in the hospital another four to six weeks. His little lungs are progressing as if he were born at 24 weeks instead of 33 weeks.

His leg became swollen yesterday so they have removed his casts and now will wait until the sore on his foot heels before they can be replaced. They have another meeting scheduled for August 30 in which they will find out more about his little legs but for now they are making new splints for his hands and legs.

Please continue your prayers for Rob, Taylor, Luke and especially tiny Sebastian. I read yesterday the verse about an angel appearing to strengthen Christ before He went to the cross. Please thank God for His angels He sends to His people, as well as for the truth that He gathers the lambs and carries them close to His heart. Pray He will continue to bless Little One in every way, protecting him from Satan and danger and physical emotional spiritual and mental harm.

August 30
Wednesday

If you make the Most High your dwelling – even the Lord Who is my refuge- then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent. For He will command His angels

God's Miracle of Sebastian

concerning you, to guard you in all your ways...

I had returned to DC and I spent much of the day cradling dear little Sebastian in my arms. Taylor and I rode in the hospital van with Sebastian and his nurse to meet Rob at Children's Hospital to have new casts put on those little legs. Most likely the next day they would put new splints on his tiny hands. We were told it seems he has a little pneumonia in one lung so they began antibiotics. He remains on several medications, as well as oxygen and the feeding tube.

As he lay on the big table at Children's Hospital and four medical people and his parents and I observed, we saw a most calm, tiny, bright eyed Little One, undisturbed by the bright lights and the taping of his legs. Maybe it was that he has grown accustomed to such. Maybe it was his Mommy holding his hand and his Daddy holding his hand gently on his little head. Maybe it was C.C.'s and others prayers.

Maybe it was His angels guarding him in all his ways.... once again.

SEPTEMBER

September 5 Tuesday

Sebastian is now six weeks old. God's miracle of Sebastian is continually a part of me. I remain humbled and awed by God's loving and merciful hand in Little One's life.

I had been in DC for a week and had spent hours each day in the nursery holding him and singing to him and praying with him and lowly playing Christian lullaby music we played for him in the NICU.

Sometimes he would sleep.

Sometimes he would look deeply into my eyes

Rarely would he cry.

And sometimes he would smile.

The plaster casts went all the way from his toes to his hips and the next day the plan would be to saw these casts off and replace them with new ones.

A special wedge bed keeps him at an angle to help his breathing rate which seems to often go to above 100 breaths per minute. They plan to test to see if he has reflux problems.

Decisions over whether splints or taping is best for his hands, antibiotics for suspected pneumonia and x-rays for signs of improvement were typical events in a day. He would drink about one ounce from a bottle and the rest from a tube

God's Miracle of Sebastian

feeding.

Friday would mark Sebastian's actual 40th week, the time babies are considered to be full term. Some said great strides take place at that point.

I am heading to sleep soon so I can get up in the morning and drive the forty minute drive to where Little One sleeps in the hospital. The verse above his bed reads....*The Lord is with you, He is mighty to save, He takes great delight in you, He quiets you with His love, He rejoices over you with singing.*

What a peaceful thought to fill my mind as I went to sleep.

September 16 **Saturday**

Those who know Your name will trust in You, for You, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek You. Psalm 9:10

They had transported Sebastian to another hospital for a milk scan and a swallow test to be sure fluid was not aspirating into his lungs and they wanted to determine if he has reflux. Aspiration into his lungs would likely result in pneumonia.

At the test, it was once again so incredible to watch this tiny Little One on a huge hospital bed with a huge machine hovering over him for an hour. It seems they don't have miniature MRI and CT scan machines.

He would still not cry during these procedures. He seemed so strangely used to large machines, bright lights and strange people. At the end of the week he was once again transported to another hospital to have his plaster leg casts sawed off and

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

replaced once more and to have a hip x-ray. I left DC for a brief visit to NC and when I returned I went straight to the hospital. He woke up shortly after my arrival.

I held him close and we just gazed into each others eyes as I whispered sweet nothings to this little gift from the Lord. The original 4-6 week dismissal date projection is now at 1-3 weeks.

Rob would visit during the days and Taylor would go to the hospital each night. Feedings continued through the tube in his nose. Sebastian will not nurse. They say babies who have been on ventilators do not want to swallow. They remember the first thing that went down their throat. Oxygen flow was lowered and we would pray he would tolerate all these changes. He had gained weight and now weighed over 7 pounds.

By now, he had very fat and very adorable cheeks!

September 18 Monday

I would check my email and read heartbreaking stories from parents whose little ones had gone to be with the Lord. I would respond.

Dear A

Tears filled my eyes as I read about your dear children. I wanted to have something helpful to say to you. But there are now words I can say to heal the pain in your heart....if there were I would say them over and over and over again.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

So I opened my Bible to the Psalms and I read words of comfort and hope and I will pray words from the Psalms for you and your family.

Many years ago when the gunman opened fire at a weeknight church service in Texas killing many young people, the minister was interviewed and asked why he had such peace at such a time as this. He replied that as Christians we grieve but we grieve with hope.....so I will pray, A, that you will have His strength and His comfort and that He will give you His peace as you wait for the time you will join your Little Ones....I pray you will grieve with hope.

Mourning with you with prayers, Susan

I would find delightful emails from Sebastian's nurses at Hopkins.

I just wanted you to know that I love receiving e-mail updates from you and that I read your blogs religiously....I still think about my little pumpkin and wonder how he is doing. It sounds like he has had to go on many field trips to other hospitals which must be stressful for all of you. But I know little Sebastian is a trooper and handles it just fine! I would love to see Sebastian with fat cheeks!!

Give my love to Rob, Taylor and Luke. I look forward to hearing from you again when you get a couple minutes.

I would send out updates.

The speech therapist has been giving him a bottle once a day, but beginning yesterday she will do it at the 9am feeding and I will do it at the noon feeding. Now he barely takes in a quarter of an ounce.

I think overall it is easier having him in DC because Rob and Taylor can work and Luke can have a fairly normal life and, as you say Sebastian is a trooper and there is no doubt God's

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

merciful and loving hand is on this Little One.

September 22

Friday

The prayer request that day read:

Please be praying for Little Sebastian this morning (10 in DC) as he is in the OR having surgery on his foot. Please pray our Almighty God will sustain him and give the doctors His skill and wisdom. Pray that every aspect will be perfect and successful and that there will be no complications, that he will be kept safe by our mighty Lord from Satan and danger, physical emotional and spiritual harm.

They cried to You and were saved; in You they trusted and were not disappointed.

September 25

Monday

I went back and forth to DC, coming home for my parents' 64th wedding anniversary on the 22nd and then back to DC on Monday. When I left him last week, Sebastian was once again lying on the table at the same hospital where he had his surgery. His plaster casts had been sawed off and new ones were being made.

This time he cried. He cried a lot. It seems good and bad to see him cry. Good in that he no longer likes being "accustomed" to such treatment. Bad in that, who likes to see a tiny one in such a situation? But always, it's wonderful to know there are lungs filling with air resulting in a cry.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

We would ask for prayers for his sucking and breathing and swallowing, for his oxygen levels and his lungs all to be perfect, for our Lord's continuing healing touch upon every aspect of dear Sebastian's being.

Liz and I went to lunch and saw a tiny baby so effortlessly suck and breathe and swallow.

I made up little tunes I would sing to Sebastian while I was holding him. One was "suck and swallow and breathe and suck and swallow and breathe."

And he would try.

OCTOBER

October 4 Wednesday

On September 30 we had quite a scare and began more urgently to want to get our Little One out of the hospital. It just seems too much to expect one nurse and often two nurses, to take care of six babies in an almost NICU setting. If Sebastian's situation were not as urgent as another, the nurse would have to make a choice.

But there are other factors as well. We learned that weekend care is often when negligence is the highest. I will not go into the details here, but suffice it to say we were horrified and upset over a certain situation in which we found our dear Little One that Saturday night.

Once my Mom's doctor told her he wanted to hurry and get her out of the hospital before they killed her. The surgeon husband of my friend, who has been in the hospital with lung cancer surgery as I write this, says the hospital is the most dangerous place to be.

Most medical people I have been around seem extremely qualified and caring. Few are not. But ones who are not competent, combined with the often poor nurse to patient ratio, makes for a potentially deadly combination.

Although it had been clear Sebastian needed to still be in the hospital and that this particular hospital was the right one for him, it was now becoming harder and more frightening to leave our dear Little One in his bed in the room at the hospital.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

I would continually pray his guard of angels would surround him. I would read to him the Zephaniah scripture posted above his bed.

The Lord your God is with you
He is mighty to save
He takes great delight in you
He will quiet you with His love
He will rejoice over you with singing.

Many months later I was holding Sebastian in his own nursery and our Lord suggested I put those words with the tune of Jesus loves You that I had sung daily to this dear one.

If you pace it just right and if you sing the last line three times and then add, "The Bible tells us so", you will have a beautiful lullaby to sing to a Little One.

October 8 Sunday

It is Sunday morning and twelve weeks ago this morning God's miracle of Sebastian came into this world! Over and over I think, "Children truly are a gift from the Lord!"

This past week adorable Little One was transported once more to another hospital to have another test to check on his swallowing. Such a brave soldier is he! He can suck about a half ounce from a bottle, so we are thanking the Lord for his ability to do that and praying for continued improvement.

Never again will I observe an infant drinking a bottle and not see it as an awesome thing to behold.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

Next week this precious Little One goes again to another hospital and is scheduled to have his plaster casts which cover his legs replaced with a different type cast. Such a guy he is as he lies on this big table surrounded by doctors!

Never again will I observe precious little baby legs kicking and bending and not see it as an awesome event.

He is still on oxygen but the levels have been lowered. It seems likely that when he goes home he will be on oxygen and an NG feeding tube. I watched him have his tube replaced and remain in awe of all he has been through.

Never again will I observe an infant without tubes in his nose and leads on his chests and not see it as an awesome picture to behold.

October 17 Tuesday

Today is my Mom's (Sebastian's great grandmother) 86th birthday! I talked with her this afternoon and she and my Dad who is 88 were looking forward to Kentucky Fried Chicken that husband Mick would be bringing for dinner. Dad fell over the weekend and fractured some ribs.

Mick, my sister and brother in law and I all went to visit Sebastian Sunday night. Mick had not seen him since the week he was born and my sister and brother in law had not yet met this miracle of God's. What a tender time.

Yesterday Little One's leg was horribly swollen and we rushed him to the other hospital to have one plaster cast removed. Tomorrow both casts are scheduled to be removed

God's Miracle of Sebastian

and replaced with the braces they think he may need for a couple of years.

October 21 Saturday

I wrote to my Lord.

Here I am again writing You a letter from the other side of Your miracle, Your merciful and loving and tender and beautiful miracle.

As You know, I trusted You, but I had no idea what You would do. I hoped and begged and did all I knew to do, but I knew the answer lay in Your hands not in mine or any person's.

Just this morning I left Little One at the hospital. His little legs in braces, his oxygen and feeding tubes, his 3 leads on his chest and his one saturation monitor on his hand. I left him after giving him his breathing treatment and his almost 15cc of milk. I left him after watching those enormous eyes look deeply into mine. I left him to fly home, knowing the plan is he will go home on Thursday.

We cried to You and were saved; in You we trusted and we were not disappointed.

Lord, there are no words to thank You, no words to ask for Your continuing protections and mercies as he comes home.

I am more in awe of You than ever for I have seen Your miraculous ways in a way I have never seen them before. It leaves me overwhelmed and humbled and speechless.

For we have come from the seeming clutches of death to life.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

Your strength and Your might have snatched this Little One and held him dear and near to Your heart.

You have been and continue to be there for him. You have been and continue to be mighty to save him. You have taken and continue to take great delight in him. You have quieted and continue to quiet him with Your love. You have rejoiced and continue to rejoice over him with singing.

How can I repay You for our goodness to me, to us?

Opening Your word for my verse this morning, I once again turn to Luke 7...say the word and my servant will be healed. No man could do what You did, no man could do what You continue to do. His oxygen up to the dangerous level of 3, then the tube mysteriously unattached...seen and unseen events where You ominipotently protect and heal. You mercifully love and answer the cries of Your people.

I will praise You forever. Thank You, Lord. Thank You, Father. Thank You, Holy Spirit.

October 22 **Sunday**

It is a most humbling experience to see Little One go through so much and be so brave, sustained by the grace of our Lord. His feet are in little shoes with a metal bar about eight inches long from the sole of one shoe to the sole of the other. He wears them all of the time except for bath time. After the first twenty four hours, he seemed to adjust to them.

Little One's eyes watched me as I left the unit today. They are beautiful eyes. His eyes express something I cannot

God's Miracle of Sebastian

describe. There is a depth to them that touches my innermost being. Such a merciful God who has saved him.... so many faithful prayer warriors...I remain overwhelmed.

This precious miracle of our Lord's is scheduled to be dismissed from the hospital Thursday, October 26. Please praise our loving Lord for there is no way to repay Him. He has been and continues to be with Sebastian. He has been and continues to be mighty to save. He takes great delight in Little One and quiets him with His love. He rejoices over him with singing.

I asked once more for prayers that God would keep His angels of protection around Little One now and in this move and always, that dear Sebastian would remain physically, spiritually, mentally and emotionally healthy. I asked for prayers that he be kept safe from Satan and danger, physical, emotional, spiritual and mental harm, that he would grow in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man, that he will be a man after God's own heart and that he will glorify Him all the days of his life.

October 26 Thursday

As I awoke this morning, I wondered what verse would our Lord would give me this day....this most long awaited and prayed for day.

The early morning of this day that Little One would be dismissed from the hospital....three months after his birth, seven months after the news that he seemed to be in serious danger. What would our most merciful Lord say to me on this early morning of this long to be remembered day?

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

Then there is was in Malachi:

But for you who revere My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings.

I thought of those words and I thought of dear Little One and his struggles.

And I thought of the song I have sung to him every day I have seen him since he was born.....

Jesus loves you this I know
for the Bible tells me so.
Little Ones to Him belong,
They are weak but He is strong

In the midst of the hubbub of DC, when I left for the hospital that last time, I heard a familiar tune on from a street corner saxophone player. Soon it came to me. "Amazing grace how sweet the sound....

Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come; Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me, His word my hope secures; He will my shield and portion be as long as life endures

The day at the hospital was long. Much was to be learned and to be done. Oxygen and feeding and breathing treatments and monitors and so much more. But at last we drove home with Little One. When we arrived Luke greeted him with a grin that would not stop!

And we did not have to leave him at a hospital that night, for Little One rested at his home for the first time.

NOVEMBER

November 9 Thursday

A typical day in the life of Sebastian consists of attempts every three hours to bottle feed or try to nurse followed by feedings through an NG tube that goes from his nostril to his tummy. Each feeding lasts about an hour. From midnight until 6 AM he is on a continuous feed through his NG tube.

We pray he will not have reflux and lose what he has taken in. He remains propped up at a 45 degree angle during feedings.

Twice a day he receives breathing treatments. Several times a day he receives other meds through his NG tube. His little boots with a bar on his feet are removed once a day for bath time only.

Twice a week a home nurse and a physical therapist come to the house. Once a week he goes to the pediatrician. He is on oxygen in his room via a converter and via a tank when we take him downstairs or to appointments.

He has hearing tests and gastro tests and visits and outings and this and that every day and will for days to come. There will be a sleep apnea test and ortho visits and pulmonologist appointments.

We continued to ask that people please, please continue to pray for this Little One! We asked that they pray for his parents and the professionals who see him and his big brother. We asked that God's guard of angels continue to protect him from Satan and danger and physical, emotional,

God's Miracle of Sebastian

spiritual and mental harm.

The Zephaniah verse that was in his isolet was now in his room and remains there.

We asked that people please pray it for him...

***The Lord your God is with you, He is mighty to save.
He will take great delight in you; He will quiet you with
his love.***

He will rejoice over you with singing.

Heartbreaking emails arrived.

My sister, A, delivered Little R and 12:13pm on Tuesday, 11/8. She was 23 weeks. They were able to have the baby christened. The nurses dressed him up so cute, he looked just like his father. The nurses took pictures of A and R holding him. His dad, Ray, said, "I felt so strong when I held him--he was so weak; but when he passed I fell apart." His daddy was holding him when he passed.

Three hours after the birth, A still had not passed the placenta, and since she was showing signs of infection, they took her in to surgery for a D&C. She began hemorrhaging, and we thought we had lost her. The doctors made the decision to do a hysterectomy to try and save her and suddenly her uterus which had been packed closed down and the bleeding stopped. (So I guess they will try again.)

I don't know if anyone has been reading my messages--but if anyone is, could someone give her some support for the whole situation and the grief they are feeling. A, "He looked so perfect and beautiful." Send any messages to the

list or to my email, and I will see that they reach her.

A's sister, B

Mick and I have experienced many hard things in our lives. Some things have happened to us and many to those we love. We have learned that some action, some response when you receive such heartbreaking and paralyzing news is so very much better than nothing.

Prayer always, but even a try at words means so much. So I tried, as I had in previous situations, praying the Holy Spirit would do what I could not possibly do.

I am so sorry....please know as I read your email the tears began to fall from my eyes and will not stop...may God give you each His comfort and His strength... know there are many women on this site who understand A and R's grief and pain in a way no one else possibly can...know we all mourn with you and pray for the hope and comfort only the Lord can bring....may they know that when they are weak, He is strong.....I have no adequate words, just love and prayers to send your way.....

November 10
Friday

Finally I began to realize that chapters must be closed and life must go on. So I wrote to those wonderful PROM ladies

Dear Ladies,

Before I remove my name from this list of wonderful ladies later today, I want to say thank you. You have been so faithful

God's Miracle of Sebastian

with your prayers and your support through a most difficult, yet miraculous time for our family.

When I read concerns from ladies and responses from you, I know you are truly a blessing in their lives, as you are in ours. Your "Don't give up" attitudes and your compassion have been so appreciated, as well as your willingness to share so openly your own situations. We have no doubt God led us to you and I once again thank Him for all He has done and continues to do!

I imagine God will put this list on my mind for the rest of my life and He will know who I am talking about when I say to Him, "Please bless these dear PROM ladies."

Thankfully Little Sebastian is growing and being protected by the hand of our Lord. Feel free to keep up with him on our blog. As his nurses have said, he is a true inspiration to us all. We do appreciate all you have done and we appreciate also your thinking and praying for us from time to time.

Thanks again and may God bless you each always

Susan

Please feel free to email me personally at anytime and/or check our blog

<http://miracles-littleone.blogspot.com/>

EPILOGUE

I could go on and on and tell you of more ups and downs that continue to occur. Little One's cousins have all met him and adore him. His oldest ones came over from Paris, as well as his two from Memphis and his two from NC.

At the date of this writing, dear Sebastian is almost ten months old. He spent several nights in the hospital this week with a bug. He still wears his little boots but only at night and for three hours each day. He can drink four ounces from a bottle and he can nibble on a cracker with his now two top and two bottom teeth. He still has an overnight feed through a tube and is on oxygen. He still takes meds and has therapy.

He plays with his brother Luke. His first outing besides to the doctor or a therapist was to church on Palm Sunday. His first road trip was to North Carolina for cousin's Zoe's sixth birthday a few weeks ago.

I was overjoyed as I got to hold him at Jon's and Allie's church that morning. He stood bouncing up and down on my lap and squealed. Even the preacher was tickled and commented on the joy he heard way in the back of that holy place where we sat.

This precious Little One bounced and squealed and praised the Lord, as words of the song contemporary Christian song, "Do it Anyway" permeated the air and our souls....

*You can spend your whole life building'
Something from nothing
One storm can come and blow it away
Build it anyway*

God's Miracle of Sebastian

*You can chase a dream
That seems so out of reach
And you know it might not ever come your way
Dream it anyway*

*God is great but sometimes life ain't good
And when I pray
It doesn't always turn out like I think it should
But I do it anyway
I do it anyway*

*This world's gone crazy
And it's hard to believe
That tomorrow will be better than today
Believe it anyway*

*God is great but sometimes life ain't good
And when I pray
It doesn't always turn out like I think it should
But I do it anyway
Yeah I do it anyway*

It seemed as if Little One were bouncing and squealing to his very own theme song.

* * *

On November 26, I wrote:

I cannot go to sleep this nineteen week birthday of Sebastian's without telling you what his three year old cousin Nathan said when he spent the night with us couple of weeks ago.

As you may have surmised by now, our grandchildren call

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

me C.C. and Nathan is thrilled when he can spend the night at C.C. s and of course she is too!

Nathan has not met his cousin yet and has only seen pictures of him and has heard stories. Mick has enlarged the picture that is on the cover of this book and it is hanging in our kitchen.

As Nathan studied the picture this particular night, I could not imagine what he was thinking as he saw the tubes in the nose of his little cousin.

He had a most interesting look on his face, one totally unfamiliar to me.

I looked at Nathan and explained that the reason for the yellow tube in Sebastian's nose is that he cannot yet eat by himself so Rob and Taylor feed him through the tube.

Nathan's gaze seemed more intense.

I tried so hard to explain what he was seeing.

How could his little mind comprehend this?

Then I pointed out the additional tubes going into each of Sebastian's nostrils and explained that he cannot yet breathe on his own so those tubes give him oxygen.

Nathan took a deep breath and looked up at me.

Joy filled my soul when this little three year old wisely said,

“But, he's smiling, C.C.”

God's Miracle of Sebastian

* * *

One of my most wonderful memories of those months of waiting was the day that Rob and I planted the flower garden for Taylor before Sebastian was born. She and Rob had talked about what she wanted and we set to work while she rested.

It was a beautiful day filled with sunshine. Luke helped us and we had such a wonderful time shopping for just the right flowers and plants.

Loading up the car with colors of spring and life was the best therapy! We knew she would be happy and that made us happy.

We spent hours preparing the flower beds by pulling weeds, mulching and digging in the dirt. To give us more space, Rob transplanted daylilies from the garden to along side the fence.

Then we planted the new flowers and watered. And we admired our work. Taylor did too!

As we worked, both Rob and I noticed a tiny red maple tree near the sidewalk that led to their front door. Most gardeners would have pulled it up as a weed because it was not an appropriate plant for a flower bed. It had few roots so it would be easy enough to remove.

But instead Rob and I got a little stake and surrounded that tiny maple with protection.

And we feared the people who mowed the lawn would remove our little sapling, so we put up a sign in a waterproof Ziploc

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

bag instructing everyone to leave this little guy alone.

That was over a year ago.

As far as I know, that little sapling remains to this day, growing stronger and taller.

Our little red maple just needed some protection and God's touch of life.

* * *

As I attempt to end this book, I find our Lord pressing me to make one last and one most important of all pleas to you the reader. As you know my intent in this book has been to glorify our loving God for His miracle of Sebastian. It has also been to encourage those who have been told there is a zero percent chance that God may have something else in mind.

But I would be so very wrong if I stopped with those two intentions. So I move forward with my plea.

In 1873 Horatio Spafford was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write the hymn, "It is Well with My Soul," as the ship on which he traveled passed near the spot where all four of his daughters had died in a collision with another ship a few weeks earlier. His wife Anna had survived the tragedy and had sent him a telegram which read, "Saved alone."

The words of the hymn are:

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say,
It is well, it is well, with my soul.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

Refrain

It is well, with my soul,

It is well, with my soul,

It is well, it is well, with my soul.

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,

Let this blest assurance control,

That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,

And hath shed His own blood for my soul.

Refrain

My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!

My sin, not in part but the whole,

Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

Refrain

And Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight,

The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;

The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,

Even so, it is well with my soul.

Refrain

* * *

My plea to you is this:

The promise our Lord gave me for Little One in this life is true for all His little ones throughout eternity, including you.

“They cried to you and were saved; in You they trusted and were not disappointed.”

If you cry out to Him, you will be saved; if you trust in Him, you will not be disappointed.

THE END

PART FOUR:

APPENDIX

Appendix 1

Helpful Notes for Parents

For those of you who have been told you need to terminate your or your loved one's pregnancy for whatever reason, I would urge you to check out your options. Look on the internet. Ask medical people from other institutions. Pray.

Following are pointers we received. Some we practiced, some we did not.

I. Condensed notes from emails:

1. Everyday that you can hang on increases the odds for that precious little one. This is especially after the 23-24 week mark, where the baby is considered viable; each day inside is so important.

2. Vitamins. Start taking vitamin E, Zinc and vitamin C.

3. Steroids. The steroids cannot be successfully given prior to 23-24 weeks, because it isn't yet the optimal time for lung development, and they won't do a bit of good earlier. That is why this is the consensus gestational age to give the injections. They boost the lung development and the baby will be further along developmentally at birth than if the injections are not given. It can make a difference between life and death for ones who are delivered so early.

4. Antibiotics, Infection, Temperature. If she has already had a course of antibiotics, I doubt they will do another unless there is a sign of infection. Be certain to tell her to take her temperature several times a day...**if it goes over 99.5** the doctor needs to know and they need to start an antibiotic again. Most, but not all doctors will give a two

week IV antibiotic series to prevent infection, or a strong oral medication if she is at home. If not, push for this, as the vast majority of success stories have had this course of treatment.

5. Discharge, Abdominal Tenderness. Also let the doctor know of any foul smelling or discolored discharge immediately, or abdominal tenderness, and bleeding of any kind at all.

6. Hospitalization. I know, for us, hospitalization as soon as they would allow it was something for which we fought hard. And it was a fight! One lady told us her son-in-law told the doctors that if they would not admit her, he would call the local news stations and tell their story. We had found out by that time, the doctors were fighting for the babies who were in trouble for other reasons at the same gestational age, but would not actively fight for a PPROM baby. They were putting more value on the life of one baby than that of another.

Many hospitals will hospitalize PPROM patients at 21 weeks, so that they can be more closely monitored for possible infections and preterm labor. Bed rest is so much easier in the hospital, because there is less temptation to do things that you shouldn't do.

7. Amnio Patch. Several ladies that we grew to know had the amnio patch done in Florida. For some it worked and others, it did not. But it is something worth looking into.

8. Bed Rest. The bed rest keeps pressure off the cervix, and helps prevent preterm labor. Also, when there is little fluid, the placenta can start to detach, causing bleeding and often preterm labor (and bleeding can further weaken the membranes), and staying on complete bedrest and not

exerting yourself can help prevent this from happening.

Warning---many doctors of the women on the pprom list did not consider bed rest helpful, but the majority of women who have gone on to deliver live babies were on complete bed rest. Some stay flat or up to a 30 degree incline (not much of an angle at all) from the time it happened until delivery. Lying on the left side is best for baby as you get bigger, as this keeps pressure off areas that don't need pressure. Go on FULL bed rest to try and stop your body from going into labor for as long as possible.

9. Water. Start drinking heaps of water to replace the amnio fluid lost. 4 quarts of water each day. Amnio fluid does regenerate (in very small amounts) – one lady had zero one day and then 2 cm a few days later (sometimes more). Of course it will continue to leak out. Remain on complete bed rest and drink fluids like crazy. When you have **ultrasounds** to detect fluid, ask the tech or doctor doing them if they can see the baby's bladder full. Some ladies would have only one pocket of fluid but the baby's bladder would be full so it meant she had ingested what was there and then she would urinate it back into the amnio sac.

10. Cleanliness was very, very important, as nearly all premature births due to pprom come after developing some type of infection. So be certain to wash hands religiously with sanitizer. After using the bathroom, be certain to clean well---many recommend using a betadine solution to wipe with so no infection is spread in that way. Also, don't wear underwear or pads to collect the leakage, as this would trap the moisture close to her body, and make a breeding ground for infection. Lay on a chux pad. Eating yogurt (unpasteurized) helps prevent any yeast infections.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

Another important thing is that no internal exams be done by the doctors/nurses. Nearly everything they need to know can be found out other ways, and nothing is gained by looking “inside.” Of course, if it is a life or death situation, if premature labor occurs, they have to, but make certain that they use sterile gloves, and not just the ones that are in the boxes. Sterile ones will be packaged individually and not just in a box in the room or on the cart. Keep extremely clean to stop infection and do not have any internal examinations.

11. Hospital with highest level NICU---that is SO IMPORTANT!!! Be certain to check out the hospital where the baby will be delivered and make certain that it has the highest level NICU---that is SO IMPORTANT!!! This little one will need all the help that is available if they can hold out until week 24 or longer. If the hospital they are using now doesn't have this level of care, I would strongly urge you to switch to another doctor and hospital. Talk to the neonatologists who will care for the baby and **make certain that they will recommend steroid injections at 23-24 weeks gestation, and talk with them about the care the baby will be given. You will be surprised at how much more help you will receive when you hit the magic number of 24 weeks gestation. At that stage they HAVE to treat the baby, and not just the mommy. It is a huge milestone for PPROM patients**

12. Staying calm and optimistic helps so much. It is awfully hard to do though, when doctors are so universally pessimistic in this situation. If you read the stories of the ladies on the PPROM email loop, you would see that the statistics for survival there are much higher than for the general population, we believe because most of these ladies follow every single precaution, and advocate for their baby when the medical profession will not. **Kindly demand certain**

things from the doctors, such as preventative antibiotics, and steroid shots at 23 weeks. This is something else they need to think about, as if they are able to reach 23-24 weeks, many of these little ones are born very early, and will need the absolute highest level of care that is possible.

II. Answers to Questions we asked:

1. AFI number. I would still check on the **AFI number (amniotic fluid level)**, very rarely is there none at all. They determine the level by ultrasound, **finding all the tiny little pockets that contain fluid** and adding them together to get an AFI. See if they know the AFI reading. If they do not know, the next time she is checked, I would ask to have this done.

2. Baby growth. Ask if the baby is **growing proportionally** and at a **proper growth** rate. Also ask if they **can see the baby swallowing**. Find out all you can about the baby's condition. Is the baby's heart rate within acceptable limits? Is the growth proportional and also is growth progressing at a normal rate?

3. Leakage. Most women do experience leakage, even when on bed rest. The baby will replace the fluid as it drains out from the rupture, but it will never build completely up to a normal level unless Mom happens to reseal on her own, which does occasionally happen.

4. Watch for bleeding and preterm labor.

5. Most PPROM patients lose their baby within 48 hours after rupturing, and the next big hurdle is two weeks. **The magic number, depending on where you live, is 23 or 24 weeks, at which** time the doctors will actively care for the

God's Miracle of Sebastian

baby by giving steroids to promote lung development, and monitor the baby's vitals constantly.

III. Miscellaneous:

1. Specialists told one lady that without amnio fluid, the baby's stress hormones would kick in and she would learn to live in a high stress environment - and would do much better as a premature baby. Every day she can keep her baby inside is important - even without fluid, the baby will continue to grow inside and needs to.

2. I firmly believe that the doctors CANNOT SEE ALL THE FLUID THAT MIGHT BE IN THE UTERUS. Some are told that that they have NO FLUID.

3. Drink LOTS of water, eat VERY HEALTHY FOOD and stay relaxed and keep your mind busy. Play music for the baby and talk to him/her. The baby needs to know you are not willing to let go that easily!!

6. DON'T GIVE UP HOPE!!

7. Continue the pregnancy and hope and pray for a good outcome.

8. Most of all, try to keep the faith and remain calm. Calm moms are less likely to go into premature labor, too.

9. The best thing for all of you to do is pray.

OTHER INFORMATION WE RECEIVED

Following are emails that were helpful to us. Although I summarized what was most helpful to us in the previous list, I would not want to leave anything out that might be helpful to another, so therefore these are shown unedited.

From PROM ladies

Hi Susan,

It is so wonderful to talk to another PPROM grandma who is working so hard to help save the life of her grandbaby, as I was doing last winter and spring. They are so lucky to have family supporting them when doctors are so doom and gloom about PPROM.

As far as PPROM...it stands for **preterm premature rupture of membranes**...so this is her diagnosis regardless of whether they have technically used the term in her case or not.

When they say "no" fluid, I am guessing that they mean low fluid...very rarely is there none at all.

They determine the level by ultrasound, finding all the tiny little pockets that contain fluid and adding them together to get an AFI. See if they know what her AFI reading was when she was checked, just to know where they stand on that. If they do not know, the next time she is checked, I would ask to have this done. How is the baby doing otherwise? Is the baby's heart rate within acceptable limits? Is the growth proportional and

God's Miracle of Sebastian

also is growth progressing at a normal rate? Has there been any bleeding or preterm labor at all?

The things you need to avoid are infection, and preterm labor. The bed rest keeps pressure off of the cervix, and helps prevent preterm labor. Also, when there is little fluid, the placenta can start to detach, causing bleeding and often preterm labor (and bleeding can further weaken the membranes), and staying on complete bed rest and not exerting yourself can help prevent this from happening.

Warning---many doctors of the women on the pprom list did not consider bed rest helpful, but the majority of women who have gone on to deliver live babies were on complete bed rest. So our daughter decided to do what made her feel like she had done everything possible to save her baby girl's life. Since they are so far from the hospital, this would be a really good idea, since things can go wrong so very, very quickly in a PPRM pregnancy, and you need to be close to the proper help should something happen.

Ask her if she is still experiencing leakage. Most women do, even when on bed rest. The baby will replace the fluid as it drains out from the rupture, but it will never build completely up to a normal level unless she happens to reseal on her own, which does occasionally happen.

Have the doctors given her antibiotics? Most, but not all, doctors will give a 2 week IV antibiotic series to prevent infection, or a strong oral if she is at home. If not, push for this, as the vast majority of success stories have had this course of treatment. This hopefully has already been done??? Many hospitals will hospitalize PPRM patients at 21 weeks, so that they can be more closely monitored for possible infections and preterm labor. Bed rest is so much

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

easier in the hospital, because there is less temptation to do things that you shouldn't do :-)

Be certain to check out the hospital the baby will be delivered at and make certain that it has the highest level NICU---that is SO IMPORTANT!!! This little one will need all the help that is available if they can hold out till week 24 or longer. If the hospital they are using now doesn't have this level of care, I would strongly urge you to switch to another doctor and hospital. Talk to the neonatologists who will care for the baby and make certain that they will recommend steroid injections at 23-24 weeks gestation, and talk with them about the care the baby will be given. You will be surprised at how much more help you will receive when you hit the magic number of 24 weeks gestation. At that stage they HAVE to treat the baby, and not just the mommy. It is a huge milestone for PPRM patients.

Most of all, try to keep the faith and remain calm. Calm moms are less likely to go into premature labor, too. Although there isn't a day that I don't question God about why our granddaughter's life was spared against all odds from the PPRM, yet He chose to allow her to die from the infection when she was only 10 days old---well, I still know there had to be a reason, and that one day I will understand. Like you said, it is so hard!

Have your son and his wife read the PPRM website? If not, I would suggest that they print out the questions that are on the site--the ones that they suggest you ask your doctors, and things that they suggest you ask the dr. to do. That website has tons of great information. Also, again, please think about joining their email list (you can do so right on the site) and ask questions of the ladies on that email loop. They have all been through this, and can give you wonderful feedback.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

Feel free to read anything on my blog about my daughters PPRM story, and I hope that you will find something there that will be useful information.

Remain optimistic and pray for a miracle, but at the same time, prepare for the worst and be ready for that as well. Know ahead of time, should the baby arrive too early and die shortly after birth, what things you want to do and would regret not having done a few months down the road. I know that is morbid to think about, but there are so many parents who have, on looking back, wished they had taken a certain picture, or made sure that they had little hand and footprints, and so many other things. From reading the mailing you sent out, I can tell that your faith is much like ours, and that you regard this little life as precious, and not just a pregnancy that has gone bad, to be thrown away. You will want memories should the worst case scenario happen.

How I hope and pray that your daughter in law can keep that little one safe inside for 3 more weeks and then some! I want her child to be one that makes it. Our family is walking as a team in March of Dimes Walk America fundraiser in a couple weeks, in memory of our little granddaughter, and the money we raise goes to fund research on all aspects of prematurity, including PPRM. I hope that one day PPRM will be something that can be as easily and routinely fixed as the heart surgeries that were just a dream ten years ago.

Please know you are in my heart and prayers! Your son and his wife are certainly welcome to email me as well. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask. I certainly am not a doctor, and don't pretend to be one. Just a grandma who researched non-stop for weeks and weeks and weeks trying to save the life of my grandchild, and to be able to hold her in my arms.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

Love, prayers, and hugs to you and your family,

K

Hi Susan,

My daughter and her husband had this happen just before she hit the 20th week of her pregnancy, and the doctors were not helpful or hopeful at all, but she went on to deliver a healthy, although tiny, little girl on week 29. She was perfect and had no problems due to the PPROM, but unfortunately picked up a rare infection when she was 10 days old, and her immune system was not advanced enough to fight it off. But we would not trade those days for anything! She is still very much a part of our family and will be a precious memory forever.

What worked for my daughter, was complete bed rest. She stayed flat or up to a 30 degree incline (not much of an angle at all) from the time it happened till she delivered. She also drank 4 quarts of water each day. Cleanliness was very, very important, as nearly all premature births due to pprom come after developing some type of infection. So be certain to wash hands religiously with sanitizer. After using the bathroom, be certain to clean well---many recommend using a betadine solution to wipe with so no infection is spread in that way. Also, she was told to not wear underwear or pads to collect the leakage, as this would trap the moisture close to her body, and make a breeding ground for infection. She just lay on a chux pad those 10 weeks. Eating yogurt (unpasteurized) helps prevent any yeast infections.

Another important thing is that no internal exams be done by the doctors/nurses. Nearly everything they need to know can

God's Miracle of Sebastian

be found out other ways, and nothing is gained by looking ‘inside.’ Of course, if it is a life or death thing, as when my daughter went into premature labor a couple times, they have to, but make certain that they use sterile gloves, and not just the ones that are in the boxes. Sterile ones will be packaged individually and not just in a box in the room or on the cart. Staying calm and optimistic helps so much. It is awfully hard to do though, when doctors are so universally pessimistic in this situation. If you read the stories of the ladies on the PPROM email loop, you would see that the statistics for survival there are much higher than for the general population, we believe because most of these ladies follow every single precaution, and advocate for their baby when the medical profession will not.

Many time, M had to kindly demand certain things from the doctors, such a preventative antibiotics, and steroid shots at 23 weeks.

You daughter-in-law has come so far already! Most PPROM patients lose their baby within 48 hours after rupturing, and the next big hurdle is 2 weeks. She has outlasted both of those hurdles---good for her! How many weeks along is she exactly? The magic number, depending on where you live, is 23 or 24 weeks, at which time the doctors will actively care for the baby by giving steroids to promote lung development, and monitor the babies vitals constantly.

Oh...forgot to mention that lying on the left side is best for baby as you get bigger, as this keeps pressure off areas that don't need pressure.

Has an AFI (amniotic fluid level) been given to you? My daughter never had above a 3, and many times was told “there is no discernible fluid” and that her baby would be deformed

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

and brain damaged if she continued the pregnancy. But E was perfect, and would have been fine had she not contracted the infection. Also curious, is she having leakage yet? That means that the baby is still producing more fluid, which is good.

Tell me any details you like, and I'll be happy to pass along what we found out from all of our research and suggestions from other moms who delivered babies that survived this awful ordeal.

Keep the faith, and keep me posted!

If you would like to read more about my daughter's ppprom experience, please feel free to read my blog at <http://www.homeschoolblogger.com/iluvtheland> If you scroll down the sidebar, you will find a link to click on that says PPRM and Infant Loss. All the entries there are about her hospital stay and E's birth.

I'm so glad you found the PPRM site. Think about joining their email loop as well, then other ladies can give you immediate feedback to questions you may have. There have been so very many positive outcomes with the group lately, and of course there have also been losses. There is no guarantee of a healthy birth in this situation, but there are many things you can do to help move the statistics in your favor.

What state do they live in? Are they near a hospital with the highest level of NICU care possible? This is something else they need to think about, as if they are able *to reach* 23-24 weeks, many of these little ones are born very early, and will need the absolute highest level of care that is possible.

I look forward to hearing back from you and passing along any information that I can, ----another PPRM Grandma

God's Miracle of Sebastian

The ladies all seem to think that Dr. Y and Dr. Q are both wonderful, and pray that their pioneering efforts in the amniopatch and amnioinfusion get more and more refined, and that more doctors will learn how to do the procedure. Anything that has a chance of helping is certainly worth trying. And if it doesn't work out, there is still old-fashioned bed rest and all the other precautions.

How far along are they now???

Week 24 is huge. Taylor will be getting the steroid series, and that will promote lung development and other growth that will really, really help if the baby decides to come early. They estimated that E gained about 2 weeks developmentally from the steroids.

Remember, she had very little fluid all the time from 20 weeks on. I sure would suggest, and the other PPRMOM moms on the support group list nearly all agree, that hospitalization at 24 weeks is the best choice. The baby's heart rate, any decelerations (which could mean cord compression) and so many other things can be kept much closer tabs on there. And should an emergency delivery be necessary you are right there when the time comes. Things can happen SO QUICKLY in situations like this, and there is no time to waste....minutes are precious when dealing with these little preemies. Many, many babies lives are saved once they reach the 24 week mark, and each additional day is an increased chance for the baby to have a fighting chance.

What is the exact day that Taylor will be 24 weeks? I want to pray that they reach it to that date and have a real fighting chance to take that baby home with them. I'm still rooting for you all! Lots of prayers are

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

being said, and we will tell others about your family. Love, hugs, and blessings, K

The doc was surprised that her leaking is clear and not brown tinged. Do you know anything about that? Clear is good! :) Mine was always clear. Brown tinged would likely be "old blood".

I would ask what the doctor's reasoning is but one thing that comes to mind is that the steroids benefit really only lasts 7 days and there have been studies done that show repeat sets is not a good idea anymore. (I had 9 sets, 18 shots with my 3rd child, E who is now 7 yrs old.) The steroid shots are not without risk, though the higher is risk of infection. Steroids can also increase uterine irritability and potentially start contractions that can turn into preterm labor. With my 4th and 5th children, I did not get steroid shots until labor was threatening. With the 4th child I got one set at 29 weeks, though we made it to 38 wks with him. With my last, I never had the strong threat of labor so I was able to not have the steroid shots.

Preemies are given steroid shots to help them get off a vent after they are born. But there are studies that show these shots are not as beneficial as just more time for some babies. And again multiple series have some definite risks. But if it is a matter of life or death, the risks don't seem as scary.

Ask the doctor what is his reasoning and come up with plans for various scenarios to see if his reasoning works for all of them - infection, labor, abruption, etc. This will help your family make an informed decision.

* * *

God's Miracle of Sebastian

Thoughts on Steroid shots

In addition to the spiritual factors and the emotional factors, there were multitudinous physical details and decisions that must be dealt with in a PROM pregnancy.

Therefore I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; My God will hear me. Micah 7:7

As is His way, God would give us answers in His time, step by step, never all at once.

I questioned the PROM ladies in an email.

My daughter in law is now approaching week 28 and we still have no decision about steroid shots. The senior perinatologist says to wait until Little One is born - he thinks there is too much risk for infection. The other perinatologist thinks they should go ahead.

They will decide on Tuesday.

I know I have asked your help before on this, but we are still uncertain the best way to go...any counsel would be appreciated. Any experiences?

Thanks as always

I had few answers, few certainties as is evidenced by my email to Rob and Taylor regarding steroid shots

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

Howdy

In thinking about the steroid shots decision this is my 2 cents worth:

On the one side: This is from Dr F's bio...which makes one think he is knowledgeable about lungs...don't know how current that work is. Wonder what Dr. F would recommend if ya'll were his kids...does he seem absolutely certain doing it is too much risk?

"Dr. F maintained his interest in fetal development and applications of new technologies towards the assessment of fetal lung function."

On the other side: Dr B and the women on the site seem to be in favor of steroids. Yet they may not have the knowledge or the expertise Dr F has.

My 2 cents worth is that I dunno, but I really believe if we continue to pray for God's wisdom you will know what to do. So I am praying for that!!

Love ya much

There would be counsel from the PROM ladies.

Well in that case I can't see why they would not be doing steroid injections . I'd push for them. I understand that they want to give them as close to delivery and that there is a limit to how many injections they'll give - but I've never heard of the injections being done after labor.

* * *

God's Miracle of Sebastian

On October 29 I offered my thoughts in response to a request from PROM that I offer any help I could from a medical perspective.

I am not sure what can be learned from us from a medical perspective, except not to listen too intently to the gloom and doom of docs and NICU folks, but then that is not new information to anyone who regularly reads these stories.

As I understand it antibiotics and steroid shots are fairly standard procedure. In our case, neither the one amnioinfusion nor the amniopatch were successful and we could find no other doctors to attempt anything else experimental. We have nothing to offer in the pregnancy realm that we did not learn from the PROM ladies....bed rest, cleanliness, drinking water, vitamins etc.

From the beginning, doctors unanimously wanted the pregnancy terminated. First there were no renal arteries, then there were no kidneys, then this, then that. On and on the dismal news poured out.

But these parents refused to terminate. Of all the doctors they saw, finally one elderly doctor had a ray of hope, not based on practicalities, just based on previous miracles he had seen.

One horrible night after we rushed Taylor to the hospital way too early in her pregnancy, I listened to a doctor as he sat by her bed and described in horrid detail the planned inducing of labor and what would follow. After twenty four hours of emotional duress and pressure to terminate that you cannot imagine, these parents decided to go home and not to allow the termination.

Repeatedly we were told this baby would only have a 2% chance of living and we were told of endless debilitating handicaps to expect. You hear a lot of potentially depressing news during a pregnancy like this one.

We were repeatedly told Little One would be born blue and silent.

After delivery, the first actual words my son said to me as he came into the room where I was waiting were, "He is pink and he is crying!"

The doctor who planned on taking Little One early in the pregnancy is the one who delivered him.

Now the doctors have said they want to do a case study on Sebastian.

I've said they would have to include God. My zeal to share my faith comes from the truth that I have nothing to attribute to Sebastian's being on this earth to than the truth that my loving and merciful God for some reason totally unknown to me allowed Sebastian to live.

As a result, the only practical information I have to offer is to pray, to trust God and to have hope. I cannot apologize for not having any other practical information than that, but then I am one who thinks such information is the most practical there is.

May you each put your hope and your trust in Him.

Pioneering Surgery Seals Birth Sac

Sent: Monday, April 03, 2006 10:18 AM

Source: New York University Medical Center And School Of Medicine

Posted: January 26, 2001

Pioneering Surgery Seals Ruptured Birth Sac NEW YORK, January 23, 2001 - Three months after an unusual operation to seal a rupture in the fluid-filled sac protecting a pregnant woman's growing fetus, a healthy baby boy was delivered at NYU Medical Center.

Bruce Young, M.D., Director of the Division of Maternal and Fetal Medicine and the Fetal Therapy Program, performed the reparative surgery, which has only been attempted by one other physician in the world.

The woman, who lives in New Jersey, had lost almost all of her amniotic fluid during the 17th week of pregnancy following a routine amniocentesis at another institution. During amniocentesis a needle is pushed through the abdomen and into the birth sac to remove a small amount of fluid to detect birth defects.

She was 20 weeks into her pregnancy when Dr. Young placed a tiny telescope through her uterus and used miniaturized instruments and biological glue to seal the rupture in the amniotic sac, which protects a growing fetus. Without the operation, the fetus would not have lived. The fluid in the birth sac is necessary for the lungs to develop.

Dr. Young, the Silverman Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at New York University School of Medicine, was among the nation's first doctors to perform intrauterine

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

blood transfusions to the fetus during the late 1960s and subsequently, fetal bladder-shunt surgery.

“This is a remarkable kind of surgery that could potentially have an enormous impact because so many pregnancies are lost due to the premature rupture of the amniotic sac,” said Charles Lockwood, M.D., the Stanley H. Kaplan Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology and Chairman of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at NYU School of Medicine, who became the pregnant woman’s obstetrician and was part of the team of doctors who assisted in the operation to repair her amniotic sac.

The premature rupture of the amniotic sac surrounding a fetus is one of the primary causes of preterm delivery and is responsible for about 40% of preterm births. There are many reasons why the sac may tear, and in a small number of cases the tear is due to amniocentesis. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the rate of miscarriage with amniocentesis is between one in 400 and one in 200. The procedure also carries an extremely low risk of uterine infection (less than one in 1,000), which can cause miscarriage.

The tiny puncture from an amniocentesis needle typically seals on its own, but it didn’t seal in this case. Antibiotics are usually prescribed to prevent infections from developing in the amniotic sac when it is torn prematurely. Such infections threaten the life of the fetus.

Three weeks after the amniocentesis, the leaking hadn’t stopped, and the woman and her husband were told by their doctors that the baby had no chance of surviving. By chance, the husband had a friend whose wife recently gave birth to twins with the aid of Dr. Jamie Grifo at NYU’s

God's Miracle of Sebastian

program for In Vitro Fertilization, Reproductive Surgery and Infertility. Dr. Grifo referred the couple to Dr. Lockwood, who in turn sent them to see Dr. Young.

“I knew that I had to operate in order to give the fetus any chance of developing normally,” said Dr. Young. “The woman is also diabetic, which further raises the risk of severe infection and subsequent sterility during pregnancy. So, with the leakage, her chances of having a full-term pregnancy were almost zero.”

At the beginning of the one-hour operation, the fetal therapy team used ultrasound to guide a needle containing a salt solution into the uterus. The solution was used to outline the amniotic membrane. Then Dr. Young used a needle containing a small endoscope, a tiny hollow tube, with fiber optics and a miniaturized video camera attached to locate the region of the suspected tear. Dr. Ilan Timor, Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology and Director of the Obstetrical and Gynecological Ultrasound Unit at NYU Medical Center, was also in the operating room to provide assistance.

“We had three TV monitors and two ultrasound screens, and a team of doctors and nurses assisting,” says Dr. Young. “I had to locate the site of the rupture by scanning the inside of the uterus, but I was confident that the tear would be near the place the patient recalled as the site of amniocentesis three weeks earlier.”

Dr. Young used a product called fibrin glue and mixed it with the pregnant woman's platelets to plug the holes in the membranes. Fibrin is a protein and platelets are a cellular component of blood. Both are necessary for blood clotting.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

The day after the operation, the amniotic fluid index, a measure of the amount of fluid in the birth sac, was 8, which is normal, and no fluid was leaking from her vagina, said Dr. Young. Prior to the fetal surgery, the index was 0.8. “We were optimistic then that she had a good chance of continuing the pregnancy and giving birth to a healthy baby.”

The woman gave birth at 32 weeks, when she developed severe hypertension and the baby had to be delivered. Fortunately, the pregnancy had proceeded long enough that the baby boy was healthy, even though he weighed only 2 pounds 12 ounces, and could breathe on his own in the neonatal intensive care unit. He spent three weeks in the unit, and he was a small, but normal newborn when his parents took him home.

The boy is now 10 months old.

Letter To Belgium

Although we never pursued it, Rob sent this email to a doctor in Belgium.

Dr. D,

My wife is 18 weeks pregnant and suffers from a rupture of the amniotic membrane most likely due to amnioinfusion. Tests have been performed at Johns Hopkins Hospital (Baltimore, Maryland) and New York University Medical Center that show the fetus is healthy and growing.

Doctors in the United States are not giving us any hope.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

Are you aware of any procedures being conducted anywhere in the world that could potentially help? We have the necessary finances to pay for anything that can be done and are willing to do whatever is necessary to save this child.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Sincerely,

And later that day, the response

Thanks for your message.

If the fluid leakage is due to an invasive procedure and there is no infection, our unit has good experience with the so-called amniopatch technique where we infuse fluid and clotting factors to seal the fetal membrane defect and restore the amniotic fluid volume. This is successful in about 70% of cases. I know that Ruben Quintero was offering this procedure to selected patients in Tampa, Florida. He has recently moved and changed jobs, and I'm not sure he's still performing this procedure. If you want, your wife can receive the treatment here on short notice. It would involve a stay of approximately ten days in Belgium

Please let me know if you want further assistance from our team in helping you out.

Best wishes,

Dr D, Fetal Medicine Specialist

APPENDIX 2
BABY FEEDING AND MEDICATION
GUIDELINES
DURING DC HOSPITAL STAY

1. These are abbreviated results from the first barium swallow test.

When he became fatigued, the test showed one or two episodes of aspiration so L is going to try some rice cereal to thicken formula for the 5-10cc he takes by mouth 2 times per day. The rest of his 58 cc for each feeding is breast milk. The idea is to try rice cereal and formula because she has seen him do well with that, but not as well with Simply Thick and breast milk. After he masters the easier rice cereal and formula, she is hoping he can go to breast milk and Simply Thick.

They also saw him suck several times, then swallow.

2. Below are the meds and guidelines we used before Sebastian's modified barium swallow

MEDICATIONS

For Lungs:

Pulmicort
Alsactazide
Albuterol

For Reflux:

Prevacid
Reglan

God's Miracle of Sebastian

Misc

Sodium

(to replace that which is lost through one of the meds, but I don't remember which)

I have attempted to put into writing our guidelines for feeding precious little Sebastian who God has so blessed and who is growing bigger everyday! Most of these are pointers from L that I have found to provide success!

H. suggested we try just increasing the oxygen during the feeding because we might not be able to coordinate breathing treatments to occur right before the feeding.

As a teacher, I have found it is good for the teacher to “be there” when the student is ready. L is very pleased with his feeding progress and our ‘student’ is doing such a great job, we teachers need to “be there”.

Times: 9AM and 3PM daily

Amount: 10cc per feeding; do not begin syringe feeding until bottle feeding is completed; do not feed from syringe and bottle simultaneously.

Temperature: He seems to enjoy very slightly warmer than room temperature best

Oxygen: Turn green knob to one, not higher (it can go higher) for feeding only

Position: He seems to be best when our feet are on the stool and our knees are elevated, so that his

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

head is also elevated and his head is resting in our left hand and we hold the bottle with our right hand

Other ideas: We try to talk a little more energetically, saying things like “Great job, Sebastian” and “Go Sebastian..you can do it!” and “Don’t forget – suck, swallow, breathe, suck, swallow, breathe.”

We gently “zerbit” his little cheeks and neck if he is not completely awake.

If his lips or gums are closed and he is awake, we gently maneuver the nipple into his mouth.

If he tries to push it out with his tongue, we just hold it still and wait and gently push it in.

Once he begins to suck, we watch his saturation, his breaths and beats per minute and if all remains good, we let him go ahead and suck until he spills. We have had him drink almost the entire 10cc and only stop once. He does not seem to like to have it taken in and out. If he spills just a little, we wipe his cheek and wait a few seconds and then continue.

If he does not have his lips completely around the nipple, we put our forefinger on one side of his mouth and our thumb on the other and very gently encourage his mouth to close

God's Miracle of Sebastian

around the nipple.

We try not to move him during his feeding. Once he begins the tube feeding, it seems best to be prepared to hold him still and with his head elevated for the feeding or to put him on the wedge to reduce reflux.

If he turns red or coughs or begins hiccupping or seems frightened, we stop. We have not had any of those things occur in some time.

APPENDIX 3

STORIES AND BLOGS

On most Thursday mornings I fast and pray and write stories about lessons God is teaching me. What follows are some of those He gave me as we waited for His miracle of Sebastian.

Six Little Ones

March 16

Son Rob and his wife Taylor gave Mick and me a gift certificate for an overnight stay at a delightful bed and breakfast we had never been to. We made reservations to go this past Saturday night which was the weekend before our anniversary. The week before our twenty four hour getaway was filled with normal activity.

My sister Kathy had come to town for a two week visit. We had spent Thursday afternoon together and were just sitting in my car visiting when my cell phone rang.

It was Rob. Never have I heard such anguish in his voice. Mom, we have problems, really big problems. He said I will tell you and then I must go. Then the unbelievable words poured out of him from the depths of his being.

He proceeded to tell me in one breath that Taylor was three and one half months pregnant and that the baby's life is in serious danger because of extremely low amniotic fluid. Normal level is eight to nine – her level was three. Amniotic fluid is essential for the development of this Little One. They

God's Miracle of Sebastian

would go to the doctor at Children's Hospital the next day to see if there were kidneys. One kidney could be enough for survival, no kidneys could not sustain life.

I asked if I could come. He said there would be nothing I could do. He asked that we not call. I understood. I asked what he wanted me to do. He said, Pray.

So we hung up.

I was truly in shock. Not so terribly surprised by the pregnancy, because I had seen Rob and Taylor recently and they seemed to have that same delightful air about them that they had when they were expecting Luke, now sixteen months old.

The reality of what Rob had said just did not seem to truly register. I briefly cried, but very quickly took my sister's hands and we prayed for this Little One, for her Mommy and for her Daddy.

I really do not remember much of what happened next. I took Kathy back to Mom's and Dad's. I am sure I called all our family and asked them to pray.

Rob asked that we have everyone who would to pray.

Soon more prayers ensued. From Paris to Japan to New Zealand and throughout the United States the prayers were requested and they were offered to our omnipotent God.

On Friday we got some good news. A first miracle! There is a bladder. There are renal arteries that lead to what should be kidneys. Praises to our God!

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

But amniotic fluid is still the essential but low component.

So they were told to wait until next Thursday – that it might replenish itself. Wait and see.

Our family has just never been good at waiting and seeing. It just doesn't seem to be a quality any of us have developed very well. Sometimes that is a bad thing, but more often it has seemed to be a good thing.

Rob was adamant that something could be done. We wondered why amniotic fluid could not be replenished from the outside.

Rob's brother, Jon, began doing research, looking for something we could do to help this most desperate situation. Although he was on deadline to complete his thesis within a few days, he put it aside. We all put things aside. Prayers and knowledge seemed to be our weapons.

Friday morning Liz, Libby and I went out to a lake surrounded by a forest. We walked the tree-lined path and we talked and we prayed. Allie and Clay and Mickey prayed. So many multitudes of others prayed to our Almighty Lord.

Friday evening nine people were at our dinner table. Mom and Dad, Dave and Flora, Liz and Nathan (Clay was flying), Kathy, Mick and me. When dinner was over, Mom asked that we all hold hands and pray for Little One. We did. Everyone went home early and I went to my computer.

Jon was at his. Rob was at his. Jon and I talked and we searched. He found some research. Rob had found some research and he isn't even a researcher! Some looked promising. We kept emailing and text messaging Rob.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

Unless he called which he had done by now, they still did not want to talk. Prayer partners were updated.

About ten-thirty Friday night, I was exhausted and heading for bed. Jon and I said we would talk in the morning – he would go to the library and read these papers he had found, this book Rob had found.

I really cannot explain what happened next any better than I can explain God letting me know Mick was having a heart attack in 1988 or His letting me know so clearly a handful of other times when He gave me bits of information that were used to save lives.

He drew me back to my computer and I typed in Johns Hopkins on the search engine. There was listed an entire page of perinatologists. I have never even heard that word before! These are people who specialize in high risk pregnancies.

So I emailed Rob and Jon and told them of Johns Hopkins special department.

On Saturday morning God clearly reminded me that all battles are spiritual. That fighting death is a spiritual battle. That attacks on believing families is a spiritual battle. I selected a few people and asked them to pray that Satan be kept from this Little One and from our family. Liz experienced the same powerful understanding that I did about the spiritual nature of this situation. I am sure others have too. So many have walked hand in hand with me through this, but a few have walked more closely. I believe God designs it that way.

By Saturday night Rob and Taylor had an appointment at Johns Hopkins in the works.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

By Monday morning the appointment time was set. They will meet with doctors at Johns Hopkins at ten in the morning on Thursday.

Today is that Thursday and it is now 10:30am and I suppose they are at Johns Hopkins. And we are prayerfully and trustingly waiting for the news that our omniscient Lord already knows.

I know people are praying. Taylor's parents are in DC. They had months ago planned to go for Spring Break. God in His mercy knew they would go for more. I tried to call Rob's and Taylor's home moments ago to talk with her parents while we wait— there was only the tape. I will go on Tuesday for two weeks. But for this moment it is so very hard to wait and see. How so very difficult it is not to actually be present with dear ones when we suffer hard times....as well as when we rejoice in good times....but the more difficult by far for me is to be apart during the hard times.....yet God in His sovereign way has us where He wants us for the fulfillment of His far greater plans.

The timing of Mick and me going to the bed and breakfast could not have been more perfect.

It was a beautiful place with rolling hills and lakes and horses and most of all a little chapel on the grounds. It was the perfect setting for strolls and stops on benches for moments to pray.

The place only has about ten rooms. Most were occupied by a family who was there for a wedding. Their joy added to the wonderland feel of the place. There were lots of little people running around. We saw them as they were dressed

God's Miracle of Sebastian

in white heading for the wedding. We saw the young Moms and Dads all dressed up. We watched them walk on this beautiful evening to the chapel so close by.

And we went to dinner. By the time we had finished our meal, the wedding was over and the small crowd was gathered for a reception across from the chapel.

So we entered the chapel and sat down. How mysterious that we had planned this date for the use of our gift from Rob and Taylor and that it would be a time to be in prayer for them and their family. We opened a Bible that was sitting on the pew. We prayed the Scripture before us. We prayed for this Little One, for all our loved ones. We thanked our Lord for this place.

We returned to our room and read to each other by the fire. A book called the Power of Love . . .two stories one by a former mayor of Los Angeles who spoke of his Mom teaching him to always please God, even during the poverty filled years of his youth. The other was a very humbling story by Corrie ten Boom about her father.

The next morning we got up and went to breakfast. The windows by which we sat overlooked the lake. Such a serene view we had. Then it was like watching a silent movie. Actors came on the scene. The three young Moms from the wedding strolled separately and met down by the lake. We commented on how they reminded us of the three young Moms in our lives – Liz and Taylor and Allie. The daddies gradually joined them. We imagined Clay and Rob and Jon.

Then we noticed those little people we had seen the evening before. They were so little and seemed to be everywhere.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

Some had walked with their Moms but most were just running to and fro. Such a precious sight we beheld!

Then it struck me.

I said to Mick. That oldest precious little girl looks to be about six years old. You know that could be Zoe a year from now. And look at those two adorable little boys. Don't they look to be about four years old? Couldn't they be Alex and Nathan a year from now? And now look again. See that beautiful boy who seems to be about two. Could he not be Luke a year from now? And do you see that lovable little girl toddling along. Could she not be Libby a year from now?

Then look, Mick, there is one more Little One! See the one not able to walk yet— just holding onto Mom.

Could that not be this Little One for whom we are all so fervently praying?

Could this not be our sixth Little One, our precious gift from the Lord, a year from now?

God has given us Scripture after Scripture for this time, as He always so graciously does. But at the very beginning He gave me a verse that we have asked people to pray. When He first gave it to me, I did something I rarely if ever have done. I did not write down where in the Bible the verse came from. I remembered the gist of it and prayed it but even when I sent it out to people I did not include the reference because I did not know it.

But the words were:

God's Miracle of Sebastian

They cried to You and were saved; in You they trusted and were not disappointed."

Then yesterday I told God once more I really need a verse from Him to see us through. As many of you know the way He has taught me is to first pour out my heart to Him, and then ask for two pages and turn to them. He led me to open to two pages of Psalms.

I began reading and was in wonder about how perfect these words of His were for this time.

Yet I still so needed just one verse to claim....one verse to hold on to...to meditate on..

I kept reading to almost the end of the second page and there it was: Psalm 22:5. "*They cried to You and were saved; in You they trusted and were not disappointed."*

April 29
Your Hearts

For some time now a favorite verse of mine is the first part of the one we so often hear at funerals.

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me."

It goes on to read,

In My Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with Me that you also may be where I am.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

You know the way to the place where I am going.

As believers, we are told that we will suffer and that we will have problems. Moment by moment we hear stories like Mickey telling me last night of his young partner hosting a crab boil. He had picked up one of the large pots of boiling water and it fell and boiling water covered his feet and legs.

In a split second our lives can change.

So it was with the disciples. They had left everything to follow Jesus, who now tells them He will only be with them just a little while longer. They want to know where He is going. They want to go with him. They find the news very difficult to accept. When they later actually see the horror of what their friend and Lord actually goes through, we can only imagine the devastation they felt.

For some time, God has shown me I can either let my heart be troubled or I can trust.

As I asked God to show me my verse for today, I opened to my two pages and there was this verse, John 14:1. It was my Lord reminding me not to let my heart be troubled. When I think of Little One and Rob and Taylor and Luke, my heart could break.

Sometimes I think it has.

Until I read what follows today.

But this verse today and reading Matthew Henry's commentary about it has given me a renewed strength once more.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

I want to share with you what Matthew Henry says:

“Here are the three words, upon any of which the emphasis may be significantly laid. First, upon the word *troubled*. Be not so troubled as to be put into a hurry and confusion, like the troubled sea when it cannot rest. He does not say, “Let not your hearts be sensible of the griefs, or sad because of them, but be not ruffled and discomposed, be not cast down and disquieted” Ps42:5

Secondly, upon the word *heart*: Though the nation and city be troubled, though your family and flock be troubled, yet let not your heart be troubled. Keep possession of your own souls when you can keep possession of nothing else.” The heart is the main fort; whatever you do, keep trouble from this, keep this with all diligence. The spirit must sustain the infirmity; therefore, see that this not be wounded.

Thirdly, upon the word *your*: You that are my disciples and followers, my redeemed, chosen, sanctified ones, however others are overwhelmed with the sorrows of this present time, be not you so, for you know better; let the sinners in Zion tremble, but let the sons of Zion be joyful in their King. Herein Christ's disciples should do more than others, should keep their minds quiet, when every thing else is unquiet.

The remedy He prescribes against this trouble of mind... *believe*. Build with confidence upon the great acknowledged principles of natural religion: that there is a God, that He is most holy, wise, powerful, and good; that he is the governor of the world, and has the sovereign disposal of all events.

The joy of faith is the best remedy against the griefs of sense; it is a remedy with a promise annexed to it; the just shall live by faith. I had fainted unless I had believed.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

He had directed them to trust God, and to trust in Him; but what must they trust God and Christ for?

Trust them for a happiness to come when this body and this world shall be no more, and for a happiness to last as long as the immortal soul and the eternal world shall last. Now this is proposed as a sovereign cordial under all the troubles of this present time, to which there is that in the happiness of heaven which is admirably adapted and accommodated. The saints have encouraged themselves with this in their great extremities.

That heaven would make amends for all.

He loves us too well, and means us too well, to disappoint the expectations of his own raising, or to leave those who be most miserable who have been of Him most observant. He went to prepare a place for us.”

So that is what I read this morning. And having read it I am all the more determined that with God's strength I will not let my heart be troubled, I will remember it is the main fort.

I will remember that heaven will make amends for all!

Little One **May 4**

“You created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb, I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from You when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in

God's Miracle of Sebastian

*the depths of the earth, Your eyes saw my unformed body.”
Psalm 139:13-16*

“My case is urgent, and I do not see how I am to be delivered; but this is no business of mine. He Who makes the promise will find ways and means of keeping it. It is mine to obey His commands; it is not mine to direct His counsels. I am His servant, not His solicitor. I call upon Him and He will deliver.” Charles Spurgeon

Here we are. Taylor is 21 weeks and five days pregnant with Little One. The doctors are concerned because they see no amniotic fluid. Rob and Taylor have tried amnioinfusion at Johns Hopkins. They have tried a special sealing procedure of the amniotic sac by Dr. Bruce Young at NYU.

Once very early on while Rob was out of town, we thought they might take Little One because it seemed all the fluid was gone and that her membranes had ruptured. It was a horrific time in so many ways, yet knowledge of God's peace and love permeated it all.

It was on March 9 that Rob called me to say there were serious problems with the pregnancy.

If a baby is born without lungs, it does not live. Fluid is essential for lung development. So what do you do? You try every procedure you can find to fix the problem. You pray so very hard. You ask others to pray. You ask God what else you are to do. Have faith. According to his faith, it was done, we read. Believe and do not doubt, we also read in His word. So how much faith is enough and how do you increase it? How do you not doubt?

There is one doctor left to pursue for another possible

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

treatment. He is contacted and says he will not perform his procedure. God leads Rob to a website. Oh so many women who have had or are having the same problems. So many heart-breaking and so many heart warming stories.

Taylor is now on bed rest and has been for two weeks. Rob is working all day and caring for Luke at night.

We long for Little One to come into this world as another miracle of our Lord's. We long to have Taylor and Rob return for their appointment in two weeks and for the doctors to say the sac has sealed, the chest is growing, there are lungs, there are no defects. Little One is a miracle!

Our God's ways are not our ways. This life is not about us. It is about Him. He is our Shepherd and we are His sheep. He watches over us every second in every spot. We do not understand why He does not rush in and fix things the moment we ask. We do not understand why He allows pains in our lives.

We can guess reasons all day long. It makes us turn to Him. It makes our faith stronger. It glorifies Him. We can be a better witness and comfort to others. He will use it all for good. Those are all part of it, I am sure.

I have learned more now what fear of the Lord means. In a split second He can perform a miracle or He might not.

Only He can do this.

All we can do is call on Him and trust Him.

I am reminded of a song I do love based on Habakkuk 2:20....

God's Miracle of Sebastian

Let all mortal flesh keep silence before Him.

<http://www.cyberhymnal.org/html/l/e/letallmf.htm>

(You can edit, copy and paste the link above and hear this hymn.)

(If I were to have)

Lunch with Jesus

(Who is to say I didn't?)

May 25

It almost seems sacrilegious to write the words, "Lunch with Jesus."

Yet that is what this story He has given me is about and I know no better title.

Last week Rob, Taylor and Little One drove to Baltimore for their doctors' appointments and ultrasound. Since Taylor is on bed rest, I had been in Washington helping out. I decided to walk down to the hotel where all of us will be convening in two days for our annual family trip. As I walked I was talking with our Lord, asking for His wisdom at their appointment, asking for His help as I tried to work out details of our upcoming family trip.

After I finished the business at the hotel, which He did have work out wonderfully, I decided to have lunch at the nearby Cheesecake Factory. It seemed a bit of a splurge and not something I would usually do by myself.

I read the menu and thought a salad and dessert would be

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

perfect.

I was seated and Rachel would be my waitress at this table for two with only one occupant. You pay almost as much for a half salad as for a whole one so a cheeseburger sounded all the better. As I waited and waited for my well done, mad cow disease preventative burger to be cooked, I noticed people all around talking to others. The DC magazine I had picked up at the hotel no longer held my interest.

I wondered what it would be like if I imagined I were having lunch with Jesus? What if I acted as though He were sitting in that chair across from me?

I thought about what I would ask Him.

What was it like for you when you were a little boy?

He would answer.

I would listen.

Oh Jesus, what do I do that pleases you?

He would answer.

I would listen.

What do I do that displeases you?

He would answer.

I would listen.

Soon it was as if I were no longer imagining. I really knew

God's Miracle of Sebastian

our Lord was there with me.

I wrote notes down about the things we said. But I cannot find them. Maybe the loss is a result of His intent or maybe just my forgetfulness.

Far from me for those moments were the wonderings about Little One and his Mommy and Daddy and Big Brother because He reassured me of something that day.

Something has stayed with me since that day more clearly than it has ever before.

I suppose it is a truth that becomes clearer and deeper the longer we walk with Him.

My Mom and I were talking the other day of the very old missionary who was asked to sum up his walk with the Lord. He responded, Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so.

As Jesus and I sat there that day, all concerns seemed to be lifted. With all the chattering about us, it seemed as if it were only the two of this in this spot.

My morning quiet times are a special time with Him, my walks and talks with Him are special times, times like this moment right now are special times with Him. I have in no way been deprived of an intimacy with our Lord.

But that day at the Cheesecake Factory was different.

After a while, it was if He said, "I am going now."

But before He left, He paused. He tenderly and deeply said

this one thing I hold so close to my heart now.

He slowly said these words:

“Susan.....No One loves you like I do.”

Our Memorial Day Trip June 8

One week ago today our children and grandchildren were with us in Washington DC. Kathy and Lauren joined us on Wednesday. We had planned a trip to the beach, but you begin to understand in time that it is not where you are that matters so much, but rather who you are with.

Rob, Taylor, Luke and Little One live in DC. Taylor is pregnant with Little One and has been on bed rest since Easter and will be for seven more weeks until the proposed delivery date.

The thought of being on such a family trip without them did not make sense to any of us.

So an adventure was born and off we all went to our nation's capitol and their home!

On Saturday Jon, Allie, five year old Zoe and three year old Alex left from Houston. Nine month old Libby led the contingency from Tennessee which included her three year old brother Nathan her mom Liz, her dad Clay, and her grandparents MeMe and yours truly, C.C.

After we arrived Rob picked up the Houston crew and the Memphis group caught two cabs. We had three rooms side

God's Miracle of Sebastian

by side at the hotel near Rob's and Taylor's home.

Our first night there Rob cooked burgers and hot dogs on the grill. He had wrapped gifts on the dining room table for each of us. Baby Libby got a wonderful rattle, musically inclined Nathan got drums to use in the bathtub, lover of vehicles Alex got fighter jets, and curious Zoe got a magic trick bank. Liz and Clay's package was labeled "short" since they are. They got a gift certificate for a wonderful Italian restaurant in Georgetown. "Tall" Jon and Allie got a trip to Durham so they could visit UNC where they may move for his post doc. "Normal" Mick and I got a gift certificate for a professional photographer to come take pics of the grandkids.

Periodically, different folks would sneak upstairs to say hi to Taylor. They will probably not like me saying this but Rob and Taylor have been remarkable. Smiles and laughter and faith and hope radiate from them. Much of what we all have seen is too private to share, but what we have seen has changed us all for forever.

People all over the world are praying for God's Miracle for Little One.

Our first night was a delightful night! Our family under the same roof, being together, is a treasure in itself.

Yet, we have all received Christmas letters that describe the perfect family and their perfect year. I sometimes wonder if people might rather read about some of the problems. Although the sum total and end is no doubt glorious and wonderful, the Bible seems to give us a lot more heart breaking stories than it does cheery ones.

Over the next days in DC, there were some hard times.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

There were some difficult encounters. There were some tiffs. Hard as we try, our family just never has been immune from them.

Yet I also notice something about our family that I will be forever thankful to our Lord for. It makes the tiffs relatively unimportant. Each person, each of the grandchildren, each of the parents knows Him. Knowing Him does not make one immune from problems. Often I think it is the opposite.

It is knowing Him that makes us keep the problems we encounter in perspective, for we know He is in the midst of all we face. He is using it all for good....every bit of it He is using for good.

Sunday we went to church and had a long lasting tiff.

Monday we went to Constitution Avenue to see the Memorial Day parade and eat lunch. (See pic on the back of the book.)

I don't remember any tiffs that day.

Tuesday we drove to Baltimore and on the way Nathan threw up on himself and Liz in Rob's car.

As you know, just as in life, family trips have their ups and they have their downs.

We primarily went to Baltimore because Rob and Taylor had their doc appointment there and this would be our one chance to really all be together. After we bought new, clean, dry clothes for Liz and Nathan we ate lunch and toured the USS Constellation. That night Liz and Clay had their romantic Italian dinner in Georgetown overlooking the river and Jon

God's Miracle of Sebastian

and Allie cooked a delicious dinner of chicken cordon bleu.

Early Wednesday Jon and Allie flew to Durham. We took the kids the four blocks, more like four miles, walk to the zoo. The heat was horrendous. This trip to the zoo caused another tiff that actually didn't occur until the next day. Kathy arrived mid afternoon from Rocky Mount and we ate Memphis barbeque sent to us from my brother and sister-in-law. Precious Zoe began signing people up to work at her lemonade stand. Clay picked up Lauren at the airport late that night, about the same time Jon and Allie returned from another airport.

I cannot remember what we did Thursday but Liz and Clay cooked yummy steaks that night. There is a story behind that cooking, as well as the Sunday church tiff and the zoo tiff that makes me understand better why people don't include such things in their Christmas letters.

It may have been this night that the most memorable quote of the trip was spoken. Three year old Alex pronounces all his "L" sounds like a "Y" sound. "Little" is "yiddle."

Alex was eating a lemon popsicle on the back porch when delighted eighteen month old Luke was also handed one just like it.

With such sweetness, Alex pointed and exclaimed, "Yook! Yuke yikes yemon too!"

Try saying that five times real fast.

Moments like those moments make all the tiffs disappear.

These little people could not wait each morning for breakfast

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

to be over so we could go ride on the underground train. Totally unconcerned with destination, the joy was in the boarding and the riding and the watching..... and in the five little people being together!

Kathy left us Friday morning after breakfast. The rest of us went to the Air and Space Museum and that night Rob grilled lobster tails and scallops.

After dinner Lauren took the kids out to Rob's new SUV where the kids watched a DVD while we stayed inside and had our annual family prayer time.

A most wonderful time, a most private time.

We rode the underground train back to the hotel for our last night in DC. We met for breakfast. Families finished packing and checking out. We met for lunch and began our goodbyes.

Then the departures began.

Jon and Allie and Zoe and Alex got in their cab. As we waved goodbye, I got out my sunglasses to hide the tears.

A car service, driven by Mr. Frederick picked the rest of us up at Rob's and Taylor's to take us to the airport. We told Rob and Taylor goodbye. I knew I would be back in a few days.

Nathan loved Mr. Frederick and talked the whole way to the airport with him. Mr. Frederick this and Mr. Frederick that. Hard to be sad with such delightful dialogue.

We arrived at the airport and found they had no seats for us

God's Miracle of Sebastian

on our return flight. We really were not sure what to do, but the guy who helped us said not to worry.

Then he called our names and gave us our tickets...first class!

As I sat in my roomy first class seat, I had a thought and wrote it down.

“In many ways this trip has been “the best of times, the worst of times.” A family loving You and filled with faith... hoping, praying for the miracle of Little One...praising You and glorifying You for the miracles thus far.”

May our most loving God continue to have mercy on us.....

Miracle of Sebastian August 17

“...you seek Me , not because ye saw miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which the Son of God shall give unto you....”John 6:26

On March 9, 2006, Rob called to tell me Taylor was pregnant and simultaneously he told me of the serious problems with the pregnancy. There was little to no amniotic fluid, essential for lung development. There may be no kidneys. The disbelief and the hope hit me simultaneously.

Five months is not a long time in the grand scheme of things, but these past five months at this moment seem a very long time. Most of it I spent in DC or Baltimore trying to be

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

Taylor, an impossible task. She was in bed for months and I tried to do many of her chores.

From the very beginning God gave me a verse, *"They cried to You and were saved; in You they trusted and were not disappointed."*

I clung to that verse, that promise, that reminder of His unfailing faithfulness these sixty years of my life.

But the storms were not to let up. We were told heart breaking stories about what this birthing would be like, all that would go wrong. Over and over the news was seldom good.

The hours and the days passed. One remedy after another was attempted. Innumerable phone calls to experts. Innumerable emails from others who had experienced similar situations. Innumerable internet searches and phone calls for experimental things being done in a situation like this. Travel to NYC and to Baltimore to correct this suggested by experts fatal for Little One's situation.

Persevering parents and others who kept seeking ways to make this wrong right were held up by our omnipotent Lord.

And life went on as best it could in view of the unknown that could unfold at any moment. Memorial Day in DC with all the cousins and aunts and uncles and me and Mick in May was followed by June and Taylor's birthday and Rob's Father's Day celebrations at the Four Seasons. Then July and Rob and 20 month old Luke held a fireworks display to the second floor bedroom window where Taylor lay. And her room was constantly filled with flowers. And Rob planted and tended the garden paradise he and God had created in

God's Miracle of Sebastian

their yard.

And they marched on. He would go to work. And she would work from bed. And I would get groceries and take Luke to the doc for checkups and do laundry.

And little was said about Little One who was constantly on our hearts and our minds and in our prayers.

Special diet and tons of water and bed rest for months and humor and church and books and movies and phone calls and rushing to the hospital over and over.

And prayer. Prayers from innumerable people to our omnipotent and merciful and loving Lord that He would have mercy and save Little One.

Such was life for a very long time.

Sometimes it seemed as though all was lost. One night in June around ten while Rob was out of town, Taylor and I rushed the hour drive to the hospital in Baltimore. I had spoken with her doc, who said they would probably take Little One. Taylor and one of the priests at her church were on the phone praying much of the long, quiet, dark drive there.

When we arrived at the hospital, we were taken to a hospital room. They were going to take Little One. They explained the procedure.

We knew it was too soon.

Even with the unbearable and unending words from the doc to Taylor as she lay in that bed without her husband at her side, the Lord gave me hope as I sat quietly and prayerfully

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

in the chair in the corner of her room.

In time Rob was on the speaker of my cell phone. He heard some of the plan. He told the docs to wait until he returned. He tried to get flights but could not get in until around noon . They would wait as long as Taylor was not in danger.

Rob arrived with Luke and Luke and I left the room. Awful moments ensued that day. I stayed with Luke at the hospital and talked with loved ones on the phone who prayed through that time with me.

At one point the four of us were all standing in the hall, because a nurse decided not to let Luke return to the hospital room. There we were. Taylor in her hospital gown, me and Luke, Rob all standing in this hospital hall discussing whether to stay or to leave all knowing the implications of that decision.

It was an almost unbearable time. Luke and I left them. Prayers continued. Heartache continued.

Then Rob called. We are going home.

Our Lord's hand was moving.

In time the truth began to dawn on each of us. There was nothing to be done. The essential life giving waters seemed not to be there. They seemed not to remain no matter what was tried. This was not to be of man's doing. This would be our almighty God's doing.

Experts continued to tell us what to expect. My heart was heavy but God kept my hope steadfast. My merciful and loving dear Lord never had me lose hope.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

But everyday, every moment He held me up by His hand. He gave me Scripture. He gave me dear family support and help unlike any I have ever experienced. He had loving friends call or send encouraging, hope-filled emails. We found our faith was encouraging others.

Then one night they rushed to the hospital once more and it was decided Taylor would remain.

I returned to DC that Saturday and about 11pm that night Rob called and said it's time.

I drove in the rain to Baltimore, praying and calling on others for prayer. I arrived around the same time Rob and sleeping Luke did from the hotel. Rob left to be with his wife. Luke slept and I lay with him in his mommy's hospital room praying and waiting and keeping others updated and seeking their prayer and seeking my Lord.

By 2AM Rob text messaged me saying Little One is being born right now.

The moments and hours that followed are still too overwhelming to think much about.....so for sure not to yet be written about.

All I can say is Rob came into the room where his sleeping eldest son and I were and said.....he came out crying, he is pink not blue.

Our Lord performed a miracle. I have walked through a miracle. I have held a miracle.

Weeks before dear Sebastian was born and about the same

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

time the truth of what He was doing hit us all, the Lord gave me a verse that I wrote on a post it and carried around attached to my cell phone...

Then they will know that I am the Lord.

I am humbled beyond belief.

I am changed forever.

Peach Seeds
September 7

Monday was Labor Day and while Taylor went to see Sebastian at the hospital, twenty two month old Luke, Rob and I went to a nearby picking farm one of his neighbors had told us about.

That morning ranks high up on my list of hard to beat delightful times.

A twenty two month old boy climbing on a tractor, running to pet a goat and gobbling at a turkey on a beautiful piece of property with airplanes from Dulles flying overhead to point at and goodies galore to eat that you pick right in front of you is just too much fun!

We started by picking blackberries and eating them. Avoiding the wasps that seemed to like them too, we just reached in and gently lifted the ripe berries from their spot on the bush. Soon our fingers were black with juice as was Luke's face.

Then off to the peach tree orchard. We searched rows of trees and were unable to find any. But Luke and I became very

God's Miracle of Sebastian

interested in the peach seeds lying on the ground. I suppose peaches had fallen and rotted and varmints of one sort or another had left the clean seed on the ground. So I picked up three.

Luke pointed at them and asked, “Zat?” I explained as best I could that they were seeds. Since we had eaten blackberries and he knew there was more eating on the horizon I thought it best to let him know we would not be eating these seeds. “Yuk” is the standard word in our family for things you want to avoid. That seemed the easiest way to let him know not to put them in his mouth, so I said “yuk”. He left the seeds alone.

We kept searching for trees with peaches. Soon Rob called out that he had found the mother load. Luke and I hurried over and sure enough there were peaches everywhere.

We pulled one off the tree and Luke and I shared it while Rob picked more to take home. We bit into that juicy peach and it was delicious! Luke would take a bite, then I would take a bite. Back and forth we shared.

Then all of the sudden Luke’s countenance changed from one of delight to one of distress. He pointed to the center of the peach we had been eating and in an alarmed tone asked, “Zat?”

How on earth did one of those yukkie things from the ground get in the middle of our peach!

I guess it is needless to say that was the end of the peach eating.

So off to the raspberries we went. If you have never picked

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

them they are a lot of work, but worth every bit of it. We picked and ate as fast as we picked. It was getting hot in the sun and Rob was determined we would have a quart of raspberries, so Luke and I walked across rows of the fields to the apple orchard. We sat in the shade of the apple tree and watched Rob. We looked at our tree and it was just laden with apples. So we pulled one off. Rob was in the field picking raspberries and Luke and I sat and shared an apple.

That is why I say that day would be high on my list of hard to beat delightful times.

Yesterday afternoon six week old Sebastian was transported from one hospital to another to have his plaster casts sawed off of his little legs and new ones put on. Taylor and I and a nurse rode with him and Rob met us there.

To watch precious Little One lie in the middle of that big hospital bed and to watch Gary come in and saw through the plaster, to see Little One's big eyes look around and to see his parents comfort him, to notice his heart rate not even increase because he is so accustomed to such loud noises and bright lights and strangers, to have to tell them all goodbye in that situation so I could get a cab to catch my flight...these are all things that make things like God giving me such a verse for yesterday be the steadying force.

Since March 9 our lives have been forever changed. We have seen and experienced a miracle much like those in the Bible. I would be the first to argue that we see miracles everyday. But there are some miracles that leave you as the people were left in Luke 7. The mother had lost her only son and our Lord's heart went out to her and He told her not to cry. He touched the coffin and told the young man to get up. The young man sat up and began to talk....and the Bible

God's Miracle of Sebastian

says, "Jesus gave him back to his mother."

Then it goes on to say, "They were all filled with awe and praised God."

Throughout this time God has given me one verse that seems to be there just when I need it. I have no idea how many times it appears in the Bible. But my quiet time practice for years has involved pouring my heart out to God and then opening to two pages to see what He has for me.

Yesterday it was once more, "Then they will know I am the Lord."

Many of those yukkie peach seeds Luke and I saw will find their way into the ground. From those seeds a seedling will sprout. From each seedling a tree will grow. From each tree peaches will appear.

A Lesson from God September 23

I have told a few people that the miracle of Sebastian has changed me. One way I have changed, I would tell them, is that things that used to upset me no longer upset me. The way I put it to my husband was that "I just don't care about those things anymore".

He quietly listened and waited until I was through with my philosophizing. Then he gently said, "I am not sure it is that you don't care about those things."

Well, that did it. I couldn't get his words off my mind.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

Let me go back and tell you about some of the changes the miracle of Sebastian has brought about in me. This day I do cherish each moment. This day I do thank our almighty Lord for His awesome mercy and His unending love. This day I continue to be awed by the fervent prayers of the body of believers.

This day I remember the text message Rob sent saying, "They are alive," when we did not know how Sebastian or Taylor would fare through this life threatening situation of a potentially deadly pregnancy and labor.

God can use such an event to change your for life. So it has been with me.

One way I have been changed is that so many things seem to have fallen into place as far as their importance.

I realized the change when people I did not know would say or do a rude thing and I was not bothered at all. Actually, I would find myself responding meekly rather than in an offended manner.

I realized it when one person began talking about subjects that I usually will debate. But I had no desire to debate. My beliefs had not changed, but I just did not care to debate.

I realized it when a person I have grown to know told me of her lesbian lifestyle and I was not offended or wanting to alienate myself from her.

But I still could not get Micks' words off my mind. Did I really not care?

As I contemplate all this at the moment, I find I am still

God's Miracle of Sebastian

being molded by the Potter in this arena and of course in many others.

God led me in my quiet time this morning to the book of Revelation and to the admonitions to the churches. He showed me two things.

He first reminded me not to lose the fervent degree of my love for Him. It is so easy for us to confuse His blessings and His mercies *with Him*. He says, "You have forsaken your first love."

Matthew Henry's commentary puts this danger of growing cold towards Him this way, "Christ is grieved and displeased with His people when He sees them grow remiss and cold towards Him, and He will one way or other make them sensible that He does not take it well from them."

Second, He showed me where the Bible goes on to say to the church of Ephesus, "But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate." These people said they were Christians yet they held hateful doctrines and had wicked practices. So the church of Ephesus was praised for abhorring the practices and doctrines of the Nicolaitans.

Matthew Henry says, "An indifference of spirit between truth and error, good and evil, may be called charity and meekness, but it is not pleasing to Christ."

Suffice it to say, *an indifference of spirit* and my saying *I don't care about those things anymore* sounded frighteningly similar.

So as I said, our loving Potter is still molding this clay.

Miracles

November 9

Eight months ago this very day my sister Kathy and I were sitting in my car visiting when my cell phone rang. You never know what the caller on the other end is going to say, but usually you expect some normal conversation. When you see caller ID flash the number on your phone you can imagine a category of subjects this caller might be calling you about.

But sometimes that is not the case. Sometimes the caller whose voice is so familiar to you has brief and heart rending news. Such was the case with this call.

It was Rob calling from DC to say Taylor is pregnant with their second child and there are serious problems. Maybe this Little One has no kidneys. Maybe he has one. There is little amniotic fluid which we learned is absolutely essential for the development of lungs.

That call came around noon on March 9.

The details of what took place between then and now are endless. Such would be the case in anyone's life for eight months.

But these eight months have changed me forever.

Doctors gave no hope for life for this precious Little One. Many wanted to terminate the pregnancy.

Experimental procedures met with no success. Months of

God's Miracle of Sebastian

prayer and seeking our Lord's mercy were all we had.

It was clear this decision was to be His.

And so we waited. Two simultaneous thoughts remained with us continually. The doctors giving no hope and our omnipotent and loving Lord's mercy.

For one hundred and thirty six days we waited.

“Let all mortal flesh keep silence” was the song He led me to over and over. And we waited in quiet and in wonder and with hope and trust for what our Lord would do.

And more bad news came with each doctor's appointment. But our Lord sustained us. We would feel Little One kick in his little room inside his Mommy. And we would see him on the ultrasound. And we would beg our God for mercy.

I suppose we would all say that miracles are all around us. The intricacies of a tiny leaf to a mighty thunder and lightning storm all are evidence of our Creators miraculous powers.

Hard as we try to explain the parts of a leaf and how it grows, we cannot make a leaf no matter how hard we try. I look at my little doggie at my feet right now. He has eyes and ears and an entire array of systems that make him be alive. He is a miracle of sorts.

Once I was driving across the state of Texas in a huge thunderstorm. Eighteen wheelers pulled over to the side. You could feel the highway shake with each roar of thunder. For me it was an awesome display by our mighty God that I have never forgotten.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

Miracles do abound, there is no doubt.

My dictionary says a miracle is an event that appears unexplainable by the laws of nature and so is held to be supernatural in origin or an act of God.

So if that is the case maybe a tiny leaf or a huge thunderstorm are miracles of a sort, but they can be explained by the laws of nature. That makes them no less awesome, but God has shown us explanations for those. We learned about photosynthesis and storms in our early science classes, so we think we understand thunderstorms and green leaves to the point of where we are not always awed by them.

However, I daresay if the waters of the Atlantic Ocean were to part, it would no doubt be breaking news on CNN and Fox. And if some wedding guest started turning water into wine, he would surely make an appearance on Larry King.

These things would surprise us because no early science class text book explained water changing into wine or oceans parting.

I have experienced many times in my life when I know God was compelling me to do something and I did it and because of His urging something ended up wonderfully. Maybe it would have anyway, I don't know. I have experienced many times when the love He has for me and my loved ones and all His people just completely overwhelms me. I have experienced many times when the love and support of the body of believers has greatly humbled me. I could go on and on listing these types of occurrences in my life which are also miracles of a sort.

But this Miracle of Sebastian is unlike any I have seen.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

Some have argued that the reason for Little One's health is the excellent medical care Little One received after his birth. We are ever so thankful to each and every one that God continues to use in the life of our dear Little One.

But let there be no mistake: the miracle is the live birth of Little One.

The miracle is our God's omnipotence in having this precious Little One enter our world crying, with lungs and pink in color..... and not as these most prestigious medical people said he would enter this world.

And so believers who see such miracles are changed forever.

I have joked that I feel like Martin Luther King when he said, "I have seen the promised land!" He said it with such conviction that when we heard him, we knew that he had indeed seen the Promised Land!

The Bible uses the word "miracle." These particular occurrences are distinguished from other occurrences and are called miracles. The Bible does not speak of the miracle of the fig leaf or the miracle of the storm on the Sea of Galilee. The Bible speaks of miracles or mighty works like a staff turning into a snake, water turning into wine and the Red Sea parting.

These are unexplainable events, attributed solely to the mighty work of our Almighty God.

And I have seen a miracle! I have seen a real miracle, an unexplainable event. Praise God!

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

And this miracle is our grandson Sebastian, who is sixteen and one half weeks old!

After most of eight months I am now home from DC. After three months dearest Little One is now home from the hospital.

A child who was not to be born alive now thrives through the grace of our Lord.

I am deeply humbled beyond belief and touched to the very depths of my soulfor we cried to Him and He answered us...we trusted in Him and He did not disappoint us. I can never thank Him enough or repay Him for His mighty deeds.

He is indeed mighty to save!

Our awesome Lord did what no doctor could do!

Our merciful Lord did what no experimental procedure could do!

Our loving Lord defied humans who gave no hope!

We see the miracle our Lord has performed! Let us joyfully praise God!

.....the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen.....

I'm Here
December 21

It is still so very difficult to believe that one week ago this moment I had awoken from spending my second night at Georgetown University Hospital in DC and had just completed my 5AM MRI/MRA and was not eating in preparation for a cerebral angiogram hopefully to happen late that Thursday afternoon.

The story begins about two weeks before.

Liz, three year old Nathan and one year old Libby and I flew to DC so the cousins could meet God's miracle Sebastian and play with two year old Luke, then drive to Chapel Hill to play with five year old Zoe and four year old Alex. We left shortly after Thanksgiving and had a most memorable time watching all these babies and parents interact!

After ten days of visiting the four of us caught our return flight to Memphis. It was a Saturday night and the night of Mick's office Christmas party. I came home and changed clothes. At the party everyone asked about Sebastian. I asked that they pray because when I left he had a slight fever. Friday the visiting nurse Joy, Taylor and I had discussed the possibility of the fever increasing and the need to rush him to the emergency room should it do so. We talked about which hospital would be best and agreed Georgetown because of convenience and knowledgeable people and possibly less wait time.

After the party, I went to bed, but with an uneasy feeling, I put my cell phone next to me. When Sebastian was in the NICU at Hopkins, Rob would text me in the wee hours with updates of things to pray about. The sound of a text message

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

coming in is one that brings me to a ready state of alert.

About five thirty in the morning that all too familiar sound and message came that they were at the ER and that Sebastian's temperature was 103 and they were waiting for him to be admitted. They had been there since two thirty.

Needles and crying and memories of previous hospital stays flooded all of our minds, but I imagine particularly little Sebastian's. I prayed God and His angels would be there once more for Little One and his Mommy and Daddy.

Immediately I told Mick and called Liz and Jon. I sent emails and put it on the blog. Once again we would turn to our loving, almighty and merciful Lord.

Three hours later I was on a flight to DC and by noon I was in Sebastian's hospital room. He was so listless. Rob had been there all night and had gone home, and Taylor was there.

It was Rob's birthday. Fortunately, we had his party the Friday night before we all left DC. Like my friend Khan the cab driver said as he drove me to the hospital, your son is not thinking of his birthday.

When I arrived in the hospital room, Taylor went home and they were able to have some family time together with Luke.

That Sunday I stayed with precious Little One, holding him, praying with him, singing to him, loving him. Trusting God once more.

On Monday I left for a little while to do some Christmas shopping and take a bath at Rob's and Taylor's. She stayed

God's Miracle of Sebastian

with Sebastian and nanny Keyla stayed at home with Luke.

Rob was catching a flight to Las Vegas for a business meeting Monday night and he would be there through Wednesday.

By Monday night Sebastian was so much better. As he lay on the hospital bed, he was smiling and talking to his two little red bears and cooing and gooing. Tuesday the docs said he could go home! Praise God once more!

By mid afternoon Taylor, Sebastian and I loaded up and left the hospital. She had a couple of errands to run, so I sat in the car with Sebastian. He cannot go out until Spring because of all the viruses out there, so that means either Rob, Taylor or I stay with him always. Before going home around four, she ran in and got us a sandwich since we had not eaten.

When we returned to the house, Taylor asked if I would prefer to take a nap or walk to the drugstore to get Sebastian's prescription. The walk and the outdoors sounded so appealing and I had rested very well in the hospital. After I returned I went to the basement to play with Luke. Taylor and Sebastian were resting on the bed in his room. Keyla had gone for the day.

In a fraction of a second, I was hit with a splitting headache. It was sudden and unlike anything I had ever experienced. I really could not stand up. I felt as if something had burst in my head, as if someone had struck me with a brick.

As I lay on the floor, Luke came over and said, CC get up, don't sleep, play with Lukey. All I kept thinking is I am going to die and Taylor may be asleep with Sebastian upstairs and Luke is going to open the basement door and climb up those steps and fall and break a leg. What a great swansong for a

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

grandma who adores her grandchildren!

I called doctor brother in law Stuart. He said get to an ER immediately. I called Taylor from my cell phone, which I happened to have, which worked in the basement!

Something is wrong with me, please come. I heard her come down the first flight of steps, then the second.

I called Mick. He called the kids.

I called neighbor Vicki. I heard the long ringing sound, indicating she was not in the country. She answered in Paris, obviously unable to help with Luke. I called another neighbor, Holly. She came down and got Luke.

Taylor, Sebastian and I returned to the hospital we had left only hours earlier.

At the ER, I felt somewhat not in control and asked Taylor to help me fill out the one question on the little ER form I could not answer: reason for being here. She said, write stroke followed by a question mark.

The hospital people said I would be there at least a couple of hours. I told Taylor to go home with Sebastian and that I would call.

It was so odd to be at an unfamiliar hospital and to be the patient. I have spent hours in hospitals with loved ones. But I am never the patient. It was so odd not to have any loved ones there.

But the oddest thing is that all that was ok. I was not afraid. My only fear had been for Luke's safety. I thought about

God's Miracle of Sebastian

how far God has brought me.

I called my friend Nancy whose son is a neurosurgeon. She asked no questions and gave me his numbers. I called him and Stuart. Both agreed something had happened and both agreed the ordered lumbar puncture was essential for diagnosis.

Back in the curtain drawn ER room, the only thing I noticed was a cross on the wall. How sweet of the Lord to have it there. How calm I felt.

I was told over and over by the two doctors to lie still. This resident had never done a lumbar puncture before. Pleasant thought. I think I just finally fell asleep in this frozen, still position with my left hand holding onto the bedrail keeping me still and on my side.

After several hours of being in this surreal state, I felt a gentle hand cover my bedrail glued left hand.

I heard my sweet husband's voice say, *I'm here.*

They admitted me to the hospital that Tuesday night to run more tests. A cat scan was followed by some sort of echo bubbles test on Wednesday to find if there were holes in my heart which was followed Thursday by an MRI/MRA which was followed later that day by a cerebral angiogram.

Nothing showed up, but each doc was convinced something had happened. Maybe it had resolved itself. Maybe it will show up in the follow up test a week or so from now.

On Friday I was dismissed from the hospital and caught a flight with Mick back home. Luke and Rob had caught a

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

flight to Memphis earlier that day for their long ago planned visit.

I just received a call from a long time friend that another of our long time friends Dad died this morning. It is Christmas time. The sky is gray outside today as I sit here typing and reflecting on these events.

There are no wrapped presents under our tree as of this moment. I feel no urgency to get them wrapped. I feel a peace that does pass all understanding. The past eighteen months and particularly since March 9, our lives have been like a roller coaster. If you stay on the roller coaster long enough, does that just begin to be normal?

With the gray skies and the quiet and my doggie asleep in the chair near me and sitting here with my red Christmas tree socks and my yellow nightgown, life seems very peaceful right now.....as it has for some time now.

Many years ago our Savior came to this world as a tiny baby. The Son of God came from heaven on high to this earth to save us from our sins. That is why He came. Without him we would be lost forever.

Emmanuel, God is with us.....

Looking back on those events of last week, I see now so many things I did not see. God got me on an early flight to DC that Sunday morning. He had me have my cell phone in the basement that Tuesday and it worked. I had eaten an early dinner. Mick was able to get on a late flight and arrive in DC. The list is endless.

Our God is loving and He is in control always. He plans

God's Miracle of Sebastian

even the tiniest details. He is intimately involved in each and every part of our lives

God is softly and sweetly whispering to us all.....
“*I'm here*”

* * *

These are notes I sent to Rob and Taylor from the prayer service held to praise God for His mighty deeds.

Prayer Service

Dear Rob and Taylor

Yesterday's prayer service for Sebastian was a most meaningful time. I have tried to summarize it for you (along with the help of some who were there).

Please read this and the scriptures mentioned when you have some quiet time.....

**Love you
Mom aka Susan aka CC**

The prayer service for Sebastian began with Liz singing the first verse of “Let all mortal flesh keep silence.”

N read 2 Chronicles 20:1-20.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

Tim led the prayer time. He would say a phrase and we would each pray silently.

With tears coming from his eyes, he thanked the Lord that Rob's and Taylor's home was a home of joy and not of mourning. He thanked the Lord that Luke would have a younger brother, that they would grow together physically and spiritually. He thanked God for the witness that Sebastian's birth has been, how it has strengthened the faith of so many.

He thanked the Lord that Rob and Taylor were able to name their child.

He prayed that Sebastian will one day understand God's intervention in his life.

After he prayed Tim read Psalm 118:23 and 113:8-9.

Then he asked people to share how Sebastian's birth had affected them.

I told of God leading me to sing "Jesus Loves You" to him when I was first with Sebastian.... and how to me Sebastian had been Little One from the beginning...how I sang to him that first day as he was so frail and yet held my finger...God had me think about the words differently that day and I think forever....Little Ones to Him belong...they are weak but He is strong.

Tim told of how he had prayed Sebastian's name would be written in the Lamb's book of life...

Suzanne told us about telling her daughter Amy not to worry about a little thing they were dealing with because they were counting on Sebastian's God.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

Bette told of the many people who had told her they prayed for their special needs son Walker...people they had never known....that we would discover the same thing would happen with us.

Mick spoke of the endless emails he received from people in churches all over the country who had been praying for Sebastian.

Liz spoke of how she had learned that God is not a God far away but a God close by. That He is all the little things, of how bad news would come, she might be discouraged, a friend would be there just then to encourage.

Lauren read scripture that spoke to this miracle being from God...not man...man could not do this, only God.

Nancy spoke of how her faith had grown so enormously.

Mom spoke of how our family has grown closer through this.

Liz closed with the same hymn the service began with.

These are the people who were there in body – others were there in spirit and told us so.

Tim, minister who fell to his knees in 2PC when told Sebastian was born alive

Mick

Me

Mom

Liz Clay Nathan Libby

Lauren, like a daughter to us

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

Karen, Lauren's roommate and our friend

Bette, long time friend and tutor

Margaret, very long time friend

Peggy, across the street neighbor and friend

Ellen, friend with Peggy, Linda and me

Ann, long time friend

Glenn and Nancy, friend and prayer partner who are now themselves launched into the deep (see March 28 entry)

Diane, long time friend

Suzanne and Don, long time friends

They cried to You and were saved; in You they trusted and were not disappointed

And below are responses to an email I sent thanking people and asking their remembrances of the time so I can pass them on to you both :

* * *

Your message is most gracious, indeed.

Thank you both for including me in such an important event. I rejoice with you in the Lord's blessing the next generation of your family. It was a pleasure to meet your mother today as well.

Tim

* * *

I am so glad I was in town and could be there. It was a sweet and moving time and Liz's voice is a bit of heaven. I have never heard her sing and she is terrific! What a great family you have!

Xxoo

Peggy

God's Miracle of Sebastian

* * *

Lauren wrote:

Tim prayed repeatedly for babies and children. He lifted them up to the Lord. He prayed for the children in the room (Nathan and Libby) and others that they would know the Lord from an early age and experience no rebellion towards Him. Tim prayed that Sebastian and Luke would share a unique bond as brothers and that the Lord would bless them all the days of their life. As Sebastian was brought into the world in an extraordinary way, Tim prayed that Sebastian would lead an extraordinary life (in so many words), a life that will bring glory and honor to God. Nancy shared from 1 or 2 Chronicles. You probably remember the gist of that. The verses I shared are from Isaiah, chapter 41, verses 17-20. The last of the verses says, "so that people may see and know, may consider and understand that the hand of the Lord has done this, that the Holy one of Israel has created it." An earlier verse said, "I will turn the desert into pools of water, and the parched ground into springs." You noticed the significance of this, as we prayed that God would increase the levels of amniotic fluid. This is what I remember. I hope it helps.

* * *

The prayer time was a blessing to me. Hopefully, if everyone recaps what they remember, you'll get a fairly complete picture of all that transpired. Here are my recollections.

Tim's prayer:

- Thanksgiving for Sebastian and that Rob and Taylor's home was one of rejoicing rather than mourning.
- that Luke and Sebastian would enjoy growing in grace as

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

brothers and would develop a special spiritual, as well as fraternal, bond.

- that Luke and Sebastian would know the Lord at an early age and never wander from His side.

- that Sebastian would recognize a special calling from the Lord and be inspired by hearing the miraculous story of his birth.

Many talked about being blessed in their prayer time for Sebastian with increased hope, perseverance, faith, trust, and wonder as God's mighty power and will moved in mysterious ways, so that all would know that His hand alone brought Sebastian into this world alive. We also were reminded of the many caring Christians that we will never know who prayed for Sebastian, Taylor, Rob, Luke, and all of the extended family and continue to pray for Sebastian's health. This, of course, reminds us not only of how close God is to our very intimate and personal concerns, but how huge God is and how He uses His whole family of faith to strengthen us in times of need. Tim also teared up when he talked about praying that Sebastian's name would be written in The Lamb's Book of Life when the situation looked grim.

Those were the high points of our prayer time that I remember. Of course, I don't have to remind you of what you said that touched us all... the little prayer you whispered in Sebastian's ear, "Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so. Little One to Him belongs. He is weak, but He is strong."

Always in His grip,
Bette

* * *

God's Miracle of Sebastian

It was beautiful to witness such faith, family and friendship
Love,
Ellen

* * *

Ann wrote:

A lot of Tim's was thanksgiving for the birth of Sebastian but I was particularly touched by his prayers for Luke and Sebastian's relationship as they grow up. (Jack and Ben are definitely brothers but are totally devoted to each other and are probably the two closest brothers I have ever seen, so I was praying for Luke and Sebastian in that way that they would love and support each other, etc.).

Tim prayed: (remember this is paraphrase and what I remember so change it where I'm off) thanksgiving that God made Rob, Taylor, and Luke's home one of rejoicing rather than mourning; that Sebastian would be filled with the Spirit and never know a time when he did not love the Lord, that he and Luke would escape years of rebellion against the Lord, but would always serve him; he led prayers for all the children, grandchildren, great grandchildren represented by those gathered. He used Psalm 118: This is the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes! He said when the news was bad one day and it appeared he would not make it that he prayed that Sebastian's name might be written in the Lamb's Book of Life. I think much of his focus was on God's plan for Sebastian (and Luke) to accomplish all that God has planned for them to do for Him.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

He asked for testimony about how we were changed as the result of seeing God work in Sebastian's life:

Bette shared that Rob and Taylor would for years encounter people who had been praying for them but whom they had never met because of her and Dick's experience with Walker. Suzanne referred to the God of Sebastian being able to handle whatever we face. Your mom was so touching in sharing how this one event had brought your whole family together in prayer and in unity. Mick shared that it was seeing your faith that kept him going in times of doubt. Lauren shared a passage about a desert and water filling it up.

* * *

Blogs allow you to read your postings and the responses of others to your postings. Sometimes your postings can cause reactions you did not intend. Our personal blog about Sebastian remained an encouragement to us and we never received any response that was upsetting.

However, to my great distress but with understanding and compassion, I found that some of my postings to the PROM blog about God's miracle of Sebastian caused deep pain for ladies whose children had gone to be with the Lord.

So I wrote to them.

Response to PROM Ladies

October 28

Saturday

To You Dear Prom Ladies,

The joys and the heartbreaks you all share bring me joy and heartbreak with you. Please know that tears fill my eyes and prayers are lifted to our Lord when I read your stories. Our own path since March and your paths have changed me forever.

The little things that used to be so bothersome just don't matter, yet the heartbreaking situations tear at me unlike they ever have before. The miracles astound me unlike they ever have before. So first of all please know I have never meant to be lacking in compassion to your situation by my writings or lack of writings.....so much the contrary.

Your stories gave us hope in a seemingly hopeless situation. You told us not to listen to doctors. In many ways, God used you to help prevent Little One from being taken by doctors early in the pregnancy.

My intent always has been to share our story so that I might give you hope as you give us hope.

My intent has also been to glorify our omnipotent God. In my sixty plus years on this earth, I have never witnessed a miracle like Little One. Doctors tried all sorts of experimental things to save Little One once they realized we were not giving up. When we were told no one would do anything else, we did not know what to do.

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

Then God led me to know that if this baby were to live it would be His doing and His alone. My repeated verse was similar to the one I read today, "I did this so that you might know that I am the Lord your God."

In my life I have experienced much heartbreak, situations that seemed devastating. I am certain there will be more. They are hard. They are perplexing.

Yesterday as I was waiting on the platform with others for the metro, we began to hear the most dreadful screams. A hush came over the crowd as the word came to us that a young woman had jumped in front of the train and an old lady had seen it. Her screams are in my mind even as I write. And I wonder why did she do this? Why didn't God stop her somehow? How are we supposed to think about this?

Three weeks ago I stood with my daughter over the open coffin of her friend's three month old baby who had been perfectly healthy. We watched the parents stand over the coffin and look down as if they were looking at her in a bassinet. Why does this devout family go through this? How do they deal with this? How do they respond to the six year old brother who says his sister will come home Friday?

I am not sure where it is in the Bible, but there is a verse that says something like I don't think about things too deep for me. I have to remind myself that I cannot figure these things out. Why did Job lose everything? His friends would have him believe it was things he had done. God later rebuked them harshly for not speaking what was right. God is God. His ways are not our ways. We cannot comprehend, but we can trust.

God's Miracle of Sebastian

If one of your little ones is now with the Lord, we have no alternative than to trust God. The same verse He gave us for Sebastian can be your verse. "They trusted in you and were saved; in You they trusted and were not disappointed." You have not lost a baby, because you know where your precious baby is. One thought that helps me is this: if someone I love is with God and God is also with me, then that loved one cannot be far away.

It may be awhile before you see him again, but trust God and one day our weeping will turn to joy and there will be no more tears. "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

We must remember that we see dimly the whole picture and that the story is not over. As believers we know how the story ends, because our Lord conquered death. We must hold onto His truths. You may have read this verse that the Lord gave me to give to Taylor last March. I am praying it for each of you this moment.

May the God of hope fill you with all loving peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Psalms and Obadiah

This is the night I will be sending this book off to be printed, yet I must pass on to you one more thing our Lord has done. Not until tonight did He lead me to look in Matthew Henry's commentary about the promise He gave me on March 10 or the verse He gave me in Obadiah on March 11 dealing with the spiritual nature of the battle in which we were engaged. Once more I am overwhelmed, as I pass what I have read on to you in the commentary.

Psalms 22

The Spirit of Christ, which was in the prophets, testifies in this psalm, as clearly and fully as any where in all the Old Testament, "the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow" of him, no doubt, David here speaks, and not of himself, or any other man. Much of it is expressly applied to Christ in the New Testament, all of it may be applied to him, and some of it must be understood of him only. The providences of God concerning David were so very extraordinary that we may suppose there were some wise and good men who then could not but look upon him as a figure of him that was to come. But the composition of his psalms especially, in which he found himself wonderfully carried out by the spirit of prophecy far beyond his own thought and intention, was (we may suppose) an abundant satisfaction to himself that he was not only a father of the Messiah, but a figure of him. In this psalm he speaks of the humiliation of Christ (Psalms 22:1-21), where David, as a type of Christ, complains of the very calamitous condition he was in upon many accounts. He complains, and mixes comforts with his complaints; he complains (Psalms 22:1,2), but comforts himself (Psalms 22:3-5),

God's Miracle of Sebastian

Our Lord Jesus, in his sufferings, had an eye to the holiness of God, to preserve and advance the honour of that, and of his grace in inhabiting the praises of Israel notwithstanding the iniquities of their holy things. He will take comfort from the experiences which the saints in former ages had of the benefit of faith and prayer (Psalms 22:4,5): “*Our fathers trusted in thee, cried unto thee, and thou didst deliver them; therefore thou wilt, in due time, deliver me, for never any that hoped in thee were made ashamed of their hope, never any that sought thee sought thee in vain. And thou art still the same in thyself and the same to thy people that ever thou wast. They were our fathers, and thy people are beloved for the fathers' sake,*” entail of the covenant is designed for the support of the seed of the faithful. He that was our fathers' God must be ours, and will therefore be ours. Our Lord Jesus, in his sufferings, supported himself with this--that all the fathers who were types of him in his sufferings, Noah, Joseph, David, Jonah, and others, were in due time delivered and were types of his exaltation too; therefore he knew that *he also should not be confounded.*

His commentary on the Obadiah verses reads:

But on Mount Zion will be deliverance; it will be holy...

Obadiah v17

And the kingdom will be the Lord's v21

...and for those who come in faith and hope to this Mount Zion deliverance shall be wrought from wrath and the curse, from sin, and death, and hell, while those who continue afar off shall be left to perish.

We may depend upon it that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church, but the church shall prevail against them; *for the kingdom shall be the Lord's; the kingdoms of the*

A Chronicle of God's Faithfulness

world shall become his, and he has taken, and will take, to himself his great power and reign.

* * *

God's Miracle of Sebastian

We remain humbled that the Holy Lord of heaven and earth
is allowing our simple family to witness His miracle of
Sebastian.

* * *

This book is very difficult to end because the story
continues and our awe of God and our gratitude to Him and
to so many others continues.