

Winter 2023

The Heartbeat of



The Remnant

A ministry of
The Berean Voice



Table of Contents

- 3 From the Editor
- 4 A Quiet and Peaceable Life
- 6 When God Says No
- 8 The Bicycle Race
-For the children
- 11 Pathway to a Fulfilled Heart
-For the youth
- 15 Nothing Shall Offend Them
- 19 Burnout
- 25 Does God Answer Prayer?
-For the sisters
- 28 God's Faithfulness in the Curse
- 32 When All Thy Mercies, O My God
-Hymn history
- 35 Saved by Hope

Purpose Statement

The Berean Voice is an outreach ministry of Faith Christian Fellowship, a church located in Holmes County, Ohio. It is operated by a board of directors, which ultimately answers to the elders of the church.

As a non-profit ministry, we desire to work with the Lord, for without Him we can do nothing. We are trusting God to provide for the ongoing work of this magazine and our other outreach projects through the free-will offerings of His people. Would you join us in prayer for this work and ongoing need?



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— *The Berean Voice Board*

It is our goal that the content of this magazine bring honor and glory to God. All Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise noted. In the event of discovering any errors in content or detail, please count it to our oversight and kindly bring it to our attention.

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From the EDITOR



Greetings in the worthy name of the Lord Jesus Christ. As I gaze out across the barren January landscape, I can't help but wonder what this new year will bring. Undoubtedly, it will bring a mixture of joy and sorrow, excitement and drear, laughter and tears, and everything else in between, which only an Almighty Creator God can arrange in such a way that will magnify His worthy power and excellence. Yet our finite, negative minds tend to anticipate all the bad things that could happen. Will inflation drive food prices even higher? Will widespread fighting erupt across the Middle East? What will happen in the elections? Will the losing party resort to protests and rioting?

I suppose, since the fall of man, these fear-driven thoughts have roamed through the minds of humanity at the beginning of each year. Yet, as it is so aptly pointed out by the writer of the article, "God's Faithfulness Manifest Even in the Curse", God has kindly provided for humanity since the beginning of time. Looking back at God's faithfulness to man over the centuries, we have no reason to doubt God will do the same for us in 2024.

Despite God's faithfulness to us, the effects of the fall of man are still evident. Family members get sick, church and relationship struggles rob us of sleep, the checkbook runs dry, the children squabble and cry, and the demands of our schedules have us hopping from one event to the next. And sometimes, it seems that all these calamities hit us at the same time. Our bodies and minds are not created to handle this. We become weary. Bone tired. Exhausted to the point when even thinking hurts. We face burnout. In this issue, "A Word From the Doctor" guides us as we face the maze of life, giving us practical and Biblical solutions to avoid or recover from burnout. He writes, "Jesus knows our limitations. He wants us to have balance, living in such a way that we not only have strength for today but also for tomorrow, next week, and next year – till He comes again."

Perhaps one good remedy to reduce the stress of life

would be to go for a bike ride. But we need to be careful and avoid getting into a bike race like the two lads did in this issue's children's story. We may end up with more stress than we bargained for.

Despite our best efforts to live stress-free lives, we still meet with the unexpected. Last week I was cleaning out our broiler houses in preparation for a new flock. I leaned across the tractor fender to push a partly opened door out of the way. As I stood up, my foot accidentally hit the hydro-static pedal, lurching the tractor forward and throwing me off-balance. My foot somehow got caught under the pedal, and for a split second, I feared I would fall right in front of the rear wheel. In a last-ditch effort, I threw myself away from the tractor. My foot slipped out of my shoe, and I landed unharmed on the ground. The tractor slowly headed off with my shoe still wedged under the pedal. All ended well, and a few lessons were learned. It was nothing other than the providence of God that prevented a freak incident from becoming a bad accident. Truly I agree with Solomon, "For the LORD shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken" (Proverbs 3:26).

As we navigate through this year, let's join the hymn-writer in worship, where he writes:

When all Thy mercies, O my God,

My rising soul surveys,

Transported with the view, I'm lost

In wonder, love and praise.

It is only by the mercies of an all-loving God that we have life and breath. May we give our all to Him and to the work of His kingdom in heartfelt thanksgiving for His unspeakable gift.

Blessings to all,

Edward Martin



A Quiet and Peaceable Life?

by Barry Grant
Hicksville, Ohio

When I was converted, I had never heard the term Anabaptist. I had never heard much about witnessing to others. I remember thinking about all my friends who didn't know anything about what had just happened to me. My girlfriend of seven years didn't understand. One thing kept going through my mind: "I need to tell them!" Something good had happened to me, and everyone needed to know that the same could happen to them! I remember a time when my brother and I were thinking of a place where we could tell many people about Jesus. We decided to go to a major league baseball game. I was nervous, I was scared, and I will never forget what happened. I had never spoken in front of a large crowd before, but when I opened my mouth, God filled it.

I did not only go and talk to people I did not know. When I saw an old friend, I would tell them what happened to me. They would usually say they had heard it before and try to convince me to settle down and relax. I will be the first to admit that I made some mistakes in those first few years. I noticed, to my astonishment, that while many people didn't like me, it was the people who said they were Christians who appeared to dislike me the most. One day I was visiting with an older man who said he had been a Christian most of his life. During the discussion, he pointed up to a lightbulb and said, "Do you see that lightbulb? It's not speaking." I was shocked. He was telling me that, yes, while

Jesus says we are the light of the world, lights are supposed to shine quietly. They don't speak.

I was astonished. Was this true? I went home to do a Bible study. It wasn't long before I found verses like Matthew 4:23, "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people." Then in Matthew 9, when Jesus "saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matthew 9:36-38).

It seems to me that wherever Jesus went, He was talking to people about the kingdom. I have seen people witnessing about God, but sometimes in an offensive way. But does that mean we shouldn't witness? If you read the book of Acts, that's nearly all you see—the Gospel going out! In one account the authorities captured the disciples and said they could go free if they would only be quiet. However, the disciples said they could not. "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). Later they were silenced—by death.

Sometime later I heard about these people called Anabaptists. As I studied them, I began to see how they

too, would not be silent. I ordered a copy of *The Martyr's Mirror* and was astounded when I read about these people who lived like the disciples. They fulfilled the things Jesus said, "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Matt. 10:22). And in Romans 8:36, "As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter."

Dear brothers and sisters, I believe the fire is going out. I hear many of our Anabaptist people talking about living a quiet and peaceable life. Jesus tells us in the parable of the sower, "He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful" (Matt. 13:22). Could that be where many of us are at? We live in the free land of America where money seems easy to obtain. Is it possible we have become deceived by our own wealth and the cares of this world? Have we become like the world to avoid being persecuted by it?

Many years ago, a group of Anabaptists fled persecution and moved to a country where there was less oppression. They opened a furniture shop to support themselves, but they couldn't sell any furniture because they were the dreaded Anabaptists. Soon, the situation became desperate because they didn't have money to buy food. One day a wealthy man walked into the shop. All the workers stopped what they were doing. They thought to themselves, "Maybe this man will buy something, and we can eat!" An old brother approached the possible client and asked him if he knew Jesus. After a short chat, the man stormed out of the store in a fit of anger. The hungry workers asked the old man why he had scared away their only chance at a sale. He explained that for this man to know Jesus was far more important than for them to earn some money.

In the mindset of the early Anabaptists, the Gospel of Jesus was number one. As in Acts, they could not but speak of the things they had seen and heard. And they, too, were "killed all the day long".

So, what do we do with the verse about a quiet and peaceable life? The verse is found in 1 Timothy 2:1-2: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." What did the apostle Paul mean when he wrote this? Did he mean that we should be quiet about the gospel and never challenge a sinner? It is hard to believe that Paul is telling us to do something he never did, something that Christ Himself never did. In fact, no one in the scriptures who followed God was quiet about their faith. In numerous accounts of

early Christians who had been arrested for their faith, the authorities would plead with them to just be quiet! But they refused, just as the disciples did. They also chose death, rather than a quiet and peaceable life.

One young Anabaptist who was arrested left behind his dear wife expecting their first child. The authorities waited for the child to be born then brought the infant to the new father in prison. They told him he was now a father and could go home and be with his wife and son. He could even continue to believe the same way, but he had to keep quiet and not speak out against sin in the state church. The young father refused. For him, being quiet was not an option. They burned him at the stake.

So, what does 1 Timothy 2:1-2 mean? It seems that the Christians in the Bible and early church were all about spreading the gospel, all about the church of Christ. They went about preaching the gospel, holding meetings in the mountains, woods, or anywhere people would come. That was their life. In the verse in 1 Timothy 2, Paul is saying we should pray that the authorities will let us live in peace so we can spread the gospel. Christians should be out spreading the word and pressing into the kingdom. Our prayer is that the authorities will let us live in peace, while we serve the Prince of peace.

Today it's easy to be a Christian when you settle down and live a quiet and peaceable life, never challenging a sinner or correcting a brother. But who said it would be easy?

When we were living in Haiti, we taught our church about the cost of following Jesus. It was amazing to hear the Haitians' testimonies of applying Jesus' teaching to their lives. One time, two members told us they were about to lose their jobs because of following the gospel. To hear them make a stand for following truth made me happy. Another sister in the church told me that the school her children attended wore uniforms and the girls were required to wear pants. When she sent her daughter to school in a modest dress, she came home with a note from the principal saying she was not to return to school wearing that thing.

1 Peter 4:14 says, "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified."

True joy comes from suffering. Suffering comes from obeying Jesus. Are we too busy with trivial matters while the world goes to hell? Let us follow Jesus like the early Christians, where men could not deny that the power of God was working in them. We have something everyone needs. What are we waiting for? Let's reunite, gather back together, deny ourselves, take up the cross, and follow Him!

When God Says No

by Robert Burkholder

New Bloomfield, PA

Just reading the title probably brings negative thoughts to your mind. We as humans don't typically like to be told "no" because it goes against our nature. Sometimes we bring the "no" upon ourselves because of disobedience, such as when God said "no" to Moses. "I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land . . . But the Lord . . . would not hear me: and the Lord said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter" (Deuteronomy 3:25,26).

In Deuteronomy 1:42, God said "no" to Israel. "And the Lord said unto me, Say unto them, Go not up, neither fight; for I am not among you; lest ye be smitten before your enemies", but they rebelled at His "no." "And ye returned and wept before the Lord; but the Lord would not hearken to your voice, nor give ear unto you" (Deuteronomy 1:45).

God said "no" to Paul. "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, 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. Most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Corinthians 12:7-9).

Let us focus our attention upon prayerful Paul's acceptance of God's "no."

First, acceptance does not mean that the problem does not exist. Paul accepted God's "no", but still had the infirmities.

Second, acceptance does not mean woeful resignation. Paul "besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me." We should be persistent, even when God's answer is not forthcoming. (cf. Luke 18:1-8).

Third, God's "no" may be necessary to avoid a greater evil or infirmity. Twice, Paul says the thorn in the flesh was

given "lest I should be exalted above measure." Unlike Paul, however, we may not know the purpose for God's "no," but we can be assured of His faithfulness and goodness. With Paul, we too may have to endure one thing, which means accepting God's refusal in order to achieve a higher purpose or benefit.

Fourth, Paul's weakness, as a result of God's "no," made him strong. "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10). The sorrow and suffering some endure has indeed made them strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

Fifth, Paul's infirmity allowed the power of Christ to rest upon him. God's strength was complete, sufficient, and made perfect in weakness. Paul's strength was seen to be of God. Therefore, Christ, not Paul, was glorified. The infirmities that Paul endured revealed the power not of himself but of God.

Sixth, God explained his answer of "no" by saying, "My grace is sufficient for thee." God's love and acceptance of us, His strength and power to assist us in our infirmities and with our weaknesses, is sufficient and complete.

Seventh, Paul gloried in his infirmities, but only after he accepted God's "no." Paul ultimately saw that this allowed God's power to rest upon him. Paul's weakness displayed and magnified divine power in a manner that human adequacy and personal sufficiency could never accomplish.

Eighth, unfortunately for him, Paul was the vessel, the sufferer, who had to endure afflictions that God's grace, power, and glory might be truly reflected, but he was glad to bear it for those purposes (cf. 2 Co 4:7-11; Gal 4:13,14; 6:14,17). Until we are ready to do the same, we cannot accept or understand God's "no."

A "no" may come into our life for many various reasons.

When God says, "No," the Christian must remember:

That God will do right. "He is ... a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he" (Deuteronomy 32:4). One may not see; he may not, as Job did not, understand, but God will do right. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25).

That God's ways are not ours. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8,9). God sees the end from the beginning. Nothing is hidden from him. "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it" (Psalms 139:6). as a little child cries in protest when his mother pulls him from the road (It is such a great place to ride a tricycle!), so we may cry when God says, "No," but He, like the child's parent, knows danger the child may not be able to comprehend or appreciate fully.

That prayer has a chief purpose. Prayer should not be an attempt to manipulate the will of God. "Not my will, but thine, be done," the suffering Savior cried, but when God says, "No," we often forget that fact and complain in effect, "Not Thy will but mine be done." Perhaps the supreme purpose of prayer is to seek God's will for our lives, our wants, our needs, and our desires. It will help to remember that when God says "no."

That a present "no" may be a "yes" in development. Paul was told that he was going to Rome (Acts 19:21; 23:11). But the bars of incarceration, the shackles of servitude, and the jaws of death seemed to say otherwise. Two years of confinement were not convincing evidence of a trip to Rome, nor was a hopeless sea voyage (Acts 24:27; 27:20).

However, as we all know, Paul went to Rome (Acts 28:16)!

That God's laws prevail. The laws of nature are laws of God. God does not will that one to fall off a cliff, but if certain physical laws are broken, he will. God has biological laws. Disease may be contracted, and suffering and death may follow. One may pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," but if he does not use God's laws to procure it, or if he contradicts God's means of acquiring it, he will not receive it. As painful as it is to accept, we frequently are victims of earthly laws in the various and diverse orders of physical life. Of course, the reverse is also true. We often are blessed by the material laws of God (Matthew 5:45; Acts 14:17; 1 Timothy 5:23).

In conclusion, Job of old bore the lashes of unparalleled human calamity and agony and torture of mind, body, and soul. His faithfulness and steadfast endurance have blessed thirty centuries of sorrowing humanity. Stephen and James met untimely, violent deaths (Acts 7; 12). They died when we would have had them to live. By their suffering and death, the early disciples were shown the power of the new faith, that men could die and yet live in victory. Hence, multiplied millions have been emboldened and have accepted torture and death rather than denounce their faith and hope of eternal life.

Deliverance came. No, not to Stephen and James, nor to suffering servants such as Job, of like precious faith, but it came in unquenchable hope, in the hope that maketh not ashamed. It came through Him that is able to deliver us who, through fear of death, were subject to bondage. "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

Job of old bore the lashes of unparalleled human calamity and agony and torture of mind, body, and soul. His faithfulness and steadfast endurance have blessed thirty centuries of sorrowing humanity.





THE BICYCLE RACE

by David S. Leid
Big Prairie, Ohio

It was one of those Sunday afternoons in late spring when the sun was finally shining warmly. It was the time of year when little boys seem to have plenty of extra energy. Little Davy was sitting on the road bank with some neighborhood boys who had stopped by. He felt like jumping up and down in anticipation of the upcoming race.

Two older boys, Big David and Paul, showed up with brand-new bicycles. These were not the ordinary bicycles the other boys had. They were beautiful Vista bicycles with gleaming new paint, shiny chrome fenders, and three speeds. These bicycles glided smoothly on the chip-and seal road without a rattle. With new ball bearings, they whizzed along with hardly any effort being applied to the pedals. Even though there did not seem to be much difference between the bicycles, Big David's was a gleaming chestnut brown, and Paul's a sparkling metal flake blue.

"Well," Big David began to brag, "With my longer legs, and freshly sprayed WD40, my bike is sure to be the fastest."

"No," challenged Paul, "my shorter legs can pump faster, and Schwinn's high-test bicycle oil by far outperforms WD40, which really is only for squeaks."

"A race! A race!" the other boys said, "Why not settle it with a race?"

"Okay," Big David said, "We'll have a race and see whose bike is really the fastest."

"You bet!" Paul agreed. "We'll start at the top of Billy's hill and race all the way down to the bottom," he said, pointing to the road bank where the other boys were sitting.

One, two, three, GO and they were off! Down the hill they came, pedaling for all they were worth.

"Go Paul!" and "Go Big David!" shouted the boys at the bottom of the hill. All the commotion woke up Little Davy's rat terrier dog, Nellie. Yapping loudly, Nellie zoomed around the silo as fast as her four little legs could carry her. She headed straight for Big David's bicycle in the front, barking loudly to try to make it stop. Poor Nellie did not realize another bicycle was trying to pass up the first one.

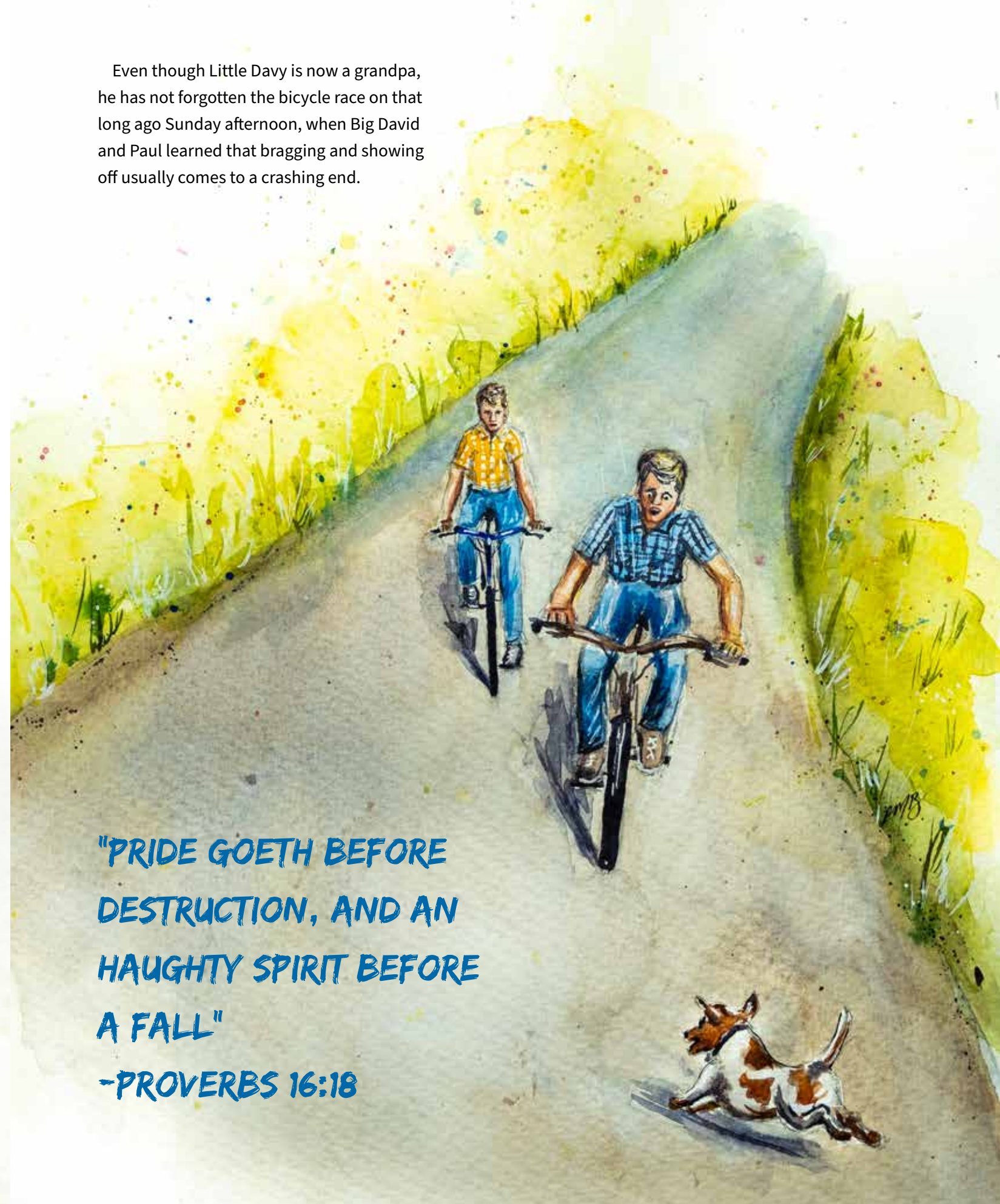
Thump, the passing bicycle hit the dog! Crash, bang, the two bicycles ran into each other!

"Hey - aye!" Oooff! Two boys flew over the handlebars and landed hard on the road. Those shining bicycles were no longer gleaming. They were lying on a heap, scratched and streaked with tar. Nellie limped back beside the silo and stayed lying there for several hours.

The other boys stood on the bank with their mouths open. Quickly, they ran to the two big boys lying by their new bicycles. "Are you okay?" they asked.

"I'll be okay," Paul said slowly, "but no more races. Who even cares whose bike is the fastest."

Even though Little Davy is now a grandpa, he has not forgotten the bicycle race on that long ago Sunday afternoon, when Big David and Paul learned that bragging and showing off usually comes to a crashing end.



**"PRIDE GOETH BEFORE
DESTRUCTION, AND AN
HAUGHTY SPIRIT BEFORE
A FALL"
-PROVERBS 16:18**

The Pathway of Life

Life is like a winding pathway
For the multitude of souls,
Who are briskly walking onward,
Heedless of their final goal.

Life is mostly what we make it,
Straight or crooked, one of twain;
We'll receive just what we merit—
Our eternal loss or gain.

O dear souls! upon life's pathway,
Lean upon your Savior's breast;
There no foe can e'er molest you,
'Til you reach eternal rest.

—Emma Kuepfer Holdeman

Pathway to a Fulfilled Heart

for the Unmarried

by Matt Miller
Sugarcreek, Ohio

Can I have a fulfilled heart if there is a vision, a hope, and or a dream in my life that lies barren and unrealized? Must I go through life carrying a cross of pain and loneliness while God answers the prayers of my friends and gives them the desires of their hearts? Is something wrong with me? Is my faith too weak? Have I not prayed enough, surrendered enough, been obedient enough? What is life all about? Why don't I have peace and joy? Does God have a plan and a purpose for me?

"Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Psalms 16:11).

"And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Psalms 1:3).

God has a path provided for each of us that will lead to a fulfilled heart. In God's presence, there is fullness of joy! God's desire is that your heart would be like a riverside tree, filled with life, health, strength, and fruit. He desires that you experience grace, joy, and peace, in your everyday life. God wants to fill your heart with his desires and purposes. He longs for you to seek after his will and plan. If you walk on his pathway, you will be filled with blessing and grace. This does not mean that every desire that you may have comes to pass (I don't think that will ever happen for anyone in this life) but rather that your heart is full of the blessings of God. Your heart does not need to feel like a desert, the Water of Life can fill it.

"But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14).

Where does Fulfillment Begin?

Fulfillment starts in your relationship with God. Does He feel cold and distant to you, or do you find joy and peace in praying and walking with him? Do you know that your sins are forgiven and that you are accepted as His child? Do you obey God with a willing heart or are there areas in your life where you resist his will as revealed in the Bible? Walking in the love and grace of God is the most important thing you can do in life. This is the first step on the pathway to a fulfilled heart.

If you are struggling in your relationship with God and are not sure of his love, forgiveness, and acceptance, here are some directions from the Bible for you.

"But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) 7 Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) 8 But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; 9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:6-10).

You should never think that Christ is in some unapproachable place, and unavailable to you. Christ is made known to you by the Bible, his Holy Spirit, and by his creation. Unbelief, sin, disobedience, and unforgiveness to others can keep you from experiencing his love and grace. Opening your heart to Him by faith, believing in your heart, and confessing with your mouth the Lord Jesus, will restore your relationship with God. He will wash away your sin and receive you as his child. Christ came to this earth to

reconcile us to God. He paid the price of our sin and guilt. We can receive his gift of salvation through faith and repentance. Faith is simply hearing the Word of God and receiving it into our hearts.

As we receive the Word of God into our hearts, it enables us to be obedient to his will. We choose to believe all that God has spoken to us in the Bible. We let go of all our doubts and embrace His Word. Repentance is turning away from our own selfish will and our sinful ways and choosing to obey God and his Word. In 1 John 1:9 God has said that if we confess our sins, He will forgive us. Do you truly believe this? Is it hard for you to accept that he will forgive you? It is impossible for God to lie, therefore his Word and promises can always be trusted.

Practical ways to walk with God

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:1).

There are spiritual prerequisites needed to walk with God. If we don't have a right heart, these practical things won't actually help us walk with God. It will only be an empty activity with no real meaning and little benefit.

With our hearts full of faith and love we need to believe everything in the Bible. We need to believe all its history, everything it says about the man, Jesus, all the prophecies, and all the direction God gives us in the Word.

We also need a surrendered heart and choose to follow and obey God in everything. There is no area in which we choose to neglect or disobey. We need to have confessed our sins and be born again by the Spirit of God.

Pray. For yourself, God's kingdom, your family, the church, neighbors, widows and widowers, orphans, missionaries, governments, and the sick. Pray for people who have lost loved ones, hungry people, people in prison, and people who need salvation. Pray for God to send workers into the vineyard.

Study the Word. Memorize it and read it to others. Discuss it.

Sing praises to God! God has been so merciful to you. Rejoice in your salvation!

“And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. 10 And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. 11 And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people” (Romans 15:9).

Contentment

Another big step in the pathway to a fulfilled heart is contentment. You can never be fulfilled if you aren't content in knowing that you are in the will of God.

“Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. 6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Hebrews 13:5).

What is covetousness? My definition of covetousness is having a strong desire for something that is outside of God's will for me right now. Normally, covetousness will drive you to violate scripture and God's will, to try to obtain the thing you have a desire for. For instance, if you are covetous of money, you will tend to do unethical things or neglect to follow the direction in the Bible in your pursuit of money. You may cheat, steal, scam, overcharge, or become a workaholic and neglect God, family, church, or the needy.

God has given us desires, and it is a good thing to pursue them if our heart is surrendered, seeking God's will and pursuing it according to the direction given in the Bible. Seek to move forward, but never force your own will. Be open to the people that God has put in your life for direction.

You may be at the age when your friends are getting married. You also desire to get married, but all the doors slam shut in your face. It seems like God reveals his will to others but not you. Know that an unanswered prayer is an answer for you right here, right now.

God reveals his will to you day by day and moment by moment. Married people don't know the long-term will of God for their lives any more than unmarried people. The reality is that my family could be taken away from me in an instant. No one is promised anything earthly for tomorrow. God promises us spiritual blessings but not physical or earthly ones.

Be careful with your expectations. You can create many hardships for yourself if you are very strong in your expectations. As an example, Matthew 20 has the story of the householder who promised his workers a penny for a day's work. Later in the day, he hired other workers. In the evening, he was paying his workers, starting with the ones hired last, and gave them each a penny. Because of his generosity, the first workers expected more than he had promised them. Since they expected him to give them more than a penny, they murmured against him. Never have strong expectations for things that God hasn't promised in the Bible, even if you feel like God has revealed it to you by his Spirit. It is far better to have a humble, open heart to God, family, and the brotherhood.

Fellowship

Fellowship with God's people is another important step in the pathway to fulfillment. Don't isolate yourself, but rather make yourself a part of God's people.

“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. 42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:41).

It can be easy to fall into the trap of feeling like you are different from everyone else and don't fit in. Remember that everyone is unique, and together we make up the body of Christ. You are an important member and have gifts and abilities that are needed in your local fellowship. Spend time with people and find ways to be a blessing and help others.

Identity

Embrace your identity. You may wonder, who am I? Where do I fit in? This can be especially difficult if you have a strong desire to be married but are not. You might see others as becoming something that you desire to be but are not.

You might wonder, what is wrong with me that I am not married? This is wrong thinking. The reality is that there are many married people who are in a worse place than you. Be open when those around you have thoughts about changes you can and should make in your life, but don't condemn yourself as not good enough and that others do not accept you. Ephesians chapter 1 says that you are chosen by God to be washed of your sins through the blood of Jesus and to be adopted as His child. You are accepted by God, and you are to be “to the praise of his glory!”

Purpose

The last step I am writing about is about purpose. What is one thing that you really enjoy doing that is a blessing to the church or Kingdom? God has a purpose for you to fulfill. You are a part of His kingdom that you can put time and energy into. God has called each one of us to be a servant, to follow in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus. It can be as simple as giving a glass of cold water in the name of Jesus. No task is too small or mundane to be a part of His kingdom. Be available. Have the heart of a



You are an important member and have gifts and abilities that are needed in your local fellowship.



servant. When you see a need, offer a helping hand or a listening ear.

“Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. 5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:” (Philippians 2:4) My wife and I recently celebrated our third anniversary. I was 38 and Jena 29 when we got married. This past spring we were blessed with a sweet little girl, Gianna. I wish I could say that we always lived out the things that I wrote in this article, but we are human and did come short at times. But we can both say from experience that the things I wrote are real and true. There is a pathway to joy and fulfillment as an unmarried person. Jena pursued midwifery and sacrificed a lot to serve mothers and babies. Always ready to drop whatever she was doing or jump out of bed in the middle of the night to go serve. I did a lot of Bible studies and also trips to the Middle East to study the Bible in a different measure. God has graciously given me the privilege to visit places where few people have been. I’ve been able to see where many of the people in the Bible lived and walked, including Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, and, best of all, Jesus. These people left behind a witness of faith and obedience. Let us follow them!

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, 2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds . . . (Hebrews 12:1-3).

“Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; 13 And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. 14 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: 15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled . . . (Hebrews 12:12-15)

“Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear” (Hebrews 12:28).

Have the
heart of a servant.
When you see a need,
offer a helping hand or
a listening ear.

Nothing Shall Offend Them

Lee Rufener

Athens, Wisconsin

*“Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them”
—Psalm 119:165*

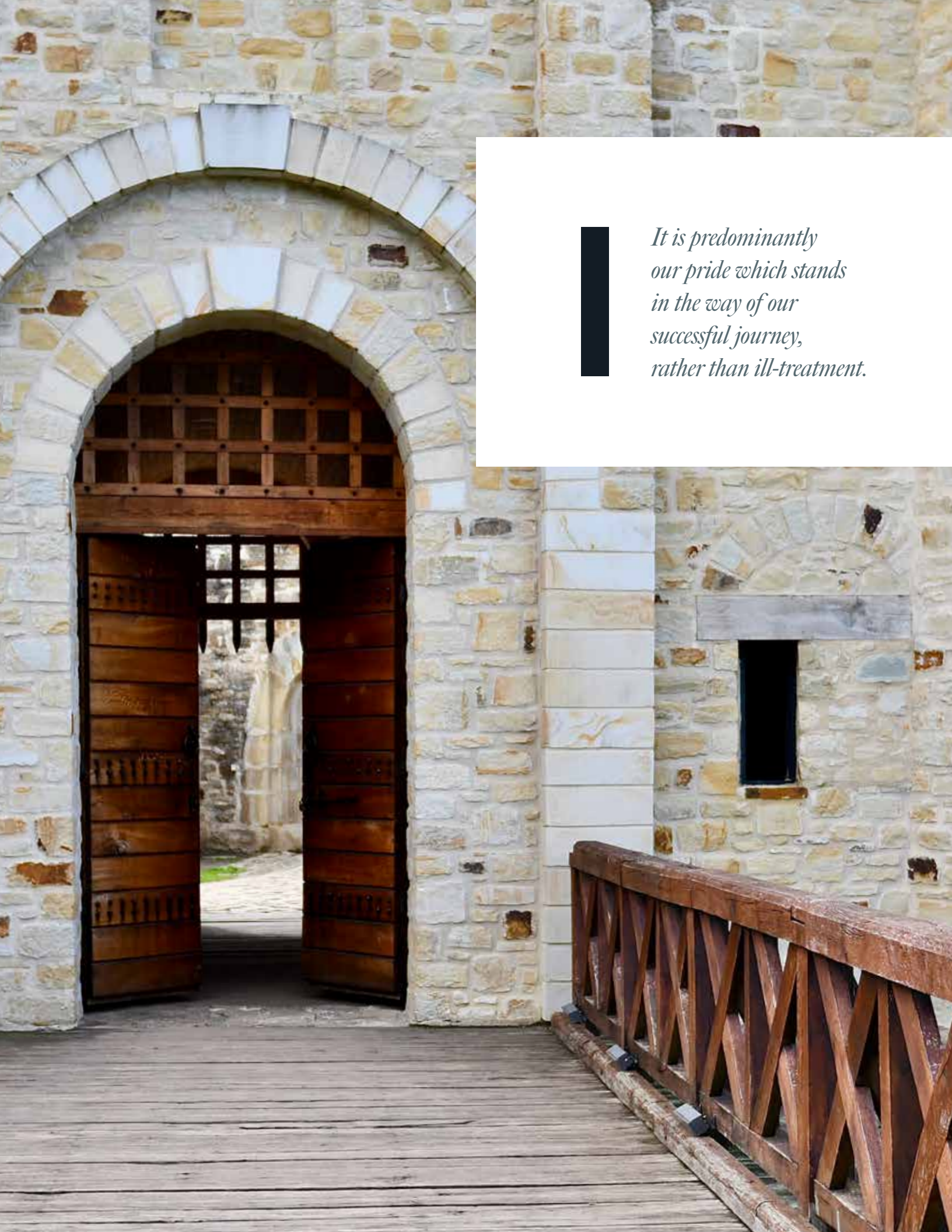
I doubt that there is a soul alive that has not been offended at one time or another. The persistent weeds of evil influence seem to sprout at every corner, testing the best of blooming relationships. The more communication tools we possess, the more miscommunication we seem to encounter, and people are offended. Ministers of the Gospel today are expected to be soft and effeminate lest they offend their listeners. While we certainly must meet people where they are and seek not to offend them, the bane of the modern church is not the bold and offensive minister.

I wish to give no license to hardhearted preachers who are void of tenderness and tears. Woe be unto the dry-eyed prophets who wield the sword of the Lord without an ounce of consideration that there are real people between the ears that they are chopping off in the process. Yet, it seems that there is an epidemic of our day that has surpassed the bubonic plague, outstripped the damage of polio, and makes our modern cancer appear like a minor inconvenience. I speak to the outbreak of the millions of offended hearts that are arising from the rubbish of the innumerable hordes of broken and strained relationships about us on every hand. Jesus mentioned that one of the signs of the end times is that “then shall many be offended . . . and shall hate one another” (Matthew 24:10). Divorce-riddled homes have risen to an all-time high, producing a generation of immense mistrust and pain. Couples will deem themselves as incompatible and separate at the slightest offense. Christians will spend years outside a church setting because they have been offended by fellow believers.

Many will automatically side with the offended party, assuming them to be a victim. Many times they are. “Woe

unto the world because of offences!” (Matthew 18:7) But the equation changes when we consider that the sinless Christ offended many. He told His disciples that they must eat His flesh and many left Him. He informed the inner 12 that had stuck with Him, “All ye shall be offended because of me this night” (Mark 14:27). The Pharisees were offended when Christ exposed their vain worship, and Jesus offended His own countrymen simply by doing good. The Greek word is *skandalizō* meaning “to scandalize”.¹ In Hebrew, it means “a stumbling block”. The problem is that many today will stumble over the slightest obstruction in their path and the molehill becomes a mountain.

“Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them” (Psalm 119:165). What shall we say then to this passage? Here are people who have learned how to walk upon the rocky path of life without going down every time a discomfiting obstacle arises before them. We wish to heap no condemnation upon the sensitive soul, but the word sensitive is not in the Bible. The closest word we can find there is sensual, which is very similar in its roots and means natural. Christ described these plants as having “not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended” (Matthew 13:20-21). It is so easy and very natural to feel sorry for the offended. They carry a tremendous sob story, and they usually share it in tears. “In many things, we offend all” (James 3:2). No one is as sinless in their offending as Christ, so there is usually an element of truth poured out against the offender. It seems to me that we all would be much further down the road if we would withhold some of our sympathy for the offended and spend our energies teaching them how to walk upright on



*It is predominantly
our pride which stands
in the way of our
successful journey,
rather than ill-treatment.*

the path of life despite the jagged and copious stumbling stones that greet us daily upon our journey. We will learn to live life unoffended when we learn to . . .

Walk Worthy

“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love” (Ephesians 4:1-2). To walk worthy, as Paul describes it here, is to walk in humility. “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18). The more pride-laden our vessel, the more apt we are to be offended. The more honestly we appraise our worth, the less offended we shall be when derided. More humble equals less stumble. When we are accused of a wrong, it always hurts. Jesus says that we should be happy when people say all manner of evil against us falsely. While such a demeaning wound may fester under our skin, there is a condition that is far worse. That is when people say all evil against us truly. Many accusations against us carry a certain percentage of truth in them. It is this portion that the Lord would have us to reckon with, rather than decrying the overstatement. While these falsities levied against us may raise our ire, they are not the reason we stumble and walk around with consequential bruises. Offense arises when the opinion of another doesn't measure up to the extent we tout ourselves.

“Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling block out of the way of my people. For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Isaiah 57:14-15). Here, Isaiah instructs us to remove the stumbling block but makes no mention of the offender. The antidote is to be of a contrite and humble spirit. We will never be able to exterminate every avenue of offense. But if reckoned correctly, there is no offense that shall ever be able to divert us from the promise, “they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31). It is predominantly our pride which stands in the way of our successful journey, rather than ill-treatment.

Walk In Love

“And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour. But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting . . .” (Ephesians 5:2-4). It takes no scholar to observe the stumblings of a selfish fool. This selfish ambition to obtain friends, wealth, and affluence is guaranteed to bring

a man flat on his nose at some time or another. The trail of sins mentioned here are all following in tow to the gratifying of self. King Ahasuerus counseled of Haman on how to honor a worthy man. Haman's narcissistic mind immediately brooded, “To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself?” (Esther 6:6). God had other plans thus the man who was so offended by Mordecai was hung upon the gallows of his own creation. Selfish souls can point to a thousand and one reasons why they are not attaining their aspirations. Somebody wronged them. An unfortunate turn of events derailed them. But it was not Mordecai, Esther, nor even Ahasuerus that brought Haman stumbling to his bitter end. It was his own refusal to walk in love and to sacrifice himself for others that wrought the malignant demise in his soul.

Walk as Children of Light

“Walk as children of light . . . proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Ephesians 5:8-11). Our innate passions contain the third rock of offense. There may be things that we believe are acceptable to our Lord, which are not. There are those who have “itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Timothy 4:3-4). This may affect those with the most noble intentions and firm beliefs. Christ forewarned His disciples that they would be put out of the synagogues so that when it happened, they “should not be offended” (John 16:1-4).

John the Baptist was a burning and a shining light and no prophet born of women had risen greater. He walked worthy of his calling, baptized the Lord, and rebuked the Pharisees. He walked in love, and multitudes “were willing for a season to rejoice in his light” (John 5:35). Yet the day came when he sent his disciples to ask Jesus: Art thou he that should come? Or look we for another? To which Jesus replied, “Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached . . . and blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me” (Luke 7:20-23). Christ's response would indicate that this apparently did not fully fit the aspirations of what John had in mind, and he was struggling to accept it. Like his Old Testament counterpart, Elijah, these like passions provided the fodder for the flames of discouragement. It seemed to John that evil had enveloped the nation and God wasn't doing His part.

We may mean well, but our own passionate feelings are not a good gauge of proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. Phaltiel was a dear soul who fell into such deceit. He had been given Michal by King Saul himself. The princess was no doubt a delicate and pleasing prize. David had

Herein we must honestly acknowledge that ignorance is not bliss. To enter the narrow gate may require a broad mind. Not so broad to allow sin, but broad enough to allow God.

evidently valued her so, for he risked his life and doubled the dowry with two hundred Philistine foreskins to secure her hand in marriage. But Phaltiel thought nothing of that, relishing his own good fortune and so enjoyed her company for years. Though this arrangement may have been socially acceptable at the time, no man has the right to receive what another has no right to give. The day came when “they sent, and took her from her husband, even from Phaltiel the son of Laish. And her husband went with her along weeping behind her” (2 Samuel 3:15-16). We know very little of Phaltiel, but if we dismiss ourselves from his emotional avalanche, we must declare him faulty. We dare not let our compassionate heart turn toward him or toward anyone who is offended when asked to separate from works of darkness. When these passionate feelings are allowed to rule, offense is the inevitable result. “For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God” (1 Peter 2:20) . . .

Walk Circumspectly

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise” (Ephesians 5:15). “Be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men” (1 Corinthians 14:20). Herein we must honestly acknowledge that ignorance is not bliss. To enter the narrow gate may require a broad mind. Not so broad to allow sin, but broad enough to allow God. Circumspect is a compound word formed from the Latin words circum (around) and spectare (to behold). The one-dimensional soul will spend his days being offended, for he cannot see from the viewpoint of any but his own. There are over a dozen solid scriptures warning us against doing what is right in our own eyes. We must learn to honestly consider the counsel and wisdom of others lest we fall into condemnation.

In her early years, Michal loved David with deep and fervent loyalty but later fell prey to rash judgment. “As the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal, Saul’s daughter looked through a window, and saw king David

leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart” (2 Samuel 6:16). As Michal viewed the scene from her upper vantage, there were two things evident. First, David was exuberantly thankful, and his joy knew no bounds. This is first love, “for whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God” (2 Corinthians 5:13). Second, during David’s ecstatic dancing in his loin cloth, his discretion elapsed, and his flesh became a bit public. This would require great circumspection to view from another portal, and Michal will have none of it. Upon his entrance to bless his house, David was met with a blast of pent-up bigotry from his offended and sarcastic wife. While the accusation carried a dimension of truth, to cling to it as supreme was shameful prejudice. God had no sympathy for it and “therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death” (2 Samuel 6:23). Many a good woman has judged her man from her singular corner and parched the soil of the home with the same arid judgment. This narrow-mindedness will never be fruitful no matter how blatant the accusation. There is a correct way to express concern, but the outpouring of biased judgment will turn a celestial oasis into a barren wasteland in a prompt fashion.

“A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle” (Proverbs 18:19). So it is with a sister, husband, wife, friend, etc. While causes for offense abound on every side, does Christ desire us to be offended? Will He salute our sour and shriveled soul? Perhaps He gave us this test so that we may have root within ourselves, “that no man should be moved by these afflictions” (1 Thessalonians 3:3). While we may not be able to control our feelings during times of inward pain, we each can choose a redemptive path and walk in the Spirit. It is a choice to broadcast grievances, nurse hurts, withdraw from the offender, and decline to believe all things. Like the brother offended, these contentions serve to lock the soul like the bars of a castle. But who holds the power for release?

1. Strongs Concordance

Burnout

By Vincent “John” Waldron, MD
Gladys, VA

The message was brief. “Dr. Waldron, would you call Mrs. Jones back about her labs?”

I was puzzled. I didn’t remember ordering any labs for Mrs. Jones. As far as I could remember, she was seeing a specialist and just had surgery for colon cancer. Maybe they had ordered the labs. But if so, they certainly should have followed up on them.

I opened the chart and looked in the lab section. Quickly my eye went to my patient’s kidney function and stopped. Her kidney function had declined a huge amount in the last week.

I called her and then her kidney specialist. Over the next half hour, her situation came into view. Because of her colon surgery, she was losing a lot of fluid, enough that she couldn’t keep up. This, in turn, was making her kidney function a lot worse, along with dropping her potassium level.

To take care of it, she would need IV fluids – once or twice a week – to keep up with the fluids she was losing. Without that, her kidneys would shut down completely.

In a sense, Mrs. Jones was dealing with kidney burnout—a situation where they were putting out more than they were taking in and suffering as a result.

As I was thinking about this, my mind went to the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea is “Dead” because it has such a high level of minerals and salts that very few, other than a few microorganisms, can survive.

The reason for this is that the Dead Sea has no outlet. The Jordan River drains into it, carrying fresh water, and then sits in a basin. Some of the water evaporates, and what remains are the salts and minerals in the water.

Over the thousands of years since the fall of Sodom and Gomorrah, this inland body of water has become one of the saltiest places on earth. It is a body of water that is

neither useful for irrigation nor a place where plants and animals can thrive.

Neither situation is healthy, yet this is exactly how most people live their lives, typically gravitating towards one pole or the other. Either they fill their schedule to the maximum, leaving no time for quiet reflection, or they resist any efforts to get them to invest their time and talents and avoid these sorts of activities.

I want to spend a little time thinking about burnout. What causes it, and how we can avoid it?

Everyone has Limits

I Samuel 30 tells the story of David returning to Ziklag. Upon his arrival, he discovered, to his dismay, that the Amalekites had invaded Philistine territory, burned the town, and taken captive all the people who were present.

David and his men had been gone three days and were already tired from their journey to and from Aphek, where King Agag had mustered his forces. Despite this and their anguish at the loss of their family members and material possessions, David consulted God and decided to pursue to the Amalekites out into the desert.

They had only gone as far as the Brook Besor when a third of his men gave up. Scripture tells us they were “too faint” to cross the brook. They were physically and mentally exhausted. Even if they had been able to hold things together for another day, they would be useless in battle.

So it was that David left them behind and continued to pursue the Amalekites, eventually defeating them with the four hundred men who were able to persevere. Here, we come to the interesting part. The men who had won the victory looked down on the men who had been faint. They said those faint-hearted men could have their families back, but all the spoil would be reserved for those who had won the victory.

In response, David said, “Ye shall not do so, my brethren,

with that which the Lord hath given us, who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand. For who will hearken unto you in this matter? but as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike.” (1 Samuel 30:23,24)

David did not wish to penalize those who had tried but did not have the strength to make it through to the final battle.

Perhaps this speaks of the grace we ought to extend to others who don't have the strength or energy to continue for a season. Maybe it lets us know that we should extend that same grace to ourselves.

What is Burnout?

There are different definitions for burnout, but it all comes down to a state of physical, mental, or emotional exhaustion related to too much stress over an extended period of time. We tend to think of this stress as work-related. There are too many projects going on at once, not enough help, or an employer who has high expectations.

Stress is stress, and it all adds up. Even if work isn't stressful, if you have a newborn baby at home, a family member with dementia, or many church responsibilities, you can still reach the place where you have little left to give.

It is as though you are in a vehicle traveling 90 mph, and you push the accelerator a little harder, and nothing happens. In response, you push the gas pedal even harder, and a screeching noise comes from the engine. Suddenly, the

dashboard lights up with funny lights, and the car starts to slow down.

The question is, how can we avoid burnout and what should we do if we realize that we are heading towards it?

Understanding Burnout

Burnout leads to both physical and emotional depletion. The problem with burnout is that even if a particular stressor causes it – say, a situation at work or a family health problem – it will affect numerous other relationships.

People dealing with burnout often exhibit symptoms consistent with depression and anxiety. They may become withdrawn, lack motivation to be involved with church and family activities, or get angry quicker than people who are not dealing with burnout.

There is even a suggestion that burnout can lead to the weakening of our immune systems. This could lead to more colds and viral infections.

Identify Early Signs

We need to know ourselves. There are signs that other people can see in our lives and how we relate to others that we don't necessarily identify as a problem.

People who are on the edge of burnout feel hopeless. They may hide it from their coworkers, but often, their family members realize that something is wrong. You used to have a sunny disposition, and now you are discouraged, not only about the present but also the future.

You might lack motivation and have low energy levels. In a sense, you are going through the motions and just doing enough to get by – both at work and in your home. This is likely related to your feelings of hopelessness.

You may find that you are more irritable than you used to be. Little things bother or aggravate you, and you find yourself smothering angry retorts.

It is important to realize that you are heading down this road for several reasons. First, you are not the only one who suffers when you are burned out. Your family must deal with you and your “grumpiness.” Also, the longer you go without taking care of things, the harder it is to get back to a place of balance.

As a physician, I see people all the time who “didn't have time” to get something taken care of until they could no longer ignore it. At this point, it will take a major procedure to set things right. It would have been easier to correct if they came in with the first symptom.

Make a Priority List

Everything in our life has a priority level. People who do not prioritize end up feeling scattered as they try to do everything at once. This is a recipe for disaster. To me, it makes sense to divide our tasks into four buckets:

1. Things that need to be done relatively quickly
2. Things that need to be done but can wait a bit
3. Things that we'd like to do, but don't need to
4. Things that we should let go of.

Here might be a good place to mention that just because something needs to be done does not mean you need to do it. Sometimes, someone in your home or workplace could help with one of the tasks on your to-do list.

Once we have made our priority list, we need to do something about it. If you simply assign a priority to everything in your life but continue to try to do everything, it won't help your situation at all.

The point of this exercise is to figure out what things you can eliminate from your schedule, so you have more space to breathe.

Make First Things First

One of the things that happens when we are overwhelmed is that we stop doing self-care. We grab unhealthy food on the go, stop spending time in prayer and devotions, and quit exercising.

Doing these things takes time, and that is exactly what we think we don't have when we are living on the margins of our energy. Self-care is extremely important but often

gets assigned a priority of zero and is seldom included in a day's activity.

As we begin to replenish our spiritual nourishment, we must also make sure we take care of our physical health.

Take Time Apart

After feeding the multitudes, Mark 6:46 tells of Jesus, “And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray.” Even Jesus had times when He needed to be alone without distractions.

It is easy to focus on the prayer aspect of this passage, and that is important, but let's focus on the solitary aspect of this experience. Jesus even left His closest followers behind during this time of seeking God's face.

There are times when we need to escape from the pressure of human interactions and find a peaceful place where we can be alone.

Put Down Technology

Part of making rest time truly restful is to eliminate sources of distraction. Phones and electronic tablets are exactly the types of things that can keep our minds from achieving the peace (shalom) that we both desire and need.

Digital burnout is a new term that is being used to describe people who feel apathetic and exhausted from spending hours each day staring at screens. Many workers spend seven or eight hours a day looking at computer screens and then get even more screen time after work.

The funny thing is that the most productive workers are often people who use old-fashioned things like paper calendars and leave phones out of meetings. As wonderful as phones are, they are also immensely distracting for most of us.

So often, we have time away that is simply not restful. The reason is that we continue to receive texts and emails and can still access social media. If you are not someone who can put his phone away and ignore it (it takes a lot of willpower to do this), then leave your phone in another room and create some distance. This will seem stressful, but we can focus on recharging ourselves by creating a screen-free zone.

Build Breaks into Your Day

There is a certain amount of work that must be done each day, and it often feels like too much for the allotted 24 hours. There is certainly no time to stop, stretch, and take a five-minute walk, or at least that's what we tell ourselves.

In reality, if you take a five-minute break every few hours to do something non-work related, you will come back refreshed and more ready to deal with the problems of the day.



Do something healthy during this time. Take a short walk or eat an apple. Chow down a bag of potato chips or eating a couple candy bars is not likely to produce the desired results.

The problem is often with our own expectations. People who struggle with burnout often have extremely high personal standards and get frustrated when they not measure up to that standard.

Be Intentional about Rest

One of the messages of the Old Testament was the importance of the Sabbath. I have heard many people argue that in the New Testament period, we no longer need to practice the Sabbath. Didn't Paul say that one day was like the other? Didn't Jesus defend His disciples for picking grain on the Sabbath?

Regardless of what you believe about the importance of keeping the Sabbath, it is still important that we take time to rest. This is the real message that Jesus was conveying when He said that the "Sabbath was created for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27).

Rest is not simply sleeping till 10 am and then doing nothing. Rest is actively making decisions that will help us recharge our depleted batteries. Go out for breakfast with a friend, take a hike, or take a good book and go somewhere without cell service and focus on something other than situations that are depleting you.

Jesus understood the human need for rest, this is why He told His disciples "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while" (Mark 6:31). This time of rest would give them energy for their next time of ministry.

Don't Buy into Myths

People tell themselves all sorts of lies that can lead to pushing themselves too hard. I'll list a few of them and some thoughts about each one.

"I'm the only one who can do this task." This feels true. The other people in our home or workplace are not helping us the way we wish that they would. Sometimes, it simply feels easier to do the task ourselves rather than spend time teaching someone else how to do it. We need to remember that if we died, the people around us would figure out how to get things done. We can assign them some of the tasks today before we die.

"If I just get this job done today, tomorrow will be easier." I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but each day has 24 hours, and somehow, they always get filled up. I have given up the idea that there is a time in my life coming up soon that will have nothing on the schedule. If a rest comes, it will come because I have made an effort to clear my

schedule, not because by some random occurrence, one day, I happen to not have a single task in it.

"God will never give me more than I can handle." God has promised many things. He has promised that when there is a temptation, He will give us an opportunity to escape it (I Corinthians 10:13). He has also promised that He will never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). I do not read anywhere in Scripture that God will keep us from overfilling our lives. He has simply promised that He will give us opportunity to take a different path and will walk beside us on our way.

So often the heavy load we carry is because other people, or even we, ourselves, have put too many things on our task list. Suppose I choose to put too many patients on my schedule and I am feeling exhausted. In that case, it is time for me to take responsibility for what I have done, rather than claiming a mythical promise that God will keep me from overwhelming myself.

"These are all good things that I am doing." Doctors face this a lot. We want to squeeze one more patient into the schedule and stay just a little later to answer another message because we feel responsible. We hate to think that someone might need to go to the Emergency Department because we did not take care of them when they needed help.

Just because the things in your schedule are "good things" that benefit other people and are building the kingdom, does not mean that you don't need to cut back in one area or another. If you are feeling emotionally depleted, it is probably time to remove a few items from your to-do list.

Conclusion

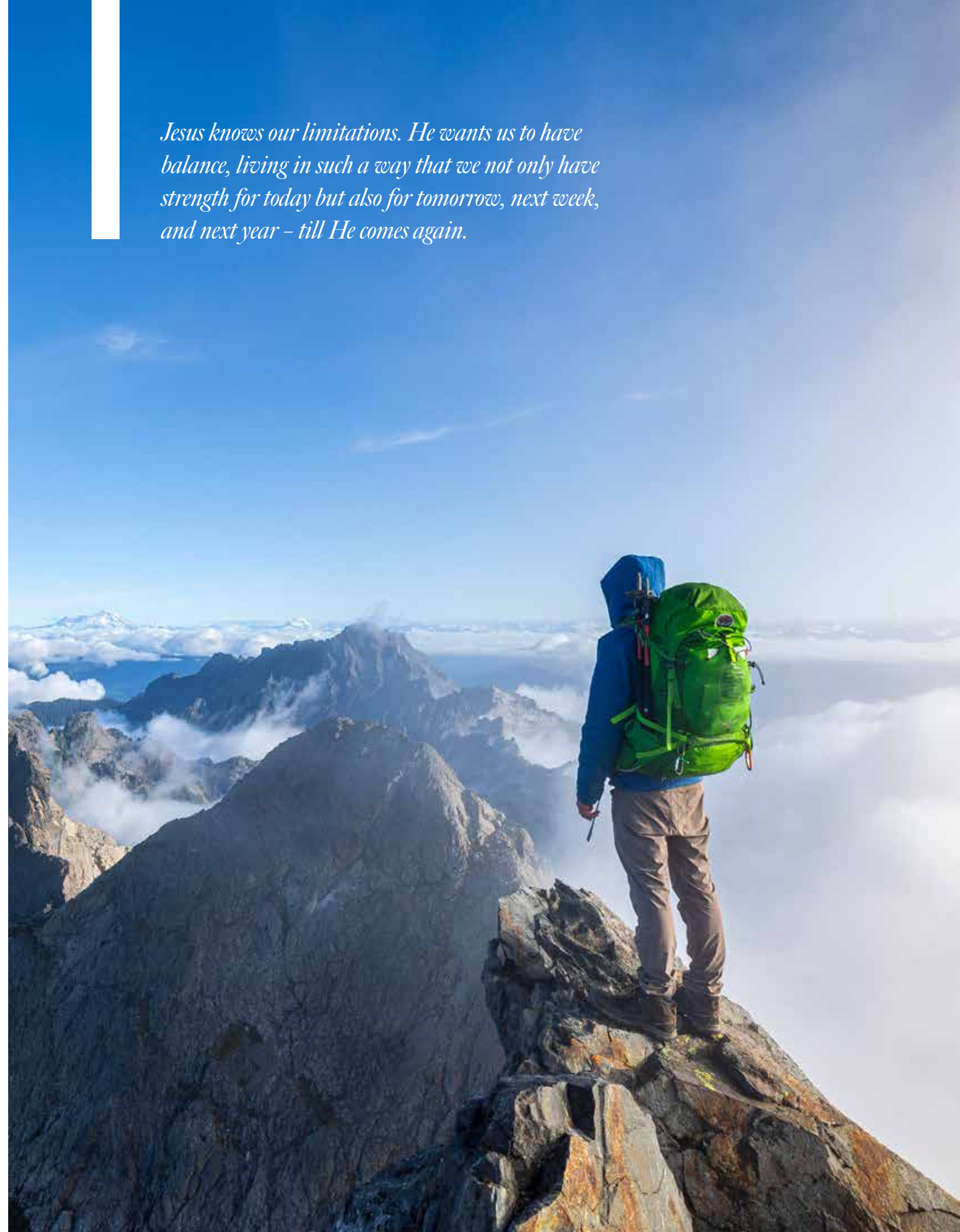
There are other things that could be mentioned. Getting support from someone else, meditating on Scripture, and even taking a vacation are all things that can help.

When I read about some of the famous preachers of the past, I see in some of their lives a roller coaster. They pushed themselves to the max, got involved in large numbers of projects, and then had an emotional breakdown. They would take some time off and, a month or two later, launch back into the same activities. This cycle continued for their whole ministry.

Jesus tells us that His yoke is easy, and His burden is light (Matt, 11:28-30). If we are at the point of exhaustion, we need to consider whether we have Jesus' yoke or if we are laboring under the burden of our own creation.

Jesus knows our limitations. He wants us to have balance, living in such a way that we not only have strength for today but also for tomorrow, next week, and next year – till He comes again.

Jesus knows our limitations. He wants us to have balance, living in such a way that we not only have strength for today but also for tomorrow, next week, and next year – till He comes again.



“ ”

Prayer lays hold of God's plan
and becomes the link between His will and
its accomplishment on earth. Amazing things
happen, and we are given the privilege of
being the channels of the Holy Spirit's prayer.

—Elisabeth Elliot



Does God Answer Prayer?

by Nancy Martin

Lancaster, MO

In May 2001, God blessed our family with a baby girl. This baby created a lot of excitement as the news flew like wildfire. “Did you hear Ivans have a girl?” Her only sister was 14 years old, and the last five babies had been boys. Such a special baby deserved a special name. We named her Judith Irene after her grandmother and called her Judy for short.

The first 24 hours after birth, Judy grunted and squawked almost continuously. “She is disgruntled about being born,” I joked. After that first day she settled into a normal baby routine with no sign of anything unordinary.

One morning when Judy was about 18 months old, I was in the living room having my personal devotions. She was in the adjoining kitchen when we heard an odd noise—a rhythmical scratch-thunk. I looked quizzically at Ivan. “What is that noise?” With raised eyebrows, he shrugged his shoulders. When the sounds continued, I got curious enough to heft myself out of my rocking chair and trudge toward the source of the sounds. An uneasy suspicion reared its head in the back of my mind and grew with every step I took. When I entered the kitchen, Judy lay on the floor, jerking rhythmically. I had never seen anyone in a seizure before, but somehow, I just knew. She’s having a seizure!

“Shall we call 911?” Ivan headed toward the phone. I debated. Since Ivan was a firefighter, we had an emergency scanner in the house. After hearing countless calls over the years and knowing it could sometimes take the ambulance a while to respond, I wasn’t at rest waiting at home while our daughter was seizing.

“Let’s take her in.” I wasn’t willing to sit there and wait until help arrived.

Judy was still jerking. Ivan scooped her off the floor and handed her to me so he could get his keys. Holding Judy

close, I headed for the door. “Bring my shoes,” I called over my shoulder as I hurried stocking-footed down the porch steps and toward the pickup truck parked in the lower driveway. Ivan passed me up, opened the door for me, and ran around to the driver’s side. Coming down the short, steep hill, my feet slipped in the morning dew, and I landed halfway under the truck with one leg forward and the other one bent back under me. For an instant, I thought I had broken my leg, but after a stunned second or two, I got to my feet, gathered my precious burden, and struggled into the pickup. Judy was still jerking and, worse yet, was no longer breathing properly. Saliva pooled in the corners of her mouth, turning into foam. Oh my baby! What is wrong with her? Is she going to die?! It’s amazing how many thoughts can run through your mind in a situation like this. Why, oh why doesn’t Ivan drive faster? She’s not breathing! I glanced over at the speedometer. It was pointed hard right. Oh, he was driving fast. With my whole body and mind, I willed us to be at the hospital.

We had a straight drive to the hospital, and Ivan pulled right up to the emergency entrance. I jumped out of the truck with my baby, yelled over my shoulder to bring my shoes along in, and ran for the emergency door. A nurse was just coming around the corner and I all but threw my precious baby into her startled arms. “She’s having a seizure!” I squeaked out. The nurse took one look at Judy, turned, and rushed down the hall with me at her heels. By the time we got into a room, Judy had finally stopped seizing. As she lay on the stretcher, semi-comatose, she went into a second, milder seizure.

Once she came out of the second seizure and things calmed down, the doctor ordered some tests. After reviewing the test results, the doctor decided she had experienced a febrile seizure, one that results from body temperature moving up or down too rapidly. He said they were common

in babies and young children and didn't seem too concerned. My mothering instincts questioned his diagnosis, but I was no doctor so we went with what he said.

This was our introduction to the world of seizures. A few weeks later she had another seizure. And then another. Our parents encouraged us to get a second opinion. This second doctor decided that Judy should have an MRI, even though the first doctor still maintained that she was just having febrile seizures and wasn't in any hurry to do the MRI. Several weeks passed until they worked her into the schedule. The day after the MRI, we got a call from the doctor's office. An appointment with a neurosurgeon had been made for two days later. The situation had changed from "no hurry" to "you will be there, no questions asked". The neurosurgeon said Judy had an AVM and tried to explain what that was, but most of the information soared right over my head. An appointment for an angiogram was scheduled, and explanations of procedures and requirements for us as her parents were added to my spinning brain. As I tried to digest all the information I was receiving in one phone call, I realized they were preparing for the possibility of surgery.

Our prayers were getting more earnest as we progressed through an EEG (brain scan looking for seizure activity) and more doctor visits. We desired healing for our baby so she could live a normal life. Our faith in God came into play as we tried to resign ourselves to His will. Friends, family, and acquaintances all joined us in prayer.

We owned a bulk food store, and many local non-Mennonite folks knew us. We had become good friends with some Christians from a local church. When they heard of the circumstances, they asked if they could have a prayer meeting to lay hands on Judy and pray for her healing. Although the church we attended did not generally do this, we appreciated their sincerity and faith in God, so we agreed to it.

The evening came when we gathered at their church with their pastor and some of the members who knew us. They took turns praying and claimed God's healing for Judy because they "knew" it was His will to heal her. They specifically asked that the doctors wouldn't find anything when they did the angiogram. Then they asked us to pray. Although not used to praying out loud, particularly in front of other people, we had confidence that God could heal our baby and wanted to do our part. We prayed for God's will and voiced our acceptance of whatever He chose.

The next day, we made the hour-and-a-half drive to Madison Children's Hospital for the angiogram. The purpose for this test was to identify what was causing her seizures and to find its exact location. After the test, we went home to await the results.

I didn't want my lack of faith to block my daughter's healing, and I knew God could heal her, but who was I to tell Him what to do? As I struggled through it, we waited for news from the doctor.

Two days later we got a phone call from the doctor's office. The nurse on the line told us the angiogram hadn't shown anything! It seemed to puzzle them. It wasn't at all what they had expected, and they didn't understand why they couldn't find the problem. Praise God! We marveled at the miracle He had wrought.

When we took Judy to her next appointment with the neurosurgeon, I asked him what Judy's problem was since the angiogram found nothing unusual. He said it appeared she had a small amount of bleeding on her brain, but not to worry about it. I thought that was one of the strangest statements I ever heard. I had always been under the impression that bleeding on the brain is very serious and not to be ignored. But I was pretty sure I knew what had happened and told the doctor about the prayers. His response was noncommittal, and I couldn't tell what he really thought.

They scheduled Judy for a second doctor's visit and MRI in six months, which I thought was a little strange,

considering that they didn't think there was anything wrong with her. I wasn't planning to need that MRI or appointment since I believed God had healed her.

That summer, we weaned her off her seizure medications, and she appeared to be healthy. The six months were almost over, and we believed her problems were behind us.

Then, one week before the scheduled MRI, she had a seizure. What a shock! How could this be? Hadn't God healed her?? What was happening? I felt betrayed. All I could ask was, "Why?" And now what were we going to do?

Such emotional turmoil and soul-searching! I felt let down and shaken in my faith. I had believed in God and that was finally where I ended up every time when I struggled. Solid as a rock under all the turmoil was the truth that God is, and His ways are far above my understanding. I found at the core of my belief in God a safe place where He knows and has my best interest in mind. And that plan might not include the things I want to happen in my limited earth-view.

What if His plan was higher? What if there was someone we would encounter through our medical journey who needed to see Christ in us? Were we willing to be His witness at the expense of our comfort and an easier life?

Our precious little girl ended up having brain surgery at only three and a half years old. Dealing with seizures, surgery, and countless tests over the years caused us no small amount of stress, but God had and still has a plan, and the "whys" we ask might not be revealed until we see Him face to face.

So, does God always answer prayer? I say yes, He does. Sometimes He says, "Yes," and we get what we want; sometimes, His answer is "No," and we do not get what we ask for. Sometimes, He whispers, "Wait," and in His own time and way, He allows us our heart's desire. Like a child who trusts his parents, I will leave the answers to my prayers in the hands of our almighty God and trust Him to know what is best for my life.



The neurosurgeon said Judy had an AVM and tried to explain what that was, but most of the information soared right over my head. An appointment for an angiogram was scheduled, and explanations of procedures and requirements for us as her parents were added to my spinning brain.

God's Faithfulness Manifest Even in the Curse

by Rick Hess

Dornsife, PA

It was the proverbial “perfect world” that Adam and Eve enjoyed daily with their Creator. The beautiful garden, designed, created, and hand-planted by God Himself, was perfect in every way. We all know that it didn't stay like that for very long. Because of the privilege of choice that God gave to all mankind, they both soon made the wrong choice. Eve, although deceived by Satan in the form of the serpent, believed the lie and chose to disobey God, doing the only thing that God had lovingly asked her not to do. But when she brought the fruit to Adam, he wasn't deceived. He knew it was wrong. God was not surprised but, nevertheless, was very disappointed. In Genesis 3, we read the sad account of mankind being expelled from the garden, barred from the tree of eternal life, and the curse being pronounced because of Adam and Eve's sin. It seemed so dark and hopeless. Even though it was only one man who sinned, the curse passed on to all of the created world, including the earth, plants, and animals. Just consider with me what all came along with this mighty curse.

1. Disease
2. Distress and Pain
3. Deterioration and destruction
4. Dominance of certain plants like thorns and thistles
5. Death
6. Decomposition and Decay

We'll refer to them today as the six “D's” of the curse.

Disease

The world's pristine days of eternal, perfect health were past. Disease entered the picture as part of the curse of sin. The children of men, the birds, beasts, and the plants would all begin to experience the effects of sickness and disease. But God was faithful by providing instructions that helped man to know how to avoid many preventable sicknesses by cleanliness and simple obedience. For example, God's command to honor His original intent in marriage,

maintain purity, avoid multiple potential diseases, etc. He was also interested in our spiritual condition. God never designed mankind to bear guilt. He wants us to have and keep our conscience clear because He knows that a guilty conscience can make you sick!

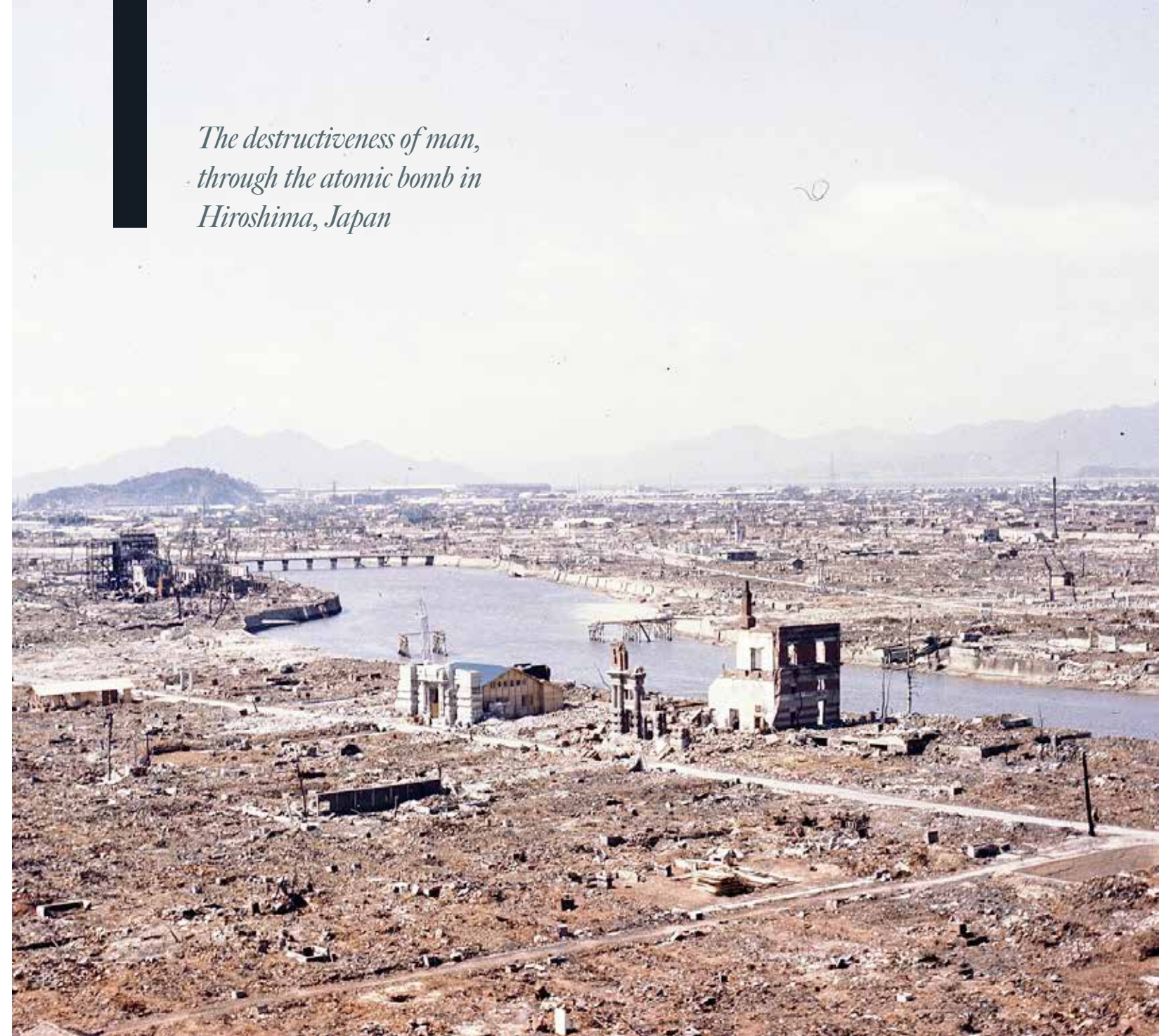
Some of these sicknesses would be unavoidable, but many could be prevented by building immunity. God was also faithful in designing people, plants, and animals with a regenerative microbiome (billions of helpful bacteria) and a systemic immune system, which helps us fight off diseases. It is amazing how each plant seems to have certain dietary or healing properties that are beneficial. How faithful a Creator!

Distress and Pain

I suspect there was no real reason for any pain in the Garden of Eden, but we have experienced pain ever since the day of their exit. Pain is indeed a part of many of our lives. There are many types of pain. Grief, sorrow, and rejection are all emotional pains that come with the curse. Aches, migraines, sore muscles, torn ligaments, infected tendons, worn joints, and broken bones are a few of the physical pains that we may experience sometime before our last breath. Again, God has been faithful in helping mankind understand what to do to relieve some of life's pains and distresses. From ancient times, plants, herbs, and other remedies have helped people deal with pain and distress. To this day, we have many useful plants that help us with pain.

One of the most beautiful things that can be experienced on earth is the birth of a child. Yet birth is generally accompanied by much pain. Although we can't eliminate this promised pain, God has been faithful in providing and revealing to us the use of many herbs for use before, during, and after birth to ease the pain and hasten recovery. He didn't have to do that for us. Mankind really deserves no mercy. What a faithful Creator!

*The destructiveness of man,
through the atomic bomb in
Hiroshima, Japan*



Deterioration and destruction

We don't need to study history much to see this principle at work. Wind, rain, and sun all have deteriorating effects on many things. Whether we consider an eroded stream bank, the rocks worn smooth in the riverbed, or the tree blown over by the wind, these are all natural elements of destruction. But add to that what man has done to the plants, animals, the soil, and each other. Whether the devastating effects of destruction during the awful wars or self-centered and greedy practices during peace, man is a

very destructive creature. God granted mankind dominion over all of creation. However, too often, we falsely interpret that to mean that we own this sphere called earth and can do whatever we want to with it. He who declared, “The earth is the Lord's,” doesn't agree with the idea that men are something other than stewards of God's creation. It is indeed wicked to worship the created world or anything in it. But it is equally wicked to be unthankful and careless with our Creator's creation! Nevertheless, God has faithfully designed His earth with regenerative capabilities in the midst of this curse. Bless our gracious Maker!

This is an artichoke plant, a member of the thistle family. Many people use this “thistle,” along with its cousin, the Cardoon, for food.



Dominance of Thorns and Thistles

Anyone who has ever gardened soon found the reality of the battle with weeds. In all fairness, any plant growing where it isn't desired is a “weed.” Many weeds can be very beneficial plants if we only know what to use them for. Some of the plants that we call weeds are actually quite nutritious and healthy once we understand which ones are edible and how to prepare them. Today, we want to think about thorns and thistles. We need to assume they were created on the first six days, not after the curse was pronounced. It seems that their ability to outgrow the useful crops increased after the curse. Even in this part of the curse, we see God mercifully providing for us.

We grow the artichoke for its bitter leaves, which are used to make digestive bitters. Think about it: Blessed Thistle, Milk Thistle, Teasel, Raspberry Leaf, and Blackberry roots are only a few examples of members of these “thorny weeds” used for medicinal and other food benefits. How good of God to give us benefits in the middle of the very curse!

Death

This is the one “D” that most of us would rather not talk about. In reality, when we take our first breath, we are one breath closer to death. Although all plants, animals, and people will eventually die, we still don't feel comfortable with it. It is quite normal for us to have a will to live, and if we don't, we should seek some help to find out why.

Indeed, death has no age. In my lifetime, I have helped bury stillborn babies, people as old as 96 years old, and every age in between. We read of the beautiful paradise restored, seen by the Apostle John in Revelation, as he describes Heaven. Some of the things he mentions are no sickness, no sorrow, no separation, no tears, no more suffering, and no death. In a way, life is only a gestation period for eternity. We can't stay here, just like the baby in the womb can't decide that it doesn't want to enter the real world. With all our sorrows and temptations, our bodies wear out and decay. With all the violence, sin, and wickedness around us, would we really want to stay here in this condition forever? Rather, we return to the soil that we

were made from, ashes to ashes and dust to dust, awaiting the final resurrection. Wasn't it gracious of our faithful God not to allow sinful man to eat of the tree of life in his current sinful, dying state? Can we see and be grateful for God's faithfulness in providing physical death?

In the midst of the curse given to Eve, the first prophecy of the Messiah is revealed. “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:15). He is the conqueror of death! Praise God for His Faithfulness.

Decomposition and Decay

Decomposition and Decay are another “D” of the curse. A nut falls to the ground, and a sprout soon appears. In a few years, it will be a small sapling. Years go by, and squirrels gather the acorns that fall to the ground each autumn. Then as a mighty oak it contracts a virus, dies, and in a few years is brought to the ground by a windstorm. Here, it returns to the soil as it decays and decomposes. Ever since the curse, everything rots and decays. Considering all the plants, animals, and people that have died in the last 6,000 years, isn't it good of God to have designed decomposition and decay? What would this world look like if all the debris of 6,000 years were still lying around? The earth would be covered with dead trees and corpses! This may be hard to realize, but God designed entire kingdoms in creation just to accomplish this before it was even needed because He foresaw the need. The kingdoms of yeast, mold, and fungus,

the kingdoms of bacteria, enzymes, and microscopic plant and animal life all help break down the fiber of life and make it into the perfect fertilizer for the completion of the life cycle and provision for the next generation. Healthy organic soil has about 8 billion soil microbes in a single tablespoon. This is another reason why it is so important to treat the soil with respect, not harsh chemicals.

Have you ever considered the great flood of Noah? Imagine the millions of tons of plant, animal, and human matter floating around before finally settling to the bottom and quickly being buried in sediment as the waters receded. This produced the ideal conditions to make coal and the other fossil fuels that we use today. There it was, deep within the earth, until the day it was discovered. To this day, it is still being used.

May we be responsible and faithful stewards of the Lord's earth!

“For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies” (Romans 8:19-23).



When All Thy Mercies, O My God

by Joel A Hostetler

Coshocton, Ohio

"O give thanks unto the God of heaven: for His mercy endureth for ever"
—Psalm 136:26

In your journey of life, from infancy to where you are today, have you ever taken a few minutes to meditate on the mercy God has shown you? Infancy to childhood, childhood to youth, youth to adulthood, and beyond, God's everlasting mercy is upon them that fear Him! The scripture says in Deuteronomy 7:9 that the mercy of God extends way past our short lives here on earth, even to a thousand generations. Take a moment and wonder in the glory and beauty of this unchanging, eternal attribute of God!

As we take a look at the history behind this hymn, let us endeavor to see the hand of God at work in the life of the hymn writer. The hymn, "When All Thy Mercies O My God," written in 1712, has been published in 994 hymnals and is to this day in the list of the best 100 hymns ever written. As the writer nears the end of his time on earth, he reflects in this hymn his awe at the mercies of God toward him throughout his life.

*Transported with the view,
I'm lost in wonder, love and praise.
Thy providence my life sustained,
Ten thousand thousand precious gifts
my daily thanks employ,
Oft hast thou with health renewed my face;
Thy goodness I'll pursue,
Oh, eternity's too short, to utter all thy praise!*

Joseph Addison, born May 1, 1672, was an English essayist, poet, and man of letters. Concerning his birth, we find that he "appeared weak and unlikely to live", Mr. Tyers says.* And that "he was laid out for dead as soon as he was born." Without doubt, the providence of God preserved his young life and gave him nearly half a century to serve Him on the earth. He was the eldest son of Lancelot Addison, a well-learned man and minister in his church. His father, being a studious man himself, made sure his son Joseph had a good education. He commenced his studies in his hometown of Milston, in Wiltshire, England.

While in school around 1685, the 13-year-old hymn writer met and became best of friends with Richard Steele, the two of them being only a few months apart in age. They continued their friendship throughout the years, and 27 years later from 1711 to 1712, they cofounded The Spectator magazine, in which this hymn was first published.

After passing through several schools, Addison went to Oxford when he was about 15 years old. While he was there, he continued to gain in learning and skill, especially in the areas of writing Latin poems and essays. By the time he was 22, in 1694, he also began to show his skill at writing English poetry.

One of the most notable details of his life that conveyed to him the mercy of God is how he managed to narrowly escape an awful shipwreck. It was this tragedy and his frightening tale of survival that would go on to inspire the writing of this uplifting hymn.

Here is the hymn with the original 13 verses:

*When all Thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view,
I'm lost In wonder, love and praise.*

*Thy Providence my life sustained,
And all my wants redressed,
While in the silent womb I lay,
And hung upon the breast.*

*To all my weak complaints and cries
Thy mercy lent an ear,
Ere yet my feeble thoughts had learned,
To form themselves in prayer.*

*Unnumbered comforts to my soul
Thy tender care bestowed,
Before my infant heart conceived
From Whom those comforts flowed.*

*When in the slippery paths of youth
With heedless steps I ran,
Thine arm unseen conveyed me safe,
And led me up to man.*

*Through hidden dangers, toils, and deaths,
It gently cleared my way;
And through the pleasing snares of vice,
More to be feared than they.*

*O how shall words with equal warmth
The gratitude declare,
That glows within my ravished heart?
But thou canst read it there.*

*Thy bounteous hand with worldly bliss
Hath made my cup run o'er;
And, in a kind and faithful Friend,
Hath doubled all my store.*

*Ten thousand thousand precious gifts
My daily thanks employ;
Nor is the last a cheerful heart
That tastes those gifts with joy.*

*When worn with sickness, oft hast Thou
With health renewed my face;
And, when in sins and sorrows sunk,
Revived my soul with grace.*

*Through every period of my life
Thy goodness I'll pursue
And after death, in distant worlds,
The glorious theme renew.*

*When nature fails, and day and night
Divide Thy works no more,
My ever grateful heart,
O Lord, Thy mercy shall adore.*

*Through all eternity to Thee
A joyful song I'll raise;
For, oh, eternity's too short
To utter all Thy praise!*

As we endeavor to understand the life and story of the hymnologist, let's take a short look at some disappointments he faced. Being single into his 40s, he had hopes of someday having a happy marriage. His marriage to Charlotte, a widow of 15 years, didn't turn out as he had anticipated. It is said that their courtship was long and anxious. They were married in August 1716 in his 44th year. A quote states that *"He is said to have first known her by becoming tutor to her son. The marriage, if uncontradicted report can be credited, made no addition to his happiness; it neither found them nor made them equal."** In addition

to his less-than-ideal marriage, the loss of his good friend Richard Steele sometime after that took a toll on him.

By the year 1717, his health began to decline rapidly, and by March 1718, he had to resign some of his work positions, having a great need for rest and quietness. *"The disease under which Addison laboured appears to have been asthma. It became more violent after his retirement from office and was now accompanied by dropsy. His deathbed was placid and resigned, and comforted by those religious hopes which he had so often suggested to others..."* *

One last note I will include here on the life of the hymn writer is the account of his passing. There was a young man by the name of Lord Warwick, rough and loose in character, who Addison had often tried to win to the faith, all to no avail. Nearing the end of his life, he endeavored one last attempt to impress this young man with the importance of Christianity. He sent for him to come and be present as he passed away, saying, "I have sent for you that you may see how a Christian can die." We have no record of how this experience affected Warwick's behavior, but we can assume that it most likely did. Joseph Addison died at Holland House on the 17th of June, 1719, six weeks after his 47th birthday. He is buried in the Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey.

This hymn has several tunes: "St Peter," composed by Alexander Robert Reinagle in 1836, is used in the Church Hymnal and Christian Hymnary. The tune "Geneva" was composed by John Cole in 1805. He was born in Tewksbury, England, and came to the United States in his boyhood. Baltimore, Maryland became his American home, and he was educated there. Early in life, he became a musician and music publisher. He continued to compose music until his death. This tune is found in the Zion's Praises, Hymns of the Church, and Harmonia Sacra. The tune "Contemplation", composed by F.A.Gore Ouseley, is more widely used by evangelical and other church groups. Other hymns by Joseph Addison include "The Lord my Pasture Shall Prepare" and "The Spacious Firmament." Here is one final quote to help us understand who Joseph Addison was and what he believed. "His religion has nothing in it enthusiastic or superstitious; he appears neither weakly credulous nor wantonly skeptical; his morality is neither dangerously lax nor impracticably rigid. All the enchantment of fancy and all the cogency of argument are employed to recommend to the reader his real interest, the care of pleasing the Author of his being."

*sourced from Wikipedia and hymnary.org

Saved by Hope

by Alvin Mast
Millersburg, Ohio

Someone once said "When hope is alive, the night is less dark, the solitude less deep, and fear less acute." When I worked in a prison as an assistant chaplain, I would sit with the condemned men and listen as they talked of their plight. Almost without exception, all spoke of hoping to get out of prison one day. Even if they had a life sentence, they hoped to get out.

I have spoken to people who do not confess to be born again, but still hope to go to heaven. These people dare not leave off hoping. Their hope is based upon their own hope! A diet on that kind of hope is a slim diet for sure! This reasoning reminds me of Jesus' words in John 10:1-2 about entering the sheepfold. "But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep." People build their hope for heaven on many shaky things. Some base their hope on having been baptized in a certain church. Some hope in their church membership. Some people hope in their good works, while still others hope in their hope. The Bible, however, says, ". . . except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

There is a true hope and a false hope. The false hope is "climbing up some other way," but true hope is "he that entereth in by the door."

"For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" (Romans 8:24). This word hope means "with anticipation or great expectation." Could we say that we are saved by great expectation? Yes, we can. "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed" (John 6:27). This seems to be a contradiction of sorts. Are we not saved by grace? Yes, we are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8). Then what is this being saved by hope and laboring for the "meat which endureth unto everlasting life"?

"Then they said unto him, what shall we do, that we might

work the works of God?" Jesus answered and said unto them, "this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" (John 6:28-29). It is only by grace that we are saved, but as this passage suggests, grace sets a condition. The condition of grace is that we believe on Him. Another condition of salvation is repentance (Mark 1:15), while another is cross-bearing. "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me" (Mark 8:34).

Everything we would do for Christ, whether believing, repenting, or cross-bearing, is by grace. Whatever we have, or do, is because of Him. We do not work for our salvation, for Christ Himself said, "It is finished." We have nothing to hope for if we do not meet the conditions of our salvation. Once we receive the Lord Jesus as Saviour, then "hope maketh not ashamed" (Romans 5:5).

As Christ becomes alive in us, we love Him and choose to obey Him. Jesus becomes more precious to us as we mature in our Christian life. As our relationship grows, our expectation grows as well. The more we get to know Him, the more we look forward to being in His presence. As our anticipation of seeing Him grows, we try to do all things possible to please Him. Our great eagerness keeps us from becoming weary, thus, "we are saved by hope."

Is your hope like the one who "climbeth up some other way," or like, "he that entereth in by the door"? Do you have a basis for your hope or is it an empty hope that has no foundation?

I trust you are growing up ". . . into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ" (Ephesians 4:15).

I hope you might grow just a little more, so your expectation of seeing Christ might grow as well. The testimony of this expectation is, ". . . in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven" (2 Corinthians 5:2).

The Heartbeat of



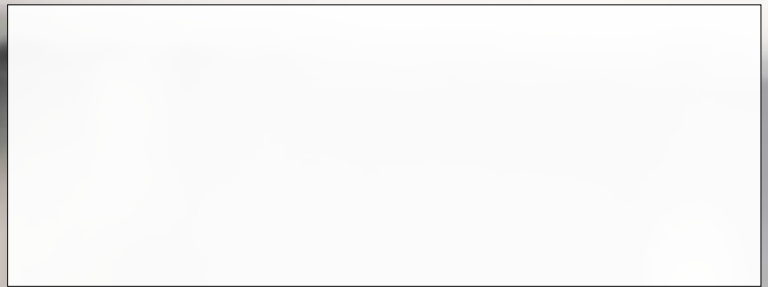
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To trust God in the light
IS NOTHING,

but to trust Him

in the dark-

that is faith.

- C.H. Spurgeon