

## The Shack

Once upon a time there was a very poor family that lived on the edge of town in a one-room dilapidated shack. The walls were of rough boards scavenged from left-overs from other finer homes. Cracks in the walls were filled with mud which fell out when it dried letting in wind and rain. So the house was drafty, damp, and cold. The roof likewise was made of salvaged materials, some shingles, some corrugated tin, or whatever else had been found. It also leaked when it rained.

The family endured the discomforts as it was all they had ever known, and it was home. Then one day a bulldozer came. The family was told to get out and they watched in horror as the bulldozer plowed through their home, splintering wood and crumpling metal. Their home was now a pile of rubble.

“Why? Why?”, they asked of the bulldozer driver.

“I don't know,” he said. “Orders of the Mayor. I'm to give you this tent to live in until we finish.”

“A tent ?” said the father, Jacob. “At least we had solid walls and a roof before. The mayor must be a cruel man to do this to us. I hate him for it.”

The mother Miriam replied, “But the Mayor has done kind things for people in the past. He must have a reason even when we don't understand it now. I wonder what the man meant when he said until we finish.”

“He obviously meant until they come back and take the rubble away.” said Jacob.

As days and months went by they argued more and more about the Mayor. Joseph was convinced he was a bad man, but Miriam was not so sure. She wanted to believe he was good. But Jacob's heart became more and more bitter. He complained to the townspeople and many sided with him.

They said, “How can a good mayor do such a horrible thing, destroying your home.”

Eventually some of the people who had become bitter at the mayor decided to move to another town. Jacob decided he would go as well. But Miriam insisted on staying and waiting longer. The children were still young and didn't understand what was happening. They thought it was exciting to live in a tent. To them it was a grand adventure.

So the day came. Jacob said goodbye to his wife and children. “I will send for you when I have built us a new house.”

Miriam waved goodbye thinking that living in the tent was really no worse than their old house and in some ways better. It was still cold but it did keep out the rain and wind. She was also not very hopeful that the house Jacob would build would any better than the one he had built before.

And so time went by. Occasionally Miriam would hear from Jacob. He was having great difficulty getting any supplies to build a home. Meanwhile Miriam was doing well in her tent although it was starting to wear out. There were tears here and there which she tried to mend as best she could.

Then to her surprise one day the bulldozer returned along with some large dump trucks. The rubble of her home was cleared away in a day. The next day another large machine came and leveled the land. It was as though her house had never been there. As long as the pile of rubble was there she felt some connection to her past and the good times with her husband, but now even that was gone. Her house could not be rebuilt.

A week went by and Miriam remembered the words of her husband. “It will be finished when the rubble is cleared away.”

“Maybe her husband was right. The mayor is a mean, cruel person”, she thought.

Then at dawn on the start of the next week a most amazing sight was to be seen on the site of her former home. A caravan of trucks came down the road and stopped. Men hopped out and began unloading the trucks which were filled with building materials and tools.

Miriam just stared. She couldn't understand what was happening. She went up to a man to ask “What are you doing?”

“Order of the Mayor”, he replied.

And so the men worked; hammers banging, saws cutting wood, the shrill sound of drills, and men yelling orders. Gradually a framework was made and lifted into place. The rafters were placed on top and a roof made. The walls were enclosed and sided. The roof was covered and shingled. It was a new house, a home. Miriam wept. A real home! The Mayor had shown himself not only to be a good man, but a very good, kind, and generous man.

Miriam sent for her husband Jacob “The mayor is good. You have to come and see the beautiful home he has built for us.”

But he was not convinced. “The mayor put us through all that trauma of losing our home. He could have at least told us he would build us a new one. And he didn't have to make us wait so long and live in a tent!” Jacob wrote back.

But Miriam kept writing him of the loveliness of her new home. She said she didn't mind living in the tent that much, and besides she had learned to trust that the Mayor was a good person.

It took awhile, but eventually Jacob got tired of living under a viaduct because he couldn't find what he needed for a new home. As he read the letters from Miriam, a warmth started to grow in his heart and the bitterness slowly melted.

One day as he looked at the surroundings where he was living and the trash all over the place, he came to himself and said “What am I doing here? It's my pride. It's just because I didn't like how the mayor treated ME. I will go home.”

And he did.

### Reflections

Have you wondered how a good God could allow or even cause bad things to happen to his people? Why does he allow pain and suffering. We cannot understand all his reasons, but He does have reasons. One may be that he takes away to give us something better. Why doesn't he do it sooner or tell us why? Perhaps to build our character and to teach us to trust in his goodness. He wants us to believe he is good no matter what. He wants us to succeed where Adam and Eve failed. The basis of Satan's temptation was to cast doubt on God's goodness. Paraphrasing Genesis, “Did he say you could eat from all the trees? He withheld from you the most important and desirable one.” implying that God was not good to do this. Eve saw that it looked good and that being wise was a good thing so she came to the conclusion Satan wanted. God is not good and you must take matters into your own hands. Which she and Adam did and we have been doing ever since. So every time we trust God and believe in His goodness in spite of circumstances, we are kicking the devil in the teeth or shall we say fangs. Romans 8:28 really is true, even if we don't always see how things could possibly work out to our best..