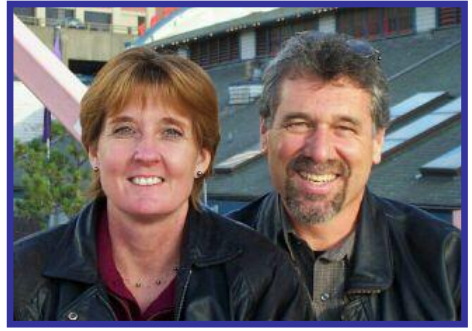


Hal and Cheryl Large

Ministering in El Salvador



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God's Word tells me over and over again that the purpose of tribulation, discipline and Godly correction is always to bring me into a right relationship with Christ. It *does* hurt - and it is OK to hurt - and, for the moment, it *doesn't* seem to be cause for joy. However, there *is* a Godly and good purpose behind what God had decided to do or to allow. The suffering may cause me great pain and may even be the result of another's sin against me. Its purpose, however, is to take me to Christ. Its purpose is to put me into a correct attitude of reflection, repentance and submission to Him. It's not all about what *I* want. In fact, it is my ego that gets in the way of knowing the life of grace and love in Christ.

"The Lord is near to the brokenhearted, and saves those who are crushed in spirit." (Psalms 34:18)

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise." (Psalms 51:17)

The "spirit" that is broken by suffering and pain is the spirit of pride, self-interest, self-exaltation and self-serving. It is the worship of people, things and even our own selves. It is idolatry. God is a jealous and loving God and He knows those things or people in which we have put our hope are, in fact, broken cisterns (*Jeremiah 2:13*). He would have us drinking from the well of life, from Christ Himself. As we put to death our own wishes and desires and in faith and thankfulness submit ourselves to God, the purpose God has for discipline, correction and pain is realized: we enter into the life of Christ. We drink from the well of living water, Christ Himself. Understanding and accepting this, we can actually give God thanks for what He is accomplishing in us as a result of our suffering.

The past six months have been some of the most difficult in the lives of Cheryl and myself. And we are still in the midst of the spiritual struggle. As you know, God has been bringing to the Family of Faith Church messages of warning and calls for repentance. The purpose has been to bring us to Christ that we might truly find our life in Christ alone and put off our life of sin, which is often covered over by religious words and knowledge. Some have responded and repented. They are living new lives in Christ. Others have not heeded the warning. Some have resisted God's rebuke until it resulted in outright rebellion. In the lives of others, private sins have been revealed openly. It has been a fiery experience for us all. One particular event has been unusually difficult and painful for the church.

This summer, it was revealed that a church member who was a small group leader, Sunday school teacher and member of the praise ministry was sexually abusing young boys. Under the direction of Christ and with the approval of his wife, we helped two of the young men from the church to file criminal charges against the man. We then informed the church. After initially cooperating, the man disappeared, abandoning his family. There has been much grief and distress for all. For some, the power of the blood of Christ to heal our deepest offenses has been appropriated. Hearts were healed and lives transformed in the midst of great suffering. For

others, the trial has brought to light many things hidden in the heart. Such is the case of three families that have left the church. They were in disagreement with the decision to denounce the crime and have promoted a division. In all, there are probably thirty less people attending the Family of Faith Church today than at the beginning of the year. And it isn't over.

We covet greatly your prayers for us. It is a time of soul-searching before God. We humble ourselves before God and He brings us into total dependence upon Him. There is a core group that has affirmed their commitment to Christ and the church. We are in the process of seeking Christ's heart and His direction together. This is a defining moment. God has been telling us He would first "pluck up and break down, destroy and overthrow" before He would "build and plant" (*Jeremiah 1:10*). We know God's purpose is to build up the church. However, that edification is to take place *in Christ*, by the faith of Christ, in the holiness and authority of Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit. So, we are coming together to pray, to walk in Christ with a broken and contrite spirit. We hope in Him.

At the same time, we have received the exhortation to lift up the hands that have fallen down; holy hands, washed in the blood of Christ. We are commanded to come together and strengthen the knees that are feeble and make straight paths for our feet (*Hebrews 12:12, 13*). We have received the call to walk together as one body in Christ and live in Spiritual unity, holiness and love. This truly must be a work of the Spirit of grace, according to the power and authority of the blood pact Christ has made with us (*Hebrews 10:29*).

Pray for us, dear brothers and sisters, for we are being sorely tested. Pray that we will continue to walk in Christ, in faith, in hope and in love. Pray that we would walk in Spiritual wisdom.

One of the families that separated from the church experienced a terrible rebuke from the Lord three weeks after they left. The husband was in a fight with his siblings over a large inheritance the father had left. Two weeks ago, he was taken to jail, accused by two of his brothers of fraud and forging a signature. He faces many years in prison. I have been ministering to the family and they have professed repentance. They have supposedly come to terms with the other party. (This has been a year-long battle with the man resisting coming clean.) Pray that I might be faithful to speak the truth in love. May they be taken to true repentance and holiness of life in Christ.

Please remember us in your prayers. We are

Yours for Souls,

