

Evidence of Things Unseen

The account of one family's
journey into a life of faith.



Joseph Herrin

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by Joseph Herrin

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Foreword

I first encountered Joseph Herrin in the fall of 2000. I had read something that he had written that someone had posted on a prophecy oriented website. The writing witnessed to my spirit so I looked up the Heart4God website (<http://www.heart4god.ws>). There I encountered the article entitled "The Lion, the Bear and Goliath." We began correspondence concerning faith in the Lord's provision, the difficulty this places on our families, etc.. I was well into this walk, but did not understand it at the time. Joseph wrote back to me with some greater details of his trials. I remember reading it out loud to my wife. One minute we were weeping, the next we were laughing as we recognized ourselves in some of the Lord's dealings with Joseph and his family.

I called Joseph on the telephone. The fact that he had just gone through some of what I was entering into, and was still walking ahead of me in it, was an enormous encouragement. Afterward my wife said, "How do we know they are not wackos?" I replied, "They ARE wackosso are we!" Soon thereafter I put my 20 year old business (which was every bit as much a son to me as Isaac was to Abraham, for I had no other children) on the altar, and released it to God to send fire down to consume it if He desired. He did so, but in a very merciful way, and He consumed my oxen with the wood from my plough.

I had read the accounts of George Muller at that time and had been blessed by a mature Christian mentor, who had and was leading a life of faith, but I still had trouble identifying with them. As many of you know, the enemy is always trying to cast doubt that this life of faith is all our vain imagination. "Who are you that God should speak to you... provide for you... care for you?" So I found Joseph's testimony to be enormously helpful, as I know it will be to many of you who will read it.

I think perhaps the greatest value of Joseph's testimony is that it is ongoing, with fear and trembling. All who enter into this life do so with fear and trembling, Moses included. Yet, when I read many of the books written about the saints, the authors tend to portray them as fearless and heroic, different than ourselves. I think this reveals more of the perspective of the biographer than the saint. Only the saint knows the inner struggle, and few have written of it.

One reason so little has been written of the inner struggle of those who embark upon a life of faith, is that after a time the remembrance of the struggle diminishes to the point it does not seem so frightening. The child has been born and the labor of childbirth is forgotten because of the joy for the fruit that is seen from it. For this reason, I find Joseph's testimony to be of great value. It is written in real time. The experiences are fresh. They are vivid, and they describe the experiences many others of us are also living in one form or another.

I should not leave this without saying "Do not be put off by some of Joseph's teaching which you may not agree with." I do not agree with all of Joseph's teaching. In some of it I think he may be in error. Others, I think he might be right, but I don't know. Much of it I do agree with, but all of these things are matters which have been disputed for centuries. There is much that I used to accept as truth that I have since learned was false. So I have learned to give these questionable matters up to the Lord. What is not disputable is that Joseph and his family love the Lord and are struggling to follow His lead into their inheritance. These other matters I consider secondary, and I trust that our Father, Who alone is our Teacher, will correct our understanding in His time.

Finally, I offer a word of caution that I have copied from the editor's preface to "The Inner Life" by Francois Fenelon. I think it is highly appropriate to this work:

And now, beloved reader, one word in conclusion, from the love of God to you. God has led you, in his Providence, to open this book that He may do you good. If through His infinite mercy you have had a personal experience of the matters herein written, your heart will be filled with thanksgiving and praise as you read. What hath God wrought! If not, you will find many things strange, and it would not be surprising if you should be ready to pronounce some untrue. But ah! beware of being wise in your own conceit! The Spirit of God that searcheth the deep things of God, alone can decide.

Do not distrust the reports of these spies whom God has sent before you into the promised land. It is a land flowing with milk and honey; true, the children of Anak are there, in whose sight we are but as grasshoppers, but they are bread for us. The Lord God, He it is that shall fight for us, and He will surely bring us into that exceeding good land.

The natural man receiveth not the things of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. If, then, you have not experienced the things that follow, think it not strange that they should seem foolish and false; in God's own time they shall be perceived, if you follow on to know.

If you will be advised by one who knows nothing, and who is least in the household of faith, you will deny nothing--reject nothing--despise nothing, lest haply you be found fighting against God: you will receive nothing but what is accompanied by the Amen of the Spirit of God in your heart; all else shall be as the idle wind.

Amen to that.

Glen Pickren



Introduction

A Christian brother has suggested that the many testimonies of God's miraculous intervention in my life, and that of my family, are perhaps one of the most valuable things I have shared, or could share, with the saints. Many others have written to relate to me how very encouraged they were in reading about some miracle of provision, or healing God has done on our behalf, for there seem to be few contemporary examples of those who have cast themselves wholly over into the care of God that they might consequently see Him do things which have no natural explanation.

As God is calling more and more saints into a walk of faith in various areas of their lives, such testimonies of God's faithfulness have great value in encouraging others along their own pilgrim way. Our own journey is far from over. In truth, I am confident that we are at the very beginning of those mighty and miraculous things we will see God do. Yet already we have such a legacy of His faithfulness to us that I could fill a book with these accounts. This is exactly what I intend to do here.

This is not an account of our own faithfulness, nor is it intended to lift me, or my family up in the eyes of others. On the contrary, I desire to show how God has chosen the weakest, most fearful and despised of His children, and by His great grace and unceasing love He has led us with the gentleness of a Father who has the deepest of compassion for His children who are all beset with many weaknesses and infirmities. This writer intends to magnify Yahweh God who alone is the source of faithfulness, as the prophet Isaiah wrote:

Isaiah 63:7-9

I shall make mention of the lovingkindness of Yahweh, the praises of Yahweh, according to all that Yahweh has granted us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which He has granted them according to His compassion and according to the abundance of His lovingkindness... So He became their Savior. In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; In His love and in His mercy He redeemed them, and He lifted them and carried them all the days of old.

The Psalmist also testified:

Psalms 89:1

I will sing of the mercies of Yahweh forever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations.

This is the happy intent of this author, to make known to all generations that God is faithful, and that even in this late hour He shows forth His mercy and His love in a myriad of ways to those who will put their trust in Him. May your faith be strengthened as you read, and may your hope in the God of all comfort be renewed by these testimonies.

Joseph Herrin



Beginnings of Faith

I do not think it is possible to begin a walk of faith until we come into a relationship with the Lord that to us is personal and intimate. It is one thing to confess Christ and believe the things the Scriptures testify of Him, but it is quite another thing to enjoy a measure of fellowship with Him. I had my first experiences in Christianity as a child growing up in Portland, Oregon. My parents both became Christians when I was a small child, and we began attending church where the man pastored who had witnessed to them of Christ. The church I grew up in was a member of the Conservative Baptist denomination. Its teachings were considered fundamental and evangelical, and I learned many things about God and about His Christ while attending Sunday School, children's church and the other meetings held there. At the age of ten I was baptized, having confessed faith in Jesus Christ as my Savior.

I have never doubted my conversion at this early age, and although I certainly had no breadth of understanding of Christ, I did understand and believe in certain specific things. I knew I was a sinner, and I knew that my sins had caused a separation between myself and God. I also understood that Christ was the Son of God, that He had led a sinless life and had died to pay the penalty of my sin. I believed that by trusting in His work of redemption that I could be saved and go to heaven one day when I died.

This is about the extent of what I understood at the age of ten, and from that time forward I learned other facts about Christ, about the Old Testament patriarchs, the children of Israel, God's law, and the lives of the disciples. What I did not learn about was a walk of intimacy with the Lord where He would speak to me personally and where I could commune with Him. I did not understand life in the Spirit at this time, but instead I was raised to try to walk out in my own power a modified Christian version of the Old Testament Law. This I found I could not do, and in my many defeats I was met with tremendous feelings of guilt and failure.

When I was fifteen my family moved to the coast of Georgia, and a couple years later we settled in Central Georgia. In my senior year in High School we began attending a Southern Baptist church of about 150 members. The pastor's name was Mac Goddard, and it was under his preaching that I first began hearing a message of salvation of faith by grace, rather than by works. Of course, I understood all along that Christ had died and risen again that I might be saved, and that it was my faith in His finished work that provided my initial salvation. But I had picked up the concept through the teachings I had been raised in that I had to do something to remain saved. I was led to think that I had to keep the church's version of the Law, and that failure to do so could result in my being sent to hell for eternity.

Mac Goddard, through his consistent teaching of a message of grace, refuted these ideas and for the first time I was able to come to a place of rest where I did not worry about whether I was at that moment a child of God, or not. The message that God chose me, and that He did so on the basis of His own mercy, not on works which I had done, allowed me to attain to a measure of rest in my relationship with God that set the stage for future fellowship with Him.

It took me considerable time to make the transition from a Law mentality to a grace mentality, for a message of keeping the Law had been deeply ingrained in my mind, and many of the things I did as a young Christian I did because I had been taught that it was the Christian thing to do. I prayed because Christians were supposed to pray. I read the Bible

because I was supposed to do so. I served in the church and supported its programs because I had been raised to believe that a true believer should do these things. In all of this I had little comprehension of what it meant to be Spirit led. I was merely being led by the external set of rules that had been delivered to me, which all good saints had to abide by.

I do not mean to indicate that all of my Christian service was a drudgery to me, for I was very zealous to do things for God and for the church. I was at church every time the doors were opened, and no one had to prod me to be there. I was active in some type of service almost all the time, even being made Sunday School superintendent of a church I was attending when I was only in my mid twenties. Because of my zeal I was advancing beyond many of my contemporaries, yet there were glaring deficiencies in my life.

Probably the greatest deficiency in my life was in my prayers. I hated prayer time. I prayed because I knew Christians were supposed to pray. I would intend to pray for an hour, and I was barely able to endure fifteen minutes. I would dispassionately go through my prayer list, and it would be exhausted, and so would I, after only five or ten minutes. I have often recounted to others that my prayer times were as dry as sawdust and that I had no sense of my words rising above the ceiling of whatever room I was in.

I cannot remember the exact time, but I believe I was about 23 years old, when I had an encounter that was to change my life. At the Southern Baptist church I was attending there was an elder by the name of Bill Martin. Bill is about twenty years my senior. It was at Bill's house that the young people of the church would congregate, for he and his wife June had a sincere love for others and they were very hospitable. Bill, in particular, really enjoyed engaging young men and women in conversations about spiritual matters, and provoking them to think about things that they may not have considered before.

Bill was not your typical church elder, being considered by the more traditional members of the church to be a bit of a wild man. Yet there was no doubting that he was serious about his relationship with God and that he was passionate about encouraging others to greater depths of spirituality. I found myself hanging out at his house a lot, and when I was around 23 years of age I even lived with he and his wife and daughter for a month.

One day Bill and I went for a walk around a peach orchard that was located behind his house, and as we walked Bill shared some things with me that I really needed to hear. Bill began telling me about his prayer life, and I was both greatly challenged and encouraged by what I heard. I had been accustomed to formal, spiritual sounding prayers all my life, so I was amazed by what Bill shared with me.

Bill told me that he would pray to God often as he took walks, or during various times of day, and he began to relate to me the substance of his prayers. He said there was no sense in attempting to sound spiritual in God's presence, nor to present ourselves to God as better, or more noble, than we actually were, for God already knew what was in our hearts. He saw every aspect of our lives, and was able to judge the thoughts and intentions of our hearts.

Bill went on to share with me how he would talk to God. He would tell God things like, "Lord you know when I saw that good looking woman today that I had lustful thoughts in my mind, and I don't want to be a lustful man, so I ask You to forgive me and to deliver me from these thoughts." Or he might say, "God you know that man at work provoked me today and I felt like punching him in the nose. I wanted to really hurt him Lord, but I know these thoughts are fleshly and not from You. I ask you to forgive me and deliver me."

The frankness with which this elder brother in the Lord prayed, the lack of posturing

and absence of pretense, was both refreshing and revolutionary to me. I knew his method of praying was right, for we cannot hide anything from God, nor can we deceive Him. He knows our thoughts from afar, and as I considered what I was hearing a thought began to grow in my mind. I had been attempting to hide from God the fact that I hated my times of prayer. I had never thought of confessing the fact to Him that I found prayer to be dry and lifeless, but as I considered it I understood that He already knew these things.

Some time later when I was by myself I prayed to God and I told Him very frankly how I felt concerning prayer. I confessed that I was only praying because I felt it was required of me, but that I found my times of prayer to be one of the least enjoyable events in my life, that I had no confidence my prayers were being heard, and that I did not want my times of prayer with the Father to remain this way. I asked God to change my heart and to place within me a desire to pray.

I cannot say that I had any great expectation that God would answer my prayer, for up until this time I had very little experience of praying with expectancy in my heart. I think perhaps that God did not require a great faith to attend my request at this time, for I was yet a babe in the area of faith, and all I knew to do was simply to make my request known and to leave the results in God's hands.

God did answer my prayer, and He did so beyond my greatest expectations. It was not long after this that I began to find a hunger for prayer arising within me. I was given a key to the church building, which was located in a quiet spot out in the country, and I would go out on Friday or Saturday evenings when the church was empty and I would walk around the sanctuary and pray. I found God placing people upon my heart, attended by a yearning to intercede for them, and I found a great emotion welling up within me as I did so. No longer did I struggle to utter a sentence or two on behalf of a person, but an intense groaning would come forth at times and I often would weep and have tears streaming down my face as I prayed.

I suppose this type of praying went on for about ten years, and it became the highpoint of my week as I looked forward to my time alone with the Lord where I could pour my heart out before Him. Most of the other men I knew from work or church were spending their free time hunting, or fishing, or going out on the town, or pursuing some hobby. Yet I had no desire for these things. I wanted only to get alone with the Lord and enjoy His presence. Oftentimes I would look at my watch thinking I had been at the church about fifteen minutes, only to find that several hours had gone by.

How I delighted in these times. I would often walk among the rows of chairs and I would anoint each one and pray for the people whom I knew sat in the chairs week after week. Sometimes I would be filled with some message from God for the people and I would go to the front of the sanctuary where the pulpit was and I would preach to the empty chairs. Oftentimes the Spirit would fill my heart with a longing for a people to be raised up who would be a praise unto Him, and I would cry out fervently, often with shouting, that this people would come forth, as I prayed for the specific characteristics that the Spirit laid upon my heart for this people. At times I would simply sing words of praise and worship unto God.

How did my prayers change from a dry, lifeless time to something that became the greatest joy and longing of my heart? It was due to nothing I did. It cannot be attributed to my taking a course on effectual praying, or to my studying the prayers of Scripture, or any other such thing. It can only be attributed to a sovereign work of God as He answered the petition I had brought before Him, even when I had little expectation of an answer.

I have often heard of God taking away from a person some destructive appetite that they had long been enslaved to. I have heard testimonies given where a person, upon being born again, would have no more taste for alcohol, or drugs, or some other thing that had formerly enslaved them. It is little thought of, but God is sovereign even over our desires, and He is able to change them at will. Thus we read of God hardening some men's hearts so that they will not repent, and others He brings to repentance. The apostle Paul gives us an interesting insight into this matter.

Philippians 2:13

[Not in your own strength] for it is God Who is all the while effectually at work in you [energizing and creating in you the power and desire], both to will and to work for His good pleasure and satisfaction and delight.
(Amplified Bible)

This was really the beginning of faith in my life, for I had asked God to change my heart regarding prayer, and I saw Him do a work that I could not account for in any natural sense. I often looked back and marveled at what God had done, for as miserable as my times of prayer were formerly, He made them all the more a delight. What had seemed a barren wilderness, He transformed into a fruitful garden.

Part of the transformation that God wrought at this time was the birthing of communion and intimacy with Him. I had a real sense that God was with me, attending to my words, and searching my heart during my times of prayer. I no longer felt that my prayers were stopping at the ceiling, but I envisioned God with bended ear leaning over to hear what I was speaking to Him. I also began to hear things from Him in return. He would place some burden upon my heart and teach me how to pray for people. I began to experience prayer as a real two-way communication between myself and God.

This was a critical development because, in order for me to enter into the walk of faith that God would bring me into, I had to be able to discern His voice. A walk of faith is not a walk based upon principle, or upon systematic theology, or upon proper Scriptural exegesis. It is a walk of obedience where we hear God's voice and we obey.

Romans 10:17

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

Isaiah 30:21

Your ears will hear a word behind you, "This is the way, walk in it," whenever you turn to the right or to the left.

Hearing always precedes obedience. The verse above from Romans is literally rendered "So faith is out of hearing...." Faith arises out of hearing. If there is no hearing, there is no foundation for faith. Therefore, any man, woman, or child who would walk by faith must first have their ears attuned to the voice of God's Spirit. What a wonderful gift is the ability to hear God's voice to those who are willing to obey. Yet it is a curse to those who are not willing, but who are instead filled with disobedience and unbelief.

If you would also walk by faith, then you too must discern God's voice. If you have not been able to discern it, if your times of prayer and communication with God have also been dry and lifeless as my own once were, then why not confess it to God. He already knows

anyway.

Perhaps you have struggled to transform this area of your life yourself, but to no avail. Simply cast all over into God's hands and ask Him to do that which you have failed to accomplish. Oftentimes we have not, because we have not asked. Ask that your joy may be made full.



Discerning God's Presence

In order to enter into a walk of faith that pleases God the saint must not only develop a personal fellowship with God, but they must come to discern His presence with them. While I was still in my twenties I preached a sermon that used the following quote by J. Oswald Chambers to describe the main theme of the message.

“The deadliest form of Pharisaism today is not hypocrisy, but unconscious reality.”

When I first read these words, I understood immediately what they meant. A great majority of Christians walk around oblivious to the presence of God in their lives. They look at the circumstances of their lives as mere coincidence and happenstance. They do not perceive the presence of God, and, because of this failure to perceive His presence, they respond to the events of their lives with human reasoning and carnal strength.

I have always loved the histories recorded for us in the Old Testament. The lives of David, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph and many others have been precious to me, for they are related in such a way that we cannot fail to discern that God ordered their every step, and that He was always present and working in their lives. When I would read about David and his anointing by Samuel, his victory over Goliath, and his initial acceptance into Saul's house, the evidence is clear that God was ordering his steps. When I read of Saul's jealousy and persecution of David, and David's many trials in wilderness places, it cannot be denied that God determined that he should endure these things. What is more, David recognized that God was present with him in all of his trials and victories.

At some point in my life the thought occurred to me, “If God was so present in David's life, and in the life of the other persons whose histories are recorded for us, then why would I think that God is not just as present in my life and the lives of His born again children?” The Spirit brought a strong conviction to me that God was certainly just as present in my life as He was in the life of the son of Jesse. He was ordering my steps to the same degree that he ordered David's. The circumstances of my life were not mere coincidences, nor the work of chance, anymore than were the events in the life of King David.

Yet as I looked around me I could see that there were almost no Christians who shared this same mindset. They nearly all lived as if God was somewhere far removed from their lives. They were trapped in this deadliest form of Pharisaism that J. Oswald Chambers described as “unconscious reality.” God would be working right in front of them and they would not perceive His presence. The result was seen in lives that were devoid of faith, which were marked by unbelief and a reliance upon the ability of man to accomplish all things and to deliver from all trials. Like the Israelites in the wilderness, the saints seemed to cry out, “Is the LORD among us, or not?” The apparent answer was that they believed He was not among them.

This unbelief is expressed in a multitude of ways. When the saints would get sick they would run to the doctors and hospitals before they would consult with God. There was no waiting before Him to discern His will for them. By their actions they demonstrated that they believed man was more present and able to help them than God. When a pressing financial need would arise they would pull out the credit card, or go to the bank for a loan. They would not get on their knees before God and seek His provision for them in the matter. They preferred to lean upon the arm of flesh, for man was much more tangible to

them than an unseen God. Even when man's solution led to financial bondage, many Christians preferred bondage to trusting a God they could not see.

Pages could be filled in detailing the vast number of ways in which men and women today demonstrate their unbelief in God's presence with them, but I would prefer to press on and to cite some examples from my early Christian life where God made His presence known. This I will now do.

In our second year of marriage, my wife became pregnant and we had much anticipation for the child that was to be born to us. From my teenage years on up I had been captivated by the thought of being a father. I suppose I was influenced by TV shows such as "The Walton's" where family life was depicted as being so rich, and the family bonds between generations so enduring. I thought of how marvelous it would be to have a large family one day, and I wondered what my children would look like, and what their voices would sound like.

When I learned that my wife was expecting I was filled with excitement, and we prepared a room in the house to be a nursery. I painted the walls in pastel colors, and some ladies from the church made curtains and matching wall decorations for the room. We set-up a crib and a changing table and all the things that go along with taking care of a baby.

My wife was doing fine throughout her pregnancy, and she had that glow of expectant motherhood about her. As the day approached for the baby to be delivered all things appeared normal. The due date arrived, but there were no signs of labor yet. We were told this was normal for first births, as they often came late. One week went by and then two, and finally the doctor said that, if the child was not born by three weeks after the due date, he would induce labor.

The day before Tony was to be admitted to the hospital to have the baby delivered she began experiencing some pains, and, not knowing if they were normal pains, she wanted to see the doctor. We arrived at the doctor's office right before they were to close and the doctor was evidently in a hurry to get home. He listened to the baby's heartbeat with a stethoscope and concluded that all was well. Since Tony was already scheduled to be induced in the morning, he advised us to go home and come back to the hospital as previously planned. The doctor did not run any type of fetal stress tests, or check on the welfare of the baby in any other way.

That night was a difficult one for Tony as she continued to experience pains. Since this was her first pregnancy she did not know if these were the normal pains associated with labor, or not, and neither did I. Both of us passed a restless night, and early in the morning I took her to the hospital. I checked her in and she was then taken to the birthing suites while I filled out paperwork. When I had finished I went up to the maternity ward, and I found the department in a rush.

When the nurses had hooked my wife up to a fetal monitor they found the baby's heartbeat to be erratic and in distress. The medical staff immediately decided to perform an emergency C-section and they were wheeling my wife back into the operating room when I arrived. A short while later the doctor came out and told me that my son had died, and that my wife would be taken to a hospital room where she would most likely be kept for a week or longer.

It was all I could do to go to a phone and call a dear woman from our church and ask her to let the other church members know what had happened. I was able to see my son, and my wife held him for a moment. He was a beautiful baby, and I could see my features in him. We learned later that because he was so long past his due date that he had his first

bowel movement while in utero and this material had gotten into his lungs and he had died.

Because my wife was recovering in the hospital, I attended our son's funeral without her. We had named our son Joshua Caleb Herrin. These were days of grief for me, and I had never wept so bitterly as I did at this time. My expectation of fatherhood, of seeing my son grow up and hearing his voice, was met with tremendous loss and sorrow.

Over the next six months my sorrow over our loss continued, though the sharp bitterness of the first pains were lessened. One evening I had come home from work and had gotten in the shower when the Spirit began speaking to me with a clarity that I had rarely experienced before. In fact, I only knew of one other time when I had discerned the voice of God so distinctly. The Spirit said, "I am going to restore your joy. I am going to give you a daughter and her name will be Kristin Noel."

I hurried up and finished my shower so that I could go and tell my wife what God had spoken to me. I told her that Kristin Noel sounded like a Christmas name. A few weeks later my wife discovered that she was once again pregnant, and the doctor determined that her due date was right around Christmas. Kristin Noel Herrin was born on December 29th, 1987.

Now this was an amazing thing to me. My wife and I had discussed baby names before, and we thought that if we had a girl we would name her Hannah Joy. We had never discussed the names Kristin, or Noel. As I later found out, Kristin means "follower of Christ," and Noel means "new life." Kristin is now sixteen years old (2004), and her entire life she has fulfilled that which God's Spirit spoke to me. She has been a source of joy, and my delight in being her father, and in seeing her own relationship to Christ blossom into one where she also hears His voice, has been beyond measure.

One thing that this event in my life did was to affirm to me the presence and watchfulness of God in my life. It is God who opens and shuts the womb. It is God who orders my steps and who establishes the times and seasons of my life. While I may not understand why God brings certain trials into our lives, I am confident that He is ever present and that He will turn even our sorrows into joy. I can be assured that His intentions toward His children are always good, and not evil, to give us a future and a hope.

As these events unfolded I had many opportunities to live in the reality of the spiritual realms all around us, or to walk in "unconscious reality." We were told that we had an open and shut case against my wife's doctor, that negligence could be proven and we could be awarded a substantial amount of money. Yet as I considered this I sensed the Spirit telling me that it was not the will of God that I pursue this matter in court. The Spirit bore witness that our own emotional healing would be delayed if we followed this carnal course, for by keeping the matter of our loss and the doctor's negligence before us, both my wife and I would give room for a root of bitterness to take hold in our lives. God would have us to forgive the doctor, and by releasing him we would ourselves be released into the freedom of forgiveness and love.

Though the money we might have been awarded was a small temptation to me, I felt the Spirit bearing witness that we did not need the money, for God would be our provider if we would trust in Him. Also, I knew that ultimately it was not the doctor that ordered my steps, but it was God. At the funeral service for our son, one couple came up to me and shared a verse from Scripture that they said the Spirit had given them in relation to this situation. The Scripture states, "The firstborn male that opens the womb is holy unto God."

The Spirit has borne witness with my spirit that God took my son directly from the womb to His presence, and that he is considered holy unto God. He was spared from ever

having to walk in this sin filled world of heartaches and sorrows. He has not known the grief of falling short of God's perfect will, of being overcome by sin and bringing shame to the name of Yahweh. Like Enoch who walked with God and was no more, for God took him, so my son was taken into the presence of all that is holy. We are all creations of God created for His pleasure, and it is only just and right that God should choose the life for each of His children that pleases Him the most. With this I am content.

Perhaps some who are reading this have been in similar situations. Maybe you have been in an automobile accident, or encountered some other loss or suffering. We all have an opportunity to see the hand of God in these things and to respond accordingly, or we can choose to live in unconscious reality. We can live as if we are on our own and that God is not present, nor is He in control of our circumstances. We can choose to pursue a carnal path of getting all that we can by any human means possible, and relying upon the institutions of man to be our defense and source of succor. Yet it is always best to rest in God, to hear from Him, and to believe and obey.

God is present in the tragedies and triumphs of your life. He is as close to you as He was to David in all of his life. "The steps of a man are ordered of the Lord" (Psalms 37:23). We must choose to believe that God is present in our lives. Only then can we respond to our circumstances in a manner that is acceptable and pleasing unto Him.

Let me share another occurrence in our early married life that also demonstrated powerfully the presence of God in ordering our footsteps. One year we received a tax refund of about \$600, and when it came we decided to go to a nearby Sam's club and stock up on some groceries, for our pantry had become depleted. As we were driving up the Interstate toward the store I thought of another young couple in the church whom we were good friends with. They also had young children, and I knew that making ends meet was a struggle for them. I mentioned them to my wife and I suggested that we could get two grocery carts at Sam's, and everything we bought for ourselves we could also buy for them. Since God had just blessed us with this money we could well afford it.

My wife was excited about this idea, and in great agreement with me. So we proceeded to the store and ended up spending several hundred dollars on groceries. We swung by our friends' house on our way home, and they came out to greet us. We told them that the Spirit had led us to buy them some groceries, and we opened up the trunk of our car to give them their portion. Upon hearing and seeing this, the wife of this couple began crying. She then told us that her husband had just lost his job and she had only moments before asked "How will we eat? What will we do for groceries?"

God had answered her concerns, and the question she had vocalized, so quickly that she could only weep. God was demonstrating to her that He was present in her life, and that of her family, and she need not act as if they were on their own and left to their own resources. It also spoke volumes to me. We left them their groceries and then had to hurry home to put up our items, and on the way I was amazed as I pondered how God had directed our steps, giving my wife and I both the desire and the ability to do this thing when we did not even know the circumstances occurring in the lives of our friends. The Scriptures state:

Philippians 2:13

It is God Who is all the while effectually at work in you [energizing and creating in you the power and desire], both to will and to work for His good pleasure and satisfaction and delight.

(Amplified Bible)

The apostle Paul is declaring here that God both gives us the desire to do His will, and the power to accomplish it. Oftentimes God will move us to do a thing and we will not even know that it is God leading us. We may merely have a desire arise in our spirit, and perhaps later the Lord will show us what it was He was doing, though many times I am convinced we do things and never know what God has done. We may speak a word to someone, and it is just what they needed to hear. They may be convicted, or encouraged, or consoled, or receive direction, and we are unaware of what just transpired within them.

It is necessary that those who would walk in faith should believe that God is ever present with them and that He is ordering their steps. I would be surprised if one out of a hundred Christians in this hour have such a conception. There is such a mass of Christians who are walking by sight and reason, judging all matters in the same way that their lost neighbors judge. They are leaning on the same arm of the flesh for all of their needs. They resort to the same carnal and worldly means to deal with the trials and tribulations that they encounter. In doing so they have succumbed to this deadly form of Pharisaism. By their actions they declare, "Is God even among us?"

"But the righteous man shall live by faith" and "apart from faith it is impossible to please God."



Seeing God's Hand in Discipline

Having read the previous chapter, you should be beginning to note that a large part of a walk of faith, and of seeing the supernatural presence of God in the lives of the saints, has to do with observation. We can either be oblivious to the presence of God in our lives, or we can be attuned to it. The book of II Kings relates an interesting account of one man who saw into the spiritual realms, and another who did not.

II Kings 6:15-17

Now when the attendant of the man of God had risen early and gone out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was circling the city. And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Then Elisha prayed and said, "O Yahweh, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." And Yahweh opened the servant's eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

Both Elisha and his servant were in the same situation, having the same resources of God available to them. Yet one man saw God's provision, and one did not. This is a picture of the lives of the saints today. God is present and willing to help all who call upon His name, yet only a few discern His presence. Most Christians have their eyes closed to the supernatural realm around them.

I believe the time is coming when Yahweh will open the eyes of many of His elect in the same way that is described here. No longer will they have to see through eyes of faith, believing things that their natural senses cannot detect, but they will have their eyes opened to see into spirit realms as clearly as they have been able to perceive things in natural realms. Yet I also believe that those who will have their eyes opened to perceive spiritual things in this way will first have proven themselves by trusting in things that their senses could not detect.

Elisha did not always have the spiritual sight that is described in this passage. He first spent a number of years "pouring water on the hands of Elijah." Elijah had this sight while Elisha served him, but Elisha had to believe first in things that his eyes could not see. Only after proving himself faithful in "walking by faith, not by sight" was he granted his request that he might receive a double portion of the spirit that rested upon Elijah. He too then received an open heaven and was able to see into spiritual realms. Thus we see the principle at work throughout both Old and New Testaments that "those who are faithful in little things, will be given greater things."

I am convinced that the reason many saints do not have any great witness of the supernatural working of God in their lives is simply due to unbelief. God is present in their lives, yet they choose not to recognize this presence. They may see some provision come in for a pressing need at the very moment that they desperately require an answer, yet they choose to interpret the event as chance and fortune. How often do the saints say, "I was sure lucky," or "You were sure lucky," when luck had nothing to do with it? Why not rather confess that God orders the steps of His children and causes His rain (blessings) to fall on the just and the unjust?

What I want to speak of in this chapter is recognizing God's supernatural presence in

the discipline we receive from His hands. This is an important matter, for it requires faith to recognize God's hand of discipline even as it requires faith to recognize His presence to heal, or to manifest some much needed provision. In each of these things we must have eyes of faith to see into spirit realms in order to recognize God's presence in our lives.

If you are a child of God then you have, and will again, experience the discipline of God. None are exempt, as Paul wrote:

Hebrews 12:8

But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

I suspect that I could have a conversation with a majority of Christians today and it would go something like this.

“Are you a child of God?”

“Oh, yes. I am most definitely a child of God!”

“Then tell me about God's discipline in your life.”

“Um, well, I do not know what you mean. God's discipline? I believe that God loves me and that His Son suffered for my sins so that I would not have to.”

“So then, you cannot think of a time when God has disciplined you?”

“I don't think God would do that to me. God loves me and wants to bless me. I have had some bad things happen to me, even some painful things, but I don't think that was God.”

I have actually had conversations with saints that were very close to this. One wife of a pastor even rebuked me when I shared with her about God's discipline in my life. She said firmly, “My God would not do that.” If she is a child of the same God that I am a child of, then the Scriptures do testify that He will indeed discipline all those who are His children, for “all have become partakers” of His discipline.

The problem is not that God disciplines some of His children, and not others. Rather, it is that many refuse to acknowledge the discipline for what it truly is. These are also walking in “unconscious reality,” and because they fail to recognize God's discipline they do not respond to His correction. As Paul wrote to the Corinthian believers, “For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep” (I Corinthians 11:30). It is tragic that so many Christians experience the hand of God's discipline upon them, but they refuse to recognize it. This results in God using more severe discipline, and even then many will not respond until God finally has to take their lives.

I have often been on the receiving end of God's discipline, and at times this discipline has been most severe. If we read the words of the apostle we should expect that it would be so.

Hebrews 12:5-7

And have you [completely] forgotten the divine word of appeal and encouragement

in which you are reasoned with and addressed as sons? My son, do not think lightly or scorn to submit to the correction and discipline of the Lord, nor lose courage and give up and faint when you are reprov'd or corrected by Him; for the Lord corrects and disciplines everyone whom He loves, and He punishes, even scourges, every son whom He accepts and welcomes to His heart and cherishes. You must submit to and endure [correction] for discipline; God is dealing with you as with sons. For what son is there whom his father does not [thus] train and correct and discipline?
(Amplified Bible)

I would like to relate to you a testimony from my life where I received a scourging from the Lord. This event was no less supernatural than His speaking to me and telling me that He was going to give me a daughter, and telling me what her name would be. It was no less a sovereign act of God than His Spirit leading us to buy groceries for a family when, unknown to us, the husband had just lost his job and his wife was just expressing her concern about where their provision would come from.

One of the areas of my life that I have struggled with is in the area of financial stewardship, and more specifically I would identify my struggle as being with covetousness. When my wife and I were first married we both felt a conviction that we were to live debt free, although we were not as clear as to whether a mortgage on a house was wrong. In all other matters besides a house we were committed to living within the means which we had and to not incur any debt.

We lived in such a manner for the first few years of our marriage, and we knew the blessing of God upon our provision. Even though we did not earn a lot of money, God seemed to always be providing for us in gracious ways. About the third year of our marriage my wife went through a pregnancy that resulted in the birth of our daughter. We had some medical bills associated with the birth that needed to be paid. We didn't have the money, although it wasn't a very large amount, and we decided to apply for a credit card in order to use it to pay these bills.

I must state that I knew in my heart this wasn't God's true provision for us. Rather than seeking Him and asking for His provision to be manifest, I decided to meet the need in my own way. A large part of my reasoning was that there were a couple of things I wanted to buy, and in addition to paying the medical bills, I could also use the credit card to get the things I wanted while not having to wait until I had the cash on hand.

We obtained the credit card and paid the medical bills. I then also purchased the things I was desiring. From this point forward, things changed in our finances and provision. We had formerly seen God's hand of intervention on a regular basis. Now it was as if God said, "Ok, if you want to handle your money according to your will, then I will remove My hand of protection and provision and leave you to your own resources and devices."

Over the next few years we accrued more and more debt. We ended up with several credit cards as well as a car loan and other debt. When things got difficult, we applied for a consolidation loan to reduce the burden of monthly payments, but then foolishly we kept the credit cards and used them again.

My wife was not working, having quit work when our daughter was born, and my income was very modest. Things reached a point where I was working two jobs, and sometimes three, and the bills were taking everything that I earned. We were living paycheck to paycheck, just barely keeping up with bill payments.

The pressure became so severe that I knew something had to change quickly. My wife and I began to discuss where we had gone wrong. We realized that we had been disobedient, and had turned aside from the path we were convicted was God's will for us. We determined that our only recourse was to repent and ask God for His mercy. My wife and I did this as we knelt down in our living room and prayed to God, confessing our sin and asking our heavenly Father to once again be the provision for our home. We estimated that it would take many years for us to climb out of debt, even in a best case scenario, but God in His mercy had other plans.

Not long after we prayed about this, I was at work one day and I had an accident on a freshly waxed floor where I fell down and broke my ankle and tore ligaments in my knee. The injury to my knee was very painful and required physical therapy. It also left me with an impairment in my knee. I did not know that being injured on the job made me eligible for a worker's compensation settlement, so I was surprised when I was told after my rehabilitation that I needed to be evaluated to determine what compensation I would receive. I ended up being awarded \$19,000 dollars, and this went a long way toward paying off our debt. Soon after this my wife had an aunt die and we received an additional sum of money that allowed us to pay off all of the remainder of our debt. In less than a year from the time we prayed and asked God to forgive us for our sinful spending habits and covetousness, and to invite Him to once more be our source of provision, we were completely debt free. This was miraculous, to say the least, and it was evidence of God's grace and mercy extended toward us.

After we were debt free God began to speak to me concerning my injury at work. God told me that He had broken my ankle and caused the injury to my knee that I might learn to walk more carefully in this area of my life. I was reminded of the Scripture from Hebrews that speaks of God's discipline. It specifically mentions God causing an injury to a person's limbs.

Hebrews 12:12-13

Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

God then began to show me parallels between the natural and spiritual applications of this discipline He had chosen for me. After the injury I became very careful about walking on the floors at work (a hospital). I was always looking for wet spots and paying close attention to how I was walking, especially during the months I was on crutches. God told me that He wanted me to walk just as carefully in the area of financial stewardship. He wanted me to learn to live within my means and not be covetous.

This injury affected me in a way that I had never experienced before, although I had known numerous injuries in my life. At times I would find myself walking down a hallway at work and I would begin replaying the accident in my mind. I would see myself setting my foot on the freshly waxed floor and falling. I would see myself lying on the floor unable to move my leg and foot. As this scene would be playing in my mind I would stop walking, and moments later I would realize I was standing still in the middle of a hallway. I would have to tell myself to move, and I would have to wrest my mind free from this image.

The Lord spoke to me about this. He said He wanted this injury to be a reminder to me to not transgress in this way again. The link between my injury and my disobedience in

the area of coveting was clearly established, for the beginning of my getting out of debt was the result of the worker's compensation settlement I received from this injury. When I understood the purpose of God's discipline I did not mind the broken ankle and the torn ligaments in my knee. I began to praise God and to thank Him for His discipline. I confessed that He was righteous and just to discipline me in this manner. I had willfully transgressed in the area of financial stewardship by obtaining credit cards and walking in covetousness, and I could only agree that it was a just thing for God to discipline me in this way. I was reminded that God disciplines those whom He loves and counts as sons, and I knew all this was done out of love for me.

It is remarkable to think back about these events. I had disobeyed and as a result I had gotten in a real bind. I was working day and night to pay bills and I was barely staying afloat. In desperation my wife and I cried out to God. We confessed our sin and asked God to be our provider once more. In His mercy He answered our prayers, and along with His deliverance He sent me some much needed correction.

There is no possibility of my denying the presence of God in my life in any of these events. I will not say that what happened to me was mere chance, or luck. It was the sovereign hand of God manifested in my life. He ordered my steps, and one fateful step resulted in some painful discipline.

God uses many such things in the lives of His children to get their attention and to lead them back to righteousness. We read already where Paul informed the saints at Corinth that many among them were weak and sick, and some had even died as a result of God's discipline for their sin. Not all physical infirmity is a result of sin, a fact that is easily proven through Scriptures. Yet the apostle informs us that some infirmities are God's discipline. In Hebrews he also uses language that speaks of a limb being made lame. My right leg was lame for a period of time as a result of God's discipline, so we see that God also uses bodily injuries to bring us needed correction. Paul also uses the word "scourges" to describe God's discipline, and by this we can understand that this discipline may be severe.

There are a myriad of ways in which God brings His discipline. He may cause us to suffer a financial setback. He may discipline us by allowing us to be fired from a job, or exposing some sin we had been trying to keep hidden. He may allow us to experience open shame. As Paul stated, "all discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful." Discipline is not supposed to be a pleasurable experience, "yet afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness."

If you are to begin experiencing the supernatural presence of God in your life, a good place to begin is to recognize His hand of discipline. Have you thought that all of the difficult experiences of your life were merely meaningless, chance occurrences to be endured? Consider for a moment those saints in Corinth. Some were weak, and others sick and some had even died. Do you suppose they all understood why they were weak and sick? Do you think they all perceived why they were dying? No! And I am sure there were some stubborn and carnal ones among them who still refused to acknowledge the hand of God's discipline upon them, even after receiving Paul's words, and that many more died.

Why was this true then, and why is it true today? It is largely due to unbelief. Though the saints may confess that God is all knowing and all powerful, though they may confess that He is omnipresent, even to judging the thoughts and intents of every man's heart, they often live as if God is somewhere far removed from them. Many live as if God was unaware of what just occurred in their life, and that they must inform Him of the matter lest He should not notice. When things happen in their lives many Christians fail to discern that it

is God who has ordered their steps, and they rarely consider that God may have some purpose in allowing them to experience the things that come into their lives. This is the “unconscious reality” that J. Oswald Chambers referred to, and truly it is deadly, for many saints today also have perished in their blindness.

It is not so difficult to discern when God is disciplining us, if we should merely develop the habit of listening to God. What Father is there who would discipline His children and not tell them why they were being disciplined? I am a father, and I have never disciplined my children without telling them why they were being corrected. It would serve no purpose to spank a child and not tell him why he was being paddled. God also knows this, and He will always tell us why we are being disciplined in order that we might correct our way and receive benefit from the sorrowful thing we are enduring.

It is an awesome thing to receive discipline from God. It is a testimony of His love for us, and a witness that He considers us to be His sons and daughters. When the Spirit revealed to me why I was disciplined, my response was one of thankfulness. I began confessing how right this discipline was. Wouldn't it be wonderful if our children would respond similarly when we had to correct them? To have a son or daughter say, “Mom/Dad, you were right. I sure needed that correction. Thank you for loving me enough to not abandon me to disobedience.”

I wish my own story ended with this confession, but to my shame I returned once more to my sin of covetousness, and this led to God having to choose an even more painful correction the next time around. But that is a story reserved for later chapters.



Prophetic Utterances

Isaiah 42:18-20

Hear, you deaf! And look, you blind, that you may see. Who is blind but My servant, or so deaf as My messenger whom I send? Who is so blind as he that is at peace with Me, or so blind as the servant of Yahweh? You have seen many things, but you do not observe them; your ears are open, but none hears.

I think perhaps the saddest person in the world is the one who does not discern the presence of God in his or her life. To think that God would create us and then leave us to ourselves is a tragic thought. How hurtful it would be to think that God cared so little for His creation that He would simply choose to ignore what He has created and take a hands off approach to our lives. Such a mindset is not supported by the testimony of Scripture.

Luke 12:6-7

“Are not five sparrows sold for two cents? Yet not one of them is forgotten before God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.”

Jonah 4:10-11

Then Yahweh said, "You had compassion on the plant for which you did not work and which you did not cause to grow, which came up overnight and perished overnight. Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know the difference between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?"

God does have compassion upon the works of His hands. He cares for men and women, as well as cattle and birds. Yahshua's words concerning the sparrows make a great study. He said of the sparrows "Not one of them is forgotten before God." Do you know how many sparrows are in the world? The word sparrow originally meant "any small bird." There must be billions of small birds in the world, and God has not forgotten a single one. Why then would anyone imagine that God's eye is not upon the people he has created, who are of much greater value in God's sight?

I remember an occasion years ago when I had my first encounter with someone who had the gift of prophecy. I was at the same Southern Baptist church where I first heard the message of grace. The exercise of the gifts of the Spirit, including words of prophecy, were rare among this body. One Sunday a man named Jeff Burke was invited to come and share with the congregation about the gift of prophecy. There was nothing extraordinary about this man's appearance. In fact, he and I could have passed for brothers. Yet as he began to share his testimony it was evident that his experience was vastly different from most of the Christians I had grown up around. Jeff spoke of hearing God's voice, and sharing the things God spoke to him with others. He gave example after example, and I was amazed as I heard of the precision with which God had spoken to people through him.

We had been told that there would be a time at the end of the service where Jeff would ask the Lord if He had a word to be shared with any of the members of the congregation. As I sat listening an intense yearning grew in my heart to hear a word of prophecy from

God. I did not care if God exposed my sin publicly, which is what I expected Him to do, I just wanted to hear God speak to me. I wanted to know that God was attentive to me, and that He cared enough about me to say something to me, even if it was a word of judgment. As I sat there awaiting the time of ministry I prayed silently that God would not pass me by, but that He would give this man a word for me.

After Jeff finished sharing his testimonies, and teaching about the gift of prophecy, he said that God had given him some things to share with a number of individuals. You cannot imagine how excited I was when the first person he walked up to was me. He came and stood beside me and said, "You have seen yourself as a marshmallow, but God says you have steel in your backbone. God would also say to you, 'I have seen your obedience, and I will make it known.'"

There was no doubt in my mind that I had just received a message from God. I believe I was in my early thirties at the time of this word, and I truly did see myself as a marshmallow. As an outward manifestation of this, I was overweight and my wife and kids were in the habit of poking me in the belly so that I would laugh at them like the Pillsbury Dough Boy that is pictured in commercials. Just a short time before this I had a birthday and my wife and kids bought me some suspenders and a necktie that had pictures of the Pillsbury Dough Boy on them. The Pillsbury Dough Boy looks like he has been constructed of marshmallows, and this physical picture described how I felt about myself spiritually.

When this word was shared with me it went straight to my heart. As cute as I thought these little dough boys were, when I got home later I threw out both the suspenders and the tie (with my wife's and kids' understanding), for I was convicted that I could not continue to wear something that portrayed an image God said was not true. God said I was not a marshmallow, but that I had steel in my backbone, and I chose to believe Him despite what my experiences in the past had told me.

It was not long afterward that I was able to put this prophetic word to the test. The Lord led me to fast for several days, and this particular fast was very difficult. I had headaches and hunger pangs, and the temptation to eat was very great. I was taking college classes at this time and I remember driving back home from college one night and I was passing many fast food restaurants. Satan was tempting me earnestly to break my fast, and the warfare within between the spirit and the flesh was intense. As I drove down the road I began shouting out, "Satan, you are a liar. You say I cannot do this, but God says I have steel in my backbone and I choose to believe God. I will not give into the flesh, but I will walk by the Spirit." I also prayed to God confessing as truth the things He had spoken to me. I had a real good shouting time as I drove home, and the battle was won. I completed the days of this fast as God had directed me to do.

The second part of this prophetic word was equally surprising to me. I had really been expecting God to expose some sin in my life, and I had numerous weaknesses that he could have focused upon. I thought God would mention my faults and tell me to repent, and I would have considered myself blessed to receive such a word. I would have thought, "Yes, God noticed me. He has seen me and spoken a word to me." Even if it had been a word of correction I would have been pleased that I had not been passed by.

Yet God did not say, "I have seen your disobedience," He said, "I have seen your obedience, and I will make it known." The effect upon me was greater than if He had exposed my sins, for I saw such a graciousness in God, knowing that He could have truly pointed out many errors in my life, but He chose to speak of my obedience instead. The effect was that I wanted to please this loving and gracious God. I wanted to rule over my

flesh and walk in a manner worthy of Him.

Saints, there is such joy in knowing that God is attentive to us. It really matters not whether He is pouring blessings out upon us, or whether He is disciplining us as sons; whether He is giving us a positive and encouraging word of prophecy, or whether He is speaking a word of correction. The joy is in knowing His presence, His concern, His watchfulness over our lives. This is why I have said that the saddest person in the world is the one who does not discern God's presence with them.

I have not forgotten this first word of prophecy that I received. It has been more than ten years since that date, and the words have been brought to my remembrance time and again when I needed to hear them. I have been emboldened to stand firm in times of trial, and I have been comforted through the many times when my obedience has been characterized as something evil. I know that one day God will vindicate all those who have suffered reproaches and false characterizations at the hands of those who call good evil, and evil good.

There are many Christians today who have been taught that prophetic words are not for today. They have received the lie that all such gifts of the Holy Spirit ceased to exist when the first apostles died, or around the time the Bible was officially canonized. By receiving such falsehoods they rob themselves of another way in which God makes His presence known in our lives. The apostle Paul wrote:

I Thessalonians 5:19-21

Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good...

I have no doubt that there are false prophets and false prophetic words being uttered today in abundance. I have heard many such words with my own ears. There is, however, a true gift of prophecy that is not to be despised. I have not run after those who are acclaimed to have such gifts, but have allowed the Lord to bring them to me when He desired. When God has brought these prophetic words to me they have had a ring of authority, authenticity and truth. In the following chapters of this book I will relate some of the other profound words that have been spoken through the men, women, and children that God has placed His Spirit upon in these last days.

Joel 2:28-29

It will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.



A Fool Returns to His Folly

Proverbs 26:11

Like a dog that returns to its vomit is a fool who returns to his folly.

I mentioned previously that I had disobeyed God in the area of financial stewardship, and, when I cried out for deliverance from the burden of debt I had gotten myself into, the Lord graciously delivered us from all debt and gave me some much needed discipline at the same time. I wish I could say that the story ended there and that I continued in faithfulness from that day forward. Yet my covetous heart quickly led me to return to my old ways.

As with many people in their sins, I did not set out to deliberately disobey God. I simply found myself wanting something and I made some very bad justifications to convince myself that I was not sinning as I had formerly done. When the Lord had delivered us from debt, we were left with a positive sum of \$8,000. I didn't realize it at the time, but eight is the number of new beginnings, and God wanted us to start over fresh as we looked to Him to be our provider, and as we responded with willing obedience in all of our monetary decisions.

We only had one vehicle and I had wanted a pick-up truck for a long time. My wife and I talked about it and we decided that I should go ahead and purchase a truck while we had the money. I began looking around at both new and used trucks, and I found a new Mazda pick-up truck that was selling for about \$13,000. I really liked this truck, and I decided that I wanted to buy it.

I justified this purchase like this. If I put down a large down payment then I really wouldn't be in debt, for I could sell the truck at any time and get back more than I owed on it. Also, since I was now completely debt free, and I was still making the same amount of money as I did when I was in debt, I had lot's of financial breathing room and could easily make the payments on this truck, which would only amount to about \$150 a month. A third justification I used was that I had been told by relatives that buying used vehicles resulted in buying someone else's problems, so you should always buy something new. I had never really bought into this argument, but it provided appropriate justification for my covetous heart at that moment.

It is amazing how blinded we can become by our carnal desires. God sent me some clear indications that this was not His will, but I discounted them. I had a conversation with the elder I had spoken of before, Bill Martin, who was now living in another town, and I told him what God had done for us and that I was going to buy a new truck. He told me over the telephone that he believed I was making a mistake and was heading right back into that which God had just delivered me from. I repeated to him my list of justifications and he then replied, "Okay, I won't say anymore."

I could wish that Bill would have been more forceful with me, even to threaten to come down and give me a whipping if I acted so foolishly by returning to my error. But He left me in God's hands, and eventually God did give me the whipping I deserved.

God gave me one more opportunity to avert my course. My boss at work had a very nice Toyota four wheel drive pick-up truck and he heard that I was thinking about buying a truck. He approached me one day and told me about his truck, and, without knowing how much money I had available, he told me that he would sell his truck for \$8,000. In hindsight I have chided myself many times for not paying attention to what God was saying.

I could have had a truck that was probably a better truck than the one I ended up purchasing, and I could have paid cash for it and remained in the will of God by not incurring any debt.

There is no nice way to put it. I acted very foolishly. Having been a partaker of God's grace and mercy, and having recognized His hand of discipline in my life, I returned to the same folly I had just been delivered from. Lest you should contemplate doing a similar thing, consider well the words of the apostle Paul.

Hebrews 12:11-13

All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

What the apostle is saying is that if we do not respond rightly to the original discipline, "the limb which is lame," then the discipline will get more severe, "the limb will be put out of joint." Paul revealed this same progression of the severity of discipline in writing to the Corinthian church. He said "some are weak and sick, and some sleep (have died)." Even in our nation's judicial systems we see this pattern adhered to. First offenders are often given a light sentence, but repeat offenders are treated much more harshly. Little did I suspect what was in store for me.

I purchased this truck that I was lusting after, and it was not too long before I was justifying other purchases and I once more obtained credit cards. During these years I was receiving many raises at work, as I was advancing from one position to another. I never went back into the depths of debt that I originally knew, and I felt I was doing well by keeping on top of paying all of my bills, yet I was walking in disobedience.

During these years the Lord made it known that He had a calling on my life to be a minister to the body of Christ, and I was ordained as an elder at one church, and a year later I was ordained as an elder and pastor at another church. I really had a heart to serve God, and I was passionate about understanding the truths of His word, yet I had areas of my life that were out of order. I did not discern the many ways in which these areas of disorder were hindering me in fulfilling the ministry God had called me to, but God knew, and He loved me enough to choose to set matters straight.

I believe it was early in the year 1999 that my life began to head down a track I had not anticipated. The next years were to be some of the most beneficial, painful, instructive, corrective, enlightening, purging, fruitful years I would know. Pain and victory, sorrow and consolation, suffering and growth were all to be mixed together.

In early 1999 we had a couple visit our church and home by the name of Charles and Nancy Newbold. Charles is a Christian minister and author who lives in Tennessee. He had come down to our church in Georgia at the request of some of the other ministers to do some teaching. On this particular day, as Charles and Nancy were preparing to leave our home, they asked if there was anything they could pray for us about.

At this time I had been reading some books by Rick Joyner, and in one of the books (I believe it was *The Harvest*) he described a dream-like experience where he was taken to an island. On this island there was much activity going on, some good and some evil. There were two different types of people present, some who appeared glorious, and others

who lacked this glory.

Mr. Joyner described one particular scene on this island. He saw Jesus standing with a sword in His hand and there was a line of people approaching Jesus. When a man or woman would stand directly in front of Christ He would plunge the sword into the person and they would fall down and die. None of the people in this queue were glorious in appearance, yet after they died they would arise and take on an appearance of glory.

An interesting thing about this was that some people, upon having the sword thrust into them, would die quickly and easily. Others underwent what appeared to be long torments, being in continuous agony, never seeming to be able to die, but continuing in their suffering. As Rick Joyner observed this he asked the Lord what made the difference between those who died quickly and those who went on in continuing agonies. The Lord responded, "Those who die quickly are those who ask Me to put them to death."

I was very much gripped by what I read, and the Holy Spirit was ministering to me all the time. I understood the substance of those things being shared. As children of God we all must embrace the cross, which is an instrument of death. We must all come to an end of our independent and selfish ways that we might live as Christ who said, "I never do anything of My own initiative. I only do the will of the Father." The Holy Spirit was impressing upon me that I needed to come to an end of independence in my life that I might be qualified as a vessel of honor in God's house.

I had been dwelling upon these things for some days when the Newbolds came to visit. I knew that if I wanted to go on with God, to enter into the fulness of those things He had laid up for me, that I was going to have to embrace a death to my many sinful and independent ways. I knew I could not turn back from what the Spirit was speaking to me, for to turn back was to forfeit the good will of God for my life, which was a thought that I could not bear. I knew I had to go forward, and the path before me was one of death to the old man and his ways.

While contemplating these things the Spirit made it known that this path was absolutely necessary, and I considered, that since it could not be avoided, I would much prefer a quick death to a long and agonizing death. My answer to the Newbolds' question was that they might pray that I would have a quick death.

When I shared this, both Charles and Nancy became very serious. They asked me, "Are you sure you know what you are asking for?" I assured them that I did. They then turned to my wife and asked her, "Are you willing to walk with your husband through whatever God will take him through." Tony hesitated for a second, and then she said, "Yes, I am willing." The Newbolds then prayed for us regarding this matter.

Just as Charles was about to go out our front door he turned to me and said, "You know, there are many ways the Lord can take us through a death experience, and one of them is to bring us to a financial death." With these words he was gone and I was left with a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach. There is no doubt in my mind as I look back over the past years that Charles Newbold prophesied when he spoke these words to me. The Lord did have a financial death in store for us, yet I can only think how fitting and wise this was. If the Lord is to take us through a death experience it makes sense that He would choose the area of our greatest independence and lay it in the dust. The Lord will go straight to that which is the chief stronghold in our lives, for if He can deliver us from that which stands in greatest opposition to His will, then He can deliver us from all other things.

This pattern is revealed in Scripture. When the Lord led the children of Israel under Joshua's leadership (Joshua being a type of Yahshua, having the same name in the Hebrew)

He led them to the city with the biggest, strongest, widest and most impregnable walls. He led them directly to Jericho. This was to be the first battle for the Israelites in the land, and if they could capture Jericho then there would be nothing greater they would ever have to face.

The history of Israel going in to possess the promised land is not just a bunch of interesting stories given to entertain. They are parables of man taking possession of the land in which he dwells. Our flesh was made from the dust of the earth. It is this ground we must possess and rule over. We must drive out every enemy, tear down every stronghold, slay every giant, subdue all the wild beasts, until the land is made into a habitation of peace and righteousness. I had some real strongholds in my life, and the Lord Yahshua was preparing to lead me in to conquer the land.

I mentioned that at this time I was serving as a minister among a local body of believers, so there were actually a number of things the Lord was performing in my life. Not only was He seeking to deliver this son of His from the bondage in his life, but He was preparing me to be fit as a minister who could receive a much greater anointing. I was to undergo a scourging for my waywardness, but I was at the same time to be fitted to enter into a greater calling than I had yet known.

The Spirit of God began to impress the following verse upon me at this time.

Luke 16:10-11

"He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. Therefore if you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous mammon, who will entrust the true riches to you?"

The Holy Spirit spoke to me that I must become faithful in my stewardship of money if I desired to receive true spiritual riches. If I could not be faithful in this unrighteous thing, this carnal and natural area of my life, then God would not be able to entrust to me the spiritual riches He desired to give to me. I yearned very much for true spiritual riches. I wanted God to open up to me the mysteries of His word and to endow me with a high calling, and an anointing to accomplish all that He would lead me to do. I wanted to be a vessel of honor in God's house as Paul described to his son in the faith, Timothy.

II Timothy 2:19-21

"The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness." Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.

The Scriptures reveal that God has a high calling set before all of His children. He desires all to be vessels of honor, of gold and silver. Yet God is able to use many of His children only for common things, for they will not submit to His purging and purifying work. They avoid the working of the cross in their lives, and because they are unclean God must relegate them to being vessels of dishonor.

Consider for a moment that in a great house there are choice goblets of gold, encrusted

with gemstones. These are brought out to be set before the highest nobility, and are shown off as vessels of great beauty and worth. Yet there are other vessels in the same house. There is common pottery that is used for waste baskets, spittoons, slop jars, and even for bathroom pee pots. God would choose all His children to be vessels of honor, but, if they will not submit to His refining work, He can only use them as vessels of dishonor.

I understood these things, and consequently I invited the Lord to bring me to a quick death to all that was wicked and evil in my life. I wanted to be a purified vessel, and as I was to find out, our heavenly Father is very willing to purge and purify all those who ask this of Him. The way has not been easy, and it has been attended by much pain and sorrow, but, as I look back, these experiences seem to have flown by. The memory of the painful things is now very distant and muted, and I feel washed by having endured the things the Spirit has led our family through.



Faith's First Steps

Before going forward chronologically in the story of our encounters with Christ, I must first go backward and share some things that are necessary in order to understand that which follows.

While I was still in my twenties, and fellowshiping at the church where I first learned the message of grace, the Spirit began to reveal a truth that was to profoundly affect my future walk with the Lord. He showed me through the types of the Old Testament that His salvation is a free gift, and even as Moses (who is a type of Christ) delivered the children of Israel from their cruel bondage and servitude in Egypt without their having to do anything other than place the blood of a lamb on the doorposts and lintels of their homes, so too God provided salvation to us as a free gift that we cannot earn, but which we merely receive.

Under Moses, the Israelites were set free from their taskmasters, and through Christ, those who believe on His name are set free from the bondage of sin. The faith of many of the Israelites was very weak, for they had been slaves in Egypt for hundreds of years. The faith of many saints is also very weak, for they have known only bondage to sin. Because of this slave mentality, many feel that they should not dare think themselves to be truly free of sin's hold upon them. Thus we see that when the Egyptians pursued Israel in the wilderness, that many among the Israelites doubted. They thought that the Egyptians would re-capture them, killing great numbers of them in the process. Even so, many Christians upon being freed from sin's bondage then doubt their freedom and begin to think that sin will once more gain dominion over them.

The Christian life is by necessity a life of faith. We not only begin in faith, but we must continue in faith. In the beginning of our life in Christ God seemingly tolerates doubting much more than He does later on. The ideal of God is that our faith should grow, and never stop increasing. Yet this ideal is not always met. The Israelites, having seen God perform wonder after wonder in Egypt, culminating in the death of the firstborn of all Egypt, both of men and cattle, still doubted that God would bring them to a fulness of salvation, and a complete deliverance from Egypt. When they stood before the waters of the Red Sea with the Egyptian army behind them and mountains to the left and right, they murmured against God. They said, "Did Yahweh bring us out here to kill us because there were not enough graves in Egypt?"

God was neither glorified, nor pleased with this faithless response. Nevertheless, He delivered the people in spite of their murmurings. Moses spoke to the people, commanding them to be quiet, to "stand still and see the salvation of your God." Moses then stretched forth his staff and the waters of the Red Sea parted and all Israel crossed over on dry land. We see that God was willing at this point in His relationship with Israel to manifest His provision for them before they demonstrated an attitude of faith. The people crossed through the Sea after they saw it part. Thus God manifested His provision without first requiring faith in the hearts of those He was saving.

We must keep in mind that Israel did not enter into the land of promise at this time. They only crossed over into the wilderness of Sin. So too God will bring many of His doubting children out of Egypt and into a wilderness of testing and trials, but He will not allow them to depart this wilderness while still filled with doubts and unbelief. Many Christians spend their entire lives in the wilderness, and perish there just as an entire generation of unbelieving Israelites did.

God does require faith from those who would enter into their promised inheritance. We see then, that when the people under Joshua entered the land God promised to Abraham, that God did not part the waters of the Jordan and then invite them to pass through as He had done at the Red Sea. No! He required that they take the first step, demonstrating faith before He would manifest His provision.

Joshua 3:13

"It shall come about when the soles of the feet of the priests who carry the ark of Yahweh, the Lord of all the earth, rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan will be cut off, and the waters which are flowing down from above will stand in one heap."

God may allow murmuring Christians, filled with doubts and unbelief, to go as far as the wilderness where their hearts are proven, but He will not allow these same doubters to enter into the land of promise. Only those who walk by faith, and who demonstrate confidence in their Savior, can enter there. God will only reveal His way into the land to those who step forth in faith. In the wilderness the saints learn to no longer live by sight, and to no longer lean on the arm of the flesh. Here they learn to receive their daily provision from God's hand, and they learn to lean completely upon Him. When they learn the lessons of trusting God well enough, then they are led up out of the wilderness and into their inheritance.

Song of Solomon 8:5

"Who is this coming up from the wilderness leaning on her beloved?"

All those who come up out of the wilderness must be leaning solidly upon Christ. This knowledge that faith was necessary in order to go on with the Lord began to dawn on me while I was a member of this Southern Baptist church where the message of grace was preached so vigorously. I observed many profound things while there. I saw many who grasped a message of salvation by grace through faith who became confident that they were saved from wrath and were children of God. Continuing the type from Egypt, they applied the blood of the Lamb to their lives, and felt secure from the death angel. Yet few demonstrated a practical faith that would have an observable impact upon their daily lives. They trusted God with their eternal salvation, but they did not trust God for their present needs. They were wilderness wanderers, and they were all dying in this land of unbelief.

I began to understand that God would test all of His children in the wilderness, to know what was in their hearts. Those who had faith in their hearts would be brought into their inheritance, while those who did not would perish in the wilderness. What is the means of this testing? It is the same as that experienced by the Israelites in the wilderness. God will test us in the physical circumstances of our lives. We can confess loudly and fervently that we trust God for our salvation, and for eternal life in heaven, but God wants to know if we will trust Him now by placing our lives firmly into His care.

It was while we were among these Christians that God first began to challenge our family to trust Him for things that men often look to others to provide. One early challenge He gave us was to trust Him for our security. We moved to a town near the church. My wife had told me she would never move to this town, for she had heard that there was much crime there. There was a security system in the house, and when we moved in my wife asked

me if she could get it activated by taking out a contract with a security company. I neglected to pray about this situation, and wishing to please my wife, who did agree to move to this town with me, I gave her my consent.

In our bedroom was a panel with lights that monitored all of the zones in the house. They were green when all was okay, and red when an alarm had been tripped. I did not know that my wife was lying awake night after night staring at the panel in fear that one of the lights would change from green to red. About a month after moving in, my wife and I were alone in the house, having sent our children to stay with some neighbors for the night. About 3 AM one of the alarm sensors tripped and a light went from green to red. Right outside our bedroom, on the outside of the house, was an alarm, and I had never heard it before. It was like a claxon siren that might announce a bombing raid, or the approach of a tornado. It was horrendously loud; loud enough to wake the entire neighborhood. It began blaring, and being awakened to such a noise from a sound sleep sent both my wife and I into a panic. The noise was so overwhelming that all I could think of was turning off the alarm. I ran to the panel and keyed in the security code to turn it off.

My wife was greatly frightened, suspecting that we had an intruder in the house. She went to our closet and took out a pellet gun that I had purchased as a play thing, and she handed it to me. I told her that I would have to shoot the intruder in the eyeball with it to do any good, so I handed it back to her and I grabbed a can of pepper spray, which is similar to mace. I did a search of the house while my wife called the police and went to the front door to wait for them. There was no intruder in the house, and after a thorough examination we found that a sensor on a front window had tripped. The children had been playing there earlier in the day and must have bumped it. Since the house was close to the road, it was probably just the vibration from a car going by that had set the alarm off.

My wife and I were very keyed up after all of this excitement, and had difficulty going back to sleep. I realized that God had gone before us in having our children stay with friends that night. This was something God wanted my wife and I to deal with. In the morning I spoke to my wife about the alarm system. I told her that it was not providing security. Rather it was producing fear. She then confessed to me that she had been lying awake for hours every night staring at the panel in fear that it would go off.

I shared my heart with Tony, telling her that the Spirit was indicating to me that we needed to entrust the security of our home and family to Him, and to cancel our security contract. Tony agreed, and we called that day and canceled it. I also threw away our pepper spray. I was convinced that God wished us to lean completely upon Him in this matter of our security and safety, and that anything else we leaned on to fulfill this same function would keep us from knowing God's provision. Eventually some opportunity would present itself where that which we trusted in would be tested. Therefore, I did not want to keep a gun in the house, or the pepper spray, or even the security system. I wanted to lean entirely upon God and look to Him to be our shelter and strong tower.

I had never owned an actual gun, just having had BB guns and pellet guns for my own entertainment to do target shooting. However, I considered at this time what it would be like to have a gun in the house. I kept coming back to the thought that if I trusted in a gun for the protection of my family, eventually God would lead me to a time when I had to prove the value of this thing I was trusting in. Every scenario I could think of, in which I would have to pick up a gun and point it at another person for defense of myself or my family, left me recoiling at the visions of the aftermath of such an event. I decided that I would much rather place our security in God's hands, and trust Him to spare us from ever having to

wound, or kill, another person. The Scripture, “Those who live by the sword will die by the sword” was much in my mind.

This was the beginning of many more steps of faith to come, where I would be led to trust in the love, kindness, mercy, wisdom and strength of God, while turning my back upon my own abilities, or the abilities of other men, to provide security, health and provision.

After canceling our security contract and disabling our home alarm system, as a family we went around the house and anointed the corners with oil. We then prayed together, asking the Father to be our security and to give us peace. That night was the first night my wife slept soundly in the house, and she was never disturbed again. We were to be at this house for three years, and even when some other people in the neighborhood had bicycles and other objects stolen, we never had anything of ours to be bothered with. This was the beginning of God leading our family to trust Him in matters of this life.



Mercy Amidst Discipline

An interesting thing occurred during our move to this house that I spoke of in the last chapter, the house with the security system. I had felt for some time that God would move us to this town which was called Fort Valley, and I had mentioned it to my wife some years earlier.

We were home owners previous to this move, having lived in a small, but new home that had been built for us six years earlier in Perry, Georgia. It was at this home in Perry that I had been disciplined by God for my covetousness and financial debt, and it was also here that I had gone into debt again and purchased a brand new Mazda pick-up truck. I had converted a garage at this house into a family room, doing all the work myself, but spending a lot of money in the process, money which I did not have, but had to borrow. One of the reasons we were selling the home was to pay down our debts, which were starting to become burdensome again.

I had already taken some steps to reduce our debt. The pick-up truck that I felt I just had to have, I kept for only a couple years, and then I traded it on a used Geo Tracker. I loved the Tracker. It was a little, sporty, four wheel drive vehicle with a removable soft top. I loved driving it around with the top off, enjoying the Georgia sunshine and the fresh air. The Tracker was much less expensive than the pick-up, and I was able to pay for it in full and get a clear title to it. We had a second car at this time which we were making payments on.

Our house in Perry sold after being on the market for only thirteen days. We also got our full asking price for the house, and when we had paid off the debt incurred in remodeling the garage we had about \$6,000 to place as a down payment on another home.

We began looking for homes immediately, and through a strange chain of events we learned of a house that had been for sale for some time. Thieves had stolen the for sale sign out of the front yard, and the owner never had the sign replaced. There was no evidence that this home was even for sale. We contacted the owner, and he had already reduced the price tremendously, for the home market was depressed in this particular town, with many homes for sale and few buyers. We made an even lower bid, offering what we thought we could afford, using our \$6,000 as a down payment, and amazingly to us, our offer was accepted.

Since we had to be out of our home in Perry, as it had already sold, the owner of this home in Fort Valley agreed to let us move in before we closed on the property, and to pay rent until the closing date. God had given me a very strong witness of His will for us to be here, and He had gone before us up to this point. I knew we were to move in, although I had no idea how I was going to come up with the closing costs, which included appraisal fees, termite inspection, surveying costs, bank loan processing fees, and attorney fees. All told, our portion amounted to about \$3,600.

I was placing myself in a very vulnerable position by moving in ahead of the closing date, for it would be a great embarrassment to arrive at this date and not have the money on hand to pay these fees. Since I would already be in the house, I ran the risk of being asked to vacate with no idea of where I would go from there. On top of this, my mother lived just two doors down from this house, and she worked at a local manufacturing company in the same department with the man who owned the house.

My mother became rather agitated when she found I had set a closing date, and had

moved in without having the money on hand to pay the closing costs. She said that I would surely embarrass her greatly when that date came. I told her that God had confirmed to me that we were to move here, and I was confident that when the date came I would have the money in hand.

My confidence remained high, and as the days ticked by I was looking daily for God's provision. When we came to within a week of the closing date, and I still did not have the money, I then began to experience some troubling of my soul. On the day before the closing date I still did not have the money and the thought came to me that I should go and see what I could get for my beloved Tracker. I was in some perplexity at this time, and did not know if this was the voice of God, or if I should stand in faith looking for some other provision. In the end I decided to go and see what a dealer would give me for the vehicle.

The dealer I took my Tracker to checked the vehicle over thoroughly and then offered me \$3,600 for it. This was the exact amount I needed for closing on the house. I accepted the offer and then called my wife to pick me up. The next day we used this money to close on the house. I struggled for a while with thoughts of whether God would have manifested some other provision if I had not sold the Tracker, but over time I became convinced that it was God's will for me to sell this vehicle. I came to understand it as part of His discipline for my having gone back into debt again by buying the pick-up truck.

God began showing me a pattern of His dealing with me at this time. Before I had converted the garage into a family room at our previous home, I had bought a new ping pong table from Sears and set it up in the garage. I purchased the table on credit, and God never let me enjoy it. The garage was not air conditioned, and it was too hot during most of the year to be out in the garage without the door being opened. Our driveway was sloped, and every time the ping pong ball would go out the door, which was often, we would have to chase it all the way down to the road. Added to this, the Holy Spirit would bring me conviction about my sin of buying this item through debt, and this conviction took all the enjoyment out of the game. In the end, the Spirit showed me that the only thing I could do was to get rid of the table because it had been bought through disobedience. I ended up giving it to a church for their youth group to use.

As I mentioned, I later converted this garage into a family room, and it turned out more remarkable than I could have imagined. It was simply beautiful. I put in a designer ceiling, and a ceiling fan, with air conditioning vents in this room. We insulated everything and put up some lovely paneling on two of the walls, with sconce lighting fixtures that I had long admired. On the third wall, where the large garage door had been, my wife and I hung a wallpaper mural over the entire wall that depicted a grist mill in the mountains of North Carolina with a flowing stream and autumn colors in the trees. We put down linoleum on the floor, and we even installed a propane fireplace with a beautiful mantel along one wall. Capping this off, I had installed wiring for a stereo and had wall-mounted some Bose mini-cube speakers that provided awesome sound. Across the back of this room I had installed full length accordion doors to divide between the family room and the utility room where the washer and dryer were located, and in the doorway leading from the house to the garage I had installed a swinging door with a stained glass window.

I had never done such beautiful work in my life, and once more God would not let me enjoy it because I had paid for it all by applying for a credit line at a local hardware superstore. The room had only been finished a short time when God's Spirit told me I was going to have to sell the house. Now, if the room had turned out poorly I would not have minded. But it was absolutely gorgeous. The mural itself was breathtaking and people

would ooh and ahh when they walked into the room. God in His wisdom knows just how to discipline His children, and this child of His was not permitted to enjoy the fruits of disobedience. All my labor went to another man to enjoy. When God had me sell my pick-up truck, and then my Tracker, this pattern was continued. Those things purchased through debt and disobedience He would not allow me to keep and enjoy.

Even though God's hand of discipline was upon me at this time, so too was His hand of mercy and grace. Although I had to sell the house I had fixed up, He had another house prepared for us, and He provided just the amount of money we needed to move in. With His grace came some discipline, and the vehicle I loved was part of the price.

I was learning lessons through all these things, and I was seeing how important were both faith and obedience. When God wanted to lead us into some new thing He would require faith on our part. For every act of disobedience He would also administer His discipline. How wise a Father He is. He does not allow His children to run around uncontrolled without disciplining them. As Paul wrote:

Hebrews 12:8-10

But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.

Is it not a great manifestation of unbelief that so many Christians call God their "Father," but they do not believe He disciplines them? What kind of a Father would He be if He did not discipline His children? What would we think of a man who let his children run around like a bunch of hellions without ever correcting them? We would not think very well of such a man. It does not speak well of many Christians' conception of God when they do not recognize, or admit, His hand of discipline in their lives.

One thing I was to learn clearly in upcoming months and years was that, even when God disciplines us, He does not abandon us. I would not be a very good father if I told my children that they would no longer be given food, clothing, or a place to sleep while they were under my discipline for some infraction. No! I might put them on restriction, or give them a paddling, or ask them to make some type of restitution for their transgressions, but I would not withhold from them that which is necessary for them to live. Neither has God ever withheld any necessary thing from us during the times of our discipline.

Saints, I want to encourage you all to consider this. God is a much better Father than we are, yet Satan loves to torment us with thoughts that God has totally forsaken us due to some transgression. This is pure balderdash. There is not a thread of truth in it, yet I myself have spent many a worrisome day wondering whether God was still with me, filled with concern as to whether He would provide the necessities of life for my family and I. Listen to the words of Scripture:

Romans 8:15-16

For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God...

Galatians 4:6-7

Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son...

We are sons! Because we are sons our Father disciplines us. He does so because He loves us.

Hebrews 12:6

For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives.

When we are experiencing the chastening hand of God, Satan will come to us and say, "God hates you. You offended Him now, and He has abandoned you completely." What a pack of lies! We should expect such deceit from the father of lies, but we should not believe him. Certainly, if we do not respond with humble obedience to God's chastening, He will have to increase the severity of it, but He will never remove His love from us.

I love my son Josiah. He is now fourteen years old, and he is very precious in my sight. At times Josiah does things that require that I correct him. Because I love him and desire that he should fulfill God's purpose that he should be conformed to the image of Christ, I must discipline him. At times he has continued in sin after being corrected, and I have had to discipline him further. The thought has never come into my mind that I should disown him, nor have I ever desired to treat him with indifference, or cruelty. I would always be delighted to see within him signs of repentance and sorrow over his sin, and my heart is to respond toward him in a way that will result in his greatest good. This too is the heart of our Heavenly Father.

Do not misunderstand me. There is a sin unto death, and Paul wrote to the Corinthian believers about some who had died due to their continuing in sin. Yet even this is an act of mercy on the part of God. To allow a son who is unrepentant in his sin, after many chastisements and much discipline, to continue bringing reproach to God and condemnation upon himself, would not be merciful or loving. Paul wrote of one such man among the saints at Corinth.

I Corinthians 5:5

I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Yahshua.

Notice that Paul's judgment is severe, but his goal is salvation. So too does God discipline us and, if we respond with a humble and repentant heart, then He is able to relent of the severity of the judgment against us. This was the case with this man, for Paul wrote of him again in his next epistle to the church at Corinth.

II Corinthians 2:6-8

Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority, so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, otherwise such a one might be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. Wherefore I urge you to reaffirm your love for him.

We must all, as children of God, be partakers of His discipline. How wonderful when we recognize the discipline when it comes. Do not think that because you are under God's discipline that He has forsaken you. No! He is watching you intensely, as a Father watches a son, to see if there is repentance and godly sorrow resulting from the chastisement. We are never more loved than when God disciplines us, for if we did not receive discipline it would be a sign that we are illegitimate children. Discipline is a sign of sonship. Let us shout out gladly when we are being scourged by God, "Hallelujah, I am a son!"



Vulnerability Salesman

It is the will of God that all of His children should live their lives being led by the Spirit, rather than by their senses and natural reason. The apostle Paul wrote:

Romans 8:14

For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

Our senses and our rational mind will not lead us to the will of God. They stand as an obstacle to a true walk of faith, in most instances. It was in 1996 that we moved to the house in Fort Valley with the security system. We were still attending the Southern Baptist church where I first heard the message of grace, but the pastor who had been instrumental in teaching this message had recently left this church to pursue other ministry. This church went through a period of about two years when they had no pastor, although God had sent the man whom He desired to step into this role before Mac Goddard had even left.

Leon Nelson was a godly minister, passionate about God, and a man of faith. He also happened to be black. Mac Goddard had invited him to come preach to the body on several occasions before he left, and his messages were very challenging, for he proclaimed a message of a vital faith that would make a difference in the saints' daily lives. Leon was asked to come and preach regularly at the Sunday evening services, and, after Mac Goddard departed from this church, the elders decided to continue the invitation for Leon to do so.

The elders began looking for a minister to replace Mac Goddard immediately, and Leon Nelson's name was brought up for consideration. It was difficult not to consider him, for the timing of his appearance, and the departure of Mac Goddard, seemed more than coincidental. This church, however, was almost completely composed of white members, and in the state of Georgia many people are not indifferent to the color of another man's skin. Although such things as race should make absolutely no difference in the consideration of a man's suitability for ministry (there are NO Scriptures that list being a member of a particular race as a qualification for ministry), we would be very naive to believe that prejudices do not exist within the church.

At one time I was naive to such things. I do not ever remember my parents speaking a word of prejudice about a man's skin color while I was growing up. I was raised in the suburbs of Portland, Oregon, and I had almost no exposure to people who were colored. In my freshman year of high school I attended one of the largest schools in Oregon, which at one time had nearly 4,000 students. During my freshman year there were only four black students in the entire school. Race simply wasn't an issue in the area in which we lived, or in our home, so when we moved the next year to Georgia I had no anticipation that others would feel differently.

I noticed almost immediately upon arriving in Georgia that there were some people who expressed deep racial prejudices. Yet, for a time I thought it was lost people, who were strangers to the love of Christ, who alone were prejudiced, and I did not expect to find this same bias in the church. During my senior year in High School we were attending the First Baptist Church in the Georgia town we lived in, and there was a traditionally black college in the town. The assistant pastor of this church was a young man, and perhaps he was a bit naive at the time as well. He began visiting with some foreign students at this college and asked them if they would like to attend Sunday School at the church. A couple of young

black men from Nigeria declared that they would like to do so.

I went with this assistant pastor to pick up these students a couple of times, and then he asked me if I would do so by myself, saying that he had some other things he must do. I remember the first time I pulled into the church parking lot at this white Baptist church, and got out of my car with these two young men. Other church members stared at us, and some even pointed. I did not understand why they were doing so. During the church service I sat on a pew with these two men, and nobody else in the church would sit with us.

I did not realize that there was a reason for this the first time it happened. When it happened again the next Sunday understanding began to dawn upon me. The pew we were sitting in was right in the middle of the sanctuary, and the pews all around us were filled, but here we were sitting on one end of our pew, taking up perhaps one fifth of its space, and the other four fifths were vacant. Only then did the thought come to me that there were some in this church who did not like the fact that there were blacks present. My eyes were opened to the fact that professing Christians could be just as prejudiced as those outside the church.

What a shame this seemed to me, for I truly enjoyed fellowship with these young men I was bringing to church. They seemed to have a real sincere love for the Lord. I saw no basis for a child of God to be entertaining any thoughts of racial prejudice. It seemed to me to be absolutely absurd. One might just as well reject another man based upon their shoe size as their skin color.

That such prejudices exist in the church strikes me as one of the greatest failings in this hour of apostasy. It was many years later when I met Leon Nelson, and I was immediately challenged by this man's zeal for the Lord, and in my spirit I felt a kinship. His Sunday evening messages were something I looked forward to greatly. I am convinced that God brought Leon to this church to step into the role vacated by Mac Goddard. Mac had taught the church a message of grace that led them from the bondage of Egypt into the wilderness, and Leon was God's chosen servant to lead them through the wilderness and into the land of their inheritance.

Leon lived a life of faith, and faith is necessary to enter into one's inheritance in Christ. Without faith the saints will perish in desert places. The church searched and searched for a replacement minister, and all the time God had placed him right under their noses. No one could be found to step into this role, and they would not ask Leon to do it. Leon was allowed to preach on Sunday nights, but it was as if there was some unwritten code that prevented him from being asked to preach during the morning service.

To be sure, Leon's race was not the only thing that kept him from being considered for the role of pastor for this body. His message of faith, and his sober words calling the saints to walk with integrity before God, hearing from the Spirit and doing exactly what the Spirit commanded, were intimidating to many in the congregation. There were many among this body who simply recoiled at the thought of following God wherever He would lead them. Like the Israelites who were daunted by the giants in the land, by the walled cities and the many strongholds, so too did many in this body shrink back from the command to go in and take possession of the land.

I Corinthians 10:1-6

For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual

drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness. Now these things happened as examples for us...

Hebrews 10:38

But My righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him.

For the space of two years the leaders of this church looked for a replacement minister without any success, and for this same two years they would not recognize the minister God had brought to them. God is patient with us, and bears long with us, but when we are determined to have our way instead of His, eventually He will relent.

Psalms 106:13-15

They did not wait for His counsel, but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tested God in the desert. He gave them their desire, but sent leanness into their soul.

This body of believers wanted a minister who was more like them. Even as the Israelites rebelled against Moses, the man whom God had selected, and put forth Korah and Dathan and Abiram to lead them, this body of believers was eventually given a man to lead them who would not challenge them in the way Leon had, nor firmly admonish them for their failures.

After two years of searching, this body found a man to their liking. This man's first name was Steve. The Lord allowed me to have a close relationship with this man, and, after he had been at this church for about a year, he asked me to accompany him on an overnight trip. We shared a room together and were able to express things that were on our hearts.

Steve had a wife and three children, and they were all living in small rented quarters. He shared with me that he had a desire to purchase a house in Fort Valley, which was closer to the church, but he had been holding off because he was unsure of his future, and the future of the church. His decision to remain in his small rented quarters was arrived at by examining things with his senses and making a rational decision that he felt was the safe course.

The Spirit strongly convicted me that Steve's decision was carnal, and that if he did not have faith for God to do a work through this body of believers, that as a shepherd of the people he would be unable to lead them into the things God had for them. The Spirit showed me that the issue of the house that Steve desired, but would not purchase, was something God had brought before him in order to reveal the unbelief in his heart. If he could not trust God to work through this people, and this lack of trust was keeping him from purchasing the home he desired, then his unbelief would have a disastrous effect upon his ministry to the body. He would be halted between two opinions, never willing to place both feet in the water while looking to God to do the miraculous.

The Spirit led me to share with Steve concerning these things, and Steve began to feel the conviction of the Spirit. Not long afterwards he came to me and shared that the Spirit had convicted him in this matter, and that he had decided, as an act of faith in God's desire and willingness to work through this people, to buy a house in the community. He was excited about this decision because it was a desire of his heart to have a home, and he felt keenly that the Spirit had indicated this to be His will.

The Spirit led him to a beautiful house in a nice neighborhood. The house was a dream home to him, far beyond what he had expected to find. I was myself amazed at the house and the yard, for it was very scenic with ancient oaks on the property, and in a quiet neighborhood. As he spoke to the realtor, the owners, and the bank, Steve found that he had just enough money to close on the house and take possession of it. However, God had a test for him before he was able to do so.

On the day before he was to meet with the bank and close on the house, the realtor called Steve and told him that a mistake had been made on the paperwork, and he would have to come up with several thousand more dollars than he had been told. Steve did not have the money, having already pledged all that he had available. He was brought to a crisis of faith. Would he be daunted by the obstacle that his senses were reporting to him, or would he believe the witness of the Spirit, that God had called him to purchase this house and would go before Him?

Steve was not accustomed to walking by faith, and his confidence in God's love and character were weak. He shared with me that he drove out to the church that evening, which was out in the countryside, and he parked there and got out of his car and began to rail against God. He accused God of deceiving him, of bringing him to a place of having his hopes built up, only to dash them at the end. He shouted out many words of unbelief and shook his fist at the heavens. Steve shared with me that he was tempted to get in his car and drive away, leaving behind the church, his calling as a pastor, and his confession of God.

The next day Steve went to the closing at the appointed time, expecting to be given the news that he could not take possession of the house. However, God worked it out where the owners and realtor absorbed part of the extra cost, and Steve was able to sign the papers on the house and move in. God had already determined how He would work things out and fulfill His words to this pastor, yet he failed to trust God. As God does with His children, time after time, He brought Steve to a test to reveal what was in his heart.

When I heard the account of what had happened I was reminded of the Israelites at the Red Sea, and how they had brought a reproach against God by asking, "Did you bring us out here to kill us because there were not enough graves in Egypt?" Great was God's displeasure over this pastor's lack of faith in His character. The Spirit spoke to me and told me that He had rejected Steve as the one to lead His people into the plans He had for them, and it was not long afterwards that God removed him.

I felt much grief in my heart when I learned of Steve's charges against God, and of his great failure of faith. Such things do not happen in a moment of time, but they are the fruit of a life that consistently fails to trust God in one matter after another. God will test all of His children in the wilderness that He might see what is in their hearts.

Deuteronomy 8:2

You shall remember all the way which Yahweh your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart...

I lost track of Steve for a number of years after he left this church, though I had heard that he had gotten a pastor's position in another town and had eventually moved there. He has since left there also, and about a year ago I ran into him again. Steve stopped by our home one day, but not to visit, for he had no idea it was our house he was at. He had taken a job selling home security systems, and he knocked on our door to see if he could sell us

one.

I found it ironic that a man who had been called as a minister of God would fall so far from a walk of faith that he was now making a living by convincing others that they could find security in the arm of the flesh. When he had been called to lead men and women to trust God in their daily lives, declaring to them that God was a present help in time of trouble, a refuge and a strong tower in time of need, he had now given up any pretense of leading others to manifest such a faith in God. He was going door to door with his message of trust in the security man offered.

Recently, God has shown me that my calling is the opposite of being a security salesman. He has called me to be a vulnerability salesman. I am to urge men and women to follow the Spirit into areas of great risk in the natural. I am to exhort them to cast all upon God, and to lean entirely upon Him in times of need. The call of a minister is to lead the saints to a walk of faith, where they trust in the words of an invisible God more than they trust in the report of their senses.

Hebrews 11:1

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

Hebrews 11:6

But without faith it is impossible to please and be satisfactory to Him. For whoever would come near to God must [necessarily] believe that God exists and that He is the rewarder of those who earnestly and diligently seek Him [out].

(Amplified Bible)

God has set a good and pleasant land before each of His children. He must take us through the wilderness to arrive there. He will test our hearts to see whether we will trust in Him. If He finds faith in our hearts, even as He did in the hearts of Caleb and Joshua, then He will certainly bring us into this good land. Even if the generation around us perishes, those who trust God will enter into the promises of God by faith.

God has told us in His Word what this land before us is. He is Himself our inheritance. His names describe the land before us. He is Yahweh Yireh, Yahweh our provider and source of provision. He is Yahweh Rophe, Yahweh our healer and fountain of health. He is Yahweh Shalom, Yahweh our peace. He is also salvation, and righteousness, and He invites all of His children to know Him in fulness. He invites us to enter into the land before us, but it can only be possessed by those who walk by faith, and who do not shrink back from the giants in the land.

Many saints have viewed this land from a distance, but have not yet begun to enter in. Many will not enter in because of unbelief. As the Psalmist stated:

Psalms 106:24-26

Then they despised the pleasant land; they did not believe in His word, but grumbled in their tents; they did not listen to the voice of Yahweh. Therefore He swore to them that He would cast them down in the wilderness...

The church of which I spoke that would not accept God's minister and leadership for them, but chose instead a man who would not lead them in the way of faith, is no longer in existence. In the space of a few short years it went from around one hundred and fifty in

attendance to twenty. Ichabod (the glory has departed) was written by the Spirit over its doors, and its candlestick was removed. Before it closed God spoke to me and said, “Any who desire to go on with Me, by faith, into the land before them will be permitted to do so. I will not disqualify any person due to the unbelief of others.” In the following chapters you will read of our next steps as we were led forth of the Spirit to enter into the good land before us.



Father, Will You Heal My Son?

I was perplexed, and somewhat distraught, when I discerned that God had determined to remove the candlestick of the church I spoke of in the previous chapter. I had spent many years in this place, and had prayed and interceded fervently that the Father would raise up a people for His praise. I had expected that He would do so, and that He would use the people from this body of believers as a part of this work. The Holy Spirit led me to the following verse, which I often used as a basis for my prayers:

Isaiah 62:6-7

On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen; all day and all night they will never keep silent. You who remind the LORD, take no rest for yourselves; and give Him no rest until He establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

Jerusalem is a type of the church, and I felt called as a watchman to cry out to Yahweh and to ask Him to make the church beautiful once more. The church had become as Jerusalem in her ruin.

Isaiah 64:10-11

Your holy cities have become a wilderness, Zion has become a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and beautiful house, where our fathers praised You, has been burned by fire; and all our precious things have become a ruin.

As I observed the church at large I saw that she had fallen from a great height. Her walls had been broken down, and the world was trampling her courts and filling her streets with much impurity and wickedness. The glory of the Lord had departed, and there was little faith evidenced anywhere. Few could be found who truly gave themselves to a pursuit of God. Yet I believed that Yahweh would have a righteous remnant prepared for the return of His Son, a Bride prepared without spot, or blemish. I wanted to see this people raised up, according to the words of Isaiah:

Isaiah 61:4

Then they will rebuild the ancient ruins, they will raise up the former devastations; and they will repair the ruined cities, the desolations of many generations.

I had seen one people fail due to a lack of faith. I had been ordained as an elder at this church just a few months before the end of her existence. Yet God had confirmed to me that my ordination was from Him and not from man. When I left this church God spoke to me and declared that His gifts and callings were without repentance. The Holy Spirit bore witness that I was still a minister to the body of Christ, and would remain so.

I was excited when God immediately showed us where we were to go next. He led us to a non-denominational body of believers in a nearby town. The name of this fellowship was "Living Faith," and this was particularly encouraging to me, because I knew it would take a living faith to enter into the promises of God. While we were here God began leading our family further into the inheritance He had for us. We had already trusted Him to be our security, and now He wanted to prove Himself as our Healer.

Both my son Josiah and my daughter Kristin were born with a hereditary bone disease called Osteogenesis Imperfecta, which simply means “imperfect bone formation.” The common name for this disorder is “Brittle Bone Disease.” Kristin was born first, and she entered this world already having suffered a fracture of the thigh while in the womb. This fracture had healed by the time of her birth. She then broke three more bones by the age of two, and at one time she had both legs in a cast simultaneously. Josiah was born two years after Kristin, and he also experienced a broken bone when he was only a year old.

When our children were at this early age, someone suggested to my wife and I that we should apply for government SSI benefits for children with disabilities. We were told that these benefits would pay for all medical expenses, as well as providing a monthly stipend for the child’s support. I did not seek God’s mind on this matter. The money and the free medical care both sounded appealing, so we applied for these benefits on both of our children. Remarkably, Kristin was turned down although she had already experienced four fractures. Josiah, who had only one fracture at this time, was accepted.

God was about to demonstrate something to me through this peculiar set of circumstances. Over the course of the next six years Josiah was to break eleven more bones, and have surgery twice to put a bone in place. Kristin, who had been turned down for these government benefits, never suffered another fracture. By the age of seven Tony and I had been in and out of hospitals and doctors’ offices regularly. We were continually taking Josiah to receive medical care for his many broken bones. The knowledge that I was not having to pay a dime for Josiah’s medical care provided little consolation to me, neither did the fact that I was getting three to four hundred dollars a month for his support. My heart was burdened for my son.

It does not take much for a child with this disease to injure himself. On one occasion, when Josiah was about three or four years old, he was in the doctor’s office and had just gotten a cast off of his leg. When the doctor stepped out of the room for a minute, Josiah got up to walk over to a nearby trash can, and he fell down right before he got there. Tony recognized the tone of Josiah’s crying and knew that he had broken another bone. The doctor came back in and she told him what had happened. He agreed to x-ray him, and he found that he had fractured the same leg in a different location. The doctor was amazed, saying that he had never had a patient break a bone while in the office.

Seeing my son endure so many injuries was tearing at my heart. I knew that every time Josiah was in a cast that his muscles would grow weaker and this would compound the problem, for the muscles provided support to the bones. If both the muscles and bones were weak he would injure himself much more.

Josiah was seven years old when we began fellowshipping at Living Faith. I had often prayed for my son before, but on one particular day I really poured my heart out. I told God that I wanted my son to be able to play like other boys. I wanted him to be able to ride bikes, and play on trampolines, and play ball without breaking his bones. I wanted him to be able to have fun with the other young boys, and not have to hobble along on crutches, looking at the others play while he stood watching. God spoke to me on this day and He said, “I will heal your son, but you will have to trust me completely and not lean on any other for His healing.”

A number of thoughts began to come to my mind. I was reminded that since my daughter had been turned down for SSI benefits that she had not broken another bone, but Josiah, having the benefits, continued breaking multiple bones each year. Now, I suppose some could have looked at this and said, “See, God knew which child would break the

bones, so He gave you medical benefits for that child.” This, however, was not what I was discerning in the spirit. I believed God had orchestrated this matter to demonstrate to me that when we lean on the arm of man we will have to depend upon that which we place our trust in. He was speaking to me that if I would cancel all SSI health benefits on my son that He would become his source of health, and He would heal Josiah even as He had healed my daughter.

Man offered no cure for this bone disease. All man could do was patch my son up every time he hurt himself. I much preferred that God should heal Josiah, than that I should receive free medical care every time he injured himself. To the natural mind what God was asking us to do seemed like pure folly. Josiah was freshly out of a cast, and had experienced two fractures that year. These government SSI benefits were hard to get, and many people employed the use of lawyers to attain them. Yet we were to cancel our benefits on Josiah and then trust God to heal him.

I knew this was the way God worked, for He had already revealed to me the principle of placing your feet firmly in the water before seeing His provision. God gave us one more encouragement in this matter. Our finances were fairly tight, and I would be losing about \$400 a month in income. At this time the ministers of Living Faith had come to me and said that the Spirit had indicated that they were to ordain me as an elder and pastor among them, and they offered to pay me \$100 dollars a week.

I really did not struggle much in making this decision, for I had a strong witness of what God had spoken to me. When I shared these things with Tony she also was willing, so we took the step of calling the SSI offices and canceling Josiah’s benefits. The SSI staff could not understand why we would turn down these coveted benefits, and they tried to talk Tony and I into delaying our decision. We were adamant, however, knowing what God required of us. We terminated benefits on our son.

When I was praying about this matter, the Lord told me that I would not need to baby my son. I felt that I was to instruct Josiah to ride bikes, play on trampolines, roughhouse with the boys, and play ball, while trusting God to protect him. I had to coax my wife some in this, for she was still leery of his injuring himself, but I believed God would prove Himself faithful in what He had spoken to me. I had asked Him to let my son play as other young boys did, and I trusted Him to keep Josiah safe in all of these activities.

Josiah is now fourteen years old, and he has not broken another bone. Kristin also has remained break free during this time. I have seen Josiah take some terrible spills on bicycles, which would have certainly resulted in fractures before, but he has come away with only scrapes and bruises. When I think of what God has done for my son my eyes well up with tears. Our Father in heaven is so merciful and compassionate to us. When we ask for bread, He will not give us a stone. When we ask for a fish, He will not give us a serpent.

God will ask us to do things that appear risky, or even downright foolish, to the natural mind. He has always done so with His children. He requires faith to be manifested on our part before He will reveal His provision. Great are the rewards for those who believe. It was not to be long before God would lead us to a greater dependence upon Him in the area of health, and we would once more see Him do awesome things.



God is Our Health

There was a real atmosphere of excitement and anticipation at this church called Living Faith when we first began attending there. The praise and worship was fresh and heartfelt, and the teaching and preaching was challenging. There was an expectation that God was going to lead the body into ever increasing experiences of His presence, and into the blessings that come to those who walk by faith.

There was one minister at this body who received all of his financial support from the church, and there were a couple others who were bi-vocational, receiving a limited support for their ministry. There was much talk among them about walking by faith, and my hopes were exceedingly high that this church would succeed where the last one had failed.

The ministers would go off once a year with their wives to a cabin in the mountains of North Georgia to have a time of fellowship, prayer and sharing about God's vision for the body. My family and I had been attending here for about six months when the ministers went off on one of their annual retreats. They asked me to preach while they were gone, and they had asked some of the young people to lead in the praise and worship.

The Spirit gave me as the subject of my first message at this church the matter of stepping out in faith, and I used the Scripture of the priests placing their feet in the water's of the Jordan as my basic text. The time of praise and worship preceded the message, and the last song the youth led the congregation of believers in was "Step Into the Water." This was not arranged between us, for we had not spoken to one another prior to this gathering, but it was a witness to me of God's desire for this message to be preached, and for the people to walk in the reality of it.

When the ministers arrived back from their retreat they shared with me that the Spirit had revealed to them that I was to be ordained as a minister among them. As I shared previously, they also agreed to pay me \$100 a week, and it was at this time that God indicated He would heal my son, and that I was to cancel all his government SSI benefits. I did not realize it at the time, but God had arranged for my first act as a minister at this body to be stepping into the waters myself, and to thereby provide an example of faith for other's to follow.

God's voice was rich to me at this time, and He revealed that He wanted to lead the body of Christ into their inheritance. As I have already shared, He revealed that His names described the inheritance of the saints, for He is that good land of promise that is set before us. David understood this, and he wrote of it in one of his Psalms of praise and worship to Yahweh.

Psalms 16:5-6

Yahweh is the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You support my lot. The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; indeed, my heritage is beautiful to me.

David used an allegory that looked back to the time that the Israelites cast lots to see which tribe would receive the various portions of the land that had been surveyed. The lines had already been drawn up and a map made, and all that remained was to cast the lot to see what portion each family would receive. David, of course, had not been born when this event occurred, for it was hundreds of years earlier. Using a poetic allusion to this event, he said that when the lot was cast for him to receive his portion, that God supported his lot and

gave him the very best part of all. God gave David Himself as his inheritance.

David actually describes the priestly inheritance that went to the Tribe of Levi, for God said they would not receive an inheritance of land, for God was their inheritance. David chose for himself this priestly inheritance, preferring God to all other worldly possessions.

As the Spirit spoke to me of this, He revealed that He wanted to lead the body of Christ into their inheritance, and that He would do so one portion at a time. I was made to understand that at Living Faith the first two areas He would lead us in to possess were Yahweh Rophe - Yahweh our healer, and Yahweh Yireh - Yahweh our provider.

The way that God leads us into our inheritance is the same way He led the children of Israel into their possessions. We must do battle. There are enemies in the land, and they must be driven out. We must take a stand in this land of promise, and defend the plot of land. As Paul said:

Ephesians 6:13

Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

God showed us as a family where He wanted us to stand, and the first place was to trust Him for Josiah's healing. Before another six months went by, the Spirit was speaking to me of the next place He wanted us to stand. He wanted me to trust Him next for the health of my entire family. He spoke to me and said, "I have been your son's source of healing, now I want you to trust Me for your entire family." I was working at a local hospital at this time, and I had excellent health insurance at very affordable rates. We had used this insurance often, and now God was asking us to give it up and look to Him to be our source of health.

I understood that as a minister to the body of Christ that what God was asking me to do was to provide an example that others might follow Him wherever He would lead them. What He was requiring of us was not for our family alone, but for an example to the children of God. I shared with my wife what God was speaking to me by His Spirit, and she was not at all pleased with this. She had a lot of fear, and she expressed many worries about what we would do if someone in our family became sick or injured. My only reply was that we would have to trust God to meet every need.

I determined to cancel my health insurance, and Tony after a struggle agreed. When I went to the office at work where such matters are handled, I was told that there was only one opportunity a year to make changes to benefits, and it was in the month of December. December was several months away, so I told the Lord that when the date arrived I would do as He had instructed me.

As we walk with the Lord and see Him prove His faithfulness before us, He will ask us to do things that are progressively more challenging. God leads us on into ever increasing acts of trust and reliance upon Him, and He will allow the situations to become more difficult with each passing test. This increased difficulty is not given to torment us, but to produce a greater faith in us, which is a very precious thing in God's sight.

I Peter 1:6-7

In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in

praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Yahshua the Messiah...

The Lord was to subject me to a more intense trial this time, that my faith might be purified further by the fire it was subjected to. As the date approached where I could cancel my health insurance, but was still a couple months away, I began to experience the symptoms of diabetes. I had constant thirst and frequent urination. My mouth felt dry and cottony, and at times I experienced blurred vision and even dizziness. These symptoms persisted and began to increase in their frequency and intensity.

One day while I was performing my job as the hospital's personal computer manager, I was working on a system in the ER when I became very dizzy. I was forced to lean against a wall to keep from falling down. Since I was already in the emergency room, I thought that I had better get myself checked out to see what the problem was. Blood tests were run and they revealed that my blood sugar level was 370 when it should be no higher than 120. The ER doctor told me that I was diabetic and that I needed to go see a family physician and get started on a diabetic regimen.

It was now less than a month before the date when I could cancel my health insurance. I considered this matter, and it struck me as more than coincidental that I should experience this trial at this time. Yet, God allowed me to be tried further. Certain nurses, whom I knew at the hospital, who worked with diabetic patients, and were involved in diabetic education, had heard about my diagnosis. They began seeking me out and urging me to go see a doctor immediately. They told me horror stories of patients who had gone blind from this disease, and others who experienced organ failure and amputated limbs. They would place brochures in my hands that proclaimed this same fearful message. These nurses told me that they had patients in the hospital at that very moment whose blood sugar level was no higher than mine, and they were on intravenous insulin drips.

When my wife learned of my condition she was no longer desirous of canceling our health insurance. It seemed that on every front I was meeting resistance to this commitment I had made before the Lord. My symptoms persisted. I was accustomed to sleeping through the night without getting up a single time, but now I was getting up five or six times a night due to my frequent need to urinate, and I would then guzzle more water to slake my thirst. I was becoming somewhat rattled in my trial, and one day while driving with my family I pulled out in front of an oncoming car that I did not see. I only avoided a collision when my wife screamed, leading me to slam on the brakes. It may have been partly due to diabetes' negative effect on peripheral vision that I did not see the car, but it was also partially due to my own anxious state.

I spent much time thinking about this matter of trusting God for our health, and I held off from going to see a family physician. Despite all the negative pressure I was receiving, and the report of my senses, I still had a witness in the spirit that God wanted me to trust Him and cancel health insurance on our family.

As I considered it, I could go to a doctor and begin treatment for diabetes, a treatment I would most likely be on for the rest of my life, or I could cast myself wholly over onto the Lord and trust Him to bring complete healing. The prospects of being healed, when compared to lifelong diabetic management, knowing that there is no medical cure for diabetes and the condition usually worsens with age, caused me to prefer entrusting myself to God with anticipation of complete healing.

Perhaps the greatest factor that weighed in my choice to trust God was that I considered what life would be like if God could not be trusted. I considered what the years

ahead would hold if I devoted my life to serving a God who would not, or could not, meet my needs. The prospect was horrendous. I decided that I would rather die of diabetes than to spend the rest of my life not knowing whether God would be there for me in my hour of greatest need. Life to me was not worth living if God could not be trusted. The only fulfillment and satisfaction I could envision in life was in entrusting myself to a heavenly Father who genuinely cared for me and who would not abandon me when I placed my life in His hands. How unbearable it seemed to me to serve a God I could not trust.

The day arrived when I could cancel health insurance with my employer, and none of the pressures arrayed against me had been removed. In this instance God would once more require obedience before His provision would be manifested. I went to the office and filled out the paperwork to cancel health insurance on my entire family. In my soul I was still experiencing some trouble, but in my spirit there was peace. I knew no censure in my spirit from the Lord. I sensed not a hint of guilt, or conviction of disobedience. The peace of God was ruling within my spirit man and leading me to understand His will.

I was very overweight at this time, being nearly 280 pounds. I had tried on numerous occasions to lose weight without success, but after canceling my health insurance the pounds began melting away with little effort at all. Over the next few months my weight dropped to 235 and all the symptoms of diabetes disappeared. No longer was I constantly thirsty. I began sleeping through the night again. My blurred vision and dizziness went away. The Lord brought a complete healing to me from the disease of diabetes.

It was in December of 1998 that I canceled this health insurance, and my family and I have been relying upon God to be our health ever since. It is now over five years later and the symptoms of diabetes have not returned, nor have any of our family members needed a doctor's care, or a hospital visit, in this time.

In the preceding chapter I spoke of God healing my son Josiah from Osteogenesis Imperfecta. Some time after we had taken this step of faith with my son, I went into his room and I noticed his name plaque hanging on the wall. We had bought this plaque many years before, but I had never noticed the meaning it attributed to the name Josiah. Directly underneath the name Josiah were the words, "Jehovah Heals."

God has not only proven Himself to be the health and healing of my son, but of our entire family. God has led us into this part of our inheritance called "Yawheh Rophe" - Yahweh our Healer, and we have found that it is a good land. There were enemies that had to be driven out, but God promised to go before us, and He testified that the battle belonged to Him. We needed only to enter in by faith.



A Failure of Faith

At the same time that Yahweh was leading our family to steps of faith, and proving Himself to be a faithful Father, He was bringing many others in this body at Living Faith to face similar challenges. Health problems abounded in this church, and each crisis of health was an opportunity to press into the Lord. The saints must hear from Him in order to know what He requires, that the victory might be attained and the good land possessed.

The head pastor at this fellowship of believers was named Richard, and he began setting aside a time during each service to call all those who were sick, or injured, to come forward for prayer. On some days half the congregation would come forward, and Richard himself was seeking the Lord for healing from a chronic back problem that robbed him of strength and severely limited his activities. There was a real sense among the leadership of the church that God wanted to reveal Himself as healer to the body. Perhaps the most common work ascribed to Yahshua in the gospels is healing. He also bestowed authority upon His disciples that they might heal.

Richard shared that he was having his wife lay hands on his back every day and pray for healing, and they were both patiently looking to the Lord in this matter. Every Sunday he was also calling all who were sick to come to the front of the church to receive prayer. This continued for about two months. Then Richard announced to some members of the church that he had heard of a new therapy offered by some doctors in Illinois for people who had physical problems similar to his. The way he had heard about this new treatment seemed unusual to him, and he took this as a sign that God wanted him to check into this procedure.

I did not say anything immediately to Richard about this, but I felt a great concern in my spirit. I had recently done a study on the medical profession, focusing on the symbol of the medical staff, or caduceus, which is pictured as a rod with entwined serpents upon it. I traced this symbol back to ancient Egypt, and I found many things that were impure relating to the medical profession and its practices. What was most troubling, however, was that so many men and women placed such trust in man's resources for healing, while not even considering that God could, or would heal them. A very large percentage of those who professed faith in Christ would not even consult with God to find out what His will was for them when they experienced injury or sickness. The Spirit led me to the following passage of Scripture.

II Chronicles 16:12

In the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa became diseased in his feet. His disease was severe, yet even in his disease he did not seek Yahweh, but the physicians.

There is a judgment in these words. King Asa acted foolishly by not seeking Yahweh. If you read the entire story of Asa's life you will find that he began in faith. Early on he trusted God and saw God deliver him from his enemies with a great and spectacular victory. At some point, however, Asa began to trust in that which his eyes could see. Years later when he was faced with another enemy, he hired the sword of foreigners to provide him protection and deliverance. God sent a prophet to rebuke him for not trusting Him as he had done previously, yet Asa rejected the prophet's words and mistreated him. The Scriptures record the following concerning this event:

II Chronicles 16:9-10

"For the eyes of Yahweh move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His. You have acted foolishly in this. Indeed, from now on you will surely have wars." Then Asa was angry with the seer and put him in prison, for he was enraged at him for this.

At the end of his life Asa still was looking to the hand of man for all of his needs, and preferred to trust in physicians rather than to seek God for healing. Asa did not turn to God even when the physicians could not heal him.

I know I must be very plain in what I say here, lest some twist and distort my meaning. I am not saying that God will never use physicians as a source of healing in our lives, nor was Asa criticized by God because he obtained the services of a physician. The error manifested by Asa, and by a multitude of saints, is that he failed to seek God in the matter. Asa never even considered that God might heal him, so He never sought out God to know His mind.

Many saints today never give a thought to God's ability, or willingness, to heal them. When they are faced with an injury or sickness they run immediately to the arms of the physicians. Some men and women trust the physicians so completely that they will allow them to cut off a limb, fill their body with toxic chemicals, bombard them with deadly radiation, operate on, or remove, some part of a major organ, or perform some other risky and potentially life threatening procedure, without ever seeking a witness from God.

Is it not a great sign of unbelief that Christian's will not seek God when they are met with a physical trial? The prophet declared that King Asa was acting in unbelief, and was dishonoring Yahweh by completely bypassing Him as a source of deliverance and healing, while preferring to trust in man. The words of the prophet have become a theme in my life that I have quoted many times, and have often recited them to God in prayer.

"The eyes of Yahweh move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His."

Oftentimes when I discerned that the Spirit would have me cast myself wholly over into God's care, and there was some great risk involved, I would meditate on these words and I would be comforted in knowing that Yahweh was searching earnestly for those who would give their hearts completely to Him.

I was very concerned when I first heard that Richard was going to seek the physicians. I knew he had grown impatient in waiting upon God, and his confidence that God would do anything for him was weak. Richard shared more about this matter when he was gathered together with the other ministers and their wives in my home. He told us, that as a minister, he could receive this medical treatment free, and that the physicians performing this procedure had set-up a clinic in the basement of a church. He told us this clinic was located in Thebes, Illinois.

When Richard mentioned Thebes, the Spirit quickened me to go get my dictionary and look up the name of this town. My dictionary gave the following definition, "The capital of ancient Egypt in the period of its greatest glory." I had previously shared my study on the medical profession, and the caduceus, with Richard and the other ministers, and they understood Egypt's link to both the Caduceus, as well as its Biblical typology of representing the systems of man and all those who rely upon the arm of the flesh.

I shared with these men that I did not believe this was God's provision for Richard's

healing, but that it was a test to see whether Richard would continue to wait upon God. I was reminded of the tests that God brought before David when he was being pursued by King Saul. Twice God delivered Saul into David's hands where he would only have to reach out and strike his enemy and the kingdom could have been his. David's men looked at the incredible way in which Saul had been delivered into David's hands, and they told David, "Surely this must be the hand of God, and it must be God's will for you to strike Saul." David knew this was not the way God would provide his deliverance, and he refused to be drawn into such an action.

I Samuel 24:3-6

He came to the sheepfolds on the way, where there was a cave; and Saul went in to relieve himself. Now David and his men were sitting in the inner recesses of the cave. The men of David said to him, "Behold, this is the day of which Yahweh said to you, "Behold; I am about to give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it seems good to you..." So he said to his men, "Far be it from me because of Yahweh that I should do this thing to my lord, Yahweh's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, since he is Yahweh's anointed."

I Samuel 26:8-9

Then Abishai said to David, "Today God has delivered your enemy into your hand; now therefore, please let me strike him with the spear to the ground with one stroke, and I will not strike him the second time." But David said to Abishai, "Do not destroy him, for who can stretch out his hand against Yahweh's anointed and be without guilt?"

The Spirit of God taught me a valuable lesson through these accounts of David's life. He revealed to me that not all things that appear as a supernatural ordering of our steps are an indication of God's will. Twice God had very remarkably placed Saul into David's hands to see what David would do. David's men rightly observed that God had done this, but they wrongly concluded that it was God's will for David to do that which unbelief would tempt him to do.

In the same way, the Spirit bore witness that this opportunity set before Richard had been orchestrated by God, but it was merely to test his heart. Like myself, Richard was a minister to the body, and as such God looked to him to set an example to the rest of the church. The very name of this fellowship was Living Faith, and God had spoken to Richard and the rest of the ministers that He desired to lead us into our inheritance in Christ by faith. He had revealed that health and provision were the two areas He would begin to bring us into by faith, and now Richard was being tempted to quit looking to God, and to return to the provision of man.

I shared these things with Richard, but he would not change his mind. I was concerned that as soon as Richard quit waiting upon God that he would also quit urging the body to do the same. Sure enough, the very next Sunday was the first Sunday in nearly two months that he did not ask those who needed healing to come forward for prayer. He has since led other members of this body to go with him to receive treatments. His attitude changed from encouraging the saints to look to God for healing, to leading men and women to lean upon the same source of healing that he had placed his trust in.

It has been over four years since God led us out from this fellowship of Christians. Last

year I heard that Richard was still going for treatments and had not yet been cured of his chronic back problems. It amazed me that he could not wait upon God for two months, yet he was continuing to wait upon man's healing after several years of treatment.

The Holy Spirit inspired men to record the lives of Asa and David for the benefit of the saints today. We are to learn from their successes and failures. The Scriptures declare that "without faith it is impossible to please God." The need to walk by faith is just as much a requirement for the children of God today as it was for the patriarchs, prophets, kings, and priests of old. Only those who walk by faith will enter into the good land before them. Those who refuse to walk by faith will perish in the wilderness.

I have great empathy for those who struggle with fears and worries and unbelief, for these have also been my enemies. I have found God to be greater than all these things, and His grace has been sufficient to allow us to remain standing when many enemies have gathered around us. Sadly, like King Asa, the response of many who have received reproof, correction, or admonition from those whom God has sent to direct them back to a path of faith, has been to become angry and to act violently toward the messenger. Ultimately, I was to be cast out from my place of ministry among this body due to my unwillingness to turn aside from the path of obedience God had set before me.



Follow Your Dreams

Once Yahweh begins to lead us into the land of our inheritance, the road leads ever onward. We must go from faith to faith, ever trusting the Lord for a further victory until all the enemies are driven out and we are dwelling securely in the land of promise. Though God may give us a time of respite, He will not allow us to sit upon our lees for long. He declares “Woe to those who are at ease in Zion.” God did not allow us to become too comfortable in the land we had already taken possession of, the land of Yahweh Rophe, before He began calling us to go in and possess the next portion of our inheritance. The next area in which God wanted to prove Himself to us was the area of financial provision.

I had been working at the Houston Healthcare Complex in Warner Robins, Georgia for fourteen years. I had worked my way into a very good position, which was a dream job for me. I had been fascinated by computers since the early 1980's, and I had for some time wanted a job working with PC's. God provided this job for me by having a position created where none had existed before. I had been hesitant to take the job, for as much as I desired to work with PC's, I was intimidated by the demands and responsibilities of such a position. The Spirit led me to take the job, however, and after I had been in it for some time the Spirit spoke to me.

I had arrived early at work this day and was sitting at my desk. I heard the voice of the Spirit ask me, “You really wanted to work with PC's, didn't you?” I replied, “Yes Lord, I did.” The Spirit continued, “Although you were worried about your ability to handle this job, I have made you adequate in every situation, haven't I?” I answered “Yes,” for this was certainly true. On numerous occasions when some PC problem had stumped me, I would be led of the Spirit to do a certain thing and the problem would be corrected. This made me look very good and competent in the eyes of others, but it was actually God solving the problem, and not me.

The Spirit then asked me, “As much as you wanted to work with PC's, this really has not been your greatest desire, has it?” I paused for a moment and thought, then I answered, “No Lord. From my youth on up I have wanted to be a minister, but I have felt even more inadequate for that calling than for the job I am doing now.” The Spirit then said, “This job has merely been preparation for a higher calling. I wanted to show you that when I call you to do something, I will be your adequacy, giving you what you need to stand in every situation.” The Spirit ended the conversation by speaking to me two things that were not found in Scripture, but coming from the Spirit they became truth in my heart. The first thing was a slogan that was popular at the time which states, “Do not let your fears keep you from your dreams.” The second was an ancient oriental proverb, “The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step.”

The conversation then ended, and I was left to my thoughts. I had already been ordained as a minister, and was serving the body of Christ on a part-time basis. I was still going out to the church building and praying regularly, and I was preaching and teaching when I was given opportunities. Yet I had never given myself to ministry full-time, and this is what I understood the Spirit to be speaking about.

Over the next weeks I began to experience a restlessness within me regarding my current job. What had been a dream job was beginning to seem less appealing to me. At the same time I began to experience a greater yearning to enter into ministry to the body of Christ in a fuller way than I had known. God was once more leading me by changing my

desires. He was working within me “both to will and to do, His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13).

As I was making the rounds of my job in the weeks that followed, I found the Lord ordering my steps to bring me into conversations with people about the topic of pursuing our dreams. I was reminded of a saying by Henry David Thoreau that I had heard years earlier while still in my pre-High School days. Thoreau said, “The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.”

I believe I was only in the seventh or eighth grade when I heard this quotation, but I understood the heart of it immediately. Many men have a dream in their heart. Perhaps one man dreams of being an artist, another man a writer. Another man may dream of being a great architect, or an explorer. Yet these same men look at the risks, and the chance of failing to attain to their dream, so they choose another course that seems less risky, but which is also lacking the fulfillment they could have known. A man may take a factory job, or a bank position, or something similar, yet day by day there is inside of them a quiet desperation caused by their dream lying dormant and unfulfilled.

It is true that many men’s dreams are selfish, but God also places dreams in the hearts of His children. We see David being anointed by the prophet Samuel when he was still a youth, and being told that he would be king one day. We see Joseph being given dreams of ruling and reigning when he was also a youth. Both of these men were to know many long years of trials, rejection, and suffering before they were to see the dreams realized. Yet after a very long journey that began with a single step, they both saw their dreams come true.

Each time I had this conversation with a person at work the desire within me to pursue the dream of my heart grew stronger. I realized that I did not want to spend my life working on computers. I wanted to be a minister of God. Despite my feelings of inadequacy, and in spite of my fears, I wanted to pursue this calling that God had set before me.

I began to sense that God would soon call me out from working at the Houston Healthcare Complex, and this would be the beginning of a new phase in my life. In my naivete I thought God would have my calling recognized by man, and that some wonderful opportunity to minister among the body of Christ would soon open up to me. I did not understand that I was only at the beginning of the journey, and that the goal lay many years ahead of me.

God did call me out from my job, and the training for ministry began in earnest. At the same time God was calling me to enter into the land of Yahweh Yireh - Yahweh my provider. He called me out from wage earning that I should trust Him for all of our provision. He confirmed this to me in ways that were remarkable.

As I was considering leaving my employer and stepping out in faith, I walked through the kitchen in our home and I glanced over at the little flip calendar located near the sink. The Scripture for the day was Exodus 14:14, and it said, “The LORD will fight for you while you keep silent.”

I was at first struck by the double occurrence of the number fourteen. I had been at my employer for fourteen years, and I was reminded of Joseph interpreting Pharaoh’s dreams. Joseph said that Pharaoh’s dreams were repeated to indicate that what was being revealed was settled before God, and it would quickly come to pass. Later I was made aware of the significance of the book this Scripture was found in. Exodus means “going out, or forth,” and God was calling me to journey out from my present job and to begin a new experience.

I shared with my wife what the Lord was speaking to me, but she was filled with

terror. Although we had already been called to steps of faith and had seen God's faithfulness, each new leading from God was calling us to deeper and deeper waters. At this time it had been nine months since we had canceled our health insurance, and God had proven Himself by healing me from diabetes and keeping us all in good health. It had also been about fifteen months since we had canceled SSI benefits on Josiah, and he had not broken another bone. I had been able to persuade Tony to willingly follow in these past steps of faith, but I could not move her on this matter of trusting God for our finances.

I knew there would be great difficulty if I followed God down this path, so I asked Him for further confirmation of His will. The Holy Spirit spoke to me again while I was at home and told me to look up the first occurrence of the word "fourteen" in Scripture. I sat down at my Bible program and did a search on this word. My Bible program lists each occurrence in order and gives a snippet from each verse where the word is found. The very first Scripture in which fourteen is found is Genesis 31:41, and this is what I saw, "I have worked for you fourteen years."

I was shouting when I got up from my chair, for I knew the Lord was telling me that I was to leave my employer, and I was excited about pursuing the greater dream the Lord had placed in my heart. I decided to check the first occurrence of this number in the New Testament as well, and I found it in the very first chapter of Matthew.

Matthew 1:17

So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations.

I saw in this that the number fourteen is used by God to denote transition, for each of these occurrences marked a definite transition point in God's dealings with His chosen people. A transition was coming in my life as well, and God had been preparing my heart for it ever since the morning He spoke to me at work. I was convinced in my heart that this was what I was to do, and I expressed this to Tony, but she was not moved. She became very emotional, and then threatening, and indicated that she would not go along with me in this step of faith.

God had been preparing the hearts of the ministers at Living Faith to follow Him wherever He would lead, and had been speaking much about trusting Him for health and provision. One of the elders had met Charles and Nancy Newbold from Tennessee, and had invited them to the church. The Newbolds told this elder about a couple they knew who lived near them. This couple is Bob and Peggy Hughey. The Hugheys had been living a life of complete trust in God for all of their provision for a couple decades, and God had taken them all around the world to minister. They had a biographical book out about their experiences titled *A Lifestyle of Light*.

The Newbolds invited this elder they had first met, and Richard, to come up and visit with them, and while they were in Tennessee they introduced them to the Hugheys. Richard came back excited about what he had heard concerning the experiences of the Hughey's, and he brought each one of the ministers at Living Faith a copy of their book. I was tremendously encouraged and challenged in reading about their lives, and I was equally excited that the other ministers were beginning to talk about trusting God for real practical things in their own lives.

One day Richard shared with me about a time a few years earlier when he had been

led by God to take his wife and two sons to Colorado. God said He would take care of them, and they went without any money on hand, needing to see God come through for them immediately. They stayed in Colorado for four months, and God would not allow Richard to work. Richard was a bundle of fears, yet God had taken care of them faithfully and at the end of four months he brought them back to Georgia. Richard and I talked about the great challenges of such a walk of faith, but also the rich benefits of a greater fellowship and intimacy with God as the desperation of the circumstances would drive the individual to press into the presence of God daily.

With all of this preparation God had been doing in our midst, I had hoped that the other ministers would be supportive when I shared with them what God was leading me to do. They had been witnesses of Josiah's healing, and they had seen God take care of our family's health, even healing me of diabetes, when I had been led to cancel our health insurance. What God was requiring now was just one more step in this process of leading us forward into greater realms of faith. The church was even named Living Faith, so I had hopes that the ministers would understand what God was doing.

I should have realized that one man's faith does not translate over to another man unless they also have a desire and a willingness to walk in faith. During one of our ministers' meetings, I shared how God had confirmed His leading to me, and I informed them that I was going to leave my employment in the computer field and trust God for our provision. As a minister there was much precedence for this, and Paul even devoted the majority of I Corinthians chapter 9 to this topic.

I asked my wife before we went to the meeting what she was going to share, and she told me that the Lord had spoken to her, telling her she was not to say anything. After I shared, the elders and their wives asked Tony what she thought about the matter. Tony changed her mind about being silent. She became very emotional and expressed all of her fears and said she did not agree with this thing I was doing. The elders and their wives, moved by Tony's emotions and fears, then expressed their opinion to me that I should not do this thing since my wife did not agree with me. They told me that I was prohibited by God from taking such a step if my wife was not in agreement.

It is not my desire to get into a discussion of headship, and the governmental order of God, in this book, for I have already addressed these topics at length in other writings. If any should have a desire to read further on this topic I would refer them to the book *Sarah's Children*, which can be read, or downloaded freely, from the Heart4God website. It is necessary, however, to mention the struggle that was present in our home that further things which will be shared should be understood.

Tony truly had not heard God speak that her husband was in error, nor had the Spirit told her that she was to resist my leadership and advocate that we go another way. In fact, God had spoken something to her that was quite the opposite. A few months prior to these events a couple from another town attended a Sunday morning gathering of saints at Living Faith, and it was known that the woman was a prophetess. Toward the end of the meeting Richard asked this woman, whose name is Judith, if she had a word for the body. She responded affirmatively, but added that the word was for the leadership and she would like to share with the ministers after the service ended.

When the ministers had gathered together, and a couple of their wives, Judith said that the Lord had given her a message for the ministers, and then added that it was specifically for one of us. She pointed straight at me, and said "God says promotion is coming to you." I was stunned to have been so singled out among the ministers, and I

wondered what the word might mean. I did not know Judith, having only seen her once or twice before, and never having fellowshiped with her or her husband.

My wife was not present when Judith spoke this word, but after a few minutes I noticed that Judith had found my wife and it was apparent she wanted to speak something to us. Tony and I stood shoulder to shoulder facing Judith, and Judith then spoke to Tony saying, "God says you are to get behind your husband." Judith then began praying for Tony and she prayed against a spirit of divorce.

Tony and I had struggled some over our previous steps of faith, and on the last one, when it was known that I was diabetic and God was pressing me to cast myself over into His hands to trust Him for healing, Tony had threatened to divorce me if I went through with canceling our insurance, but it did not seem to me that she was very serious about her threat. I appreciated the prophetic word spoken to Tony, and the prayer, very much, and later when things were to get very difficult in our home I was much consoled that God had already sent His messenger and declared His will.

Fear is a terrible taskmaster, and I had endured much torment from fear during my life, and I would experience more. I could empathize with others who were also being terrorized by this demonic spirit. The Scriptures command men to live with their wives in an understanding way, knowing that they are weaker vessels (I Peter 3:7), and one of the ways in which they are weaker is in their susceptibility to fear. The verse preceding the one just mentioned speaks the following:

I Peter 3:6

Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.

Fear was the real issue that Tony was dealing with. She had not received a word from God saying that I was to continue working as a PC manager, nor had she heard His voice saying I was not to pursue full-time ministry. She was merely being terrorized by her fears, and this fear was evident every time she spoke. God instructed me to be patient and gentle with my wife, but at the same time He would not allow me to bow to the pressure she was using to try to manipulate my actions. In my obedience to God I was led to be as hard as adamant, yet in my conduct with my wife I was instructed to manifest much patience, mercy and forgiveness. The journey had begun, and I was not to allow my fears, or the fears of others, to keep me from the dreams God had set before me.



The Struggle Continues

When Judith had prophesied to me, while I was standing in the midst of my fellow ministers, she had no idea that my first name was Joseph. Everyone at Living Faith knew me by my middle name, which was Bradley, and most simply called me Brad. It was to be a few months later, when God called me to leave the computer profession and enter into ministry full-time, that the Holy Spirit would speak to me and tell me to begin using my first name, for the Spirit testified that the name was significant.

The son of Jacob who bore this same name was told that promotion was coming to him, and this was also made known to his brothers. His brothers' response was not positive, and they eventually rejected him, casting him out from their midst and selling him into a foreign land as a slave. I have only understood the similarities to Joseph's path and my own in hindsight, for when Judith spoke this word of prophecy I was still enjoying a measure of fellowship with my brothers in Christ at Living Faith. When God told me He was calling me to full-time ministry I anticipated a greater role opening up among this fellowship. This thought was increased by something Richard had shared with me. He had told me that he believed God would soon have him step aside from his role as head pastor of this church, and he believed God was preparing me to step into the role he would vacate.

Things began to get more rocky in my relationship with Richard and the other ministers as God continued to press our family forward into a greater walk of faith that we might inherit the good land before us. The other ministers were given many tests themselves, but they were shrinking back, rather than going forward. Each time this happened a greater rift occurred between us. It came to the point that Richard was accusing me of being prideful and arrogant for believing I was hearing from God concerning specific steps of faith, when he and the other ministers disagreed.

This is a common reaction when one person is willing to face the giants in his/her life, while those around them are not willing, due to the fear and unbelief in their hearts. The Spirit has ministered to me much truth from the life experiences of David. When David was willing to face Goliath, his elder brother Eliab, who had been hiding behind the rocks with the rest of the Israelite army, accused David of arrogance and misbehavior. The true reason for Eliab's accusations of his younger brother was that David had not succumbed to the same fear that was in his heart, nor did David view such fear to be the proper response.

I Samuel 17:28

Now Eliab his oldest brother heard when [David] spoke to the men; and Eliab's anger burned against David and he said, "Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your insolence and the wickedness of your heart; for you have come down in order to see the battle."

The anger of my brother's in Christ also began to burn against me when I demonstrated a willingness to face the Goliath that stood before us. I was willing to go fight this giant, and I proved it by following God obediently when He told me to leave my employer and trust Him for the provision of our family. The reaction was burning anger from my brothers.

A couple months after I had left my employer the ministers called for a meeting to discuss my situation, and they had in mind to defrock me, and cast me out from their midst

if I would not change my course. The Holy Spirit had spoken to me some days earlier and had indicated that a separation was coming. The Spirit said that I was not to initiate the separation, but that I was not to resist it when it came. I spent many hours every day in prayer, for I was in much anguish at the rejection I was already sensing from my brothers.

On the day of the meeting I went to a place alone and I prayed fervently to God. I asked Him to give me an opportunity to share with them one more time about the necessity to follow Christ in faith wherever He would lead us. I asked God to guard my lips and keep me from saying anything He would not have me to speak. God answered my every request.

The meeting began by Richard asking me whether I was going to continue on my course, or whether I had changed my mind. He then gave me liberty to speak, and for about thirty minutes I shared from the depths of my heart concerning what I saw God doing among the body at Living Faith, and in our own family, in leading us into a walk of faith. I spoke of the obstacles to be overcome, and of the spirits of fear and unbelief that were hindering the body from going forward. I also spoke of a Jezebel spirit that was seeking to overturn the governmental order of God that is described in the words, "Christ is the head of man, and man is the head of woman, and God is the head of Christ."

I was only interrupted one time when the wife of one of the ministers got up from her seat and stood in front of me and said, "You think your words are prophetic, but I tell you they are pathetic!" She hurled these words at me with great venom and then sat down again. In all of this I was given great grace to speak plainly and with an exceptional calmness, then the meeting was turned over for the other ministers to have a time to speak.

Richard said he considered my words to be "a bunch of crap," and he then asked the other elders, one by one, to express their thoughts. All concluded that I was wrong and that they could no longer walk with me in ministry. I sat for about an hour as I was stoned by my brothers, and God gave me grace to sit silently and bear it all. Some of the reactions were angry and violent. One man told me three times that he could care less whether I died, that he was only concerned for my family.

Such a reaction was not unlike that which Joseph received from his brothers, for they too acted as though they could care less whether he died, and some expressed a desire to kill him. Yet, I find hope in the rest of Joseph's story, for eventually Joseph's brothers' hearts were changed and they expressed sorrow for the evil things they had done. A day came when they were reconciled to Joseph, and it is my hope that I will also see such a day.

After this meeting I was reminded of the Sunday morning some months before when I was singled out among these same men and told that promotion was coming to me. I did not know that I would first have to experience rejection and demotion, and a removal from fellowship among the saints that had once been so precious to me. I did not know I would have to go a similar path as the son of Jacob, but God in His wisdom knows the best course to prepare all those whom He calls.

It was in much grief that I left this fellowship of believers. I had much hope when God brought us there that the saints at Living Faith would succeed where the last church had failed. The name Living Faith seemed to hold out much promise. After the ministers turned away from a path of faith, and had subsequently cast me out from their midst, I thought of the name of this church and the Spirit reminded me of a verse from Revelation:

Revelation 3:1

He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, says this: "I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead."

Within a couple years from the time I was put out of my place of ministry, Living Faith underwent further decline. This church had at one time during our period among them about 150 people in attendance, but after I departed it declined to the point where some Sundays would find only fifteen or twenty people in attendance. The ministers also had a falling out with one another and two of them left, leaving only Richard and one other man to minister to a dwindling fellowship.

There are many histories recorded in the Old Testament that bear great resemblance to the experiences we have known at the two churches spoken of in this book. We can read in the Scriptures of many people who were brought to a test of faith, and they failed the test, turning back from a course of obedience. The result was always decline, bondage, judgment upon carnal decisions and actions, and a removal of the cup of blessing that God had desired to pour out upon an individual, or people. It is one more evidence of the unconscious reality that people walk in today that they can witness similar situations being lived out in this hour, and they do not discern that there is a reason that such things occur. They do not perceive God's hand when that which began with great promise ends in dead works and an absence of spiritual life.

I was not at the end of the painful experiences I would have to go through as God both disciplined me for my covetousness, and prepared me to be used as a vessel of honor in His household. He desired to release a greater anointing for ministry in my life, but He would first have to purge, purify and refine the instrument of His choosing.



A Cutter of Grass

I did not yet understand many of the ways in which God works when He leads people into their possession. A lot of the things I am sharing with you I learned in hindsight as I looked back and meditated upon what God had done.

I understood the requirement for faith to be manifested before God's provision would be seen, but one of God's ways that I had not yet discerned was that, when He takes a people into the land, He will also remove all idolatry from their midst. I have shared about my struggles with covetousness, and the repeated disobedience that I had engaged in. God would have to break off this root of idolatry in my life in order to bring me into the land.

I did not fully appreciate this fact, and it caused me to have some false expectations regarding what God would do for us. I thought my faith would be met with a perfect provision on God's part, and indeed it was, but God's perfect provision was not anything close to what I had anticipated. When I left my employer to pursue full-time ministry I had a lot of debt. Just before embarking upon a life of trust in God's financial provision for us I had been offered a new job that paid significantly more than I had been making. I was given a raise of about \$15,000 a year.

As I viewed this windfall, I acted once more in disobedience. My wife had been wanting a van for some time, and although I should have known clearly at this time that it was not God's will for me to incur more debt, I justified this purchase as I had done earlier ones. The justification was somewhat different this time, for I truly had no interest in buying a van. It was purchased to appease my wife who had not been very pleased with me in recent months. I used a quotation from Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth as the basis for my justification. Paul said:

I Corinthians 7:32-34

But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and his interests are divided.

I reasoned that I was not unmarried, so I had to give thought to pleasing my wife as well as pleasing the Lord. This is actually a right understanding of Paul's words, but my application was all wrong. Husbands are to give thought to their wives, and they are to be willing to subjugate their own wants and desires in order that they might bless their wives. I reasoned that I did not really want a van, nor did I want any more debt, but I did want to please my wife. My action was in this way cast as being very unselfish, and even sacrificial, but God was not fooled.

The apostle Paul never intended to convey to men that they should disobey God in order to please their wives. Yes, men were to lay aside their own personal preferences in matters in which they had received no command from the Lord. They were to give consideration to their wives in a multitude of ways, but they should never use a desire to please their wife as a reason to disobey God. It was not God's will that I should take on more debt. This was a fact He had made known to me very well in prior days. God did not buy into my justification, and this was the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back. I had now crossed a line where God would have to chastise me severely. God would make sure

that this van, which I bought in 1999, was the last item I would ever purchase on credit.

It was in March of 2000 that I was cast out from my place of ministry among the body by my fellow ministers. The months leading up to this time were very painful and tumultuous and I felt a need of getting away for a period of time that I might hear from the Lord. I had just written the book *The Remnant Bride* and had felt led of the Lord to create the Heart4God website to share teachings with the body of Christ. I had no source of income other than God, and I wanted to hear from Him regarding what He would do in our lives. I was casting around for direction, and had even thought of joining a ministry in another state. I took my family to Mississippi for a week to visit with my sister's family, and while there I found a place apart and I sought to know God's mind.

My sister lives in a rural area of Mississippi, and directly across the street from the front of her house is a large field. Day by day I would sit in a chair on her front porch with a notebook and pen and my Bible, and I would wait upon God to speak to me. I was ready to write down whatever He spoke, and I was not disappointed. I filled up many pages while I was there.

Some months earlier I had watched the movie "Forrest Gump," and I was struck by a particular scene in the film. Having made a fortune in shrimping and through investments, Forrest returned to his hometown and he began mowing grass for the town for free. He just rode around all day on his riding mower cutting grass. I have long enjoyed cutting grass, whether with a push mower, or a riding mower, for I have found it to be a time when I can focus upon the Lord and what He is speaking to me. At the time I watched this movie my life was filled with conflict at home and at the church, and I looked at Forrest spending his days mowing grass and I envied him. I wished that I could get away from all of the turmoil and just mow grass all day long while communing with the Lord. This was the most appealing scene to me in the entire movie.

When I arrived at my sister's house I noticed that the field across the street had been planted in grass, for the owner intended to start a sod farm. As I sat on the porch each day I would watch the owner mow the grass with his tractor, and I was caught up in the peacefulness of this occupation. One day I spoke to the Lord and said, "I wish you would give me a job like this one of cutting grass, where I could forget my troubles and simply ride around and commune with you each day." The Lord responded by saying, "I have indeed called you to a ministry of cutting grass, for all flesh is as grass. Yet those whom I use in this ministry must first allow Me to cut the grass in their own lives."

These words came to me very clearly, and I wrote them down in my notebook. I then looked in my Bible for the Scripture that speaks of all flesh being as grass. I found the following verses:

Isaiah 40:6-7

A voice says, "Call out." Then he answered, "What shall I call out?" All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of Yahweh blows upon it; surely the people are grass.

I understood the Lord to be telling me that He was calling me to a ministry of removing the flesh from people's lives, but that I would only be fit for such an occupation by first allowing the Lord to deliver me from the bondage to the flesh that was present in my life. This thought was both pleasing and disturbing to me. I wanted to be used of God as a minister to His people, but I did not look forward to the process I would have to go

through to be prepared.

Later that day when my brother-in-law arrived home I asked him how large the field was across the street. He said he was unsure, but it was either 60 or 66 acres. This was a further confirmation of what the Spirit had spoken to me, for the number six represents the flesh man throughout Scripture. Here was a field before me representing fleshly people, and God had told me He would one day call me to a ministry of cutting the flesh away from mankind.

There is much Scriptural precedence for such a calling. Perhaps the clearest type of such a ministry is the practice of circumcision, which is a cutting away of the flesh of the foreskin. The circumcision of a male is attended by much pain and discomfort that lasts for days. Similarly, when man's carnal nature is dealt with by God, there is pain that accompanies its removal. There is a passage of Scripture from the Old Testament that is full of insight relating to this matter.

Joshua 5:3-5

So Joshua made himself flint knives and circumcised the sons of Israel at Gibeath-haaraloth. This is the reason why Joshua circumcised them: all the people who came out of Egypt who were males, all the men of war, died in the wilderness along the way after they came out of Egypt. For all the people who came out were circumcised, but all the people who were born in the wilderness along the way as they came out of Egypt had not been circumcised.

As mentioned in an earlier chapter, Joshua is a type of Yahshua. Joshua was not born in the wilderness, but was one of the two men who were still living at this time who had been brought out of Egypt. This too points to Christ, for of Him we read:

Matthew 2:13-15

An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise and take the Child and His mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him." And he arose and took the Child and His mother by night, and departed for Egypt; and was there until the death of Herod, that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, "Out of Egypt did I call My Son."

Joshua was called out of Egypt, and he was circumcised in Egypt. Egypt stands as a type of the world. Christ also was called out of Egypt, and in the greater type for which Egypt stands, the Son of God learned obedience and His flesh was broken and nailed to a cross. This brings to mind the words of the apostle Paul:

Galatians 5:24

Now those who belong to Christ Yahshua have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Immediately after Joshua had led the Israelites through the Jordan River and into the land of promise, God commanded him to stop and circumcise all the males. This is a picture of the work of Christ in removing the flesh from all those who would enter into the inheritance set before them. As an awesome confirmation of this work that was to begin in my own life,

I had just crossed over the Jourdan River, which is about ten miles from my sister's house in Mississippi. When we went by a sign announcing the name of this river I was impressed by the Spirit that it was significant. Later I understood that God had just brought me across the Jordan and now I was also to allow Him to cut away my flesh. We read further of this ministry of Joshua:

Joshua 5:8-9

Now when they had finished circumcising all the nation, they remained in their places in the camp until they were healed. Then Yahweh said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you."

The ministry of the removal of flesh is actually one of great blessing, for it removes the reproach of Egypt (the world) from the children of God. Those who perform this ministry must be prepared even as Joshua was. They must first have the flesh removed from their own lives, and then like Joshua they must spend time in wilderness places where their hearts are tested and they learn to trust in God.

When God calls a person to a ministry of cutting grass, they must be prepared to have their own lawn mowed. Even after God spoke to me about this calling upon my life, I did not appreciate all that I would have to go through to be prepared. Much pain was ahead, and there would be times where I could do nothing aside from surrendering to the knife in God's hands and then waiting before Him for healing to come. We cannot bear this removal of the flesh all at once, so God works on us measure by measure. He knows exactly what each one of His children can bear, and He is committed to doing a thorough work in each of them.



A Perfect Provision

When I left the Houston Healthcare Complex in October of 1999 after fourteen years of service, I was able to cash out my accrued vacation time, and the money from this carried us for a couple months. An annual gift from family, and then a tax refund, came in right on time and carried us through about April of 2000. We were still carrying all of our debt, and making payments each month as I had when I was still employed. I had expected that God would be pleased with our obedience in following Him in this step of faith and that He would either manifest some provision to pay off all of our debts, or He would give us what we needed to continue paying all our bills month by month. God had other plans, however.

Yahweh was always faithful to provide for us the necessities of life. We always had food, clothing and a roof over our heads, but He felt no obligation to pay for all the things I had purchased through debt and disobedience. As part of my own flesh cutting experience, He was going to break me of this stronghold of covetousness and then lead me and my family into a fresh beginning where we would walk contentedly, thanking Him for whatever He chose to provide for us. The financial death that Charles Newbold had prophesied some months earlier was to come quickly.

I continued spending my days praying, writing new articles and answering correspondence. Finances became tight and our bills began to get behind. I was very concerned about this, and I could not understand why the Lord was not manifesting His provision, for I felt bound in my spirit to not seek any employment. I was absolutely convinced that had I done so I would have been in great disobedience to the will of God and would be walking in unbelief. Our bills for the van and the house became one month late, and then two months late, and then three months late.

Despite my complete inability to pay these large bills, God would send us support in small amounts to pay our utilities and to purchase some gas and groceries, though these things were tight as well. We were not able to be as extravagant as we once were in our shopping, and we became bargain shoppers. We only had one occasion when we had to forego buying meat for a week, or more. We had been accustomed to eating meat daily, with most every meal, and during this time Tony and the kids began voicing how much they were missing it.

I was reminded of God's testing of Israel in the wilderness. He let them suffer hunger and thirst on occasions to test their hearts. He fed them with manna for forty years, and the Israelites, who were accustomed to a much more varied diet in Egypt, began grumbling about missing the melons, leeks, onions, garlic, and fish that had once been a part of their diet. Although God's provision for them was perfect, and just what they needed to break off their bondage to the appetites of the flesh, they did not appreciate what God provided. They grumbled and murmured against God. The Scriptures state:

Numbers 11:1, 4-6

Now the people became like those who complain of adversity in the hearing of Yahweh... The rabble who were among them had greedy desires; and also the sons of Israel wept again and said, "Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the fish which we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic, but now our appetite is gone. There is nothing at all to look

at except this manna."

If it were not so tragic, I could almost laugh at the description given here. The Holy Spirit inspired Moses to write that the people began to complain like those who were suffering adversity. Where was the adversity? Their existence was truly remarkable. They had just been delivered from Egypt, having seen the greatest nation and the greatest army on earth made a mockery of by Yahweh. They had crossed through the Red Sea on dry land, and God had then performed a great miracle by making the skies rain food for them every night. These were a blessed people who were experiencing things that had never been witnessed by any other people from the beginning of time.

Where was their adversity? Their complaint was that they missed the produce and meat of Egypt. Though they had come out of their slavery to the Egyptians, they were still slaves to their flesh and its appetites. God was not pleased with their grumbling, so he spoke to Moses:

Numbers 11:18-20

"Say to the people, "Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall eat meat; for you have wept in the ears of Yahweh, saying, "Oh that someone would give us meat to eat! For we were well-off in Egypt." Therefore Yahweh will give you meat and you shall eat. You shall eat, not one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days, but a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you; because you have rejected Yahweh who is among you and have wept before Him, saying, "Why did we ever leave Egypt?"'"

This scene was in my mind when we had gone some days without meat, and I was not about to begin murmuring in the same fashion. We actually experienced a few days when all we had in the house was a bag of grits and some butter. For those who have not eaten grits, I suspect that their texture is not far from that of manna. For us, it was Southern manna, and I could imagine God watching me to see if I would also complain about this provision. You could not have coerced me to say a negative word about what we were eating, for I knew what came next for the Israelites.

Numbers 11:31-33

Now there went forth a wind from Yahweh and it brought quail from the sea, and let them fall beside the camp, about a day's journey on this side and a day's journey on the other side, all around the camp and about two cubits deep on the surface of the ground. The people spent all day and all night and all the next day, and gathered the quail (he who gathered least gathered ten homers) and they spread them out for themselves all around the camp. While the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the anger of Yahweh was kindled against the people, and Yahweh struck the people with a very severe plague.

I gathered my family together and I told them that we needed to rejoice over the grits God had provided for us, for they were hearty and filling. In truth, every member of my family enjoyed eating grits, and would often request them. The complaint arose because they did not have anything else, and the flesh craves a variety of rich delicacies. I reminded my family of the Israelites, and I encouraged them to be thankful to God for what we had.

It wasn't long before God honored our attitude of thankfulness. We had not told anyone of our situation, when a man I had worked with at the hospital called us and said that he had a freezer full of deer meat he needed to get rid of. He asked if we would like the meat. Not only does my family enjoy deer meat, but it is perhaps our favorite type of meat. This man and his wife brought over a huge cooler full of deer steaks, deer roast, deer sausage, and ground deer meat and they completely filled up a freezer we kept at the back of our house. We ate off of that meat for weeks, and it was absolutely delicious. I made some deer jerky out of one of the roasts that my children still talk about to this day.

There was no doubt in my mind that God was testing us as He had done the Israelites, and I was determined to pass the tests brought to us. We saw many incredible provisions at this time, and were becoming accustomed to seeing the hand of God moving on our behalf, yet I was still unable to pay my major bills. I had much dread in my heart about what God should make me walk through, and I cried out often for His hand of provision. But like David when he cried out for the life of his son to be spared after his sin with Bathsheba, God would not relent of His judgment and correction. A day came in September of 2000 when we were all in the house doing various things when the power was cut off. I knew the city had cut off the electricity because I had been unable to pay the power bill.

My wife and kids came into the room and asked what we should do. I told my wife to call our friends' Randy and Barbara Barnes and see if they could go stay with them for a while, for they had previously made such an offer. Tony called, and they were invited to come on out, though I decided to stay at home with our two dogs. This arrangement would give me time alone to pray and seek God's face.

Despite our predicament, I was observing signs of God's working in my life in so many ways that it was hard to doubt that we were walking according to the path God had set before us. When I had begun going through tests of faith, and was being buffeted by fear, anxiety and worry, I considered that my greatest enemy was fear. I was reminded of the account of Yahshua and His disciples crossing the Sea of Galilee in a boat when a fierce storm came up. We are told that Yahshua was sleeping on a cushion in the boat while the disciples were becoming more and more alarmed. Things looked so desperate to them that they thought they would sink and surely perish, so they woke up the Lord and said, "Do you not care that we are perishing?" Yahshua was not alarmed at all, but spoke to the wind and the sea to be calm and it was immediately calm. He then chided the disciples for their unbelief.

I was captivated by this true story, and I told the Lord that I wanted to have the kind of peace that Yahshua had, for if I had peace then I could go through any circumstance and it would not trouble me. When I prayed these words to God, He answered me clearly and said, "I can give you this peace, but I will have to take you through some storms to get you there."

The date that our power was cut off I was home alone, except for our two dogs, and I slept in a recliner in our front room next to the door so that I could get a breeze from outside. September in Georgia is often very hot, and it was so at this time. That night a terrific thunder storm came up, and it was perhaps the worst one I had ever witnessed up till then. We had a very wide covered front porch that extended out about ten feet from the front of the house, but the wind blew so hard that rain was coming into the front room where I was sitting. Lightning was striking furiously all around, and a tree right across the road split in two due to the wind and fell into the road, blocking traffic.

The storm was horrendous, and it matched the storm that was raging in my soul, for

I had many fears and worries about what might lie ahead of us, and I had been tossed about all day. The next day was a Saturday and the mail brought a notice of foreclosure on our house, and another letter stating that our van was to be repossessed. In my spirit it was dawning upon me that God was not going to deliver me from this discipline as I had hoped, but that I was going to receive a more severe correction this time around for going into debt. It appeared that God was going to strip us of all those things I had gained through disobedience, but at the same time He was providing everything we needed to live.

I stayed home alone for a week, and I was riding my bicycle to the library to keep up with my correspondence and to ask some people to pray for my family and I. I was not driving our car because I did not have the money to pay the insurance. God put it in my heart to have a yard sale to begin selling some of our possessions, but I did not even have enough money to buy some posterboard and a marker to hang up a yard sale sign. A check came in the mail for fifteen dollars, and I knew the Lord wanted me to use this to buy these materials. I then had a yard sale and took in about a thousand dollars.

My wife and children called from the Barnes' and said that everyone wanted me to come out and that we could put the dogs in a pen, so I went to join them. While there I talked to my wife about our options, and I told her that there was a ministry in a nearby state that I wanted to check out to see if God would open a door for us to join them. I had spoken of this before, and it was much on my mind, so we took our children to my sister's in Mississippi, and Tony and I borrowed their pop-up tent trailer and headed to North Carolina. It rained the entire way, and we never saw sunshine. We rented a campsite for a week, but after three days we knew definitely that God was not leading us to join this ministry. There was not even a hint of opening, and I had no witness in my spirit that we were to be there. The campground manager generously refunded our money for the unused days.

The Spirit spoke one thing to me before we left North Carolina. He said, "I want you to go home and get your finances in order." He then told me I was going to have to declare bankruptcy to do so. We picked up our children in Mississippi and the next day we returned to Georgia. As we crossed into Georgia the sun came out for the first time in five days. I knew we were back where God wanted us to be, and I set about doing that which God had instructed me to do.



A Fresh Start

We arrived back in Georgia and returned to stay with our friends, the Barnes family. I told Tony what the Lord had spoken to me about getting our finances in order, but she was terrified about the prospect of declaring bankruptcy. I told her we were shortly going to be forced into it anyways, by our creditors, and I was certain this was what the Lord had directed me to do.

We made an appointment to see a bankruptcy attorney, and on the drive there I told Tony that the Spirit had spoken to me that morning and told me that I was to pack up our possessions, for we were going to be moving. Tony was incredulous upon hearing this remark and suggested that what I needed to be doing was finding a job. She knew we did not even have the money to rent a place, and she asked me where we were going to move to. I told her that I did not know, but I had heard the Spirit tell me to pack and I was going to begin packing the next day.

I was reminded of a story the prophet Jeff Burke had shared some years earlier. The Lord spoke to Jeff and told him He was going to show him what it was like to live as possessing all things, though owning nothing. A short time later Jeff received a phone call from a friend who had just built a new house on a lake. As soon as the house was built his friend learned that he was to be transferred out of the country for a year by his employer, and he asked Jeff if he and his family would like to live there for a year at no cost. I told Tony that if God could provide a house for them in such a remarkable manner that He could do so for us as well.

We arrived at the attorney's office, and we learned some things about bankruptcy I had never heard before. The right to declare bankruptcy had been written into the laws of the United States as a right for all citizens, and it was partially a response to the debtors' prisons that had existed in Europe. One form of Bankruptcy is Chapter 7, and it is commonly referred to as "Fresh Start." God had told me that He was going to give us a fresh start, so this was a great confirmation to me. We would give our house and van back to the creditors, and all of our outstanding debts would be made null and void.

I wondered about the Biblical precedence for such an action, and the Spirit reminded me of the law of Jubilee in Scripture. Every fiftieth year all land was to return to its original owners, all countrymen who had sold themselves as slaves were to be set free, and all debts forgiven (Leviticus 25). This was a remarkable law that God had ordained for Israel that had no precedence in any of the other nations. The year of Jubilee was called a year of release, and every form of bondage that an Israelite could be subject to was to be canceled in this fiftieth year. Around this time, we went with our friends the Barnes' to visit a church they attended, and I noticed a large banner across one wall that proclaimed that it was the year of Jubilee. The Spirit was proving that it would be one for us.

After paying the lawyer the entire fee for the bankruptcy proceeding, we were told that we would be assigned a date to show up in bankruptcy court, and they would notify us of the date. We headed back to our friends' house, and I told Tony once more that I was going to begin packing the next day as God had told me to do.

That evening Tony went out with Barbara, and everyone else scattered in different directions, leaving me home alone. I used the time to pray. I was confessing to the Lord that I had done what He had instructed me to do by filing for bankruptcy, and that I was going to begin packing in the morning, even though I had no money to rent a place, and I did not

know where I would go. I asked God to reveal to me where we were to go. As I was praying the phone rang. I did not answer the phone because it was not my house, but I listened as a lady we knew, who had once attended Living Faith, left a message for Tony and I on the answering machine. She said that she had a vacant house that she owned in Macon, Georgia, and that she had felt led of the Lord to offer for us to stay there free for the next month and a half. She added that if we wanted to stay longer she would charge us rent of \$500 a month.

There was a leaping in my spirit when I heard this message, for I KNEW God had just answered the cry of my heart. Here was a home in Macon, Georgia, the same city in which the bankruptcy court was located, and we were being offered six weeks of free rent. We were to find out shortly that our court date would fall just before the end of this six weeks.

When everyone returned home I told them about the phone call, and Randy agreed that this was the provision of the Lord for us. Tony, however, did not want to even consider moving there, for she had heard that the home was in a bad neighborhood. I convinced her to go with me to take a look at the home. Even though I did not have the money to be choosy, I had prayed specifically about the place God would take us. I had asked God to provide us a home that had bedrooms for each of the children, and a fenced yard to let the dogs out in. This house had both, and it was very tidy and attractive.

When we were looking over the home, Tony asked me to speak to her outside. She told me that she would not move there because of the neighborhood. I reminded her of how God had provided it at the moment I asked Him to reveal where we were to move, but she continued saying she would not move there. I told her that we had no other options, for there were no other homes being offered to us, and she still said she would not move there. I tried to console her by telling her that God would not have provided it unless He wanted us to be there, and that He would take care of us, but her fear was tremendous. Randy also sought to encourage her.

I was not thrilled about moving to this house either, but I knew it was God's will, and this comforted me. One of the reasons for my lack of joy was a sign I saw as we approached the neighborhood this home was located in. We had to go down a street in Macon called Vineville, and just before the road we were to turn onto there was a road sign pointing to the very road we had to go down to get to the house. The sign said "Payne City." In my spirit I knew immediately that this was more than just a coincidental road sign, but that we were about to endure a time of pain. I had a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach, but I knew we had to follow where the Lord was leading.

When we approached the house for the very first time I noticed the house number was 3456. As I looked at these numbers the Spirit said, "Here I will set your household in order." The street the house was located on was called Kingsbury, and as I meditated on this the Spirit told me that He was going to bury some things here that had been strongholds in our lives for a long time, and we would never walk in those things again.

I suppose some reading of these things may never have experienced the Spirit speaking to them through such means, and some may even see these things as silly, or the fruit of an overactive imagination. The Spirit bore witness to these things, however, and everything He spoke to me was to come true. It was to be a time of much pain. Our household would be set in order, and God would bury some things here, such as my covetous inclinations which led me to incur debt, and we would never walk in these things again. God is an omnipotent Father, and it did not tax Him in the least to set all of these signs of His working before me. If Christ could tell Peter to cast a hook into the sea to catch

a fish with a coin in its mouth to pay the temple tax, then He had no trouble ordering the circumstances of my life in similarly incredible fashion.

God knew the difficulty of what I was about to walk through, and I needed much assurance that I was in His will. While in Payne City I would be tempted to bail out of the walk of faith God had called me to, and to go seek a job just to relieve the pressure I was under. The Lord performed one more action to keep me from doing so.

On the day of our move I rented a truck and the Barnes family helped us load up all of our possessions in Fort Valley and move us to Macon. I do not remember doing anything to injure myself, but as the day wore on I began experiencing more and more pain in my hip and left leg. This pain was to remain with me during our entire stay in Payne City, and it reached a point that I could only walk by leaning on a cane. This kept me from abandoning the walk of faith God had called me to by going out and seeking employment, but it also provided another message from the Father.

During the time we were at this home, the Georgia National Fair was held in a nearby town, and I wanted to take my children, for they enjoyed the fair immensely. I prayed and asked God if He would provide the means for me to take my children, and not much later their grandfather gave them money for tickets and for the rides. My hip was so painful at this time that I had to rent a wheelchair at the fair and let Tony and our children push me around.

We went through one building where exhibitors and various businesses had booths set up. One of the booths belonged to a local chiropractor, and I felt led to ask them about my condition. Upon hearing the symptoms they said that I was suffering from sciatica, which is an inflammation of the sciatic nerve. They gave me a brochure that described what I was experiencing exactly.

Later, when I was back at our house I began to study the sciatic nerve to see what it represented in Scripture. I learned that this nerve is the same one the Jews identify as the sinew the angel touched in the hip of Jacob when Jacob wrestled with God. Jacob refused to let go of the angel until he received a blessing, and I was also experiencing a time of great wrestling.

The struggle was tremendous for me, for I was dealing with Tony's daily threats of divorcing me and taking my children with her. Some family members were also encouraging her to divorce me. In the eyes of many Christians, including the men I formerly ministered with, I stood condemned, having been numbered among the transgressors. My agony over all these things was great. Despite all these pressures, I clung desperately to God and would not abandon the struggle, for I felt with a certainty that if I did so I would forfeit the blessing of God. This thought alone kept me on the cross God had called me to endure.

I read further about Jacob's own wrestling with God, and the following is recorded:

Genesis 32:31-32

Now the sun rose upon [Jacob] just as he crossed over Penuel, and he was limping on his thigh. Therefore, to this day the sons of Israel do not eat the sinew of the hip which is on the socket of the thigh, because he touched the socket of Jacob's thigh in the sinew of the hip.

Jacob leaned on his staff from that day forward. What is pictured here is God breaking the natural strength of a man. The staff is a type of Christ, and when Jacob's natural strength was touched he was forced to lean on God. So, too, God was seeking to break the

natural strength in my life. He sought to deliver me from my tendency to accomplish things through human scheming and carnal means. He wanted me to lean upon Him entirely.

Thus far in this book I have shared how God has spoken to me through the lives of Joseph, David and Jacob. He has shown me definite parallels in my own walk and experiences, and those of these men. This should not strike any as unusual, for the lives of the Old Testament saints are recorded for us as examples. God will lead His elect through circumstances that bear striking similarity to those who have gone before. As Solomon testified:

Ecclesiastes 1:9

That which has been is that which will be, and that which has been done is that which will be done. So there is nothing new under the sun.

The histories recorded in Scripture serve to provide encouragement and understanding to those who know God's dealings in their lives. I have many times received strength, and stood firm in the midst of some trial, as I have reflected on God's dealing with men who have gone before me. I am most grateful for these examples, for the lives of these men continue to witness to this day.



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 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. 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.

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.

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 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 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.

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 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 fellowshipped 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.

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 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 1/2 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.

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

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 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. 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 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.

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 office, 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.

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 teaching 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.

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 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 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 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.

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 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 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 Potiphar'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.

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 local 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.

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:

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 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 power 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 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?



A Titus Two Woman

In the months that followed our time on Jekyll Island, where My wife and I celebrated our sixteenth wedding anniversary, the Lord continued to bring about many new beginnings in our home. We had not been in our townhouse long, and I had only been teaching college classes a short time, when God began leading my wife to make some profound changes in her life. I will let Tony share this in her own words.

[Begin Quote]

The Father began speaking to me in January of 2001 about the head covering. I began to diligently study the Word and pray about this asking the Father to show me if this was for today. My husband has believed in the covering from the beginning of our marriage yet I did not see this practiced in the churches that we attended. As I studied I became convicted that this was what the Father was leading me to do.

One day in June as I was disciplining my son because he had not done what I had asked him to do earlier in the day, I heard the Father speak to me that I had not yet obeyed Him in something that He had asked me to do. I knew right away that He was speaking about me covering my head...so the next day when I got up I began wearing the covering. That was June of 2001. (I need to interject something here: One thing that really grieved my heart, was that I realized that all the years we have been married, knowing that my husband believed in the covering and desired that I cover, the Holy Spirit showed me that I had been in sin and rebellion all those years that I did not cover. I very quickly repented of my sin, received the forgiveness that I so desperately needed and now I am walking in obedience to the Lord and my husband.)

The first thing that took place when I began covering is that I had a peace settle over me like I have never experienced before....it is still here too. There have been several things that have taken place since I began covering and I consider each of these things to be blessings sent from God to me as a result of my obedience to Him in the area of covering and dressing modestly. I guess the one that has meant the most to me is that my hubby told me that I am more beautiful to him now than ever before. <Very Big Grin>

I wish I had time to tell you all that we have walked through in our marriage and how we got to where we are now....it would blow your mind!! I have noticed that he now sees me in a different light and he has always been respectful to me, but that has increased even more and I also see his love poured out to me even more. He spoke to me one day about this and told me that he sees a gentle and quiet spirit that has not been present before. That was very humbling.

My son has begun showing more respect toward me and his whole attitude has amazed me. He has been very encouraging to me in his own little way since I have been covering. He is funny sometimes....I will have my dress on and will sit down and may not notice that my dress is not pulled down all the way over my legs and he will bring it to my attention. This has been a big thing to him. His whole perspective on modesty has changed, and I am so grateful for this. Also, my hubby and I have been out eating before and I have had older men walk over to our table and stand there and just smile at me and one even nodded his head at me as he turned to leave. It is like this demands respect, and it is given.

Our daughter began covering in February of 2002 and then the dresses followed for her in April. I see this as a true blessing from God as a result of my obedience to Him in

these areas in my own life. My daughter was a big time tomboy, and to see her in her covering and dress now is more beautiful than I can describe to you here. My heart overflows with joy when I see her. She has such a tender heart toward God and always wants to be pleasing to Him.

Dresses were the hard thing for me to start wearing. When I started covering I was wearing shorts and pants. Boy, what a walking contradiction I was, and I did not even know it. Though I do remember that as the summer went on that my shorts felt like they got shorter and shorter. That was just the way that the Father dealt with me and allowed me to become more conscious of my clothes and the call to modesty.

The sad thing in all this is that the biggest critics have been other believers. The covering stirs something in them that they don't want to deal with. It represents things that they do not want to hear about and have not heard talked about in the church. It is funny, because without them knowing all that it is about, they (other women) are made mad by it.

A few months back we were at a gathering and, as we walked up, my hubby and I were standing outside and I happened to look inside the building and this guy who I knew saw me and he turned to his wife and then they both turned and looked at me. Both of them had this disgusted look on their faces. They were not happy people. I feel sorry for them. This reminded me of a Mennonite pastor that I heard on a tape one time that said when you start covering get ready to be persecuted.

The covering speaks so loudly to the women of this day who are not walking in the place that God has prepared for them; submission to their own husbands, covering and modesty. My life has been radically changed through learning submission to my husband, wearing the covering and dressing modestly. I NEVER want to go back to the old way things used to be. There is NO going back.

Tony Herrin (written 4-27-03)

We truly were in a time of new beginnings in our home. It had been many months since God had told me that He would change the heart of my wife, and from the time in Payne City when the Holy Spirit said He would set our household in order. We were still seeing these changes come, and each change contributed to the atmosphere of peace, joy and righteousness in our home.

I had never nagged my wife concerning her wearing the Christian woman's veiling, but I had shared with her from the beginning of our marriage those things that the Scriptures taught on this matter. I had encouraged her on a couple occasions to begin this practice, but when she was unwilling I had let the matter drop.

It would do little good for a woman to practice such Christian ordinances under compulsion, for the headcovering is supposed to be a testimony of what is in the heart of a Christian woman. When I thought of trying to coerce my wife into wearing a headcovering I was reminded of the cartoon of a little boy who was forced to sit in a corner because of misbehavior. The little boy said, "I may be sitting down on the outside, but I am standing up on the inside." I did not want my wife to wear the headcovering out of compulsion, desiring instead that there should be a harmony between her inner person and her outer witness.

I was so blessed the first time I saw my wife come into a room with a headcovering on. I was amazed at what the Spirit had been doing in her life as she explained to me what He had spoken to her. It was an added blessing when she began wearing dresses. I had told Tony when we were first married that I thought it was right for women to wear feminine

attire, and I had always thought that women in long dresses were the picture of beauty, being arrayed both modestly and in feminine attire. Rather than accentuating the sexuality of a woman, as the majority of sensual attire today does, or going the opposite direction in making a woman appear masculine, as another segment of the clothing industry does, the Scriptures teach that a woman should wear feminine clothing that is modest and does not provoke men to lust, or draw attention to themselves in unrighteous ways.

Deuteronomy 22:5

A woman shall not wear man's clothing, nor shall a man put on a woman's clothing; for whoever does these things is an abomination to Yahweh your God.

I Timothy 2:9

Also I desire that women should adorn themselves modestly and appropriately and sensibly in seemly apparel, not with elaborate hair arrangement or gold or pearls or expensive clothing...

(Amplified Bible)

I have for a long time also desired that my daughter should dress in this feminine and modest manner. As Tony said, Kristin had always leaned toward tomboy styles. She wanted to dress as a cowgirl, or in camouflage shirts and pants, or similar styles. I knew that there were precious few examples anywhere of young ladies dressing in feminine and modest array, and it was extremely difficult to find anything suitable at local department, or clothing stores. Kristin had always been sensitive to dressing modestly, but her clothing simply wasn't feminine.

I think the Spirit waited for Tony to enter into obedience in this area before He began to move upon Kristin's heart, for He wanted to show Tony what an impact her own obedience would have upon others. The day Tony began wearing dresses, she set her face as flint with the attitude that there was no going back. She got rid of all her clothing that she felt was no longer in accordance with the Spirit's witness in this matter, and she has never vacillated in this determination to be obedient to God.

Even more changes were forthcoming, however. I had for many years wanted Tony to be more domestically minded, more of a keeper at home who would develop skills such as sewing and cooking. I had bought her a new sewing machine a few years after we were married, but she lacked interest in it and ended up selling it some time later. Tony also lacked confidence in her ability to sew, feeling like the necessary skills were lacking in her make-up. I was somewhat doubtful then when she told me that she wanted to get a sewing machine again. I had also begun to doubt that she had what it took to be a competent seamstress.

A great encouragement for Tony at this time was an acquaintance she made with a Christian sister named Wendy who had an Internet forum and website for women who were practicing headcovering and modest dress. Tony began to correspond with her after she started practicing headcovering. She purchased a few headcoverings from Wendy, and their friendship grew so much that Tony flew out to California for ten days to spend time her. While there Wendy taught her how to sew some simple garments, and when Tony returned home she was full of excitement about the things she had learned.

Tony has since been making her own dresses, and they are as well made as the ones she was purchasing from stores and from individuals. Her skills and confidence have grown

to the point where other women are asking her to teach them to sew. It is a great blessing to me to see all of these changes occurring with my wife. She is being conformed to the image of a “Titus Two Woman.”

Titus 2:3-5

Bid the older women similarly to be reverent and devout in their deportment as becomes those engaged in sacred service, not slanderers or slaves to drink. They are to give good counsel and be teachers of what is right and noble, so that they will wisely train the young women to be sane and sober of mind (temperate, disciplined) and to love their husbands and their children, to be self-controlled, chaste, homemakers [workers at home], good-natured (kindhearted), adapting and subordinating themselves to their husbands, that the word of God may not be exposed to reproach (blasphemed or discredited).

(Amplified Bible)

God has brought forth things in our home that I had not imagined possible in such a short period of time. There is no doubt that our family appears as a “peculiar people” in this hour when women are abandoning the traditional feminine roles of motherhood to pursue careers in the world. My wife and daughter stand out as distinctly different from the other women, both old and young, who dress to appear sensual and alluring. We are called to be lights in the midst of darkness, and both my wife and daughter have had opportunities to encourage others to also choose a course that turns aside from the ways of the world. These things are truly amazing, and are a source of much satisfaction to me.



Both Feet In

As my working hours at the college were dwindling I came to sense that a transition was coming again and that the Father would lead us out once more to trust Him entirely for our provision. I also began to once more feel a lack of desire to remain where God had temporarily placed me as a college instructor, desiring rather to be occupied in teaching the word of God to the saints. On February 20th, 2003 a Christian brother from California e-mailed me to make known an opportunity to manage a retreat center on a ranch he owns. He had a vision for it being used as a spiritual training center and he felt that the Lord might be calling me to be instrumental in raising up a work there.

My very first thought when I heard of this offer was that the Lord had led me to pray for the past ten years that He would raise up a people in Middle Georgia for the praise of His glory, and that this ranch being in California would be taking me away from seeing this body raised up. Yet the Father had never given me a timetable for raising up this people, and I considered that it was possible that He might be leading us to California for a time. This seemed all the more possible because my wife had only seven weeks prior flown out to California to spend time with a close friend, and all she had talked about since her return was wanting to move to California.

The timing of this offer was just right for me to be able to give notice at the college that I would not be returning, and to finish out teaching the present quarter. Also, our lease would be up at the end of April, and this brother in California shared that his current caretaker for the property would be leaving in May. As I was convinced that a transition was coming, and I felt released in my spirit from the college, I gave my notice that I would not be returning to teach the next session. I shared with my wife that whether God took us to California or not, I was convinced that I would be doing something different by the time my birthday rolled around on May 7th. My college duties ended on March 19th, and at this time we were still unsettled about California being our destination, not having heard a final confirmation from the Christian brother I had spoken with.

As a family we began to pray in earnest that God would show us His will. Tony, Kristin, Josiah and I began seeking God daily for direction. On March 25th we still had heard nothing definite regarding the move to California, and feeling like we were in a state of limbo, we gathered together and prayed that the Father would direct us. The ranch had sounded like a wonderful opportunity, for it would bring my wife close to her friend in California, and the location was very scenic. It was located right next to Yosemite National Park, being surrounded on three sides by national forest. It had a view of the Sierra Nevada mountains and a lake stocked with bass and perch. Yet with all of this natural attraction, we sincerely prayed that if this were not the Lord's will for us at the time that the door would be shut. We voiced our heart's desire to the Father that we would rather be in the middle of a desert with Him, than to be in a paradise without Him.

The very next morning the answer came. The brother who owned the ranch e-mailed me to tell me that the situation had changed and that some things had been mis-communicated to him. The caretaker that he thought was moving, actually had intentions to stay on, and he felt that he could not ask him to leave. This left us in a bit of a quandary, because I had left my employer in anticipation of God moving us to participate in a new work somewhere, and now we had no door open before us.

A week passed with our family being in the situation of not knowing what God was

calling us to, and as we were now in the first week of April I felt led to call my family to a day of prayer and fasting. This was the first time our children had fasted, and it was a good experience for them. We gathered several times during the day to pray and to ask the Father to give us some direction.

No direction came that day, but two days later, as I was sitting at the table with my daughter, I told her that I felt led to visit a non-denominational church whose members had a year previously come out of a Mennonite congregation. My daughter was quite surprised at this, for we had been outside of any organized group of believers for the past three years.

During our three year time of wilderness wanderings we missed the fellowship of the saints very much, and on several occasions we sought to return to fellowship with some group of believers. On each occasion, however, the Spirit let us know immediately that this was not His will for us. In a way, I felt like Samuel when the seven sons of Jesse were passing in front of him. Some of the churches we thought of visiting looked impressive, but when we considered them we heard the Lord say,

I Samuel 16:7

"Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but Yahweh looks at the heart."

At each church that we considered associating with, the Lord would say, "I have not chosen this one either." I must admit that in suggesting that we visit this recently formed body of believers, part of me anticipated hearing the Lord say these words once again. However, the Spirit never spoke these words to me, and I found a growing excitement within me that God was about to fulfill that which He had me pray for since 1993. I had a great hope that God would at this time raise up a people for His praise, and that this newly formed body of believers were to be the ones He would begin this work through.

I had similar hopes at the last two churches we had been a part of, but my hopes were unmet when both bodies failed to walk forward in faith when God asked them to do so. They had been daunted by the giants in the land, and the strongholds and walled cities to be conquered. I continued to look for a people who would not turn back from the challenges and obstacles before them, and over the course of the next few weeks I had many reasons for my hope to be reborn that I might see such a people raised up soon.

On April 6th, 2003 we visited this body of believers who were meeting in a warehouse that belonged to a roofing company. The location was very rural. We were invited home to share lunch with a family from this church, and as I spoke to them the man shared some incredible stories of trust in God. Here was a man sharing with me that he had cast all over onto God in a time of trial and he had seen God deliver him in a spectacular manner. He had been tried in the fire, and had faced the loss of all he owned. He had chosen to lean upon God alone to deliver him, and God had been faithful. How my heart was encouraged as I listened. I had been yearning to find a people with a real, practical faith, and I was hearing of just such a faith. Hours went by like minutes as I listened to this brother share of his own tests and of his determination to demonstrate faith before God.

It was the practice of this body to have the men take turns bringing a devotion each Sunday, and I was further encouraged by what I heard. The young men were included in this time of sharing, and I heard some wonderful messages coming from young hearts that yearned to experience a vital walk with God. I was impressed with the messages of faith I

was hearing, and the very evident sincerity of these young men.

On April 14th I had a growing sense that the Lord was going to move us to be a part of this fellowship. It was about a 35 minute drive to the warehouse where they met, and all of the church members lived a distance from us. Our lease was to end on our home in two weeks, and I felt confident that the Lord would move us, but I had no idea where He would move us.

As a family, we were continuing daily in prayer, asking the Father to reveal His will. On April 14th the Spirit spoke to me and said, "You are asking me to manifest My direction and provision for you, but you have only one foot in the water. You have quit your job, and this is putting the first foot in the water. The second foot is giving your notice to your landlord that you will be moving."

I thought about this some, and it seemed reasonable to me that God would ask such a thing, for He often asks us to do that which is unreasonable in the natural. I once more called my family together and shared what the Lord had spoken to me about giving our notice on our lease. I sensed some reservation in them, and this led me to doubt. I returned to prayer and asked God to confirm His will. Just three days earlier a book had arrived in the mail that I had not ordered, neither was I expecting it. The book was called *Rees Howells - Intercessor*, and a Christian brother had felt impressed to order a copy to be sent to me. I sensed the Spirit leading me to pick up the book and begin reading where I had left off. The next chapter was titled *Standing in the Queue*. It was all the confirmation I needed.

The chapter contained a wonderful testimony of God calling Rees Howells and his wife to a new work as missionaries to Africa. It detailed God's dealing with this English couple as He required that they step out in faith to follow His direction. He said He would take them to Africa when they did not have money to even take a train to London. They were led to buy tickets to take them as far as they could go, which was only 20 miles. The next connection they needed to make would be on a train that would arrive in a couple hours. Rees had no money for the tickets, and the time was close for the train to board, when God spoke to him and said, "Have you not preached that a word from Me is as good as coin? What would you do if you had the money in your pocket right now?" Rees answered, "I would go get in that ticket line so that I could purchase my tickets." God then replied, "Then go get in the line."

There were about twelve people in front of him in the queue, and the devil started to come against him. The devil said, "You are just like those Israelites who had Egypt's armies behind them and the Red Sea in front. You are going to get to the front of the line and have to step out because you have no money." Rees answered, "You are wrong, because God has said that I am going through." When it got to where there were only two people in line in front of Rees, a friend, who had followed them to the station to see them off, suddenly walked up and said he could stay no longer for he had to go open his shop, and he put 30 shillings in Rees' hand. Rees used this money to purchase tickets to London, and the Lord then opened up many other sources of provision as other friends began coming up and giving them financial gifts.

I called my family back together and read this chapter to them. God was asking me to put both of my feet in the water, which was similar to what He did when He asked Rees Howells to go get in the line to purchase tickets. I asked my family if any of them now doubted this was the Lord's will for us. They all said that they no longer doubted.

Rees Howells shared that this experience of standing in the queue to buy a ticket was something he was glad he was not deprived of, for it brought him a great confidence of

being in the will of the Lord when he saw the Lord's provision come suddenly and miraculously. I told my family that the Lord would also use His deliverance and provision in our lives to give us confidence of His way before us, letting us know that we were in His will.

I called our landlord and he answered right away. I asked if I could come over to speak to him and he told me to come right on over. I left, asking my family to pray for favor, since I wasn't giving a full month's notice and we would be needing our full deposit back. My time with our landlord was very good and we ended in prayer. He had no problem with the late notice and said he would get us our deposit back as soon as possible. So both feet were placed in the water and I began looking for the Lord to show His provision and make His plan known to us.



A Growing Hope

April 23rd came and, as it was a Wednesday, there was a meeting of the church that night which I desired to attend. We had little gas in the car and no money to purchase more. My wife was invited to attend a ladies sewing meeting that morning with members of this same fellowship, but things were so tight that I knew if she went we might not have enough gas to go to the church meeting in the evening. After praying I felt confident to tell her to go, believing that if God wanted us to attend the meeting that night, He would provide the money needed for gas. My wife took both of our children with her, and this left me in the house alone, and I used the opportunity to pray.

During the preceding weeks the Father had been leading me into a place where I could know peace in the midst of trials. Often before, when the Spirit had led us through some test of faith and we had obeyed, we did so in fear and trembling. The Spirit began testifying to me that it was possible for us to go through these trials of faith and to know peace in the midst of the storm. I wrote an article at this time sharing those things the Spirit was speaking to me, and I titled it "Resting in the Confidence of His Love."

In the week following God's instructions for us to place both feet in the water, I found that I was able to walk in a place of peace I had not formerly known during such trials. I was greatly encouraged in meditating upon God's faithfulness to us in the past, and also in reading the book on Rees Howells' life. On top of this, the Spirit had spoken prophetically through my daughter about nine months previously during a moment of great testing. This prophecy was written down and I found constant encouragement in reading it. The prophecy read:

Word From Kristin - July 24th, 2002
I have great things in store for your family.
Marvelous things that only I can get the credit for.

My sheep will hear My voice and they will know
that it is I, the Lord thy God.

My provision is on its way. My timing is perfect.
You need not fear any trouble, instead, trust Me.

The time has not yet come to reveal all things,
but behold, it is drawing nigh.

You need have no less than great expectations, for
I, the Lord thy God, am in control.

Watch and wait.

You must put behind you all foolish thoughts of
doubt and disbelief, for great is My reward for
those who trust.

Forget not those things which I have done for you, and expect greater things in the future.

I am a just God, those who put their life in My hands need never fear.

Await with anticipation the things that are to come. They are drawing near.

Those things which I have spoken to you will be fulfilled, for I do not lie.

I have listened to your heart's cry. I have not turned a deaf ear.

I am a father who loves to give good gifts to His children. Trust My timing.

You must learn to listen to My voice, and My voice alone. Take the path which I have set for you. Do not turn to the right or to the left.

On this day, April 23rd, as I was praying I was led to read the Psalm of the day, which is not something that I normally do. As I read the Psalm I felt the presence of the Spirit, and I received great comfort and peace. The opening words declare, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." The word 'want' is a synonym for 'lack.' This Scripture is testifying that we will not know lack, for our Shepherd will take care of all of our needs.

Just a few days earlier I had found in a trash can in the bathroom two Scriptures written on 3x5 cards that I had recorded about 20 years previously. My son had gotten the cards and used them for some purpose, cutting a hole in the center of each one, but I could still read the Scriptures. They said:

Matthew 6:30-34

"Do not be anxious then, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'With what shall we clothe ourselves?' For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

Philippians 4:5-7

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Great peace was ministered to me as I meditated upon these Scriptures. As I

considered that it is the Lord's command that we are not to be anxious about anything, I felt a release from the clinging anxiety that I had known most of my life. I had formerly acted as if it was some Christian duty to be anxious about the cares of life. Somehow the thought had been ingrained into my psyche that a responsible Christian man must worry about providing the necessities of life for himself and his family. I had picked up the idea that it was okay to follow God in faith, but one should act like a responsible citizen by being constantly worried until the manifestation of God's provision should come through.

I hated this anxiety. Anxiety is the child of fear, and it grows up quickly into a hideous monster. Now I was hearing the Spirit say that it was not God's will for anxiety to be in my heart. All worry was to be put away. Peace and confidence were to be the habit and mindset of the believer. During the past two weeks since I had placed both feet in the water I was able to experience a peace and confidence that had previously eluded me. On this day in particular I experienced a boldness in knowing that God would certainly meet our needs.

About 2:30 in the afternoon the mail came and there was no money in it, only a bank statement telling me I was \$1.22 in the hole. I was at peace even in seeing this. I came into my room and knelt by the bed and prayed, expressing my needs to God. I thanked God that I knew His eyes were on us, and I was trusting in Him. I ended by telling God that I was experiencing such peace that I believed I could sleep in the stern of the boat at this time while the storm raged around me.

When I got up I felt led to check my bank balance online, and when I did I found that a deposit had been made into our account for \$500. This was unanticipated, and it came from a Christian brother halfway around the world. I cannot express how much joy flooded my soul. It was not just that we had some money, but it was a testimony of the fact that God is present and watching us every minute. He knows our needs so intimately and is able and willing to provide. I began singing the 23rd Psalm "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want..."

For the next hour I went around the house singing to God and praising Him for His love and watchfulness over us. I looked forward to my wife and children coming home so that I could share this miracle of provision with them. When they arrived we all sat down and my wife asked if she could share first. She told me that a lady at the meeting, the wife of an elder at the church, came up to her and gave her forty dollars. She told Tony that they really wanted us to continue to come to church and they knew it was a long drive, so they wanted to give us gas money to get there.

What an answer this was to my prayer that morning. I had asked the Father that if it was His will for us to go to church that He would provide money for gas. Here was money given to us for the express purpose of being used to purchase gas to drive to church. The Father could not have answered my prayer more specifically. This woman did not just give us money for expenses. It was for gas. Neither was it for gas to drive anywhere, but to enable us to drive to church. What a confirmation this was to us that God wanted us to attend this fellowship of believers.

When I then shared my news with the family, they were awestruck. What incredible good it did me to see my children and wife exulting in the faithful provision of the Father. The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not lack for any good thing. All of these things were conspiring together to raise the level of my hope and expectancy that God would at this time raise up the people of faith I had long prayed for. I felt a deep excitement about upcoming events.



Pouring Water on the Altar

When the Lord instructed us to place both feet in the water, and then He confirmed His instruction with the story of Rees Howells standing in the queue to purchase tickets, I felt like the Lord would probably take us down to the wire before manifesting His provision for us. Rees Howells had two people in the line before him when God placed the provision in his hands. I suspected that we might get down to a couple days before it was time to move before He showed us where we were to move.

On April 23 we had a week left until our lease expired, and still no idea where we were to go. I had a growing feeling that we would be moving south toward the community of Montezuma, Georgia where the people currently resided. We were told repeatedly, however, that rental property in the area was very scarce. Being a rural community that had not grown appreciably in many years, the housing market was very slow. My wife had asked me whether we should ask the members of the church to help us locate a place to rent. I prayed about this, and I felt that the Lord did not wish for us to do this.

As I contemplated the Lord's working in bringing us into fellowship with this body of believers, I understood that He desired for us to encourage them in their faith before God. I knew that the people He was looking to raise up were to be a people marked by a peculiar confidence in God's ability to protect and deliver them. Our moving to the community was to be an example of God's ability to provide for His children when they look to Him alone to accomplish His purposes, for the battle belongs to the Lord.

As I was considering this, I heard the Spirit tell me to pour water on the altar. I was reminded of Elijah pouring water on the altar when he was in the contest with the prophets of Baal and Ashtoreth. I looked up the Scripture and read the following.

I Kings 18:33-35

Then he arranged the wood and cut the ox in pieces and laid it on the wood. And he said, "Fill four pitchers with water and pour it on the burnt offering and on the wood." And he said, "Do it a second time," and they did it a second time. And he said, "Do it a third time," and they did it a third time. The water flowed around the altar and he also filled the trench with water.

Elijah had such a confidence in God that he knew that he could not make the test too difficult for Him. Pouring water on the altar was merely a mark of Elijah's great confidence in God's ability to accomplish what He said He would do. When God finds a saint with great confidence in Him, He will at times allow them to pour water on the altar, which brings greater glory to the Father. Never before had I been given such an opportunity. I had followed the Lord in faith numerous times before, but I did not have the peace and confidence necessary to go beyond the demands of what God required in order to pour water on the altar.

As the Spirit spoke to me about pouring water on the altar, I understood that in our case, pouring water on the altar equated to telling our friends at church to not go hunt for a place for us to live. The Lord wanted to demonstrate to them that He could bring the provision to us Himself. On April 23rd we attended a Wednesday night meeting of the church and a brother asked about our situation. I told him that we were to be out of our house on the 30th, and at the moment we were not sure where we were to move, but we

knew God would move us. He asked me if they could help us look for a place, and I respectfully declined his assistance. I shared with him that we wanted to know that the provision came from the Lord and felt that we were to rest and trust in Him.

The following Sunday my wife was talking to a lady from the church, and she also asked if she could help look for a place for us. As I was standing nearby, I once more poured water on the altar by telling her that it was not necessary for her to assist in this way.

The 29th of April came and we still had no prospect of a place to move. In all of this time, however, the Lord had allowed us to know an unusual peace that we had not previously experienced. The day began with individual prayer, and then our family met together. We reminded ourselves of all that the Lord had spoken to us, encouraging one another in our faith. We then prayed and asked God to manifest His provision quickly.

Some of the people of the church had arranged to get together and help us move, and they were to meet at our house on the morning of the 30th. We had already boxed everything up, and had as much as possible of our belongings stacked and ready to go out the door. I was considering how closely the Lord was taking us down to the wire. We were within one day of people from the church showing up to move us, and we still had no clue where we would move.

After we prayed Tony went and checked her e-mail, and then she excitedly called me into the room. In her inbox was an e-mail from a lady at the church telling us about a house she had heard about that was coming available, and it was close to the community and church building and sounded like it might be a good fit for our needs. Tony was excited, however I experienced reservations.

The Christian sister who had e-mailed this information was one that we had asked to not go out and look for a place for us, and it came into my spirit that if she had gone and found this place for us that it would not provide as strong of a testimony to the church about the Lord's ability and willingness to handle things Himself. I did not want any man or woman to claim that they provided a place for us. I desired that the glory should go to God.

For about an hour I struggled with this issue. I considered how close we were to the end of our time and we had no other prospects. If I turned this down, and nothing else materialized, we would look like great fools and it could even lead to homelessness for our family. Yet if I accepted this house not having a clear conscience before God that I had acted in faith, then I knew God would not be honored and we would lose a great blessing. After wrestling with this issue I called our family together and I told my wife that she would have to call this lady and tell her that if she had gone and found this house for us that we could not accept it. In doing so I was pouring water on the altar for a third time.

Tony went outside to make the call, and when she came back in she had news to share. She related to us that this woman had wanted to go look for a place for us, but her husband told her that they needed to honor my wishes by not seeking a place. She had obeyed her husband and had not looked for a place. She then shared how two different people had called her the previous day to tell her about this place that was coming available, not knowing about our situation at all. A young couple was moving out of a double wide home set in the midst of pastureland on the family farm, and the parents of the young man were seeking to find if anyone in the community knew of a family needing a place to live. The people who owned the property were not even members of the church we were visiting, and they had no knowledge of us. The lady who contacted us confirmed that she did not go seeking a place.

I felt a release of my reservations about the home when Tony related these things to me. In my spirit I felt that we had poured water on the altar a third time by making the call that morning, and that in return God had honored our faith and made His provision known. If we had not made the call and told the people we could not accept the property if they had gone looking for it, then God would not have honored our heart attitude. The principle is true that “whatever is not of faith is sin.”

We still had to talk to the owners and see if they would rent to us, and all day we waited to hear something, and no word came. At 8:30 that night we were still in the situation of having heard nothing and we also had no money in hand to rent the place. At 9:00 I was finally able to get hold of the owner of the property, and over the phone he committed to rent to us without even meeting us or requesting references. Better still, the man said that he did not require any deposits, or even the signing of a rental agreement, and the rent was less than half what we had paid the previous two years. Ten minutes later our previous landlord drove up to our house to bring our son back from playing with his sons, and he told me that he would give our full deposit back in the morning. So within 15 minutes we had both a place to move, and a commitment that we would have the money to pay the rent.

God could not have waited much longer to manifest His provision. It was only 12 hours until the people from the church were to show up to help us move. God had tested us severely, and on this last day I struggled with maintaining an attitude of peace. Yet I was given grace to not murmur or complain against the Lord.

We did not see the house before we moved in. Some people asked us how we knew whether the house would be suitable. Some asked if it had appliances that we lacked, a range and a refrigerator. I told them that since the Lord was handling the arrangements I was sure that everything would be fine. Sure enough, everything was a perfect match for us. The bedrooms were larger than what we had before. The home was prettier and in better shape. There was nothing about the place that disappointed us. Our entire family just walked around the place and expressed their satisfaction with every detail.

As a family we felt like we had gone through a protracted battle and had come out on the other side victorious. Yet the victory did not belong to us, but to the Lord. Not only did He prove Himself faithful in His provision, but He encouraged us in numerous means all along the way. He desired for us to have peace as we waited on Him. He longed for us to succeed, and to rest in Him. True are the words of Scripture:

Isaiah 40:28-31

Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, Yahweh, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is beyond searching out. He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases power. Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly, yet those who wait for Yahweh will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.

Having begun this relationship with this body of believers in this way gave me great hope for the things the Father would do among them. He longs to prove Himself in such magnificent ways to the entire body of Christ, even to the entire world. Days of great exploits lie ahead for the body, for those who trust in Yahweh. We truly serve a risen Savior

who is in the world today!



Storm Warning

I felt we had done well in this episode as we had placed ourselves unreservedly into the Father's hands, knowing that if He did not come through for us, we would be in a real mess. We had stood faithful against that tyrant called time, and had continued to look to the Father to deliver us. Yet at the very end, my faith had indeed been tested severely and I had not been perfect in my faith, and I must now tell you about it.

When I finally got the man on the phone who would be our landlord for the next two months, I was dealing with anxiety and fear. I was still looking to the Father to deliver us, yet I was also willing to "help him out" a little. If this man did not rent to us, we had no other prospects and we were to be out of our home the next day. As I spoke to this man on the phone I learned that they had never rented to others before. They had a family farm with a dairy and large family house, and some distance removed in the middle of a field was a double-wide manufactured home that they had bought for their five sons to live in for a time after each one got married. One son and his wife were just moving out, and the other sons seemed to be years away from marriage, so they decided to rent the home out.

The price was excellent, less than half of what we had been paying, and though we rented the house without seeing it, we were to find that it was a beautiful home that had been well kept and it was situated with a lovely lawn, and the lawn was itself surrounded by pasture land, making it very scenic and peaceful. The owner did not require a contract to be signed, nor did he require any deposits. Both of these things were wonderful since I did not know how long the Father intended us to be there, and I did not have much money at the time.

When I spoke to the owner on the telephone I asked if there was anything he wanted to ask about us, and the only thing he asked was whether we smoked, for they didn't want smokers in the house. I assured him we did not smoke. As I was on the phone my family was waiting with baited breath to hear the outcome of my conversation, for they were also desirous of knowing that they had a place in which to move the next day. As my daughter Kristin listened to me speaking to our soon to be landlord, she pointed to our two dogs, and I knew what she was indicating. She wanted to know if I had mentioned to this man that we had two indoor dogs. I politely ignored my daughter, for the thought flitted across my mind, "What if the dogs are a deal breaker, and the man refuses to rent to us because we have dogs? Where will we turn?"

Now, if I had a perfect faith before the Father I would have told the man about our dogs, for God was able to work a divine thing upon the owner's heart, or He could have led us to another home that was suitable, or any number of things. God was not worried in the least about us being homeless, or left without provision, for the One who fed an entire nation for forty years in the wilderness, who caused their feet to not swell nor allowed their clothes to wear out, the One who caused water to come forth from a rock, was neither anxious nor worried about anything.

At that moment, however, I found that my eyes were not on the Savior who could walk on water, but they were upon the wind and the waves that were raging around me, and I began to sink beneath the waves. I did not tell the man about the dogs, and I justified it to myself by considering that I was not lying, I was merely withholding information that he had every opportunity to ask me about. I had even asked him if there was anything he wanted to know about us, and he had merely asked if we were smokers. Besides, our dogs

were housebroken and I was confident that they would not do any harm to the home.

When we moved in I found that my heart wasn't at ease due to the fact that I had not disclosed to the owner that we had dogs. The owners had some corn planted in the backyard, and they asked us if we would allow them to maintain the garden until the corn was ready to pick, which we were happy to oblige them in. The wife of the owner would come over every day or two to weed the garden, or do something to it. I found myself working to keep the dogs inside and out of sight whenever she would come by, and I noticed my wife doing the same.

Before I go further in this story I want to tell you about our moving day. We moved things in several loads, and the last thing we left to move was our dogs. We planned on taking them along with the very last load, which mainly consisted of things from our refrigerator. This was primarily to keep the dogs out from under foot while we were moving things into the new home. It was late in the evening when we went left our former home with our dogs. My wife had turned our keys into our former landlord, and it was now after dark. As we drove the thirty miles to our new location we entered into a storm.

Not long into the trip the wind began to blow savagely, and dark clouds were overhead. Things got steadily worse as we got closer to our new home. Lightning was flashing continuously and the rain was coming down heavily. Off in the distance we saw an electrical transformer blow up with blue flames shooting into the air. Along the road were woods and pecan orchards and the wind was blowing so hard that pieces of trees, from single leaves to large branches were breaking off and flying across the road. This debris was raining down so thickly that it reminded me of being in a heavy snow storm. The debris literally covered the road so that the lines on the pavement could not be discerned, and at one point we drug a sizeable limb under our car for some distance. I did not get out of the car to remove it because the storm outside was so ferocious.

I have never been in a worse thunderstorm in my life, and I would not have been too surprised to see a tornado appear. When we arrived at our new home the power was out due to the storm, and we turned on our weather radio to hear warnings of severe thunderstorms with winds of 60-70 miles per hour. There were actually two separate storms that moved through, one right behind the other. This was a foreboding beginning to our stay at this new residence, and over the next two months I contemplated how in this way God had shown us prophetically that our time in this place would be filled with spiritual storms.

The first few weeks in our new home went fairly well. Other than being nervous about what our landlords might think when they discovered our dogs, things were going well. I had paid a month's rent when we moved in, and all our bills were paid up. I received a refund check from a retirement fund I was required to pay into while I was an employee of the state of Georgia, and it amounted to 23 hundred dollars, which was another confirmation from the Father that He would take care of us. I mentioned previously of the Father speaking to me through Psalm 23 on the 23rd day of the month, that He would be our Shepherd and we would not want for any necessary thing. This sum of 23 hundred dollars we received was a testimony to me that God would continue to meet our needs.

It had now been nearly four years since the Holy Spirit had spoken to me at my sister's house in Mississippi about being a cutter of grass. He had spoken to me through the following verse from Isaiah:

Isaiah 40:6-7

All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers,

the flower fades, when the breath of Yahweh blows upon it; surely the people are grass.

The Spirit spoke clearly to me at that time and said, "I have indeed called you to be a cutter of grass, for all flesh is as grass, but I can only use those for this ministry who have allowed me to first cut the grass in their own lives." I knew the Spirit was saying that He needed to deal with my flesh, before He could use me to deal with the flesh of others. God was about to speak to me again about cutting grass, and I was about to have my own lawn mowed (my flesh cut away).

The home God had provided for us in Montezuma was surrounded by a beautiful lawn of lush green grass. It was undoubtedly the nicest lawn of any home in which we had lived. This was a very remarkable fact to me, because, since the time that the Father had spoken to me about my calling to be a cutter of grass, every home we had lived in had terrible lawns where I could not get grass to grow. In one home that we were in for a year the backyard was devoid of grass. I borrowed a friend's tiller and it would barely scratch the surface of the dirt. The ground was like concrete, concrete made of Georgia red clay. I scattered grass seed on it in vain, for the yard remained nothing more than dirt for the entire year we lived there.

The next home we lived in had never had a lawn planted in it before, being in a new development. The owner promised to plant grass for me when we moved in, yet it was four months before he was able to get anyone to come and do the job. The land was tilled with a tractor and prepared to receive seed. The seed was sown and straw placed over it to protect it from the rain, yet the day after the seed was sown a heavy rain came and washed all the seed away from the house and down to the edges of the yard and into the road. To the day we moved out we never had grass growing around the house. This was the house we were in just prior to moving to Montezuma.

You cannot imagine my excitement then when I saw the beautiful yard of grass around this home the Father had just moved us to. I thought that perhaps now the Father would open the door for me to begin to minister as He had prophesied to me. While in the previous two houses the opportunities for ministry were as barren as the soil surrounding our homes, but now we had a lush and fertile yard.

A couple years previous I had bought a used push mower at a yard sale for ten or fifteen dollars, and I had been using it to mow the sparse amount of grass that I had. Now I had the better part of an acre of thick grass to mow, and I thought of purchasing a riding mower to do the job. The Spirit closed every door that I knocked on as I looked for a riding mower, and I became convinced that He desired for me to continue using my 22" push mower.

The Spirit has for quite some time spoken to me through numbers, and I noticed the prevalence of a certain number when we moved to this home. The house number was 2231, and the road we lived off of was County Road 22. When the Spirit showed me I was to use my push mower, the first thing I noted was that it was a 22" mower. I began to wonder about the significance of this number, and I was certain it had something to do with cutting grass, that is, removing sinful flesh. Before I was to leave this house, which would be our residence for two months, the Spirit revealed the significance. I did a search in my Bible software for the number 22 and I came up with the following.

Jeroboam, the king who made all Israel sin with the two golden calves he set up reigned 22 years and God cut him off (I Kings 14:20). Ahab, the king who did more evil than

all the kings who preceded him because of his wife Jezebel, reigned 22 years and God cut him off. Furthermore, the Scriptures record the following about these other wicked kings:

II Kings 8:26-27

Ahaziah was **twenty-two** years old when he became king, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Athaliah the granddaughter of Omri king of Israel. He walked in the way of the house of Ahab and did evil in the sight of Yahweh, like the house of Ahab had done, because he was a son-in-law of the house of Ahab.

II Kings 21:19-23

Amon was **twenty-two** years old when he became king, and he reigned two years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Meshullemeth the daughter of Haruz of Jotbah. He did evil in the sight of Yahweh, as Manasseh his father had done. For he walked in all the way that his father had walked, and served the idols that his father had served and worshiped them. So he forsook Yahweh, the God of his fathers, and did not walk in the way of Yahweh. The servants of Amon conspired against him and killed the king in his own house.

The number 22 has a correlation to wicked kings. As saints we are a nation of kings and priests, and there are among the saints those who are also wicked, for they have allowed the flesh to rule in their lives and have not dealt with it as they ought to. The number 22 speaks of cutting off this wickedness from our lives, even as my 22" mower was used to cut the grass that surrounded my new home on County Road 22. Another astounding confirmation of the symbolism of this number came at this time when a sister in Christ who sends out a daily Scripture, was led by the Spirit to send forth the following:

Ephesians 4:22

Strip yourselves of your former nature [put off and discard your old unrenewed self] which characterized your previous manner of life and becomes corrupt through lusts and desires that spring from delusion...

Amplified Bible

During this period of time in Middle Georgia, we were running a rain surplus of more than 10 inches for the year. Much of this surplus occurred during the two months we were living at the house I am writing about. This made the grass grow tremendously fast, and it was all I could do to keep it mowed with my little push mower. About every other day I was out mowing grass for a couple hours, and, even doing this, it at times got taller than was desirable.

God often foreshadows spiritual realities with natural symbols, and the pattern is "first the natural, then the spiritual." My grass cutting in the natural, preceded a flesh cutting in my life. Whereas I thought I was ready for God to use me in this special ministry toward others, I learned that I still had more flesh to be removed from my own life. One enemy that had been allowed to grow up in my life without proper pruning was fear. Some of these fears had kept me bound and had hindered me from walking in perfect freedom before God, as was demonstrated in the matter with our dogs. God wanted to set me free from this fear, and He used our time in this home to do just that.



The Storm Comes

Just before moving to our home in Montezuma a thought came to me one day, that I rejected as being from the Father. The thought was that God would not release His provision for us in our new home until I had shared the gospel of Christ with my neighbor who lived across the street. My neighbor was a divorced man, close to my own age, who lived alone, though from time to time his two children would come and spend time with him. I had spoken to this man on a number of occasions when we would meet outside, but I had never spoken to Him about the Lord, or about his soul.

Not all saints are given the ministry of an evangelist, but all are called to evangelize. A parallel truth is that not all saints are called to the ministry of a prophet, but Paul says "All can prophesy." I had never considered evangelism to be my ministry gift, and whereas I speak to people about the Lord nearly every day, most of them are professing believers. I knew in my heart that part of my lack of evangelistic effort was a result of a deep, ingrained fear in my life. It was a fear of man that was unhealthy, and which had been keeping me in bonds in certain areas of my life. Yahshua came to set the captives free, and He desires that we be free in every area of our life.

I convinced myself that the thought which had come to mind regarding speaking to my neighbor was not from God, but that if I saw a golden opportunity before I moved I would speak to him. My neighbor was a very congenial person, and not one that people would consider gruff or intimidating. I never found a time to speak to my neighbor before we moved, though this was largely due to the fact that I was not looking very hard.

I had received a financial gift from a brother in New Zealand on April 23rd, and this was the last support I would receive for an entire two months and two days. (Again we see 22 in this, and the Father was using this lack of provision in a profound way to remove some flesh from my life.) I had paid a month's rent when we moved to Montezuma, this being for the month of May, and as June approached I began to get nervous for no support had come in.

I had received a refund from the state of Georgia soon after moving, but the money went quickly with the cost of moving, paying utility bills up to date, purchasing clothes and other essentials for our family which had been pending for some time, and also giving some of the money away as the Spirit directed. When June arrived I had no money for rent and the anxiety this produced in my soul was greater than any other time I could remember. In a parallel to the spiritual buffeting I was experiencing inside, the weather continued to be stormy, and, in particular, very windy on a nearly continual basis. My anxiety had begun to build during the last week of May, and when June came with no provision in hand the storms were at gale force in my soul.

I continued to struggle to stand in faith and to look to the Father for His provision for us, and some days the battle would rage the entire day. Fears of angry landlords, and anxiety over being reproached for not paying my bills in a timely manner weighed upon me. The thought of being evicted terrorized me beyond all sound reason. I did not know why these fears were so strong in my life at this time, for they had never been before.

On June 2nd I had been experiencing a demonic buffeting all day long as fears and anxieties were coming against me. In a direct correlation the wind blew hard all the day and I could see out in the yard the trees bent over against the assault. The wind outside was so ferocious and unrelenting that the trees rarely straightened up the entire day. This was a

perfect mirror of the buffeting I was receiving. By the evening I was so exhausted from the fight that when I prayed to God for relief the tears began to flow and I begged for His mercy and deliverance. I knew that He had me in a place of tremendous sifting, and I felt I could not bear anymore.

I sent out an e-mail in the evening to the Heart4God list, and I asked for the saints to pray for me. The response was immediate as within fifteen minutes I felt the storm in my soul abating, and I received an inpouring of e-mails from saints who said they were praying for me. I believe the number of people who responded with an e-mail to this one mailing was greater than anything I had previously written and sent forth. What a tremendous mercy this was.

When I had prayed that evening, the thought came to me once more that I had not spoken to my former neighbor about his relationship to God, but I once more put the thought away, not wanting to believe that it had anything to do with my trials. Yet the next day as I was listening to the Lord He spoke it to me again. He said that He wanted me to speak to my neighbor about his soul and that He would not release our provision until this had been done. I wanted to convince myself that this was the voice of Satan seeking to torment and confuse me, but I really could not imagine Satan telling me that I was to witness to my neighbor.

What finally persuaded me was the realization that it was a fear of man that had kept me from speaking to my neighbor, and I knew that Yahweh did not want His children to be enslaved to any fears. I considered that, whether God was telling me to speak to this man, or not, I could not do wrong by facing this fear and refusing to be cowed by it. I could only err by continuing to be ruled by fear.

I gathered my family together and I shared with them what I was now convinced the Father had been speaking to me. I shared how I had allowed a fear of man to go uncontested in my life, and that I had failed to speak to our neighbor when the Spirit had prompted me to do so. I asked them to pray for me as I was going out right at that moment to drive the 30 miles to where our neighbor lived, and I was going to fulfill that which God required of me. My wife and children prayed for me, and I then got in the car and drove in complete peace over to this man's house. I knew he would be home, and he was, and he invited me in and we spent about an hour and a half speaking about his relationship to the Lord.

I felt something significant had occurred in this, and that I had broken free from some chains that had long been binding me. The torment from this particular stronghold had been shattered. However, there was another fear that the Father also desired to loose me from before His sifting would be complete.

The Father showed me that I had also been fearful of bearing reproach in the name of Christ. Fears of my landlords thinking that I was an infidel, or reprobate, or a sorry fellow for not holding a wage earning job were buffeting me. Then there was the church and our extended family. They had heard me profess that the Father had called me to trust Him for our finances, and how could I defend myself if the Father chose to delay in manifesting His provision? Who would believe that I was truly walking in the will of God? Would not all men number me among the transgressors?

It wasn't that such reproaches were new to me, for I had experienced a great number of them before. Yet I had never come to a place of being content with the reproaches I received. They had always galled me, and left me with gaping wounds that were slow to heal. As the Spirit spoke to me He began to bring me understanding that it was His will that we willingly bear reproaches in our obedience before God, and that the Father would

intentionally bring us to situations in which we had no possibility of defending ourselves. He intentionally orchestrated events, and our particular reproaches, where no one would believe us if we attempted to persuade them. He opened my eyes to see that He had brought one after another of His chosen vessels to this same place.

Joseph, the son of Jacob, was accused of being an attempted rapist, and, as a slave and a foreigner, no person would believe his word over the word of one of Pharaoh's officials and his wife. What a reproach this young man bore, and it was God's will that he bear it. Mary, the mother of Yahshua, was thought to be an adulteress, and people thought her Son was the product of adultery. How could Yahshua defend Himself? Who would believe that His Father was God and not a man. No man had ever been born previously aside from the intimate relations of a man and a woman, so who would believe that Yahshua was the first and only exception to this pattern? He had to bear this reproach, as well as the reproach of being a Sabbath breaker, a blasphemer, a Samaritan (illegitimate half-breed), and many other things.

The apostle Paul testified regarding reproaches:

II Corinthians 12:10

Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with reproaches, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

God challenged me at this time with the questions, "Will you be content to obey Me even if it leads to reproaches that you are unable to justify in the eyes of man? Will you be content with the knowledge that I know you are being obedient, though all men consider you a transgressor? Will you receive the reproach of your landlord, if it be My will, and bear it with contentment?" It took me some hours to be able to tell the Lord I was willing, but in the end I did. As I made the confession that I would be content to bear more reproach, the storm in my soul broke, for it was the fear and dread of reproach that was bringing torment, and when I chose to no longer avoid reproach the torment was broken. I confessed that I was willing to bear the reproach of my landlord, or any other, and I even began to seek an opportunity to meet my landlord so that I might see whether God had chosen further reproach for me, or not.

A few days later, now the middle of June, our landlord's wife came over to do some work in her garden and I went out to speak to her. I told her that I did not have the money yet to pay her for the month's rent, but that I was committed to doing so as soon as I was able. Her response was very gracious and without a hint of reproach. She said that she understood that there were times when things did not work out according to our expectation and that these were times when we had to have faith in God. What a marvelous attitude and expression of grace this was. When I went back in the house I thanked God for His mercy, and I told Him that though I was willing to bear reproach, it was a blessing that He had chosen to remove the reproach in this instance.

June 25th was a landmark day in many ways for us. It had now been two months and two days since we had received any financial support from any of the saints, and this was quite unusual for us. Though I do not solicit funds, nor do I normally make my personal needs known to the saints, the Spirit regularly leads various ones from all over the world to send us financial gifts at very appropriate times. To go for two months and two days without any such gifts being received represented a very real drought for us. Our rent was

now seriously in arrears. Our telephone bill was a few days past due, and our electric bill would be due before another week had passed.

When we come to extremities in our circumstance we can either begin to murmur and complain, or we can choose to worship God. I felt the Spirit leading me to worship the Father that morning, so I put on a very worshipful CD, and I quickly entered into a deep and profound worship. For about thirty minutes I worshiped the Father, and my whole being was moved. I felt a trembling inside and tears streamed down my face as I worshiped the Father for His awesome holiness, His faithfulness, His love and mercy. It was a very moving time and I knew I had been in the presence of the Father and that He had received my worship which had been offered in the midst of a great trial.

As the CD ended there was a knock at the door and I found that it was my landlord. I went outside to speak to him, and I could tell that he was a bit nervous about what he had to say. He began with, "I really hate to tell you what I have to tell you," and then he proceeded to tell me that one of his sons who had moved out of state with his wife and child had found that things were not working out for them as he had anticipated, and they were going to move back home and would need to live in the home we were now occupying. This man told me that he had not anticipated having to ask us to move until his next son got married, but this had come up unexpectedly. He hated to ask me to move out so soon after we had moved in, and as some compensation they wanted to offer us our last month's rent free, if we could be out in two weeks time.

I saw in this that God had ordered our steps to manifest a provision for us in receiving a free month's rent, and also giving our landlord's a way to save face and act graciously in this unexpected turn of events. Our landlord was being very humble and gracious, and I did my best to reassure him that I was in no way upset with his request, and we would begin praying immediately for the Lord to show us where we were to move.

While he was speaking he also mentioned that they did not know that we had dogs when we moved in, and they had not asked, and we had not told them. He said they would never have said anything about the dogs once we moved in, but it was really their desire to not have dogs in the house. These words brought back to remembrance my own omission of revealing this information, and it brought me understanding of what the Father was doing.

Over the next days the Father spoke to me through the history of Abram and Sarai, when on two occasions Abram went into a foreign country (Egypt and Gerar) and he asked Sarai to say that she was his sister. This was actually a true statement, for they had the same father, but different mothers. Technically, Abram and Sarai were not lying, but neither were they disclosing the entire truth. They were withholding the fact that they were married due to Abram's fear that the men of the land would kill him in order to have Sarai for themselves, for she was very beautiful.

Abram, who was later to be called Abraham, is called the father of faith, yet his faith was something that he had to grow in. He had faith when he was younger, for he followed God to a land that he knew nothing about simply on a promise from God. Yet his faith needed perfecting. He stumbled in faith on several occasions, and these were two of them. Abram should have been able to trust God, and not be concerned about being killed. Yahweh had promised Abram that he would be a father of many nations, and Abram had not yet had born to him the child that was promised. He should have been able to trust God to take care of him in these foreign lands, yet fear was present in his life and he willingly omitted a key item of truth in order to "help" God preserve his life.

What a parallel these occasions in Abram's life were to my own situation, for I had also omitted some information to help God out (not telling our landlord we had dogs), and in doing so I had revealed that my faith was not yet perfected. God, in His mercy, would now allow me to walk through the same situation again in order that I might walk perfectly this next time. In a great parallel to our previous move, we once more had two weeks to move, no money on hand, and no idea where we would move to.

When Yahweh revealed the purpose for having us go through this again, I felt no reproof from Him, but only His desire to see me perfected in faith. As I read the story of Abram's two similar events, I also could find no hint of God reproving him in the matter. God simply continued to patiently mold Abram into Abraham the father of faith. When I understood the will and purpose of God in this matter, I gathered my family together and I confessed to them these things. I told them that the reason we were having to move again so soon was that I had not acted perfectly in the previous move, and God wanted to see all of His children perfected before Him. I confessed my error and we all committed to doing it right this next time.

I took comfort in the fact that Yahweh did not punish Abram materially when he stumbled in these matters, but that he actually was increased in goods in both instances. Though he did suffer embarrassment in being forcibly escorted out of Egypt, he went away with more than he arrived with. Knowing this, I had hope that God would not make us suffer some deprivation due to my error, such as sending us to live in some dilapidated hovel that was undesirably situated, trusting instead that He was merely looking to produce a correct attitude in me that He might bless us.

June 25th was a landmark day due to the fact that we learned that the Lord was going to move us again in two weeks, but it also stood out because we received a financial gift in the mail that day from a Christian sister in California. It had been two months and two days exactly since the last gift, and this was the capstone to God's testimony that He was removing much flesh from my life. The amount we received was fifty dollars, and five is the number of grace, and fifty is the number of Jubilee where all the captives were set free, so this number was also very significant to us. An added testimony was that the sister had written the check out and dated it for the 23rd, and once more Yahweh was testifying to us that He was our shepherd and we would not want. We actually received more than fifty dollars on this day, for our landlord had told us our rent would be free for the month, and this was a financial provision as well.

As I spoke to my family of what the Father was doing, I shared with them how gracious and merciful the Father was being to us. Our landlord could have come over with great indignation because I had not told them about the dogs, and he could have been angry that I was behind on the rent. He could have rightfully demanded that we be out in two weeks and still pay the last month's rent, yet none of these things occurred. We received great grace as the landlord was very humble and even apologetic, and he demonstrated much grace to us in giving us a free month's rent. We serve a loving and merciful God.



Disappointment, and an Illinois Miracle

The next day, June 26th, was similarly eventful. My wife had planned to get together with our friend Barbara Barnes. Barbara called in the morning to say that she was at a gas station and her car would not crank. She asked if we could meet her there and see if we could help her. Tony and I hurriedly got in our car to go help her, and, to our amazement, our car would not crank either. I did not think that this was merely coincidence for the Spirit had spoken to me that Barbara's husband Randy and I would one day be working together in ministry. A few years back we were both picking muscadines and scuppernongs (a type of large grape) in a local vineyard. The name of the vineyard just happened to be JC's Vineyard, JC being the preferred name of the owner. The Spirit spoke to me at the time and told me that Randy and I would indeed be working together in JC's (Jesus Christ's) vineyard in the future. Again, first the natural, then the spiritual.

As I was standing outside looking at my car that would not crank, and contemplating this strange parallel between our two cars, the phone rang and it was one of the ministers from the church we were fellowshiping with. He said he had heard we were having to move, and he expressed his sympathy over this, and then he asked if I would be able to meet with him and the other minister from the body that night. I told him I would be delighted to do so. We arranged to meet at 7:30 P.M..

I was able to get my car fixed before the meeting as God sent a Christian brother over to our house who paid for the part and installed it for me. It turned out that both our car and the Barnes' car had the starter go out on them at the same time. We later found out that both cars were repaired and driven back home at nearly the same moment, around 5:30 P.M..

I went to the meeting that night, not having a clue as to what the ministers wanted to speak to me about, though many guesses flew around my mind, all of which were wrong. These men had been considering whether God had sent me to be a minister with them to the body of Christ, and one of them had asked me a few weeks previously if I considered myself Calvinistic in my beliefs. One of the five main points of Calvinism is 'limited atonement', and it asserts that Christ died only for a remnant of the creation, and that the majority of the creation will suffer unending torment in the lake of fire never to be reconciled to God. It turned out that the ministers wanted to speak to me about my belief that when God's plan of the ages is complete all things whether in heaven or in earth would be reconciled to God through the cross of Christ (Colossians 1:20).

This minister had been surprised to hear me state that I found fault with this point of Calvinism, and I gave him a copy of the book I had written on the topic called *God's Plan of the Ages*. Both ministers had looked over the book, one very briefly, and they had both concluded that the teaching of universal reconciliation was heresy. The meeting both began and ended with them affirming their belief that it was heresy. We spent over three hours discussing the matter, but were unable to come to agreement. I asked them what effect this would have on my fellowship with them and I was told that I would not be allowed to hold any teaching position in the church, nor would I be allowed to partake of the sacrament of communion with them. I reaffirmed my love for both men before leaving, and I hugged both of their necks.

In the span of two days, I found that I would have to move suddenly, and I would have no opportunity to minister among this body of believers. A decision was set before me, and

I knew it was a test. I could shake the dust off of my feet and move out of the community the Father had led us to, or I could forgive my brothers and choose to remain, as I looked to God to fulfill the things He had spoken to me about raising up a people for His praise and glory. I searched the mind of the Spirit and I could not find any witness that He desired me to leave. He had already spoken to me about being willing to bear reproach, and here I was being reproached as a heretic and I was being given the opportunity to bear it with contentment.

Our family prayed about the matter, and we were all inclined to stay and to continue to fellowship with this people, even though I would be viewed as a heretic and numbered among the transgressors. As saints we are being conformed to the image of Christ, and the pattern of Yahshua's life was to go to a people whom the Father had sent Him to, to be rejected and reproached by these people, and yet He did not shake the dust off His sandals and call down fire on them. Rather, He laid down His life for them that they might be reconciled to the Father. Yahshua is our pattern Man, and how blessed we are when the Father gives us an opportunity to share in the work and the suffering of His firstborn Son! The Spirit bore witness that He was offering such an opportunity to me, yet how easy it would be to simply walk away from this people since I was having to move at this time anyway.

As I considered it I realized that if I walked away pride would be the primary motivator in a decision to do so. Yet if I stayed and bore the reproach with contentment, God would work in me the humility that He desires in His sons and daughters. The decision was not a difficult one, and as a family we confessed to the Father that we were desirous of staying among these people that we loved, and which we knew He loved, and we asked that He would provide us a new place to live.

It was only a day or two after we had committed to stay, and had asked for God's provision, that a check arrived in the mail. I was the only one home, and normally we did not see the mail arrive for the mailbox was quite a distance from the house. I "just happened" to look out the front window when I saw the mail being delivered. I felt the Spirit urging me to go and check the mail, and I had an expectancy that had been lacking during our long drought. There was a letter in the mail from a brother in Canada. I opened the letter and I found that it contained a postal money order, and what looked like a carbon copy.

The amount on the money order was \$729.20. I had to look at the amount several times to believe I was seeing it correctly, for this was a significant amount, yet the note attached to it described it as being a small amount which the brother hoped would be helpful to allow me to continue in the ministry that the Father had called me to. Sure enough, it was over seven hundred dollars. As I walked back to the house I felt the Spirit urging me to look closer at the carbon copy. It looked identical, and had the very same amount inscribed on it. The thought occurred that I should check the serial number. The serial number on the copy was different than the original. In awe, I then understood that this Christian brother had sent me \$1,458.40. He had actually sent \$2,000 dollars Canadian, and this was the amount it translated to when converted to U.S. currency. What a blessing this was, and with this money the Father had provided the necessary money to pay our bills and rent our next home.

I took this gift to be a confirmation from the Father that He was pleased to allow us to remain in the area, and I had a growing anticipation that He would soon reveal His perfect provision for a home for us. I shared with my family that I believed the Father would

do similarly as He had done the last time we had moved and we would not have to seek a place, but He would bring it to us. We did go out and check out a few possibilities one day, asking the Father to close all doors that were not of Him, and all the doors were closed, so I determined not to look further.

On the first of July I received a surprising phone call. A man from Illinois whom I had only received a couple of short e-mail correspondences from, was on the phone and he told me that he was in Montezuma, Georgia. This was unanticipated, and I invited he and his wife to come on over to our house. Our family had chosen this day to pack up all that could be boxed, so that we would be ready when the Father opened a door for us. This couple arrived to find our house filled with boxes.

Gary and Karri Sargeant were the names of our unexpected visitors. They shared with me that the Spirit had spoken to Gary and told him to go to Georgia to see me, and he really did not know all that the Father intended, but that he knew he was to be there. He wasn't sure if the Father wanted him to move to Georgia, or just come for a visit, though Karri said that the Spirit had told her they would only be in Georgia seven days. Not certain of the Father's will in this, Gary still heard the Spirit speak to him when he arrived in Montezuma, and direct him to rent a house. The Spirit said, "I will make it real simple. There will be only one house for rent in the local newspaper, and that is the one I want you to rent." Sure enough, there was only one house for rent in the paper, and Gary put down a deposit on it, with a commitment to pay the rent by July 8th.

As Gary and Karri looked at the house they had placed a deposit on, they questioned whether the Lord really intended it for them. The house was too big for the two of them, being a three bedroom triple-wide manufactured home. When Gary entered our home with boxes everywhere, and heard that we were preparing to move, but had no idea where we were to move to, he said, "I think I may have just rented your house for you."

Over the next few days, Gary prayed and asked the Lord that if the house were intended for he and his wife that the Father would provide the money for them to rent it by the end of the week, for they had rented a hotel room in town for one week and they had told the owners that they would pay them the rent in one week. He said that if the Lord did not provide them the money then he would know that the house was intended for us, and not them. Before the week was over, however, both Gary and Karri had heard from the Lord that they were to return to Illinois.

The Father sent this couple to Georgia for much more than simply to secure a house for us. The Father had many things which he wanted me to minister to this couple, and we spent much time together. The Spirit did some profound things during this week, and He manifested many prophetic signs that confirmed the things He was speaking. Before the week was over both Gary and Karri knew that they were to return to Illinois, and many spiritual things had been imparted between us all. My daughter formed a special bond with Karri, and it was a very precious time.

At the end of their week in Georgia, we went with the couple to meet the landlords of what was to be our new home, and to see the house. The house was everything we had desired. My daughter had especially wanted to remain in the country (as opposed to living in the city), and the home was on a farm with a pecan orchard behind it with cows pastured under the trees. There were horses in a nearby field, and my wife had been saying for months how she had wanted some chickens so she could have fresh eggs, though I did not want the responsibility of having to care for them. There were chickens that ranged freely throughout the yards, and the owners' son said that we were welcome to have all the eggs

we wanted for he did not like eggs. In this way, both my wife's desire and my own were satisfied.

One thing I knew would be an important point to deal with up front was to disclose that we had inside dogs, and to ascertain that this was not a problem for the owners. Before we even arrived at the house the couple from Illinois told us that the landlords allowed indoor dogs, but not outside dogs, for they said the outside dogs always ended up becoming theirs. What a perfect provision this was, and I had never heard of any landlord who allowed only indoor dogs, which was exactly what we needed. They confirmed this when we spoke to them.

The landlords told us that the house had been advertised in the paper for about a week before this couple from Illinois came to rent it, and they had absolutely no response on the ad, which was amazing since decent rental property is very scarce in this rural area. Yet in the next days after this couple put down a deposit a waiting list of eight families who wanted to rent the home had been compiled. Since this couple had already put down the deposit, the owners were willing to transfer the deposit to us and allow us to rent it, which we did.

What a miraculous thing this was, for the Father sent a couple all the way from Illinois to secure a house for us, not even knowing we were having to move, and it was equally incredible that the home would be a perfect match for us in every way! Once more we had the house brought to us, and we did not need to search for it. In this little community, such things were truly amazing. My wife had recently spoken to another lady from this same community who was once in a similar situation of having to move in two weeks. She testified that she and her husband had to move out of the community for there were no suitable properties for rent.

After my great disappointment with the ministers of the local fellowship we were attending, I was much encouraged by the truly marvelous ways in which God continued to provide for us.



Eights and Sevens

God delights to speak to me through numbers, and He gave us some significant ones at this time. After receiving the money from the brother in Canada, I paid our telephone bill, electric bill and all other bills up to date, as well as buying some groceries. When I balanced our checkbook to see how much money we had left to use for moving, the balance came to the unusual number of \$888.77. It struck me immediately that the Father had chosen to speak to me through this number, so I went to an online site where E.W. Bullinger's book on the Biblical significance of numbers is located, and I was surprised to find an entry called *Eight and Seven Together*. Of these two numbers together he writes:

Seven means, as we have seen, according to its etymology, that which is spiritually complete or satisfying; while eight denotes that which is superabundant or satiating. Hence we often find these two numbers associated with these distinctions.

I did not understand why these two numbers should be important to us at the time, but the Lord continued to set these two numbers before us, linked together with one another in ways that we could not ignore. On the first day that we drove out to this new home that the Sargeants had secured for us, we turned onto the road that borders one side of the property, which must be traversed to get to the house. When I passed the street sign, I had to stop and ask my family, "Did you see that?" I drove back to the sign and on it was written CR 87 for County Road 87. A further confirmation of God speaking to us through these numbers at this time was that we officially moved into our new home, and spent our first night there on July 8th, which is the seventh month and eighth day. Only in hindsight have I been able to understand what these numbers signified.

My rejection by the ministers of this body, who declared my teaching to be heresy and who told me that I would not even be allowed to partake of communion with them, occurred the very day after I had heard from my landlord that his son was moving back and they needed us to move out in two weeks. The temptation was present to shake the dust off of my feet and move away from this area and never fellowship with this people again. It was not in my heart to do these things, however, so I quickly rejected these thoughts that the enemy brought to my mind. I truly loved this group of people, and I was not willing to give up my hope that God would yet lead them forward into their inheritance in Christ. I hoped that they might yet not shrink back from a walk of faith and life in the Spirit.

The morning after my meeting with the ministers, I told my family about all that had transpired. I told them, despite the fact that I would be considered a heretic, and regardless of my being limited from any teaching role among them, I still desired to stay and intercede for this people. I asked my family if they were willing and desirous of staying under these circumstances and they all said they were. As a family, we committed to continue to attend services and to love the people and pray for them, though I knew the news would quickly get around that I had met with the elders, and the outcome of the meeting would be noised about.

My family and I bowed before the Father and told Him that we were willing to remain and intercede for this body of believers, and we asked Him, that if this were agreeable to Him, that He would let us know by opening up a suitable place for us to move into that was in this same area. It was a remarkable thing that the first house had been available to us and

had been so suitable. It was an even more remarkable thing when we found a second house in this same rural community, and once more we did not have to look for it, but God brought it to us at the hands of a couple who had driven all the way from Illinois. God revealed in a profound way that He was very pleased with our request to remain and intercede.

The significance of the numbers eight and seven is that God found our willingness to put aside all offense in order to intercede for these people to be a satisfying thing in His eyes. He found our willingness to despise the shame and endure reproach, while asking the Father to bring these people into their inheritance in Christ, to be a complete and mature response. We were willing to suffer for the sake of others, and this satisfied the heart of Yahweh. The etymology of these numbers testified that our being at this home for this purpose was an acceptable offering in the sight of God. It was “spiritually complete or satisfying” to the Father, and the aroma of this sacrifice was “superabundant and satiating” to Him.

God testified even further concerning this matter of making an intercessory offering for this people. Our amazement grew when we saw what other testimonies God had set to our obedience in remaining here to pray for the people, rather than choosing to leave with an offended heart. The house was located at 308 Levie Road, and it was impossible to not see the name of the priestly tribe in this name. The owner’s last name was King. So this property bore the remarkable testimony of kings and priests.

Revelation 1:5-6

And from Yahshua Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

It was the duty of the priests to present the sacrifices to God, and as a nation of kings and priests it is the calling of all of God’s elect to offer to God sacrifices that are acceptable and well pleasing unto Him. Christ is the forerunner for all of the elect. He bids His disciples to follow where He walked. As He took up the cross, so are all of His disciples commanded to take up their cross and follow Him. If He willingly bore reproach as an evildoer, so too will His disciples be asked to bear similar reproach. If He laid down His life for those who treated Him with despise and ill will, then so too will the elect of God be called to lay down their lives for those who have rejected them.

God spoke to me much about this call to intercede for others while we lived at this home on Levie Road. He taught me much concerning the saints’ call to lay down their lives for others. Daily I was brought to pray for the ministers who had rejected me. When I met them at church I continued to hug their necks and speak a blessing to them. I did not turn my love away from them, nor did I call down fire from heaven to consume them. I continued to ask God to bring them into their inheritance in Christ.

We were to experience much pain while we lived in this home, and we were to endure some more storms. As a testimony to what was to occur in our lives spiritually, God once more provided natural signs to attest to what was coming. Within the first few weeks there were repeated thunderstorms that passed through the area. The winds were so severe that they blew the underpinning loose from under the house, and I had to put it back in place and reattach it. This happened two or three times, as thunderstorms would pass through

the area quickly.

On the last occasion when this occurred, my son Josiah had gone over to the barn to get some eggs from the chickens before the storm arrived. The wind began blowing, with lightning striking in close proximity attended by loud boomings of thunder. Josiah had not yet made it back, and I was thinking about looking for him when my wife hollered and said that Josiah was crawling through the yard. She thought he had been struck by lightning. I flew out the door and was by his side in a moment. He was a pitiful sight crawling through the yard on all fours.

I asked him what had happened and he said that when he had seen the lightning that he had decided to hurry to the house and he went to change his gait to a run, pushing off suddenly with one leg, when his knee twisted. He fell to the ground and sat the eggs down in the grass and was proceeding to crawl to the house. Tony and I helped him into the house. His knee was tender for some time, and he walked gingerly for a week, or so, but he healed up quickly. This event was a foreshadowing of a tremendous spiritual storm to come where my son would once more play a central part.

My mind was gripped with the image of my son crawling through the yard, and great compassion filled my heart for him. I thought of David crying out in grief over his son, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!" It may seem strange that these words came to mind when I witnessed my son dragging himself through the yard, for my son's condition was nowhere near the extremities of that young man Absalom. Josiah was my only living son, however, and it was an emotionally moving experience for me to see him in this way.

After the storm I noticed that the air conditioner would no longer come on. It had been damaged by a lightning strike. When I went to check on this problem I noticed that the brand name of the air conditioning unit was Payne. This was the same spelling as the town we lived in where we knew so much pain. What a prophetic sign this would prove to be. Although the landlords replaced the unit within a few days, the old unit sat in the yard next to the house until the day we moved out.

The emotional pain we were to know at this house, and the great wrestling of soul and spirit, were to be the greatest we had ever experienced. Though I had known longer trials, I had never experienced any trial that would be as intense as that which was coming. That which is spiritually complete and satisfying to God often comes attended with great wrestling and acute pain. God pronounced His satisfaction when Abraham was willing to offer up Isaac, and before we left this home on Levie Road I would also be faced with a similar test.

I was to learn more about the Father's heart through the painful experiences I was about to walk through. Just as Yahweh wanted Abraham to learn more of His character and heart, so too did He want me to discern more of His great and terrible love. Even in Abraham's day, God had already determined to give up His Son Yahshua as a sacrifice, and He wanted a friend with whom He could share the knowledge of what it had cost Him. In asking Abraham to perform a similar act, Abraham would be able to touch the heart of Yahweh in a way that only those who are willing to make such deep sacrifices can. Abraham was called "the friend of God," and a true friend will willingly share the joys and the sorrows of another.

Yahweh wants others to know His heart, His sacrifices, His pain and sorrow. God is not some automaton that lacks feelings. He did not embark upon the plan that would lead to the death of His beloved Son without emotion and pain. What He experienced is

inexpressible, for never has the love of a father for a son been more pure, and never has there been a son who was more pleasing to his father. Even as the Son knew great agonies in the Garden of Gethsemane as He contemplated drinking from the cup of suffering that would lead to His separation from the Father, so too did the Father drink from His own cup and know His own agony.

The Father was about to give me a small taste of the depths of sorrow He was willing to endure to redeem a fallen creation. Even as He stood in intercession on behalf of the world who had rejected Him, so I was being called to stand as an intercessor for this group of believers.



The Threat of Eviction

After being in this home on Levie Road for a month it came time to pay for another month's rent. Once more God's provision did not include money to pay the rent on time. I was really grieved by this, and I argued with God some concerning this matter. I reminded Him that we had asked that if it was His will for us to remain in this area and intercede for this body of believers that He would give us a sign of His pleasure in this matter by opening up another house for us to move to. He had done so by sending a couple all the way from Illinois to secure a house for us on the very day that we began boxing up all of our things to move. This couple had entered our home and said, "I think I may have just rented your house for you."

There was no doubt in our minds that God had gone before us in this matter, for we did not even have to look for this home. God brought it to us. I was extremely perplexed then, when God would not manifest His provision for us to continue to pay rent. I had to contact our landlords and tell them I did not have the money to pay them, but I was committed to do so as soon as the funds came in. The landlords were not willing to be patient with us at all in this matter, and when the rent was only a few days late they informed us that they were going to file at the local courthouse to have us evicted.

This news was very unsettling for my wife, and it was disturbing to me as well. We had never faced eviction before. Immediately, images began swirling around in our minds of the Sheriff coming to put all of our furniture out by the road. We had fears of being put out with no idea of where we would go. These, and similar anxieties, were to fuel the storms that would rage in our souls for the next few weeks. If I were perfected in my faith I would not have worried, instead I would have been able to sleep as soundly as Christ did on the cushion in the boat while the storm raged around Him. God had given me plenty of assurances that things would be all right. He had spoken through my daughter during an earlier test and said, "You need not fear any trouble. Instead trust Me."

I considered these words often in these days, as I re-read God's words of prophecy to me. They did give me a measure of calm in the midst of the storm, but it was not a perfect calm. In this same prophetic word God had said, "Those who place their trust in Me need never fear, for I am a just God," and again He said, "Put away all foolish thoughts of doubt and unbelief, for great is my reward to those who trust in Me." These words became my defense against the storms that we were encountering, and I would daily do battle by meditating upon what God had spoken to me. I had to choose whether I would walk by sight, or walk by faith, trusting in the words of God as more real than the events that were conspiring against us.

I mentioned before how God had prepared us for the test of faith when we first moved to Montezuma by having a Christian brother send me a book on the life of Rees Howells. When I first opened this book and looked in the index I saw a chapter titled *Called Out From Wage Earning*, and this was the very first chapter I read, for God was calling me to leave my job at the college, and I wanted the encouragement of another man who had walked in a similar place. Rees Howells also experienced tests, but God was faithful to see him through all of them. I had not even known this book was coming, but God knew I needed to be encouraged by the witness of it at this time. He spoke to me further through the chapter *Standing in the Queue*, which gave us the boost we needed to stand during our own time of testing.

This was not to be the last time God would prepare me for a test by placing it upon some saint's heart to send me a book. Just before we moved to the home on Levie Road, another brother in Christ sent me a copy of Bill Britton's biography called "Prophet on Wheels." In this book Bill Britton described a time when God called him to also trust God for his provision as he committed himself to ministry. Bill gave up a lucrative insurance sales job to follow God in obedience, and then God did not provide according to his expectation. Bill ended up having his nice car repossessed, and they too faced being cast out of their home for not being able to make their payments. Bill began to complain to God about the poor provision they were seeing. The following is taken from his writing titled *Hebrews - A Book of Better Things*.

One time, years ago, we were living in a little house at the edge of a village in Carney, Oklahoma. Our only bathroom was an outdoor privy, or an outhouse, as some call them. We had no hot water in the house. In fact, until we were able to have a well dug, we had no water at all and had to carry water from a neighbor's house. It was during this time that our youngest girl, Rachel, was born and seeing my wife have to take care of herself and her newborn baby under these conditions, began to do something to me.

I had been successful in the insurance business and was zone manager for a very fine company, but the Lord had pressed on my spirit to quit my job and give full-time to the ministry of writing and radio preaching. Our expenses were heavy and had been sufficiently met by my earnings at my job. But when I was without a job, the expenses went on while the money coming in was cut off. Things got in very bad shape. Financially, it seemed that the door to heaven was closed. Night after night I would stand in the field behind our house and look up at the stars and say, "Father, I know you own every one of those stars. I know you own the cattle on a thousand hills. You have in your hands the hearts of millionaires who would not even miss the amount that it would take to bring us through this financial crisis. Father, I do not doubt your ability to meet our needs. The question in my heart is, why are you not meeting those needs? Why are you letting us go like this?"

Night after night I cried to God. Our bills were getting behind. We hardly had money to feed our children. We lost our car and it looked as though we would lose our little home. Unknown to me, a bitterness against God was beginning to creep into my heart. I did not recognize this until one night I went to a service in Oklahoma City.

The preacher was preaching on the first part of Hebrews 3. I had with me an Amplified New Testament, and began to read this chapter in the Amplified, reading ahead of where he was preaching. I came to verse 8, and in the Amplified it says: "Do not harden your hearts, as happened in the rebellion of Israel and in their provocation and embitterment of Me in the day of testing in the wilderness." I stopped and read that phrase again, "embitterment of Me." Then I realized that the children of Israel in the wilderness were bitter at God.

I said, "God, why were they bitter at you?" And the Lord spoke to me as I sat there in the service that night and said: "They became embittered at Me because they knew I could do better than give them bread and water. I gave them manna from heaven and water from the rock, but they lusted after flesh. They knew that if I desired, I could give them quail, and they were bitter at Me because I was not doing as much

for them as they knew I was capable of doing." I thought to myself, "what a wicked and rebellious people. They did not deserve to go into the promised land, becoming embittered like that at God." Then the voice of the Lord spoke to me and said: "Son, that's the condition you are in. You are becoming bitter at Me." I cried out in horror, "Oh no, Lord, not me, I'm your son. I wouldn't be bitter at you no matter what." He said: "You are becoming bitter because you know in your heart and have faith to believe that I am able to meet all your financial needs; and yet, you are wondering why I am not doing it, and bitterness is coming into your heart."

As the light of His Word shined upon my heart, I recognized that it was true, and right there in my seat, while the preacher in the pulpit was continuing his message, I had an altar call and cried out to God for repentance and for forgiveness. I said: "God if you will cleanse me from this awful thing, I will never complain or become bitter at any circumstance you bring me into, regardless of what it is"

In his biography Bill shares of this same time, and goes on to comment that he told the Lord that even if they should lose their house that he would not complain a word to God. He said that if he and his wife and children were put out of the house that they would just join hands and sing praises to God as they walked down the country road leading away from their house. This experience came back to me as I found myself in similar straits. I did not want to murmur against God, yet I was very perplexed about the situation, and experiencing some anxiety.

It was not possible for us to go anywhere, for we did not have the money to rent another house. We had to simply wait for things to play themselves out and see what God would do for us. I gathered my family together and told them that we would continue to pray for God's provision in our lives, and look to Him to deliver us. I read them the chapter from Bill Britton's book where he faced his own crisis, and I told my family that we had to count the cost of our obedience.

The Spirit had shown me that the enemy is able to heap added torment upon us when we have not counted the cost of obedience and accepted it. I thought of what the worst thing was that could happen. We could be evicted by the Sheriff and have all of our possessions put out by the road. We could possibly lose all we owned of material goods. I considered whether I was willing to pay that price as an intercession for the people we were praying for, and as an act of obedience to God's will. I determined that I was, and I shared this with my family. I asked them to also count the cost, for by doing so they would take away the enemy's ability to torment them. When Satan came with his fear tactics saying that we could lose everything, we could simply respond, "I have already counted the cost and I am willing." The threat would then lose its potency, and we could know peace.

Our landlords filed the eviction papers, and the Sheriff came out to have us sign the document. The papers then went back to the court and we had a couple weeks to come up with the rent or be put out. The weeks went by and no money came in to pay the rent. We began looking for the Sheriff to show up any day and place all of our belongings out by the road and to put us out as well. I continued to pray for grace, particularly that God would spare my wife from having to go through this experience. She had struggled mightily for weeks, but had at last come to a place where she said she was willing to trust God in this situation, and she would accept His will in the matter. This was a great victory and I made mention of it to God and asked for Him to spare Tony from this ignominy.

The day came when the Sheriff drove down the driveway, and I knew we were to

receive the final news of our eviction. The Sheriff was a kindly gentleman. He told me the landlords wanted him to throw us out that day and put our belongings by the road, but he told them he didn't do things that way. He said that he preferred to give people a period of grace to move out in an orderly fashion, and he would give us three more days to allow us to move our belongings. He was almost apologetic about his duty, and his gracious demeanor did wonders for my tense nerves.

God was to open up a place for us to move to the very next day, and we would end up getting all of our things moved in good fashion during the next three days. It happened to be Labor Day weekend, so some of our friends had time off from work and they helped us move. A couple we had known for a number of years, Randy and Georgina Mills, had heard of our predicament and they prayed and felt like the Lord would have them to offer for our family to come and live with them for a time. We could place our belongings in their garage, and we could also help them out by completing some remodeling projects on their home. I prayed about this offer and felt the Lord would have us to accept it. We would end up staying with this couple for five months.

God gave us some confirmations of His tremendous grace being loosed to us at this time. I had prayed for grace in this situation, and it had impressed me that the Sheriff had used the word grace when he said that he preferred to give people a grace period to move their things in an orderly fashion. When I remembered these words it seemed to me that God had deliberately led this man to use this term to show me that He had heard my prayer. Another testimony of God's grace being extended to us was to occur on the day we moved out. I did not set my alarm on the Sunday we were to move, but I woke up and looked at the clock and it was exactly 5:00 AM. Five is the Scriptural number for grace, and it was very unusual that I would wake up at this time, for I had been in the habit of waking between six and seven.

When I checked the news on the computer that morning I was faced with an even more remarkable confirmation. The headlines read:

Texas braces for wind, rain as Grace nears

(CNN) --As Tropical Storm Grace moved steadily closer to the Texas Gulf Coast, Hurricane Fabian churned far east of the Caribbean, the National Hurricane Center in Miami, Florida, said Sunday.

At 5 a.m. EDT, Grace was about 115 miles southeast of Corpus Christi, Texas, and moving to the northwest near 14 mph, forecasters said. That motion would bring the storm's center across the Texas coast sometime Sunday.

Strong winds and rain from the storm have fallen over East Texas and southern Louisiana, forecasters said. They predicted rainfall accumulations of 6-8 inches in those areas, with higher amounts in some places.

A tropical storm warning remained in effect for the Texas coast from High Island to Corpus Christi.

The statements in this article were too incredible to be mere coincidence. The time given for this tropical storm update was 5 AM, five being the number of grace. Grace was 115 miles from Corpus Christi, 115 being 23 times 5, 23 signifying God's provision as in the 23rd Psalm "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want," and five once more being the number of grace. God was stating through this that His grace was being loosed in the area of provision. But the clincher is that it said Grace was heading toward Corpus Christi, which

is Latin for “the Body of Christ.” I was in awe of what I read, and I knew Yahweh had set this sign before me for my encouragement.

We would be moved by the deadline given us by the Sheriff, and we would know five months with our friends, which was a period signifying grace. A week after we moved I received some money and I paid our landlords the balance of the rent I had owed them. I was not required to do so by law, but I sensed in the Spirit that it was the right thing to do, and I did not desire to defraud anyone. We experienced one more excruciating trial before all this was accomplished. I have skipped over it to tell the end of this matter first, but I will speak of this ordeal in the next chapter.



My Son, My Son!

I mentioned that we were to know one more final, agonizing test before we left our home on Levie Road. It began the day the Sheriff arrived to tell us we would have to be out in three days, and this test would be brief, but intense. As soon as the Sheriff left I told my family that we would indeed be moving, although we had no idea at that moment where we would go. I then went into my bedroom to seek the face of God. I was troubled in my heart because I had expected God to receive our intercession on behalf of this people and bring them forth to a walk of faith. Instead I had witnessed them taking steps backward as they turned away from God's will for them to step out in faith regarding certain decisions they were facing. They were also moving back to a closer affiliation with the traditional Mennonite churches from which the Spirit had called them forth. Because of these things I wondered if our intercession could yet be complete.

As I prayed with much anguish in my heart, a terrible thought began to form in my mind. I sensed the Spirit asking me, "What if I asked you to perform one last great act of intercession for this people? What if I asked you to not move out as the Sheriff instructed you to do, and it ended in your being arrested and you being separated from your wife and children, with your children being placed in government custody for a time? Would you be willing to endure even this as an act of intercession for this people?"

Terror filled my heart when these thoughts came into my mind. I wanted to immediately reject these thoughts as being from the enemy. I wanted to believe that he was simply seeking to torment me further, but it was not the first time I had considered that God might eventually ask me to make such a sacrifice. I had been dreading this moment for years.

Several years earlier, right after the Lord revealed that He would strip us from all things we had gained in our years of disobedience, we had stayed with our friends Randy and Barbara Barnes for a short time. While we were at the Barnes' house, I watched a video that Randy had pointed out to me. It was an older movie called "The Bible," and it began with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and it ended with Abraham taking Isaac to the mountain to sacrifice him.

The end of this movie was very powerfully depicted as it showed Abraham traveling, with the son he loved, to the mount to make the sacrifice. The agony in Abraham's heart was revealed to be tremendous, yet he went forward obediently. The movie depicted Abraham binding the arms of his son with a sash, and then laying Isaac upon the altar. Isaac may have been the age of my own son Josiah who was now thirteen years old. The movie ended with a profound question coming from Isaac's lips as he spoke to his father. He said, "Is there nothing that God cannot require us to do?" Abraham responded, "No son, nothing."

When I watched this movie I was in a time of great testing, and I was carrying a cross that would lead to a financial death. The pain of this cross was great, but I considered what it would be like to be required to give up one's own child. There was, and is, nothing more precious to me than my children, and I felt that I could empathize with Abraham's own agony as I watched this movie. What God required of Abraham seemed beyond normal reason to bear. It struck me as cruel, for I knew that there had to be real agony and torment in his heart as he spent three days traveling to the mount with his son.

After watching this movie I was appalled, and I refused to pray to God for several days. God seemed too terrible to me in the things He required of those who would follow Him.

Something within me knew that a day would come when I would also be asked to willingly give to God that which was most precious to me, and I could not bear the thought. The question of Isaac in this movie stood before me, "Is there nothing that God cannot require of us?" I knew the answer was that God could, and would, require that we hold nothing back from Him. There could be nothing that we loved more than we loved Him.

After viewing this film I spent several days brooding upon the high cost of discipleship. I wondered whether I actually would be able to give up my children if God should require it of me. I found much weakness within me, and I knew that in my own strength such an act of obedience would be impossible. Now the test was set before me, and I had to confront this matter. I do not know if the things I envisioned happening if I refused to move out would actually occur. I do not know if I would actually be arrested, or my children would be taken from me, but for me at that moment the possibility was very real, and the Spirit allowed it to be a real possibility in my thinking.

I spent hours in my room in agony. I tried to push these thoughts from my mind, but they would not go away. I considered my wife's response if I told her God had revealed to me that we had to stay and face whatever consequences should come. She had wrestled mightily with the thought of losing her possessions, and had finally accepted this, if it should prove to be the Father's will. I knew it would be an even more incredible test to ask her to pay this further intercessory price.

I have never known such agony as I did during those hours alone in my room. It became to me my own private Gethsemane as I wrestled with drinking from the cup of suffering I saw placed before me. I was crying out to God to release me, but I would come back to stating, "Nevertheless, not my will, but Thy will be done." The cross before me seemed unbearably difficult, but after hours of wrestling I finally concluded that I could not shrink back. I had to follow the course God set before me. With a tremendous heaviness in my heart I called my family together that evening and I shared with them what I was sensing from the Spirit. I told them that even if it resulted in our being separated for a brief time, that I knew God would bring us back together, for God had spoken promises to us as a family that had not yet been fulfilled, and He could not lie. I was reminded of the Scripture that spoke of Abraham's own trial.

Hebrews 11:17-19

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac; and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, "In Isaac your descendants shall be called." He considered that God is able to raise men even from the dead; from which he also received him back as a type.

Abraham knew that, even if he had to give up his son to death, God would restore him to life, for God had given him promises concerning Isaac, and God could not lie. I too knew that if I had to give up my children for a time, that God would give them back for He had testified, "I have great things in store for your family. Marvelous things which only I can get the credit for."

When I spoke to my family Tony did not receive my words well, being greatly distressed, but the children bore it better. I asked my family to pray with me for God's grace and mercy in this matter, and for strength to not fail the test. Tony refused to join us, but Kristin and Josiah sat close by me and we prayed together. I have never been so moved in my life as I was by the prayer of my son. He too was in distress over the thought of being

separated from his parents, and his sister held him tightly as he prayed with tears running down his face. He said, "Father, I do not know if I can go through this, but I ask you to strengthen me that I would be able to obey."

Josiah was sobbing as he uttered this prayer, and I was reminded of Christ's own impassioned plea to His Father in the Garden. My son did not shrink back, but chose instead to ask the Father for strength, and never have I been more proud of any person in my life than my son as I listened to his words. My heart was moved within me, and I felt that I could barely endure another moment. My heart was so drawn to my son at that moment that I would not have hesitated to do anything possible to assist him in his own trial. I prayed silently to God and I said, "Surely Father, Your heart must also be moved by such a pure cry from the heart of one who wants to be obedient to You. Surely You will show my son grace."

I realized later as I looked back over these events that the Father had shown me that such a circumstance would occur. On that day when my son was caught outside in a thunderstorm and I had seen him crawling through the yard toward the house calling out for his parents to help him there was foreshadowed this day when I would see my son in distress. His vulnerability moved me to great compassion, and my heart was being turned over within me. I wanted to spare my son from any pain and suffering, but I knew we had to look to God to deliver us all, even as He provided a ram in place of Isaac.

I slept in the bed with my son that night with my arms wrapped around him. He fell asleep quickly, but my heart continued in pain and sorrow. I had confessed to God that I was willing to do even this, if He required it of me. I was willing to be separated from my children if that was the terrible price of intercession He required of me.

After I had shared with my family what the Spirit had spoken to me and had confirmed to them that I could not shrink back, but I had to follow the Lord wherever He would lead me, our friends the Mills called and said that they felt the Lord would have them to offer for us to live with them for a time. I did not immediately recognize this as our ram in the thicket and our release from this test, for I had fully committed to obeying God and to seeing things through to their conclusion. I truly expected God to require us to carry through with this intercession to the end, and I was in agony, but I was willing and had already seen it as an accomplished fact. I was not looking for a way out, but rather a way through, so I did not realize how quickly the Father had responded to our willing obedience by opening up a door of provision. It was probably no longer than an hour, or at the most two hours, after we had prayed to God and asked Him to strengthen us in this trial that the Mills called and said they believed God would have us to stay with them. As the next morning dawned I began hearing the Spirit speak to me and tell me that this was His provision. He had seen our willingness to not shrink back from this great test, and He was satisfied.

In hindsight I now see the significance of all the eights and sevens that we encountered when we moved in, for these two numbers together speak of that which is full and spiritually mature, that which is superabundant and satisfying to God. He had opened up a door for us to remain in this community for a couple more months and to intercede for this people, and having received our intercession He was now moving us on. Our intercession had arisen as a fragrant aroma to His nostrils, and He would now bring us a season of peace and grace, which He signified in many ways.

I would be less than honest if I told you that I have not had many doubts about all of the things we walked through during that time. I wondered whether it was actually God who

led me to count the cost of making such a sacrifice, or whether it was the voice of the enemy seeking to torment me. I wondered whether I was right to subject my wife to such a test, for the Scriptures say nothing of Abraham speaking anything to Sarah about what God had commanded him to do. He did not even tell his servants who traveled with him what his intent was, and Isaac also did not know until the last moment. Tony had done well to come to a place where she was willing to have all her possessions cast out by the road if it should be God's will, and this was a tremendous thing. It is understandable that she should be greatly disturbed at the thought of being separated from her children.

I do not know whether I erred in my handling of this matter, but I know that my heart was focused upon obeying God and not shrinking back even when faced with the greatest sorrow I could imagine. I also know that God taught me some things about His own heart toward His Son by allowing me to walk through this experience. What a great and terrible love the Father has for His creation, that He would be willing to freely give His Son up for us. I can see that the Father, far from being a dispassionate force, was moved beyond measure in His own heart as He observed His Son's willingness to drink from the cup of suffering set before Him. I also learned of the depths of compassion that can be elicited from the heart of a father when he sees a son struggling with great issues while choosing to not shrink back, but instead asking for strength to continue.

More than any other description, Yahweh is called a Father. He has created man in His image, and man too has been given the privilege of being a father. As we delight in our children we learn of the great delight Yahweh has for His Son, and of His yearning to have many sons and daughters. As we experience pain in our dealings with our children, we can also know the pain of our heavenly Father toward His children.

I am now able to look at the experience of the Father as His Son was beaten, scourged, spat upon, mocked, and crucified with just a little more understanding of what it cost Him. I felt a tremendous ache in my heart toward my son for a brief time as I considered giving him up, and it was almost beyond bearing. I have never known a sorrow so deep, or a pain so acute. By experiencing this I feel I have touched in a small measure the pain that was in the Father's heart as He turned His Son over to the suffering of the cross that others might know life. Many people are speaking of being called as intercessors in this hour, but I wonder if most of them truly know what the high cost of intercession is. Intercession is more than merely saying a prayer for another person. It is being willing to lay down one's own life on behalf of another.

The people at the fellowship in Montezuma do not know of the things we were called to do in intercession for them. They saw only the outer circumstances of our lives, our moving twice, our inability to pay our rent, our being evicted, and they have imagined us to be suffering for our own errors. I have not sought to correct this image in their minds. It is the good will of God that we should be so misunderstood. His Son was also judged wrongly by those who viewed His suffering.

Isaiah 53:4

Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.

The church today has almost no understanding of God's will for them to follow in the footsteps of His firstborn Son. Being conformed to the image of Christ includes being conformed to the same life of sacrifice and intercession that He demonstrated. As the

apostle John stated, “As He is, so are we in this world” (I John 4:17). We should not think it strange then when God calls us to acts of intercession for others, for such selfless giving of oneself for others is the heart of God. Even as Christ laid down His life for those who reviled and rejected Him, so too will the elect of God be called to make intercession for those who have cast them out and rejected them.

I mentioned previously that the name on the air conditioner at this home on Levie Road was Payne. The owners had replaced the unit with another one from a different manufacturer, yet the repairman had left the old unit sitting in the yard next to the house. I thought of the significance of this, for as long as the old unit sat there we continued to endure pain in our trials. I wanted so badly for someone to come and take that air conditioner away.

On the day we were moving out the owner’s son brought a tractor over and picked up the air conditioner and took it away. Our friends the Barnes were helping us move, and I had told Randy about the significance of the name on the unit. He saw the owner’s son taking it away, and he commented to me on the timing of this event. The next months were to be a time of recovery for us, and the pain we had been enduring would not be present.



A Season of Grace

We had been in Montezuma, Georgia for four months. Our time had started off with great promise, but had ended with tremendous disappointment. I had felt certain that the Lord would use this people as a core group to begin to raise up a people to His praise. I had prayed for such a people for ten years, and I had truly believed the Spirit was indicating that now would be the time for a people to come forth who were a people of faith, a people marked by their passion for God and their love for one another, a people who were both led and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

In my spirit I was greatly perplexed. I wondered if I had failed somehow in my intercession for this people. I wondered if I had even heard God correctly about His desire for us to participate with this fellowship of believers. Yet, as I looked over all the tremendous confirmations we had received, as I considered the myriad of ways God had come through for us time and again, and as I understood the necessity of the incredible sifting work He had performed in my life, I realized that He had been with us the entire time. Why then, did we not see victory among these people? Why had I witnessed another body turning back to a dependence on the flesh, and why did I know rejection again?

It became painful for me to think about this time in Montezuma, and the pain was increased because I did not have any answers to my questions. The Spirit reminded me of Paul's words:

II Corinthians 4:7-9

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed...

Paul said that he also knew times when he was perplexed. Paul encountered times when things just did not look right, and events did not turn out according to his hope and expectation. Despite times of perplexity, Paul said he did not despair. My dictionary defines despair as "to abandon all hope, loss of hope or confidence." I did find myself experiencing times when I was tempted to abandon all hope and confidence that I would see the things God had promised to me fulfilled. I found myself intentionally avoiding any thoughts about our experiences in Montezuma, for I could not arrive at any answers that would bring me hope or comfort.

My Father knew just what I needed to recover from this tumultuous and painful time we had just passed through. I had no desire to write, and nothing was arising in my spirit that was needing to be shared with the saints. I wanted to take a break from the ministry God had called me to. God provided the outlet I needed. Our friends had many remodeling jobs to be performed on their house, but due to health problems they were unable to complete these tasks themselves. I had worked in the area of apartment maintenance and home repair for some years, and I had the skills necessary to do the work.

Over the course of the next couple of months I worked with my son Josiah to do a variety of jobs. We re-bricked a fireplace hearth, and painted rooms and hallways. We replaced countertops in the kitchen and removed a wall mounted oven and turned the space into a pantry. We installed a drop in stove/oven combination and spray painted the range

hood to match the other appliances. We sanded and painted kitchen cupboards, and laid flooring in a utility room. We built a table to fold laundry on, and installed ceiling fans and light kits, and we did work out in the yard as well. All of this manual work proved to be good therapy, getting my mind off of the perplexing problems to which I could find no answers.

When we had been with the Mills for about two months, the Spirit spoke to me through a prophetic word I read on the Internet. The word was posted by Mark Kaphaem, and it was titled *Stay in the Game*.

Injury time Out - Do you want to stay in the Game

Today in prayer the Lord showed the following to me.

I saw a big football game going on and it was an injury time out. There was a player down on the field and the question from the Coach was "do you want keep playing, do you want to stay in the game."

The Coach did not ask him how bad he was hurt or where the pain was. He just asked him if he wanted to play, if he wanted to stay in the game.

Then I saw a field with hundreds of players down with injuries. Some would only be out for a couple of plays. Some would be out for a couple of weeks. Some would be out for the rest of the season and others had career ending injuries.

I then saw the Lord walk up to each one of these players. He just held out His hand and if they wanted to stay in the game He would pull them to their feet and they were instantly strengthened.

I believe the Lord is allowing a brief injury time out right now. Are you down on the field? It is up to you. Do you just need a quick breather or maybe a couple of weeks off? Or is this a season ending injury. Maybe you are hurt so bad you just want to go home.

The Lord is coming to you. Do not let your injury determine your decision. For if you want to play, if you want to stay in the game, He is there for you. He is reaching out His hand.

The Coach wants you in there. For despite all you have been through, He believes in you. And there is no injury His love cannot heal.

I felt a strong witness of the Spirit as I read this word. I had been injured through all of the troubling events we had known in Montezuma, and I had taken a time out. I had quit writing, and I didn't even want to think about rejoining the game. It seemed to me that the life I knew before, when I was employed as a computer professional, was so much simpler and less troubling. At times I envied those who could go to their jobs day after day, receive their pay, and live their lives with seemingly little struggle. I was wrestling with despair. I had enjoyed the past couple of months where I did not have to get out on the field and get knocked down time and again. It was sort of pleasant sitting on the sidelines.

I knew, however, that I could not remain where I was forever. God had called me to minister to the body of Christ, and I could not be satisfied returning to the life of ease I had known before. I did not want to miss out on the high calling of God in my life. There were many wonderful promises He had made to us as a family that I knew could only be entered into if we stayed in the game and did not turn back. I confessed to God that I wanted to get back in the game, despite my injuries. I asked Him to heal me and use me once again.

Almost immediately after this the Lord placed it upon my heart to begin writing again,

and the book “The Mark of the Beast” flowed forth. The anointing of the Lord was more evident upon this writing than perhaps anything else I had written to this time. Many of the things revealed in this book came to me as I sat down to write, for I had formerly never considered much of what was written. I felt incredibly helped by the Spirit as I wrote, and I knew the Lord was fulfilling what He had promised. When I had said I wanted back in the game, He was faithful to raise me to my feet and fill me with renewed strength and power to continue.

I did not want a career ending injury, or even a season ending injury. I just needed a breather. The Lord was then able to raise me back up again. Our Father in heaven deals with us with great compassion. I have seen this over and over. In moments of pain He has often given me some special token of His love, and when the fires of refining seemed unbearable He would often take me out of the fire for a time and let things cool off.

At this time, God did not give me any understanding of the experiences we knew during our months in Montezuma. I was still as perplexed as ever, but God encouraged me to return to ministry without having the answers to all of my questions. The ability to continue to follow Christ when things don't make sense is another part of the maturity He desires to see formed in us. I had to choose to know perplexity without giving in to despair. I had to choose to continue in hope and confidence that God would fulfill all of His promises to us if we would just follow Him wherever He would lead.

Over the next few months I continued to write and pray, and God enabled us to help our friends with expenses by buying groceries and doing much of the cooking. At the end of five months we knew it was time to move on once again. The Spirit was urging us to step out once more and to trust Him for all of our provision.

This was a great test for me, for the last two homes God had led us to rent He only provided the resources for us to pay the first month's rent, and each time we ended up being forced to move after only two months. His grace was seen in that He always had another place prepared for us, yet I agonized over being subjected to the same circumstances again. Once more I only had enough money to rent a home and pay the deposits, and we would have to look to the Father to provide the resources for us to continue to remain there.

I was tempted at this time to insulate myself from the further possibility of enduring more reproach and trials by seeking another job in the computer field, yet I knew in my heart it was not the Lord's will. It is a difficult thing to make ourselves vulnerable by returning to a situation that is identical to one that we found to be very painful in days past. It is not unlike someone who survives a plane crash forcing themselves to return to flying, or someone who receives a painful injury returning to the same occupation in which the injury was sustained. God knows our struggles, and He is sympathetic toward us. The word of God states:

Psalms 34:18

Yahweh is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

He would lead us once more to make ourselves vulnerable before Him, but He would also give us many assurances of His presence with us, and we would see His mercy manifested on our behalf.



Understanding Comes

When I discerned that God would once more have us to move I began meeting regularly with my family to pray for God's direction and provision to be made known. We were specific in those things we asked for. In particular, we desired a house with at least three bedrooms so Kristin and Josiah might have their own rooms. I considered that a fourth bedroom would be even better, that I might have an office to set up my computer and have a place to be able to pray and write. We also asked for a place in a country setting, though I suspected that this would mean that I would have to go back to a dial-up connection for Internet access, which is a real detriment when trying to maintain a website and attend to a large volume of correspondence. I also wanted something that would be close to \$500 a month, though many people who move into this area have found that almost anything under \$600 a month is run down, small, and in bad neighborhoods. As a final specific point of prayer, I had told my family several weeks earlier that I felt God wanted us to locate in the area of a small town nearby named Byron, Georgia.

Our family had only been praying for a couple days when my daughter began corresponding with a young lady who had recently begun practicing headcovering. As they were getting acquainted my daughter told her that we were going to be moving soon, and when the other young lady asked her where we were going to move, Kristin informed her that I felt we were to move to Byron. This girl responded by saying that she lived in Byron and that her dad had rental property in the area. She volunteered to ask her dad if he had anything available, and a couple days later she got back with my daughter and told her that her dad had a four bedroom, two bath home that was located on their family farm in a secluded location. She said I should contact her father if I was interested.

What this young lady described was exactly what we had been praying for, and I sensed that God was once more going before us in these things. Only once in the past five years did we have to look for a place to live. We moved approximately ten times in this period, and in only one move did we actually have to look around to see where God would have us to live. In all of the other instances God had brought the provision to us. I determined to call this man the next morning, which was Friday February 13.

On Friday morning I considered that, should the man agree to rent to me that day, I did not have the money on hand to pay both rent and deposits. I prayed and felt that the Lord wanted me to check the IRS website to see when my tax refund would be deposited. When I did I found that \$790 was to be deposited into my checking account that very day. This seemed providential once more, since the means to pay for this house coincided exactly with the opportunity set before us.

I called the man and he was very interested in showing us the house. They wanted a quiet (not rowdy) family to go into this home since it was on their family farm and they lived on the other side of the land, as did some other relatives. We agreed to meet at 3 PM to view the house, and we prayed again as a family before we went. We asked the Lord that if this was where He wanted us that He would give us favor.

We met the man's wife, and she turned out to be someone who had formerly worked at the Houston Healthcare Complex during the same time I was employed there, and she recognized me. She and my wife hit it off very well, as did their daughter and my daughter who were meeting each other face to face for the first time. The husband was very busy, as he is also a home builder, and he only dropped by briefly. I asked him if he wanted me to

fill out any paperwork, and he said no, that he felt good about us renting from them. We gave them a check for the rent and deposits and began moving in the very next day.

The rent was close to the amount I had prayed for, and the home was only four years old, in great shape, and in a beautiful country setting. It had four bedrooms, which we desired, and was just outside the city limits of Byron. It would take less than five minutes to be in town. Amazingly to me, although the home is on a farm it is served by two types of high speed Internet access. DSL and Cable Internet are both available. The owners also allowed pets, though we were required to pay a deposit. There were absolutely no impediments to our moving to this new location. It was as if the Lord had swung the door wide open and said, "Here is my provision for you. Enter in!"

Even with so many affirmations of the Lord's hand in this provision, I was troubled by stepping out and renting this place, for the memories of our experiences in Montezuma were still fresh in my mind. Twice God provided places for us there, only for us to then see all financial provision dry up, and I dealt with the agony of not having the money to pay our rent. My faith was being tested severely, as the Father was seeking to deliver me from the fears that tormented me. I had been struggling to understand why God led us to endure the things we experienced in Montezuma, for I had such high expectations and a very profound disappointment. Although I knew God was teaching me lessons there (It was there the Spirit led me to write the book *The Divine Quest*), there was much I didn't understand and this lack of understanding was producing an unrest and lack of peace in my soul.

Just a few days after we had moved into this home, my wife and children were going off, and my daughter was to spend the night away. I was sitting in a chair by the front door anticipating a quiet evening by myself, and I was watching my daughter come in and out as she was constantly remembering one more thing she wanted to take with her. On her last trip she grabbed two things and headed for the door, but when she got there she changed her mind about a book she was going to take and she turned around and placed it in my hands, told me good-bye, and was out the door and gone.

I looked at the book in my hands, and it was *Hinds' Feet On High Places* by Hannah Hurnard. I had never read this book before, but I had the feeling that I had been set-up by the Spirit. My family had just left. I was all alone. And God had just placed a book in my hands which I felt a strong witness that I was to read. I began reading the book and as I did the Spirit witnessed powerfully to me and the tears began to flow. I read of the main character, Much-Afraid, and how the Shepherd led her out from her relatives the Fearings. I read how the Shepherd led her to one journey after another where her fears assailed her and had to be overcome, faith had to be exercised, and her will had to be laid upon the altar. As I read I was reviewing my own journey, and I began to understand why my Shepherd had been leading me down the paths He had asked me to take. It has been His desire to free me from all fears and to learn an unshakeable confidence in Him.

I then understood also what he was doing in our current situation, for once more He had led me to a place where I had only enough money to pay for the first month's rent and deposits, and where the landlord required that the next month's rent be paid on the first of the month, only two weeks later. (The first month's rent is for a full month, but the second is pro-rated. I know some will be curious.) God was asking me, "Will you trust Me once more? Will you dwell in perfect peace this time without listening to the voices of anxiety, fear, or evil forebodings?"

In this book the main character Much-Afraid is led down many perilous paths, and through roads of sorrow and pain. She is tormented by members of the Fearing family who

dog her steps and continually speak words to her that are intended to turn her back from following the course the Shepherd is leading her down. The Lord reminded me that nearly two years earlier He had prophesied through my daughter with the words "You must learn to listen to My voice, and My voice alone. Put behind you all foolish thoughts of doubt and unbelief, for great is My reward to those who trust in Me." My way had been made much more difficult because I had allowed the voice of fear to continually resound in my heart. I had continued to follow where my Shepherd led, but I did so in fear and trembling.

Much-Afraid finally determines to no longer listen to these voices, and at first she stops up her ears, but she is not able to hear anything at all. She later learns that an even more effectual solution is to begin singing praises to God whenever the voices of fear, anxiety and evil forebodings begin to speak to her. The Spirit had been speaking the same message to me for some time. He had been calling me to praise and worship Him in the midst of trials, and I knew that while we were at this house in Byron that Yahweh desired to bring me to complete victory in this matter.

When we moved to this house I noticed that the house number was 2440, which is commonly pronounced "twenty-four forty." I had felt there was a significance to these numbers, but I did not immediately know what it was. After we had been in this house a few weeks, the Spirit revealed to me the meaning. The Spirit showed me that the significance relates to worshipping Him in the midst of trials and tests. The number twenty-four only occurs in reference to two things in Scripture, and the verses the Spirit led me to were in the book of Revelation.

Revelation 4:9-10

And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever...

Revelation 5:8-9

When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song...

Revelation 11:16

And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God...

Revelation 19:4-5

And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!" And a voice came from the throne, saying, "Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great."

We see here that the number twenty-four is consistently linked to God's creation worshipping Him. Wherever the twenty-four elders are mentioned, praise and worship of God is also present. The number forty is a number associated with trials and testing, for example the Israelites were tested by God for forty years in the wilderness, Yahshua was

tested for forty days in the wilderness, etc.. As I considered these things I sensed the Spirit telling me that He wanted us to worship Him in the midst of trials and testing. We were to have no lack of trials in which to practice this, for from the day we moved in we were beset with one test after another.

It was a great comfort to me that God should choose to bring me understanding of my trials. As I read this book by Hannah Hurnard I experienced a deep peace come upon me. It was as if the Father had come down to wrap His arms around me and to personally assure me that He is with us. I felt like I was having an intimate conversation with the Father as I read this book, and I knew He was answering my prayers for understanding to be granted to me.

In the book Much-Afraid is yearning to get to the destination, which is the mountains of spices. The Shepherd at times takes her down paths that are leading in the direction of the mountains, and hope grows in her heart, but then He unexpectedly bids her to follow a path that seems to lead directly away from her destination. These detours are great tests for Much-Afraid who wants so desperately to be at the end of the journey. Great crises are met with time after time as Much-Afraid must once more lay her will on the altar in order to choose to follow the Shepherd.

I could identify my own times when I have been brought to such crises, and I have battled with continuing on, or turning back. Time after time I have also been led to build an altar and lay my will upon it. In the book, as in reality, something of great value is gained every time she chose to follow the Spirit by taking up the disciple's cross. At each fresh surrender there is something more of the sinful nature that is crushed, and a new release of the life of Christ within us.

I had been very intent upon wanting to arrive at the destination, and to know the fulfillment of God's promises for my life and that of my family. Yet there is tremendous value in the journey, for the journey fits us to be able to receive the anointing and calling God has for our lives. As we travel through wilderness places, knowing many tests, our old Adamic nature is subdued and the life of Christ is brought forth to ever increasing expression. In the wilderness we leave behind all those things that have hindered us, and we come forth leaning upon Christ Who has become everything to the saint.

When Yahweh has tried us thoroughly, He will bring us up out of the wilderness and into the promises set before us. The Scriptures say that it is by "faith and patience" that we inherit the promises, and we are told that we have need of endurance. I believe there is a place of rest to be attained in our wilderness experiences. This rest replaces the restlessness we have known where we feel driven to be at the end of all trials and testing. There is a place where we simply become content to wait upon God patiently, and to endure with joy. When we attain to this place, then the Shepherd is able to bring us up out of the wilderness and into the glorious realms that lie ahead.

As I reflected on this book by Hannah Hurnard, and what the Spirit was speaking to me through it, a peace began to grow in my heart. Our present situation looked so very similar to those we had known in Montezuma which were very painful. Yet the promises of God are very precious, and the apostle Paul declares that the glory to be revealed in us is not worth comparing to these momentary, light afflictions.

Romans 8:16-19

The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer

with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.

There is a purpose for every path and every experience our Shepherd leads us through. He is probably more eager than we are ourselves to see us arrive at the destination before us. Yet He bears long with us when we cry out for deliverance from our painful trials, for He knows that there are no shortcuts to glory. He does not wish that we should fall short of the glory of God in any respect.

I hear my Shepherd asking, "Will you simply follow Me? Will you take the course I set before you, and not shrink back?" He promises to be with us at all times, and nothing can separate us from His love. The overcomers in Christ are identified by the following simple statement:

Revelation 14:4

These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb.

I have had many expectations about what God would do at each place He has led me. I have watched three different bodies of believers shrink back from the path of faith before them when I had expected God to take each one into their promised inheritance. Things have rarely turned out the way I thought they would. When I have thought I was nearing the end of the path, there always seemed to be a further valley to travel through. Yet the Shepherd guiding me knows what He is about. I am learning to rest under His watchful and loving eye.



A People for His Praise

When we moved to our new home in Byron our family had been battling sickness for a few weeks. Some condition similar to bronchitis had been passed around from one member to another, and I had come down with it about a week before our move. Tony also was afflicted with it at this time. I did not think too much of it, for I knew that in time it would pass and we would be restored to health. I did not know that things would get worse before they got better.

A few days after we had moved in my daughter asked me to fix a shelving unit in her room. I was tired from the move, and from battling the respiratory ailment that was going on, but I agreed to do what I could. I asked Kristin to bring me a chair to stand on so that I could reach where the repair needed to be made. I had anticipated her bringing one of the sturdy kitchen chairs, but instead she showed up with a small child size wooden chair, and she offered it to me. I looked at it for a moment, but being too tired to make a further effort I accepted the chair and sat it in the closet.

When I got both feet up on the chair it shattered into a half dozen pieces and I fell and landed on my left arm and side. My daughter was very startled, but I took inventory of myself for a moment and found that nothing seemed seriously hurt. I told her I was okay and I got back up and asked her to bring me a different chair, and I finished the job.

During the rest of the evening my left arm grew progressively more painful, and it began to stiffen up. By the next morning I was barely able to bend it at all at the elbow, and my forearm was very tender. I still considered that it was not anything serious, since I had been able to use it fully the evening before, and I knew it would heal on its own. I was tempted to grumble to God about my sickness and my injury, but I checked myself, and chose to ask God to give me understanding of why these things were happening.

Over the course of the next few days the Lord gave me understanding of my arm injury. I was reminded that in Scripture the left arm represents defense, for the soldiers would typically wear the shield on their left arm while wielding a sword or spear with the right arm. My arm was injured at the exact spot where a shield would be worn. At this time the Spirit had led me to write some articles that generated a lot of negative response, and He was seeking to teach me to not be defensive at all in my responses. This message of not being defensive was confirmed through a couple of sources, so I thanked God for His lesson, and I asked Him to teach me how to be totally without defense before man. I was to receive plenty of practice as the negative mail continued to come in, and much of it was very vitriolic in nature.

The physical tests continued as I had something resembling a blister come up on my left eye. It didn't affect my vision, but it looked bad, and was a little worrisome. My wife also continued with her respiratory sickness, and she got to the point where she was having great difficulty sleeping at night, and this affliction was wearing upon her.

About this time my son came into the house one day and he said, "Dad, did you know the air conditioner here has the same name on it as the one on Levie Road? It says it is a Payne." I had already noted this myself, but I noticed one difference. The lettering was smaller on this air conditioner, and it had a second name on it which was Carrier. So it was not just Payne, but a Payne Carrier. I wasn't sure what difference this signified, but I sensed that there would be some difference from our previous experiences.

About a month after we moved in I was experiencing some relief from my respiratory

problems. I was not coughing as much, and my breathing was improved, though my wife continued on with much difficulty. I noticed one day that my tongue felt like someone had given me a shot of novocaine. It felt a little numb, and had a strange sensation to it. The next morning I woke up and this sensation had spread to my lips, which felt a little puffy and numb. By the end of the day the entire right side of my face was paralyzed, and I realized I had come down with Bell's Palsy.

I knew about Bell's Palsy because I had an uncle who had come down with this condition years earlier. I read what I could on the Internet about it and I found it was often precipitated by a viral infection, and it was due to inflammation and damage to the seventh cranial nerve. The condition typically persists anywhere from a few weeks to a few months, with some cases lasting longer than a year.

Over the next week the symptoms reached maturity where the right side of my mouth was drooping. When I smiled, I only had half a smile. When I raised my eyebrows, only my left eyebrow would go up. My right eye would not blink fully, and this led to a dry eye condition and the need to use my finger to manually blink my eye. At times I began wearing a patch over my right eye to keep it from being irritated and drying out. I also experienced much pain in the right side of my head that felt like a severe ear ache with shooting pains. All these things are symptoms of Bell's Palsy.

When I read about this condition on the Internet I learned that there is little to be done in the way of treatment. It has not been proven that any medication will improve the condition. One must simply wait for the damaged nerve to regenerate itself, and this can be a slow process. All of these things have occurred as I have been writing this book, which speaks in places about God performing supernatural healing in our lives. We have no health insurance, for God has told us to look to Him for our health needs, and He continues to reaffirm that this is His will for us.

I knew all of these things happening in our lives were not coincidental, for God orders our steps, and He is the One who chooses our trials and tests. I have been reminded again of the significance of our house number 24-40. God is seeking to teach us to worship Him in the midst of trials. He wants to see if He will find a response of worship in our hearts, or whether we will resort to murmuring and complaint against Him as the Israelites also did in their wilderness journeys. I have been very mindful of this, and because of this fact I have chosen to adopt an attitude of trust and worship, rather than fear and complaint.

As all of these things have been occurring, my family and I have had to choose to recognize the presence of God in our situations and struggles. We can either choose to believe that He orders the events of our lives, and He has a very good purpose for all things, or we can live in the unconscious reality spoken of earlier in this book. What we choose to believe will radically impact what our response will be.

Because I have chosen to recognize the presence of God, and to not think that anything in my life is chance, or accident, I was ready to receive what God spoke to me yesterday through a prophetic word He led me to. I was writing a chapter in this book and I had just penned the following words:

Our time had started off with great promise, but had ended with tremendous disappointment. I had felt certain that the Lord would use this people as a core group to begin to raise up a people to His praise. I had prayed for such a people for ten years...

These words, “a people for His praise,” were still in my mind when I went to find a prophetic word at an Internet site so that I could quote it in the chapter. What I found first was a word that had recently been posted that was titled, “A People that will be a Praise unto My Name.” The Spirit bid me to read this prophecy, and He spoke to me through it. Below is the text of this word.

A People That Will Be A Praise Unto My Name

Dee Hoetmer - 17th March 2004

Isa 33:10 Now will I rise, saith the LORD; now will I be exalted; now will I lift up myself.

Do not look to the left or to the right, for your deliverance will come from Me. Look to the hills from whence comes your deliverance. Some trust in horses, some trust in chariots. Why do you look to Egypt My people for your deliverance from your circumstances?

Psa 121:1 I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. Psa 121:2 My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth. Psa 121:3 He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Psa 121:4 Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. Psa 121:5 The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand.

Psa 20:7 Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God. Psa 20:8 They are brought down and fallen: but we are risen, and stand upright. Psa 20:9 Save, LORD: let the king hear us when we call.

Isa 54:4 Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more.

Have I not said that I will open the door? Have I not said that I will hold you by the right hand and show you the way in which you must go? Many are fretting, looking for that open door, anxious to move forward in your call. Yes the world awaits the revelation of the Sons of God. Creation awaits redemption, but for now My children I have to teach you patience, longsuffering and fortitude.

Rom 8:21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

You are to have the attributes of My Son before I reveal MY SONS to the world. Lay down your own agendas, lay down your presumptuous thoughts about what awaits you in your calling. All self seeking, all self glorification must cease. Long have I suffered My name being brought into disrepute. Long have I suffered the mockings of My Holy name, for My children have not brought glory to Me! Now when I send out My prepared ones, MY SONS, they will go forth ablaze in My Glory!

Rom 8:18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

There will be no mistaking who is LORD, CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE AND ALL THAT IS THEREIN. You will stretch forth your hand in faith and I will do creative miracles. Yea limbs will grow where there were only stumps, eyes will appear in empty eye sockets. There will be no mistaking that I, THE LORD GOD JEHOVAH, IS GOD!

The miracles will not be for you Beloved, in that day, but that the world will know who I AM. Kings will bow down to Me in that day I will reveal My power through you. My name will no longer be mocked. My people be ye Holy even as I AM Holy! My name will no longer be mocked, the world will see who I AM.

So now you see Beloved, why it is just a little longer, a little more refining and I WILL SEND FORTH A PEOPLE THAT WILL BE A PRAISE UNTO MY NAME!

1Pe 1:7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

Phi 1:11 Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

Eph 1:12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.
[End Quote]

It is for such a people that I have been led to pray for over ten years. The Spirit is testifying that such a people will be seen soon. At this moment He is doing a further refining work. He is seeking to teach us patience, longsuffering and fortitude. I can easily see how the present trials being encountered in my family are designed to produce these characteristics. Because I have discerned God's hand in this matter, I am encouraged to endure with patience, and to look with hope for that glory which is soon to be revealed. I am enabled to praise and worship God in the midst of tests.

I am still praying for healing, and I am praying for God's provision to be manifest on behalf of my family, for God has told us to ask. His words says:

Philippians 4:6

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

This book is not yet finished, for my story is not yet concluded. I look to great things to come in just a short time. If you have learned anything in this book, I hope you have noted how important it is to discern the presence of God in our lives. God is not absent in the lives of any of His children, though many live as if He is nowhere around. Only when we discern His presence can we respond appropriately to the circumstances of our lives. We must consciously choose to live by faith and not by sight.

The life of faith is not some mystical experience reserved for a few. It is to be the portion of all God's children. We enter into this life of faith one moment, and one act of

belief at a time. The Scriptures do testify, "Without faith it is impossible to please God."

Without faith I would not be confessing that He has ordered my steps and allowed my wife and I to know physical infirmity at this time. I would also not respond with the patience and worshipful attitude that He desires. Without faith I would not believe that days are just ahead when God will place awesome anointings upon His elect, and the blind will receive sight, amputated limbs will grow back, and many other extraordinary things will occur. Yet I do believe, and I look to a day soon when the name of Yahweh and His Son Yahshua will be a praise in the earth because there is a people who walk worthy of Them.

No, this book is not finished, for God is not finished. He will complete what He has begun. He has taken a family that was very much out of order, bound by many ungodly things, and He has been setting things in order. He is bringing forth something that will glorify His name. When our own fears and weaknesses would have caused us to turn back from the course He chose from us, He has held us steadily to the path. It is not our faithfulness that is in view in this book, but the faithfulness of God to complete that which He has begun. As Jude has stated,

Jude 24-25

Now to Him Who is able to keep you without stumbling or slipping or falling, and to present [you] unblemished (blameless and faultless) before the presence of His glory in triumphant joy and exultation [with unspeakable, ecstatic delight]-- to the one only God, our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory (splendor), majesty, might and dominion, and power and authority, before all time and now and forever (unto all the ages of eternity). Amen (so be it).

(Amplified Bible)

He is faithful! Amen!



Addendum: A Testimony of a Dying Son

(July 2008)

This addendum continues the history that leaves off in the last chapter of the book. It is offered for those who have written to ask me what has occurred in our lives since the book was completed. The trials have continued, and so has the grace of God and His supernatural intervention. He has not spared His people from suffering, but He has never left our side.

I Corinthians 15:31

I die daily.

Luke 9:23-24

And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it."

Yesterday, a Christian sister from the West Coast wrote to me and inquired as to how I am doing. We have corresponded often, and I am knowledgeable of her many trials, as she is of mine. I understood that her question was more than mere politeness when she asked, "How are you doing?"

Yesterday had its own set of specific trials, including a letter from a lawyer threatening legal action and sanctions. The threat was a direct result of my walking a path that the Spirit of Christ has led me down. The Spirit of Christ has put me in peril's way. Such a thought is foreign to most Christians today, and it would even produce a rebuke from more than a few. "Surely," they would contest, "the Lord will bless the man who is a true servant of God. God would not bring His obedient children into reproach and disrepute."

In a recent writing I shared that since 1999, when I completely surrendered to the leading of the Lord in my life, God has led me down much more difficult pathways than when my own will was the determinant. He has led me to experience more trials, more reproaches, more rejection from Christian brothers and natural family, more perilous situations, more perplexity, and more fear than when I was still holding the reins of my life. This was certainly the experience of the apostles when they fully yielded control of their lives to God.

Romans 8:36-37

Just as it is written, "For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered." But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.

II Corinthians 4:8-13

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Yahshua, that the life of Yahshua also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Yahshua's sake, that the life of Yahshua also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death

works in us, but life in you.

Certainly I knew some trials in the many years preceding 1999. After all, I had a sincere devotion to Christ, and a desire to please Him. But my trials were fewer and far between. There were great seasons when the Lord simply left me alone to follow the desires of my heart. Since 1999, when I understood that Yahweh needed to do a work in my life of bringing all things in this soul of mine under subjection to His rule, the pace has greatly accelerated. I said, "God, bring me to a quick death, for I want the life of Christ to be revealed in me."

He began by stripping me of all that I had acquired through many years of covetous living. In 1999 I was forced to file for bankruptcy. I surrendered my home, and my custom van to the creditors. At the direction of the Spirit of Christ I held a yard sale and sold all my furniture and worldly goods. He then led me to trust Him for all of my provision as I focused on fulfilling the ministry of writing to which He had called me.

I had a wife and two children, and my faith was far from perfect. The Lord led me to trial after trial in the area of provision, and at each test I had to wait patiently, not seeking to deliver myself by carnal means, and in every instance He came through. What a sifting it was to this man who has feet of clay and a mind unsettled by many fears, doubts and unbelief. In six years time the Lord led our family to move over fifteen times, and at each new move I had no idea where I was to go, or through what means my family's provision was to be manifest. As I obeyed, and put my feet to the path the Father showed me, He always opened up a way. His pattern was always, "Put your feet in the water and then you will see them part."

Joshua 3:13

"And it shall come about when the soles of the feet of the priests who carry the ark of Yahweh, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off, and the waters which are flowing down from above shall stand in one heap."

It would do the Israelites no good to protest that everyone else who crossed the Jordan did so by boat. Why should they have to do things differently? I also knew that it would do me no good to protest that no one else I knew was living the way I was. I did not know of anyone else who was going out to move their family time after time without knowing where they were going or how they would find their provision. This was the path the Spirit led me on. I had to do as He directed. It did make things more difficult that even the Christians I knew called me a fool and condemned my walk. I was reproached for my obedience to the Spirit's leading.

Romans 15:3

For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached Thee fell upon Me."

Have you ever considered that Christ was reproached for living in the manner in which His Father directed Him to live? He had no job. He had no home. He traveled about with a number of disciples, and they received their substance from whatever means the Father provided. Oftentimes the Lord's provision came from the hands of a group of devoted

women who followed Him.

Luke 8:1-3

And it came about soon afterwards, that He began going about from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God; and the twelve were with Him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses: Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who were contributing to their support out of their private means.

I can hear the Jews now. "Why don't you get a job and quit sponging off of others? Be a man and quit living off the money of these women. If you are God, why don't you turn the stones into gold? You are just a pretender. If it weren't for these women you would have starved to death long ago."

Oh yes, I have heard similar charges. Sure, God could have dropped a bag of money out of heaven and taken care of all of my needs. Why then did He choose the methods employed? It was that I might learn humility, even as His own Son learned obedience from the things that He suffered. Had he turned the stones into diamonds, or the dust into gold, the lesson of humility that comes from being often reproached would not have been learned.

I can imagine the charges brought against Yahshua. "You are not a very good provider for your followers. They haven't eaten all day, and now they are making a meal by walking through the fields and threshing grain in their hands. Can't you do better than that? You have job skills. Why don't you get a job and provide them with a real meal?"

There were days when the members of my family and I had no more than a sandwich, or two, and a glass of water for lunch and supper. One day we had only a bag of grits in the house. Yet we never went hungry. God always provided something. When we allow God to begin choosing our path for us we will find that we are met with many circumstances we would not have chosen for ourselves.

Philippians 4:11-13

Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

Deuteronomy 8:15-16

He led you through the great and terrible wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water; He brought water for you out of the rock of flint. In the wilderness He fed you manna which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do good for you in the end.

Yahweh still chooses to perfect His sons and daughters by letting them know lack, by them being cast upon Him for daily provision, and at the same time He teaches them humility. I have certainly been reproached for the care I provided for my family. It would

be one thing to experience such humble means in a third world nation, but I was living in the midst of America, the land of plenty, the land of idolatrous consumerism. How could I justify such experiences to members of the church who had been inculcated with doctrines of prosperity and the love of mammon?

The answer is that I could not justify myself in their sight, so I quit trying. I simply had to bear reproach. I had to choose to die daily to the respect and affirmation my soul desired. My hope was that I might attain to all that the Father had for me and my family as I persevered and continued to follow the Lord wherever He would lead.

After six years my wife had enough. She had listened to other Christians telling her that it was not necessary that we live as we were. She had heard numerous criticisms of her husband, often from pastors and their wives. The decision to leave troubled her soul, for she had seen the hundreds of ways in which the Lord had intervened in our lives to manifest provision during the years of full-time ministry. Yet, she did not see any others living as we were doing, and she desired to be free of the trials and afflictions that seemed to beset our family more than all others around us.

In 2004 my wife left. Our son went with her to live with a wealthy Christian family who had boys his age. My daughter remained faithful in her desire to follow wherever God would lead, and the Lord opened a door for her to stay with a family in a Mennonite community, with my blessing. I was left by myself. Since I was by myself, the Lord was able to accelerate the trials even further. I found it much easier to endure hardship alone, than with wife and children.

II Corinthians 11:23-30

Are they servants of Christ? (I speak as if insane) I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure upon me of concern for all the churches. Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern? If I have to boast, I will boast of what pertains to my weakness.

My suffering has not been to the degree of Paul's, but I can testify that I have endured far more than most of my Christian brothers in America. I spent five months living out of a car, eighty days camping in the forest in a small tent. During this period many days I was without food, and often was low on water. I spent a week one time without eating, and at another time I went seventeen days before the Father provided something to eat. In five months I lost forty pounds.

I knew exposure to the elements, camping out in a small tent in the woods in November and December. Some days I awoke to ice on the ground, and I had no winter clothes with me. I wore layers of summer clothing and had one fleece pullover. For months at a time I had no other human companionship, no one with whom to carry on a conversation, no one to share my burden. Yet through it all the Lord was with me. He made

it abundantly clear that this was a path He had chosen for me. It was a cross appointed unto me to bear. I had to remain until He released me, and I received abundant grace to do so.

While camping the remnants of a hurricane passed through the area. The ground was already saturated from another tropical storm that had come through earlier. For three days it rained constantly until water began to seep through the sides of my tent. The wind was blowing and the ground so saturated that huge trees began falling over in the forest all around me. I lay in my tent listening to the thunderous crashing of huge pines as they fell close by. A restless night was spent listening to the sounds of the wind, rain, and crashing trees. I thought to get out of the tent and sleep in the car, but I considered that it afforded no better protection. My safety was in the Father's hands. He had led me to this place. He would be my shelter.

After five months living as a homeless man, the Lord directed my steps to an inner city rescue mission. I was there a few months and they asked me to fill the position of Resident Manager. I was given a small room in the men's dormitory, and I was responsible for the oversight of the Mission after staff hours. This required 80-100 hour work weeks, and my pay was room and board and \$100 a week. In eight months time I had three days off (I worked every weekend from sunup to sundown). In this the Lord was teaching me endurance, patience, and many other needful things.

While at the mission I received notice that my wife had filed for divorce. Papers were served to me on Good Friday 2005. This was the day the church remembers the Lord being brought before the courts, falsely charged, and delivered to be scourged and crucified. The Spirit spoke to me that day and said "This is a cross I have appointed for you. You are to bear it willingly as My Son bore His."

Luke 14:26-27

"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple."

The Lord said I was to accept this cross in the same way His Son accepted His own. He directed me to Peter's writing.

I Peter 2:21-23

For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously...

The Spirit of Christ revealed that I was not to hire a lawyer. I was not to mount a defense, or make accusation against my wife. I was to go to the divorce proceeding and entrust myself to the care of the Father. When the date arrived I did as the Lord instructed. I had no counsel, no witnesses, while my wife had brought both. I was accused of neglect of my family, of being heartless and uncaring, failing to provide for them as I was capable of doing. It was recounted how many times we had moved during the six years of walking in faith and performing the ministry entrusted to me. How irresponsible this seemed to

those who did not judge things by the Spirit. False accusations were added that I might be made to look utterly reprehensible.

The judge gave me opportunity to speak, and I recounted how the Lord had led us as a family to this walk of complete trust in Him. I shared that we had seen God's provision miraculously an uncounted number of times, and we had even seen our son healed of a hereditary bone disease that caused him to fracture 12 bones by the age of seven, when we cast ourselves over onto God at obedience to His direction. I shared that since my wife had left me that she had gone back on what God had spoken to us as a requirement to see our son healed. We had been told to cancel his SSI and Medicaid benefits and God would keep him from breaking bones. For seven years God had been faithful to this. Yet one of the first things my wife did after leaving me was to take out government benefits on our son once more. Just a few weeks later he broke his elbow when a friend jumped into the swimming pool and landed on him. He had to have surgery and to wear a cast for months.

The judge listened somewhat impatiently, and then said, "Mr. Herrin, in some ways I find your faith to be admirable, but I must conclude that it is my judgment that it is misguided." The judge granted the divorce and required that I begin paying alimony and child support amounting to \$900 a month. At the time I was only earning \$400 a month, but the judge based this amount upon what I had earned six years earlier while employed as a computer professional.

After the divorce was granted, my father came from out of state to visit me. He and my mother had concluded years earlier that I was a religious heretic, filled with many ideas relating to God's word and life in the Spirit that were unsound. I knew it would probably be a trying meeting, so I prayed before I went to meet him that God would give me grace to simply express my love for my father and to not allow my tongue to say anything disrespectful.

My dad shared that he placed the blame for my divorce upon my shoulders. He said that if I continued to do as I was doing in seeking to be led of God in all things that I would probably end up in jail for not paying child support. I told my father that I understood how he arrived at his conclusions in this matter. I told him that if I had lived the life that had been mine since 1999 because I had chosen it for myself, and that God had not chosen it for me as he believed, then he could only judge me to be a great fool. In response my father replied, "That is right. I believe you are a fool."

After we finished sharing a meal together, we went to part. My father stuck out his hand in parting, but I drew closer and hugged his neck instead. I told him I loved him, and I have not heard from him since that day.

As I drove back to the rescue mission I told the Lord that I did not know what the future held, but if it was His will for me to go to jail as my father suggested, then I was willing. My life had been so much like Joseph's, the son of Jacob, that I could almost imagine it to be God's will that I also suffer this ignominy. I confessed to the Lord that my life was in His hands. He had told me not to hire a lawyer or mount a defense, but to entrust myself to His care, and I had done so. I told Him I would continue to rest in His care.

The next day a man from New Zealand sent me \$5,000. This was the largest gift I had ever received. Five is the number of grace, and it was as if the Lord had answered the challenge of my father, and said, "You trusted me in this, and I will provide for you. You will not go to jail for lack of ability to pay child support." Right after this happened, the director of the mission approached me and said that he was going to fire the two managers of their thrift store that day, and he wanted me to step into a management position there

immediately. In this way the Lord provided the means to pay my wife every month.

In February of this year my son turned eighteen, and my child support obligation was fully met, and paid on-time. God has been faithful. There were more trials to come, however. Little did I realize how much my own trials were to resemble Joseph's. My wife's wealthy friend that she moved in with hated me with a passion. She was very restless in seeking to cause me trouble, despite her confession of being a Christian. She began to go down to the Mennonite community my daughter was in and tell the people my daughter was staying with that I was a terrible person and that Kristin should not be helping me in any way. My daughter Kristin had been receiving my mail and forwarding it to me, but due to the influence of this woman the people at whose house my mail was being sent decided they should not be involved anymore.

This was merely a minor inconvenience to me, but it disturbed me that this woman was going out of her way to spread evil reports. My wife accompanied this woman and listened quietly as her friend made charges against me. This woman heard that I had been hired by the mission in a staff position, and although she had been the driving force behind the demands that I pay child support and alimony, she sought to get me fired from my job. She called the mission director and accused me of being an abuser of my wife and children. The director called me into his office later and related these things to me. He said that he informed her if these things were true that there was no better place for me to be than at the mission, for their goal was to help troubled men.

This woman called repeatedly to the director, and then she even had the pastor of her church send an e-mail to the director to warn him of the type of man he had hired. This pastor had never even met me, yet he gave forth this evil testimony. The director called me to his office again and shared with me the e-mail he had sent back in response. He informed the pastor that he had known me for over a year and had sufficient knowledge of me to form an opinion of my character. This director had recently given me an award at the mission's holiday banquet, saying that I had been the best Resident Manager the mission had ever known. Thus, the attempts of the enemy to cause me discomfort were thwarted.

Isaiah 54:17

No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn.

Like Joseph of old, God had given me favor with my employer. The director of the mission became my defender, negating the need for me to defend myself. Yet the worst actions of this woman were still to come. She went to this Mennonite community again, and she openly suggested that the reason my daughter had sided with her father was that there was an unrighteous relationship between us. She went so far as to suggest that my daughter and I had been having sexual relations together.

The woman in the home my daughter was staying at was so appalled at this suggestion, knowing the purity of my daughter, that she told her husband that she never wanted to meet with that woman again unless her husband was present. This wealthy Christian woman began spreading this accusation around to others who were willing to listen, and I even heard the report come back from the mouth of my own mother.

When the Lord desires to prepare a son to share His glory, He does so by first subjecting the son to shame, reproach, falsehood, and many trials. Joseph, the son of Jacob, spent many years in prison being known as the man who attempted to rape Potipher's wife.

God did not remove this reproach from Joseph until the day he was brought into Pharaoh's presence and made second ruler in the land. It is also appointed to the sons of God in this age to suffer many things. God is seeking to bring forth a humble, forgiving spirit in His sons. He wants them to die to the opinions of men that they might live only for His opinion, His judgment.

Yahshua, the firstborn Son of God, learned much from the things He suffered as well. He heard the crowds cry out "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." Just a short while later these same people were crying out, "Crucify him!" God must bring all of His sons to a place where the opinions of men no longer move them. They must recognize that both the praise and condemnation of man are without weight. All that really matters is what God thinks.

At the same time, being subject to persecution, unjust accusation and the enmity of men and women provides the child of God with an opportunity to die to all offense that arises from their soul. As they clothe themselves with Christ they can cry out, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." This has been the confession the Spirit has brought forth from my mouth time and again as offense has been added to offense. Ours is not a ministry of condemnation, but of forgiveness and reconciliation.

John 3:17

For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him.

Matthew 18:34-35

"And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. So shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart."

It is a true statement that declares, "by the judgment you have judged others, you shall be judged." Those who are merciful shall obtain mercy. When we are reviled we are to speak a blessing in return. How can we do these things if there is no one to revile us, to speak evil of us, and to unjustly accuse us? If they did these things to the Lord of glory, how much more will they do so to those who are His disciples?

II Timothy 3:12

Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Yahshua will suffer persecution.

My trials did not end with these things. For two years I labored at a menial job at a thrift store. Had I chosen to do so I could have returned to the computer field and made a large salary, but this was not the Father's will. Instead I was called to toil at a thankless job that was fraught with many difficulties. It would have done me no good to say, "But Lord, I can do so much more. I remember the days of heady success when I worked as a computer professional. I made a good salary and had money to spend upon many things. I remember the years I worked in ministry, writing books and teaching your children." We must submit to whatever the Lord chooses for us. He alone knows what is necessary for our perfecting as sons.

If we will surrender to the direction of the Lord in all things, we will find that He brings us into circumstances where it is necessary that we die daily. The desires, thoughts,

and ambitions of our soul must be subjugated to the will of the Father. We must walk according to the leading of the Spirit, not according to the natural course of this world.

All those who do so will certainly be considered odd. They will be met with many reproaches. In the hour when their commitment to obedience is producing in their being the greatest sacrifice, they will find the world, and a worldly church, casting condemnation at them. If they hurled insults at the Son of God as He was offering Himself as a sacrifice in obedience to His Father, will they not do so with all those who follow in His steps?

In closing the letter I communicated to this sister yesterday, I wrote the following:

I have been thinking recently whether we truly have a proper mindset in regard to suffering. We are Christ, for we are a part of His body. Yahweh has appointed a cup of suffering that Christ must drink. Yahshua drank the largest portion of it, and then He has presented the cup to the rest of His body. Most have chosen to not drink from the cup at all. Yet a remnant have acquiesced. Some have sipped at it, trying to only get a taste, but no more than they had to. It has been a mere remnant among the remnant that has had the mind to drink fully that the sufferings of Christ might be brought to completion and that they might set an example for others.

Are we not brought to a quicker death if we drink deeply? Christ's sufferings were intense, but short lived. Others have seemed to smolder like a wick all their lives. Their sufferings have never burst into flame, but Yahshua is so gracious that He will not even extinguish a smoldering wick. They will have to smolder a long time, however, before the work of purification is accomplished in their life.

Consider that the three Israelites who were cast into the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual. They were in the furnace but a moment, and even then the visible Son of God was present with them. The more intense our trials, the greater the manifestation of the Lord we will be met with. He is near to the brokenhearted, to the sorrowful, to those suffering for righteousness sake.

So be encouraged sister. Suffer well with me as we embrace the cross God has appointed unto us. And thanks for asking about my welfare!

Back in February of this year I was led by the Spirit to leave the mission after three years of service. The Lord has indicated that I am to prepare for a ministry of teaching. I believe I will be traveling and the Lord will provide open doors of opportunity. Yet even in this time of preparation the trials continue. I still find that I must die daily. The message the Lord has given me to proclaim is the message of the cross.

I am no glutton for punishment. However, I realize that suffering is appointed to us in this time. My great hope is that I might not resist this work, but that I might willingly drink deeply from the cup of suffering presented to me. This willingness is of itself a triumph, for it goes against the inclinations of the natural man. It is choosing identification with Christ above self-preservation.

I expect the trials will continue even as the Lord sends me out on the road. Yet I look to the Lord to walk with me through every trial. Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. Let us encourage one another with these words.

May you be blessed with peace and understanding in these days.



Second Addendum - The Garment of Humility

(December 2011)

I had suspected for years that Yahweh might one day require me to experience imprisonment even as that other Joseph, the son of Jacob, did many years ago. God's ways of perfecting His sons have not changed. A man must pass through many humiliating, sorrowful, and distressing circumstances in order to provide the right environment for spiritual growth.

In February of 2008 my son Josiah turned 18 and the child support I was required by the county judge to pay to Tony came to an end. Tony had requested from the judge that I pay her alimony after the child support ended.

When the Father directed me to leave employment at the Macon Rescue Mission in 2008 to return to full-time ministry, I sought to pay Tony the alimony she requested. Yahweh enabled me to do so for a period of 8 months, but then the financial support I was receiving from the saints of God began to dwindle. This led to a period of intensely seeking to know the mind of the Father.

It had ever been my hope that Yahweh might somehow effect a reconciliation between my wife and I. I had no bitterness in my heart toward her, and sought always to send her money for support at the earliest opportunity, rather than waiting until the last day of the month. When it became impossible for me to send Tony the money she requested from the courts, I inquired fervently of the Father to know why this was transpiring. I told the Father that I did not want Tony to think I was bitter toward her, or unwilling to send her support. In reply, the answer I received from my Father in heaven was that I was to trust Him. That He was working out all things according to His wisdom.

I knew that my inability to pay the alimony award put me in a place of peril. The Father would not allow me to seek secular employment again. He continued to affirm it to be His will that I minister full-time. In a few months I received notice from Tony's lawyer that contempt charges were being filed against me for not paying alimony, and in November of 2009 I was ordered to appear in court.

I appeared before the same judge that granted Tony the divorce she sought in 2005. Once more, the Father made known that it was His will that I not hire a lawyer, that I give no defense, and make no charges against my wife. I was to be as a sheep led to the slaughter.

The judge ordered me to lay aside the full-time ministry and to seek secular employment so that I might be able to pay Tony the money she sought. In much meekness I shared with the judge that God had directed me to leave secular employment in 2008 and to return to full-time ministry. I told him that I could not in good conscience do anything else. I was led in handcuffs from the courtroom and taken to the county lock-up where I spent 60 days in a jail cell.

In 2010 Tony instructed her lawyer to bring the matter before the judge again. Once more I was required to appear in court, and the result was the same. I was led away in handcuffs and taken to the county detention center where I remained for 74 days. It was during this latter period in jail that I wrote the following article which I sent to my daughter and asked her to post on my blog site.

The Garment of Humility (Written from jail)

Joseph Herrin- 6/19/2011 (Father's Day)

There are certain experiences that are common to the disciples of Christ that are unknown to the majority of professing Christians today. I would share with you regarding one mark of discipleship that Yahweh has made abundantly clear at this season both through His word and through personal experience. Let me begin by looking at the very first book of the Bible where we read of the story of Joseph who serves as a type of Christ.

Joseph was born as the eleventh son of Jacob, being the first son of Jacob's favorite wife Rachel. Joseph was the son of Jacob's old age. Doing the math we read that Jacob was 130 years old when he came to Joseph in Egypt. (Gen. 47:9) This was the second year of famine, the ninth year since Joseph was brought out of prison to serve as Pharaoh's second ruler in the land. Joseph was 39 years old. By this we understand Jacob was 91 years old when Joseph was born. Joseph was the son of Jacob's old age, and greatly beloved by his father. (Gen. 37:3)

It is in Genesis chapter 37 that we see a remarkable theme begin to weave its way through the pages of Scripture. Jacob gave to Joseph a special garment to denote that he stood in his father's favor. Many Bibles describe this garment as a "coat of many colors." I read a teaching on this many years ago that suggested that "a long sleeved tunic" is a more accurate translation. The teaching reported that it was common for a man of wealth to adorn the son who was to receive the birthright with a long sleeved tunic. Whether it was a coat of many colors, or a long sleeved tunic, it is clearly evident that Joseph's brothers recognized the special garment he wore as a mark of their father's special love and favor toward Joseph.

Genesis 37:4

"When his brothers SAW that their father loved [Joseph] more than all his brothers, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him."

The response of Joseph's brothers to the favor of their father was identical to that of Cain when Yahweh had regard to his brother Abel's offering, but not to his own. Cain was filled with hatred and murdered Abel. Similarly, Joseph's brothers were filled with hatred and they spoke of murdering Joseph. (Gen. 37:18-20)

Though Joseph's brothers were persuaded not to murder him, what they did do stands as a great parable.

Genesis 37:23

"And it came to pass, when Joseph came unto his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his coat, his coat of many colors that was on him."

To understand this parable one must know the significance of a person's garment. The garment represents a person's identity, their reputation before God and man. Without a garment all men are naked and covered in shame. Yahweh, in His mercy, covers the shame of man. Christ Yahshua becomes our propitiation (literally - merciful covering). Paul exhorts Christians to "put on Christ" and to "clothe yourselves with Christ."

God is no respecter of persons. "He has mercy on whom He chooses, and He hardens whom He chooses." (Romans 9:18) Yahweh does not favor the rich man above the poor, nor

the mighty man above the weak. God does not choose the wise man more than the foolish. He favors whom He chooses, and He hardens whom He will. From the same lump of clay He fashions one man to receive His honor, and another for dishonor. (Romans 9:21)

That God would choose to have mercy on one man over another strikes the heart of fallen man as capriciousness. Rebellion is stirred up in the natural mind, and it is exhibited as hatred and a spirit of murder toward those who receive the Father's favor. Christ described the logic of fallen man in the following parable.

Luke 20:13-14

“Then said the Lord of the vineyard, “What shall I do? I will send my beloved son. It may be that they will reverence him when they see him.” But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, “This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.”

In these words, the heart of fallen man is revealed. If men truly loved God, they would honor those whom He honors, they would love those whom God loves. When the sons of Jacob spoke of murdering Joseph, they knew such an act would grieve their father deeply. They proved that they cared little for their father when they sold Joseph into slavery and made it appear as if a wild beast had slain him. When Jacob received this evil report of his sons he entered into deep mourning for Joseph and would not be comforted (Gen. 37:34-35). In a similar manner, the Jewish people revealed that they did not have God the Father's desires in mind, for they slew His beloved Son.

Let me point out an important part of this parable. Joseph had his garment stripped off twice, perfectly paralleling a work in the life of Christ. The first time Joseph was stripped of his garment of honor was when his father sent him to his brothers. (Gen. 37:13) Similarly, Yahshua emptied Himself and took on the form (garment) of a bondservant when His Father sent Him to His brethren. (Phil. 2:7) Even as Joseph had the robe of favor removed from him, Christ did not consider equality with God something to be held onto, but laid aside the glory He shared as He dwelt with the Father, and took the form of a slave.

This first stripping of Joseph and Yahshua is something all disciples must experience. Christ said that a disciple is not above his master, but must become like his master. “Before honor, comes humility.”

All who come to Christ must lay aside the honor, the glory, the reputation and esteem they had in this world. This is far more difficult for the rich than the poor, for the mighty than the weak, for those esteemed as wise than those without esteem. To be a disciple of Christ is to be reproached, scorned, mocked, and ridiculed. The ways of Christ are not the ways of the world. What man esteems is despised in the eyes of God. To surrender to be led of the Spirit of Christ is to embrace a life of humility.

In 1999 the Spirit of Christ challenged me to follow wherever He would lead. I had a good job as a computer professional. I had honor among my co-workers. I had honor in my church, serving as a minister. When I surrendered to follow the Spirit I was led to leave my place of employment to begin a ministry of writing. My circumstances became much more humble. Many in the church could not accept such a walk as the will of God. I was soon cast out of the church. Outwardly my standard of living declined greatly.

In a similar way Joseph left the abundance of dwelling with his father and became a slave in Egypt; Christ emptied Himself of the glory He shared with the Father and took on the form of a bondservant. Even in human terms, His life was a humble one. Yahshua was

born in a manger. His years of ministry were spent as a homeless man. He was buried in another man's tomb. Those who would follow Christ must lay aside the garments of honor that they have in this world and accept the garb of a bondservant. A bondservant wears whatever his master gives to him to wear. Should our Master give us a very humble garment to wear, we must wear it with grace. The apostle Paul wrote:

Philippians 4:11-12

"I have learned, in whatever state I am in, to be content. I know both how to be abased, and how to abound... both to be full, and to be hungry, both to abound and to experience lack."

How do we wear the garments of humility with grace? We do so as we lay aside all bitterness, forgiving those who have treated us shamefully. We refuse to be ruled by a spirit of self-pity, seeking instead to be faithful wherever our circumstances have led us.

Joseph was stripped of his garment of honor and sold as a slave in Egypt. He was bought by Potiphar, a key servant of Pharaoh, the captain of his bodyguard. Joseph did not sulk in Potiphar's house. He bloomed where he was planted. Yahweh showed favor to Joseph, giving him wisdom and causing everything he did to prosper. In all of Potiphar's household there was no one as faithful as Joseph. In all of God's house there has been none more faithful than Yahshua. Both rose to positions of honor as they devoted themselves to labor humbly as servants. Potiphar entrusted everything in his possession to Joseph, and Yahweh entrusted all judgement to His Son, considering Him faithful. Both ever lived to do the will of the one they served.

When we embrace discipleship, following Christ wherever He leads, He will most certainly lead us to many humble experiences we would not have chosen for ourselves. We glorify God by being found faithful wherever He places us. A spirit of complaint, of discontentment, must be resisted. God will honor His faithful sons in due time. Our times are in God's hands.

Those who are faithful as servants will begin to rise to positions of honor in the house they labor in. Joseph was made overseer of Potiphar's house. Accordingly, he was given a new garment as a symbol of honor. The garment was not as glorious as that which his father Jacob had given to him, but it denoted honor nonetheless. The day came, however, when this garment was wickedly stripped off of Joseph and he was cast down to an even lower position.

Potiphar's wife lusted after Joseph, entreating him daily to lie with her. One day she found Joseph alone in the house and grabbed hold of his outer garment, entreating him to commit adultery with her. Joseph refused, leaving his garment in the woman's hands as he fled.

Potiphar's wife stripped Joseph not just of his garment, but of his reputation. She took away Joseph's reputation as a faithful servant to his master and clothed him in the garment of a transgressor as she falsely accused him of trying to rape her.

The parallel in the life of Christ is obvious. The Jewish leaders envied Christ. They brought false charges against the Son of God. His garment was also stripped away and Yahshua was clothed in a garment of shame. Yahshua "was numbered among the transgressors." Even as He was being crucified, the Roman soldiers parted His raiment and cast lots for His cloak.

Those who are to "clothe themselves with Christ" must wear this garment of

abasement as well. Consider how many of Christ's disciples named in Scripture were accused of transgression and subjected to imprisonment, beatings, or worse. Among those named are Peter, James, John, Paul and Timothy. Some of these repeatedly were numbered among the transgressors. This is the lot and privilege of those who would follow in the footsteps of Christ. To yield to be led of the Spirit as Christ was, is to embrace a life of humility, of shame and reproach.

I write these words from jail. It is now the second time I have been placed in here as I have sought to remain faithful to the call of God on my life. One of the first things that occurs as a man is put in jail is that his clothes are taken from him and a prison jumpsuit is given to him. I am wearing a bright orange jumpsuit. On the back in bold letters are emblazoned the words, "Houston County Jail." I am marked as a transgressor and share a domicile with thieves, murderers, and men accused of violent offenses and drug trafficking. Joseph shared a place with similar offenders. Christ was hung between two thieves.

What do these experiences signify? What is their purpose? I believe the answer is found in the garments. Yahweh wants to clothe His sons in garments of humility. Those destined to receive ruling authority and power must be exceedingly humble. Joseph was chosen by God to be elevated to the second position in the greatest nation on earth. Christ has been exalted to the right hand of God where all power and authority has been given to Him. Those who can endure patiently being abased, being content in the knowledge that such is the will of God, prove by their submissive spirit that it is God's will and pleasure that is uppermost in their mind.

Experiences of abasement, suffering, and reproach, when endured in the Spirit of Christ, produce a meekness in a man that is not present in the Adamic nature. Being willing to sink lower than one's normal situation in life, lower even than one's companions, produces a humility in a man that is highly esteemed in the eyes of God. It is He who inspired the words to be written, "God gives grace to the humble, but resists the proud."

In being willing to sink lower, to be as David when he danced with abandon before Yahweh, testifying "I will be more vile than this, and will be humble even in my own sight..." (2 Samuel 6:22), finds great favor with God. Such an attitude is a great contrast to Satan when he declared, "I will ascend..., I will exalt my throne above the stars of God..., I will be like the Most High" (Isaiah 14:13-14). On the one hand there is a willingness to sink lower to satisfy the will of God. On the other hand is manifested a pride that is discontented with one's appointed station, demanding ever to rise above others.

Sinking lower, becoming humble and vile in one's own sight, is a great trial to the soul of man. The soul must be crushed as an olive in the olive press. There are times when this crushing causes even godly men to cry out in their distress. As Christ viewed the cup of suffering His Father presented to Him at Gethsemane (interpreted - "olive press"), He cried out, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death..." (Mark 14:34). Sinking lower yet, Christ uttered the words that always glorify the Father, "Nevertheless, not My will, but Thy will be done" (Mark 14:36).

In a sense, the first time the disciples of Christ are stripped of their garments they embrace becoming "of no reputation." They willingly lay aside all that they previously gloried in. The apostle Paul recounted his former reputation; A Hebrew of the Hebrews; born of the tribe of Benjamin. He was zealous, joining the strictest sect of the Pharisees. He was educated in the school of Gamaliel. As to the righteousness found in the law, he was accounted as a perfect man. This same Paul testified, "Those things that were gain to me, I considered loss." He compared them to dung that he might gain Christ.

All disciples must for a time lay aside the garments of honor as a favored son and array themselves in the clothing of a servant. A great many Christians and ministers refuse to do so. They hold on jealously to raiments of honor. They constantly assert their position as sons of the Most High. They refuse to accept anything but honor, accolades and prosperity. In doing so they follow the pattern of Satan, despising the humility of Christ.

There is a second stripping that causes the disciples of Christ to descend even lower, following the path of Joseph who was placed in Pharaoh's dungeon. We must be willing even to be stripped of the garments of a servant, to be arrayed with the shame of a transgressor.

As I pondered this matter sitting in jail, the Spirit opened my eyes to understand an event that occurred at the crucifixion of Christ. In the time of His suffering we read that some standing near, hearing Christ say "I thirst," dipped a sponge into some sour wine and offered it to Christ to drink.

King David, speaking prophetically in the Psalms, wrote of this event, "They gave me gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." The words "gall" and "vinegar" both described the sour wine those nearby offered to Christ (Psalm 69:21). About a week after I was put in jail a letter arrived from a close family member. They spoke words of condemnation, urging me to abandon the path of obedience God had laid on me that I might come down off the cross.

Soon after, an inmate in an adjoining cell called out to my cell-mate. He said, "Ask the minister what *gall* is." I asked him to tell me how the word was being used, for it has more than one meaning. He quoted the above verse from the Psalms. How precious is our Father in ordering our steps.

The Spirit showed me that the gall offered to Christ to drink is a symbol of the bitter things that those close to Christ's disciples will offer to them even as they are enduring the cross. How bitter it is to have those close to us add to our reproaches in an hour when our soul is being crushed.

We often hear someone speak of a "galling experience." They are referring to something very bitter. Someone is said to have a lot of "gall" when they speak, or act, in a very presumptuous and unkind manner. Even as Christ hung on the cross, remaining there out of love for others and obedience to the Father, those nearby hurled abuse and scorn at Him. He was mocked and condemned. Those nearby said, "If you are the Son of God, come down off the cross," and "He saved others, He cannot save Himself."

Those who would clothe themselves with Christ must accept such experiences with grace and forgiveness. Joseph found it an exceedingly bitter experience to be branded as a transgressor. For a while this garment chafed at him as if he were arrayed in sackcloth. He yearned to remove this ill fitting reputation, and declared his innocence (Gen. 40:14-15). Yet it was Yahweh's will that he wear it two more years.

There have been times in my present incarceration when I have found my circumstances galling. My soul has been weighed down under a burden on some days. I am encouraged when the Spirit reveals to me that such experiences are the portion of all who would be perfect in Christ. To put on Christ, we must put on His humility.

There have been many trials and attacks from the enemy at this time, but the grace of God has been more abundant. Even as Christ was comforted to spy John and some of the faithful women standing nearby, sharing in His hour of tribulation, so have I been much encouraged by those faithful saints who have written to me and offered up prayers on behalf of my family.

The Father has encouraged me in other ways. I have been put in cell number 40. The Spirit led me to the Psalm of this same number. It begins,

“I waited patiently for Yahweh; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in Yahweh.”

It is truly my hope and earnest desire that a remnant will observe the Father’s grace and keeping power in my life and be encouraged to abandon their lives fully into His hands. He has declared that there is “an afflicted path that leads to life, and few there be that find it.” Yet His grace is able to keep the weakest, and most timid of those who will commit their lives unto Him. Though the way of Christ’s disciples leads through fire and flood, through lion’s dens and the valley of the shadow of death, we have an omnipotent Shepherd who watches over us. We will never walk alone.

If we will accept the garments of humility that Christ wore, we will wear the garments of honor. The hour came when Joseph was brought out of the prison of Pharaoh. His garment was changed once again. Pharaoh arrayed Joseph in linen garments. He placed the necklace about Joseph’s neck, and a signet ring on his finger. Pharaoh declared that in Joseph was the Spirit of the holy God. Joseph received glory for abasement, and honor for shame. This is the heritage of the overcomers in Christ.

May you be blessed with peace and understanding in these days.

Note: I was released from this second imprisonment after 74 days in jail.





Books By Joseph Herrin

The Remnant Bride

Sabbath

Sarah's Children

The Road from Babylon to Zion

Laying Down the Law

God's Plan of the Ages

The Divine Quest - God's passionate pursuit of faith in the heart of man.

The Mark of the Beast

Evidence of Things Unseen

Overcoming Addiction by the Spirit of Christ

Christ in You - The Hope of Glory

The Marriage Covenant

The Gate and the Way

Dragon Flood

No Apologies

Yahweh's Book

Foundations

Push Back! A Christian Response to the Homosexual Agenda

Lunacy & the Age of Deception

Living Epistles - Testimonies of Faith

Attractive Deception - The False Hope of the Hebrew Roots Movement