

Groggs in Dominica

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Christ or Chaos

There will be Conflict.

I could never have imagined so much of it though. So much turmoil, anxiety, fear, stress, and worry. My heart is in a continual state of ache, and when there are times of joy and laughter, eventually even that is overridden by a sense of guilt. Guilt that I'm having a good time and my husband is a Remand in prison.

I know this newsletter has been a long time coming. I'm still not sure the timing is right because of how quickly things have been changing. However, this past week has felt enough like a lull to give a go at writing.

This is really just a continuation of the last newsletter (3.30). I know there have been several email updates along with some confusion. I will tell what I know and will keep quiet about what I must. Yes, our amazing lawyer had to approve the contents of this newsletter.

What I don't think I mentioned in the last newsletter was our meeting of Pastor Steve and his wife Desrie. These two have become God's hands and feet for our family.

Before we left the States, we had been looking to make contact with Dominican pastors. Pastor Steve was one we'd sent a FB message to but it was never seen until March 24th of this year. It was an account he thought had been hacked so he made a new one. God's timing is

perfect, of course. We invited him and his family over for supper, even in the midst of what was happening with Sandra and Deborah.

Having only just met us, they decided to not only stand with us but to fight for us. Pastor Steve's wife, Desrie has been a warrior of encouragement. She has been Godly strength and compassionate love. I will forever be thankful to my Father for sending her my way.

Monday, April 17th

Desrie planned a day away for me, to help me destress. We had a wonderful time as we visited her family and relaxed at the hot springs.

Unfortunately, once back on Wifi at her Mom's I saw that Hannah had been trying to get ahold of me, saying the police were back and there were way more than last time. She was begging me to come home.

Since Jason was supposed to be our ride back, and I couldn't get ahold of him or Hannah, Desrie and I had to wait for Steve to come pick us up. I came home to madness. There were Custom Officers and police with rifles everywhere.

The house was in the process of being searched and Jason was in handcuffs with the kids corraled in the front room. All personal phones had been confiscated.

... PRAISE ...

- Prayers of the Saints on our behalf.
- For the friends that have come straight to us when they heard the lies.
- The Brothers and Sisters in Christ that has stood by our side through this mess.
- Physical safety for our family.

... PRAYER ...

- Repentance from Sandra and Deborah.
- Bail granted to Jason so he may be returned to his family.
- Peace, healing and safety for all of us. There's been a lot of trauma.
- Finances.
- Wisdom and great discernment moving forward.
- Ability to finish applying for Jason (and my) Work Permits and for them to be granted in good timing.

Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.

~ Ps. 46:10

Unbeknownst to me, a firearm and ammo had been found. I'm glad I didn't know until right before they all left. It was late before they filed out, taking Jason with them.

We listened to the commotion from the front porch as the police started searching the container that had been at Feed My Sheep on the Mahaut Gospel Tabernacle's property since Sept. 2021.

It wasn't too long before we saw the whole police procession with Jason, the truck, the shipping container on a semi, and several police vehicles, all with lights flashing drive close by on their way to the dock where they deposited the container. I think that was my first feeling of surrealism.

Tuesday, April 18th

I received a call from Jason saying the police and customs were going to search the shipping container and they needed for me to be present as well. I protested, saying I had kids to take care of but my denial was refused.

A police van showed up and I was assigned a female officer. She came to be a friendly face amid this turmoil. I called her "my person" and I was glad she was at my side and would remain so (by order) for the next week, any time I was transported somewhere.

Both our lawyers were present at the dock as the container was searched. Misc ammo was found during this time in totes that had been pulled too carelessly from the basement. I have no idea how I didn't have a full-out panic attack during this search. They provided a chair for me to sit in as I cried and tried to just keep breathing.

After the search, Jason and I both rode in the police van back to the house where I thought I was being dropped off. Halfway there, I was informed I also was under arrest. This was after my lawyer had asked the police multiple times during the search if I was under arrest. Each time, she was told no.

Shortly after, my phone was taken and once at the house, they searched again. It was during this one that a bit more ammo was found, even though the lawyers and myself think it was planted. With how thoroughly they searched the first time, and where this was found, there was no way they had missed it on the 17th.

With both parents now being arrested, the police decided to take all the kids as well. Our lawyer made arrangements with Desrie to come to the house when she could and we were told the police would then bring the kids back and she could care for them. What we didn't know at the time was the police had no such intention.

Once at the police station, we found out that Hannah and Gracia were also under arrest and Elijah and Nathan would be sent to Chance's Childrens Home, in State custody. Jason would be in the cells at the Roseau jail while I, Hannah, and Gracia were sent to the Grand Bay jail, clear on the southern tip of the island.

I can't say much about Jason's conditions although I heard they were far worse than ours. For us, the cells at Grandbay (there were only two that we knew of) were about 7' x 4', the walls were covered with graffiti, some written in feces, and sprayed with urine. Hannah and Gracia shared a cell while I was alone in mine.

The cells were empty except for just enough cardboard on the floor to sleep on. We had to ask a guard (because we were there, they had to have a female guard present as well) to let us out to use the bathroom which was next to my cell, with only bars for a door and paper towel for TP.

As ashamed as I am to say it, it was Hannah and Gracia's upbeat spirits that kept me from having a breakdown. They were God's blessing to me that night and during our week-long stay there.

Wednesday, April 19th

Jason's parents arrived on the island early afternoon. This vacation had been planned for months and yet a vacation they did not get. Our lawyer sent a driver to pick them up from the airport since I hadn't even been able to give them directions to our house before I was arrested.

They were told they would be getting Elijah and Nathan from the children's home but then the police decided that it was "too late" in the day. They told the kids that their grandparents had gotten in too late. More lies.

That night, Dennis and Becky felt the love of some of our friends, true Believers. These Dominicans sat on the front porch of our rental with Jason's parents and had a praise service. There were prayers, singing, hugs, and encouragement. This continued throughout the rest of the week as multiple brothers and sisters in Christ stopped by to offer their support and bring food.

But GOD. While I'm still so sorry for what Jason's parents flew into, God's timing was perfect. He knew we would need them. They were able to get ahold of someone at the Grand Bay jail so I could

Speak with them, know they were OK, Mango was OK, and see the several people who were there with them. This brought me great relief.

Thursday, April 20th

More lies from the police on returning Elijah and Nathan. In fact, they were driven to the house to collect clean clothes, some snacks and whisked back away to the children's home while Elijah clung to her grandma and cried. Nathan wasn't in too bad of spirits since he'd made friends there yesterday (of course).

72 hours have now passed since Jason's arrest and he still has not been charged. (72 hours is the limited for an arrest without reason) They "released him" for about five minutes, not even letting him leave the station, and rearrested him, giving them another 72 hours to figure out charges. Normally, this would have been considered an abuse of power.

Friday, April 21st

Somewhere during this time, we all got interviewed by two officers while a third wrote everything down. They even interviewed Nathan, a 12-year-old child.

The US Consulate in Barbados sent a representative to talk to us after hearing a great outcry from the States regarding what had happened to our family. They were more concerned because there were children involved. And while she wrote down our statements of the conditions in the jail where Hannah, Gracia, and I were being kept, nothing was done that we could tell.

A Writ of Habeas Corpus was sent to the High Court via our lawyers, to force the police to explain why they were keeping all of us still with no charges. I

believe it was because of this, that Elijah and Nathan were released this evening to Dennis and Becky.

The rest of us, minus Jason, spent several more hours sitting in police headquarters. Thankfully, our lawyer spent that whole time with us as well, reminding the police their 72 hours were up and we should be able to just walk out since they hadn't charged us yet.

We were told, "Do what you think you have to do." We were pretty sure if we tried to walk out though, it wouldn't go over well. After reprinting about five times, we were finally read our charges and Jason was also handed his. By this time, it was about 9:00 at night.

Hannah, Gracia, and myself were all given the same possession charges, but Jason and I had an extra, trafficking. After this, we girls were returned to the Grand Bay jail, where we spent the weekend.

Saturday, April 22nd

While I don't know how Jason's weekend went, Hannah and Gracia kept each other entertained and thus me as well. Their spirits were high, and it actually seemed like they were enjoying themselves.

But GOD. During the previous week, an adult female guard had taken a liking to us (more so the girls). She was shocked and appalled that a 16-year-old was in jail, let alone her jail. She brought us cushions to sit and sleep on and two blankets from her own house. At one point, she started calling the girls "her daughters." There were other things she did for us that I can't mention. She is keeping in touch with us to this day. Also, we were

brought good food, even if not always in a timely manner.

Sunday, April 23rd

We read Scripture while our favorite guard listened and we sang whatever hymns and praise songs we could remember. During our week incarcerated, we read out loud to each other the books of Esther and Job.

Sunday evening found all three of us sharing a cell. Someone had been arrested on suspicion of arson. He was drunk. That evening and night were not so much fun. We had to listen to him rant, yell, cuss, shake, and kick the bars of his cell. Til our female guard threatened to dump a bucket of water on him, all for us I'm sure.

Monday, April 24th

Thanks to the Writ of Habeas Corpus, we found ourselves in High Court today. The judge (referred to by everyone as "my lord") ruled the police kept Gracia, Elijah, and Nathan unconstitutionally. Gracia was released to Jason's mom, who was present.

There were news reporters and miscellaneous people in the court that day as well but since this case involved minors, the judge told them all to leave. For the ones that didn't, he went person by person, asking them who they were and then deciding if they were allowed to stay. Most were not.

From there we were ushered to the first floor where the Magistrate court is held. This was the initial hearing for the firearms and ammunition. Jason pleaded guilty to all possession charges, and Hannah and I plead not guilty. Neither Jason nor I were allowed to plead on the trafficking since it's considered an indictable

charge. That means it would be dealt with in the High Court.

Since Jason plead guilty to all the lower charges, the ones against Hannah and myself were dropped. She was released to Becky. Since the indictable charge was still over Jason and my heads, we went back to our respective jails. Bail was not even mentioned.

I read through all of Proverbs that very quiet night. Thankfully the man in the cell next to mine was no longer drunk and thus had much better behavior.

Tuesday, April 25th

It was back to the Magistrate court today but nothing was decided. I sat out in the waiting area the entire time, with my favorite officer next to me. She really was good company. She thought enough of us and the kids she left her number for us early on. I have yet to get in touch with her though.

What we'd been hearing regarding the case, was that once Jason had enough money to pay the fine for the lower charges, the prosecution had agreed to drop the indictable charges for both of us. The problem was, the magistrate refused to set an amount. I was told the hearing had turned into a circus. Not even the court police had seen anything like what was going on with Jason.

Instead of going back to jail after court today, Jason and I were both remanded to StockFarm Prison. And while I thought being in jail was bad enough, my preconceived notion of prison was so dreadful I'm not sure how I managed the drive there. Jason and I weren't allowed to be in the same vehicle because rules don't allow a male to travel with a female.

When I saw him get out of the prison bus in front of me, I couldn't control myself anymore and broke down. My officer sympathetically rubbed my shoulders.

Intake for me was getting all my possessions searched through. Things were pulled out of my purse that I was allowed to keep. I had to sign a paper saying the inventory of my wallet was as I had watched and then I had to change into a yellow jumpsuit.

I know I must have looked petrified because the guard (they're all female in the female section) was kind and encouraging. When she took me to my cell, I found another inmate just getting done mopping the floor and laying out a blanket on it, like a carpet, for me. She had already cleaned the toilet. I could smell it.

So, while I was pretty much in disbelief that this was actually happening, here are the blessings I was able to count every day while in prison:

*I had a roof over my head.
The cell was twice as big
as the Grand Bay jail.
An actual bed with a
mattress and sheets.*

*My own working toilet so I didn't
have to ask permission to go.
TP instead of paper towels.
New toothbrush and toothpaste.*

*I had 2 bars of soap,
one for me and one for dishes.
Some shampoo for my hair.
The opportunity to shower
twice a day (it was needed).*

*A towel and 2 washrags.
The door was 90% covered,
offering privacy.*

*There were only two other
women with me in the section.
One of the guards brought me a
hymnbook after a while.
I had a foldable fan I used
almost all day, every day.*

I had my Bible.

*Food was brought regularly three
times a day even if breakfast and
supper were both sticks of bread
spread with margarine.*

*Lunch was hot food. A chicken
leg with rice and sometimes
beans or lentils.*

So, while prison seemed to be the end of the world, it was much better than jail. I was thankful.

While there, I read through Psalms, Ecclesiastes, Isaiah, Mark, Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon and I started into Hebrews. It's amazing how much reading you can get done when you have nothing else to do.

We did have responsibilities to a degree. We had to wash our dishes, once a week was laundry when you were given two buckets that you filled with water and washed whatever you had that needed it, we had to keep our cells clean and tidy and every once in a while, clean the courtyard. It was surrounded on two sides by 3 cells each. On the far end were the sinks and the shower stall. We also had "recreation" daily if we behaved. The woman across from me lost hers a couple of times. She's another story, not fit for this newsletter.

I'm pretty sure at least two of the guards were Christians even though they all were very nice and seemed to have high moral standards.

Thursday, April 27th

Back in Magistrate court today. Again, I sat in the waiting area, and again, nothing was decided concerning Jason's sentence. We were remanded again, this time until Friday, May 5th. I couldn't believe it. We would spend another week in prison. Jason had even tried to get a custodial

sentence so that I would be freed. Our lawyer wouldn't hear of it. She said another five days in prison wouldn't kill anyone. She was right.

Something new happened once I was back. Recreation time. I declined to watch the movie that was playing and instead looked through their poor selection of books. I found one by Max Lucado and started reading it until one of the guards pulled a chair next to mine. We spent the rest of the time talking. It was very refreshing.

On another day, I was able to sit and watch a different guard plait (braid) one of the inmate's hair. She did such delicate braids and intricate patterns. Both of the Christian guards were there during that time, with praise music playing in the background and I felt such peace, like I hadn't felt since this whole crazy ordeal began. It was wonderful.

Somewhere In Time...

I don't know which day during the long weekend it occurred, but one of the guards I'd talked with about how I hadn't been able to talk to Jason in a week and had only seen him in passing at the courthouse, arranged for him to come to visit me!! I cried and hugged her. While he had to stay handcuffed, we got to sit next to each other holding hands and talked for probably 45 minutes.

Tuesday, May 2nd

Just before lunch, I was told I was going to court. This was a surprise since I knew it wasn't Friday. The lawyers had pushed for another hearing, this time on the East side. That's a drive I don't enjoy and I was concerned about motion sickness. Thankfully, even though speeds and corners were taken crazy, I was fine. The Lord answered my prayers and Jason's.

Again, we had to ride in two separate vehicles. This time, the Magistrate finally decided on a fine amount. It was paid (thank you all that gave!!!) and we were both released. We rode back home with our lawyer, even stopping to grab a bite on the way.

While everyone at the house knew that we had gone to court that morning, no one had been in contact with them so they didn't know how it went and didn't know we were coming home. It was so good to see everyone!

Wednesday, May 3rd

Little did we know this would be our only full day together for a while. We'd been separated for two weeks and spent the day trying to recoup and plan what was next.

We'd been told there was a deportation order put in for Jason. Based on this and the Consulate wanting to see him, he decided to travel to the US Consulate in Barbados. He was hoping if he talked with them in person, he might get their help.

Thursday, May 4th

For the rest of the story, you'll need to stay tuned. Part two of the newsletter is still evolving, although some of you know what happened this day.

But God

I've told so many people that I can't look back on my time in jail and in prison without seeing God's hands wrapping me (and the girls) in His love and goodness.

While at times I didn't think He was listening since life seemed to be going from bad to worse with no let-up, I could still very clearly see His compassion

on us and the favor He gave us in those places.

The police at the jail, and the guards at the prison, were all wonderful, level-headed people. They were kind and took the best care of us that their jobs would allow. The female officer that was assigned to me and the girls during the first week was gentle and caring.

All the people that came to the house after Jason's parents arrived on-island, offering support and encouragement, bringing food, praying with them and praising the Lord together, was Him loving on them. Becky kept notes on who all came and I have since made sure to thank each and every one of them.

God knows. He sees and He cares.

Praise the Name of the Lord!

Jesus is King!

Until next time, the **Groggs**

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; but in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight. ~ Prov. 3:5-6



Picture: Feb. 2023