

## IN HIS WAKE

***Wake: Position behind somebody: a position or the area behind somebody or something that is moving ahead fast.***

When you begin to follow Jesus in your bible you will see some strange stuff. If he gets in a church a demon possessed crazy is liable to start screaming or you may find him in the next service having a man to stretch out his withered hand with the preacher watching and losing his temper.

If he runs into a funeral procession he is subject to walk up to the casket, speak life into the corpse and break up the whole caravan.

Then you have grave diggers going home telling a story around the dinner table that will leave their kids and wives wide eyed and crazy rushing to tell their neighbors and friends.

God only knows what the funeral preacher had to say when he stood up before his congregation in their next get together.

If he gets on a boat he is subject to drift off into a sleep and if a storm should arise and someone gets in a panic he may just wake up and speak orders to the elements; and they just may listen and obey.

This is God walking around doing exactly what he wishes for the human race. Making wine for a wedding, healing the pain of sickness and affliction, feeding the hungry, and clothing the poor, quelling fears, encouraging the downtrodden and supplying the needs of the poverty stricken, the spiritually depressed and the lonely.

Along with all of this comes hope for the dying with the promise of a resurrection to a new and eternal life that is free from the problems and struggles with which we are all too familiar.

When he got in a house he attracted a cross section from every economic and intellectual level. If men could not get their sick through the door they climbed on the roof, ripped back the tile and eased them down into the presence of the humble King.

When he spoke forgiveness and healing to this victim of sin and sickness, the past was erased and healing and wholeness flooded his being. There in that humble setting a man bound to his cot shaking with the palsy was made new and walked out the door with a new

life and a fire in his soul telling everyone he met what Jesus had done.

When morning came the roofing contractors were there to make their repairs and you can only imagine what kinds of stories they were hearing after the Jesus cottage prayer meeting the night before.

“..They were astonished with a great astonishment” and were “...Beyond measure astonished,” were consistent statements in describing this man from Heaven.

Every race, creed and color was drawn to this man of men who two thousand years ago divided time and put new calendars on the walls of our world. If he should start preaching on a street corner in your city you would be drawn to listen. Along with you would be your friends, neighbors, coworkers, maybe your doctor, your banker and maybe even your lawyer. You would find the homeless and the hopeless walking with their back packs, pushing their grocery carts and riding their bicycles; loaded with their every possession. You would see the SUVs, Benzs and Bentleys crawling to a stop to hear what God had to say. If he spoke very long you would hear the deep clucking sound of the local news helicopters there to cover the story of this miracle worker. The local TV reporters would fight back tears as they gave their little two minute description of what Jesus was saying and doing. Then you would see and hear other witnesses with their voices breaking with emotion and maybe detect a tear or two as they gave their account of what was happening as they stood in the presence this itinerant preacher.

There is a reason for Jesus getting our attention. He has and is everything that we need. He loves us in spite of who we are or what kind of resume we have developed with our mistake ridden past. He loves us; all of us. There are no outcasts. The red necks, white necks, skin heads, nuts and crazies are going to be in his crowd. From the intellectuals to the ignorant along with the clean, the dirty, the young, the elderly, the good and the wicked; all sit spellbound when Jesus speaks. Deep in the heart of man, it is known, that it is He, who has what we need so desperately.

Our bibles say, speaking of God, that, ***“Thou openest thy hand and satisfieth the desires of every living thing.” (Ps. 145:16)*** Somewhere in our sincere search for truth...we will find him. It may be in a song, the breeze in the trees, the babble of a brook, your bible, a sermon or one of the other million and one ways that our maker has of communicating with his people. The great truth

is; he can be touched.

Someone made a bumper sticker that said, *“Jesus Is The Answer”* and someone wrote a book entitled, *“If Jesus Is The Answer, What Is The Question?”*

It may sound too simplistic but He does have, or he is, the answer to the mysteries and the questions of life. Our guilt, anxieties and oppressions are nullified when we find and abide in His presence. He looked his imperfect disciple in the eye, put his finger on his heart and said, ***“Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church....” (Mat. 16:18)*** In other words, I am going to live in you and I am going to be your God and you are going to be my people. He picked up losers by the wayside and fired them with the dynamic power of His spirit. He walked this world and was attracted to the poor and downtrodden. The bible says, ***“..When he saw the multitude, he was moved with compassion on them..”(Mat. 9:36)*** He is contagious and addicting. When men heard him speak they shook their heads and departed murmuring, ***“Never man spake like this man..”(John 7:46)*** When they heard him pray their solemn request was, ***“Lord, teach us to pray...”(Luke 11:1)*** When he was handed five loaves and two fish to feed some five thousand men plus women and children, a crowd of possibly fifteen thousand or more, his multiplying hands produced an over abundance that sent a young man home with twelve baskets of surplus food.

All of these things are still happening in the invisible world of the spirit. Two thousand years have passed and we still want to learn to pray like he prayed. We still go to extremes to feel his touch and to know his forgiveness. We still want and do catch his generous and simple giving spirit.

His great truths are so simple and often slip by without recognition. When we miss them, we miss so very much.

Many years ago I was pastoring a small church. A business man bought us a bus to bring kids to Sunday School. The first Saturday we got it running we went to the different trailer parks and neighborhoods trying to find some kids that wanted to go to church the next morning. At one particular trailer we had four little boys who promised to go but when Sunday Morning came only one little girl came out to ride with us. Her name was Sissy and she was barefoot. She asked if she could go to church barefoot because she did not have any shoes to wear. I told her to get on board, shoes or

no shoes. She was our only passenger and she was sure welcome like she was.

At the altar call that morning, only one came forward, and it was little Sissy. She gave her life to the Lord and after that I mentioned that she did not have any shoes to wear but came to church anyway.

After church was over a man came over to me who was visibly touched and a little choked. He stuffed a bill in my hand and said, "Buy that little girl some shoes." A few minutes later a lady came over and stuffed another bill in my hand; "Buy that girl some shoes."

When some of the women found out her shoe and dress size; they took the money and went to town and bought several pairs of shoes and two or three dresses. When the bill was totaled up it was within a couple of pennies of what was given.

When they told me the bill was so close to what was given, the truth hit me right between the eyes. God in his simple way, does supply. Everything; shoes for your feet, clothes for your back, food for your body, peace for your soul and tranquility for your mind...and everything else. We don't read about happenings like this in our local newspapers or see them on our news channels because they would not get any attention. But to real believers, this is headline news. It is this simple and quiet Lord of ours walking through our world of poverty and lack reaching out to meet our every desire. Sissy's deal was another miracle of God's work that is unseen by this world but one that we believers do see and it motivates us like a bunch of what the world would call, "religious crazies" to keep on laboring to see it happen again. It is no wonder that God himself calls us a **"peculiar people, zealous of good works."**(*Titus 2:14*) And at another time just, **"a peculiar people."**(*1 Pet. 2:9*) And I guess we must admit; we are, and that we are nutty enough to admit it and enjoy it.

God sent a thirty passenger bus, a driver and an assistant to pick up Sissy in a trashville trailer park. To bring her all by herself, to his house, to save her soul, radically change her life and to supply her with new shoes and clothing.

Acts like these are taking place around the world and they are ripples of what was ignited some two thousand years ago when a giving God gave a living and giving Jesus to our poverty stricken world. He said then and he still says now, to **"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart:**

***and ye shall find rest unto your souls....For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*** He still gathers the poor in his arms and tells us to, ***“Give, and it shall be given unto you.....good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over.....” (Luke 6:38)***

These truths are so different from our world's teachings. The bible says that, ***“The idle of the heathen are silver and gold..” (Ps. 155:15)*** With all the shortages we face, it is only natural for us to be attracted to this direction. For us to seek things like food for our bodies, clothing, shelter, transportation and a security blanket to protect us in our uncertain future. To think, think, think and to work, work, work; trying our best to keep up or nudge ahead in the rat race of life.

Jesus came along and debunked this kind of thinking. He brought us a deeper dimension, a spiritual insight that reaches past time and our physical needs and wants. He stood on the mountainside with his voice booming out to the multitude and commanded us to ***“....Take no thought,(to not worry) saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?”***

***(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.***

***But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. (Mat. 6:31, 32 &33)***

His word tells us to be thankful in every situation, to know in the depths of our soul that every minute event of our life is part of his plan and is working for the good for us in the end. He tells us that every hair on our head is numbered, that we are the salt of this earth, the lights of this world and his city on a hill.

The word “faith” is mentioned only two times in your King James Old Testament but when Jesus came on the scene this word came forth like a wild lion in the devil's meat house. His voice rumbled out and around our world and throughout the ages telling us that we could pluck up trees and remove mountains with this great God given power.

Rev. R.W. Shambach the old radio/tent preacher would often close his program with these words; ***“You don't have any problems, all you need is faith in God.”*** When I first heard this and was burdened down with problems it got on my nerves; yet I knew deep down; it

was the truth. Your faith and my faith will see us through. When the night is dark and there is absolutely no way to figure your way out; God comes on with His miracle; but it is not before the struggle, the cat fight, the gut rending turmoil of which a faith fight consists.

A few years ago I was in Beijing China. There, among other things, we visited, what was called the "Temple Of Heaven." It was sprawled over hundreds of acres of land with thousands of visitors each day. This vast worship center contains 3000 cypress trees that are over 600 years old. There were different buildings, statues and images constructed for fasting, sacrificing and other worshipping rituals used by the ancient Chinese in their search for their god. It no doubt took millions of man hours of labor and hundreds of millions of dollars in money. It is so expensive, so big, so historic, so confusing to my simple mind. This is what religious belief does. It can put a damper on our lives. It can stir questions. It can get us away from the basics of our inhouse Holy Ghost Christian faith.

It was and is simplicity when it comes to the teachings of Jesus. We might not do things that attract a lot of attention but we can do great little things that will get the eye and the heart of God.

Theodore Roosevelt said, *"It is far better to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure, than to take rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy much nor suffer much, because they live in the grey twilight that knows not victory nor defeat."*

Our efforts in reaching the loss seem so inconsequential to our world; so simple and inglorious to the masses that are seeking fame and fortune, yet to us and to heaven, each one is so precious; each one a very glorious triumph drawing little or no attention from a greedy world.

When we go to him with a surrendered soul it is a great and mighty step that brings indescribable victories. The demons of hell are horrified when this power from Heaven floods our soul. When we really hook up to heaven, it seems that an angel fires the starting gun and the battle gets under way. We get a gut feeling that our eternity and peace is at stake and the struggle is going to take everything that is within to win; and this is the way it really is. Real Christians have real battles. The genuine born again world changers are under attack from the principalities and the powers of darkness; spiritual wickedness in high places. The anointing we have received and fight daily to keep comes with a price. Somebody has got to

pay the power bill and the ones with the touch are the bank accounts from which the payments are withdrawn. How much more can we ask. What a joy and privilege it is to stand for what is right. For us to be healers and not hurters, givers and not takers. To bless and not curse, love and not hate. For us to serve, hoping for nothing in return but the wonderful peace from the God of Heaven. To be "*Happy tired*" from doing the labor of the Lord. The Apostle Paul said it all, ".....***We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.***"(2 Cor. 4:7)

We are working in this wake, fighting in his battles, winning his victories and looking to Heaven as our final home and resting place. What a wonderful privilege.

***Prayer: Lord, thank you for allowing me to participate. To see your footprints and to know that with your help; I can follow. That I have the privilege of being your voice, your hands and your feet. To speak, to labor and to go where you command. Thank you for the opportunity of having you as my Lord; as my forgiver and guide. Please show me how to live...how to be close, hear your voice and to have your touch. Help me to, "Be in your wake forever" Amen.***

***"I would rather be a failure doing something I loved than being a success doing something I hate.***

***George Burns***

### ***FIND ME A ROCK***

When it came time for God to build a new church he sure went about it in an unorthodox way. Here in America we all know you have a business meeting, get some pledges, raise some money, find a parcel of land, get some drawings and call the contractors. The problem machine is already on automatic and it starts cranking them out like crazy and the folks in charge are often in for some

sleepless nights.

God sure had a different idea. He got up one morning and decided he was going to build a different kind of church and that he was going to build it in a very different kind of place. He must have had enough of the existing one because wrecking it had worked its way to the top of his list. "...**There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.**(Mat. 24:2)

He undoubtedly had had enough of concrete, rebar and of it being stuck in one place. He was looking for a foundation of faith found in the heart of a man and he was planning a little heart room with a sound system so sensitive that a "think prayer" would make thunder and lightening flash before His Heavenly throne. He was tired of what had been going on and He had designed a system where He could be so close to his people that mind talk was as good and as powerful as screaming over a million watt amplified system. He had something in his mind like, ***“.I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people”*** (Heb.8:10) I am going to be their God and they are going to be my people and we are all going to know what is going on.

The first thing he did was to start the destruction of the one in existence. It went something like this:

***“And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to show him the buildings of the temple.***

***And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.***(Mat. 24:1&2)

This is when the building plan changed; God the Father sent Jesus looking for a plot of land to lay the foundation and he found it in the most unlikely place.

***“Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?”***

***And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.***

***He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?”***(Mat. 16:13 thru 16)

Then Peter ignited the bomb. ***“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”***(Mat. 16:16)

The building program was underway and unknowingly Simon Peter was the land owner who was about to furnish space for the

foundation.

*“Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.*

*And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”(Mat. 16:17 & 18)*

God found his rock of faith in a vessel that was in many ways like you and me; somewhat imperfect. A vessel that could lose its temper, curse, cut off an ear, deny the Lord and at one time be scolded and called Satan. A vessel that was familiar with failures and reversals. One, that after a night of toiling at sea for his empty boat catch; still had a “nevertheless” in his heart; a “nevertheless” that would motivate him to push out from the shore into the deep in obedience to the Lord and to let down his net for a boat sinking load of fish. A “nevertheless” deep in the gut that would bring him through the fires of life’s trials; one that would inspire him to love life and to see good days. One that would ready him to answer any and every question that any man would have concerning his faith and his walk with his God. A “nevertheless” that drew him so close to the God of Heaven that he would know when his time on earth was coming to an end.

Isn’t it good to know that God is not looking for perfection in his flawed vessels? Isn’t it good to know that no matter what our class or status is in life, that he has a place for us if we dare to step out in faith and fill it.

## FINDING HIS ROCKS

Jesus tells a story in the bible about a man who with a hundred sheep had one gone astray. It wasn’t enough to look at the ninety and nine and be content; he left them to search through the mountains and the forests to find the stray and then to load him on his shoulders and bring him back to the fold.

No matter how lost we may be or seem to be; we are never forgotten and our labor for the Lord is of the utmost of importance. In your heart; and in mine is a plot of land reserved for God to build his church. As we surrender this property to him, he claims us as his rock and begins his construction. Our properties are made up of special soils and special DNAs. No human on earth can take the place of you or of me. We all have an

assignment and our world cannot be completely healed without each of us doing our small part.

Deep inside we know that God has a purpose for our lives. Finding and fulfilling this purpose calls for a lifetime of study, seeking and searching. It calls for the sacrificing of this heart property, even if we surrender it at a very slow rate and with very much struggle. Dying to self is not easy and we all have this task to deal with on a daily if not hourly basis. Peter was apparently a few strides ahead of his fellow disciples, but as we follow his life; we find that he had many more steps to take.

Steps of denying the Lord and the embarrassing moments as he heard the rooster's early morning crowing, yet the rock held it's place and brought him through. The mountain top experience of having a burning fire in his soul to preach the first Pentecostal message and see souls streaming to the altar, making the rock more stable and readying it for the first trip to the jail house where the ground would start shaking and the gates would swing open to freedom again.

There is something about these happenings that ignites a fire in the souls of others. It makes me want to be a copycat rock. It stirs the soul and makes you wonder just what God could or would do if we turned it all over to him.

A good solid rock will defy the law of man if it conflicts with the laws that come from Heaven. A good solid rock will have a countenance that will cause brilliant men to look on a common man and realize in awe that he has been with Jesus.

Because of his rock foundation Peter became a street fighter for God. A preacher and a healer for his world; a messenger for his generation and for all generations to follow. This from a common man that fished for his livelihood but one day ran upon Jesus and was changed forever.

You and I are leaving footprints, sending out vibes, signals and sounds that our generation and those that follow will hear, feel and see. These signals will go on forever. What kind of a foundation do we have and what are we allowing the God of Heaven to build on this property?

In redneck language, God says, "I'll build my church and the gates of hell ain't gonna mess it up..." I say "Lord, have at it...dig so deep that it hurts and then dig some more if that is what is needed. Get in this flawed temple of clay and do your thing. Put

me on your potter's wheel and put the pedal to the metal. Spin me until I can't see straight. Turn me into whatever you need. Make me a walkin, talkin, squawkin Jesus machine. Put me in the jailhouse and then send an earthquake to shake the foundations. Motivate me to give and work like a crazy man to promote your kingdom. Nobody has ever needed anybody like I need you now; here I am, take all of me.

Peter may have been the first rock but he sure wasn't the last. Paul just happened to have a little rock foundation in himself. To paraphrase, he said, "They have whipped me five times, beaten me three times, stoned me once and my body has been pickled in the Mediterranean Sea. About all he could brag about was his body mark scars he got from laboring for his Lord. He wrote letters in the jailhouse that didn't have much of a chance of getting even to the sidewalk running up to the jail, but today, some two thousand years later, they are being read and preached around our world. He surrendered his rock property and the Lord used it to rock our world for him.

### **WANTED: SURRENDERED ROCKS**

Jesus said the fields are white and ready for harvest and for us to pray for and to labor in his fields. Just by seeking God's plan for our life will bring us our everyday needs of food clothing and the basics of life. It also starts a healing process that networks itself into our family and friends. It sets up an atmosphere of influence that will draw others to the kingdom. A fire in our soul is contagious and will feed on itself as we live our lives trying to please him. Faith can become visible in our lives as the God of Heaven dwells and walks in us performing his little everyday miracles.

No one on this earth should go to bed hungry. Not one of God's creatures should be without clothing, shelter, food and a secure feeling that everything is going to be alright, yet it is not happening.

In the end, when we are taking our final breaths this is the only activities that will count on our bottom line.

By surrendering our foundation for the Lord's building we bring blessing after blessing into our lives and they flourish and spread to other lives. We are his church and we are mobilized to do his work in any and every situation that may arise.

When God formed our world he chocked it full of blessings. He

made the ground fertile to bring forth fresh crops every season and he filled it with gold and natural resources to meet our every need. He put us here on the surface and gave us curiosity and his bible for an instruction manual. He sent his son to live before us, teach us and to die for us. If we can't fix this wagon with the tools that he has given it will never be fixed. If we can't work together and reach down to others that are less fortunate then poverty and lack is going to take us over like the plague.

You and I are created to serve; nothing else will satisfy. We were put here to be hands and feet for our God; filled with his spirit and directed by his still small voice. I want to be surrendered and you do too. We have both lived long enough to really know, that we don't know; how to live.

*Prayer: Lord here I am....please take my time, my energy, my love, my mind and my soul. Forgive me of every past sin and come into my life with your soul saving power and instruct me how to live. Fill me with your Holy Spirit as I give my heart, mind and soul to your service. I confess you now and forever before men. Thank you for saving my soul. Amen*

*"As long as you believe in yourself and your own vision, you have something. When you give up that, you are personally bankrupt.*

*Olivia Goldsmith/Writer*

*"You may have to fight a battle more than once to win it."*

*Margaret Thatcher*

## THE HOWBEITS OF LIFE

Enough is enough is enough. In the 17<sup>th</sup> chapter of Mathew there is a story that deals with a heavyweight problem in a human life. It says, *“...There came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, Lord have mercy on my son: for he is a lunatik, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.”* (Mat. 17:14 thru 16)

There is such a thing as being driven until you hit your Jesus switch. Things can go bad. I am not talking about flat tire bad, bill collector bad or a squabble at work bad. I mean losing your job bad, losing the house bad, divorce bad, losing your family bad, drug bad, alcohol bad, sick bad, destitute bad, lonely bad, prison bad, long time bad, paralyzed bad and death bad.

This situation was lunatik bad, crazy bad, jumping in the fire bad and jumping in the water bad. God seems to use gut wrenching

situations to move us from whatever level we are to the level he wishes us to be.

David, the man after the very heart of God was familiar with these elevating situations. He talked about being, ***“...Poured out like water”*** his heart, ***“...Melted like wax..”*** (Ps.22:14) and having, ***“... No soundness in his flesh or rest in his bones. (Ps. 38:3)*** After writing and telling everyone that would listen that, ***“..My refuge, is in God.”*** (Ps.62:7) We then hear him saying, ***“...Refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul.”*** (Ps. 142:4) He was apparently back in the pit again. Which most of us can well understand.

Mr. Certain Man had pulled his son out of the water and the fire too many times. He had jumped up in the middle of the night to his screaming and tormenting cries until he could bear it no more. His wife was about to have a nervous breakdown over this situation, was losing sleep and living a life of anything but tranquility. He left home with his lunatic son and with a determination to find an answer from concerning his situation. Or to find out if there was a God and if there was an answer to any situation. He was on a “going to Jesus” mission and he was determined to not come home empty.

When he got into the church mix he found that going to a cabinet member or the vice president was not working. The disciples lost their patience like most all of us do when we get frustrated by making no headway. They were going through the motions and the motions were not working. The lad was still out of control; flailing, screaming and falling into whatever there was to fall into. Praying, laying on of hands, anointing with oil; nothing is working until Jesus shows up.

Then in a matter of minutes, He speaks His words to us failures, ***“: ....O Faithless and perverse generation..”*** (Mat. 17:17) then proceeds to carry out his task and the job is done, and this question arises; ***“Why could not we cast him out?”***(Mat. 17:19)

The first thing he brings up is faith, or better yet the lack of such.

***“Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.***

**(Mat. 17:21)**

It is not difficult for me to find myself in this crowd. Their failure, his success and his little “Howbeit” statement was a call for us to go back to the well. To move ourselves by sacrifice and dedication to our next level of faith and service. I am an “old man” Christian and believe me I must have asked myself this “Why could we not..” question thousands of times; and we should, for our failures should always bring us back to the cross and to a renewing of our commitment to grow closer to our Lord than ever before.

This little sermon from the lips of Jesus was God’s way of letting us know that no matter how serious our problems may be; they can be conquered through a deeper and more powerful spiritual walk of prayer, fasting, action and obedience. Then we find a little sub sermon being preached in this text by the actions of Brother Certain Man that lets us know that we may have to go through the first church of the “holy rollers,” the third church of the “dried ups” and the fifth church of the “whatdoyousees” to get the miracle which we are seeking. He dismissed himself from the teaching class and founded his own “doit” class. He marched through “Lord, help my unbelief” and a bunch of failure church members to find this man of men miracle worker that could set his son free from these demons from hell.

We all have faced or are facing a lunatik problem in life. They come in many forms and sizes but they all have the end result of making us want to jump overboard into something even worse than being a lunatik; like being a drowning or a burning lunatik. We often get in the old proverbial spot of being between a rock and a hard place; death and life, belief or doubt, move on or die and rot.

When we read our bibles, meditate on its words and whisper a few prayers to Heaven; something very, very powerful happens inside us. In some unexplainable way we develop a faith of knowing. Knowing that nothing is impossible with God and the thing we are facing, that when conquered, is just one more little step toward him and our journey to Heaven and eternity. More often than not our failures are what bring us to the doorstep of our next opportunity. In them we find ourselves stopped and reassessing our situation; regrouping, reloading or as some may say “reinventing” ourselves. Mr. Soichiro Honda, the founder of Honda Motors wrote, “*..Success can be achieved only through repeated failure and introspection. In fact, success represents the 1 percent of your work*

*that results from 99 percent that is called failure.”*

I am certain that a few disciples went home and were lying awake in the wee hours of the morning thinking of the incident that had happened and of the “howbeits” that were looming in their lives. I am sure that they were making assessments of their acts and behaviors and then comparing them with the one who they had determined to unconditionally follow to the end. Maybe the subject of fasting did come to mind. Maybe I should miss a few meals just to affirm to God that I am serious about doing his heavyweight work. Maybe this walk is a little more hardcore than I have thought it to be. Maybe the sacrifice I am to make will drive me to my knees. Maybe my thoughts and compassion should be more directed to the needy of my world. Maybe I am one of the “called ones” to heal my world. Maybe I should examine my life a little closer. Maybe a few priorities should be changed. Maybe there are a few activities that should be dropped. Maybe I should not worry so much about someone calling me an extremist and being associated with the ones that are out to change their world no matter what the cost.

It is very difficult to explain the depth of the longing in a true believer’s heart and his or her desire to change their world. But the very thing that puts it there springs from the words of the master in his little mini sermon after their great failure. “...*Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.*” (Mat. 17:20)

Mountains are huge. I was raised in the sand and swamps of Florida and when I visit these jagged rocks that stretch for hundreds of miles and reach thousands of feet into the sky, I always stand in awe. I am convinced that our Lord could not have picked a better metaphor for describing the impossibilities that arise in our spiritual walk from time to time. Mountains so breathtaking and our faith so small, yet this mustard seed bit of dynamite will rip them from our pathway. So impossible, yet possible because we know His words are true. No matter how small or insignificant we may seem in the eyes of this world; when Jesus stood before the multitudes and started rumbling humanity with his words, telling us and daring us to believe, he changed everything. The only ones prohibited from doing his great work and having his Holy Ghost comfort was and is the unbelievers by choice. From the rice patties

in the Philippines and the garbage piles in India to the penthouses in London, New York and Shanghai and every level in between; faith works. It will bring you out and it will bring you out big time.

Will we have to go back to the well after our failures? Yes, many times. Will we maybe have some all night prayer experiences with what feels like a “Tiger Fight” in our gut? Yes. Will our world at times seem to fall apart? Yes. Will we be dogged at times with discouragement and depression and feel as though we can’t put one foot in front of the other to take our next step? Yes. Will we get into longtime problems, with some not having a solution? Yes. Will we have to tolerate some situations that we will never fully understand? Yes.

I could go on and on with this stuff just from my own experiences. But listen to the Apostle Paul, our flagship missionary of the New Testament and our leader in our trek through adversity. *“Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace;*

*And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it:*

*Being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.*

*I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you.” ( 1 Cor. 4:11 thru 14)*

Many in America have succumbed to a milk and toast gospel and we all know that a diet like this will only create a milk and toast spiritual being incapable of performing in the pits of addiction and bondage in which we are called to fight.

The “Howbeit” from Jesus should be ringing in the ears of our soul if we want to be effective for our Lord. How can we attack the poverty stricken, the homeless, the spiritually ignorant, the unsaved and the without hope crowd that is growing much faster than we would like to admit?

How can we live with ourselves, knowing that we have or can get power enough and to spare to change our corner of the world, and to not be doing it?

Our lunatik mountains stands before us and our tools of faith are in our bosom. God fired the starting gun on Pentecost morning and we see the job at hand, yet many of us are still on the fringes of the battle.

Happiness is getting right in the middle of the mix... and that is

where we really want to be. Getting to the “howbeits” one by one and conquering them with the heavy artillery guns of fasting, prayer and his mighty and powerful word. Going to the well after every failure and reloading with a new and more powerful faith. Using our disappointments and reversals to fuel a gutfire of faith that will carry us onward and upward until the end.

*Prayer: Lord, help me to be sensitive to the howbeit that rings out around our world of suffering. Build me to my potential as I rededicate myself to you. Forgive where it is needed and teach me your ways that I may have your power and your wisdom. Help me to continue to go back to your well of help. In your way, just make me better tomorrow than I am today and motivate me to fight evil as never before; thank you for just being my Lord. Amen*

*“What can I do with what I have to get what I want?”  
John Johnson*

***NEVER, NEVER, NEVER GIVE UP!***

The late Og Mandino, one of the greatest motivational writers and speakers of our time wrote: *“Adversity is the rain in your life, cold.*

*Comfortless and unfriendly. Yet from that season are born the lily, the rose, the date and the pomegranate. Who can tell what great things you will bring forth after you have been parched by the heat of tribulation and drenched by the rains of afflictions? Even the desert blooms after a storm.”*

Persistence is the one quality that we must develop if we are to win in this arena of life in which we have been placed without having a choice. Someone has said that, “*You can’t beat a man that will not quit fighting*” and “*It isn’t how big the dog is in the fight but how big the fight is in the dog.*” Our King commands us to get on an ask, seek and knock mission and that importunity will get somebody out of the bed at midnight to give us the help that we need no matter what kind of mood in which we find them.

Our Lord often paints his most beautiful portraits on lives that have been wrecked by failure, turmoil and adversity. His power and His love seems to find it’s dwelling place in the nooks and corners of hearts and lives that have been broken and crushed.

When we are down on the canvas of failure and the nights are so dark; the God of Heaven is putting on his apron of love and will hone our horror into a wonderful tool that we can use to heal our world.

The Christian life is enriched and made durable by trials and adversities. The Apostle Paul, writing out of hurt, discouragement and reversals says, “*We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.*” (2 Cor. 4:8 & 9)

He had what you, I, and the rest of the world needs so badly. In the middle of all of his mess he had an “*I press toward the mark.....*” (Phil. 3:14) An “*I press*” and a “*Mark*”; a *gut* and a *goal*. These two will do wonders. They will get us out of our turmoil and find for us a place of rest. A gut and a goal will transform our lives and keep us marching as we go on to transform other lives. A gut and a goal will build a fire in our soul, let it spill over into others and give us the boldness to stare down every devil in hell as they march up our driveway. A gut and a goal will amplify the words of our Lord in our desperate times of need. When he says, “*.....I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.*” (Luke 10:19)

With thunderings like this, He shakes our soul, our world, our enemy and our enemy’s very foundation. In the end of this very temporary life a gut and a goal will give us the power to back hand

death and to march into the portals of glory being "...More than conquerors through him that loved us..." (Rom. 8:37)

There are no shortcuts, no bargain base prices, no dollar store specials in making a good life. We are going to be knocked on our butts; over and over and over and then over some more. We must develop our "gitup" Our bibles are stuffed with the word "arise." From an angel to Joseph, for his direction, "*Arise, and take the young child and his mother....*" (Mat. 2:20)

From Jesus to the man with the palsy, "*Arise, take up thy bed...*" (Mat. 9:6)

From Jesus to his disciples when they were paralyzed with fear, "*Arise, and be not afraid....*" (Mat. 17:7)

From the prodigal standing in the hog pen, "*I will arise and go to my father...*" (Luke 15:18)

From Jesus to Saul on the road to Damascus, "*Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.*" (Acts 9:6)

I could go on and on with this stuff but in the end if you don't have the "gitup" you might as well just "gitout" and float down the devil's river with the billions; which is not a good idea.

## **GOD' S INEXPLAINABLE**

Did you ever have a problem that was impossible to solve, have the Lord solve it and then not be able to explain it? It really is not that unusual. David had the same experience. He said, "*I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree.*

*Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.*" (Ps. 37: 35 & 36)

They say there are three types of people. One group, makes things happen, the second group watches things happen and the third group just wonders what happened.

When it comes to a few of my problems that have just happened up without me knowing why and God's answered my prayer in getting them solved, more often than not I am in that "What happened" crowd.

Someone has said that, "Every problem is spiritually based." I believe this and it helps somewhat in explaining the above situation.

In my day, which was a long time ago the oldtimers had an expression they called, "*praying through.*"

For some reason, you seldom here this expression anymore; yet

it is as true today as ever. This is when you have something (a problem, a need, a challenge or whatever) in your life and it is so desperate that sleep will not come and you are tossing and turning and fighting on the inside like a wild man against a thousand pound grizzly bear with no way or hope of winning.

The old time solution was to hit it head on with fasting and prayer. I mean turn your plate over and do without everything for a few days and nights and to get anyone else in on it that was ready for battle. I mean real hunger, real thirst, real staying awake, real doing without food and drink, real twisting with hunger and real intercessory prayer to the God that knows it all. Some people would think you nutty for even thinking like this but I have seen it work enough times to make a believer out of me.

Often when these activities take place the spiritual victory will arrive before the actual happens. It is like a, "Check is in the mail message from the Lord." It is a knowing that everything is going to be alright; the battle is over, watch for the answer because it is on the way.

With a couple of generations passing without this knowledge might explain the reason we find our homeless teens roaming our streets by the thousands and finding their fellowship and camaraderie in gangs which can do nothing but harm for their lives.

The old "*pray through*" theology might not be as crazy and unworkable as some may think. In fact it might be just what we need to whip this infestation of demon rats that are trying to take over our world.

## **STEP ON THE WIRE RIDE**

At Niagara Falls they have a museum in which many of the contraptions with which folks have tried to "Shoot the falls." There is one where a man actually walked a wire out over the falls with a grill and actually cooked a hamburger while balancing on the wire.

Another story I have heard is about a fellow who pushed a wheel barrow across the falls on the highwire with a big crowd in attendance. When he reached the other side and a great roar of applause went up; he paused and asked one of the guys who was really excited and clapping, "Do you think I can walk this thing back to the other side?" "No doubt in my mind, you can do it!"

Do you really believe I can do it?” “Yes, I believe,” the onlooker replied. “Then why not get in and ride?”

This changed the complexion of everything. It is so different when you put your own hide on the line. When it is old number one who is putting his life at risk, it is apt to put a damper on this faith thing.

But with God...you have to do it! His word proclaims, “*But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*” (Heb. 11:6)

We are all subject to faith failure, missing God, doing the wrong thing at the wrong time and making silly and sometimes stupid mistakes. But this is also a big part of the faith walk. We often feel there is a fine line between having faith and stupidity and at times we end up on the stupid side. In reality, this is another test of faith; just to carry on after one of these deals is quite a task. The world would have you to give up, quit, be like it and stop this believing stuff. We must decide now and forever that we are in it until the end and betting our lives and everything we have on Jesus and what he has promised. With mistakes, failures, sins, bad judgments and whatever; I say pray again and again, clean the slate again and again, start again and again, and as Winston Churchill thundered, “Never, never, never, give up!”

*Prayer: Lord give me grit, tenacity, guts, stick to it and whatever else it takes to stay in line with your plan. Today and at this moment, I give it all to you all over again. I have fell short, failed made crazy mistakes and I am sorry...for everything. Please forgive and give me the strength to carry on and be what you made me to be and to do what you have called me to do. Amen*

*“If I can stop one heart from breaking,  
I shall not live in vain;  
If I can ease one life the aching,  
Or cool one pain,  
Or help one fainting robin  
Unto his nest again,*

*I shall not live in vain.”*  
*Emily Dickinson*

*“There is no failure, except in no longer trying.  
There is no defeat except from within,  
No really insurmountable barrier,  
Save our own inherent weakness of purpose.”*  
*Elbert Hubbard*

*Millions saw the apple fall, but Newton was the one who  
asked why.*  
*Bernard Baruch*

### ***THE ANSWER IS “NO”***

Paul prayed earnestly until the answer came; three times. Who knows how many tears, what degree of surrender and how much fasting. A need that seemed to be ever present, yet the answer was, no, no and no again. The scriptures say, “...*There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.*

*For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.*

*And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.(2 Cor. 12:7 thru 9)*

It was growing time and none of us like these kinds of pains. The pain of knowing that some things are not going to change. Knowing that there are stumps in our fields of life that we must plow around, live with, tolerate, accept and to go on with our walk with God. A time to move from ”Thornsville” to “Graceville.” God has bigger fish to fry, tougher trials in which we must go through, higher mountains to climb and we often go with a limp from the battles of our past. These are distractions from the real purpose of our labors. Things, and sometimes very small things,

that can get on our minds before we get the sleep brushed from our eyes in the morning and nag until our last fading thoughts as we drift back into never, never land again. There seems to be a “*Get over it!*” scream from God somewhere in this scenario.

What kind of a thorn are you having to endure? Look around, check out your close friends and family members. Go down the list and write in their plight. One is job problems, another marriage and another has physical sickness and drugs are in the picture of the next one. Check back and see how long these things have been going on. Aunt Mattie has been sick for thirty years, Uncle Jack has had gambling problems for as long as you can remember and cousin Marie is on her fifth husband.

The truth is, things are not going to change very much. The secret with Paul and the secret with us, is putting on our game face and plowing through whatever it is. Keeping our joy and being thankful for whatever is going on. Even if you are walking in lock step with Jesus and are in the middle of his will with a clean conscience in the obedience arena; problems surface in areas in which we have no control. Good parents sometimes have problem kids and the demons of hell are always on the rampage looking for a crack in the armor of the family and friend network. How can we be happy if someone near and dear is in the fire of a life threatening trial?

Paul was successful in growing through whatever crisis came his way. He writes, “*I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*” *I know both how to be abased and how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry; both to abound and to suffer need. He then penned ten of the most powerful words in your bible; “I can do all things through Christ which strengthened me.” (Phil. 4:11)*

In the morning paper is the story Mary Nicholson who just two days ago helped to organize a church reception for the family of an Army lieutenant killed in Afghanistan. The next morning a Marine detail brought devastating news to her doorstep. Her 22 year old son, Cpl. Michael Nicholson, had lost both legs and an arm to a blast from a hidden explosive in Afghanistan.

A few days ago I was going into the grocery store and met a young girl being pushed in a wheel chair. No legs, one arm completely gone and a stub for the other arm. I told God right then that my complaining for that day was over.

When Diane O’Dell of Jackson, TN celebrated her sixtieth

birthday, she had spent fifty seven of those years in an iron lung. The article containing this news went on to tell of about forty others in America that are in the same situation.

Stories like these have a way of making us ashamed to complain about our little money, house or job problem.

When I was a child we lived without electricity or indoor plumbing. We had to pump our water by hand and use an outdoor toilet. It was seven of us children living in a two room log house. When we complained about our circumstances mother would say, "Be thankful for what you have and the Lord will give you more." She told us the truth.

Barriers and obstacles are the order of the day for those who dare to walk by faith. Every trial we conquer builds spiritual muscles and makes us more effective in our labor for the Lord. How can a Christian without scars or a limp be of any help in a world that is filled with disease, lack, bondage, heartbreak and pain.

The Apostle Paul with a background of beatings, shipwrecks, arrests and prison time said, "*Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might...*"

Simon Peter, after a time of seasoning as a follower of the Lord wrote, "*Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:*

*But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.* (1 Peter 4:12 & 13)

I think he is trying to tell us to slap the devil in the kisser, put our minds on something of importance and go back to work for God.

It is so easy to forget that we are in a battle for our very soul and the lost souls of our world. In the end we will not have lived good enough or worked hard enough. "My grace is sufficient for thee," must be our anchor now, and in the end. What other than this do we have to lay at our master's feet?

The best antidote I have found for this dilemma is thanksgiving. The Apostle had arrived in this area; I haven't. Paul wrote, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." (1 The. 5:18)

There was a hit song in the fifties by Eddie Fisher. The lyrics went,

*"...When I'm troubled and cannot sleep  
I count my blessings instead of sheep*

*Then I go to sleep...counting my blessings...*

This can be a reminder for us all. Just how much is your hearing worth? What about an arm, a leg, your peace of mind, your sight, your child, your mother or dad? It doesn't take long to get the drift. We are multibillionaires multiplied by multiplied billions. Our blessings that we take for granted each day are priceless. Maybe our little thorn is there to bring things like this to our remembrance. Maybe we should look to the heavens and say with the Psalmist, *"be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations."* (Ps. 100:4&5)

Maybe the Lord is nudging us to move on to bigger and better things. Maybe we are in a game like many of our sports stars where you have to play in pain. It just might be good for God not to use the tweezers at this time. Maybe we need the struggle, the fight, the fire, the trial. It could be that we have been too long in our comfort zone. Maybe He is speaking through our circumstances. Maybe he is saying, "Get over it, move on, live with it, adjust or press on. Maybe that still small voice is assuring us that, I am still here and, "My grace is still sufficient for thee!" Maybe we should glory in our infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon us.

Maybe we should take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when we get weak, then we get strong.

Just maybe our strength is made perfect in our weakness.

This little deal just may be exactly what the doctor has ordered for such a time as this.

***Prayer: Lord help me to adjust. To grow; in your way and in your time. Help me to accept your "Nos" and please keep me in my wilderness until my trial is finished. Don't bring forth my wine before it's time. Help me to walk with my limp and to endure my scars of failures and mistakes. Forgive my sins and keep me in your perfect will forever. Amen***

***"Only passions, great passions, can elevate the soul to great things."***

***Diderot***

## WHY SIT WE HERE UNTIL WE DIE?

*And there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate: and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die?*

*If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die.*

*And they rose up in the twilight, to go unto the camp of the Syrians: and when they were come to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria, behold, there was no man there.*

*For the Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us.*

*Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their life. (2 Kings 7:3 thru 7)*

Someone has said that, “*The most dangerous man in the world is a hungry man.*” This is probably true. In the bible we find a couple of women who made a deal to eat their own children when things got so bad that dove dung and donkey head were the only groceries left on the shelves at the grocery store. The dung was going for \$27.00 a cup and the donkey heads were running \$325.00 a piece. (2 Kings 6:25)

In 1972 an airlines crash in the Andes Mountains in South America left Nando Parrado and fifteen other survivors, including his rugby team, without food or water. They survived for seventy-two days by eating the passengers that had died in the crash before they were rescued.

Mr. Parrado, since then, has been a race car driver, television host, motivational speaker, business entrepreneur and, most recently, author of a book called “*Miracle in the Andes.*” But no matter what he does, he says, his actions are guided by the lessons he learned and the conversations about life, death, God and religion that took place during his struggle to survive.

“We didn’t have any food, clothes or water, and they weren’t searching for us. So how could we survive? I lost everything, my family, friends and future, but I was resurrected. I came back to life from the grave.”

The situation got so bad said Mr. Parrado, “That we ate human flesh with complete knowledge and acceptance of what we were doing.”

Mr. Parrado’s mother and younger sister were among those who died there in the Andes, his sister succumbing to injuries and cold as he held her in his arms. His awareness that theirs “would be the last two bodies” to be consumed by the group was one of the things that drove him to climb through the mountains on a quest that many of his teammates thought was impossible.

Before he left, he gave the other survivors permission to consume the bodies of his mother and sister, preserved in the snow near the wreckage of the plane. But the idea of having to eat their flesh himself, he said, was too awful to consider.

Desperate people do desperate things and when hunger pangs hit our physical stomach we are subject to act in unbelievable ways.

Our spiritual appetites are no different. This hunger in our soul is often what causes good and at times well bred and educated people to seek artificial highs like a hungry shark in bloody waters seeking food.

This is what leads us into bondage that robs us of health, family, career, talent and productivity. This is what will cause a young addict to take a gun into a business, to rob and even kill the innocent to feed his or her habit for maybe just a few more hours. It is the root cause of the homeless and the bound on our streets and the poverty stricken of our world digging in garbage cans and dumpsters looking for morsels of food to carry them through the next hours. Begging pennies to buy one more fix of anything that will bring a few moments of comfort to the soul.

Jesus on the mountain side with his voice ringing around this world and throughout the ages proclaimed, “*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness...*” (Mat. 5:6)

Our spiritual barometers can be read by determining how hungry we are for God’s way and his touch. How much desire we have to be in the perfect will and way of our creator. This appetite that we all want to whet, increase, develop and feed.

This happens as day by day we observe the world and its ways.

The greed, hate, dishonesty, pain, poverty and whatever bad elements that may come to your mind are continually parading before our senses. Our logic begins to ask questions and to seek a better way. Daily unexplained tragedies that destroy precious lives and cloud our thinking with a parade of “whys.” Why are we living in a world chocked with abundance yet with a starving population? What kind of thoughts are running through a serial killers mind and how can people do the things that we read about in our papers, on our computers and hear and see on our television screens. Are we all capable of performing these dastardly acts or is it just a few sick minds that carry this poison.

This is what was happening to these four lepers. They were caught, as the multitudes of our world, in a triple jawed death trap. It was lurking in every corner of their existence. If we go into the city we die, if we sit here we still die. Our only alternative is a give up. Every option seems to be a “no go.” Our only hope is somewhere between slim and none and it is to fall into the hands of the enemy. It was death here, death there and who knows what the enemy will do? It may be death there too.

Sooner or later at one time or another this is where we find ourselves.

Our bibles say it was twilight; too dark to be light and too light to be dark. Too early to be late and too late to be early. Too soon to make a decision and too late to not make one. The old station of “I’ll wait.” The devils favorite place and most loved non action program, procrastination; he was there as always to stick his ugly head into and to hinder the deliverance of the human soul.

### **ARISE!**

The bible says, *“They rose up...”* and this is the key to it all. The first two thirds of God is “Go” and the reverse two thirds is “Do.” The only way out of life’s traps is taking a step into the unknown. A step that turns our eyes Heavenward and our hope to a power that is much more than we can comprehend with our simple, finite and carnal minds.

This is what they did and with the situation they were in it was anything but easy. Four lepers on the march, coaxing each other, dragging the weak, tugging the weary and pushing on with every

ounce of strength in their emaciated bodies. Moving into the unknown with hope the only weapon left in their arsenal. Their movement was slow and treacherous with the only encouragement coming from the sound of each other's voice. On earth things were not looking or sounding very well but unknowingly to them the heavens began to shake. When God looked down and saw their faith, he got stirred. This action not only got him stirred it moved him into action. He started rattling His rockets, shaking His Heaven and calling on his earth shaking horses to get into the battle.

There are enemies in every moment of our existence and believe me they are dangerous and deadly. We must beware of them and their efforts to kill and destroy every worthwhile thing in our lives. Jesus said, *"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."*(Mat.7:15) *"...Beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles."* (Mat. 10:17 & 18) *"Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces, And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts: Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation."* (Mark 12: 38, 39 &40) He also said, *"Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you..."*(Mat. 24:9) He also told us to, *"...Beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."* (Luke 12:15) This one may just be the cause of every economic problem on earth. The "greed breed" has arrived and believe me they have infiltrated about everything there is to infiltrate from the tramp camps under our bridges to our penthouses in the city. In many cases our churches and ministers are in on the act and there is no such word as excess in their vocabulary.

The Apostle Paul wrote, *"Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."* (Phil. 3: 2 & 3)

If you will notice, these were warnings about spiritual crazies and deceivers who apparently rank as more dangerous than the criminals running our streets. Church people, dressed up, messed up, contaminated with sin and hypocrisy. Spiritual demons who will use every trick in the book to get us side tracked and off our

course in our walk with Jesus.

As these four lepers, we are born into a battle that is not of our asking or making. We get pushed into a corner where we must make life and death decisions for which we have never bargained. We often feel as the disciples felt as they followed the Lord to Calvary; *"....They were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid."* (Mk. 10:32)

Have you ever noticed that at times you can go to sleep feeling fine and awaken at three in the morning feeling so depressed that you could jump out of a window ten stories high. Nothing had really changed, you just got into neutral for a few hours and the demons from nowhere eased their way into your head and started doing their stuff. There we are with the blessings of Heaven flowing in our lives yet we can hardly put one foot in front of the other to begin our day because of these invisible snakes.

The Apostle Paul was very familiar with these activities. His description was, *"...For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."* (Eph. 6:12)

Brandi Meshad, an eighteen year old who recently lost her life to an overdose of drugs wrote this in her journal concerning her fight with the demons of hell: *"Addiction, it isn't any ordinary monster. It's like a giant octopus, weaving its tentacles not just around you but through you, squeezing not hard enough to kill you, but enough to keep you from feeling until you try to get away. Try, and you hunger for its grasping clutch, the way its tendrils pop you up, your need intensifying exponentially every minute you refuse to admit its being."*

Are there any adjectives capable of describing this hell that is binding, tormenting, destroying and killing both our young and old?

Could some of these critters look like forty foot long, mad, wild and hungry crocodiles with snake eyes; looking at you and me for their next meal?

That brings up a very important question; what do we do?

It takes heavy stuff to deal with heavy stuff and this is heavy stuff. This is what took our Lord to the cross. When you think of sin and evil as swiping a watermelon when you were young or maybe sneaking around and telling a few little white lies, things look out of balance when compared to the agony and death of God's only son on a cruel cross. But when the reality of the wickedness of this world we live in exposes itself, and we see the depth of the

darkness that permeates our society; things take on a much different perspective. We are living in a hell hole of fear and we must at any action or price extricate ourselves.

With a blood bought born again experience with the God that made, owns and runs this universe and an unshakeable faith in his goodness, mercy and power we can stop hell in its tracks.

Our bibles tell us that, "...*Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*" (Heb. 11:6)

If it is impossible to please God without faith then the opposite must work well; like, ....With faith it is impossible **not** to please God."

Mr. Parrado as a young athlete arose from the airlines crash surrounded by death and started his march into uncharted territories of hopelessness and these lepers arose from their death trap and started their march into a similar situation.

You and I are going to find ourselves in the same or a similar situation and somehow and somewhere we are going to have to find our "rise up." We are created and born to walk by faith. To serve and to see God's wonders working in our lives. He did not create us to be bound by the evil forces of this world and to face death without a way of escape. His voice still thunders from the mountainsides of the world and throughout the ages. "*Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.*" (Luke 10:19)

No situation or dilemma that we face surprises the Lord. Deep inside we all have our "rise up." Deep down we know that we can look up and surrender. Deep down we know that if we really give up on our little failing plan that Heaven is going to start moving in our favor and the sound of God's horses are going to strike fear into our enemy. Deep down we do know that every breath of air and every crumb of bread still comes from his hand and that He will bankrupt Heaven to see that his children have their every need satisfied. We have a knowing that He is good and that He is good all of the time and will make a way where there is no way.

### ***THINGS CHANGE FAST***

God knows how to get after it. When the enemy soldiers heard a stirring in Heaven fear gripped their souls and they high tailed it out

of their camp leaving food enough and much more. This is the way your Lord works. He will turn the devil upside down and shake out everything he has stolen. The scriptures teach us that, "...*He brought forth his people with joy, and his chosen with gladness and gave them the lands of the heathen: and they inherited the labour of the people....*"(Ps. 105:43 & 44) They also tell us that, ".....*The wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just.*" (Prov. 13:22)

God knows how, and will, rob the devil to meet the needs of his people.

Faith still sets off alarms in Heaven. Every time a wretched sinner looks to Jesus for forgiveness the angels go into an hallelujah fit right in the middle of glory land. I believe that Heavenly sirens, earth shaking noise makers and fireworks are the order of the day when one is born into this wonderful and eternal kingdom. The same happens with every heartfelt believer's prayer that is directed to the Heavenly Father. Your bible tells you that, "*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*" (Jas. 5:16) Much is life changing, much is need meeting, much is bondage breaking and Holy Ghost comfort and much is much more over and over again. We must not underestimate the power of our prayers, especially when we are in desperation and fervently needing something from Heaven.

This story of the four lepers ends with victory and abundance; or maybe it doesn't end. This was just one phase of life where faith won out over everything and desperate needs were met.

This is where souls were made stronger and ready to battle again. And this is mine and your lesson. Whatever the case, whatever the situation, press on, move on, keep on walking, never give up, believe, believe and then believe some more, the best wine still comes at the end of the feast and this thing is not over until it is over.

***Prayer: Heavenly Father, I am in the valley of decision. In every direction I see hopelessness and doom. Today and at this moment I arise. By faith I ask for your intervention. I surrender my will to your will and my way to your way. Please forgive my failures, mistakes and most of all my sins. Jesus, be my Lord and be my guide from this moment on. Amen***

***“I would encourage people to not allow themselves to be defined or limited by others. Follow your passion; follow your heart. They will lead you to the place you want to go.”***

***Evelyn Glennie***

### ***VISIONS AND DREAMS***

In her poem, “Climb ‘Til Your Dreams Come True” Helen Steiner Rice writes:

***For faith is a mover of mountains  
There’s nothing that God cannot do  
So start out today with faith in your heart  
And climb ‘til your dream comes true***

This little five letter faith word can be pretty elusive. We know it is there, we know that it is real and we know that it is very, very powerful; but how do we harness this unlimited energy and get it to work on our behalf.

The old testament in your bible is over 3 times the size of the new yet the word faith is recorded only twice in these scriptures. Then Jesus comes along, climbs the side of the mountain and his words start bursting forth and shaking the foundations of our world. As the poor, rich, black yellow and white, by the thousands, made their way to hear what this man of men had to say, they were welcomed to the beginning of what has proven to be the greatest happening ever recorded in human history. This man from heaven was telling them to believe and miracles would happen. Not some fire falling out of the sky miracle or making objects disappear but real miracles. Miracles in our inner most heart. Miracles in our minds and in our spirit. Mood changing, life changing, attitude changing miracles that would let you sleep well at night and go about your day with a tranquil mind with no load of guilt. Miracles that would comfort the human soul like nothing this world’s gold can buy. Miracles of knowing in ones heart that death is not an obstacle that cannot be conquered. Miracles that could make a quadriplegic experience more joy than an Olympic gold winner. Miracles of a hidden joy that can be savored in a rice patty in the third world or a cooperate tower in the financial world.

Jesus himself, when his disciples returned with joy, looked to the heavens and said, *“I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.*

*Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.” (Mat. 11:25 & 26)*

The Apostle Paul wrote, *“Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”* Also, *“But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty..”* He said, *“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.”* Another says, *“We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:”* Then, *“For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”*

### ***GOD DOES IT DIFFERENT***

We belong to a very confidential fellowship yet we are trying our best to let everyone in on the secret. God has different plans. He is the doorkeeper and has the rules that run the invitation and the initiation process. The membership roll is enlarged only when he sees fit to bring in a soul. If we are in the “club” the benefit package is automatic. This is where the faith machine begins. We have a clean slate, an open line to talk to the Lord and a book full of unlimited promises. We also have our spiritual eyes opened to recognize his workings in our lives.

The benefit package includes, *the forgiveness of all iniquities; the healing of all diseases;*

*The redeeming of our lives from destruction; The crowning of our lives with lovingkindness and tender mercies;*

*The satisfying of our appetites with good things and a renewing of our youth.(Ps. 103: 3 thru 6)*

It goes on and on. Our bibles are chocked full of abundant promises that will bring hope, peace and tranquility to our every waking moment. God just does things for his people. He turned on his “Sea Separator” for Moses and sent the “Heavens’s Angels” pit crew with their lug wrenches to demobilize Pharaoh’s army and their chariots. He chunked blocks of ice out of heaven, stopped the sun and put brakes on the moon when Joshua needed help in his battle on the road to Bethhoron. *(Jos. 10:11 thru 13)* He took the

heat out of Nebuchadnezzar's burning fiery furnace for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and robbed the lions of their appetites for Daniel. (*Dan. 3:25 & Dan. 6:22*)

When the writer of Hebrews was overwhelmed with power, he wrote, "...*Time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:*

*Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,*

*Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.*

*Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:*

*And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:*

*They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;*

*(Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. (Heb. 11:32 thru 38)*

When we read of our faith heroes and what they suffered and obtained with their believing it makes us both inspired and humbled. It brings a hunger to our soul to change our world and to be in the perfect will of our maker no matter what the call may be are what the price may demand.

We do not have to look far to see that we have a very sick world. Most of us are overwhelmed when we see the task of even making a minute change in what seems to be a gas fed sin fire of destruction. This is so wrong. When the Pentecostal fire fell in the second chapter of Acts we were endued with a firepower that is a million times and over what we need.

Several years ago I was attending a church that would seat about a thousand people. The seats were individual chairs and were in need of the seats being recovered.

On Sunday morning the pastor asked everyone to bring a screw drive to church that Sunday night and to be prepared to take seats apart and to load them in a moving van to take and be recovered.

We did. I mean we really did. It must have been over six hundred people present and by the time I got my seat disassembled and started on the second one I looked up and the building was about

90 percent vacant. Some had brought electric screw drivers and were five times faster than me and others. The job was done in minutes.

Did you ever hear the old story about getting a job making a penny a day and doubling your salary every day for 30 days. It doesn't sound too enticing; but get your calculator out and check out the numbers. For a month's labor you will go over ten and one half million dollars.

If we could apply this to winning souls can you imagine how quick we could change the world? By each Christian winning one soul per year and by doubling this every year the earth's population would be converted in about 35 or forty years and the top soul winner would bring in only forty or so souls.

Right now in our nation the homeless population is over 3 million souls and in our county we have 11,000. What can we, as Christians do?

It would be impossible to get these people to your church on Sunday morning and many would not be welcome if they did show up.

A friend of mine who has helped me feed and minister to the homeless had this suggestion: "Jim, just buy you a bus, load it with the homeless people and go to the finest churches on Sunday Mornings. They will give you a thousand dollars a load to take them away." I have not tried this; as of yet.

Jesus taught us to head for the highways and the hedges and to fill the seats at his banquet table. We have got to learn that a soul is a soul is a soul. Drunk, stinky, poor, black, white, yellow, belligerent, nasty or whatever; we are commanded to roll up our sleeves, take off the gloves and go bare fisted at the devil and his hell. To climb through the hedges in trailer park trashville, get under the bridges, into the bunk houses, the homeless camps. To have church right in the middle of nowhere. To change this wicked world with the soul cleansing sin forgiving blood of Jesus and preaching with the unlimited power of the Holy Ghost. If it will work anywhere it will work everywhere. If God can save anybody he can save everybody. If you can pray out of anything you can pray out of everything.

***Lord clarify my visions and my dreams, help me to do whatever you want wherever you want and to do it whenever you want. Help me to fulfill my calling in my labor for you.***

***Today and at this moment I surrender my will to your way.  
Be my guide, my supplier, my healer and most of all my Savior  
and Lord. Amen***

***“When you are passionate, you’re focused, purposeful, and  
determined, without having to try. Your body, mind, and  
spirit are all working in unison toward the same goal.”***

***Marcia Wieder***

**“NO MAN”**

We are creatures of worship. Something or someone is in the first place slot of our lives. “*Everybody’s Somebody’s Fool...*” are the words belted out by Connie Frances over the last forty years or so and they are alive and well this very hour. Jesus stood in the midst of humanity with his words echoing around the world and throughout the ages and cried, “*No man can serve two masters..*” and “*No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.*”

Paul, encouraging us to not waiver writes, “*Stand fast in the faith...Stand fast...in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free....Stand fast in one spirit and to Stand fast in the Lord...*”

Once we leave the starting line, God’s message comes forth calling for dedication, consecration and a long time tenacious determination to stay in obedience to his commands.

What is in our thinking machine? What kind of good or garbage is being manufactured between our ears?

Nothing can please the devil any more than a mind contaminated with doubt, unbelief, negativity, apathy, revenge, resentment, regret and any other brand of think poison that he seems to conjure up in all of our waking moments.

He is after our brain and if we do not stay on guard he will take over our thinking and then our lives. Spiritual warfare is real and it is going on in the bosoms and the minds of the billions. The Apostle Paul likened it unto a fight, a wrestling match or a race. He spoke of spiritual wickedness and powers of darkness. He said, “*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*” (Eph. 6:12)

A recent article in our local newspaper on one of my favorite tennis players went as follows:

Jenifer Capriati can't remember where she was when she first had thoughts of killing herself. She says, "between the doctor visits and the pain and the idleness, it isn't easy to keep straight."

She remembers being boxed in by bleakness, battered by doubts about her purpose and worth, pounding herself harder than she ever hit any tennis ball. Here she was, a Grand Slam champion, an Olympic gold medalist and former number one player in the world, reduced to this, a lost soul with a bad shoulder, a woman in the vice grip of depression.

In those dark moments, neither her successes nor her 10 million dollars in career earnings could offer a shred of comfort. She'd looked at the base line of her life and could see nothing but her own faults.

"Sometime you get to a point where you can't stop what you are thinking," Capriati says, "It's like you are being taken over by a demon. You feel as though there is no way out of the space you are in. It feels like the end of the world."

Another article along the same lines, reads, "*Antipsychotic Drugs for children in Florida have increased 35% per year for the last five years. Tens of thousands of children in our state, starting at age 3, are being administered these drugs and no one knows if it is safe or not.*"

In another we find Owen Wilson, a young man that seems to have everything going his way fighting his demons of suicide.

If these reports are not the descriptions of the pure demonic powers of darkness stalking humanity and looking for souls to torture then you tell me what is.

If you can sit and relax, if your mind is at peace; if you can carry on a normal conversation, get a normal night's sleep and awake in the morning without being tormented by fear and uncertainty then you have a train load of blessings that millions do not have.

Jesus dealt with these situations two thousand years ago and he is dealing with them this very moment. He does give us power over all power. He does enable us to walk on the serpents of fear, anxiety and depression. It all comes with the Holy Spirit package. The same fire that fell on Pentecost morning and endued the disciples with the ability to bring healing and Heaven to our world will fall on us. The moment we bring ourselves under the total surrender to the will of our Heavenly Commander very powerful changes begin to take place. God is God, has been, is, and is going

to be forever; it is ourselves who are on the short end of the stick when it comes to being delivered from these powers of darkness.

When the disciples could not set a young boy free of a demon, this is what Jesus had to say of their failure. *“Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.”* (Mat. 17: 20 & 21)

The little “*howbeit*” in this mix is the difference from a kid being in the fire with a tormenting devil or being on his way home, set free, with comfort of soul and peace of mind.

Our walk at times calls for diligence, sacrifice, tears, languishing and an indescribable hunger for Heaven and its ways. It calls for gut wrenching moments of prayers; believing against what seems to be every demon of doubt in hell.

A tough road? Right. Worth it? Right again. Check out both sides of the equation and make your choice. Are we ready to do battle or are we going to drift down hell’s river with the world. Will we take the cross, the high road? Will we take swimming against the current and praying all night if this is the call? Can we embrace the “*howbeit*” of fasting and believing for God to intervene in the battles against the devil and his powers of evil? Can we take burying ourselves in the scriptures and develop the appetite of a hungry shark in bloody waters; searching for God’s truths and revelations? Longing for just one more touch of His hand; one more flooding of His spirit. One more “Everything is going to be alright” phrase from glory.

The faith fight can be very addictive. No one loves the pit but when the battle is won and you breath in the mountain top air of victory, you find yourself ready to go at it again. Slugging it out in faith. None of this world’s entertainment needed. It is all built in our bellies. Holy Ghost fire with the joy of the Lord in the middle of the night. The hidden life in Jesus that the world has never, or will never know. As Paul wrote, *“...We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.”* (2 Cor. 4:7)

As Jeremiah wrote, *“...As a burning fire shut up in my bones..”* and Peter proclaimed, *“...Joy unspeakable and full of glory..”*

The bottom line is, you can’t serve two and you have to serve one. It is not a fault; it is the divine system. We have been tossed

in the battle without being asked or offered the choice of not being here. What an offer. What an opportunity. What a future. As the song writer penned, “*..What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and grief to bear...what a privilege to carry...everything to God in prayer.*”

Our children and grandchildren are in a battle for their minds as Jennifer, Owen and ourselves are, along with billions around our world. This will go on and on until we grasp the truth that two thousand years ago the blood of a young 33 year old sinless man trickled down the center post of a cross and soaked itself into the dirt of a sinful, sick and wicked world. As he screamed, “*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?..... My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*” and the world offered it’s vinegar and ...*He...cried again with a loud voice, yielding up the ghost.*

As the moments passed the scriptures say, “*...The veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;*

*And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,*

*And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.*

Our bondage today is real; we can see it in the eyes of the multitudes as we see it in poverty, sickness, bondage and disease. But on this day when the veil ripped, the earth quaked, the rocks split, the graves opened and dead people came to life and started marching into the city of Jerusalem; everything changed. This day that God split time and put new calendars on the walls our world; things changed and it was an astronomical and an eternal change.

This greatest moment in the history of our world that birthed victory for all who dare to believe. It is so wonderful to have the opportunity of serving the God that made and owns everything.

***Prayer: Heavenly Father I am thankful; for everything. The good when I rejoice and the not so good which brings me to my knees. Please forgive me and give the help that is needed to carry on. Strengthen my faith to receive your many blessings. I give myself to you...all over again. Please give me wisdom to know your ways and the courage that I may walk in them..Amen.***

***“The most powerful source on earth is the human soul on***

*fire.”*

*Marshall Foch*

*“Your imagination is the preview to life’s coming attractions.”*

*Albert Einstein*

*“Will you help me? Those are the only words you need to say, and someone will help you.”*

*Tom Harken*

### *THE POTTER*

*“Arise, and go down to the potter’s house...” And Jeremiah answered with an “I went...”*

Here we have a prophet that is not preaching a “*feel good*” message; a man torn in heart and spirit because of the situation of his nation. A man with the words, “*I knew thee, I formed thee, I sanctified thee and I ordained thee ringing in the depths of his soul.*” A man tossing in his bed, crying, “*Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! (Jer. 9:1)*”

A man who at one time cried, “*For since I spake, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil; because the word of the LORD was made a reproach unto me, and a derision, daily. Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones.” (Jer. 20:9)*

God spoke to Jeremiah in unusual ways. At one time he sent him to the clothing store to buy a linen girdle and then told him to wear it without washing for a time. He then commanded him to take it to the river Euphrates and cram it in a hole so the sewage of the city could saturate its fiber and rot its fabric. When he returned to dig it out of the rock he was taught a lesson in our self righteousness and how rotten it is in the sight of God.

This time he was headed for the potter’s house, which God was about to turn into his school house. He has his ways of teaching us. He can let us look up into a starlit night and behold his Milky Way with it’s 200 billion plus stars and it’s 100,000 light year diameter, and wonder in our simple minds of his creation; when it started and if there is an ending. He will let us look into the blue of the sky and

ask ourselves questions of how deep is the blue and if we could travel past that; what is next? And next? And next another billion times and then more nexts. Forget his creation of just one grain of sand that we will never fully know in detail; and think about time. What was here before it started and what was before that and what happens when it is over or is it ever over? What came before the start and what comes after the finish? How do you start or stop time? Thoughts in this vane confirm what we well know...there is a maker and controller of all.

When the potter grabbed a glob of clay with all of its impurities; sticks, rocks, leaves and whatever and placed it on his wheel I am sure that Jeremiah's mind gears started turning. God can take a handful of mud and heal blinded eyes and if that isn't enough he can make a new man with himself as the pattern. With his hands he can create a body just like mine and yours with it's 60,000 miles of veins and arteries and a heart that can pump 600,000 gallons of blood per year through every inch of those 60,000 miles. The complexity of the human body should be enough to convince the skeptic that somebody somewhere knows it all and is calling the shots on what was, is and is going to happen in our lives and in our universe.

Place your hand on your chest and breath in deep; there in your bosom lies 600 million pockets of folded flesh to purify that breath and be ready for the next. If you could remove your lungs and unfold them they would cover a tennis court. King David apparently started thinking of things like this and then proclaimed, ***"I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works..." (Ps.139:14)***

God made it all, owns it all, knows it all and runs it all. Moses sang, *"He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he."* (Deut. 32:4)

He also wrote, *"I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand."*(Deut. 32:39)

Isaiah said, *"I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things."*(Isa. 45:7)

Then we have the psalmist proclaiming, *"For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof."* (Ps. 50:10, 11, & 12)

We are so guilty of under sizing God. It is so easy to think he

doesn't know or he doesn't care about the situation we are trying to work through.

As the potter's wheel began to spin and the rocks and debris began to fly, I can imagine Jeremiah doing a rerun in his mind of a growing experience in his walk with his God. He no doubt recalled times of lack, turmoil, fear and rejection, fighting doubt and the opinions of his world. Waking in the wee hours of the morning wondering if the God of everything was aware of what was going on in his existence. Wondering if the one that told him, "**...They shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee..**" (*Jer. 15:20*) still around?

He had a mind spinning out of control while doing what in his heart, he felt was best. The Apostle Paul describes it as, "**....Troubled on every side, yet not distressed; ..... perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed...**" (*2 Cor. 4: 8*)

### *THE TOUCH*

Things have a way of going so wrong. A phone call can turn a party into a panic, a reunion into a wake and a love that seemed eternal into a heartbreak that seems will never end. Life can go into a tailspin storm in which only His touch can bring the calm that we so much need.

As the potter gently touched the tender, moist and spinning clay the vessel began to take shape. The rough edges of useless raw material began to form into something precious and worthwhile.

Years ago we sang an old course:

*Just to have a touch Lord from you  
To help with the trials I go through  
Dark may be the night  
But it brings a ray of light  
To help with the trials I go through*

If you have never had an experience like this it is hard to understand. How do you explain your heart being torn out of your body and your mind being tormented; and then, an indescribable peace flooding your mind and soul with no medication; legal or otherwise? What word in any language can convey this secret that

only the redeemed have experienced? People wonder why finding a real Lord often turns us into loose tongued fanatics, god crazies, hallelujah freaks and with whatever name the other millions have been tagged.

What is it that drives us to turn over our plates and do without food that we may obtain another touch? Why do we search in our bibles before daylight or after midnight for a simple truth from Heaven? What makes us gather and worship someone that can neither be seen nor heard by the world? Why can we be happy when the world can see that we have so few possessions? Why do we give when we do not have it to give and go when common sense tells us the weather is too bad? Why is it that we can be all alone and still be in a Holy Ghost meditation mode that brings comfort that this world's gold cannot buy?

Jeremiah writes, ***“Behold he wrought a work on the wheel...and the vessel was marred...so he made it again..”*** And this is the way it goes; again, again and again. God had his wheel spinning with his touching and breaking; day after day, year after year. He never gives up on His project. Teaching us that in all things to give thanks and that every little detail good and bad is working together for the good. That we are dead and our life of joy, peace and tranquility is hidden from the world. That our trials, heartaches and disappointments are not worthy to be compared with what is coming in our future. That our many failures which left us so weak and discouraged, are turning themselves into fuel for a gut fire that will drive us to change our world. A gut fire that will motivate us to draw closer and to reach out to the less fortunate and kindle the same fire in their soul. A gut fire that was ignited some two thousand years ago when all hope died and rested on a slab in a borrowed tomb; rested until a resurrection round fired from Heaven split time and brought eternal salvation to sin sick souls like you and myself.

When the goodness of Jesus comes into an unworthy vessel; when something happens in your bosom that you absolutely cannot explain even to your closest friend; it makes us know that we know that we know. We are connected to truth and to eternity. To purity, love and peace. To Heaven and to the God that made it all. It gets addictive; we want more and we will go to most any extreme to get it.

King David was obsessed with finding more of God. For

searching and seeking after the heart of he that forms the light, creates darkness, makes peace and creates evil. He had his heart dead set on the one that opens his hand and satisfies the desire of every living thing; the one that feeds everything from the one cell paramecium to the one hundred ton blue whale and all that is in the in between.

In his longing for the perfect walk he writes,

***“ Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:***

***And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” (Ps. 139:23 & 24)***

In another verse he prays, ***“Cleanse thou me from secret faults. (Ps. 19:12)***

This is really what we and the world we live in are seeking. In every crazy way you can think of and a million more our world population is longing for that invisible something. That something that will fill this mysterious void and hunger in our soul. That ticket to heaven and that forgiveness that seems so unobtainable.

To know how long this opportunity has been open; look at the date on today's newspaper. To know and understand how we find the God of everything...we open our bibles, our hearts, our mind and our soul. We pray; we believe and it works. It works in the wee hours of the mornings or in the darkest and most lonely nights of our lives. With every heartbeat, breath and tick of the clock, his ears are open to our cry and his eyes are beholding our every step. He loves us more than we know.

In God's soft tender voice he is telling Jeremiah to just watch that wheel and to watch his hand. Things are spinning, debris is flying, mud is being reshaped, impurities are being removed and the vessel is being broken again and again to make it ready for the autoclave. When it goes through the fire and the heat and the finishing touch of the potter he brings forth a treasured masterpiece; the message is clear. Keep on fighting, never look back, endure whatever comes over the hill, stay tough, stay strong; you are mine, you have always been mine and you will forever be mine. Yes, I do know thee, I did form thee, I did sanctify thee and yes, I have ordained thee. From your conception through eternity...you are mine.

***Heavenly Father, today I surrender. I surrender to your will***

*and to your way. Jesus I surrender to your Lordship. I bring my failures, mistakes, misjudgments and most of all; my sins. Please forgive and restore. Come into my life and live forever. Today and at this moment; I start all over again. Thank you for coming to my world and into my heart..Amen.*

### **WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?**

Elijah was a man who prayed and the Heavens shut down it's waterworks. No rain and no dew for some three and one half years.

This was a man with faith so strong that he actually raised the dead, called fire from heaven, mocked and killed demon prophets and eventually called down the rain to end the drought.

He was also a man, that when faced with a death threat on his life,

headed for the woods, went into a state of depression and told God to take away his life that he had had enough. (1 Kings 19:4)

King David, the man after the very heart of God, also had a fault and/or a weakness here and there. During his seven and one half years in Hebron he had six sons from six different wives. (1 Chron. 3:1 thru 4) It looks as though he was after a few hearts other than God's; and we all know the story of his deal with Bathsheba where his voyeurism, turned to adultery and eventually into murder. (2 Sam. 11:2 thru 18)

Moses lost his cool and took a two by four or whatever, beat an Egyptian to death, turned fugitive and headed for the back side of the desert to spend his next forty years.

In the New Testament we find Saul who later became the Apostle Paul coming at God's new church with the vengeance of a wounded lion, trying with everything within himself to stop what he would later spend his life and his every possession to pioneer.

In our bibles we find that these giants of faith had weaknesses and frustrations as we all do. When we learn of their battles, sufferings, losses and their victories it helps us to know that we are all in a growing stage and are likely to be facing more situations that will help us to mature and strengthen on this journey to eternity.

At one time or another we find ourselves in Elijah's, "*..It is enough..*" and "*...Take away my life..*" situation. Times when we face the impossibilities of life and are overwhelmed with the enormity of problems that are at times, not of our own making.

The Apostle Paul, right in the middle of his calling, right in the middle of God's perfect will and acting in total obedience to God's voice speaking in his heart; penned these words: ***"...When we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears."*** (2 Cor. 7:5 & 6)

When the disciples were traveling to Jerusalem with Jesus, forsaking everything in life to be close to him and to learn of him and his works, found themselves in a situation where ***"..They were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid."*** (Mk. 10:32)

Jeremiah was ready to give up; to quit his preaching; tired of the trials and persecutions, said, ***"I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine***

***heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.” (Jer. 20:9)***

When God saw Elijah’s situation of falling asleep in weakness and depression he had an angel to start cooking up a meal right there in his swamp. While Elijah was depressed, discouraged, suicidal, looking for Prozac and ready to end it all, God was cooking up a Holy Ghost meal that was going to get in his digestive system and give him a refueling that would carry him onward to do the work for which he was called.

We are living in a time and season of “Mind Battles.” Hundreds of millions of prescriptions for anti depressants and anxiety attacks are being written for hundreds of millions of distraught people both young and old.

Years ago, the late Og Mandino wrote, *“The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of hell, or a hell of heaven....Friends dead, jobs failed, words that wounded, money lost, sorrows unbealed, goals failed, ambitions destroyed, loyalties betrayed...Why have ye allowed such cobwebs of infamy to gather in the attic of your mind until there is scarcely room for a happy thought about this day.”*

Some twenty six percent of Americans are suffering from this malady of depression and anxiety. If the devil can get our minds he can get us. If he can mess up our thinking he can take control. If he can get in our heads for very long he will move into our hearts. We have to fight this battle like a cornered wildcat. We have to come out swinging, clawing and scratching with both guns blazing.

Our bibles has its solution to these situations. ***“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus..” (Phil. 2:5)*** and ***“..Who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ. (1 Cor. 2:16)*** Another says, ***“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” (1 Tim. 2:7)***

It also gives us some instructions on what to let our minds dwell upon.

***“...Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.***

***Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with***

*you.”(Phil.4:8 & 9)*

Elijah went to the woods of depression. He was in a transitional phase of his life. We all have been there or will be there in the near future. This is a very precarious position; at times depressing and scary. An “Everything is gone“, “What in the world happened,” or a, “What did I do now?” deal. But God was there as he always is; touching, talking, cooking and giving directions. Encouraging and motivating him to begin the next stage of his God called assignment. To arise and to eat and drink. To get a super sized spiritual dinner that would give him forty days of strength to endure his journey and fulfill the calling and the labor of his life.

We know so little about God and his ways. They are so much higher than our thinking. The bible proclaims that, ***“...His judgments are true, righteous and unsearchable and his ways are past finding out.” (Ps. 19:9) & (Rom.11:33)***

When we are overwhelmed, sleeping, weak, discouraged, depressed and feel so lonely; he is awake and mapping out great plans for a future with mountains, valleys, battles and victories that he alone knows and understands; heights much greater than we have ever experienced and lows to keep us in balance.

This is what he had for Elijah and he has the same for you and me. Elijah headed for the mountain of God but somehow ended up in a cave. This is where the dynamite question from God exploded. ***“What doest thou here, Elijah?” (1 Kings 19:9)***

In our lingo the question is, “What are you doing here?” “What are you doing stopped in the cave?” And this leads to questions about our stopping places. What are you doing in a relationship that is going nowhere? What are you doing in a church that doesn’t win ten souls a year? What are you doing on a dead end job with a dead end attitude? What are you doing in a rut ministry with no anointing or excitement from Heaven? What are you doing depending on drugs to crank you up and more drugs to crank you down? What are you doing sitting here playing a do nothing game of checkers when I have a world that needs changing?

We could go on and on. There are too many stories of lives falling by the wayside. We see them every day, preachers who quit, Christians who give up, visions dimmed, dreams dead, hope gone, faith gone with no more glint or twinkle in the eye and joy in the soul.

When Pentecostal fire fell from Heaven and the Holy Spirit of

God began to fill and anoint the disciples, there was something in this package other than a time of shouting. With God's touch came dreams for the young, visions for the old and an outpouring of spiritual power on the handmaidens and all flesh. This package contains a challenge and a power to turn our world upside down. To get in the devil's prison and free the slaves.

God gave Elijah a wind, earthquake and fire experience and then he gave him a communication experience with God's still small voice being the teacher; and this is where it is. Don't look for the skies to light up and the earth to shake when you are looking for something from heaven. It is not likely to happen. But be very careful when you get still and quiet in his presence. Be careful when you are in your little private intimate place of prayer because you are about to crank up a sound from heaven directly to your heart. You are about to hear something that will comfort you like nothing else can comfort you and guide you with a heavenly tug at the heart.

### ***ON THE OTHER SIDE***

We never know how deeply our lives affect those with whom we are connected or the ones with which we are going to be connected in our future.

While Elijah was going through his ordeal of depression, doubt and self pity there was a young man plowing in a field some distance away. He was in last place on a twelve team agricultural operation, fighting heat, dust, bugs and fatigue; wondering if God was ever going to get him out of his round and round dead end rut job. Wondering if he would ever realize his dream of doing his God called assignment. He could not leave the farm until he had a visitation from God's prophet and felt the touch of his mantle.

To some degree we are all in similar situations. We are the ones in waiting or the ones in ministry. There is a battle on both sides. Doing God's work stirs the evil forces of this world. If Satan can stop our ministry his goal is accomplished. Without our work, no matter how simple or insignificant it may seem; we die. Our labor for him, no matter if we are on the cutting edge or in a no name support position; is our spiritual lifeline.

Elijah persevered and won over his depression and suicidal tendencies and Elisha stayed at the plow until his word came from

God's prophet. When these battles were over it was time to have an ox killing, plow burning, beef boiling, tell mama good bye going away party. A time to cut strings from the past and to travel their world doing miracles from Heaven and in Elijah's case, go to heaven.

A mission accomplished a mission in motion and life goes on; generation after generation doing heavenly work trying to make our world a heavenly place. So rewarding, so fulfilling and satisfying to the human soul; yet such a mystery.

The very thing that fulfills our every desire can look so boring and laborious to our world. And to we that labor for him, the world can look so empty and vain. It rings out the truth from our bibles; ***"The secret things belong unto the LORD our God..." (Deut. 29:29)*** and the question from this same book, ***"Hast thou heard the secret of God?" (Job 15:8)***

This thing we feel in the depths of our soul; this indescribable joy that wells up in the very depths of our being; this "whatever" that we know that the world's gold cannot buy. This little heavenly secret that nestles itself in our hearts in our most trying times. This is the thing that brought Elijah out of his depression and moved him to his next level of service and it is the thing that will do the same for you and myself. There is a miracle in process in those whom God himself is living...it is now and it is wonderful.

***Prayer: Lord, move me into your perfect will, let your angels feed me with heavenly food and get me out of this wilderness of depression. Take my past, my present, my mistakes, my failures; and most of all my sins. Forgive me and give me new life. I receive you and your instructions to show me the way. Please teach me how to live. Amen***