



Psalms 78:2-4

I will open my mouth in a parable, I will utter dark sayings of old... We will not conceal them.

Parables Bookshelf - Series 1.7.5

This issue of PARABLES BOOKSHELF contains chapters 17-22 of the book *Evidence of Things Unseen*.

In previous issues we have looked at the numbers 1,3 and 7 as they relate to God. We have seen just a few of the myriad of ways these numbers are stamped upon the creation by the Creator.

In this issue I would speak of the presence of these numbers in the Bible, as they occur together.

A prominent portion of the Old Testament deals with the appointed feast days established by Yahweh

which Israel was to observe annually. These feast days collectively are called Moedim (appointed times). As a collection they are ONE (1).

These feast days are divided by God into three main feasts which are identified as Pass-over, Pentecost, and Tabernacles (Sukkot).

These three feast days are further divided into seven parts, for both the first and last feasts have three parts. Pass-over consists of Pass-over, The Feast of Unleavened Bread, The Festival of First Fruits. Tabernacles consists of Rosh Hashanah, The

Day of Atonement and Sukkot.

Thus, the appointed days are One, Three and Seven.

The golden candlestick that Yahweh revealed the design for to Moses was also marked by these three numbers.

The candlestick is one, and made of one piece of beaten gold. It has three parts, the body of gold, the anointing oil inside, and the flames that burn. It also has seven flames coming from seven candles.

Many more illustrations of this prevalence of the numbers 1,3, and 7 could be provided.

Food for Thought

"I prayed for faith, and thought that some day faith would come down and strike me like lightning. But faith did not seem to come. One day I read in the tenth chapter of Romans, 'Now faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.' I had closed my Bible, and prayed for faith. I now opened my Bible, and began to study, and faith has been growing ever since."

D. L. Moody

Scripture Memory

Romans 1:16-17

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous man shall live by faith."

Parables Newsletter

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Evidence of Things Unseen

Pain City

It was the middle of September, 2000 when God moved us to Payne City. It had been six months since I had been cast out of my place of ministry at Living Faith, and although I had quit attending at that time, Tony continued to go week after week, taking our children with her. Tony had received much encouragement from the ministers and their wives in her rebellion, and she craved this support as she continued to state her opposition to the path God was leading me down.

I tried on numerous occasions to explain to Tony what God was doing in our lives, and I reminded her of Charles and Nancy Newbold's visit to our home when I had asked them to pray that I would have a quick death. I reminded her that Charles had asked if she

I knew that I was partially to blame for my wife's struggles.

would walk with her husband through the things God would take him through. She had answered affirmatively, and Charles had exited our house by saying that one way God could take us through a

death experience was by means of a financial death. Tony responded by saying that if she had understood what we would be walking through that she would never have agreed to it.

God gave me tremendous grace in these days, for Tony was going through emotional upheavals daily, and would rage at me at times, while falling into tears of self-pity only moments later. She said, and did, many hurtful things during this period of time, but God gave me grace to never answer her back with anger for anger, or reviling for reviling. I was able to calmly respond to her, and to keep affirming that I loved her every time she would say that I hated her.

The Holy Spirit had made known to me that this was to be the manner of my response. Some months earlier God had spoken plainly to me, affirming His words through an event He had orchestrated, letting me know that He would change the heart of my wife. I knew that changing her heart was something beyond my abilities, and I believed that God would do what He had said. I also remembered the prophetess Judith taking Tony by the hands and praying against a spirit of divorce. These

things gave me comfort, and the confidence I needed, to simply leave Tony in the Father's hands while I looked to Him to effect a heart change in her.

Responding with such patience has not always been the norm for me, but I felt so vulnerable at this time, and I daily needed God's grace to such an extent, that I dared not act in a prideful, or unforgiving, manner toward others. I wanted God's mercy in my life, so I was compelled to be merciful to others understanding that "by the judgment we judge others we will be judged", and remembering our Lord's words, "blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." A man who is hanging on a cross is very unwise to hurl insults at the person next to him who is also on a cross.

I also knew that I was partially to blame for my wife's struggles. Because I had disobeyed in the area of covetousness, I had opened up a door in my home for my wife and children to become attached to various worldly idols. It was to be expected that they would have some difficulty giving up these idols. I was once more reminded of the story of Jacob leaving his father-in-law Laban. One of the Scriptures that had been used of God to initiate this entire journey in my life was Genesis 31:41, "I have worked for you for fourteen years". These words were spoken by Jacob to Laban, as Jacob was fleeing from his household.

Reading further in this story we find that Jacob's wife Rachel stole her father's idols and hid them among her baggage when they departed. Jacob too had allowed idolatry in his home, and his wife had a difficult time giving up the family idols. I admitted my culpability in this matter, and it led me to choose to be very patient with my wife.

My wife was at her most volatile period while in Payne City, but it was merely the final death throes that preceded her deliverance. I truly considered turning back to work in secular employment, because of the difficulty of the days, but God had so disabled me that I could not even walk at this time without leaning upon a cane.

During this time of great pain, I also knew great comfort from the Father. He manifested His provision for us, while we were in Payne City, in extraordinary ways.

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We had been there a couple weeks, and I had no money left for gas and groceries, or to pay bills. I prayed to God on a particular day and I asked Him to provide us some money. I had a sum of several hundred dollars in mind. That night we visited with our friends the Barnes' at their church, and before we left he placed an envelope in my wife's hands to give to me. When I opened it I found that it contained three hundred dollars in twenty dollar bills. God provided the exact amount I had requested that morning.

A few weeks later I had to pay the water bill, and once again I had no money. Tony had some money her father had given her, but she refused to use it to take care of our family's expenses. She said the money was hers, and she would not share it with me. This rejection from my wife cut me to the heart, and I spent time alone with the Lord weeping because of the pain I felt. I told God that I needed money to pay this bill, and I asked Him if He would send me some money since my wife would not share with me in this matter. This was on a Wednesday, and that night we visited with our friend's at their church again. As we were leaving Randy handed me a check that was written from the church's benevolence fund. The check was for fifty dollars, which more than covered our utility bill. Randy told me the check had actually been given to him Sunday, but he had been unable to give it to me that day. I knew God had reserved it for this day to be given in response to my passionate plea that arose to Him that morning.

I felt very comforted by these tokens of the Father's watchfulness over me and my family. We did not know any lack while we were in Payne City, and God provided just what we needed to pay all of our bills. One remarkable provision came in on the very day that we were leaving this house. Although we were given the offer to stay six weeks at no charge, I had agreed to pay the electric bill. Before we left the bill had arrived at the owner's house, and they called to inform me that it was fifty-four dollars.

I felt that I needed to pay this bill in a timely manner, yet on the day we were moving out I did not have the money, and I wanted to give the money to the owners when I gave them their keys back. As we were preparing to leave the house on that last day I looked in the mailbox and there was a letter from a credit card company I had once done business with. Inside was a check for eighty dollars. The company had faced some sort of class action lawsuit, and they were sending out checks

to all those people who were entitled to a refund. The name of the company was Providian, and God was testifying to me that He was our faithful Provider.

God was also faithful to do what He had spoken to me when I first saw the numbers 3456 on the outside of the house. He would set our household in order while we were there. One of the great obstacles in the way of Tony having a heart change was the support she was still receiving from the ministers and their wives who had rejected me. I began to pray that God would cut off all influences in my wife's life that were encouraging her to resist God's working in our lives.

We had been in Payne City several weeks, and Tony had arranged to go to a meeting with a number of the women from Living Faith. She called one of them to ask if she could ride with these women, who were all close friends at the time, and she was informed that Richard's wife had told the other women that they were not to pick Tony up. Tony could not understand why she was being shunned in this way, for she had done everything the ministers and their wives told her, and had chosen to align with them in all the matters we were dealing with. Tony was devastated at this rejection, and she went into her room to cry.

I felt great sorrow for my wife, for I understood the pain of being rejected by friends, and I wept for her and asked God to comfort her heart. No explanation was ever given as to why the women had chosen to avoid Tony, but I knew God had answered my prayer to cut off from Tony all the unrighteous influences in her life. Tony quit attending church at Living Faith, and there was an immediate softening in her attitude.

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City...*

God had to do one more work in my wife's life, for she had been entertaining the thought that if things got bad enough she could divorce me and return home to her parents and live with them, taking our children with her. God had to show her that this was not the panacea that she considered it to be.

Evidence of Things Unseen

The neighborhood in Payne City was ruled by gangs, and there was much crime present. God watched over us, however, and we knew His faithful hand of protection as we had known everywhere else. One day I was hanging a banner on the front of the house. The banner had the word "Faith" on it, with images of a cross and an anchor. Faith in God was my anchor in that hour, and I wanted to display this banner as a testimony of the One in whom we were trusting.

As I was hanging the banner, an elderly woman drove up, and she got out of her car and approached me. She asked if I was a minister, and I told her I was. She began sharing with me about

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how she had been terrorized by the gangs living in the neighborhood. She lived one block behind us and on more than one occasion young men had cut her phone line and power

line at night with the intent of breaking in and robbing her, and possibly harming her. She said that gang members lived on either side of her house, and they wanted to run her off so they could have her house.

I inquired as to whether she had family, and she told me she had family in Florida, but did not want to move there. I asked her if she was a part of a church, and she said she attended a large church in Macon, but she did not feel that she could ask them for help. I held her hands and prayed for her, and she left thanking me profusely.

About a week later I was sleeping in a recliner in the living room due to my sciatica, and about 4:30 AM I heard two gunshots. They were very loud, and very close by. My wife and kids did not hear them, but continued sleeping. A few minutes later there was a banging at the front door, and I heard the voice of this elderly woman asking me to hurry and open the door. I threw on some clothes, and unlocked the door and she came in. By this time my wife and kids were awake, and they listened as this woman said that someone had cut her phone line and power again, and they had then broken a window to come in her house. She kept a gun under her pillow and had fired two shots into the ceiling, scaring off the intruders. She brought this gun with her when she came to our house, and she laid it on our kitchen table. She asked if she could use our telephone to call the police. When the police arrived she returned

to her house.

My wife had been very frightened by the neighborhood already, and she told me daily of her fears. Just the day before, I had heard God tell me to let my wife go stay with her parents if she was afraid to stay with me in Payne City. After hearing the report of this woman, I knew Tony would want to leave, so I told her that if she wanted to go to her parents' house that she had my permission, but I would remain in Payne City. Tony was greatly relieved to hear me tell her this, and she told me that, as soon as the sun was up good, she would call her parents and ask them if she and the kids could stay with them.

Tony's heart was considerably softened toward me by this time, and she had quit speaking of divorce when she shared her fears with me. God was ordering everything in our lives according to His wisdom, and His timing was impeccable. Tony's parents said she could come stay with them, so she and the kids packed up some belongings and left in the car. Later that evening Tony called me from her parents' house and told me that she really didn't want to be there, wanting instead to be with her husband. This was a major breakthrough, but more was to come.

Tony called me every evening so I could speak to her and the children, and each evening I could sense in her words that she found the idea of leaving her husband to return to her parents' household less attractive. Her mother told Tony that she could move in permanently, suggesting that she should divorce me, but she told Tony she would have to do as they instructed her to do. Tony would have to get a job and place our children in public school, which were two things she was greatly resistant to. Our children had been home schooled from the beginning of their education, and Tony felt it was her place to be at home with them. Tony repeatedly told her mother that she had no intention of divorcing me, and that she had only come to stay because she was frightened of the neighborhood.

By the end of the week Tony felt she could stay no longer, and called to tell me that she and the kids were going to rejoin me at the house in Payne City. I must add here that our children were never frightened of the neighborhood, and they had made friends immediately with some of the neighbor children. They were excited

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to hear that they were moving back. I too was excited about their return, and I could see that the hand of God had orchestrated all that had transpired to reveal to my wife that her place was with her husband. Like Moses, she had come to choose “rather to suffer affliction with the children of God... esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt” (Hebrews 11:25-26).

The atmosphere of our household was vastly changed when my wife and children returned, and the threats and outbursts of emotion were replaced with a great measure of peace and contentment with the will of God. I am really proud of my wife, for although she struggled greatly, she overcame in the end. I do not know too many women who would be willing to endure the chastening hand of God that we experienced. Most prefer the “pleasures of sin” and would trade away a future hope in Christ for a season of personal ease and self-gratification.

My wife was to go from “glory to glory” from this time forward, as the Spirit led her into ever increasing reflections of a woman of godliness. Tony would begin practicing those things written by the apostle Peter:

I Peter 3:3-6

Your adornment must not be merely external -- braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands; just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, **and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.**

We had our date in bankruptcy court, and God set us free from all of our financial bondage. Yet many more things were buried while we lived at this home on Kingsbury Drive. Our King cut-off and buried my covetousness, as well as Tony’s rebellion. Our household was set in order, and it has been a much different experience since.

To those who care to ponder this, it reveals a great

mystery. Only through suffering do we learn obedience, and only in pain are we set free from that which binds us and holds us back.

New Beginnings

Despite the agony we knew in Payne City, I told the Lord I was willing to stay there as long as He desired. I looked to Him to provide the money to pay the rent of \$500 a month, if He desired that we should stay longer than the six weeks we were offered free. The money never came in, and, about a week before our time there was up, a couple we knew called and said that they wanted for our family to come stay with them in the country during the month of November. They had prayed about it and felt the Lord was leading them to set this offer before us. Our free time at the house in Payne City ended October 31st, so this was a very timely offer.

It was a tremendous change going from the tension we knew in this crime ridden neighborhood, to a house in the country. It was just what my wife needed, and she enjoyed her stay immensely. Kristin and Josiah also greatly enjoyed this time, for this couple had a son and daughter that were nearly the same ages as our children, and they had a wonderful time together. This family even had an outside pen for our dogs to stay in, and in this way God met all of our needs.

*I was willing to stay
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desired...*

Although I also appreciated the change of atmosphere, I did not enjoy our stay to the extent of the rest of my family. Part of the reason was that this couple thought I was in disobedience for not working, and they saw their offer as an opportunity for me to find a job. I had tried to explain to people before that God had told me that I was to trust Him for our provision, and in every instance I had been unsuccessful in convincing anyone. I could understand people’s incredulity, for it was hard to explain why God would let me go through bankruptcy, and lose our house and van, if He had called me to trust Him for our provision. So few saints have any understanding of God’s discipline in the lives of His children, that I found it impossible to speak to them of

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it.

As a result I had to simply bear the reproach of everyone who considered me to be a deluded reprobate who was too lazy to get out and work to support his family. These judgments chafed at me very much, and I agonized over God's will. I was pleased that God was providing for us, but not that He was doing so in such a way that I was open to everyone's criticism. This caused me to doubt at times whether I had heard God aright, for the weight of every man's opinion was against me.

When we arrived at this couple's house, I sensed that the Lord would have me speak to the husband about some things he was pursuing in his life. We had once fellowshiped together at the same church, and had been good friends. We had been able to speak freely about matters together. Yet the first time we started a conversation he told me up front, "Your being here at our house is about you, and not about me." In this way, he very peremptorily cut off any discussion we might have had.

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I was so discomfited that I spent my first week there fasting. While the rest of my family were enjoying themselves immensely, and taking great delight in the wonderful things our hostess was cooking, I continued to struggle. Daily I would go outside by myself and pray. I was very depressed in my thoughts, for it was difficult staying in the house of friends who judged me as a transgressor. I longed to have a single person whom I could share with who would understand this path God had called me down, and who would offer me encouragement along the way.

I was also filled with anxiety as I considered what we would do when our month was up with this couple. They had told the members of their church that I was out of work, and this resulted in various members sending me job applications from businesses they knew to be hiring. It was impossible to tell these people that I wasn't looking for a job, so I just took the applications and said thank you. The thought that I would have nowhere to go at the end of the month would nag at me,

and I thought of all these people judging me to be a fool for not seeking a job when I had the opportunity.

All these things contributed to my lack of enjoyment during this time. I was a bit upset that my wife was able to have such a good time while I could not. No one judged her as a transgressor. Everyone expected me to do my duty as a husband and father, and to be the breadwinner. I was seen as the transgressor, while my wife was viewed as a victim of my disobedience. This had been the judgment of the ministers who had rejected me, and this judgment seemed to follow me around like some hellish burden.

I felt very constrained by the Spirit still, and I would have violated my conscience had I gone out and taken a job. I still felt that I would be forfeiting a great blessing of God had I abandoned this walk of faith, so I continued to wrestle with God and I decided that, for better or worse, I would look to Him to provide, and if I perished, then I perished.

About a week before our time was up with our friends I felt a growing conviction that we were to sell our remaining furniture and possessions and purchase a motorhome to travel in. We had stored all of our things in our friends' barn, and since they were out in the country, it was not a very good place to have a sale. I decided to rent a truck and take everything back to our house in Fort Valley, which was technically still ours until the foreclosure was finalized, and I would have a yard sale there.

My family and I packed a large moving truck full of our possessions, and I drove it to town. We had some friends who lived a block up from our old house, and they said we could stay with them while we had the sale. Early in the morning I went down to our house to set things out of the truck, to be displayed for sale. I could not have imagined the result we were to have. People began showing up much earlier than I had anticipated, and they were buying everything. I did not even have time to price the items.

Things became so hectic that I had people climbing up into the back of the moving truck to see what else I had for sale. Some men even volunteered to help me unload the truck so they could see what else was in there. I was

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literally spinning in circles trying to keep up with it all. People were asking for prices right and left, and I was handling everything as best as I could. By that afternoon everything that I had brought to sell had sold, with the exception of a washer and dryer, and I had a man leave me a business card asking me to call him if I did not sell them. So I called him and he bought these last two items, though he gave me less than I had wanted.

It was evident that God wanted me to sell all of our possessions in this manner, for I had never seen a yard sale like this one before. It was like some angel had whipped the crowd into a frenzy of buying. I had thought of continuing the sale the next day, but there was no need, for everything had sold. God was going to start our family over fresh. He had us get rid of all things that tied us to a past of disobedience, and we were going to begin anew in obedience.

Our month was over with our friends in the country, and with the money I had made with this sale I was able to rent a hotel room in Perry, Georgia. I finally knew some rest in my soul there, for I was not living with the judgment and criticism of others. It was a great relief for me to retire to our hotel room in peace.

I did not have nearly enough money to purchase a motorhome, but my wife's parents had given all their children and their spouses a financial gift at Christmas every year since we had been married. With this in mind, we began looking at some motorhomes, and even drove to the Atlanta area to look at a couple of used vehicles, but we did not see any that we liked. We all felt a lack of peace with these first few motorhomes we had looked at.

We had been in the hotel about a week when my wife's parents did something they had never done before. They had always given their children money on Christmas day, without deviation, but this year they decided not to have a Christmas gathering at their home, and they presented my wife with a check on December 8th. The check was for \$8,000. Eight is the number of new beginnings, and this number was to appear again and again in the next couple months as God set about bringing our family into a time of new beginnings.

My daughter Kristin was looking in a local paper that day and she found a motorhome for sale very close by, but the owner was asking \$10,000 for it, and I figured that we could only spend about \$6,000 for a motorhome. I told Kristin that the motorhome was too expensive, but she urged me to call the owners anyway. She said they might come down some on the price. To this I replied that they would have to come down about forty percent to bring it within range.

At my daughter's insistence I called the owners and they described to me a 28 ½ foot motorhome that was fully self-contained with a generator, water holding tanks, a refrigerator that ran off of propane or electricity, a stove, a hot water heater and both roof and dash air conditioners. The motorhome was over fifteen years old, but it was in good shape and would sleep four people easily. It also contained a bathroom with a shower.

I told the lady who owned the motorhome that it sounded very nice, but that I only had \$6,000 to spend. She did not sound put off by this statement, and she invited us to come take a look at it, saying that we could talk further about the price. I took our entire family to look at the motorhome, and as soon as we saw it every one of us knew it was the motorhome God wanted us to have. It was larger than some other RV's we had looked at, and in better shape. It had good tires on it, and recently had new batteries bought for it as well.

After talking it over with my family, I offered this woman \$6,300 and she accepted our offer. Since it was a Saturday, we arranged to meet at the bank on Monday to pay her for the motorhome and have the title transferred to our name. When I arrived on Monday the woman told me that she had a caller contact her about the motorhome on Sunday, and the caller appeared willing to pay her the full \$10,000, but she told them that she had already promised the home to us. The woman selling the motorhome was a Christian, and she stood by her word to us. May the Lord bless her for that.

As soon as we saw it every one of us knew it was the motorhome God wanted us to have.

Some friends, Buzz and Donna Harrington, who lived in the same county we were in, contacted us and in-

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vited us to park our motorhome at their house for a while. This was evidently God's leading, for He had been opening doors before us right when we needed one opened. So we parked at their house and remained there for about a month while they generously shared all their meals with us.

The motorhome was lacking a hitch to pull a car, so I had one installed. Another thing I needed was a tow bar to attach to a car in order to pull it. I also felt like I

It was a great feeling to be heading down the road in our motorhome...

needed a smaller car than the four door we had, so I placed an ad in the paper to sell our car. I need not have done so, however, for when the Barnes family heard we were selling our car, they said they wanted

it, and they would even give us a smaller two door car they had as part of the selling price. The tow bar was also acquired in an equally providential way.

While we were parked at the Harringtons, a friend of theirs from North Carolina stopped by, as he was on his way to Florida. When he heard we were looking for a tow bar he said that he knew a man in South Georgia who had a company that made some of the best tow bars in America, but he had recently closed his business. He said he would check with him and see if he had any left. Sure enough, this man had a few left and he agreed to sell us one for half the price they had been selling for. We not only were able to obtain a \$600 tow bar for \$300, but this man picked it up for us on his way to Florida, and brought it back to us when he returned the next week.

We were now completely outfitted and ready to hit the road. It was early January, 2001 when we left our friends' house and headed for Jekyll Island, Georgia. Jekyll Island is a state park, and I had once lived there for three years, before I was married. My wife and I had also honeymooned there, and it was one of our favorite places to visit on vacation. God was about to do some wonderful things as He revealed that we were in a time of new beginnings as a family.

Jekyll Island

It was a great feeling to be heading down the road in our motorhome, towing our car behind us. I had a sense of tremendous freedom. God had taken us through our year of Jubilee, releasing us from all financial bondage, and all attachments to this world, which had tied us down to one location. I felt a tremendous liberty to go wherever God would lead us.

In the depths of my heart there has always been a part of my being that wanted to be free from the material possessions of this world. Christ commanded His disciples, "lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust corrupt and thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." A part of me wanted to know the freedom of "having nothing, and yet possessing all things" (II Corinthians 6:10).

Purchasing a motorhome was not a new thought to me. It was a desire that had come to me a couple years earlier, and the Spirit had led me to a passage of Scripture that greatly encouraged me in this way. This Scripture is found in the 35th chapter of Jeremiah, and it recorded an event that occurred just prior to Judah being taken captive by Babylon.

Yahweh spoke to Jeremiah and instructed him to invite a family known as the Rechabites, or the sons of Jonadab, to a room prepared near the Temple. Jeremiah was commanded to set pitchers of wine before them and invite them to drink. The response of the Rechabites was amazing.

Jeremiah 35:6-7

But they said, "We will not drink wine, for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying, 'You shall not drink wine, you or your sons, forever. You shall not build a house, and you shall not sow seed and you shall not plant a vineyard or own one; but in tents you shall dwell all your days, that you may live many days in the land where you sojourn.'"

Jonadab's instructions to his children revealed a heart that was passionate for God. Jonadab did not want the future generations of his family to become attached to

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the world and the things in it. He did not want them to live for personal pleasure, as signified by the vine and the fruit of it, but he wanted them to live for the will of God. What Jonadab chose for himself, and his offspring, was actually the priestly portion. God had told the tribe of Levi that they would have no inheritance in the land, for God would be their portion.

There is tremendous freedom and liberty described in this story, for this family dwelt in tents and were able to move at will whenever God said they were to move. Nothing hindered them from following the Lord. They had no attachment to a piece of land, to a house, a vineyard, or a field. They also would not accumulate a lot of worldly possessions, for it would prove too much of a burden to transport such things each time they moved.

The Rechabites obeyed the command of Jonadab, and because of their obedience they received a blessing from God that was only spoken to two people in all of Scripture.

Jeremiah 35:18-19

Then Jeremiah said to the house of the Rechabites, "Thus says Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel, 'Because you have obeyed the command of Jonadab your father, kept all his commands and done according to all that he commanded you; therefore thus says Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel, "Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not lack a man to stand before Me always.'"

What an awesome promise! To this day there is someone from the line of Rechab who stands faithfully before God. I had considered painting the cover of the spare tire on the back of our motorhome with the words: "Sons of Jonadab - Jeremiah 35". I shared with one man how this story had inspired me, and he suggested that the initials RV could stand not only for "Recreational Vehicle", but also for "Rechabite Vehicle".

David also wrote, "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance", and it was while he was sleeping out under the stars tending sheep that he first fell in love with Yahweh. The things of this world can be a very real obstacle and distraction, competing with our devotion to God. There is a great temptation to begin serving the things we own, and to devote ourselves to acquiring more and

more of the goods of this world. Being ensnared by an accumulation of worldly goods, many have been led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.

The freedom I felt as I drove down the road was like nothing I had known before. I had no house to return to, no yard to maintain, no worldly obligations to which I had to attend. I was able to go where God directed, and at that moment the Spirit was leading me to take my family to Jekyll Island, Georgia for a month.

Along with these heightened feelings of freedom, I also experienced a sense of vulnerability. This vulnerability intruded upon my liberty and joy, and caused me to experience moments where I was weighed down with anxiety and fear. This was my experience as I fluctuated between periods of great delight in what God had done in setting us free, and times of great anxiety as I worried about what we would do next, and where our provision would come from. We had now known fifteen months of the Father's provision, and we had never lacked for any necessary thing, yet worry and anxiety had been constant companions along the way.

After paying for a month's rent at the Jekyll Island RV Park, I had a couple hundred dollars left to spend on gas and groceries, and to use to wash clothes at the campground Laundromat. I had no idea where any further money would come from, nor where we would go when our month was over. These uncertainties fueled my worries, and made me question the rightness of what I had been hearing from God, and the direction our lives had taken.

*I was able to go
where God directed...*

In hindsight I am able to see how foolish such thoughts were, and how they diminished the great enjoyment I should have known during this month when God graciously provided me a month of rest and recuperation from the trials I had been walking in. Although I did not know what was in store for us next, it was very evident that God had led us to where we were at during that moment, and this alone should have been sufficient to bring me peace. If God wanted us to change

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our course at any time, He was very able to communicate His mind to us, and I need not have worried that I would be left in a lurch somewhere with no provision. My doubts and worries reflected a lack of trust in the character of my heavenly Father. God wanted me to arrive at a place where I had a perfect confidence in His character. His flawless nature of love would never allow Him to abandon, or forsake, a son or daughter who was seeking to follow wherever He would lead.

Despite moments of anxiety, our month on Jekyll Island was a time of refreshing and recovery. The relationship Tony and I shared had been strained to the point of breaking in the preceding months, and God wanted to give us a time of new beginnings. He began to reveal this to us in many extraordinary ways.

My doubts and worries reflected a lack of trust...

While on Jekyll Island, Tony and I celebrated our sixteenth wedding anniversary. We had not planned this date to coincide with our stay, but the Holy Spirit revealed that there was significance to this event.

The number sixteen is eight times two, eight representing new beginnings. The Spirit indicated that this would be a time of new beginnings for both of us. As I mentioned, Tony and I had spent our honeymoon at Jekyll Island sixteen years earlier, and God returned us to the same place to mark a fresh start in our marriage. While we were at Jekyll Island, I also realized that we were now in our sixteenth month since God had called me out from wage earning to trust Him for our family's provision.

These were days of great grace for us, and we spent time as a family riding bikes, taking walks, and visiting the many historic sites in the area. There was a fishing pier just a couple miles down the road from our location, and my son said he would like to try to catch some crabs while we were there. I told Josiah that we would have to wait on this matter, due to the cost of the crab baskets, and string we would have to buy. A few days later we walked to the pier and there were two crab baskets, with string attached, that someone had left behind. Josiah was able to use them, and by this provision the Lord saved us about fifteen dollars.

On our anniversary I wanted to do something special for Tony. I wanted to cook some steaks over the outdoor grill provided at our site, but all the steaks I had seen at the little store on the island were beyond my means to purchase them. The cheapest began at \$7.99 per pound. I decided to go look one more time on the day of our anniversary. I found one package containing two steaks toward the back of the meat counter that were marked \$2.99 per pound. I could find no difference between these steaks and any of the other ones. I knew God had shown me grace, for these steaks were \$5.00 a pound cheaper than any of the others, and five is the Biblical number for grace. Tony and I ate outside by candlelight, sharing a wonderful meal together.

Another blessing we had during our stay involved a tour through the millionaires' village on Jekyll. During the early 1900's, Jekyll Island was a favorite vacation spot for America's rich. Many "cottages" were built, along with an impressive hotel and a private marina. The wealthy cottage owners and their visitors would arrive by boat to the island. During World War II the rich tenants of the island were advised by the government to leave due to a concern that the Germans might mount a surprise attack by u-boat, or other means, and kidnap these rich industrialists and their families. The tenants never returned, choosing rather to locate to other areas. The village and hotel have been maintained, a museum built, and tours are offered daily. A trolley ride and tour of the homes normally costs ten dollars per person, but on a single day of the year tours are offered for free, and we happened to be there during that day.

God continued to show His hand of provision in various ways. A couple were camped beside us in their motorhome, and they had no car with them. They wanted to go to town one day, and when I saw the man beginning to unhook his motorhome I offered for he and his wife to use our car. He was happy to take me up on this offer, and he brought the car back with a full tank of gas, when it was only a quarter of the way full when he borrowed it.

We obtained another blessing when we drove to town and found a local burger franchise selling their hamburgers for about fifty cents each. We loaded up our freezer in the motorhome with them, and the children, Tony and I were able to pull one out and cook it in our microwave oven (which was given to us free just before we left for Jekyll Island) whenever we wanted a quick

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meal. In all of these things, and in many more ways, we saw the hand of God carrying us through this time, and stretching our money in ways we could not have imagined.

I spent much time in prayer during our month on the island. I would arise before the rest of my family, and I would ride my bicycle down to Driftwood Beach, a couple miles away. I would climb up on a large tree that had blown over and hardened on the beach, and I would watch the sun rise over the ocean. One morning a sea otter passed directly underneath where I was sitting, as it waddled its way down to the water. I also spent time praying in the evenings as I stared at our campfire, or glanced at the stars through the canopy of oak trees that surrounded our campsite.

As I prayed, I reflected on the months leading up to our stay on Jekyll Island. The preceding year had taken a toll on me. I had received many wounds from fellow ministers, church members, family and friends, and had lived with much uncertainty and pain. Before leaving my employment at the hospital, a fellow worker gave me a brochure announcing a series of teachings to be conducted in a rented hall at a local park. The speaker would be teaching on end time events, and I read further where this unknown man traveled from town to town where he would post his fliers announcing that he would be speaking somewhere. He trusted God both to bring people in and to provide for his needs. I had considered how wonderful such a ministry would be, for I longed to teach the saints the truths of God's word, and I also loved to travel. The Holy Spirit had been revealing many things to me that I believed He wanted the body of Christ to hear.

Yet, as I now considered embarking on such a ministry in our motorhome, I did not feel that I was ready. I did not sense that my faith was strong enough to drive to some town I had never been in before, while looking to God to meet the needs of my family. The anxieties I had known during the past year were still with me, and I felt that I needed a rest from the burden I had been under as I continued this walk of faith. I also was feeling the wounds of the continued criticism I was receiving from family members due to my not working. I began to ask God to give me a time of respite so that I could heal from all of my emotional wounds and regain my strength. I asked that He would release me from this faith walk, at least for a period of time, by allowing me to return to work.

The Lord heard my cry, and He answered my request. He would shortly provide a job for me, and allow me to have my reproach removed for a season. He would then launch me out into the deep once more.

A Sudden Opening

I need not have worried where we would go after we left Jekyll Island, for while we were there our friends Randy and Barbara Barnes e-mailed us and said they would like us to come and park our motorhome at their house. It was a great relief to me to know we had somewhere to go next. I was down to my last few dollars, and although we had plenty of gas in the motorhome to drive back to Middle Georgia, I did not know where I would get the money to buy groceries when my funds ran out.

We parked our motorhome at the Barnes' house, and I continued asking the Father what He would have me do next. After we had been there a few days the Lord spoke to me around noon one day and said, "Go right now, take a copy of your resume with you, and apply for a teaching job at Middle Georgia Technical College." This idea was not completely new to me, for some friends had mentioned a few months earlier that I might find a job teaching at this school. I did not pursue it at the time, for God had not yet released me to return to work. This day, however, I knew God was telling me to leave at once and apply for a job.

The preceding year had taken a toll on me.

I grabbed a copy of my resume and told my wife I would be back in a while. I did not tell her where I was going, or what I intended to do, for I preferred to know something definite before I shared anything with her about this matter. I went into the business office of the college and spoke to a secretary about wanting to apply for a teaching position in the computer department. The secretary took my resume and said they would get back with me in a couple weeks. I did not feel I was to leave things this way, so I asked if there was anyone in the computer department whom I could speak to about job openings. The secretary told me the name of the man who was responsible for hiring in that department, but she said he would probably not be in his of-

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face, for he also taught classes. However, she agreed to telephone his office.

This man answered right away, and when she told him that she had someone wanting to apply for a job teaching computer maintenance and management he told her to send me up right away. I arrived at his office and he looked over my resume briefly. He said that a new school quarter was starting in a few weeks and he needed an instructor to teach the very thing I was interested in. The previous instructor had just been fired for viewing pornography on school computers. He had no one to fill the position, and my showing up was very providential.

The previous instructor had just been fired...

This man offered me the job, and he told me that all new instructors started out being paid fourteen dollars an hour. I had already been thinking about what salary I would request, and I asked the Lord, if He really wanted me to work there, that they would agree to pay me sixteen dollars an hour. I was still feeling very hesitant about returning to work, and I wanted to be sure it was the Lord's will. I asked this man if he could pay me sixteen dollars an hour, and he responded that it was very unusual and he would have to get the college president to okay this starting salary. He thought it would be approved, however. There ended up being no problem with this request and I started my new job at sixteen dollars an hour. I had picked this number because the Lord had been using it so prominently to testify that my wife and I were in a time of new beginnings. It just seemed right that the Lord should do this thing if He wanted me there.

As I left the college having been offered this job, part of me was very elated, for I really felt like I needed a time of recuperation and rest from all of the pressure I had been under. Yet I also had this nagging feeling of guilt. It may seem difficult to understand this if you have not walked in a similar place, but I had been trusting the Lord for nearly a year and a half for our every need, and I felt like I was living life on the edge much of the time. Now I was considering giving up this challenging walk, and I felt like a backslider for doing so. Although I had asked God for this break from the pressures I had been facing, I also felt somewhat guilty when God granted me my request.

My Father in heaven was very gracious and compassionate toward me, and He gave me many more assurances that this was His will for me so that I would not be bothered by guilty feelings. After being assured of the job, I told my wife about it and she was elated. We then discussed what we needed to do next, and I felt that the Lord would have us sell the motorhome and use the money to rent a place to live in that was close to the college. We could use the money from the sale of the motorhome to buy furniture, since we had sold all our previous possessions.

I placed an ad in the local paper for the motorhome, and the very first man who came to look at it bought it, and he paid me \$1,200.00 more than I had paid for it. We had lived in the motorhome for four months, and then sold it at a profit. This was the grace of God. We then began looking at rental property and the Lord led us to a townhouse that was literally the only thing we could find that was available. It was a wonderful fit for us, for there were three bedrooms, and a fenced backyard to let the dogs roam in. Tony had a wonderful time going around to yard sales and thrift stores to buy the furniture we needed to set up our household once more. We bought brand new beds for all of us, and the Harrington's gave us a kitchen table and chairs. In very little time we had all that we needed, and had acquired it on a shoestring budget.

The Father continued to pour forth witnesses that He was directing our steps, indicating that we were in a time of new beginnings. One witness to this fact was that the townhouse had exactly sixteen steps between the top and bottom floors. Another occurred when I got in the car to drive to the college one day. I felt the Lord tell me to check how much time it took me to drive from the townhouse to the college. It took exactly eight minutes each way. My classroom also seated exactly sixteen students. My first class was full and I never lost a student the entire quarter. This was very unusual, and never happened again, though I taught this same class over a dozen times in the next two years. The Father gave me such favor that my second quarter of teaching the college increased my pay an additional \$1.50 an hour.

Immediately upon obtaining employment, the reproach I was receiving from family members ceased. My financial pressures were also lessened, and these things combined to allow me a time of peace and recuperation. The college offered me thirty hours of teach-

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ing a week, and this amount was quite sufficient to meet all the expenses of our family, especially since we no longer had any debt. I continued to write books and articles, and manage the Heart4God website, in my off hours. I still considered this to be my primary calling, and my teaching job was merely my tent making occupation.

God had no intention of allowing me to continue in this place of ease forever. He was merely answering my request for a time to heal, and regain my spiritual strength. I had worked at the college for nine months when my hours were cut to twenty a week. This was still adequate to meet our needs, but things were a bit tighter and we had to begin looking to God to fill up anything we were lacking. Another nine months passed and my hours were cut once more to only ten hours a week.

When this occurred I was reminded of Elijah at the Brook Cherith. God had sent Elijah to this brook during a time of drought, and each morning and evening ravens would bring him his food. Slowly the brook dried up until it was no longer able to sustain Elijah. This was God's way of letting Elijah know that it was time to move on. I stayed six more months at the college working only ten hours a week, and then the Lord indicated once more that it was time to launch out into the deep. It was pretty easy to take this step, for the ten hours a week I was working were not nearly adequate to supply the needs of our family of four, and we were already having to look to the Lord to supply our necessities in very substantial ways.

I considered that working zero hours was not much different than working ten hours, and God could surely take care of us. God still had to coax us to take this step, and He ordered our situation in such a way that I was willing to let go of the slender provision I had been receiving, to lean fully upon Him once more. On March 17th 2003 I worked my last day at the college. This began a tumultuous five months in which God would stretch us further than we had ever been stretched before, yet we were also to experience things that were simply astounding.

Saul's Branch

Before going on to tell about my experiences after I left my college teaching job, I feel it necessary to speak about some significant things that happened while I was still employed. God did not take a break from molding and shaping this son of His during the two years He graciously allowed me to work as a college instructor. After a brief time of ease, the lessons and trials began again in earnest.

I mentioned that I had a period of nine months when I was teaching thirty hours a week. This was truly a time of rest for me, and I know of no great trials I experienced during this period. When my work hours were decreased, God began once more with the tests and purifying work in my life, and some of these trials were quite severe, at least in my thinking.

We kept our townhouse for a year, which was the duration of our lease, and I felt within me that God would move us to another home in the area when our lease was up. A few weeks before our lease was to expire I was at work one night and I had a strong witness in the spirit about this. I determined that I would take my wife out to dinner the next night and tell her what I was sensing, however, my wife did not need me to tell her anything, for she had already been hearing from God.

When I arrived home that night my wife told me she had a visit that day with an old friend. This lady's husband had recently retired from an executive position with a local manufacturing company and he was now buying up some properties to rent out to others. This friend told my wife that her husband had been praying about a new piece of property he had just purchased, and he felt that the Lord wanted him to contact us about renting from him. They did not know our situation, and were not even sure whether we owned our home, or were renting.

I considered that working zero hours was not much different than working ten hours...

It seemed evident to me that God was once again directing our steps by bringing such an opportunity before us right when our lease was about to expire. The

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fact that I was also sensing a witness within that God was going to move us just added to my confidence. The home this couple offered to rent to us was larger than our previous one, in a nicer neighborhood, and it also cost slightly less than we had been paying, so it was a very attractive offer to us. The home was located on the corner of two streets that had very intriguing names. It was on the corner of Branch View Circle and Branch View Drive.

God has spoken to me very specifically through street names and addresses before, so I was alert to what He

The kingdom will shortly be torn from the hands of the Saul Branch...

might be speaking to us here. I found that the names of these streets were referring to a small body of water, just down the hill from the home, that bore the name of Saul's Branch. Saul's Branch was not very

spectacular. It was merely a small channel of brackish and stagnant water that had formed off to the side of a creek that ran nearby. There was no outflow to this body of water, and it was a haven for frogs and a breeding ground for mosquitoes.

While we lived at this home the Spirit began to teach me more about the two branches of His church that existed side by side. One was pictured by the reign of King Saul, and the other by the reign of King David. One body was Saul's Branch, and one was David's Branch. I was comforted somewhat in knowing that we did not live on a street named Saul's Branch, for such a street did exist in this neighborhood. Instead, we merely lived on a road that had a view of Saul's Branch, and God would speak to me various things about this branch of the church that knew little of faith, and which was pictured perfectly in a stagnant backwater that was going nowhere while providing a breeding ground for things that were both noisy and obnoxious.

There is present at this time a Saul Branch of Christianity, and they have control of the reins of the church. They guard the doors, and choose what message will be proclaimed to the masses. Their message is not one of a vital and active faith, for Saul failed in this regard, being unwilling to wait for God in the midst of a crisis. This branch of the church does everything through the power and strength of man. It is marked by programs of man, and it is a kingdom of man. It looks very impressive on the outside, even as Saul was impressive by

being head and shoulders taller than everyone else around him.

There is also a Davidic Branch of the church. At times this branch of faithful believers is allowed to dwell in the households that Saul controls, but more often than not those of this Davidic branch are driven away by the jealousy of Saul. Many in this group find themselves living as outcasts, having their place and their ministry (pictured in Michal, the wife of David) given to another whom Saul chooses. These are without honor, and are often hounded by the Saul Branch of Christianity who wishes that they did not exist, for the Spirit expressly testifies that a day is soon coming when the reign of Saul over the people of God will come to an end, and other, more faithful servants, will stand in his place.

This is a most precious truth that those who find themselves outside the camp suffering the reproaches of Christ should take to heart. The kingdom will shortly be torn from the hands of the Saul Branch and given to the Davidic Branch who are being trained through hardship while suffering many reproaches.

We had only been in this home on Branch View for a couple months when I came to a financial test. There was a three week break before the summer quarter began at the college, and as an adjunct instructor I only received pay for actual hours taught in the classroom. Added to my recent reduction in hours to twenty per week, I now also had a three week period with no income and very little support was coming in from other sources. I pleaded with God to send forth His provision, but none was forthcoming. My bills began to get behind.

Not being able to pay rent on time was a particularly grievous trial. It was not like being late on paying a phone bill, or utility bill to some impersonal organization. We were renting from friends whom my wife had known from her youth, and I did not want them to think ill of me. I had already found that it was pointless to try to reason with people about the walk of faith God had called us to, for even Christians could not understand God dealing with modern day people in such a way. They might admit that God required men and women in years past to follow Him in faith, such as Abraham, or David, or Elijah, but I had been unable to convince anyone that He would require something

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similar of me. In my distress I asked God to let me take another job to supplement my income, but the Holy Spirit was constraining me greatly in this regard, and I knew it was not His will that I should do so.

When my rent was about a week late I knew I needed to contact our landlord and let him know that I was committed to paying him when I had the funds to do so. When I spoke to him he asked me if I had gotten the letter he had sent, and I told him I had not. He was somewhat surprised at this, but it turned out he had put the wrong address on the envelope and it took two weeks for the letter to arrive at our house. He told me to expect the letter, and he suggested I get another job. I thanked him for his patience and hung up.

I really wrestled with what God was doing in my life at this time. I told God that I was faithful in my expenditures. I had not incurred any more debt, and I was living in a frugal manner. I told Him I was quite willing to work a second job if He would release me. All I received in return was silence, and a knowledge that I had to patiently endure this trial.

For the past couple years I had followed God wherever He led me, often at great cost to myself in pain and sorrow. I knew in my heart that I had never fought so hard to remain faithful to His will, and it chafed at me greatly that others did not recognize this fact. Instead of people recognizing my obedience, God allowed me to bear reproach after reproach, and to routinely be numbered among the transgressors. This did not seem right to me, and I poured out my complaint to God on numerous occasions.

About a week later the letter arrived from our landlord, and it was very terse, and a bit threatening. In it he stated that I needed to take steps to pay the rent as soon as possible to avoid any future unpleasant actions. When I read this my heart sank, and I felt very dejected. I went and sat down on the edge of my bed and looked out the window. I told God that I had been walking as faithfully as I knew how, and yet He was not allowing me to pay my bills on time and now our friends saw me as a slacker. I told God I was greatly discouraged and I needed some encouragement from Him.

I was praying these things silently, and I did not hear my wife approaching, but, as soon as I said these words, she was standing beside me placing a piece of paper in my hands. She left it with me without any explanation. I looked at the piece of paper, and the first thing I read was the words, "Joseph was discouraged...." I looked at what she had placed in my hands and it was a prophetic word someone had sent to my wife. She was led at just that moment to print it off and give it to me. Following is the text of the message:

Prophetic Word by Teresa Seputis

Child of mine, do not lose heart. Know that I am with you in all things, and I will cause My glory to burst forth in each of your situations. I know the testing of your faith is not always easy, and I know it is difficult to be in the refiner's fire. But My desire for you is that you come forth as pure gold. Do not become discouraged and do not lose heart.

Joseph became discouraged in prison as I prepared a humility in him that would allow me to thrust him into a place of prominence in national politics. He looked to his surroundings and not to My overall plans, and his heart was heavy and his walk was more difficult than it had to be. He placed his hope in a man, in the chief butler of Pharaoh's courts. He expected that the chief butler would rescue him from prison because of the anointing and accuracy with which he interpreted his dream. But the chief butler was wrapped up in his own affairs and ambitions and quickly forgot his promise to Joseph.

I told God I was greatly discouraged...

If you put your hopes in man, you will be disappointed, even as Joseph was disappointed. Rather, keep your eyes and your vision and your expectation upon Me. For I am faithful to fulfill the promises that I have made unto you. And no matter what the circumstances look like, I am able to work My glory in them, and to make you come forth into the calling and anointing I have given you. Do not fret because of circumstances. Do not fret because man lets you down, or because man does not recognize your calling and anointing. Rather, place your hope in Me, place your

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trust in Me and watch how I will turn your situation around and work My glory in the midst of it.

I am able, and I will work on your behalf in My perfect timing. Trust in Me and know that My plans for you are good.

I read these words with tears filling my eyes. I knew God was speaking directly to me. At the very moment I had told Him I was discouraged He had sent me a word of encouragement. The reproach I was encountering

Trust in Me and know that My plans for you are good.

became bearable as I understood that God had brought me to this place, and He was using these things to prepare me to one day enter into the promised promotion that was ahead of me. As this word

testified, He would cause me to come into the calling and anointing He had chosen for me, but first he had to prepare me to be able to bear these things.

I considered God's preparation of that other Joseph so many years ago. He walked faithfully even when he was in the midst of a great trial of his soul. Having been separated from the father he loved, and sold as a slave into a foreign land, he remained faithful to God and served with integrity in Potipher's house. Despite his faithfulness he was accused as an attempted rapist, and of being a sexually impure man. He had to bear this reproach for many years, yet God used it to form a humility in him that would allow him to receive the authority he would one day walk in.

As I considered it, I thought that it was more agreeable to me to be thought of as a slacker, and an irresponsible fellow, than to be accused of sexual sins I had not committed. Though I too was numbered among the transgressors, I saw the mercy of God in the reproach He had chosen for me to bear. It was on August 27th, 2002 that my wife printed out this word and handed it to me, and I have carried it in my Bible since. I have read it many more times, for there was to be much more reproach I would have to bear. I needed to remind myself frequently that God was ordering my steps and there was a great purpose behind the sorrowful events in my life.

I have often asked God why He could not have chosen to let me suffer reproach for some religious activity such as preaching against the sins of this present evil world. Why did He choose for me to suffer for not being able to pay my bills on time, for there is nothing noble in such a thing. Yet that is precisely why He has chosen this reproach, for it will lead to humility, even as Joseph's reproach did. In suffering for some overtly righteous activity we can become prideful, even while enduring reproach, but it is much more humbling to suffer shame as an evildoer. Christ was perfect in humility and He was accused of violating the Law of God and being a blasphemer. He learned obedience by the things He suffered, and God has chosen that His elect should do the same.

God could have chosen for His Son to only heal six days a week, and not to heal on the Sabbath. The Father knew His Son would be accused of being a Sabbath breaker, a sin punishable by death, if He led Him to heal on a Sabbath day. It was the Father's will for His Anointed One to suffer reproach that He might be perfected through suffering. If we would also be perfect, we too must suffer. We will know reproaches, but they will only serve to conform us more to the image of Christ if we receive them willingly, and do not despise them.

A Whisper on the Wind

I was eventually able to pay my landlord the rent, though I was paying it at the end of the month, rather than at the beginning. This continued for some time until in the fall of 2002 my work load was decreased again to ten hours a week. The Holy Spirit still would not allow me to find other work to supplement my income, telling me instead that I was to continue the ministry of writing and correspondence He had given to me.

When the electric bill arrived at the beginning of November, I did not have the means to pay it. I had been forced to pay this bill late on previous occasions, even having to apply for a week's extension, which a customer is only allowed to do one time. I knew I would not get paid again by the college until the last week of November, and I did not believe the power company would bear with me that long before sending someone out to turn off our electricity.

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One week went by and I had not heard anything from the power company, and then two weeks, and then three. I did not understand why someone had not yet been sent out, but I began to hope that I would get paid and be able to pay my bill before anyone was sent to our home. Because of the Thanksgiving holiday we were to receive our checks a few days earlier than usual. When there was only a couple days left before I was to be paid, I felt that God would surely deliver us by keeping the power company employees away from our home until I could pay the bill.

The day before I was to be paid I was sitting at my computer writing when my son came into the room saying there was a man from the power company on our back porch. He had been sent to disconnect the power and was in the process of doing so when I walked out to speak to him. I told him I was to be paid the very next day, and I would pay my bill then. I asked if he could delay in cutting off our power, and he agreed since he said he had never been sent to our home before.

God allowed us to struggle financially in this manner for a long period of time, and some of the worst testing was still ahead. We often had the wolves howling at the door, with some impending lack threatening us, but God never allowed us to suffer lack. We always had food, covering and even electricity and phone service. Though things have looked perilous on many occasions, and we have had some close calls, God has always had a provision for us. By allowing us to experience these things He has been proving our faith and obedience to Him, while at the same time teaching me humility.

I shared this experience with a young couple that God had brought into our lives, and the wife of this couple told me of a similar incident that occurred with her uncle. Her uncle is also a minister who has spent a considerable time outside the main camp of Christianity, and the Spirit laid it upon him to also trust God for his provision.

This young woman shared that she and her husband were over at her uncle's house one day, and things were very tight financially for her uncle at the time. Adding pressure to his required obedience in this matter, an elderly relative lived in a home on the same property, and they shared the same electric account with the lo-

cal power company. If power were cut off at this minister's house, it would also be cut off at the home of this elderly relative.

This man had been seeking God for his provision, yet he too was being stretched with no provision coming in. The power bill got further behind until the day when this young couple were visiting. An employee of the power company pulled up in the yard and walked over to the electric box to cut off the power. Right after he arrived a member of a church this man had formerly ministered at drove up. He saw the power man and asked him if he was about to cut the power off. The man affirmed that he was. This former church member then said that he had come to deliver some money to this minister and he asked if he could pay the power bill. The power employee agreed, and this minister was delivered at the very last second from having his electricity disconnected.

It seems strange to some that God would lead His children to trust Him in such ways, and then let their faith be tried down to the last second. Yet what a testimony and encouragement it is to wait upon God at such lengths, and then to see Him manifest His deliverance at such a propitious moment. It is hard to argue against the fact, when witnessing such events, that God has so arranged matters to try His saints in the furnace of affliction.

God has so arranged matters to try His saints in the furnace of affliction.

As I thought on what the Spirit was doing in our lives, and the lives of others, I wrote an article titled "A Whisper on the Wind." It seems to me that God often gives His children scant evidence of His will for them. He may reveal that they are to trust Him in some matter by simply bringing them a gentle inner witness of His will, or speaking to them in a still small voice. These same saints must then contend with all the pressures of the world that literally shout at them, telling them the course they are on is some fool's errand. A choice must be made whether they will obey the whisper they received from the Spirit of God, or whether they will give in to the relentless thundering of the voices of fear, anxiety and human reasoning. In the article "A Whisper on the Wind" are the following words:

Evidence of Things Unseen

There is a purpose to the Father's working in your life. His voice may seem but a whisper in your ears, while all that surrounds you in this world is shouting at you, telling you what a fool you are to stay the course and

There is a purpose to the Father's working in your life.

follow the path set before you. This whisper is speaking mysteries and telling you that magnificent promises will be fulfilled just ahead, while the world is blaring forth its call to find refuge in its embrace at

this very moment. The enemy of your soul would like you to trade the barely perceptible dream you are chasing after, for lesser things that can be had now, at this moment. Don't sell your birthright for a bowl of pottage. Though you feel that you may perish at any moment from the unmet clamoring of your natural life, hold on.

Rick Joyner, in the book "The Call" penned these words as Christ speaking to him,

"Those who come to Me now, fighting through all the forces of the world that rebel against Me, come because they have the true love of God. They want to be with Me so much that even when it all seems unreal, even when I seem like a vague dream to them, they will risk all for the hope that the dream is real. That is love. That is the love of the truth. That is the faith that pleases My Father. All will bow the knee when they see My power and glory, but those who bow the knee now when they can only see Me dimly through the eyes of faith are the obedient ones who love Me in Spirit and in truth. These I will soon entrust with the power and the glory of the age to come..."

You may be undergoing tremendous trials at this moment. You may feel like a thirsty soul in the vast deserts of Egypt following a faint mirage in the distance that holds the promise of water, hoping beyond hope that it is not a mirage, but that it is real. Hold onto the promises that have been whispered to you by the wind of the Spirit. When the Father sees that you desire the spiritual riches that come from His hand, more than satisfying your natural appetites with a bowl of pottage, then He will bring you satisfaction beyond anything imagined. Like a brilliant beacon in the midst of a darkened world you will bear His glory and all mankind will be drawn to the brightness of your shining forth.

Have you heard a whisper on the wind? Have you wondered why His voice is so faint, why He would call you to such extremities in your trials with so little that is substantial to base it upon? It is in this way that He is glorified as He observes men and women following ardently after Him when they see so little. How greatly does all of heaven marvel when they see such a one turning away from the comfort and pleasures of the world, embracing suffering and hardship and shame, and all for a hope that has been whispered to them, a hope that they fervently long to see become reality.

Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Through faith let your hopes become substance. Allow the things hoped for to become more real to you than the world that presses in around you. There is a God in the heavens, and He is a rewarder of those who come to Him in faith. Your faith is much more valuable than gold that has been tried by fire. Like gold our faith is also tried by fire, but what remains after the firing is something that is precious in the sight of God.

[end quote]

It has been a great trial for me on many occasions to choose to cling to the words I have received from the Spirit of God when all around me is clamoring out that I have been deceived and I will be proven a fool in the end. What has often kept me to the course is considering what life would be like if I did believe these other voices that are filled with fear and unbelief. I have considered what life would be like if I did not believe in a present God who is ordering my steps and watching over me with great attentiveness. To live a life based upon natural sight and reason, that knows nothing of the unseen presence of a present God, seems intolerable to me.

When I consider life without faith I am appalled at the vision before me. Do I really want to live a life where I cannot trust in the unseen? Do I want to live a life where I have to lean on my own resources, and upon the arm of man, to see me through every crisis and difficulty? As challenging as a life of faith is, it seems to me much more preferable to a life of unbelief. I would

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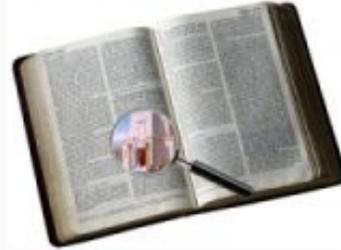
rather risk appearing a fool in man's eyes, than to turn my back on the rewards that await those who cast themselves unreservedly over into God's hands.

The life of faith forces me to believe in a God who loves me, who will never abandon or forsake me. A life of unbelief says, "Is God even among us?" Worse yet, it may confess that God is present, but fail to believe that Yahweh truly loves His children, nor that He has their best interests at heart. Like the unbelieving generation that came out of Egypt many years ago, an unbelieving heart brings reproach to the character of God by saying, "Did God bring us out here to the wilderness to kill us because there were not enough graves in Egypt?"

When the tale of my short life on this earth is told, I want it to show that I believed in a Creator who loves me and who is present with me. All of our lives will testify of what we truly believe. We may speak words of faith, but is faith seen in our actions and in our lives? Can others point to times in our lives when we leaned upon an unseen arm and were delivered, rescued, encouraged and sustained through many perilous and difficult places? We are living epistles read of all men. Will they read in our lives a story of faith, or of unbelief?

*The life of faith forces me
to believe in a God who
loves me...*

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PARABLES PRECEPT— The Bible

BIBLE STUDY



GET INTO THE WORD!

Have you ever considered why the Bible is divided into two sections called The Old Testament and The New Testament? We can understand this natural division of this sacred book by looking at what a Testament is.

The word Testament speaks of a covenant made between two parties. There are a number of covenants between God and man in the

Old Testament, but the one that receives the most focus is the covenant delivered to Moses at Mt. Sinai. This covenant is often called The Law.

The Law was established as Yahweh's covenant with a people who chose to be holy unto Him, the natural descendants of Abraham which we call Israel. It was only intended to be a temporary covenant until Christ would come and establish a better covenant.

Galatians 3:23-24

But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ...

The Old Testament is centered around this old covenant. We read

about it being given to Abraham's descendants in the second book of the Bible.

In the New Testament we read of God establishing a new covenant with man. This new covenant is a better covenant, for it was established on better promises (Hebrews 8:6).

We see then that the first part of the Bible focuses on the covenant of the Law, while the second part of the Bible speaks of the covenant of Grace.

John 1:17

For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.

There is great benefit in studying both the Old and New Testaments, for the former leads us to the latter.