

# The Ultimate Question

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*A Revelation  
by a Servant of The King*

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## **Dedication**

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In grateful appreciation, this account is dedicated to those who take the time, make the effort, risk rejection, and make other sacrifices to tell others about the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

## **Acknowledgment**

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For the guidance of God, who patiently waited for me to set this account in writing; and kept me from many unprofitable tangents while preparing this manuscript. And to my friends and family, who encouraged and corrected me through the writing and editing of this book — my humble thanks.

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# Introduction

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When I was a new convert to Christianity, I was invited to dedicate my life to serving God's purposes. This seemed the right thing to do, and God responded by giving a prophetic word, telling me to "Go tell others what I have done in your heart." That was in 1979.

In the intervening thirty-four years, our Heavenly Father did many things in my heart. Now appears to be the time to compile those things into a sensible narrative that puts things in proper order and context.

I have woven two stories into one. The first is about a near death experience I had in 1995, that in a matter of minutes thoroughly reshaped my understanding of spiritual matters. The other story is about the highlights of my pilgrimage through life and the lessons I learned. Together, they show the way I found to a right relationship with God through the confusing maze of the world and its chaotic view on the "meaning of life."

I can only guess what God's purposes are in having me tell this story. The writing of it helped me sort out the details of my belief system and drew me closer to Him. For each reader, it will be different. Some will also be drawn closer to God. Others will be challenged to examine and revise their own beliefs, relationship with God, and conduct with others. I expect some will reject part or all of what I write. Very likely, most will be indifferent.

My hope is that anyone who reads this will seriously ask themselves what is the answer to the ultimate question. That is what really matters.

— God's Servant, East Texas, 2013



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## Chapter 1 – The Night I Died

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*“And as it is reserved to men once to die, and after this, Judgment; so Christ having been once offered ‘to bear the sins of many,’ Christ shall appear a second time without sin to those expecting Him for salvation” (Hebrews 9:27-28; [See also Isaiah 53:12]).*

Death came for me about midnight, on a cold winter night in 1995. It was three days after I had been in a gas explosion caused by a faulty heater and my carelessness.

Now I was trying unsuccessfully to rest on the short couch in our living room. Pain and exhaustion were almost all I could think about. My right hand throbbed with pain where it had been charred; my throat burned, and my eyes stung badly, and were partially blinded by pus that constantly formed in them. I could not eat, drink, or read at that point, and I was desperate for sleep.

Finally, I had enough of my cramped position on the couch and decided to lay the couch cushions out on the floor so I could at least lie horizontally. “Perhaps then I can rest,” I reasoned. What I did not realize, was that being propped up on the couch had been keeping me alive; for my seared lung tissues had been leaking what was coming from the lower portions of my fluid-filled lungs.

As I lay the cushions together on the floor, my thoughts centered only on how good it would feel to lie down and get some rest. I had no idea that something very extraordinary was about to happen.

A moment later, I stretched out on my back and enjoyed the small, but significant pleasure of being able to lie prone without my legs being bent under me or the couch armrest digging into my back. For a few moments, I lay there relaxing until I realized my hand hurt again. I had forgotten the bowl of ice water I had prepared. Now

I would have to get up to retrieve it, only now I discovered that I could not rise.

My body had become weak and unresponsive and I felt as if I was smothering. Although I did not know then that fluid had spilled into the upper portions of my lungs, I did know that I could not breathe. Suddenly, I realized the danger I was in.

It was late at night; almost exactly midnight. Everyone was asleep and no one would check on me until morning. I tried to cry out but discovered I had no voice. I was trapped, suffocating in my own living room, unable to help myself, and unable to summon help. I realized my only help now would have to come from God, so I began to pray silently in my mind.

Now, I do know how to pray, and in those desperate moments as my life ebbed away, I composed some of the most eloquent and well-considered prayers I have ever prayed — but nothing happened. I felt my mind continue to shut down as my brain absorbed the diminishing oxygen from my blood. I continued to pray: a few paragraphs, then a paragraph, then a few sentences, then a sentence at a time. But there was no response.

My ears began ringing and my heart rate increased dramatically. I knew from swimming underwater that these were signs of severe oxygen deprivation. I became desperate and fearful, knowing death was imminent. A peaceful resignation began to come over me but I was determined to fight it. Finally, I realized it was almost over, and I had only enough consciousness remaining to pray one last word. It had to be chosen carefully: it was my last chance and it must count. I chose carefully, the word “Help!” and put behind it, the clear intention that I sought any help God would give me on any terms that He would offer.

Suddenly, the pain was gone, as were the sensations of exhaustion, thirst, and hunger. My mind was clear and I felt vital and alive again.



“My prayer is answered!” I thought. I was elated and immediately stood up. What I saw surprised and amazed me. It was the middle of the night and there were no lights on anywhere in the house. Yet, the room appeared brightly lit, with no shadows.

Even more astounding was that there was no apparent source of illumination! Normally, I wear glasses for severe astigmatism and nearsightedness, but I could see perfectly clearly. All my other senses seemed remarkably enhanced as well. I could hear the slightest noise; even far away. A severe case of influenza during undergraduate studies had robbed me of much of my sense of smell but now it was very keen and I could smell and discriminate odors I had never noticed before.

Moreover, I have deformities in my spine which cause constant, low-grade pain in my lower back. It too was gone. I was delighted, assuming I had been miraculously healed. That was, until I looked down where I had lain. There on the couch cushions, my body lay still and silent.

In an instant, I realized I had died. But how had this happened? It helps to take a few steps back in time from that moment, to put the pieces of the story together.

I had recently been laid off from a contract engineering position with a local manufacturer. It was 1995, the local economy was not exactly booming, and I was unemployed. Consequently, I had little money and no insurance.

A couple of years before in better times, we had bought a little run-down single family ranch house in a working-class neighborhood. My wife and I poured everything we had into making it a cozy little home for our growing family. Now, even the modest mortgage and carefully watched utilities rapidly drained away the small income I managed to earn at odd jobs here and there. We had no savings to speak of.

So, when the old and decrepit gas furnace that heated our home began failing, I tried to apply my mechanical talents to repair it. Normally, it would have been a simple matter of replacing the old, corroded pilot light and rusty burners, but there was no money for spare parts. Therefore, I fiddled with things as much as I could.

Despite my best efforts, the furnace would still go out; typically in the middle of the night, and characteristically when the weather was coldest. It was an older model that did not have a safety feature to prevent the natural gas it burned from being sent to the burners, if the pilot light was out. So, even when the pilot light was out, it would continue to send fuel to the burners in a futile attempt to heat the house.

Naturally, as the house became colder, the furnace would cycle more frequently and even more gas would be pumped into the air. It was a dangerous situation.

After several weeks of this, I had developed a routine. When I smelled gas or sensed by the coldness of the air, that the pilot light had gone out, I would go to the furnace, shut off the gas, and turn on the exhaust until no more gas could be smelled. Then I would relight the pilot light and watch it until it was burning steadily and did not go out. Only after that did I turn on the gas to the burners and restart the furnace. As a final precaution, I would stand and watch the furnace for a while, to be sure it was operating correctly.

On that fateful night, I had lost count of how many times the furnace had gone out. I was groggy from lack of sleep, and probably the gas fumes as well. It was about 3 a.m., when once again I felt the bite of the cold and I smelled gas. Weary and frustrated, I stumbled out of bed and shuffled down the hallway to the furnace closet.

I can still remember thinking how simple it would be just to toss a match into the furnace and ignite the burners without all the tedious preliminaries I had been following up until then. Some other part of

my mind was alarmed and warned me of how dangerous and foolish the idea was, but I dismissed it as unreasonable and over-cautious. For some reason, I was sure that if I stood back far enough, any burst of flame would be inconsequential to me.

Since childhood, I had tinkered with fire in various forms and I had always escaped serious harm — but not tonight. Gripping the large box of wooden strike-anywhere matches in my left-hand; I struck a single match, and with one smooth motion, sent the flaming splinter of wood straight into the burner section of the furnace.

I did not even see it land.

A bright flash filled my entire field of vision and I felt as if a large, hot and heavy mattress had suddenly walloped me from the front. The trajectory my body took was linear and very short, before my back impacted the opposite wall of the hallway. Then I simply slumped to the floor.

I do not recall much of a sound from the explosion; perhaps a soft “whoosh!” My ears were not ringing after the explosion and nothing was in flames afterwards: not even the stubborn old furnace! And no one else in the house awoke as I sat in the dark hallway for a moment, collecting my thoughts.

I was still alive and intact, and I did not feel any pain. I sighed, realizing I had been foolish; but thankful I had escaped serious injury (or so I thought) The hall light was not on. I did not need it since I knew my way from the bedroom to the furnace so well, and I hated the bright light after waking from sleep. So, I had to feel my way to the bathroom, where I turned on the light. I wanted to see what sort of damage had been done: expecting singed eyebrows and crinkled hair, as had been the case a few times before, with flammable experiments gone awry.

It took a moment for my eyes to adjust to the light before I could

see clearly what I had done to myself. The frightening sight and the searing pain hit me simultaneously — and both were shocking.

My eyebrows were completely gone and the hair around my face was badly singed. The skin of my face and my right arm, where it extended out of my pajama sleeve, were bright red. My right hand was all red and charred around the thumb and forefinger. Instinctively, I thrust my burned hand under a gush of cold water from the sink faucet, but that did little to relieve the intense, throbbing pain from the burn. I groaned, realizing what I could expect to endure for some time to come.

The next few days were dominated by two things: pain and humiliation. There was no respite, day or night from the searing pain in my hand; nor was there relief from the shame of knowing I had made an avoidable mistake. I had no money to spare for a doctor's visit; no insurance due to the coldheartedness of my ex-employer, and no government assistance due to my youth and recent employment status. When even prayer brought no relief, I resorted to doctoring myself.

That was not a good decision. Rust had been blown into my eyes, and flames had seared my throat and nasal passages. Infection quickly set in. Soon my eyes filled with pus and my throat became so raw that I could not swallow my own saliva without agony.

My regime of treatment was quite primitive. I soaked my burned hand in ice water, took some antihistamines, read the Bible, and prayed for relief. Reading was difficult since I had to rinse my eyes frequently, but I was desperately searching for some passage that I might have overlooked on healing. I read Ole Hallesby's book *Prayer*,<sup>1</sup> seeking guidance. Although I learned some valuable lessons, I did not find what I sought.

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1 Hallesby, Ole. *Prayer*. Augsburg Fortress Publishing, 1959.

At night, I tried to sleep, but instead thrashed about in bed. I moved to the couch in the living room so my spouse could sleep undisturbed. I would lie there propped up on one arm rest, reading with a book in my left hand, and letting my right hand rest in a bowl of ice water on the floor. My hand was like a yo-yo: going down to seek the relief of the cool water and then retreating when chilblains set in. But the physical sensations and temperature extremes I had now would soon prove to be the least of my concerns.



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## Chapter 2 – The List and the Key

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*“But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask from God, who gives to all freely and with no reproach, and it will be given to him” (James 1:5).*

My rather inadequate preparation for the afterlife was an interesting and eclectic journey that brought me into contact with a variety of people and institutions. A great deal of it was not very helpful or useful, but there was an overall purpose to the journey. Mixed in with many other things were two events that were crucially important. One was developing my list of questions on spiritual subjects, and the other was a very key piece of information that meant the difference between salvation and damnation.

Years before in 1979, I arrived at the train station in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, to begin my first year of undergraduate studies at Juniata College. I was seventeen years old and this would be my first extended period away from the security, order, and comforts of home.

I had no friends or family in Huntingdon, and entirely dependent upon strangers for everything. Therefore, I was both apprehensive and excited. My first impression of the town and college was a good one, for another student’s family offered to transport me and my belongings from the train station to campus. I long remembered this kindness with gratitude.

Juniata College was founded as a land grant college in 1876, by the Church of the Brethren, as the Brethren Normal College. (A “Normal College” is focused on preparing its graduates specifically for teaching vocations.) Over the years, it developed a broader scope. When I attended, Juniata had become a liberal arts and sciences college with a broad spectrum of students, from a variety of religious, ethnic, and national backgrounds. Although mandatory chapel attendance had

been dropped some years before, the Christian traditions were still relatively healthy and vibrant when I attended the school. I soon became active in two Christian student organizations: the Intervarsity Christian Fellowship, or IVCF for short, and the Deputation Club.

Through my acquaintances with the other students in these organizations, I was introduced to quite a variety of Christian authors and musicians. (Through my dorm mates, I was also exposed to a lot of other things too, for which I had no liking or interest.) Between reading the Bible and the writings of C. S. Lewis, I came to read the book *Caught Up Into Paradise* by D. O. Richard Eby.<sup>2</sup>

In that book, the author had told of his own near death experience, and how he'd seen heaven and returned to life after his body was resuscitated. Although I found the book very encouraging and enlightening, I had been disappointed that the author had asked very few profound questions of God when the opportunity came.

I had my own idea of what questions were important that the author had left unanswered. So, after reading the book, I composed what I thought was a good list of the questions I would ask God — if I ever had the chance.

One of my first questions arose soon after my conversion from an agnostic to a Christian, back in 1978. I had been taught the gospel and the reality of heaven and hell. Even as a seventeen-year-old, it seemed logical to me that there must be more to life than simply escaping hell and getting to heaven.

Perhaps there was a hierarchy in heaven, with progressive levels. I asked my pastor, the Reverend Charles B. Gross, if there were more levels of advancement in heaven after a person got there. His honest answer was that he did not know, so my first question on my list was:

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2 Eby, Richard E. *Caught Up Into Paradise*. Spire, 1983.



- *What is heaven like, and do we continue to progress to higher orders of being after we get there?*

In the early eighties when I started college, the issue of abortion was fresh in the news, and there was considerable debate among Christians on whether the life of an individual began at conception or birth, and what the fate was of the souls of aborted babies. So, my next *big* question was:

- *What is the fate of the souls of people who die before they are born; before they reach the age of accountability, or who never develop sufficient mental faculties to know right from wrong?*

The other questions developed as I experienced more to life, and they went something like this:

- *What is the fate of people who live and die without ever hearing the gospel?*
- *What is the fate of people who only hear a corrupted version of it?*
- *Why do good people appear to suffer for no apparent reason, and why do evil people appear to escape the logical or natural consequences of their sins?*
- *Why is the biblical account of creation so vastly different from the scientific explanation for how the universe and life began; especially in terms of evolution and the timespans involved?*
- *What is the nature of the soul; does it have structure and functions like the body?*
- *Do animals have souls like people do?*
- *Can a soul be destroyed?*
- *How did Jesus transmute water into wine, and multiply the loaves and fishes?*
- *Who or what is the Holy Spirit?*

- *What are demons and where do they come from?*
- *Why do we pray?*
- *Where is hell and what are the criteria for being sent there?*
- *Is there a true Church?*
- *Why do not modern Christians demonstrate the same miraculous powers that are recorded of the prophets, seers, and apostles in the Scriptures?*
- *Is there such a thing as reincarnation?*

And so on. Over the years, I revised and added to my list, as my understanding and knowledge grew through study and prayer. Some questions I answered to my own satisfaction, and these were dropped from the list. However, others still nagged me. From those, many doubts arose and challenged my faith. I felt I could not fully rest or feel secure in my faith until they had been answered.

On occasions when I had the privilege to meet great teachers and preachers in the faith, I would pose one or more of my favorite questions to see how they would answer. More often than not, their answers did not satisfy me. It finally occurred to me that I would have to answer them myself.

I seriously studied to understand and apply the faith, as well as I could. First, I read through the Bible, savoring the clear, precise language of the New American Standard translation. Later, I discovered Dr. Jay P. Green's *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible*,<sup>3</sup> which brought me to even deeper insights. From C. S. Lewis' writings, I diversified to a whole host of other Christian authors, including Dr. John G. Lake, Smith Wigglesworth, Ivan Panin, Reverend E. W. Bullinger D. D., and similar authors.

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3 Green Sr., Jay P. *A Literal Translation of the Holy Bible*. Sovereign Grace Publishers, 2000.

I often spent my time reading these, to the detriment of my technical studies. While at Juniata College, I used the opportunity to spend time in the library of the Stone Church of the Brethren on-campus; browsing, borrowing, and studying. Later, I transferred to the Georgia Institute of Technology as part of a dual-degree program. There, I joined the Baptist Student Union (BSU). The BSU at Georgia Tech had an excellent facility with a small, but well-stocked library.

During my three years of undergraduate studies there, I spent a large fraction of my time studying in that cozy room, surrounded by spiritual subjects. When the tedium of calculus, thermodynamics, fluid mechanics, or the like became too great, I would pluck a book from the shelves there and refresh my spirit.

At the BSU, I met Christians who had been raised by Christian parents and who had attended church all their lives. As a recent convert, the depth and breadth of their knowledge and faith humbled and challenged me. Occasionally, informal contests of Bible knowledge were held, and I was matched against some sharp contenders. This was good practice for me. As I studied and exercised my knowledge, my “question” list grew and developed too. The list was not always on my mind, but from time to time I would update it as new ideas came to me.

After graduation, I moved briefly into the working world as a process engineer. Work and social life kept me quite busy. My spiritual life devolved into weekly church services and daily prayer and Bible studies. I tried attending some local fellowships and Bible studies to further my Christian education, but they were chiefly for new believers and working class Christians. These were too basic to advance what I had already learned so far. Consequently, I missed the stimulating academic life.

The vibrant ferment of academia gradually settled into a routine around work, home, and church, where there was only incremental progress. Little change occurred in my list until later on in my mar-

ried life. The one *very* important exception to this was a small house church near my hometown of Princeton, New Jersey, called the Plainsboro Gospel Fellowship (PGF). It met in the home of Stanton and Margaret Clark, in Plainsboro, New Jersey. It was recommended to me by someone I met at the coffee house; held at that time, in the basement of the Nassau Christian Center in Princeton, New Jersey.

I was looking for a New Testament-style church that I felt would suit me. At first, I liked PGF with its charismatic, informal, family-style atmosphere and the deeply spiritual, loving and caring attitude of the congregants. But as the church grew in numbers, the leadership began planning on building a regular church building.

From that point, it seemed to me that the fresh spirit seemed to decline. In the interim, I met many real “Jesus People,” whom I really liked and admired. One of these would give me the key I needed to escape the very bonds of death!

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## Chapter 3 – My Spiritual Body

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*“For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle is taken down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in Heaven. For also in this we groan, greatly desiring to be clothed with our dwelling place out of Heaven, if indeed in being clothed, we shall not be found naked.*

*For indeed, being in the tabernacle, we groan, having been weighted down, inasmuch as we do not wish to be unclothed, but to be clothed, so that the mortal may be swallowed up by the life. And the One having worked in us for this same thing is God, who also is giving us the earnest of the Spirit.*

*Then always being fully assured, and knowing that being at home in the body we are away from home from the Lord (for we walk by faith, not by sight), even we are fully assured, and think it good rather to go away from home out of the body, and to come home to the Lord. Because of this, we also are striving to be pleasing to Him, whether being at home, or being away from home” (2 Corinthians 5:1-9).*

For a moment, the sight of my prone body laid out on the living room floor left me sad and fearful; wondering what the full implication was of being in the afterlife. Then I took stock of the situation. It was not as bad as might have been expected. My personality was still intact, and had survived the death of my body. I was still me and self-aware.

A quick check confirmed I still retained all the memories of my life experience. In fact, although ordinarily my memory is slow and fallible, my memory in that state was remarkably complete: perfectly organized and accurate, with total recall of every detail and with very rapid processing and analytical capabilities. In fact, I felt alive

and healthier than I had ever felt before. All pain and discomfort was gone; not just from my injuries, but also chronic back pain from scoliosis that I had from birth.

Although I could remember easily and clearly, every detail of my earthly life, I had no memory of any existence prior to my birth. Despite having no memory of a preexistence in the spirit; being a disembodied spirit seemed totally normal and natural to me. I had a vague sense that I had been in this spiritual state before, for my reactions to this state felt as if they were habitual and well-developed.

There was no period of adjustment, such as an infant goes through when it matures from a helpless state at birth, through childhood. The only other bodily sensations I missed were hunger, thirst, and the need to breathe. I felt no need to inhale and there was no desire to eat or drink; nor did I feel any movement of air against me, whether I stood still or moved. I did not think to check to see if I was clothed or not.

I tested out my new senses; trying vision first. I found I had the ability to focus instantly on objects near and far with total clarity; even to the blades of grass in my neighbor's lawn across the street, or microscopic particles of dust on the wires of the window screen before me. I could not test it at a further distance though, because houses and trees blocked my vision beyond a few hundred yards and I could not see through them.

My field of vision appeared to be wider than when in the physical body, although it had a definite area of focus surrounded by a less-defined periphery. I could not see behind myself. I also felt an awareness of things around me that was not sight, but more akin to radar or sonar that allowed me to "feel" the proximity of the floors, ceiling, walls, and furniture that was about me on all sides.

I regret that I did not look in a mirror to see if I could see myself, but in the drama of the moment, that did not occur to me. My sense

of sight did not depend on natural or artificial illumination, but everything was clearly visible without shades or shadows. Though the colors and hues were somewhat different from what I regarded as normal, everything was recognizable. (Colors, as I saw them in the spirit, were generally lighter in shade and more intense.)

When listening, I could hear small animals and insects moving about inside and outside of the house. I could distinctly hear traffic on the main road, over five blocks away. Normally, this would have required sophisticated listening devices to detect. This sense of hearing was very directional and I could pinpoint the locations of the sound sources quite accurately.

My sense of smell was also quite keen. I had lost most of my natural sense of smell from a severe case of influenza in 1980. Yet, in my spiritual state, everything about me had a distinct and pleasant odor that I could easily identify. Even ordinary, inert things like paper, fabric, and wood were easily recognizable. Living things like plants, people, and pets had an especially nice fragrance.

I could feel that I had two arms and two legs, and used them normally as I had those in my physical body. When I held my hand in my field of vision, I did not see a hand as clearly as I did the physical objects around me. It was more like a faint wisp of steam that maintained its shape. I do not clearly recall any distinct sense of touch. This is natural, since I could not significantly interact with material objects.

As I passed through doors, I felt a mild sensation. The nearest analogy I can compare it to is that it felt as if I was pushing through a curtain of falling dust. I have a vague recollection that I felt a very light pressure against the soles my feet on the floor, but it was on the order of a few ounces, rather than the hundreds of pounds I normally exerted.

I did not observe what sort of facial features I had or whether or not

I had genitals, for it did not occur to me to check, and I feel that was a grave oversight. Had I thought of it, I also would have looked in a mirror and experimented with trying to forcefully impact liquids such as water; or light objects such as feathers or dust.

Next, I began to go about the house, testing my ability at locomotion. It was not exactly walking; rather, I willed myself to move in a direction with a certain velocity and that's what happened. It seemed perfectly natural and effortless, as if I had always done this at some previous time.

I suppose I could have moved up and flown or dived beneath the floor as easily as I moved in a horizontal plane. However, my mind was still conditioned to move in one plane. It did not even occur to me to try either of those stunts. But once I had my bearings, I decided to try to wake my family and get help; for I knew I had about five minutes before brain death set in. My daughter Alexandra's room was the nearest to the living room, so I went there first.



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## Chapter 4 – Early Encounters With Death

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*“And you, child, will be called Prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give a knowledge of salvation to His people by remission of their sins, through the tender heart of mercy of our God, in which the Dayspring from on high will visit us, to appear to those sitting in darkness and in shadow of death, to direct our feet into the way of peace” (Luke 1:76-79; [See also Malachi 3:1; Isaiah 9:2]).*

That fateful night in 1995 when I actually died was not my first close encounter with death. In fact, my life seemed to be overshadowed by death; regularly punctuated with near misses.

My mother told me the story of the first such event, which occurred when I was a mere two months of age. In late 1961, we were living in an apartment in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where my parents were finishing their graduate studies.

Although I appeared otherwise healthy and was growing normally, I started vomiting up my food at every feeding. Concerned, my mother contacted our pediatrician, the renowned Dr. Barry Brazelton.<sup>4</sup> Vomiting in infants is not uncommon, so Dr. Brazelton advised waiting to see how things developed.

By that weekend, the vomiting grew worse. In fact, it became more and more frequent and violent. Very concerned, my mother telephoned the on-call doctor at Boston Children’s Hospital. From my mother’s explanation, the on-call doctor realized that the vomiting was what is known as “projectile vomiting.”

She came to our apartment and confirmed this and diagnosed *pylorus stenosis*, a failure of the sphincter muscles in the duodenum of the stomach to develop normally. This prevented food from passing

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<sup>4</sup> Dr. Brazelton was a popular pediatrician, author, and developer of the Neonatal Behavioral Assessment Scale (NBAS).

from the stomach to the upper intestine. So, although I was being fed regularly, I could not digest my food and was slowly dehydrating and starving.

In earlier years, there was no treatment, and children with this condition usually lived or died based on whether or not their bodies could correct the condition before succumbing to starvation. It is an inherited trait that strikes alternate generations, and my paternal grandmother had barely survived it.

In 1961, pioneering surgery to correct this had been developed in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where we lived. Surgery was performed at the Children's Hospital, and I recovered. However, it left a great scar on my tiny belly that migrated over the years to my right side.

When I was about three years of age, our family moved from New England to New Jersey. My father had earned his Ph.D. from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in optical physics, and landed a research position with Bell Laboratories in Murray Hill.

Occasionally in the summer, we would escape the heat of the Jersey summer by going to the shoreline. On one such outing when I was about four years of age, I was allowed to wander the beach by myself, to pick up shells and play in the surf. While beachcombing, I saw how the other children enjoyed swimming in the surf and decided to try it too. I wandered into the deeper water, enjoying the movement of the water and the cool firmness of the sand between my toes.

Suddenly, a wave knocked me over and pressed me flat against the sand under the water. A strong undertow then pulled me away from the shore. I was too weak to rise up in the light green waters, and had not yet learned how to swim well. Instinctively, I began crawling upwards along the sandy bottom as the dense brine rushed past me. I could see the sunlight shining through the water ahead of me and knew there would be shallower water where I might be able to

rise and breathe again.

I held my breath and kept crawling for what seemed like a long time. Soon, my lungs were burning for air and I was feeling weaker. When it seemed I could not hold out any longer, the level of water suddenly dropped around me as a wave receded.

With the pressure of the rushing water over me relieved, I was able to rise up on my knees and get my head above water. It felt wonderful to breathe again. Then the water began to rise around me as another wave rolled in. Fearful of being trapped underwater, I forced my tired and weary limbs to scramble towards the shore to safety.

When I was clear of the deeper water, I lay in the shallow surf for quite a while, recovering my strength. As I lay there, I looked around at the adults and children playing nearby in the sand and water. No one seemed to notice me lying there and none showed any concern for me. I felt that was terribly wrong. I had nearly died a frightful death from drowning, and it seemed no one noticed or cared.

When my strength returned, I rose and walked back to the spot where my family had laid out their beach blankets. The summer sun felt warm on my cold body and I lay down on a blanket to sleep. It felt really good to be alive! When I told them what had happened, only my mother really believed me and she seemed more cross than concerned. It was my first encounter with disbelief, but far from the last.

The next encounter with death was even more harrowing.

My father's advances in his career allowed us to relocate from our apartment in Plainfield, New Jersey to nearby Mountainside, where we moved into our first real house. There, I had my own bedroom and a yard to play in. It was a beautiful house. I especially liked the double French doors that opened outward onto the back yard, providing a view of the hillside garden.

This was a time of major changes, for soon after our move to the house at 1443 Deer Path, I started public school for the first time. I was also introduced to organized religion through the local Presbyterian Church. And I was inducted into the complex and often chaotic brotherhood of small boys.

My parents had left the Christian Science Church after my paternal grandfather — also a member of that cult — had died of untreated diabetes. Some adherents of Christian Science like my grandfather, refuse to acknowledge the reality of illness, and avoided necessary treatment for it. The death of my grandfather, combined with other issues, turned my parents and especially my father, away from religion in general. However, my parents did briefly try the Community Presbyterian Church down the street.

Although my parents' attendance was not regular, we did become good friends with the pastor, Reverend Elmer Talcott and his family. I liked to play with their children and was friends with their sons Malcolm and Scott. They lived on the same side of the street; just two houses southwest on Deer Path; between us and the church.

Between our house and the Talcott house lived the O'Konski family. My mother became friends with our neighbor, Irene O'Konski, and it was she who saved my life at that time. Across the street from us lived another family who had children my age; the Shields.

One late summer day in 1968, when I was in the second grade, we came home to a locked house. My mother could not find her house key, so she left me and my siblings in the back yard; while she went to get the spare key she had left with Irene. Being good friends and having no apparent reason to hurry, they chatted amicably on her front porch.

Meanwhile, some of the neighborhood boys including Chris Shields, David O'Konski, and some others gathered in our back yard and we began talking. Teasing me was one of their favorite

pastimes and they were quick to make fun of our predicament.

My mother seemed to be taking an inordinate amount of time retrieving the house key, and in the absence of adult supervision, the teasing rapidly escalated. Then I remembered how the French doors did not latch well, and how even when locked, they could be pushed open from inside, with a firm shove. So, I thought I would do my mother a kindness and show my tormentors that I could solve the problem myself.

Leading the group of boys onto the back porch, I confidently announced that I would open the doors with a mighty rush against them. Then, with my audience watching, I ran with outstretched arms full force at the doors. However, I had miscalculated. The doors only opened outwards, and no force I could muster at that tender age would cause them to open inwards.

Instead, when my hand hit the glass pane of one of the many windows, it shattered, and my arm went through the jagged opening in the glass. In a panic, I hastily pulled my arm out again. In two swift motions, my right arm was thoroughly shredded. The skin had been flayed off of my upper arm and I could see cream-colored bones and purple muscles laid bare in the sunlight. Arterial blood gushed out in spurts from there, and a long gash in my wrist quickly turned the whole arm bright red.

Perhaps due to the shock, I felt little pain, but terror gripped me. Terrified surprise paralyzed the other boys into inaction. My first thought was to run to the Talcott home for help. The pastor's wife, Brucie Talcott, was nearly always home and welcomed us children whenever we visited. So, I ran straight towards their house, intending to cross as I normally did, through the O'Konski family's backyard, and head for the Talcott's back door.

However, as I passed through the gate between our yards, a strong impulse seemed to hit me to run to my right and around the front

of the O’Konski house. (David O’Konski later told me he felt an angelic presence at that moment.)

This made no sense at the time, since it was a longer way to go and I nearly always cut through the O’Konski’s back yard to reach the Talcott’s back door, rather than the front. To go to the Talcott’s front yard required a relatively longer detour around the fences and hedges in the respective front yards. However, I followed that impulse. As I came around the front of the O’Konski house, I saw my mother and Irene standing on the front porch.

Seeing her child running, screaming, and covered in fresh blood must have alarmed my mother, but she kept her presence of mind and stopped me to keep me from running further. Mrs. O’Konski dashed inside and grabbed a handful of clean cloth diapers. She used these as a compress to stop the bleeding. Then, while my mother held the diapers on my injured arm, Irene called for the police and an ambulance.

A police officer soon arrived and administered more conventional first aid. After the ambulance arrived, I was whisked away to the hospital: lights blazing and sirens screaming. There, my wounds were closed and I was able to recover. I recall the emergency medical technician in the ambulance who tried to calm and distract me by explaining the use of the siren and lights. His calm, technical explanation engaged my attention, and this professional conduct positively impressed me.

In an odd twist of fate, I was placed in a ward with two brothers who had given each other the very same injuries I had obtained that same day. I wondered at the coincidence and suspected a connection. It is certain that the detour around the front of the O’Konski house saved my life, for the Talcott family had left on vacation earlier and no one was at home. Had I gone there, it is likely I would have quickly bled to death waiting vainly for them to answer the back door, because no one would have known where I’d run off to.

At that point in my life, I already believed in God and felt I had a purpose for being alive. However, my concept of spiritual matters was quite limited. A frightening experience one morning before the accident with the French door opened my understanding to the existence of a spiritual realm.

While dressing for school, I opened my bedroom closet door and actually saw a demon standing in the closet! When I demanded to know what it was and why it was in my closet, the demon only glared at me menacingly before disappearing without replying. It was a hideously ugly, dwarf-like creature with mottled skin and malformed facial features.

Sensations I recall from when I saw this demon and before I charged the door suggest to me that something demonic had urged me on to my foolish behavior, yet something angelic had guided me around the O’Konski’s house to safety. However, these concepts were very vague in my mind at the time, so I did not ponder them very deeply.

There were numerous other such situations as I grew older: falls, fires, explosions, electrocutions, poisoning, exposure to radiation; automobile, motorcycle and bicycle accidents, attacks by gangs and animals, abductions, armed robbery, and the like. Along the way, I accumulated a variety of scars, fractured bones, and emotional trauma. By the time I was nine, I frankly did not expect to live to be eleven! By my twenties, such events seemed so commonplace that they had become almost routine. “Oh no! Not again!” was my typical reaction.

For example, I was the victim of an attempted armed robbery in 1984, and it is perhaps one of the more interesting stories. It was early in 1984 and I had returned to my undergraduate studies at Georgia Tech for the winter quarter, but classes had not yet started.

Heavy snow had fallen the night before. That morning, I bought my text books and groceries for the term; therefore I had the after-

noon free. Having grown up in the north, I was used to snowy conditions, and was well-prepared with jumper cables, anti-freeze, and snow tires. However, many of the locals were not so well-prepared. So, I decided to be a good neighbor and drove around the area helping to jumpstart stalled cars and free other motorists from the snow.

In the afternoon, I stopped at a gas station near campus to refuel, when a young black man in a fatigue jacket came up to me and asked if I had cables and could jumpstart his car. I had been doing that for much of the day and thought nothing of the request. I agreed to do so and had him wait while I paid the attendant for the gasoline.

The young man told me his car was over in a nearby low-income housing development, Techwood Homes. So, I took him as a passenger and we drove across the overpass to Techwood. He seemed uneasy and his directions and description of his car were vague. So, I began to wonder what was really going on. My concerns were realized when he directed me behind an apartment building and then pulled out a small, nickel-plated revolver.

“Now, do not get nervous man,” he said, “this is a stickup.”

At first I was shocked, then afraid, then angry; all in a matter of seconds. I had only been trying to help the man and he had used the occasion to try to rob me at gunpoint.

“I just want your car,” he explained.

“‘Just’ my only means of transportation,” I thought, along with my groceries for the month, my text books, and all my tools in the trunk of the car. I had just spent most of my savings and realized I could not get through the quarter if he took off with all these things. I also remembered that I was a Christian and not afraid of death and that stealing was a sin, so I replied, “Mister, I’m a Christian and not afraid to die. And stealing is a sin. I can’t let you do that.”



He was clearly surprised at this unexpected response. While he hesitated, I began to back the car towards the street where there were many people; potential witnesses that could discourage him. Then he reached over and turned off the ignition, but left the keys in the steering column.

My anger mounted and I restarted the car; astonished and thankful that he had not taken the keys and that the finicky starter motor actually worked on the first try. “Do not touch my keys!” I retorted sharply, as I resumed course to the street. This was obviously not going like the robber had expected, and he froze for a moment to rethink his plan while I backed out of the parking lot into the driveway. Then he tried to step on the brake pedal but I kicked away his leg and shouted, “Keep your foot away from my brake pedal!”

I was now so angry that I did not even think about the gun at my side. I floored the accelerator and tried to speed backwards down the driveway. However, I cut the corner too tightly and smashed into the apartment building; crumpling the rear fender of the car. Immediately after impact, the robber opened the passenger side door and fled. The last I saw of him, he was running away into the apartment complex.

When I reported the crime to the campus police, the desk sergeant at Georgia Tech shook his head slowly and told me I was lucky to be alive. As I pondered those words, fear finally set in. I began trembling at the thought of what I had just been through.

Perhaps the robber lacked the nerve to shoot, the gun might not have been loaded, or it even could have been a fake. I did not know. Still, I was grateful to God to be alive and also thankful to still have a car and all that went with it. I suppose that if the robber had wanted my car, he was planning something more involved that I hope never materialized.



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## Chapter 5 – Visiting My Children

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*“See My hands and My feet, that I am He? Feel Me and see, because a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see Me having” (Luke 24:39).*



*I visited my daughter and tried to wake her.*

Just standing in my living room looking at my dead body did not hold my attention for very long. After a moment to think, the first priority that came to mind was to check on my family.

First, I went to my daughter's bedroom to check on her and try to wake her. The door was closed. I found that my hand could not grip the doorknob, but passed through it, so I moved directly through the

door and stood by her bed. I noticed that my vision was temporarily obscured but not completely occluded as I had moved through the door.

My intention was to wake her and tell her what had happened and perhaps get help. I felt it important to assure her that I was okay and that I was going to watch over her. However, I could not make any sound or touch her in a way that would wake her. So, I just looked at the sleeping child and felt sorrow that I would not be able to care for her.

Alexandra was only three at that time. Her little face looked angelic and peaceful in sleep; framed by her long golden locks. At that moment, I realized my children would be without a father to raise them and I became concerned and agitated.

Next, I went through the closets and the wall between, into my son's bedroom and I watched him sleep. I could not wake him either, so I just stood there and wondered what his fate would be when I was gone. This made me sad as I looked at his peaceful face half-buried in the pillow; blond hair tousled in sleep.

I had been so busy with my career and fixing up our recently purchased home that I had neglected many opportunities to spend time with Christopher. With mixed joy and sadness, I thought about the times we had enjoyed together and the realization that there would be no more of them.

I could have just walked in a straight line through the walls from room to room, but force of habit made me go back into the hallway again. From there, I decided to return to the living room. My intention was to examine my body more closely, to see if there might be a way to reenter and reanimate it.

As an engineer by profession, I regarded all problems as something to be resolved. Being dead was certainly a problem, but there was

no point in immediately giving up. My plan was to examine the situation, see what resources I had to work with, and go from there. With my mind newly freed of corporal encumbrances and working at a level far above the norm, I felt it was worth a try. I reasoned that there might be some capabilities in the spirit that were yet undiscovered; and fixing “the problem” became my highest priority.

Back in the living room, I stood pondering at the feet of my body for a short while. Suddenly, I began to sense the presence of something evil. It was like the malevolent presence that had troubled me since early childhood. It was akin to that moment of suspense created in a horror movie, when nothing is overtly seen but there’s an atmosphere of expectancy that something really frightening is about to happen.

If I had been in my body, the hair on the back of my neck would have been rising up to full attention! Emanations of passionate hatred were unmistakable. I stepped back from the body, not certain what was going to happen next.



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## Chapter 6 – My First Experiences With Religion

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*“There is a way that seems right to a man, but the end of it is the ways of death” (Proverbs 14:12,16:25).*

As mentioned previously, my first encounter with organized religion came through the Community Presbyterian Church in Mountainside, New Jersey. My best friend at the time was Scott Talcott, the son of the church’s minister. We were neighbors of about the same age. I regarded him as my closest friend and sought to play with him whenever I could. However, he often disappeared for much of the day, especially on the Lord’s Day.

When I asked him about this, Scott explained that he had to go to church-related functions rather than play. Eager to be with my friend, I proposed that I would go with him, so it was arranged. At that age, I really did not understand what it was all about, and found the structured lessons and rites very tedious. It was not nearly as fun as playing out in the woods or on the church playground.

I was also disappointed that I could not spend time with Scott, since we were all made to sit quietly at desks or on benches while adults talked to us. Scott and the others seemed to understand what was going on, but it was all over my head. My one positive memory of those classes was that they gave us grape juice to drink and crackers to eat. I thought these were tasty, but the significance escaped me at the time.

My interest in church peaked and was abruptly cut off when I followed Scott’s example and joined the children’s choir. It was rather fun at the beginning. We gathered in a large room at the church and some kind ladies taught us how to sing. I had listened to music before, but had never formally tried to make it myself until then, so naturally I was not very good at singing. The best moment came

when we had our picture taken as a choir and it was published in the local paper.

Then the bad news came. The children's choir was ready to perform and we were all going to wear choir robes. The robes for the children's choir were short, white, puffy dresses, with large red ribbons about the neck. My first impression of them was how "girly" these anachronisms looked, and my opinion rapidly declined from there. My parents, especially my mother, tried to comfort and reassure me that this was just fine. She emphasized that all the other children would be wearing the same outfit. I reluctantly went along until the day of our debut came about.

The children's choir gathered in the practice room to don our robes and make final adjustments. Then we were marched single-file to the sanctuary. I was near the rear. As we emerged into the sanctuary, I looked from side to side at all the staid, well-dressed adults seated in the pews, awaiting our performance.

I was unsure of my ability to sing, and terrified that all these neighbors and social elites would see me dressed like a giant piece of beribboned popcorn. I only made it a short distance into the sanctuary before shame and humiliation overcame me. I turned and fled crying, back to the narthex.<sup>5</sup>

After that experience, I flatly refused to go to any more church functions with Scott; and it seemed all were relieved to be done with me, this stubborn, awkward child. That was my last choir performance for over forty years, and the end of my interest in organized religion for nearly a decade.

My parents also lost interest in the church as their relationship deteriorated. In 1969, they divorced and my mother moved with my siblings and me to Trenton, New Jersey. There, she married an English professor, Dr. Jonathan Thomas, and we moved into his home

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<sup>5</sup> An area between the nave and the main entry.



on Carlton Avenue.

“Jack,” as he asked to be called, became my stepfather and something of a mentor. Unlike my father, who was preoccupied with his research, Jack took an active role in parenting. Dr. Thomas had already raised a son and daughter from a previous marriage, and therefore had some experience in parenting. As a college-level English professor, he was also well-educated in the Bible, but chiefly as literature. He did not regard the Christian faith with any serious or practical interest, and therefore did not apply it to parenting.

He did give me many scholarly lectures on morality, and proper, just behavior, but seldom if ever invoked spiritual values. There were several copies of the Bible in his personal library, and I began reading it there for the first time, along with many other excellent books.

My mother and Jack did sporadically attend the Unitarian churches in Ewing, and later Princeton, New Jersey for awhile. The services did little for me though, being on par with book reviews and mild-tempered social commentary. However, this church did periodically have what were termed “extended family weekends,” where a number of families would spend the weekend overnight in the sprawling facilities. These were quite fun for us children, who happily played in and around the church buildings.

A charismatic boy named Rick Smith dominated the children’s social scene. He and I had some sharp differences, so eventually I kept apart from them and enjoyed my own company. That led me to the church library. It was the first time I had seen so many books on religion. Bibles were relatively scarce there, but there were many commentaries and topical books.

An adolescent at the time, I read the ones about sex education first. After exhausting this topic, I began reading other titles. Although most of them were far beyond my ability to properly comprehend

at the time, it did create an awareness in me that there was a whole body of literature on spiritual subjects. I was becoming cognizant that there was more to believing in God than simply acknowledging that He existed and that life had purpose, meaning, and goals. For the first time, it occurred to me that God had expectations of people.

The adults also enjoyed the extended family meetings, perhaps too well. Jack became interested in Rick Smith's mother Beverly, and my own mother took a liking to Rick's dad, Richard. This naturally caused some strains in the respective marriages, not to mention between the families.

My mother and Jack did try a variety of things to address the issues troubling their marriage. On one weekend, our family and the Smiths went to a weekend-long Gestalt therapy session in Mays Landing, New Jersey. Gestalt therapy is a humanistic approach to satisfying immediate perceived needs, without addressing the root causes of personal issues. The shortcomings of this "feel-good" approach should be obvious.

The counselors there attempted to heal marital problems by encouraging intimacy through therapy, that included people baring both their hearts and bodies during the sessions — children included! Being very modest, I declined to disrobe as others in the group did, but the sights and sounds from that weekend deeply disturbed me. From that point on, a new element of sexual lust was added to the evil thoughts that already troubled me. If I had not been demonized up to that point, it is certain that I was after that!

Since it ignores sin, even the radical, experimental Gestalt therapy offered no real cure. Rather, it ameliorates the symptoms and only makes the patient feel better, while in fact they are still getting worse. Therefore, in the course of things, Jack and my mother divorced, as did the Smiths. Jack eventually married Beverly, although my mother only remained friends with Richard.

All of this was quite distressing and embarrassing to me. I resolved that when I married, I would do all I could to avoid divorce. Thankfully, we left the Unitarian Church and the Gestalt therapists behind when we moved from Trenton to be close to Washington's Crossing Park in New Jersey.

Our new home in Titusville overlooked the Delaware River and occupied a pleasant and attractive lot with large trees and grassy lawns. At the time, the Belvidere-Delaware Railroad operated along the Delaware-Raritan Canal, between our property and the river. In between the canal and the river, was a narrow strip of forest which became one of my favorite places to wander and explore. It would have been an ideal place to live, except for two things: the local gang of boys, and a spirit that haunted our house — particularly the attic. Moreover, without a regular father figure in my life, my interests tended to drift.

The gang of boys was led by two brothers: Steve and Bobby Service. They had long picked on another boy, Jon Tyson, before my arrival. Since I was a new kid, both of us were outsiders to the local social order. Thus, it was natural that Jon and I soon became friends. This led to the other boys picking on both of us. I tended to keep to my own yard or the forest, once that kind of treatment commenced.

We moved there in 1974. Around 1977, weird things began to happen. Across the street from our house was a large apartment building with the Tally Ho Bar (as it was called then) on the lowest level. Drunks would often exit the bar with loud shouting and profane comments late at night. They also disturbed my rest by noisily starting and restarting their vehicles and then pulling out and driving off with excessive gunning of the engine, squealing tires, and sometimes, honking horns.

By comparison, the passing freight trains across River Road were inconsequential. But what disturbed me most was that sometimes I could hear their thoughts in my mind as I lay awake in bed late at

night. The confused, unrestrained mind of a drunk was shocking to a teen raised in a peaceful home where drunkenness and profanity were otherwise unknown.

Another strange thing began to happen at night. I would hear footsteps clearly ascending and descending the attic stairs. This went on night after night. Frightened but curious, I would turn on the lights and investigate. I never saw anyone in the hall, on the stairs, or in the attic. When I checked on my siblings and my mother, all were fast asleep. None of them claimed to hear the footsteps when I asked them. Shortly before we moved from there in 1979, the footsteps stopped.

Occasionally, I would also have very vivid, detailed dreams of mundane events. Within a day or so of the dream, the events portrayed in the dream would actually happen. One of the most vivid and disturbing dreams or visions ended in a scene where I was looking down into some dead, brown leaves, while drops of blood fell from the right side of my vision; spattering onto the leaves. Although I knew I had dreamed more, I could only recall the last part of the dream. It seemed like a warning, but without more context, I was unable to guess what I was being warned against.

Later that day, I was walking in the woods above our neighborhood. It was a part of the woods I had never been in before. Following a narrow deer trail, I came to a very tall Japanese larch tree. High up near the top, I spied a branch that would make an ideal quarter staff. (I wanted one because my friend Jon and I were interested in things medieval, and we planned to learn how to spar like the knights of old.) However, the lower limbs of the tree were all dead. I knew from years of tree climbing, that a tree climber should never trust their weight on a dead tree limb, but I wanted that particular branch very badly.

After some thought, I decided that if I stayed close to the trunk of the tree and kept a firm grip on a branch at all times, I would be

okay. Even to me, this was obviously a bad idea. Although my conscience sounded an alarm, I climbed up about twenty to twenty-five feet, to where I was nearly in reach of the branch I wanted. (Later, I would learn where these bad ideas really originated.)

As I took hold of the next branch, it snapped off easily in my right hand. Unconcerned, I dropped it and reached for another. Then, the branch in my left hand broke off. Only mildly concerned, I reached with both hands for other branches. In a moment, both branches under my feet snapped and I suddenly became *very* concerned! It seemed that I hung in the air for a brief instant — long enough to realize my predicament and to compose a short prayer.

“God, if You get me out of this alive,” I promised, “I won’t do this again!”

I must have hit my head on something as I plummeted earthward; for I do not recall any more of the descent. I awoke from unconsciousness facedown in the leaf meal. As I pushed myself up, I could see the very same pattern of leaves before me that I had dreamed about earlier.

Immediately, blood began dripping from my lacerated right ear; spattering onto the leaves. It was eerie to see in my waking state, what I had dreamed that very morning. This was not the first time something like this happened, nor would it be the last. Yet, the extreme clarity of the dream and the exact match of the view — down to the veins in the leaves — made it unusually memorable and precluded mere *déjà vu*. Later, I realized the significance of this experience: our lives are very carefully scripted by God down to minute details and He sends us warnings!

I was otherwise unhurt and stood up to assess the damage. Looking upwards, I saw that my falling body had broken off all the branches on one side of the tree; leaving jagged, knife-like protrusions sticking out from the trunk. The broken branches formed a large pile

that now leaned up against the trunk. Their splintered ends pointed skyward like spears. I had landed just to the side of the pile, and by inches, had just missed being impaled. The thought made me shudder. Once more, I was very grateful to be alive.

That happened on a weekend, and my mother worked at that time as an English teacher, so when I arrived home, I found my mother in her usual occupation of grading the papers of the students she taught. She turned to look at me when I announced I had something that needed her attention. My dear mother expressed initial shock at seeing me standing there: clothes torn and dirty, broadly grinning, with blood caked all over the right side of my head and neck. Then her composure returned and she requested an explanation.

I told her the story as we drove to the doctor's office, but she was not impressed with my daring adventure. The doctor put a few stitches in my ear and sent me home with some good advice about staying out of trees with dead branches. I mostly heeded him and kept my promise to God.

The most profound experiences for me while we lived there were the out of body experiences. My interest in spiritual matters had been piqued by some of the more unusual books in the library of the Unitarian Church. I was also looking for explanations for the paranormal experiences I was having, so I ordered more books from ads I found in the back sections of some magazines we had. These were not about Christianity but about ESP, mind reading, and astral projection – occult themes.

Using techniques learned from a source on mind control, I learned to detach my spirit from my body. Mostly it was just for a few seconds, before some disturbance broke my concentration and I was sucked back into the body. However, sometimes I could float up and out and then hover about my bedroom.

In this state, I first realized that there was another dimension to

reality. For example, in the spirit, I could see that my bedroom was noticeably different in the spiritual realm than in physical reality. The differences puzzled me until I realized that not only was I leaving my body, but I was also entering a parallel world to the physical one I had previously known. There were subtle differences between them regarding the physical laws, such as the propagation of light, spatial relationships, and the flow of time. But my visits were too brief and infrequent to examine these phenomena closely. In that state, I also felt an evil presence there that frightened me; there was a sense of danger.

The experiences were not only disturbing but difficult to achieve. So, fearful of hidden dangers, troubled by the amplified feelings of evil, and discouraged by the arduous effort involved, I eventually abandoned experimenting with these things. My limited dabbling in the occult frightened and disgusted me. However, I still desired to learn more about spiritual things, but I realized I was looking for something pure, clean, and safe. I also yearned for a father.

That primed me for what I found during Christmas break in 1978. I was watching television and idly changing channels, looking for some interesting programming. After much flipping back and forth between channels, I came across a program called *Show My People*. It was broadcast from Bob Jones University (BJU) in South Carolina. There was a speaker, Dr. Bob Jones III, who was telling the television audience about Jesus Christ. I had never seen anyone on television before talk plainly about Christianity, and decided to watch for awhile. Eventually, Dr. Jones said something that I could relate to.

“Do you feel an emptiness in your heart?” he asked, with a quaint southern drawl. His question grabbed my attention, for it was true.

“That’s because you need Jesus Christ in your heart,” he explained.

This one statement made more sense to me than all the books I had

read, songs I had heard, and sermons I had listened to, up to that date. I wanted to know more, so I grabbed a pencil and paper and wrote down the telephone number Dr. Jones invited us to call. After the program, I called the number and was given an address to write to for more information.

Writing that first letter began the journey that lead me to the very gates of heaven and hell!

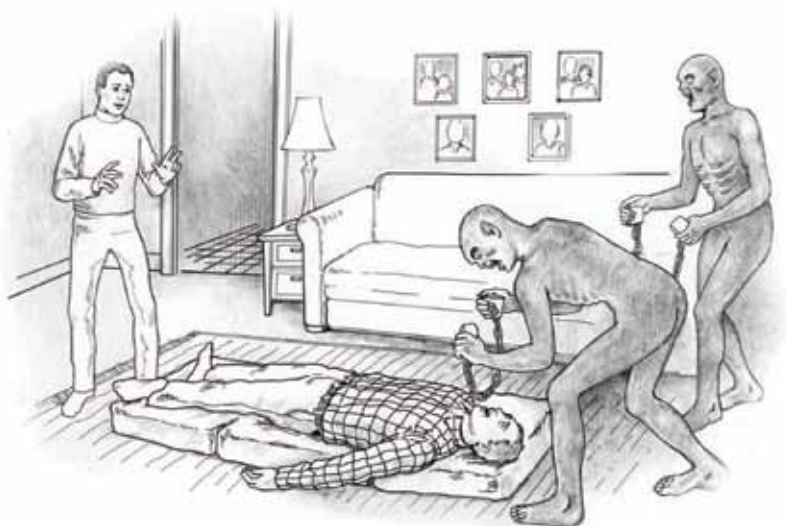


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## Chapter 7 – At the Gates of Hell

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*“Behold, they are all My souls. As the soul of the father, also the soul of the son, they are Mine. The soul that sins, it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4).*



*Two demons entered my living room with chains,  
to bind me and take me to hell for eternity!*

My body was still lying on the floor of our living room when I returned from visiting my children’s bedrooms. I stood near the feet and was wondering if there was a way to revive it, when I felt a new sensation. It was akin to the feeling when fear builds up because some unknown danger is approaching in the darkness. It was that kind of fear that makes the hair on the back of one’s neck rise up. Now, a palpable feeling of evil began to permeate the room and I felt distinct emanations of intense hatred.

Suddenly, through the southwest corner of the living room, came two dark, man-sized figures. They were shaped like tall, lean but muscular men; covered entirely in short, coarse, black hair. They had gleaming yellow slits for eyes, and curving black claws on all ten digits. Each of them carried a set of manacles and they were laughing. As they laughed, I could see into their open, red mouths, which displayed short, white fangs. As they approached, the creatures began to communicate with me.

They did not speak to me in the conventional sense, but projected their thoughts directly into my mind. It was a raucous burst of thoughts, emotions, and images. They had very wild, chaotic minds. Thoughts of hunger dominated their thinking, and that hunger was directed toward me!

It was clear to me that they did not regard me as a person; a human being with personality, awareness, emotions, feelings, and purpose, but merely as food and fuel. They intended to capture me and take me back with them to hell, for consumption and endless, brutal torture to satisfy their perverse, sadistic pleasures.

The whole exchange lasted less than the blink of an eye, but the amount of information exchanged was staggering. I had a glimpse of hell, which showed me clearly that it is a mind-blowing, horrific place of suffering, chaos, insanity, and abuse that is beyond the pale, constrained efforts of human language to describe.

Excruciating pain, hunger, exhaustion, sickness, extreme thirst, trauma, and torment dominated the images they shared. It was horror beyond human comprehension: without relief, without hope, without respite. I received a vision of senseless, lawless, chaotic, disjointed, purposeless existence at the mercy of implacable, fiercely hostile powers. I was horrified and desperate, yet to them it was home, and they seemed perfectly adapted to such a perverse environment. These were truly awful creatures — monsters!

I protested that this was not right. I was a believing, practicing Christian. I had been assured by church leaders and teachers of eternal salvation, of admittance to heaven when I died. I had publicly professed Christ as Savior, been baptized, studied the Scriptures, prayed and attended church regularly, and donated money and time. I had even been a Sunday School teacher, a church trustee, and gone on short-term mission trips! I was considered a model Christian by some, and had done all that the church had taught me — well beyond most of my peers.

The creatures laughed at this. They flooded my mind with a remarkably complete and well-organized list of all the sins I had not properly confessed and repented of during my life. From late childhood through the present, they recalled everything from a filched paperclip to an unpaid bill.

They knew of every instance of an unkind word, rude behavior, indifference to others, and cheating on exams; to absolutely every lie and each selfish act. Thankfully, they did not appear to have known my personal thoughts, but that was little consolation, for I could feel they were extremely powerful and my own strength was inadequate to resist or argue. In a moment, I would be dragged away helplessly to eternal damnation.

As they approached, the creatures went on to gloat that they had been with me all of my life and had been constantly working toward this moment. They had been trying to tempt and kill me so they could compromise my relationship with God and harvest my soul.

Images came to mind of the many times I had narrowly escaped death. They had been behind every one of those situations. Because of God's protections, they could not kill me outright, but they could manipulate mine and other people's feelings and perceptions, to cause us to make bad decisions that lead to tragedy. The incident with the furnace was only the latest. Now they were ravenously hungry and impatient to have the fruit of their labors.

I felt this was not right and I searched my mind desperately for some way to escape this fate. The creatures (I suppose they were demons, but they did not name themselves) were closing in on me. I knew there was only one last opportunity to escape them and it had to be good.

I remembered what a man had told me once at a house church meeting in Plainsboro, New Jersey. He was an unusual fellow and often talked about miracles, demons, and spiritual things outside of the normal, officially-discussed church subjects. He was charismatic in his beliefs and had given me books on the gifts of the Holy Spirit and on exorcism and such, that I dutifully read and shelved after making little tangible, practical progress on the subjects. However, one thing he had said to me came back from memory.

“If you ever meet a demon,” he had said, “rebuke it in the name of Jesus Christ.”

I do not even recall his name now, but the man literally saved my life, my eternal life. Knowing this makes me wonder now how many people since then I might have said something to about this, but did not. Immediately, I sent the thought back to the demons:

“I rebuke you in the name of Jesus Christ!”

And instantly they were gone; as if a wrecking ball had hit them dead on and sent them back to the place where they had come. Once again, I stood in my living room alone, with my body lying on the floor. I looked around and wondered what my fate would now be.

Was I rejected from both heaven and hell? Would I wander disembodied until Judgment Day perhaps, or for eternity? I did not like that thought and was just imagining that there might be other dangers and perils out there for a disembodied spirit, when the third remarkable thing happened.

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## Chapter 8 – I Realized My Need for God

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*“Therefore, I said to you that you will die in your sins. For if you do not believe that I AM, you will die in your sins”  
(John 8:24).*

After contacting him through the television program, Dr. Jones and I corresponded for several months, and he went into more detail about who Jesus is and what our relationship with God requires. As a teenager, I was profoundly impressed that a university president would show an interest in me as an individual, and take the time to write letters to me.

After he was satisfied that I understood the basics of the gospel, Dr. Jones recommended that I meet in person with a local pastor, who could respond more directly to my questions and teach me in greater detail. This seemed like a good idea, so I asked for his recommendation. Dr. Jones referred me to a graduate of BJU, the Reverend Charles B. Gross. After I contacted the pastor, he arranged to meet me at our home, with my mother’s permission.

Pastor Gross came to our house that spring. In his humble, quiet way, he explained the difference between righteousness and sin, the relationship between God and mankind, and my need for salvation from death and damnation. His patient explanation included a warning that rejecting God’s plan meant dying and going to hell for eternity and that God had promised to admit those who accepted His plan into heaven, where they would have eternal life.

I believed what he said; it made sense and I could see how this fit what I had observed in my short life to that point. I also knew I did not want to go to hell. Going to heaven was appealing but the reverend was rather vague about what heaven was like and what made it so desirable.

“What do people in heaven do?” I wondered. Eternal life naturally seemed much better than death, but I did wonder why both believers and unbelievers still had to suffer physical death. Pastor Gross explained that everyone has to die, and God separates out the saved and damned on Judgment Day.

This was not very satisfactory to me. I reasoned that if Christ already died for us, why should we still have to die if our sins were forgiven? I had a problem with this point but could get no better answer, so I set the question aside to investigate the subject more thoroughly later on. Dying in any sense bothered me greatly.

The main point I grasped was that there was a distinction in behavior between righteousness and sin. Righteousness is doing God’s will and sin is opposing God’s will. God will reward obedience with eternal life in heaven with certain rewards, and punish sins with death and the torment of hell. What was not clear was the basis on which good and bad were defined.

It seemed to me that everyone had different, arbitrary opinions, and there were obvious difficulties in consulting God directly. I hoped that Pastor Gross would clarify this, but he just referred me to the Bible. It was not discussed then, but I would have to wait until someone else explained the role of the Holy Spirit.

At that stage in my education, this merely complicated the matter, since the Scriptures were way beyond my modest adolescent ability to comprehend such things. Late in the winter of ’78-79, Pastor gave me a good start by suggesting I read Psalm 119. That helped, for it inspired me with a respect for God’s laws and led me to study them in-depth.

The most interesting point that I realized for the first time, was that there could be personal interaction between me and God — a relationship! This was profound. I had believed in God as long as I could remember, but now I understood for the first time, that I could

have interaction with Him.

What was missing from the conversation was an explanation of the principles upon which this whole system operated. That would come years later, when I learned about more complex subjects such as the fear of God, faith, and selfless love.

What primed me for this moment? I have observed similar conversations where the gospel was clearly presented and the listener flatly rejected it or indefinitely put off making a decision. This is difficult for me to understand, because the general subject seemed crystal clear to me, as Pastor Gross explained it.

Even at sixteen years of age, I could look about and see that I am an amazingly complex and wonderfully-designed being, living in a world of constant miracles and wonders. It is true that it all seems warped and twisted by evil because of the wickedness of some people and the chaos and disorder that colors our environment. For me, it was like being a savage; standing among the ruins of a great civilization and observing the magnificent works of my predecessors.

I was ignorant of what had gone on before my time, yet there was no doubt that things had been very different before — better perhaps, or even wonderful, but something had gone very wrong and changed things. The theories of a causeless, purposeless universe I had been taught in public school seemed like gibberish to me.

My memories go back to an age somewhere between two and three years of age, when my family lived in Pineview Apartments in Plainfield, New Jersey. Some of those earliest memories include an awareness of a spiritual presence about me. Sometimes it was good; more often it was evil. I disliked the evil presence and longed for the good. I also felt a sense of destiny and purpose. It is difficult to say where that came from. Neither my parents nor my teachers ever tried to instill such thoughts in me.

This might be compared to my sister's habitual neatness and passion for organization — something I lack. Asked where it comes from, she will answer, "It is just something I was given." So, it seems to be the same with me. My spiritual awareness is just something God put in me from the start; although I suspect that part of it was in answer to my maternal grandmother's prayers.

Mildred Green, my grandmother, was a devout woman who regularly prayed for her family. She and my mother were the only members of my family that encouraged me in the Christian faith. In short, it just seemed natural to me that God exists and that I could relate to Him person-to-person. It is such a fundamental part of my personality that it greatly astonishes me when other people think differently. I am so grateful for that gift.

Although it makes me different from most people and puts me in conflict with some; I gladly accept the difficulties it brings when I see the effects it has on the lives of those who lack it. The gift gives me a passion to search for truth and meaning in life; to seek out God, and to learn about spiritual things. It makes me sensitive to spiritual forces about me, and warns me when danger or diversion is near.

The sense is far from reliable or accurate and I still grope about blindly in many regards, but it is so much better than having no spiritual sense at all. I see those who lack this sense as single-mindedly pursuing transitory things which ultimately have real no value: sensual pleasure, popularity, temporal power, material wealth, control and influence over people, and such things. They miss both the call to seek greater riches and the warnings that they are putting their very souls in peril.

I can also see patterns in the world around me that are like the signature of a master artist at work. These are subtle, but deliberately left for those who seek them. These experiences make me yearn for greater levels of this gift and wish that more people shared it with me, for then they could embark on the same amazing journey that



took me into the eternal family of the believers — into the very embrace of God and into His Church! And Oh my, God has a most interesting family!



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## Chapter 9 – Face-to-Face With Christ

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*“Jesus said to him, Am I so long a time with you, and you have not known Me, Philip? The one seeing Me has seen the Father! And how do you say, Show us the Father” (John 14:9)?*

I began to feel another emotion, like the hatred I had felt earlier; but this time it was a profound sensation of love. It was even more wonderful than the hatred had been awful. A moment after I felt it, Jesus entered the living room from the southeast corner and stood facing me. There was no mistaking in whose presence I stood.

He looked just as I might have imagined Him: a Caucasian man with shoulder-length brown hair, and a short, full beard, hazel eyes, and a white robe that hung to His sandaled feet. He had a light blue cape slung over one shoulder, as is often portrayed in popular paintings I had seen in many churches. He did not speak to me, but as the demons had, He shared His thoughts with me telepathically.

First and foremost, Jesus let me know that while He was perfectly aware of my sins and flaws, He accepted me just as I was, and loved me deeply and unconditionally. My relief was tremendous, because I was expecting a severe rebuke, given the list of sins I had just been accused of by the demons. He also let me know that He was appearing to me as I expected Him to look so that I would be comfortable with our meeting, and that He could appear any way to anyone, as needed.

Words fail to describe what it was like to be in the presence of Christ. My eyes beheld a man of average height and build, dressed in simple first century garb. As the Scripture says,

*“For He comes up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He has no form nor magnificence that*

*we should see Him; nor form that we should desire Him” (Isaiah 53:2).*

*“For think this within you, which mind was also in Christ Jesus, who subsisting in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, having become in the likeness of men and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, having become obedient until death, even the death of a cross” (Philippians 2:5-8).*

What I felt was entirely different. Instantly, I knew that I was in the presence of God, which in this case, was the person of the Son: Jesus Christ, one of the three persons in the Trinity.

In that spiritual state, communication is far above what it is in the body. It is instantaneous, complete, and it covers a broad-spectrum of mediums that include sight, sound, feeling, thought, emotions, and entirely new and wonderful modes that have no earthly equivalent.

There was no question about whose presence I was in. This was not just some exalted being or a great spiritual force. Jesus *is* His credentials. I knew it was Him. I knew who He was, and it was equally clear who I was, and the vast difference between us.

I pity the backslidden Christian, the false Christian, the agnostic, the atheist, the pagan, and especially the Satanist on Judgment Day! There will be no arguing with God, and He will accept no excuses.

The unbelievers and everyone else will know exactly where they stand; and the terrible, terrible, terrible, terrible, terrible, terrible, terrible (there are not enough “terribles” in all the dictionaries in the world to express what I mean) mistake of denying Him. On Judgment Day, I expect the communication will be essentially entirely one way: from God to man, for there is no possibility of anyone

arguing with God in His presence.

He is awesome and limitless in His perfection, His holiness, His inerrancy, His fullness, His knowledge of us, and in every other attribute. The most amazing defense a person or any gathering of people could devise has absolutely no chance of enduring the scrutiny of God! He is a loving God to be sure; even merciful, but He is also mortally terrifying in His greatness, completeness, and perfection!

Oddly, the experience was not overwhelming. Jesus did not shine with brilliant light and He was not surrounded by a host of mighty angels. There was no crown or scepter to mark His status, and Jesus did not need a herald to introduce Him. He did not require any trappings of deity to communicate His status. His presence was enough to establish in my mind, who He is.

The only analogy I can make is that it was something like being in the presence of true royalty. Jesus' composure, the way He stood, the way His eyes regarded me, and the perfectly timed and controlled gestures He made all marked Him as THE AUTHORITY.

His person inspires unmitigated awe. He radiated absolute assurance. His very thoughts to me were so utterly perfect in every way, that they seemed inevitable. In comparison, my own efforts to present myself and compose my thoughts seemed hopelessly awkward and incoherent. Yet, I did not detect the least element of rejection, revulsion, or a condescending attitude in His demeanor toward me.

His total awareness of me also made me feel (in a sense) naked; even worse, utterly transparent. Nothing was hidden from Him. With less effort than a thought, He made it clear to me that He was aware of everything about me. In one way, it made me feel terribly vulnerable, but in another way, it was reassuring.

It was equally clear that Jesus was there for my benefit; not to condemn or harm me. He cared deeply for me. He is a true shepherd and

knows His flock more intimately than any man ever knew his wife or children. Jesus knew me far better than I knew myself.

I had read this in the Scriptures, but encountering it first-hand was still a revelation. If it impressed me that a university president could show a direct and personal interest in me; I was amazed that God valued me so highly that He gave me such in-depth, detailed attention!

If I felt fear and disgust when the demons revealed their knowledge of my sins, it was shame and despair I felt when I understood how thoroughly all my failures were known to God. In the absence of the standard of His holiness against which to measure myself, I had come to think of myself as a pretty fine person. In the presence of Jesus, that illusion was blown away like smoke in a strong wind.

Things I regarded as triumphs were revealed as feeble, failed attempts. Qualities I regarded as noble were exposed as exorable weaknesses. Towering deeds that led me to believe I was pleasing to God looked like slapstick, comical errors. Yet, all this was not like a scolding or a harsh criticism. It was simply the truth: quietly, plainly, and lovingly revealed. Jesus was not trying to beat me down, but show me the way up.

The first key point I had missed was that even the good things I had done were done with the wrong motives! I had done things of real benefit for others and made genuine sacrifices of my effort, time, and resources. However, all my motives were self-serving: to earn a place in heaven, to achieve some status, to deserve a reward, to please others, etc.

What I had missed was that I should have done them because I loved God; to please Him, to bring glory to Him. This was not to stroke God's ego; it has nothing to do with that. Giving glory to God is a high privilege that exalts the one giving it. Its purpose is to draw others to Him and to build relationships with God.

There are generally only three activities of eternal value:

1. What we do to improve ourselves spiritually (i.e. in character after Christ's likeness).
2. What we do for others (especially what others can't — not won't — but can't do for themselves).
3. What we do to please God (i.e. show our love for Him).

Little else really matters!

Another key point that came out of all of this was that I had tried to live on my own terms, in my own strength; depending on my own intelligence and using only my own resources. God never intended anyone to live solely that way.

Like many others, I had believed a crafty lie of the devil. That is the lie that we can do anything apart from God. This pernicious lie is a set up. The devil cannot fight God directly, nor can he fight us directly, when we are one with God. In truth, Satan is already defeated. The only way he can defeat us is by getting us to separate ourselves from God and expose ourselves. If we believe the lie that we can live and act independently from God, it makes us vulnerable to the enemy.

This is the fundamental error of pride — believing we know better, can do better, and are anything or have anything apart from God. If we do declare independence from God; by default we become the devil's property! (There is no neutral spiritual territory.)

*"I am able to do nothing from Myself; just as I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, for I do not seek My will, but the will of the One sending Me, the Father" (John 5:30).*

*"The one who is not with Me is against Me, and the one who does not gather with Me scatters" (Matthew 12:30).*

That is not to say we should not use the abilities and skills we do have. However, these are just starting points. When we do use them, these must be used for God, in service to others. This attitude makes us partners in God's work. God then becomes involved in our work and empowers our deeds with a vast array of subtle, but very efficacious powers and purposes that greatly augment the effect we have.

He works with us as a partner. In this way, our words and deeds take on a life of their own, and a process is initiated that continues to create results long after we have ceased to be actively engaged. That is why so much more can be achieved when we do things with the right motives. What we do only in our own strength and for our own purposes begins and ends with just those actions with which we are directly engaged. The difference is as great as night and day!

Besides knowing I was in the presence of God, I also knew I was in the presence of a master teacher. It reminded me of my days of undergraduate studies when I was struggling to understand physics. I would wrestle fruitlessly with a problem or concept for hours.

When I finally admitted to myself that I could not make further progress, I would go to my professor's office, Dr. Ray Pfrogner. I would explain the problem and he'd have me put it up on the chalkboard (that was before the day of white boards and digital touch screens) and set up the problem.

Dr. Pfrogner had a special way of talking his students through a problem that did not directly reveal the answer but opened the student's eyes to see it. He let me set up the problem and work through it as far as I could go. Then Dr. Pfrogner would say a few words and the intractable became obvious.

More than once, I had just laid out the problem on the board for him, when it was suddenly clear to me how to solve it. The ease with which he made it clear was embarrassing to me, for I also saw at once how simple the problem really was and how I should have



been able to solve it myself.

It was the same, only more so in the presence of Christ. He showed me that through obedience to God, anything is possible within God's will. One point I will always remember with surprise and shame was that the Church could have won the entire world for Christ in any generation, from the time of the apostles to our present age. Only laziness, selfishness, timidity, and unbelief (and mainly the latter) have held back the Church.

In my own case, I thought I had struggled mightily to achieve the modest progress I had made as a Christian. Yet in a moment, it was clear that I had not really been struggling to achieve God's will at all, but to resist it! Worse, I had tried to impose my will upon God's purposes!

We are made to obey God, and it is really the most natural thing for us! Yet, I was afraid to yield because I would have to give up sins and worthless habits, which I enjoyed more than fellowship with God. It was really awful to see these things clearly. I had been afraid that God would ask me to do something I did not want to do, could not do, or that would involve incurring embarrassment or the rejection of others.

In retrospect, I saw how foolish those thoughts were. True, there were obstacles, but for every obstacle, God provides a remedy. It was excruciatingly mortifying for me to see how simple the truth was, and how convoluted and complicated I made my life, to avoid admitting what I really knew all along. The pain and shame I felt did not come from Jesus but from within me. I realized that I had not found the answers because I really did not want to find them.

By that time, I had been a Christian for about sixteen years. I had read the Bible through several times, in several different translations. I had also listened to innumerable sermons and read the equivalent of a small library of books, by Christian authors. I knew the truth.

I knew even more than that, for everything I needed to know was in the Scriptures. After all, that's just what Jesus had to start with in His mortal life!

But like the rich young man described in chapter 19 of the gospel of Saint Matthew; I loved the familiar and comfortable more than God's way. I had cherry-picked my way through the Bible. I selected what I wanted to believe, and discarded what I did not like, or substituted something I thought made more sense than God's Word. It was easy, since those around me were doing the same thing and they appeared to be doing just fine.

That appearance thoroughly dissipated in the presence of the true man, Jesus Christ. I knew then that I was not doing fine. I knew my teachers, pastors, and fellow Christians were not doing fine either. There are no excuses before God. Jesus is the standard and He had proved in His own person, that the impossible was possible — and I could not deny it.

What I had missed or rather rejected, is the simple truth that we must seek obedient oneness with God. Three prime clues to this are in these verses:

*“And the man Moses was very meek, more than any man who was on the face of the earth” (Numbers 12:3).*

*“But the meek shall inherit the earth; yea, they shall delight themselves in abundant peace” (Psalm 37:11).*

*“Seek Jehovah, all the meek of the earth who have done His justice; seek righteousness; seek meekness. It may be you shall be hidden in the day of the anger of Jehovah” (Zephaniah 2:3).*

Meek does not mean weak. It means obedient!

Christians overcome the devil by obedience to God. An obedient Christian has the full protection, power, and provision of God behind them. However, the moment they depart from obedience to God, they are on their own – within certain limitations, and that's where Satan wants them.

A great difficulty is in knowing God's will for a given individual. Extrapolating from the Scriptures to the details of daily life is often challenging, for we are typically subject to innumerable, conflicting demands and impulses. The key here is starting in obedience and continuing progressively in it as the relationship with God grows. Obedience starts with the revelation of God's will in the Bible.

The Decalogue<sup>6</sup> is a good pattern to start with, but the four prohibitions<sup>7</sup> are especially applicable to Christians. (It is no accident that these are both repeated for emphasis!) This is followed by the revelations of the prophets and the teachings of the apostles. Yet, everyone has a different starting point; and throughout life, there are regular challenges, exercises, and tests.

To keep from failing, a person must develop a close relationship with the Holy Spirit. It is sin: personal, inherited, and associated, that interferes with that. The Holy Spirit is usually communicating to us what we need to know at any given moment, but we either do not know how to listen or we do not want to. Sin and unbelief in our lives also makes it difficult to hear Him.

This can seem like a closed loop from which escape is impossible. How does a person cleanse themselves of sin so they can receive the Holy Spirit and keep from sinning?

The particulars of everyone's case are different, but the principles are universal. Read the Bible (or listen to someone else read it). As often as a sin is identified, repent, renounce, reject, reform, for-

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<sup>6</sup> *Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 5:4-21*

<sup>7</sup> *Acts 15:19-20,21:25*

give, and then reinforce the virtue that protects against it. Most of all, *forgive*. Be like the great reformer Martin Luther, who prepared himself for his historic lifework by confessing and repenting of everything he could think of; from the greatest to even the least sin. Luther then repeated the process over and over again until repentance became habitual.

This example shows that we must passionately cleanse ourselves; not once, but regularly! And this involves the grace of God too, for the basis for obtaining any forgiveness from God is that we believe Christ paid the penalty for that sin. We repent of that sin, make such restitution for that sin as we can, and we forgive those who sinned against us. We should also forgive ourselves! It seems like a monumental task, but in reality, most of this could be done (aside from restitution) in less than a day (for the average person), if done in a focused and systematic manner.

Once sin is out, the Holy Spirit must be invited in. Then He can transform our nature so that we are not even tempted to sin. We do not even desire it. Moreover, He gives us new desires for righteousness, holiness, and perfection; and best of all, a love for God.

Here is where deliverance ministry becomes so important. Most of our ungodly desires and tendencies are rooted in having demons in or about us and that occupy the role intended for the Holy Spirit. Removing sin from our lives removes the spiritual legal basis that allows the demons to work in our lives and influence us to rebel against God.

Remove their influence, invite the Holy Spirit to fill those parts of our being the demons have vacated, and the good and proper influence of God becomes natural and easy. Leave them alone to do their diabolical work and they will work tirelessly, ceaselessly, and diligently to separate us from God and destroy us.

Another important point is the role of praise, worship, and prayer

in a Christian's life. These are our protection, our tools, and our weapons, respectively. This is a vast subject and anyone neglecting these has already surrendered to the enemy. If we do not learn to use these, the temptation is to use carnal devices which ultimately only exacerbate the problems.

Again, it takes more time to explain all this than it took me to comprehend it in the presence of Jesus. These poor words cannot truly begin to do justice to what Jesus helped me to understand. This is the merest of outlines. Yet, it is very important to achieve this because until we do, we cannot make real progress in life. It is helpful to know that Jesus passionately wants us to achieve this and is ready and willing to help those who sincerely desire it and who diligently seek to achieve it for the right reasons.

The Holy Spirit is ready and willing to help us through the details of this process. Acknowledging this before Jesus was the step that opened up my way back to life; for, just as the accusations of the demons brought on me condemnation and damnation, the judgment of Christ — with my acknowledgment of my sins and repudiation of them — brought me justification and salvation.

When I had grasped these things, Christ indicated that it was time to move on. Then Jesus told me He had something He wanted to show me.



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## Chapter 10 – I Repent and Pray for Salvation

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*“For Moses writes of the righteousness which is of the Law: ‘The man doing these things shall live by them.’ But the righteousness of faith says this: ‘Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will go up into Heaven?’ (that is, to bring down Christ); or, ‘Who will go down into the abyss?’ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead.) But what does it say? ‘The Word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart’ (that is, the Word of faith which we proclaim) Because if you confess the Lord Jesus with your mouth, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth one confesses unto salvation. For the Scripture says, ‘Everyone believing on Him will not be put to shame’” (Romans 10:5-11) [See also Leviticus 18:5; Deuteronomy 30:12-14; Isaiah 28:16]).*

Back in the spring of 1979, Pastor Gross and I sat on the couch in my living room in Titusville, and he led me in the classic “Sinner’s Prayer.” Together we had prayed something like:

*“Heavenly Father, I confess that I am a sinner and I ask for Your forgiveness. I believe Christ died for my sins and rose from the dead. I repent of my sins and ask You to forgive me. I invite You to come into my heart and life. I want to trust and follow You as my Lord and Savior, in Christ’s name. Amen.”*

Pastor Gross assured me now that I was saved from hell, and nothing could take away God’s promise of eternal salvation. I felt relieved but asked him if people would also forgive me too. I understood that most of my sins were wrongs done to others, and only indirectly against God, although there were those too. He smiled and

shook his head. No, that was another matter. I was on my own when it came to reconciling with people. This was a bit disappointing, but it helped me to realize that I needed to be more careful about how I treated others.

For several weeks after that, Pastor Gross came to our house and taught me from the Bible. When he felt I was sincere in the faith and ready for more, he arranged to take me to the weekly church services where I was reintroduced to Bible classes and sermons. It impressed me that the pastor of the church would make the twenty-mile round trip from Trenton to Titusville before and after the service, to make it possible for me to attend. It was somewhat disappointing to me that neither my mother nor any of his grown children could relieve him of that duty. I felt I was a burden on him since I did not yet drive.

Charles B. Gross was the pastor of Brae Burn Bible Chapel; a small, non-denominational congregation in Trenton, New Jersey. I related much better to this church than the one in Mountainside. First of all, I was older and more teachable. Secondly, there the gospel was taught simply and plainly. In this small congregation, I also received the direct attention and personalized instruction I needed to understand and grow in the Christian faith.

The services were more informal than I had observed previously, and there were no medieval traditions with strange clothes and unfamiliar rites to confuse me. The people were down-to-earth, working class people: friendly, hospitable, and caring.

His son, Steve Gross, taught the Bible classes and I took them at least as seriously as I did my regular school work. Soon, I surpassed my peers, because most of the other youth were compelled by their parents to attend and did not put as much effort into the subject.

One thing did trouble me. From time to time, I still felt an evil presence within and about me. I had expected it to be banished when my



salvation became official. I was even more astonished when I still sensed it following me to church; with the presence continuing even in the midst of the worship services. I asked Pastor Gross about this but he had no idea what I was talking about.

This matter troubled me and I searched through the small church library for anything I could find that would explain this. I found books on systematic theology, eschatology, commentaries, concordances, and a great variety of Bible studies and inspirational stories, but I did not find anything that explained what I was feeling. I borrowed and studied what I could but I was not satisfied.

I did enjoy the spring and summer church activities. From the sunrise service celebrating the resurrection of Christ to the pancake breakfasts, it was inspirational and fun. I liked the organized activities: volleyball games for the youth, church picnics, and special musical programs. These were new and interesting for me. With few exceptions, my life had until then revolved around the routine of family, neighbors, and school, with a short stint in the Cub Scouts and an occasional summer camp.

During this time, high school graduation came and went. Then it was time for me to leave for college. At my request, Pastor Gross arranged an introduction for me to Calvary Baptist Church in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, where I would be attending Juniata College. However, I did not start attending Calvary Baptist right away.

The congregation had hundreds of members and occupied a large commercial-grade building off highway 26, on the north side of town. It was quite different from the small, home-like chapel I had just left; and the idea of meeting a large crowd of strangers daunted me. I was not entirely decided that I was ready to return to a formal church environment like the one I had known in Mountainside.

Instead, I joined a Christian student organization, the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. Two members of the group, Nancy Hersh-

berger and her roommate Karen Kunkle invited me out to a retreat the IVCF had planned that fall. I had never been on a retreat before and it sounded interesting.

We were part of a group of about a dozen students staying in a large cabin out in the Pennsylvania woods for the weekend, in the autumn of 1979. There was singing, Bible study, and times of testimony. The informal, deeply personal approach really appealed to me. In between the organized activities, we shared stories from our lives. Being a recent convert, I had little to contribute — relative to the others — so I mostly listened to amazing stories of healings, miracles, revelation, testing, trials, and triumphs.

On the second evening, Nancy and Karen asked me if I had ever heard of the baptism of the Holy Spirit or the gifts of the Holy Spirit. At that point I had not, so they read to me from the twelfth chapter of Saint Paul's first letter to the Corinthian Christians:

*“But concerning the spiritual matters, brothers, I do not wish you to be ignorant. You know that being led away, you nations were led to voiceless idols. Because of this I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, Jesus is a curse. And no one is able to say Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit. And there are differences of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are differences of ministries, yet the same Lord. And there are differences of workings, but the same God is working all things in all. And to each one is given the showing forth of the Spirit to our profit. For through the Spirit is given to one a word of wisdom, and to another a word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit; and to another, faith by the same Spirit, and to another, gifts of healing by the same Spirit, and to another, workings of powers, and to another, prophecy, and to another, discerning of spirits, and to another, kinds of languages, and to another, interpretation of languages. But the one and the same Spirit works*

*all these things, distributing separately to each as He wills”  
(1 Corinthians 12:1-11).*

Nancy asked me if I could speak in “tongues.” I had studied French in school and German on my own, and even invented a language for a fiction book I wrote. They explained that this was not what they meant but that they meant a spiritual language that has not been learned. It is a language of prayer given as a gift from God. That was new to me, and I asked them to show this thing to me. So, Nancy spoke in a language that I did not understand and Karen interpreted it into English. The words in English sounded vaguely like Scripture and were chiefly praising God or reassuring those present of His love for them.

I was impressed, so when they asked if I wanted this gift too, I said “Yes.” The young ladies prayed for me and I felt a tingling and flowing warmth come over my body, which they said was the Holy Spirit. After several attempts, I began to speak slowly and hesitantly in a strange tongue, but I did not interpret.

This was quite remarkable and I was very grateful to them for teaching me about this. Later, this gift would develop into a fluent prayer language and become an essential part of my prayer life. For, even when I had no idea how or what to pray, the Spirit was always ready with something to say.

That night, there was a guest speaker who also spoke on the Holy Spirit and the spiritual gifts He bestows upon Christians. The speaker also emphasized the importance of giving back to God; namely giving ourselves.

She said that those who gave their lives to God would be guided and blessed to fulfill their purpose in life. This appealed to me, so I was first to stand and dedicate my life to God’s purposes. The speaker and the others prayed for me and then the speaker began to prophesy. I had read of this in the Bible, but had never seen it

before. It seemed very important, so I wrote down the words that were spoken:

*“Karl, My son, you have done well to choose to walk the path I have chosen for you. Go and tell others what I have done in your heart. My blessing rests upon you.”*

The prophecy was merely three sentences, but they said so much! God knew me by name and considered me His son – family! I now knew there is a purpose and a plan for me, and God had chosen to bless me! Moreover, as I listened to the other prophecies given for the students with me, I saw that the miracles I read about in the Bible were real and relevant for this age too! Likewise, I saw for the first time, that God was directly concerned about the lives of each person, and still communicated directly with them.

This was so different from the images I had of myself and God until then. I had thought of myself as an insignificant individual among billions; a product of random events, with no specific purpose, and an uncertain future. Moreover, with all the difficulties, disappointments, and dangers I had already faced, I felt cursed, not blessed.

This really turned my thinking around! I had also adopted the attitude of others that knew about God. They treated God as so holy and great, that He was unapproachable directly; and that the details of our lives were “too insignificant” for His attention. This had led me to believe we were helplessly caught up in the vast currents of His activities.

It gave me both joy and apprehension to know that this was not true. It is one thing to think you are an insignificant spark of life in a vast creation, and an entirely different matter to know that God is personally aware of you and holds you accountable for what you do with your life!

After the retreat, I felt more confident about my future as a believer and decided to start attending a regular church. A few weeks later, I contacted James “Jim” Thorn, a student who drove the shuttle bus for Calvary Baptist Church; and I asked him to take me to the services on a regular basis. I also joined the Deputation Club and began associating with a broader spectrum of Christians.

Jack S. Palmer was the pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, and he was a very different kind of man than Charles B. Gross, but both were fine Christian leaders. Charles was a short and stocky man; quiet, humble, studious, and a talented pianist. He was very learned in Scripture, ancient Greek, and theology. They both had good Christian wives and large families. In contrast, Jack was a tall, lean outdoorsman; direct, plain spoken, and practical. He played the trumpet enthusiastically but not particularly well, and his seminary education was secondary to his leadership skills.

Charles had recognized the importance of bringing me to a saving level of knowledge, understanding, and faith regarding the gospel. Jack saw that I needed to make a public declaration of faith and to be baptized. The church elders questioned me regarding my beliefs and practices, to determine if I was a proper candidate for baptism.

After they were satisfied, it was arranged for me to be baptized the following spring, along with the other new believers. I looked forward to the occasion for two reasons. First, it would be my first opportunity to publicly declare my faith. And second, I hoped that baptism would relieve me of the evil presence that continued to trouble me.

I regard March 9, 1980 as my re-birth day. The regular service was rearranged to accommodate a baptismal service for new believers, at the conclusion. From the baptistry, I was allowed to address the congregation to whom I declared my repentance of sins, my belief in Jesus Christ as Savior, and my gratitude to God for calling me to the faith early in life.

Pastor Palmer baptized me by full immersion in the name of the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. It was a joyful moment for me, and I welcomed the loving approval of the members of the congregation. However, the evil presence was still with me afterwards, and I realized there was more yet to be done.

I had confessed Christ as my Savior, been baptized in the Holy Spirit, and been publicly baptized in the name of the Trinity, by full immersion. At that point, I had done everything I was told was necessary to become a Christian. Most of the other believers I fellowshiped with — especially the new ones — spoke of a wonderful peace and joy they experienced. And I could see it evident on their faces and hear it in their voices, but it still escaped me. I still felt an evil presence about me and was tormented by a crippling lethargy, a short temper, and persistent temptations. I really disliked this state and wanted relief. Why was I different? No one I asked could tell me what was missing, and I was ashamed to admit that I was different.

After three years of studies at Juniata College, I transferred on a dual degree program to the Georgia Institute of Technology. As part of the five-year plan, I would repeat my sophomore year there and ultimately earn bachelor's degrees from both institutions. It was a major move from a small-town college to a big city university.

It was one of the happiest times of my life but also one of the more difficult periods. The evil presence troubled me constantly; making it difficult to study, take exams, or even rest. I had to focus so intensely on academics, that most other things were ignored. This persisted even when I moved to Atlanta. There, I struggled terribly with a constant tiredness that regularly caused me to fall asleep in class and while studying. Somehow I managed, despite this difficulty that doctors could not diagnose or treat.

Pastor Palmer recommended that I join the Baptist Student Union (BSU) on campus, and indicated they would help me find a local church. So, I arranged for the BSU intern to meet me at the train sta-

tion in Atlanta. When I arrived with my belongings, he welcomed me to Atlanta and brought me to campus.

The campus minister Al Rahn, and his secretary Harriet Clardy, and the staff and students at the BSU also welcomed me with true southern hospitality despite my being a Yankee from up north. They helped orient me to campus life, and soon I was enrolled and busy with classes. A progressive dinner to the local area churches for new students helped me select a home church. I settled on North Atlanta Baptist Church largely since it was close to campus and I had no vehicle.

The BSU was an ideal place to study: spacious, well furnished, open early to late; and best of all, it had a well-stocked library. The small, cozy library became my favorite place to study. It was quiet but had a nice view of the central part of campus through the large windows.

Although engineering was my main emphasis of study, I continued to develop my knowledge of spiritual matters. When the tedium of thermodynamics, fluid mechanics, and electronics became too much to bear; I would pluck a book off the BSU library shelf and feed my spirit for awhile. It was one of these books that caught my attention and held it firmly, from cover-to-cover.

Glenna Henderson wrote an account of her deliverance from demonization in *My Name is Legion*.<sup>8</sup> She was a faithful member of a Lutheran congregation and was a sincere believer, dutiful wife, and loving mother. Glenna was a leader in community service and considered a role model. However, she was also tormented by ugly, violent thoughts, abnormal lusts, and intense temptations. Glenna sought counsel from her pastor, who eliminated other possibilities and finally concluded that she was demonized.

This was a situation where a person is not demon-possessed, but

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8 Henderson, Glenna. *My Name Is Legion*. 1972. Lecture.

is still strongly influenced by demons in or about them. By examining her personal history, he determined that they had first come into her through abuse Glenna had experienced in childhood. The pastor ministered deliverance to her through confession of sins, forgiveness, and fasting and prayer over about two years. Eventually, the demons were expelled and disposed of. This gave Mrs. Henderson the relief she sought. The book chronicled the deliverance process that they developed by trial and error, since the pastor had not been trained in this matter in seminary.

I asked the campus minister, Al Rahn about the book, but he did not know how it got there. He also did not care for the subject and removed it from the library. I had heard that the Assemblies of God (AG) churches were more likely to be informed about the gifts of the Holy Spirit than the Southern Baptists at that time. So, I arranged an appointment with an associate pastor of one of the larger AG churches nearby.

When I told him about the book and asked about deliverance ministry, the pastor angrily denounced the book, saying it was heresy and ought to be burned! He assured me that Christians could not be demonized, told me that he doubted the author was even a real Christian, and questioned my status as a believer. I found this meeting less than helpful and regretted the time and trouble I took to make the trip.

About the same time, I befriended another Tech student, Henry “Hank” Ziemer, who attended North Atlanta Baptist Church with me. In the course of things, I learned that Hank was also interested in deliverance ministry and was learning from, and being counseled by a deliverance minister, Tom Hodgins.

From what Hank told me, it sounded like the evil presence I experienced was demonization, so I arranged to meet with Mr. Hodgins. Beforehand, Hank loaned me some tapes to listen to, that explained the process. It was scriptural and made sense to me, so I went to



meet Mr. Hodgins for counseling. He had me confess my sins and prayed for me. I felt no change, although he did insist on payment for his services. I paid him well, but left disappointed. I wondered why this had worked for Hank but not for me.

That was in 1983. I resigned myself to live with the situation and managed as well as I could; but the temptations, bad temper, faulty memory, and other ills persisted and highly complicated my life. I continued to study the Bible and advance spiritually, but my zeal and enthusiasm were considerably dampened. I felt real progress was eluding me until I dealt with this issue.

I knew I had a serious problem and I needed answers but was not finding them. I was jealous of Mrs. Henderson, who had a competent pastor, supportive Christian friends, and an understanding spouse. I felt there must be a way to resolve this, but I did not find it at that time. I believe God never leaves us without the necessary resources, however it appears He is very subtle about how they are offered; for I had unknowingly missed an opportunity several years before.

In 1979, the summer after I became a Christian, I was interested in spending the summer break with *Youth With A Mission* (YWAM).<sup>9</sup> But to do so required me to raise my own financial support and somehow also pay for the next year of college. My immediate family did not support this idea and insisted that I work that summer to earn money for school. This seemed fiscally responsible, so I worked to earn money for school, instead.

What I did not know then was that YWAM takes their volunteers through a very thorough counseling program that is quite similar to what Pastor Robert E. Nicholson had done for Glenna Henderson.

I wonder how things might have been different had I followed my heart and volunteered with YWAM instead. In 1984, I did volunteer

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9 YWAM is a Christian, Interdenominational program founded in 1960 to involve youth in mission work.

with the *Children's Sand and Surf Mission* (CSSM) in Ship Bottom, New Jersey. With the support of my maternal grandmother, I did manage to finish school and graduate the next year, despite losing some summer earnings. But the CSSM program did not include any special counseling for the volunteers, like YWAM did.

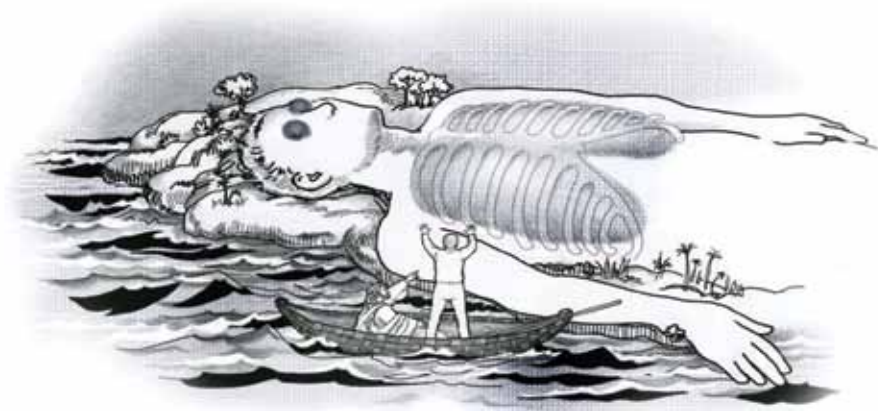
It seems to me to be God's way of showing me that I could have done this earlier, if I had exercised the faith to try. But because of my unbelief, it was not until sixteen years later that I had a breakthrough, and nearly thirty-five years before all of the pieces came together.

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## Chapter 11 – Healing My Body

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*“Surely He has borne our sicknesses, and He carried our pain; yet we esteemed Him plagued, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His wounds we ourselves are healed” (Isaiah 53:4).*



*Christ showed me how to use the  
gift of healing to restore my dead body.*

Suddenly, the scene shifted and I found myself in a vision, standing with my Lord on the banks of a river, in a subtropical, semi-desert climate. Papyrus reeds grew tall and thick along the banks of the river; and swarthy, dark-haired people in simple, ancient dress were fishing and washing in the river. I presumed it was the Nile in ancient Egypt, but I was given no explanation.

The Lord simply told me to build a boat from the reeds. I did as I was instructed and made a vessel out of the reeds. It was constructed

like a canoe, with a flat bottom and high prows, such as I had seen in books on archaeology. All the tools and materials were readily at hand, and it seemed to take little time or effort to build the boat. (Normally in my dreams, the images are not vivid, and the surroundings shift and change in such a manner that completing a task like this is nearly impossible – so I knew I was not in a dream state but a vision.)

I understood that we were to launch the boat into the river and sail downstream. Jesus stepped into the boat and I followed; using a long wooden pole to push off with and guide the boat out into the current. Jesus sat amid ship while I stood in the rear of the boat as we launched into the river. Soon, we began to pass a long, low island in the river.

Superimposed on the island was my prone body. It appeared translucent and I could see through the skin, bone, and muscles to the organs within. All the healthy organs were transparent, but those damaged in the explosion were colored. The eyeballs were sooty looking; the throat bright red, and the lungs were a mottled gray-blue-green.

Jesus told me that when I had been made by God, He had put the ability to heal in my spirit. Then He instructed me to stretch out my hands toward the damaged organs and they would be healed, so I did as He commanded me. However, unsure of exactly what to do, I hesitated, and we passed the eyes before I could touch them. As I reached out in turn for each remaining organ, its color became clear again as I felt a current of energy flow through me to my prone body.

We had just reached the “foot” of the island and I had turned the boat upstream to go back to the eyes, when the vision was disrupted. I found myself back in the living room, standing at the feet of my body; Christ stood immediately to my left. At the same moment, the two demons — manacles in hand — burst into the room, and ran directly toward me. This time there was no preliminary drama but they

were all business, and clearly intended to try to capture me.

Initially, I presumed Christ would automatically protect me, but He neither moved nor said a word. I was shocked and surprised but had no time to contemplate the situation. I instantly realized I had to do something myself, so I rebuked them again. A split second before they could sieze me, they were violently flung back out of the room, not to return.

This shook my understanding of my relationship with Jesus, but much later, I realized that according to Luke 10:19, Christ has given believers not only the authority to fight demons, but the responsibility to do so. Even if we are in great suffering or peril, the Lord will not do for us what He has already given us to do! The demons knew that well and tried to capture me before I understood it clearly. The rules of engagement are very important to know, and God expects us to be well-acquainted with them!

The vision resumed where it had left off, and I touched my eyes and watched them turn transparent. The healing was complete and the vision ended. I do not know why the vision was necessary to effect the healing, or what the symbols in the vision meant. There was no explanation, but perhaps it will become apparent later. As soon as the vision ended, I was back in the living room and standing before Jesus.

I felt only love, acceptance, and kindness from Him, but He sternly communicated to me that my sins had grieved Him and put me in a terrible, dangerous predicament. They needed to be dealt with; correctly and thoroughly. I expressed my sorrow and regret for them and added my deep gratitude for being rescued from damnation. Then, I suddenly remembered the list of questions that I had intended to ask God if I was ever in His presence.

However, as I stood there, I realized that I had just escaped from eternal damnation by the narrowest of margins and that I owed ev-

everything to Christ. He owed me nothing; let alone answers to questions that now seemed so lame and trivial in His awesome presence.

What I failed to realize was that all my thoughts were known to God, so He knew that I was thinking about the list, even if I did not intentionally communicate anything to Him about it. Jesus indicated that He knew my thoughts, including my list of questions, and He was willing to give me a response. I was about to have one of the most incredible experiences I think anyone can relate.

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## Chapter 12 – Deliverance: Part I

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*“Offer thanksgiving to God, and pay your vows to the Most High. And call on Me in the day of distress, and I will save you; and you shall glorify Me (Psalm 50:14-15).*

*“You are my hiding place; You preserve me from trouble; You surround me with songs of deliverance” (Psalm 32:7).*

After graduation from college, the next fifteen years of my spiritual life was largely on hold. During that time, I graduated from college, started my career, married, fathered two children, and attended a variety of churches. Each church was like a grade in school, and from each one, I learned new things but they were about the mechanics of being a Christian. There were few overt miracles and much repetitive sameness.

Then a crisis hit. My career took an interesting direction and I moved the family to Europe to work in a new plant that Eaton’s Vehicle Switch Electronics Division was building in Gdansk, Poland. Both the move and the job were very stressful on me and my family. But I was really thrilled to be in Europe and I enjoyed the excellent food, rich history, refined culture, and friendly people. It was a welcome change in climate from hot, humid Texas.

My work as the New Product Supervisor tested all my skills to the maximum and kept me working long and arduously. Yet, I enjoyed my work and was glad to advance my knowledge and skills. I also enjoyed working with the Germans and Poles there, who were highly intelligent and very industrious.

On weekends, I regularly attended a local congregation, the Church of the Green Light (in Polish called Kościół Zielone Światło). This was a Pentecostal Church in Gdansk. I was also active (though less than successful) in evangelizing on my own among the Poles.

There was a brief respite from the evil presence that troubled me when we first arrived in Poland. However, in a few weeks, it returned with a vengeance. (I later learned that some demons are territorially limited, and some of those that tormented me needed to arrange for others to take over their roles regarding me in this new country. Some of these new spirits were confined just to the city of Sopot, so I noticed the interesting phenomena that they would come and go as I crossed the city limits into Gdansk!)

This presence appeared to feed upon my stress at work and the difficult adjustment the family had to living in Poland. Turmoil disrupted our home until it was nearly dysfunctional. In the worst moments, I discerned a sharp increase in the malevolent presence. Therefore, I concluded that I was dealing with a spiritual problem; though one that was compounded by ordinary ones. This prompted me to revisit the subject of deliverance ministry.

At that date, the Internet was now widely available; including in post-communist Poland, so I used this powerful tool to research the subject in a way not feasible back in 1983. The resources that I found were multitudinous and I ordered a substantial number of books. Two authors, Ed Murphy, and Charles H. Kraft provided me with the best material I could find at the time.

Going through their books, I engaged in what may be termed “self-deliverance.” After a fitful start and some digressions, I finally found something that worked. It was essentially the same as I had read about in *My Name Is Legion*, with the additional knowledge that I could claim direct power and authority to exorcise demons on the basis of my faith in Christ alone.

Although they were very helpful, a pastor and intercessors were not absolutely necessary. As I had long suspected, the evil presence that had plagued me was a demon! In fact, it was several of them, and I had acquired them in childhood through various traumas — from the teasing and tormenting I had experienced from other chil-



dren, and also during the turmoil of my parents' multiple divorces.

As I prayed and struggled against them, I could feel them leaving my body. It was a new and wonderful sensation! After nearly twenty years, I finally had the relief I had been seeking. The lethargy, lustful thoughts, extreme emotions, poor memory, and a host of other things were gone or significantly reduced. I finally felt normal and realized in retrospect, how ill I had really been. I was deeply grateful to God and eager to enjoy my new state; however, my relief was short-lived.

I found that the demons were back within a week or two and I realized where they were coming from. Through my intimate relationship with my wife, they were finding an entrance back into my body. This was a huge problem. My wife was only nominally Christian. Therefore, she had little interest in spiritual matters. It had taken me nearly two decades to comprehend and accept what I had just learned, and that was the result of a passionate pursuit of truth.

In her case, I had no idea even where to start. Still, I tried to tell her about what I had discovered; and read to her and the children from the books I had bought. I also prayed and fasted — I really prayed! But it was to no avail. She neither believed me nor cared about such things, and was so estranged by that time, that I had little influence with her.

I realized I needed outside help. First, I canvassed the local churches but found no one knowledgeable on the subject. Then I contacted Charles Kraft's ministry. After some negotiations, I arranged for two of his assistants to travel to Poland and give a workshop on deliverance ministry. I contacted several local churches to invite the pastors and members, and put out flyers and ran ads in the local papers.

If I expected a warm response, I was seriously disappointed. Few people came; and the assistants — although sincere and caring — were not very capable. They ended up closing the conference early

and taking a tour of Poland instead.

Before leaving for home, they did minister to the family, but with little effect. I was particularly disappointed when they declared that as a policy, they did not minister deliverance to children. I was back where I had started, and had expended considerable resources and good will getting there. At least I knew what I was dealing with now, and had some hope of solving the problem, but that just added a tantalizing factor to my frustration.

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## Chapter 13 – The Ultimate Question: Part I

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*And this is the confidence we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us (1 John 5:14).*

*“Indeed, I tell you truly, the one believing into Me, the works which I do, that one shall do also, and greater than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you may ask in My Name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My Name, I will do it” (John 14:12-14).*

The Lord is the ideal gentleman, and perfectly capable of anticipating and responding to the cleverest challenge any person can present Him. In my case, He dismissed my list and offered to answer His list of questions instead — the thought stunned me! What kind of list of questions would Jesus have? It was obvious to me that whatever list Jesus might have would be far superior to what I had composed. So, I accepted and was invited to share His mind, because my mind was too small and inadequate to comprehend either the questions or the answers that He proposed.

The moment I agreed to it, I became one with Him and shared the mind of Christ; or at least a portion of it. I was perfectly conscious of my own self; my personality with all my memories and awareness of self was intact, but I also shared Christ’s mind and knew His thoughts and knowledge related to the subject. At least He shared with me, that portion of His mind that is dedicated to mankind. I sensed there were other vast portions of His mind relating to other things, but what I was allowed to share was only that which related to human history.

As vast as that was, it was only a miniscule fraction of the total that seemed boundless, in the brief glimpse I had of it. His mind is very

dynamic; perfectly orderly, with absolute harmony and an analytical capacity that is beyond imagination, let alone description!

If I had been impressed at the capacity and speed of my mind in the spirit; I was absolutely awed by Christ's mind. It held every detail of every person that had ever lived and would ever live. This information was perfectly organized and could be retrieved, reorganized, and analyzed effortlessly, without delay or hindrance at the merest thought about it.

The Lord then took us through a unique exercise where we began by showing me the whole of human history from start to finish. It took but a moment to comprehend it in that state. Then we began to look at how a change in some event, a decision, an action, a twist of nature, or any possible variation could affect that history.

We started off small; seeing how changes in personal decisions affected individual lives. Effortlessly, we saw how this change spread through time and circumstances and what the effects were on the whole. Then it became increasingly more complex as more events and more individuals were involved.

I was allowed to propose variations on any given scenario. When I did, the Lord would show me how that would turn out; and then proposed other variations and demonstrated what a full set of variations would produce. From this vantage point, it became obvious that there is a wonderful harmony with purpose and structure to human history that is not nearly so apparent from an individual perspective.

There was a particular way He visualized this, that made human history more easily understandable. The course of a person's life was like a thread that wove through the continuum of space and time. It began when they were conceived in the womb and terminated when they died.

There were four colors of threads: brownish, white, gold, and red.

Parts of an individual thread might be white or brown, depending on how they had lived at that time: white for selflessly, and brown for selfishly. When a life had run its course, the thread turned either red or gold.

The vast majority — perhaps 98% — were red. The threads twisted together to form bundles which represented social organizations, families, schools, communities, nations, etc. Individual threads passed from bundle to bundle as relationships changed or were rearranged; often returning to mingle with bundles they had departed from earlier. Bundles of life-threads came together periodically, at nodes that represented critical events such as migrations, wars, mass movements, and other historical events that affected large groups of people.

Jesus explained to me that at the junctions were nodes where; the history of mankind was particularly malleable and informed. Capable Holy Spirit- led individuals could exert tremendous influence on the fate of mankind at those times. (That was in 1995.) He showed me the next critical juncture of a majority of the bundles that would come in 1998; others would follow with nodes occurring at different times in different places, until they came together again in the near future.

We continued the exercise until we had looked at the ramifications of every possible variation in human history. While this may seem like an impossible task from a strictly human perspective, it was effortless for God and takes more time to tell about it than the actual exercise involved. That is how great the mind of our Lord is!

We actually went through the exercise three times. At the end of the first exercise there was a pause, as if Christ was waiting for a response from me. When He did not get that response He said, “Karl, let us do that again from another perspective.” So, we began the exercise again from a different perspective, with some changes in the people we started with, and the way they related.

When we finished that exercise, I was in a state of excitement, wonder, awe, and amazement, but that was apparently not what Jesus wanted, for He said a second time in a more serious tone, “Karl, let us do that again from another perspective.”

Suddenly, I realized that this was my third and last chance to understand some important lessons from the exercise. So, I suppressed my emotions and paid close attention to the third exercise. I compared carefully, how the timeline threads changed as the people made the decisions that affected the course of the lives.

I noticed that the threads were white when their motive was selfless love; and turned progressively darker as they were motivated by selfishness, cowardice, laziness, and unbelief. Partway through the exercise, I realized that the main criteria for making decisions that pleased God was selfless love! At that point, Christ stopped the exercise and announced I learned what I needed, and that it was time to return to my body.

At the conclusion of the three exercises, I realized that no matter how simple or complex, short or long, minor or major; the choices people made in their lives all had an ultimate point, when considered as a complete sequence. There was one question, which when answered, addressed what was truly relevant about all other questions. That question was:

“What does this have to do with selfless love?”

All other issues were neatly resolved or were of no consequence, when a given sequence of history was fully played out from start to finish. Only that one question had ultimate eternal value. That was a truly profound revelation for me, and was only part of this extraordinary experience.

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## Chapter 14 – Deliverance: Part II

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*“And having called His twelve disciples, He gave them authority over unclean spirits, so as to cast out, and to heal every disease and every weakness of body...And going on, proclaim, saying, The kingdom of Heaven has drawn near. Heal sick ones, cleanse lepers, raise dead ones, cast out demons. You freely received, freely give” (Matthew 10:1-8).*

Nearly ten years passed after our return from Poland before I finally found what I was looking for — deliverance — again! I had largely given up on myself and stopped trying. Though I had searched and inquired, I did not find a competent deliverance minister. My own efforts at self-deliverance were fitful and never lasted more than a few weeks. Struggling in the spirit for that peace I had tasted before took too much fasting, prayer, and discipline to sustain while I was responsible for a professional career and family.

With the open door of the relationship with the mother of my children, it was analogous to shoveling sand uphill, but abandoning the effort was a costly mistake. In the interim, the troubles created by the demons continued to grow. Ultimately, my marriage, career, education, and a small business I had started all failed, due to the turmoil they created. It was a terrible state to be in, but one I was resigned to endure.

However, in 2011, a close friend began behaving erratically and I suspected demonization, so for her sake, I started looking into the subject again. A search online turned up Tom Hodgins again, but he was in Georgia and we were in Texas. A real help was the Spiritual Warfare Ministries Deliverance Ministry Directory. I had not seen anything like this back in 1999, and found it a godsend.

There, I browsed the ministries in East Texas and found several nearby. After telephoning the nearest deliverance ministries and

learning the details of their beliefs and practices, I settled on Little Sparrow Ministries in Lindale, Texas. It was a small ministry that operated out of the home of Judy Farris-Smith. I decided to learn more about her and the ministry personally, before recommending them to my friend.

In person, Judy did not strike me as a great spiritual warrior for God. She was a short, plump, garrulous, middle-aged blond, with a cheerful personality. She looked as harmless as her little pet Chihuahua. This was a far cry from my expectation of someone who routinely exorcised demons. I honestly did not know what to expect.

However, right away I recognized I had found someone different. I could feel the Holy Spirit about her, and in her home very distinctly, like I had never encountered before. Judy was quick to introduce me to her husband and associates; then move onto the matter at hand. I was already well-acquainted with the principles of spiritual warfare and deliverance, so we went right to the heart of the matter.

Judy also introduced me to a book by Drs. Jerry and Carol Robeson, *Strongman's His Name, What's His Game*,<sup>10</sup> on which (with permission from the authors) much of her book and ministry were based. The Robesons had long been involved in deliverance ministry and had learned that demons characteristically organized themselves into hierarchies. This was an important breakthrough. Lower-ranking demons were bound in a hierarchy to their lead demon, which is termed a strongman. Therefore, the whole lot could be expelled as a group.

In all, she and her intercessors cast out fifteen of the sixteen strongmen demons listed in the Robeson's book. This partially explained the great difficulty I had previously encountered. In comparison, Glenna Henderson had only one strongman cast out of her. Why there was so great a difference was not explained.

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10 Robeson, Jerry, and Carol Robeson. *Strongman's His Name...What's His Game?: An Authoritative Biblical Approach to Spiritual Warfare*. Whitaker House, 2000.



I suspected that the abdominal surgery I endured as an infant was a key factor. Remember that, when I was about two months old, I was operated on for pylorus stenosis. The surgery opened my body rather dramatically, for an infant. Even today, surgeons take precautions against microorganisms infecting their patients, yet have no thought for spiritual contagions that are just as deadly, if not more so. Based on my experience, my suspicion is that opening the body for surgery can introduce demons, if care is not taken to prevent this.

Two other key points in her ministry was the breaking of ungodly soul ties and repentance for ancestral sins. Doing so closed the “doors” through which demons routinely came back in after having been expelled.

This was very different from the tedious, time-consuming, demon-by-demon approach developed by Glenna Henderson and her pastor, Robert “Bob” Nichelson. Judy also had a list of sixteen strongmen demons and their subordinates, derived from the Robeson’s book. We prayed and asked for the help of the Holy Spirit and for discernment about what my condition was.

Another key point I had not found in either Kraft’s or Murphy’s books was the role of inherited curses and ancestral sins. These had to be dealt with in addition to personal sins. It was mentioned in another book I read, titled *Unbroken Curses*,<sup>11</sup> by Rebecca Brown M.D., and Daniel Yoder, but they did not provide a systematic, comprehensive way to deal with the subject.

As I suspected, I was heavily demonized, so with her two assistants praying, she went right to work; laying hands on me and leading me through a confession of sin and prayers she had standardized in her book. After confession of my personal sins, one of the first things we did was to sever soul ties to the demons and repent of sins in ancestral lines through which they established their claims on me.

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11 Brown, Rebecca, and Daniel Yoder. *Unbroken Curses: Hidden Source of Trouble in the Christian’s Life*. Whitaker House, 1995.

For the first time since 1999, I again felt the power of the Holy Spirit flowing in me. From her hands, it coursed through my shoulders and chest and out through my limbs. I also felt movement internally; it was shocking, but not unpleasant.

After about a quarter-hour of prayer, I felt the first demons leave. It is a unique sensation. The nearest analogy I can make is that it felt like having a tattered wet sheet drawn out of, and off of me. I have since learned that some demons have an appearance similar to octopi or squid; with long tentacles. What I was feeling was the tentacles that had anchored themselves in my body and to my soul, uncoiling and releasing their grip.

I could distinctly feel their main bodies leave me, like a bubble bursting forth, and the tentacles slithering out of me. Although the feelings were easily discernible, I did not see anything visible or hear anything going out. It felt strange but the relief that came afterwards was wonderful!

Unlike Tom Hodgins, Judy did not require payment for her services. This was a godsend, since I was unemployed and broke at the time. Later, I sent her a substantial gift when my situation improved.

I came back for a few more deliverance counseling sessions, and continued self-deliverance outlined in her book and the Robeson's book. The demons that were expelled (or others like them) were very persistent in trying to return to me. It was a constant — sometimes losing — struggle to keep free of them, but there was real lasting progress for the first time.

Once the soul ties to the strongmen demons were severed and the head demons cast out, it was far easier to keep them out and expel them when they returned. Previously, they had just slipped back in and the strength of their hold on me was as strong as ever. Now they had to fight to get back in, and could be expelled with relatively little effort.

I was encouraged by Judy's example to know it could be done, and was soon advancing upon her techniques, in new areas. After years of spiritual stagnation, I was finally moving forward again. Unfortunately, when I tried to introduce my friend to deliverance ministry, she adamantly refused to even try it. Her pastor (who later resigned his position) forcefully (and ignorantly) assured her that Christians cannot be demonized (which is not true).

On his advice, she cut off all communication with me and went to another church. However, that did not stop me from ordering more copies of books on deliverance and resuming my studies. I also attended conferences on the subject and exchanged material with individuals I found receptive. An important step was attending a retreat at the Lake Hamilton Bible Camp in Hot Springs, Arkansas, which is devoted to deliverance ministry. There I learned more details and refined what I already knew. I was sad for my friend and her family, but glad to finally have the necessary toolset I was looking for to move forward in my Christian life.

One of the side effects of being delivered was that for the first time in my life, I could plainly hear the voice of God talking to me. It was quite different from what I had expected. Instead of being a strong, deep, commanding voice with profound sayings and high, lofty commands; the voice of God was something very different. He spoke in a quiet, gentle way about ordinary things.

The voice itself was not overpowering, but I could feel ultimate confidence and authority in the even-measured way He spoke. God expected to be obeyed — these were not requests but clearly in the imperative. It was definitely a masculine voice, with proper, grammatical English and concise wording. Oddly, there were no explanations with the directives — just what to do, not why it was to be done. That became plain enough afterwards.

God did not tell me to go out and conquer the world or raise up a mighty ministry for Him. It was simple commands and instructions:

“Karl, it is time to wake up.” (I habitually like to sleep in a little bit in the mornings.) “Do not forget to put medication in the water for the turkeys,” and such things like that. (I did not know it, but one of the turkeys I was raising at the time had the scours.)

One of the most effective techniques I developed was calling down the judgment of God upon demons. Many times in frustration with troublesome people, I had petitioned God to judge them for their sins. He generally ignored such requests. However, when I asked Him to judge demons that troubled me, the response was immediate and powerful — and I did not learn this from any deliverance minister or conference.

From the account of the fall of Adam and Eve, I realized that God judges not only people, but any other being that rebels against Him. Only people are protected by grace; not demons — therefore the unmitigated response. So, whenever I felt a fresh demonic assault, I prayed, “Heavenly Father, please judge this demon as you judged the serpent of Eden.” Quite routinely and swiftly, the demon was gone and its attack ceased.

I do not yet know exactly what happened to them, but I suspect it was quite effective. Not only have I become sensitive enough to discern different kinds of demons, but to discern individuals among the demons. To date, I can say that to the best of my knowledge, the individual demons so judged have not returned, though many of the same kind have taken their places.

Another useful technique was binding demons together under their head demon or strongman. Demons are commonly organized in hierarchies, and the whole lot can be dealt with as one group. This saves tremendous effort and time in exorcising them. Praise also weakens them, so worshipping God with praise, music, and dance sets up a favorable “atmosphere” for battling with them.

Fasting helped too, but was at least an order of magnitude less ef-

fective than praise and worship. Confessing and forgiving ancestral sin and renouncing ungodly ancestral covenants was very effective. Declaring and ordering a spiritual divorce and manumission<sup>12</sup> from the devil (worship is an intimate act comparable to sexual intimacy as in marriage) also were helpful. Persistence was central to success in the endeavor; as much in resisting temptations as in contending with demons.

It was essential to purge my home of all ungodly artifacts and printed materials. Pornography is about as demonic as outright idolatry. I never permitted either outright in my home, but went to the point of blotting or cutting out references to them from the books in my library or purging the same from my computers. I also sanctified my home, property, and livestock through prayer.

Through these efforts, I had tantalizing glimpses of what might be possible with a complete deliverance from demonization and full investing of the Holy Spirit: perfect memory and rock-solid sanity, with constant peace and joy; physical activity without fatigue, superhuman strength, telepathy, and even an end to sickness, aging, and death! I realized a lot more was at stake than just feeling better!

*“Even youths are faint and fatigued, and young men stumbling shall stumble; but the ones waiting for Jehovah shall renew power; they shall go up with wings as the eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not be faint” (Isaiah 40:30-31)!*

However, after the initial successes, I gradually lost ground to a constant day and night assault by demons seeking to reclaim their influence over me for an unexpected reason. Even when I was diligent in resisting them during my waking hours, the assault continued as I slept, and they began to slip in and reestablish themselves while I was sleeping.

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<sup>12</sup> Manumission means to release from slavery or other form of servitude.

I learned that when we sleep, our spiritual defenses subside and become vulnerable. I knew now there was more to this still to be discovered, so I began an in-depth study of the Bible to see what was missing.

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## Chapter 15 – The Question: Part II

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*“For this God is our God forever and ever; He will be our guide even unto death” (Psalm 48:14).*

*“You shall guide me by Your counsel; and afterward You will take me to glory” (Psalm 73:24).*

Once things were seen from God’s perspective, the order in creation and the centrality of selfless love was perfectly clear. Whenever someone was living based on selfish principles, their life-thread was the dull, brownish color. Whenever they lived based on the principle of selfless love, it turned white.

If they lived and died outside of God’s purpose, the thread turned permanently red and terminated in the much larger bundle or red life-lines that eventually ended in nothingness. Those were the ones whose lives were not given to God. They rejected God and ultimately perished. Their entire lives were meaningless. They are food and fuel for hell.

When a person lived and died for God’s purposes, the life-thread turned golden and became part of the bundle that continued on throughout time and into eternity. It was a much smaller bundle, but far richer than the other bundle in the quality of the lives lived. When a thread turned red or golden, it would change over its entire length once the person’s life was over. This was a graphic representation of how even a person’s mistakes (or successes) can be transformed to fit God’s purposes (or made of no consequence), depending on whether or not they give their lives to Him.

It was clear throughout the exercise, that God is always perfectly in control and that no detail escapes His attention or involvement; nor could one person directly alter another’s eternal destiny. They could influence them, but it was always (and ultimately) the indi-

vidual's attitude, decisions, and responses that counted. Although sin certainly mattered, the key point was not so much the magnitude or frequency of their sins, or even their good deeds, but whether or not they rejected God.

While there are many facets to the life experience, the singular purpose of it is to test and prepare a person for oneness with God. Every soul that went to hell had, at some point in their life, clearly and consciously rejected God. It just astonished me that the vast majority of people do so. Many, many of the damned are very religious too, but they embraced a false image of who God is and rejected His holy, loving, and righteous nature. Instead, they justified themselves by inventing a god that accommodated them.

I should interject my understanding on one particularly poignant issue, for which I expect some readers still want an answer. Why is there so much loss and suffering in the world? If it seems wasteful and pointless, that is because for the lost, it is. However, for a saint, suffering is an opportunity to grow and become stronger and more mature; to advance to higher levels of being — in short, to become more Christ-like.

Sin and the consequent suffering cannot happen in heaven. The sufferings of mortal life provide a unique opportunity for people to be transformed into the children of God they are intended to become. Consciously choosing a course of action that involves suffering for divine purposes not only advances a person spiritually, but is richly rewarded in heaven. (However, self-inflicted suffering would not generally qualify for this, nor would creating situations that caused others to suffer be commendable.)

*“Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart (will/consciousness) is made better”  
(Ecclesiastes 7:3 KJV).*

Naturally, we should not seek to create situations where we or oth-



ers suffer unnecessarily. But when it comes to us, it should be seen as an opportunity, and embraced even more eagerly than pleasure. Suffering is intended to be used to exercise virtues such as patience, endurance, perseverance, etc.

Just as sensibly, when the opportunity to escape suffering comes, let it go if it has accomplished its purpose. But a person should not use unrighteous means to avoid suffering — if they do, they add to their sins and lose the opportunity to grow. In some cases, there are other ways to accomplish similar goals, but suffering is particularly effective; and God may use it when we avoid the other opportunities He gives us.

That is, our progress toward oneness with God is simple and direct when we are attuned to, and obedient to the Holy Spirit. God freely and gladly works in us to transform us into His image as we seek that very thing. When we pursue other purposes, God sets barriers in our way that use suffering to warn us that we are straying from the mark and which turn us back toward His goals for us.

If we utterly reject Him, He ceases the transforming process and assigns roles to become the source of tests and trials for the rest. This is a very bad state to be in, for it sets a person up for divine justification for ultimate annihilation. Alternatively, we can choose suffering as an intense, expedited means to achieve goals that would otherwise be involved or lengthy.

It pleases God when we willingly suffer for His purposes; for then it opens new, higher opportunities for advancement in the transforming process. For example, it increases our capacity to receive more of Him in us; the ultimate form of true wealth.

A startling revelation for me was that God also suffers. He even chooses to suffer on a scale that we could not endure the mere awareness of! His passionate love for us makes God vulnerable to the consequences of our sins. If we truly understood what our sins do

to Him and had the least love for God, we would immediately stop.

He willingly allows us to grieve Him for higher purposes, so we may learn through our mistakes, how to become more like Him. To become like Him, we must also love passionately; accepting the same vulnerability that this entails, and endure the consequent suffering, including disappointment with others.

One really needless source of suffering is unrepented, inherited sin. The Bible clearly states the penalties for sin: death, banishment, illness, loss, violence, poverty, barrenness, etc. God is the author of the principles that govern creation, and God must enforce them, for He is self-consistent.

Tragically, the penalties for some sins are inherited by the descendants of the sinner. The descendants may have no idea what sins their ancestor(s) committed, but they are still subject to the penalties. As much as God loves those individuals, He must execute judgment impartially. Ignorance of, or disbelief in the principles offers no protection from the consequences. The devil is fully aware of this system and eagerly exploits it and our ignorance of it, especially to hinder believers.

Another key point is attitude. While we have free will and free choice, our options regarding our actions are really far more limited than we would expect; for God fully anticipates our every thought and action. Accordingly, He ordains events around this to achieve His purposes. All we really fully control is our attitudes — how we receive and react to things.

In simple terms, a positive attitude is desirable and a negative one is not. Therefore, our focus should be on seeing the positive side of things and responding in a positive, constructive, and thankful way; regardless of circumstances. Circumstances are ultimately neither good nor bad, but it is what we make of them that counts.

After the exercise was complete, I was gently separated from His mind and returned to my normal state. I felt a moment of loss as the incredible experience of oneness with God subsided. As my mind returned to its normal state, I felt a veritable flood of information flow out of it. I know the value of information, especially of this infinite trove, and tried to hold back as much as I could. However, Christ told me, “You have what you need. That information is not yours to keep.”

Therefore, the memories of the details of individual lives were not retained because I neither had the capacity nor a reason to keep them. The incomparable experience of being part of God has endless ramifications which are beyond the scope of this testimony. Sensing my disappointment, Jesus assured me that similar experiences are possible in heaven.

## **Let Everything Praise the Lord!**

*“Praise Jehovah! Praise God in His holy place;  
praise Him in the expanse of His might.*

*Praise Him in His mighty acts;*

*praise Him according to His excellent greatness.*

*Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet;*

*praise Him with the harp and lyre.*

*Praise Him with the timbrel and dance;*

*praise Him with strings and pipes.*

*Praise Him on the sounding cymbals;*

*praise Him with the resounding cymbals.*

*Let everything that breathes praise Jehovah.*

*Praise Jehovah” (Psalm 150:1-6)!*

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## Chapter 16 -The First Key: Praise Leads to Love for God

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*“I will bless Jehovah at all times; His praise shall always be in my mouth. My soul shall make its boast in Jehovah; the humble shall hear and be glad. O magnify Jehovah with me; and let us exalt His name together. I sought Jehovah, and He answered me, and delivered me out of all my fear” (Psalm 34:1-4).*

Once I had most of the elements necessary for a full and robust relationship with God in place, things began to turn around for me in a remarkable way. Besides merely feeling better, physical changes began to take place. Though my diet and exercise routine did not change dramatically, my health improved in measurable ways. My resting heart rate and cholesterol dropped measurably in the course of a year. Even my hair, which had receded dramatically during the two-year period during my divorce proceedings, began to grow back!

Acquaintances who had also been through deliverance had reported even more dramatic results, from being partially cured of diabetes, to wholly cured of terminal cancer! One family reported major behavioral changes in their child, whose emotional instability had kept them out of school for over a decade. He returned to school and placed only a year below grade level!

I could tell I was not there yet myself, and something was lacking. I wondered why I could feel there were still some demonic holdouts, and what would dislodge them. For months, I racked my brain seeking an answer. I prayed, fasted, read Scripture, did good works, etc. in the hopes that something would provide a breakthrough. These all helped in modest ways, but I needed something more effective and lasting. In response to my prayers for guidance, a memory came back to me.

In 1997, I was working as a contract engineer for FMC Sofec in Houston, designing an anchor pull-in system. Engineering jobs were scarce in Longview at the time, and I was very glad to even find work out of town. Just a few weeks into the assignment, influenza swept through the office and did not spare me. I quickly became so ill I could barely function. However, the work had to progress or they would find another contractor. My young family needed the income badly, so my options were limited.

Anti-viral drugs like *Tamiflu* were not readily available then, and I was already in the most debilitating phase of the infection by that time anyway. I needed a miracle to be able to manage at work the next day. So, I went to a local church that night, where they had a regular prayer meeting. It was about all I could do to drive my battered pickup truck there and sit, silently suffering through the meeting until it came to the part where people could request prayer. I put my hope in the Scripture:

*“Is any among you sick? Let him call the elders of the assembly, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save those being sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he may have committed sin, it will be forgiven him” (James 5:14-15).*

The church elders could see that I was very ill, and were willing to anoint me with oil and pray for me. Although the requirements of the Scripture were fulfilled, I felt no change. Disappointed and trembling with fatigue, I rose to leave. Seeing this, one of the elders whose name I did not know, stopped me. “I felt a check in the Spirit,” he said. “I sense that what you need to do is to praise God.”

I looked at him in disbelief; praise was one of the last things on my mind that night. “Thanks,” I replied, “I’ll think about that.” However, I felt this was an absurd idea and had little intention of actually doing it. I let myself out of the meeting hall thinking I had wasted the trip.

The walk back to my truck was probably less than 200 yards, but it took all of my strength. A cold winter rain fell on my uncovered head but I was too miserable to care. Driving home, I pondered what the man had said. There was not the least bit of motivation in my whole being to praise God at that moment. I could not have forced a thought of praise, let alone vocalized it. I felt somehow that God was responsible for my illness. I resented the particularly inopportune timing that interfered with a critical assignment.

When I arrived back at my rented room, I slumped onto my bed and just lay there until my strength returned sufficiently to think clearly. “Well,” I concluded after some thought, “praising God does not cost anything and I have nothing important to do with my time. I’m too miserable to sleep.” It did not seem that this would cause any harm; therefore, there was no excuse for not trying.

I just lay there. I could not summon the words to praise God. My mind was deeply mired in resentment and self-pity. However, I viewed this as a problem to be solved and looked around the room to see what resources I had to work with. Then I spied my Bible. I knew that the Psalms contained words of praise, so I opened the Scriptures randomly to the middle of the *Book of Psalms*.

I began reading aloud at the first psalm I came to. Between fatigue, congestion, and despondency, the words were flat and mechanical. I read the psalm, but there was no change. I paused, looked at the clock, and saw I had over an hour to go until my usual bedtime. I decided to continue.

I read another psalm, then another. Perhaps twenty minutes went by, without a change. Finally, I stopped watching the clock and continued reading aloud. Soon, a feeling of lightness of spirit came over me. I paused, did a double check, and confirmed what I had sensed. This encouraged me, so I resumed reading. Perhaps about an hour into reading the psalms, I felt the blockage in my sinuses break loose. The feeling of lightness increased and I could sense tingling

start all over my body. The Holy Spirit was at work!

It was necessary to take a break and work my way through a box of tissues as the congestion began to rapidly clear. My hope and confidence rose. The praise became genuine as I continued to read. Praising God was no longer drudgery, but the words flowed freely and easily.

It was about bedtime when I finished the *Book of Psalms* and I felt the flu had been broken. I was still weak and somewhat congested, but the aches in my joints were gone and my strength and morale were restored. So, I laid the Bible back on the night stand and tucked myself into bed, with a prayer of gratitude for this healing.

The next morning, I awoke with no more than a little residual congestion. I was able to resume work with my usual vigor. I had not recovered from the flu so rapidly before, and excitedly shared the story with my colleagues. They showed polite interest, but because of their strong technical focus, obviously did not relate to anything spiritual. This disappointed me, but I was glad to be able to keep my job and resumed work, sincerely thankful for God's mercy.

From books by John G. Lake, I had learned that illness has both physical and spiritual root causes. Addressing the spiritual root cause such as sin-induced demonization often results in partial or complete healing. The Rev. Lake, a Pentecostal minister, strongly advocated prayer, combined with fasting, praise, and worship as the remedy for otherwise intractable ills.

In the aforementioned example, I had proven his method in my own person. Praise not only became a potent resource in my spiritual toolset, it became a necessary part of my relationship with God. Later, I came to realize that God designed people for the purpose of praising Him. It is one of our essential functions. As with anything we are intended to do "for" God, it is really for our own benefit to do so. Though He passionately desires our love, God really needs



nothing from us. Praise is the means by which God connects us to Him for our own sustenance, just as praying to Him aligns us with His will.

My attention had been so tightly focused on my family and career, that I had devoted little time to praise and worship outside of the approximately twenty minutes a week of worship that was included in the church service between the announcements and the sermon.

I read the Scriptures daily, prayed regularly, and meditated on spiritual things almost constantly, but praise was not habitual for me. That left a huge opening for the demonic to operate, for it was equivalent to trying to feed my body on a diet lacking in protein! I could function almost indefinitely, but gradually grew weaker spiritually as my internal resources were depleted.

Regrettably, it was years after the incident with the flu before I made praise a regular routine. After awhile, I discovered that just reading the Psalms was not sufficient in many situations. I needed something better — more effective. It occurred to me that psalms were meant to be sung, but typical English translations of Hebrew poetry do not really lend themselves to singing.

So, I persuaded our pastor to give me a well-worn copy of the 1940 Broadman Hymnal. I liked these classic hymns and was familiar with the musical scores. The best routine that developed was to prop up the hymnal on the window sill above the kitchen sink, and sing while I cleaned up after a meal.

This became one of my most important resources when I was going through the divorce. This was a time of deep despondency and fierce anger. Emotion ran so rampant, that I had to cut it off just to function. The only remedy was to praise God. My natural reaction was to blame others and circumstances and to complain, but this just exacerbated the problem. Real relief came when I set aside my bitterness and praised God! Those were years of extreme darkness for

me, but I remember those times spent in private praise and worship, as oases of joy and peace.

During the time when I set aside my cares, concerns, and complaints, and expressed my thankfulness, appreciation, and awe for God; the darkness dispersed and peace reigned. Those precious moments gave me the strength and confidence to continue again and again, after repeated setbacks and failures. They gave me hope to believe I could prevail.

The reassuring touch of the Spirit reminded me I was not alone and gave me faith that better times would come that were worth persevering through the present difficulties. Most importantly, they gave me the strength to resist the temptation to give in to either resignation or retribution; either one of which would have been a disaster.

It was clear that this pleased God, for I often felt the Holy Spirit come down gently upon me as I sang. These praise and worship sessions refreshed me and weakened or altogether drove away the malevolent presence that regularly tried to trouble me.

As an added benefit, after months of conditioning, it strengthened my speaking voice and vastly improved the range of notes I could sing. Moreover, in the presence of the Holy Spirit, topics for prayer presented themselves, so I would interject short prayers in between the hymns. As answers to those prayers came about, it became clear that this was also an effective technique for intercessory prayer.

The positive atmosphere this created was contagious, too. I noticed as I spent significant amounts of time in praise and worship, that an aura of positive feelings developed about me. When I was in the presence of others, the attitude was contagious. They also perked up and were more responsive.

Normally, outspokenly negative people were more subdued and easier to deal with as well, and this was a revelation to me. Normal-

ly, it took a lot of thought and effort to motivate others and defend against critics. But the presence of God developed through praise and worship seemed to cut through all of that with remarkable ease. These observations restored my confidence to such a degree that I even accepted an invitation to join the church choir!

My conclusion from these things is that God intentionally designed us to praise Him. It does not seem right to attribute to God, the kind of ego that *He needs* praise, so it seems reasonable that praise of God is something *we need* to do for our benefit – even a necessity for countering the devil’s devices.

So, just as prayer is for our benefit, praising God is for our benefit too. Having been in the presence of God, I can emphatically state that He absolutely inspires praise, just by His awesome presence. In contrast to accounts I have encountered from those who have seen hell and where the devil forces his followers and captives to praise him; praise of God is inspired by His greatness.

Praising God is a natural response which should require no prompting or compulsion. The fact that people here on earth have the slightest negative attitude toward God implies that the devil is actively working to obstruct the praise of God – or worse, direct praise to himself.

Somehow, praise must be involved in invoking the presence of God, or the presence of the devil (as when people complain about God or glorify Satan). When God’s presence is enhanced by praise and worship, this facilitates His will to be done here. Explaining how the process works is difficult, but the empirical evidence is that it does.

Worship, Praise, Prayer, Thanksgiving; essential thoughts and words. In a world where bucks, ballots, bullets, blades, and bombs seem to be the choice instruments of influence; these things seem at first to be feeble resources indeed.

It takes hundreds of millions of dollars and vast technical resources to launch and land an ICBM on a target halfway around the world. Yet, I saw that from my own home, with a cast-off hymn book, through prayer I could affect things a world away or even next door! This should not be surprising, for it is ultimately through words that God accomplishes His purposes.

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## Chapter 17 – Returning to Life

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*It was wonderful to be alive and to see again!*

*“Jesus said to her, I am the Resurrection and the Life. The one believing into Me, though he die, he shall live. And everyone living and believing into Me shall not die to the age, never! Do you believe this” (John 11:25-26)?*

I was humbled and starkly aware of how pitiful my list now seemed. It was not lost on me, how gracious God had been to answer me in the fullest, most extraordinary way. A sense of loss tinged my thoughts as I could feel the memory of the experience already fading. My much-reduced mind struggled vainly to retain the vast knowledge and analytical capacity it had shared with Christ. I took

some consolation in the thought that I could at least retain the one principle I had learned: *the fundamental centrality of selfless love*.

True to my nature, I still had one last question to ask.

“What will become of my children?”

Jesus showed me that by invoking Him, even when I was dead and damned, I had fulfilled the most basic requirement for going to heaven — calling on His name for salvation. I had also demonstrated genuine repentance for my sins. I could go to heaven now or I could return to my body and resume responsibility for my children.

At that point, my progress as a saint was not worth mentioning, and I could not expect any special rewards in heaven, either. He added the warning that if I returned, I would have to deal promptly and thoroughly with my sins and be careful not to be exposed again like I had been. There was a real risk of still going to hell if I returned; as there was for all of the living, at any moment.

The teaching “Once saved always saved” that I had encountered in some of the churches I attended, is absolutely not true. It is a dangerous heresy that has landed millions of sincere people in hell! A person can lose their state of salvation at any time by rejecting or denying God, although I believe this is not necessarily true if this occurs under extreme duress.

The thought of going to heaven and being forever secure from hell was very attractive; but I also thought of my children. Christ showed me with abundant clarity, that in my absence, their situation was very perilous and that there were more children I was supposed to father and raise to fulfill my purpose in life. It was not God’s plan for me to die right then.

I thought of the children, and the lesson of selfless love was fresh in my mind, so I decided to return to my body. I dreaded putting it

on again, with its limitations, vulnerability to suffering, and physical needs. But the fact that Jesus had already arranged for it to be healed made it obvious which decision He wanted.

The instant I agreed to this, I found myself back in my body. Immediately, the pain, exhaustion, and weariness returned, but were nowhere near as intense as they had been. I felt my body like a heavy, thick weight around me, as I rolled off the couch cushions onto my knees. Already I missed the feeling of lightness and freedom that I had experienced in the spirit.

It was dark again in the room, but I could not see anyway because my eyes were bleary with pus. Shaking slightly with fatigue, I rose and stumbled down the hallway to the bathroom, where I intended to rinse my eyes out.

It was just after midnight, on a cold winter morning in East Texas in 1995, as I groped my way down the hallway from our living room to the hall bathroom. Even if the lights had been on, I could not have seen anything. Both of my eyes were blinded with pus; the aftermath of the fiery explosion that had occurred three days previously in that same hallway.

Keeping my burned right hand tucked against my chest, I felt for the bathroom door with the left, and pushed my way in. I advanced cautiously until I felt the cool tiles of the sink against the front of my legs. I fumbled with the faucet until I heard water gush into the sink and then splashed the cold water into my face; rinsing my eyes and cooling the scorched skin of my face.

When my eyes were clear of pus, I groped around until I found a towel to dry off my face. With my good left hand, I felt along the bathroom wall until I found the light switch. Bright light flooded the small room, and for a moment, I was too dazed to see anything.

Then, my vision cleared and I looked into the mirror above the

sink. After a few blinks, I could see again. *I could see!* That alone was wonderful. The searing pain from infection and the rust particles that had lodged in my eyes from the explosion were gone. Moreover, the pus which had constantly blurred my vision was gone too! It was wonderful!

I looked at my face and noted that the singed hair was still there and my eyebrows were still gone, but the red, second-degree burns on the skin of my face were faded and nearly gone! I grinned in delight, not minding that my hair was a mess. I looked otherwise rather pale, even for winter. Only two small patches of burned skin remained on my thumb and ring finger. I will probably bear these faint scars for the rest of my life, as a tangible reminder of the experience.

I WAS ALIVE! I had always been aware of how special it is to be alive. From time to time, I had reflected on this incredible miracle and taken joy from many simple things, like hot showers, drawing a deep breath, gazing at a sunset, or idly flexing the fingers of my hands. But that morning, it all had a new and more powerful meaning for me.

My heart pounded in my chest and my mind reeled with excitement at what I had just experienced. “What’s next?” I wondered, as cool water from my damp hair ran down the side of my face and dripped into the sink from my chin. I reflected back on what had brought me to that moment. I had been given the second chance of all second chances. What was I going to do with it?

Soon after that, I found a new employer and went back to work. The Lord was quick to remind me of my perilous state, due to unrepented sin and lack of restitution to those I had wronged. I had hardly received my first paycheck, when an epidemic of viral meningitis swept through our area and I was among the victims. Again I was without resources for proper medical care.

After being gravely ill for several days, I recovered enough to



return to work. During my recovery, I searched the Scriptures to learn what sins I was guilty of and repented of them. As soon as my next paycheck came, I began contacting those I had wronged and arranged to make restitution. I had learned this was serious business that should not be delayed! God has no use for excuses.

## The Great Commandment

*“You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people; but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am Jehovah” (Leviticus 19:18).*

*“And coming up, one of the scribes, hearing them arguing, knowing that He answered them well, he questioned Him, What is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, Israel. The Lord our God is one Lord, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment.*

*And the second is like this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is not another commandment greater than these. And the scribe said to Him, You say well, Teacher. You have spoken according to truth, ‘that God is one, and there is no other besides Him; and to love Him from all the heart, and from all the understanding, and from all the soul, and from all the strength; and to love one’s neighbor as oneself’ is more than all the burnt offerings and the sacrifices.’ And seeing that he answered intelligently, Jesus said to him, You are not far from the kingdom of God. And no one dared to question Him any more” (Mark 12:28,34 [See also Deut. 4:35,6:4-5; Lev. 19:18]).*

*“If you truly fulfill the royal Law according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you do well” (James 2:8).*

*“And we have known and have believed the love which God has in us. God is love, and the one abiding in love abides in God, and God in him. By this, love has been perfected with us, that we have confidence in the day of judgment, that as He is, we are also in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, because fear has punishment; and the one fearing has not been perfected in love. We love Him because He first loved us. If anyone says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar. For the one not loving his brother whom he has seen, how is he able to love God whom he has not seen? And we have this commandment from Him, that the one who loves God also loves his brother” (1 John 4:16-21).*

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## Chapter 18 – The Final Key: Praise Leads to Love for Others

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*“And He said to them, It is not yours to know times or seasons which the Father placed in His own authority; but you will receive power, the Holy Spirit coming upon you, and you will be witnesses of Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:7).*

Back in 1979, the prophetic word I received told me to “Go and tell others what I have done in your heart.” I took that directive seriously; and over the years, put considerable time and effort into sharing my faith with others. I went door-to-door, gave away Bibles and tracts, participated in short-term mission trips, testified before audiences, and have had numerous one-on-one conversations as the opportunities occurred.

I even published my philosophies of life in a book. However, the response was quite disappointing. Very few of the people I shared my faith with chose to become Christians; and fewer still of those kept the faith. What seemed so centrally important to me failed to interest most of those I met.

Even among practicing Christians, few could relate to my testimony of prophecy, miracles, and revelation. This really astonished me. Oddly, the two groups I thought would be most receptive, were in fact, the least so. When I approached church leadership to even mildly suggest that there could be areas of ministry being overlooked (let alone errors in their teachings), the reactions ranged from indifference to being expelled by them from the congregation.

The other group was Christians in crisis. It was clear that something was going terribly wrong in their lives. Having been through similar circumstances and having solved similar problems, the root causes and cures for their problems were quite plain to me. Yet,

typically these people dogmatically insisted on continuing on, as if the difficulties were a test of loyalty to God, from which they could not deviate. The mere idea that there could be some error in their relationship with God offended them.

After decades of this pattern, it was clear that a different approach was called for. There was nothing in the directive from God that told me what results I should expect, but it was discouraging to have such consistently negative responses. I reasoned that even though I was doing what God wanted, perhaps the method was at fault.

About that time, I was laid off from work and had a long stretch of free time, so I decided to re-read a select number of the books that had influenced my faith, and some others I had been meaning to study. I re-read through a good number of the list of recommended books in the appendix of this book (some I had not opened in decades).

It was humbling to find how much I had forgotten and how much I had overlooked on the first readings. The insights the Lord had developed opened these author's writings in new and refreshing ways. This helped to fill in critical gaps in my understanding of spiritual things and corrected some errors that had crept in.

I also sought out some of the more mature and insightful believers I had known, to renew acquaintances. We brought each other up-to-date on what the Lord had done in our lives. In some cases, it was quite interesting and encouraging to see we'd been on parallel tracks. This was especially true of deliverance ministry. This confirmed to me that this is a critical time for this ministry to be brought into the mainstream Church.

*"Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend" (Proverbs 27:17).*

I renewed my efforts to clear up past sins. I prepared a list of every known sin in the Bible, and spent several days confessing, repent-

ing, repudiating, and asking God's forgiveness. Another step was to identify and break bad habits, and cease activities that might bring reproach on the body of Christ. As I did this, I could feel demons of various strengths automatically leaving, so I repeated the self-deliverance exercises I had learned, as well. It was humbling to discover how much of the old problem had crept quietly back in – but it was relatively easy to expel it again.

With each step I took towards a closer relationship with God, I felt better and stronger. However, these were incremental changes and I felt I needed something more efficacious. I felt a need to develop a loving relationship with God and my neighbors, so I gave charitably and performed acts of kindness for some who needed it. I spent more time encouraging and counseling others and also worked on my interpersonal skills. These brought improvement too, however, only one thing made a fundamental difference.

It is a truism that the most important thing we possess is our time. Rich or poor, great or small, all of us have only twenty-four hours to spend each day. A good portion of that is devoted to necessary things like sleeping, eating, grooming, and ordinary chores and other obligations. The discretionary time we have left over is our most valuable resource.

I decided to revisit the lesson I had learned about praise and gave that as a gift to God. I already give time every day to reading the Scriptures, prayer, and devotions. These are good, but in the Spirit, I felt these were not what really pleased Him. *What truly pleases God is worship.*

So, I took all the free time I could spare, and devoted it to worshipping God. This primarily took the form of praise and singing. I even dusted off my old acoustic guitar and resumed teaching myself how to play so I could improve my singing and learn new scores. Immediately, I felt the presence of the Holy Spirit come; sometimes intensely. I have been told by those that see in the Spirit, that God

caresses, embraces, and even kisses us. His presence was so delightful; I can believe this! It was wonderful to realize, that regardless of my actual skills and talents for worship, God is ready at any moment to receive our love.

A side effect of this was that I felt better, my health improved, my mind was clearer, my outlook more positive, and temptations fewer and weaker. I also noticed that my positive mood was contagious. That was a nice bonus. It was as if the guardian angels which I am told are our constant companions drew some strength from this activity and became more active and spread the good spirit about me.

An even more profound side effect was that small problems that had long bedeviled me without resolution began to resolve themselves without any effort from me. Financial shortcomings, interpersonal conflicts, logistical and scheduling complications, and household repairs just seemed to take care of themselves. I even had the best garden in years, with no more effort than usual!

At first, these times of praise and worship were a bit awkward, and scheduling them seemed to interfere with my other priorities. Yet, as I saw how they improved my mental and spiritual state and had a collateral effect, I realized this had greater value and a broader effect than I had anticipated! I resolved that I would try to make this a permanent part of my daily routine and try to organize my life about it. I took a cue from the psalmist who wrote:

*“Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments” (Psalm 119:164).*

That works out to about every three hours, in a given 24-hour period, so I scheduled my times of praise and worship about three hours apart. This worked so well, that I determined that should I become an employer, I would try to give my employees breaks every three hours, just for this! I wish to God I could find such an employer.

This led to two things. For the first time in my Christian walk, my respect for God began to transform into genuine love. I needed God, respected Him, feared Him, admired Him, and much more, but I had not yet begun to love Him and did not know how to summon up the emotion. A clue for me was in C. S. Lewis' book *The Four Loves*.<sup>13</sup> There, he wrote that if we do not feel like loving, we should go through the motions until it becomes habitual and then natural. I regret that I had to start that low on the scale, but it worked for me.

God had rebuked, prodded, encouraged, warned, and chastened me in a great variety of ways throughout my life, but I do not recall Him being ever too responsive as He was to my efforts to love Him. This feedback naturally encouraged me to love Him more. I had finally come home and conquered one of my worst sins. I could finally keep the first and foremost commandment to *love the Lord your God!*

The other outcome of this was that my love for others was likewise stimulated. Previously, I had regarded service to others and sharing the gospel as a duty. The Scriptures clearly state that we should bless others in need and share the gospel. I tried to perform these duties professionally and competently.

Imagine my puzzlement, when previously I noticed that others so-engaged were having more and better results than me — those who were not half as zealous, informed, prepared, strategically-guided, and persistent as I was. It's not that those things were wrong, but although I had plenty of conviction; due to a lack of love, I also lacked compassion. That was the difference before. Now I had both.

My love for God transformed my attitude and gave me compassion for others because I could see them as He does. The self-centered veil of pride was lifted and the light of heaven could finally shine through me. It brought back to mind, another prophetic word that was spoken to me by prophetic minister Ed Traut, during one of his meetings in Austin, Texas.

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<sup>13</sup> Lewis, Clive S. *The Four Loves*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1991.

“The Spirit says to you, ‘I will rebuild all that the devil has torn down.’”

When I realize all that was kept from me and stolen from me because no one had ever taught or preached this simple truth to me; I might have been angry. However, I took comfort in the Scriptures:

*“In every matter of trespass, for ox, for ass, for sheep, for clothing, for anything lost of which it is said that it is his, the case of both of them shall come to God. Whom God declares guilty, he shall repay double to his neighbor” (Exodus 22:9).*

And:

*“Men do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry; But if he be found, he shall restore seven-fold; he shall give all the substance of his house” (Proverbs 6:30).*

As I enjoy the growing love of God, I also look forward to seeing how the devil will be made to repay what he stole from me and from others!



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## Chapter 19 – Analysis and Conclusion

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*“Teach me Your way, O Jehovah, and lead me in a level path, because of those who watch me” (Psalm 27:11).*

*“I walk in the path of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of justice; to cause those who love me to inherit wealth, and I will fill up their treasures” (Proverbs 8:20-21).*

*“The path for the just is uprightness. Upright One, level the track of the just” (Isaiah 26:7).*

This book describes two parallel journeys and the lessons God taught me through them. *The first journey* is my discovery of God and the journey to oneness with Him that led me through the following stages: awareness of God in the triune being of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

*“I and the Father are One” (John 10:30)!*

*“And when the Comforter comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth who proceeds from the Father, that One will witness concerning Me” (John 15:26).*

There is indeed one God, as it says in *Deuteronomy 6:4*. In fact, everything comes from Him, exists in Him, and returns to Him. His being permeates everything. Belief in God is a natural condition of mankind, and came to me as easily as learning to breathe.

What He had to reveal to me and teach me was first that He exists in three distinct persons; a Trinity, with distinct roles: the Father, who is the Godhead and who directs all things; the Son, Jesus Christ, through whom He created everything good and redeemed all things from sin into perfection; and the Holy Spirit, through whom He realizes the spiritual maturity of His creation.

The necessity for God having multiple persons in one being was

extremely difficult to grasp until I understood two things. The first was how my own person fit so perfectly into the person of God, when He permitted me to experience oneness with Him. Sin separates us from God and from His other children so we cannot see well, how this works. Yet, we are made for that purpose, and the triune nature of God is perfectly expressed in our own design.

When we are perfected in righteousness and holiness, the tendency to unity is inevitable! What was most profound to me is how harmoniously our person integrates with His so that nothing is lost in the union of our identity; and His person is perfectly expressed through us. Likewise, although God exists in three distinct persons, they are perfectly and harmoniously integrated.

The other point that I understood, which demonstrates the necessity of God having three persons, is that life itself comes from the exchange of love between persons. A god that could neither give nor receive love is a dead god. God must have existed before His creation, and must have had life to impart to creation, to give it life. The life force that comes from God is generated by the tremendous love that flows constantly between His three persons.

Our mortal life is a temporary gift that, while augmented in small ways, is steadily consumed over time. If it is not replenished by the exchange of love, death results when life is exhausted. Eternal life is possible only when we enter a loving relationship with God and unreservedly exchange love with Him.

When the Christ emptied Himself and came to earth in mortal form, only two persons of God remained in heaven: the Father and the Holy Spirit. Love continued to be exchanged between them; otherwise life itself would have ceased! Had God been only one or two persons, it would be impossible to have a Savior, the Messiah. More than three persons in the essence of God is not necessary.

Any or all of the Trinity may appear on earth as a theophany (es-

entially a projection rather than the true essence of their beings); but at least two persons of the true essence of their beings must remain in heaven, for life to exist. When Christ left earth forty days after His resurrection, the Holy Spirit came here at Pentecost and has remained on earth for the Church to this day, as promised in John 15:26. That is why I was only aware of being one with Christ and the Father when we merged.

I gained awareness that God intends us to have a personal relationship with Him, but that sin — rebellion against His will — prevents that relationship and condemns a person to damnation in hell.

*“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is everlasting life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).*

From my earliest childhood, I wondered why God could be so present and yet so difficult to communicate with. I felt this was very wrong, and did not accept the standard line that He was impersonal and unapproachable by nature.

The problem is Satan, who depends on using us as resources to accomplish his will. He knows sin separates us from God, and exposes us to his predations. The devil is incapable of confronting God directly, so he must work to turn God’s creation against the Creator, in his attempt to displace God.

To accomplish that in us, the enemy tries to entice, deceive, terrorize, and ultimately force us to turn on our loving Creator. This is impossible when we have a full and robust relationship with God, for that relationship makes us like God, Who cannot be enticed, deceived, frightened, or forced in any way.

A person who yields to the devil has demonstrated themselves to be unlike God, and therefore incapable of ultimately achieving oneness with God. The alternative to conformity to God’s character is to be like the devil, who must be destroyed in hell. Those who try to play

both sides automatically fall into Satan's camp. To accommodate even a single defect in character is to choose the devil's path; for he began with iniquity, and the rest of the story developed from there.

### **Awareness of Reconciliation to God Through Grace, Through the Substitutionary Sacrifice of Jesus Christ for My Sin**

God, who made us and the creation we live in, foreknew us and what we would think, say, do, and become. He knew the devil's devices were so pernicious and effective, that none of us but the Christ Himself could overcome sin. God loves us and was not willing that any should be damned with the devil and his angels, so He prepared a means of salvation.

It was made possible through Jesus' sinless life and selfless sacrifice. To be just, it was made free and unconditional, apart from the requirement that people repent of sin, believe on the gospel, and accept Christ's atonement to receive that salvation. On that basis, the power of sin is broken and a relationship with God is reestablished.

### **The Need to Consciously and Personally Repent of Sin and Accept God's Grace**

*"No, I say to you, But if you do not repent, you will all perish likewise" (Luke 13:3).*

Bondage to sin and death are the default condition for rejecting God. Therefore, salvation by grace requires action to change the default. To change state from damned to saved, an individual must consciously choose salvation. Grace does not automatically provide immunity from the natural consequences of sin; only reestablishes the right relationship with God.

Therefore, the sin must stop, which is why repentance is a necessity. There is some tolerance with God for backsliding, but this is

not defined and it is surely a temporary situation. Therefore, it depends on God's sovereign judgment. Anyone who devalues grace by choosing to continue in sin, risks losing it and incurring God's everlasting rejection. Genuine repentance includes becoming a partner in God in rectifying the consequences of sin, by making restitution too. Restitution reminds of the cost of sin, demonstrates God's love to the person we injured, and pleases God.

### **The Place of Baptism by Water in Reconciliation to God**

*"The one believing and being baptized will be saved. And the one not believing will be condemned" (Mark 16:16).*

In heaven, nothing is hidden. In God's earthly kingdom, it will be the same. A change of heart from sinner to saint is apparent to God, but not necessarily to society. Baptism is an open declaration of belief in Jesus Christ as Savior, and repentance of sins. The public declaration of baptism looks forward to the time when every deed and every thought will be apparent to all.

God requires us to be public about our commitment to Him. Baptism is also patterned after the death and resurrection of Jesus, and therefore should be full immersion, rather than anointing or sprinkling. Circumstances vary from case to case, and I presume God cares more about the state of the heart than the form of the rite, so the nearest approximation to this should be performed. Baptism by proxy is permitted when the convert had no reasonable opportunity to be baptized between conversion and death, as in deathbed conversions or martyrs.

Baptism of children below the age of accountability and of the mentally deficient is very difficult to justify. Baptism for deceased unbelievers has no precedent in Scripture and lacks validity. Forced baptism is a great wrong. It does not impart salvation, but rather resentment and resistance to the true faith in the one so violated. I believe it is safe to presume God will deal very strictly with those

who abuse His ordinance of baptism, and quite leniently with exceptional cases.

**The Special Purpose of the Holy Spirit as Helper,  
Comforter, Guide, and Giver of Spiritual Gifts and  
the Threefold Nature of My Relationship with Him,  
on Me, in Me, and in My Heart**

Due to the triune nature of God described earlier, Jesus the Savior had to return to heaven so the Holy Spirit could come to earth as helper and comforter. The baptism and gifts of the Holy Spirit:

*“Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, If one is not generated out of water and Spirit, he is not able to enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).*

*“But when the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works in righteousness which we had done, but according to His mercy, He saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ, our Savior; that being justified by His grace, we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:4-7).*

The signs which follow a true believer include not only a changed character, but miraculous gifts and powers. Some churches teach that a person becomes a Christian by affirming a written creed and being publicly baptized in water.

In the third chapter of the *Gospel of John*, Jesus told Nicodemus that a true Christian is reborn of the Spirit. It is my own experience that a person cannot overcome sin or please God through ordinary efforts. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is our necessary helper to first resist the devil, and second, to serve God. He protects and guides us.

The Holy Spirit is sovereign and is not bound by any conventions

of man, so there is no formula for invoking Him. But the general pattern is that a person must prepare their heart through confession and repentance, and then invite the Holy Spirit to come to them. When we have met His terms, He is pleased to respond. As awesomely terrible and powerful as He is, the Holy Spirit will not violate our God-given free will. Neither can we prevent Him from departing if we are disobedient, or force Him to serve our purposes.

This is facilitated by the laying on of hands by a person already anointed with the Holy Spirit, but that is not necessary if the subject is receptive, willing, and the Holy Spirit chooses to respond.

**WARNING:** There are apostate and occult-empowered ministers who will lay hands on the unwary and unready; claiming to impart the Holy Spirit. The spirit they impart is a demonic counterfeit. Be very discerning and cautious about this matter. If it does not feel right, it probably is not right. If spiritual discernment is lacking in such cases, examine their conduct and reputation carefully. Seek confirmation from someone with discernment! Do not be hasty to receive such ministry. When in doubt, cast it out!

Once a person has received the Holy Spirit, they are under God's protection and may also receive spiritual gifts and power. However, the Holy Spirit is easily grieved by sin, and may depart a backslidden Christian. The gifts remain, but may be neutralized by sin, and do not operate effectively without the cooperation of the Holy Spirit.

### **The Importance of Dedicating One's Life to God's Purposes**

*"Therefore, brothers, I call on you through the compassions of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service. (Romans 12:1).*

God has a purpose, even a detailed and specific plan for the life of every person. Yet, He will not force us to follow that plan or give

Him anything. We may follow our own heart and dispose of our talents and resources as we choose. However, that puts us squarely in the domain of the devil, who has no reservations about using every device at his disposal to exploit us for his purposes.

Ultimately, the devil and all who follow Him are still controlled by God and serve His purposes, but in a very different way. They are but that which the children of God exercise themselves against as they progress in God's purposes. When the exercise is finished, the devil and all his followers will be summarily discarded with no thanks or reward; and even the memory of them will be erased.

Also, while the devil can steal from a sinner, he cannot steal from God. A believer that gives over all that they are and all that they have to God (and is an obedient steward) cannot be robbed by the devil. Dedicating one's life to God not only aligns our lives with God's plan, but makes us God's property, which He will surely secure and defend!

This is an excellent choice to make, because through it, God gives meaning, purpose, and reward to all our thoughts and actions — even the “wrong” things we did, and even our pre-Christian lives. Not dedicating our lives to God robs us of meaning and purpose and exposes us to exploitation by the enemy.

Such a state makes us a partner with the devil by default. It is not an easy choice to make or an easy way to follow; for God expects us to serve Him diligently with all our heart, to very high standards. But there is no mistake in living life to the fullest.

**The Fact that the Holy Spirit Operates Today in  
Miraculous Power Through those Gifts, including  
Healing and Personal Prophecy**

*“Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonders among all people” (Psalm 96:3).*



Christianity is more than a way of life or a philosophy. It is a new life with a progressive transformation of our being, from mundane mortality into divine immortality, in the likeness of Christ. We are to become vessels for His Spirit and channels for His divine, life-giving power. God is a God of wonders and miracles.

Manifestations of His power are not for entertainment or to awe the credulous. They are a means to accomplishing God's purpose, which includes restoring life to this corrupt, dead world. The gifts and miracles are just a beginning that demonstrates and initiates the incredible wonders that are to come in His kingdom on earth and that ultimately will be ours in heaven. Without these, a person can only make a pretense of serving God and can do nothing of truly eternal value.

The enemy also works in occult power, and this can only be opposed in God's power. Occult power is power derived from the exploitation of unbelievers and careless believers, and is used against the body of Christ. We are also commanded to communicate to others, the testimony of God's great works and miraculous nature.

### **That the Devil, His Demons and Hell Exist and are Actively Trying to Destroy Mankind**

Just as God, heaven and His angels are real, the devil, hell, and his demons are real too. Though they are invisible to our natural senses, they interact with us subtly but persistently and deliberately. They are numerous, powerful, intelligent, capable, well-organized, and systematic in their attempts to exploit and destroy us – restrained only by God's intervention.

The devil and his agents are our natural and implacable enemies. Tragically, many people partner with the enemy; some of these knowingly. These are either deceived or the very worst kind of traitors. There can be no agreement or compromise with them but only determined resistance and strategic countermeasures, in an unrelenting fight to victory.

## **The Reality that Christians can be Demonized and the Importance of Deliverance Ministry**

Some teachers and ministers of the gospel have erroneously concluded that demons cannot directly attack, let alone inhabit Spirit-filled Christians. This is absolute heresy, disproved by millions of counter examples. Typically, such people are covering for the fact that they lack the ability to discern demons and expel them.

To admit such a thing, is to bring into question, their credentials to minister at all, so rather than address the problem, they deny it exists. This is absolutely contemptible, because it leaves their disciples unprotected and without remedy and therefore exposed to conditions that can compromise their salvation.

The human body is a truly vast and complex vessel capable of containing not only the human soul and is designed to accommodate a variety of manifestations of the Holy Spirit; but also other spirits from God, such as strength and courage. A Christian whose life is not fully yielded to God may open part or all of their being to demonization.

Contrary to some teachings, their body can at the same time, host the Holy Spirit, other divine spirits, and innumerable demons of nearly all descriptions! Naturally, the Holy Spirit is grieved by such a state, and often withdraws from, or reduces His presence in such cases.

A demonized Christian cannot function fully for God. Left unchecked, demonization has the potential to destroy the believer and even make them an instrument of harm to others. Deliverance ministry is essential for any believer to fully realize their potential.

**That our Purpose in Life is to Develop into the  
Likeness of Jesus Christ through Resisting Evil  
and Responding Constructively to Suffering**

*“But we know that to the ones loving God all things work together for good, to those being called according to purpose; because whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, for Him to be the First-born among many brothers” (Romans 8:28-29).*

Resisting evil routinely brings a fierce response from the devil; often leading to suffering, rejection, loss, persecution, and worse. Oddly, it does not appear to be explicitly stated in the Scriptures, but suffering plays a good and necessary role in our lives. Responding positively, constructively, even thankfully to suffering helps us to become increasingly Christ-like.

Jesus set the standard. He did not argue, accuse, judge, or complain. He bore rejection and persecution obediently and patiently. However, Jesus was also ready to teach, correct, admonish, and even fight, when the occasion was right. In fighting, He recognized (and demonstrated for us) that the enemy is not flesh, but spirit.

God has assured us that the devil cannot endure our resistance, and we will prevail, if we persist in God’s principles. In the interim, the suffering we endure builds our character. There is no sorrow or suffering in heaven. Here and now we have the unique opportunity to advance ourselves and earn rich rewards for heaven. A key point is that we must maintain a good attitude through the trial and persevere through to the end.

An important point to understand here too is that partial credit is rare, if found at all in God’s tests. It is helpful to remember that the fundamental definition of sin is “missing the mark” or falling short of the expectation of God. Subsets of sin like “rebellion” (refusing to do good) and “transgression” (doing wrong) are merely extreme expressions of sin.

In short, if we do not know what God wants of us specifically (by word of knowledge or prophecy), and receive His provision

(through the Holy Spirit), our best efforts will fail. Even the best Christian who tries in their own wisdom and strength to please God, will fail because *they can only guess what is right, and are likely to guess wrongly*. Even if they guess rightly, they will not know how to accomplish it. Principle is necessary, but not sufficient.

Human effort alone cannot achieve God's purposes. Without His Seven Spirits (Isaiah 11:2; Revelation 3:1), like Job, we will find that our best and highest — no matter how noble or exceptional — are inadequate.

### **The Central Importance of Selfless Love**

*“And one of them, a lawyer, questioned Him, testing Him, and saying, ‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?’ And Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments all the Law and the Prophets hang” (Matthew 22:35-40; [See also Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18]).*

In distinguishing between sin and righteousness, our motives mean as much or more than our words and deeds. Just as Christ showed that selfless love is the root answer to every question; so selfless love is the guiding principle for our purpose and relationship with God. From the principle of love, can be derived all other divine principles.

Love is life. Without love there is death.

In the thirteenth chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthian believers, Saint Paul eloquently explained that without love, we and all we do and accomplish are meaningless. That does not mean that if

we do not feel love we should give up altogether. We need to start somewhere. The beginning of love is obedience to God.

As we obey God and receive the fruits of obedience, the excellence of His way and the perfection of His person become apparent. Respect becomes obedience, obedience leads to closeness, closeness becomes intimacy, intimacy becomes love; and ultimately, love transforms us into His likeness where love is normal and natural. Love for God flows back through us and becomes love for our fellow man. In this manner, we may become the rivers of living waters Jesus spoke of in John 7:38.

To love selflessly requires self-control and sacrifice; with Christ's atonement on the cross being the ultimate expression of such love. It requires both action and inaction. Action involves expressing love (without needing prompting) in giving ourselves to others, and in responding appropriately to others loving (or attempting to love) us.

Inaction involves resisting the natural inclinations to be selfish, and refusing to react negatively when others offend, hurt, or harm us. There is also wisdom in love, for it makes us vulnerable. Wisdom is necessary for those who love, to avoid traps the devil sets to exploit and destroy them. It is a fine balance to walk in love, where the protection and guidance of God are essential. Learning to balance life's priorities in love puts us in harmony with God and advances us into a state of oneness with Him.

There is also wisdom in love, for it makes us vulnerable. Wisdom is necessary for those who love to avoid traps the devil sets, to exploit and destroy them. It is a fine balance to walk in love, where the protection and guidance of God are essential. Learning to balance life's priorities in love puts us in harmony with God and advances us into a state of oneness with Him.

*The second journey* was my near death experience, where I received direct revelations of the nature of the demonic and the divine.

From first-hand observations, a number of important facts and principles can be derived. I am very grateful for these, because things that before were matters of faith, are now for me, known facts.

In the interim, this knowledge has sustained me during trials that faith alone could not have endured. While I cannot impart the actual experience to others, they can be encouraged to know that someone has actually tested the theories and has returned to communicate what they learned.

### **The Account Related Firsthand Knowledge of the Following**

God exists and is accurately (but far from completely) portrayed in the Bible. He is a loving, holy, perfect being Who possesses omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence. Also, there is ultimately only one God. Other gods are the inventions of men or the counterfeits of the devil.

God is in control of everything to the minutest detail, both good and evil; and offers us a choice of a purposeful life with spiritual growth, or a purposeless life with spiritual disintegration, according to our free will. He has foreordained assigned roles for us that we have the option to fill. This includes the options to choose righteous or unrighteous roles.

Our freedom is chiefly in terms of our attitude. The choices we make open or close opportunities to engage these options. Either direction accomplishes God's will, but there is a clearly preferred direction towards righteousness. God does not need us to choose evil to accomplish His purposes. The devil and his kind are quite adequate for that. But people may freely join that element too; though they shall share its fate as well. It should be a sobering thought that we can also choose roles where we play the part of God's opponent.

The right attitude will lead us to the roles God has prepared for us that serve the purpose of advancing our own development. These

roles build on each other with good choices advancing us, and poor choices stopping or even regressing us. Our advancement also aids others in their advancement too, especially when we lead the way. Faith, integrity, courage, strength, and love are all critical in making the right choices.

As human beings, we are created in God's image, with an ultimate goal of oneness with Him, through opportunities He offers us for spiritual advancement and reward. We are children of God made in His likeness. One of those characteristics is an uncompromising respect for free will. God gives us free will to choose to grow into His likeness, or not.

Eternal life is only possible on His terms, so to reject His ways leads to destruction. It is not as if God uses the promise of eternal life to compel us to be obedient to His will. Conformity to God's nature is what makes eternal life possible. Any other nature has inherent flaws in it which will ultimately lead to failure, degeneration, and death.

To have eternal life, we must adopt holiness as an intrinsic part of our nature. Eternal life without adopting all the characteristics of God is possible. But oneness with God requires acquiring all the characteristics of God through a full spectrum of spiritual growth.

*Heaven and hell are real.* Heaven is a place of indescribable riches and opportunities for those that accept God and His ways. These riches are not material things such as gold, jewels, fancy houses, or prestige. True riches are developments to one's being, in terms of capability, perfection, holiness, and love that make a person more Christ-like.

Hell, a place of torment and destruction; created to punish and destroy the devil and his angels, is real too. This is the eternal, unchangeable destination of those who reject God and adopt the devil's ways. At death, our choice of destinations is unalterably determined.

We may not be perfectly righteous or unrighteous at the moment of death; thus it is the direction we have chosen in life at that point, that determines our direction for the rest of eternity. Of course, the aforementioned prerequisites must be met before a person may expect to continue on to heaven in the next life.

What matters most in this life is how we treat others and our relationship with God. Considering that the elect and God will ultimately become One; the distinction between how we treat God and how we treat others is really very fine.

I should add too, that while I did not directly observe heaven itself but only experienced oneness with Jesus; there was no indication that we are (as some cults teach) destined to become other gods and goddesses, and create our own worlds with people of our own making. God offers us something far more wonderful than becoming provincial little “godlets.” His ultimate goal is to unite us once again with Himself, where we will augment and share in His divinity.

There has always been, is now, and always will be only one God Most High. Those who believe (and worse teach) any other error have only received a variation on the devil’s original sin of wanting to “become like God,” apart from God.

The obvious response should be to give ourselves to God’s purpose in repentance and obedience. Once a person realizes they have divine purpose, they should both take comfort in knowing that a loving God has their best interest at the heart of His plan for them, and take warning that deviating from that plan results in profound loss for them and for others.

Once a person has established a relationship with God through understanding His Word and seeking His will, they must passionately seek to develop and exercise a love for Him and their fellow man. This is not the same as loyalty and obedience to an institutional church, though that can certainly help, in some cases.



Ultimately, we are personally responsible and accountable as individuals to God. We cannot depend on associations to family, friends, church, or nation to commend us to God. On Judgment Day, it will be too late for excuses. God will not accept excuses in any form, for He gives us everything we need to fulfill our purpose and His will. Selfishness, laziness, and timidity are our common enemies, and will lead us straight to hell!

Ultimately, it is a very simple matter. We make it complicated by trying to find ways around God's ways. Ask Him for wisdom — it is one thing He offers without restraint. Ask Him for help; that is why He gave us the Holy Spirit. And never, ever give up or compromise!

Lastly, when I have shared this story with others, some inevitably want to know what my list of questions was and what the answers are. So, for them and for others like them, I reproduce the list with my answers here. However, I make the disclaimer that despite my near death experience, I am still a limited, fallible person. The only thing of real substance I was allowed to take away from the divine question-answer session was the ultimate question, which is all that really matters. That was the purpose of the exercise.

I was not specifically given a command by God to share this revelation with others. The exercise was, as far as I can tell, for my benefit alone. However, since the story appears to be helpful to others, I have written things down for their benefit too. Given the vast number of people who are going to hell, hopefully this will change the destiny of some.

But in the timelines I saw — both past and future — there were no great future changes indicated in the proportions going to hell and heaven. So, I do not expect this testimony to make a profound impact. If telling this story means some take warning and act wisely, then it is well worth the effort to publish this account.

I do not wish anyone, no matter how evil a life they have lived, to

suffer damnation — it is just too terrible and entirely unnecessary! But I do want to state clearly that the answers that follow are not divine revelation, but my own conclusions based on Scripture, first-hand experience, research, and some careful deduction and extrapolation. The best course to take in answering any such question is to inquire of the Holy Spirit. Providing answers is one of His roles.

## ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON THE LIST

Jesus did not specifically answer any of the questions on my list. In light of answering the ultimate question, they are really not relevant. However, through my studies and experiences, I do recognize that others are interested in the answers and have answered these questions to my own satisfaction.

Here, in brief form, are my own understandings. I do not represent them as divine revelation or even infallible doctrine, but only as my own informed and considered opinions. The exercise of answering them has helped me settle certain troubling doubts. Perhaps these will be of similar value to others.

- *What is heaven like and do we continue to progress to higher orders of being after we get there?*

Heaven, in the simplest terms, is being in the presence of God. God is triune in nature, with three distinct persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Between them flows a vast current of love. It is this exchange of love that generates life. From life, springs everything else.

God is alive and everything He creates is necessarily alive too. (This is at least initially true, for sin kills.) God is holy and nothing impure or imperfect can be in Him. Therefore, heaven is pure and perfect, and full of life and love. From life and love, spring everything good.

Human beings are derived from very tiny fragments of God that He separates from Himself and endows with features and functions, power, and ability, to exist apart from Him and to exercise free will.

Heaven is an extension of God's core being in which He creates a multitude of environments and opportunities for us to grow and develop into His likeness. The goal of this is to reach a state where we are ready to reunite with Him in oneness, with His core being, that both preserves our identity and perfectly integrates it with His own.

Heaven extends throughout everything, including multiple universes; and even down to us on earth. It reaches to us when we are obedient to God. To be sure, it is weaker here than virtually anywhere outside of hell. But those of us who choose God's way will find that when we leave our mortal existence, that we come from (and in reality) never left heaven, once we gave our heart to the Lord. Saint Paul wrote:

*"I know a man in Christ fourteen years before—whether in the body, I do not know, or out of the body, I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third Heaven"*  
(2 Corinthians 12:2).

In the New Testament, the Greek word for sky ("οὐρανός" [Strong's G3772])<sup>14</sup> is generally used for heaven, with no distinction as to which level; and no distinction between height, atmosphere, or space. Some scholars say this refers to the terrestrial, telestial,<sup>15</sup> and celestial heavens; or the atmosphere, space, and heaven proper.

In his book *Demons, an Eyewitness Account*,<sup>16</sup> Howard O. Pittman recounts a near death experience where he saw Satan and his demons in the second heaven (pg. 10). In *Visions Given to Annie*,<sup>17</sup>

14 Strong, James, III John R. Kohlenberger, and James A. Swanson. *The Strongest Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. 2002.

15 A religious term from Mormonism that pertains to the lowest degree of glory.

16 Pittman, Howard O. *Demons: An Eyewitness Account*. 1985.

17 Schisler, Annie M. *Visions Given to Annie as Told to R. Edward Miller*. 1970.

R. Edward Miller confirms that the devil temporarily occupies the second heaven. He also writes that there are many levels to heaven, so I would discount the sky-space- heaven theory.

I have not seen heaven nor been given a revelation about it. Based on available firsthand accounts, my best understanding of the given information is that heaven is multi-dimensional, with many distinct levels. We are outside of heaven proper in one of many creations, and are just below the least of these levels. Higher levels are like layers of an onion; each successive level is greater than the one before it. However, their greatness in all degrees increases vastly from level to level.

Whether the size and scope increases logarithmically or geometrically or otherwise, I do not know. But the upper levels are so vast, that the entire universe we know would be so microscopically small as to be irrelevant there.

According to others such as Dr. Eby, earthly life mimics — in a crude and warped way — life in heaven. In heaven, there are also people, animals, and plants; and many more living things that are either inanimate here (like rocks, clouds, and streams), or they have no counterpart here, like angelic beings. People dwell in buildings and there are gardens, cities, and other constructions. People and angels eat and drink as we do, though I presume it is not a dire necessity, as it is here.

According to Annie Schilser's visions, heaven is really an extension of God which abounds with an endless variety of opportunities and environments for spiritual testing and development. There are also many places of creation and structures devised to give glory to God.

- *What is the fate of the souls of people who die before they are born; before they reach the age of accountability, or who never develop sufficient mental faculties to know right from wrong?*

The moment a human being is conceived, the body and soul are matched together. Whether the soul always fully enters the body, I do not know, for some part of the soul may also reside in heaven, while the rest abides in the body; or a soul may reside exclusively in the body. But some portion of the soul unites with the body.

A body cannot live long without the soul. It has been suggested by others that a fetus is viable in the womb without a soul because of its connection to the mother. I do not know if that is possible, but from the account of the Holy Spirit filling John the Baptist in the womb, it is apparent that the normal and intended case is for the spirit to unite with the body before birth.

Until and unless a person reaches a state where they have sufficient mental capacity to choose right or wrong and to accept or reject God, they automatically return to heaven upon death. A soul that cannot reject God cannot be damned. That is the default state.

The moment they make a decision to turn from selfless love and pursue a different path in life, they are on a course for hell. Only a conscious decision to repent and an effort to make restitution and reconciliation can change that. The age of accountability is typically between the ages of three and five; though mentally-deficient persons may reach that state either later, or never.

An interesting note is that some people's souls are fragmented into multiple personalities by extreme trauma or occult rites. Unless re-integrated, each personality is separately accountable to God. So, one fragment of the same soul may ultimately go to heaven, while another fragment may ultimately perish in hell. The best course is for the personality to be reintegrated and to accept the Christian faith.

- *What is the fate of people who live and die without ever hearing the gospel?*

Each person's situation is unique, and ultimately only God can

judge them. However, everyone who lives beyond the age of accountability is, at some point in their life, confronted by the Holy Spirit, with a choice of righteousness or sin. Though the manner and depth of the experience may vary, there are no exceptions. The individual is responsible for their response.

In the moments after death, God will reveal the whole matter and give some of those who have responded well to His Spirit, an understanding of the true nature of things and the opportunity to accept His grace, as He has done with me and with others. Those who have proven themselves lovers of sin will go straight to hell, with no such opportunity.

- *Why do good people appear to suffer for no apparent reason, and why do evil people appear to escape the logical or natural consequences of their sins?*

To properly understand this, a distinction must be made between purposeful suffering and purposeless suffering, earthly rewards, and eternal rewards.

What makes this difficult to understand is the mindset that (1) this life is all there is to existence, and (2) that suffering is undesirable. An evil person cannot participate in building the kingdom of heaven; only a righteous person can. But an evil person can be used of God to build the kingdom of Satan, which God uses to test and develop His saints.

Evil people will have no heavenly reward, and receive all the reward they will have for serving God's purposes in this life. They will fully bear the consequences of their sin in hell. And if they should repent and change their ways, then Christ will have borne the consequences Himself.

For good people who suffer, it is a different equation. Their reward is not in material things or earthly honors. Purposeful suffering in

this life creates true riches which are character development and heavenly advancement and honors. There are only three things of value that can be taken from this life into the next:

- 1, Obedient service to God
2. Improvements to our person
3. Good things we do for others (who are also going to heaven)

An evil person who repents on their deathbed enters into eternal life bankrupt. One of the elect who dies an anonymous pauper may be immensely rich and honored in heaven. However, there are also good people who suffer for their ancestral and national sins because they have not repudiated these.

The nature of sin and righteousness are such that successive generations may inherit divine judgment against their ancestors. Finally, people can suffer from the errors of other people or be directly attacked by the devil, in opposition to God. These are people who have not taken care to protect themselves from both situations.

- *Why is the biblical account of creation so vastly different from the scientific explanation for how the universe and life began; especially in terms of the timespans involved?*

The biblical account of creation is accurate and the timeline correct. The earth was created in 4003 B.C. The heavens were created during the seven literal days of creation afterwards. In approximately 2347 B.C., the great flood occurred, with a concurrent massive storm of ice created by subterranean water ejected high into the atmosphere, and the collapse of a massive cloud that surrounded the earth, which covered the northern and southern hemispheres with a deep layer of ice.

Massive quantities of rock and sediment were dislodged (largely from between the Americas, Europe, and Africa, as the once-united

continents broke up). This mixed with the waterborne remains of drowned plants and animals to create the fossil record. The fallen ice created the appearance of several ice ages as it partially melted.

At the same time as the flood, a spiritual veil was established around the world; partially separating it from the full presence of God. This resulted in a rapid attenuation in the divine life force that had previously fostered abundant life on the planet; resulting in the current, relatively barren conditions. This is illustrated in the exponential decline in the lifespans of the patriarchs between Noah (950), Shem (600), Eber (464), Jacob (147), Moses (120), and King David (69).

Concurrent with this, the speed of light and other physical constants changed. The speed of light declined exponentially; with related changes in physical properties of matter. Essentially, the earth went from a living planet to a (relatively) dead one. (The change in the speed of light is illustrated in Job 38:32, where it is clear that before the invention of the telescope, Job was able to discern that the individual stars in, and the unusual independent motions of the constellation *Arcturus* were visible to the naked eye. (Not so now.)

The approximately ten-fold decrease in the speed of light accounts for the significant errors by physicists in formulating the age of the universe; and for interpreting data like the rate of radioactive decay. The appearance of the stars and galaxies around us are vastly different because of this.

- *What is the nature of the soul – does it have structure and functions like the body, and can a soul be destroyed?*

The human soul is multidimensional and co-exists both in our bodies on earth, and — at least for believers — extends through to other “planes” and into heavenly realms, much as a three-dimensional object exists in multiple two-dimensional planes. Its external shape can be altered at will, and the human form is an adaptation specific for mortal life and only one of several possible variations.



A sphere or cloud is the fundamental or natural shape of the spirit. On each heavenly plane where God grants a person access, the soul may grow in size and functionality within the restrictions characteristic to that plane. Unlike a static three-dimensional object which can manifest only in fixed ways on two-dimensional planes; a soul can have entirely different forms on different planes, and each manifestation can engage in entirely independent activities on different planes. It is like having multiple bodies that can be used simultaneously for different purposes.

The soul has both external and internal structure, with a significant number of analogies to the human body. However, the soul has a tremendous capacity to acquire and develop a multitude of functions and features beyond the basic ones necessary for independent existence, that God imparts to the human soul upon initial formation. Many of these have no counterpart in the physical body.

This would be like adding wings, radar, projectile weaponry, or additional memory and processing capacity to a human body, as has been proposed in some technical literature. The soul can also develop a nearly unlimited capacity for operating with intelligence and power. This, I think, is one of the central reasons why sinners must be destroyed in hell. Satan was among the sons of God, and the damage done by one of his kind gone wrong is beyond description. More like him is unthinkable!

As an aside, animals have souls too, and angelic beings are also spiritual entities which closely resemble humans, in form and function. But while both of these are made from spirit derived from God; both of these lack the fragment of God's essence He gives to humans, and also certain capacities for spiritual development which are unique to humans.

The composition of man's spiritual being generally consists of three distinct parts: the heart, which is essentially a fragment of God, and about which He forms the rest; the soul, which contains the mind,

and which is the seat of reason, will, and memory; and the spirit, which contains the “support” functions for the senses: locomotion, nourishment, defense, etc. It is the heart which will ultimately return to God, when our course of divine development and perfection is complete. The soul and spirit may remain to provide a vessel in which we may manifest our person, external to God, and to interface with the body.

The soul and spirit of the damned are destroyed in hell; essentially erasing the personality, and with it, any hope of having a glorified body. The heart, which is eternal and indestructible, returns to God, with all trace of that person erased. If this appears to put a finite limit on the suffering of the damned in hell, that is incorrect.

Just as heaven is eternal and independent of time; hell has an eternity of its own that is separate from heaven. While the damned suffer from their perspective for all of their eternity; it is (from heaven’s perspective) no time at all. So, the damned are destroyed and their “heart” is returned to God, instantaneously, from His perspective. Some mathematicians state that there are greater and lesser infinities. Similarly, there are greater and lesser eternities.

God exists outside of time. From the perspective of the damned, they suffer forever, even though from God’s perspective, it is over when time runs its course. Understandably, this is a difficult concept to grasp. I have been told by mathematicians that there are greater and lesser infinities. God outlasts time; it is something like that.

- *How did Jesus transmute water into wine and multiply the loaves and fishes?*

Jesus was one with God, not separated by sin. He had repudiated the sins of His mortal ancestors and was Himself, sinless. Therefore, on earth He had full access to love and receive love from God, and therefore the power of life. He was an open channel and a fit and functional vessel for God’s will to operate through. He did not do

miracles in His own power, but acted as an instrument of God.

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,  
and the Word was God (John 1:1).*

The material world was created by God (through Christ) and is responsive to God's will, which is imparted through the words which God speaks. God's words are, in fact, derived from His own being, and communicate His will to His creation. As a human, Jesus had learned the very important and critical ability to listen for, and hear God's words, and become responsive to them. (God speaks to all of us constantly at multiple levels, but we either cannot hear Him or refuse to listen.)

As the sounding board of a musical instrument gathers and amplifies to tones imparted to it; Jesus received, interpreted, and amplified the words of God and then imparted them to their objective in the material world. The words of God convey with them, information and power (they are essentially light, although there are other kinds of light than the photons science has identified). A material object which receives the words of God in this fashion must obey them.

In the case of changing water to wine, God's words provided the energy and information to rearrange the atomic structure and the molecules of water into a higher (more complex) state: namely, wine. This could also theoretically be done by brute force, in a very powerful and sophisticated nuclear reactor.

But divine love peacefully and gently compels the subatomic particles to revise their "dance" into another pattern. Specifically, subatomic particles are composed in turn of what scientists call "strings" and "membranes." Essentially, these are energy in the form of vibrations, at different frequencies. The vibrations are very complex and contain the information which defines the nature of the matter that is created.

God is able to speak to matter in such a way that His words alter these vibrations and change the state of the matter; including from simple to complex, and lesser to greater quantity. To transform from a lower to a higher state also requires energy to be input. This energy is the life that is generated from love, and manifests in the material realm as energy, which in turn is interchangeable with matter. Thus, energy is derived from life, not vice-versa. That is why, in God's perfect order, all matter is alive.

The multiplication of the fishes and loaves is a variation on this; where the few fishes and loaves provided were multiplied because of the compassion Jesus had for the multitude (Matthew 9:36; 15:32). That divinely-sourced love imparted the information and energy from heaven necessary to multiply the food to provide abundantly for the multitude. It is not explicitly stated in the plain text of the Scripture, but it may be implied that Christ let the Father love the people through Him to manifest these things.

- *Who or what is the Holy Spirit?*

This one question I am still carefully considering. Error regarding the Holy Spirit is a very serious matter, so all I can safely say is that He is a distinct person in the triune God, with male gender. As His title implies, He is Holy. If He has a name, it is not something revealed to us yet. The Scriptures also tell us that He acts as our helper and comforter.

Believers may be baptized into the Holy Spirit, which may either come upon them or indwell them. He communicates revelations to us, including prophecies and memories. The Holy Spirit has several distinct roles, as stated in the Scripture: counselor, comforter, helper, intercessor and interpreter; reminder and teacher, guide in all truth with wisdom, and revealer of things to come; bestower of spiritual gifts, judge of sinners; source of knowledge, wisdom, revelation and power; the seal of God's redemption in our lives who renews us and gives us eternal life; and who sanctifies us and enables us to

serve God's purposes with good deeds and spiritual fruit. I will not speculate beyond these.

- *What are demons and where do they come from?*

Demons are not, as some assert, fallen angels. Demons are not created by God. They are offspring of the devil. However, since he lacks true generative and creative power, the devil must use living creatures in the process of creating demons. Therefore, they are a byproduct of illicit sex and false worship (which are, for spiritual purposes, interchangeable). Habitual sin causes them to be conceived and nourished by a human or animal soul until they reach a state where they can exist independently of their host.

Demons are illegitimate, unclean spirits, and are therefore rejected by God; and naturally gravitate to service to the devil. Lacking the ability to obtain sustenance from God; they prey on living creatures, men, animals, and plants. Because of their perverse origins, they are incomplete and defective. That does not mean they are necessarily stupid, weak, or particularly vulnerable. Demons may be extremely overdeveloped in a given function. However, they are all critically weak and vulnerable to the Holy Spirit.

- *Why do we pray?*

Prayer is not, as some assert, a mechanism by which people invoke God to do our will — though many try to misuse it in this manner. Prayer is the act of petitioning God to accomplish His will through us. Just as God's words convey information and power to transform His creation; our words also have power — both for good and evil. (The devil imparts power to the words spoken by his followers too!) *The Lord's Prayer* is a classic example of this.

Really effective prayer is done in tandem with the Holy Spirit; following His lead in choosing the subject and content of our prayers. The first and foremost object of prayer is to transform the person

praying into the likeness of our Lord. After that, prayer's dual purpose is to invoke God's will and oppose the devil's purposes.

Speaking prayer without being empowered by His Spirit is no more effective than reading a book aloud. Praying in an ungodly spirit such as malevolence or greed is worse, for it serves the enemy's purposes. The strength of a given prayer is directly proportional to the true passion of and love for God in the person's heart — not their sincerity or eloquence.

- *Where is hell and what are the criteria for being sent there?*

The most basic definition of hell is the absence of God. It is characterized by qualities that are diametrically opposed to those of heaven. Therefore, wherever chaos, injustice, waste, hatred, perversion, and like things are present; in broad terms, hell is there too. God also created three places of confinement for the unredeemed dead, the devil, and the angels that rebelled with him: paradise, Abaddon, and Gehenna (the pit).

Paradise was where the righteous dead awaited Christ's death and resurrection. They were released from Paradise when Christ resurrected Himself from the dead and led them into heaven. Abaddon is the place of confinement and torment for the devil, his angels, and the damned. It is a temporary holding place until Judgment Day.

Demons and the devil may come and go from there, but the fallen angels and the damned cannot leave. On Judgment Day, the devil and all his followers, including the fallen angels and the damned, will be sent to Gehenna for truly terrible torment and destruction.

I do not know the latitude or longitude or the depth beneath the earth of hell. A good guess would be near Mt. Sinai, since that is near where the earth swallowed up Dathan and Abiram, and Korah and his men, who fell directly into hell.

The basic criterion for being sent to hell is rebellion against, or rejection of God. At the most fundamental level, God is love and His will is for His creation to receive His love and return it back to Him freely. Listening expectantly for God's voice to reveal His will, and obedience to that voice is the natural manifestation of that love.

So, sin is responding to God's love with indifference, or even hatred, which manifests as disobedience. The two commandments from which all other commandments are derived, are to love God and love your neighbor. Therefore, anything that deviates from that is sin. Technically, there are neutral actions which are not sin; and there are common, minor errors and sins that do not merit punishment in hell. However, anything that falls between total, selfless love, and mortal sins are tragically missed opportunities to advance in God's purposes.

- *Is there a true Church on earth that fully and accurately preaches and practices the gospel and properly represents God?*

Not that I have found in institutional churches, but I believe I have met individuals from many variants of Christianity — independent, as well as denominational — that do demonstrate the selfless love and obedience to God that defines the true Church. House churches seem to have a disproportionate number of these, so it exists in the form of individual believers yielded and obedient to the Holy Spirit.

Given 2.5% of the world population is saved (on average); approximately 30% of the global population is Christian and roughly 2% of the general population is mentally incompetent and roughly 4% die before age five. Then, 6% get a “free pass” to heaven, and of the remainder, only true Christians or 2.5/30 or 8% of professing Christians are actually prepared for eternity in heaven! This indicates an abysmal failure rate for any organized Church.

- *Why don't Christians manifest the miraculous powers recorded of Jesus and the saints in the Scriptures?*

“Christians” do not automatically manifest divine power because in the first place, most people who call themselves Christians are not really Christ-like. Most of these are “cultural Christians,” with no real spiritual involvement; and a large majority of the rest are apostate or backslidden.

Of those who have a meaningful, spiritual relationship with God, most have not unreservedly given themselves to God, fully repented of their sins, divested themselves of curses, and learned to hear and obey the voice of God. It also helps to ask for the respective gifts and to receive them by impartation from someone who already has them. But the latter point is not absolutely necessary.

• *Is there such a thing as reincarnation?*

In a word, no. Saint Paul wrote to the Jewish believers all that should be necessary to say:

*“And as it is reserved to men once to die, and after this, Judgment” (Hebrews 9:27).*

Despite this, there is a huge body of literature purporting to provide evidence for reincarnation and whole religions revolve around it, but these are lies straight from the devil in hell.

Accounts of reincarnation are typically false memories manufactured by demons who either invent them, or derive them from the memories of individuals known to them. They then plant these ideas and false memories into the minds of impressionable individuals.

Some accounts are the pure fantasies of gullible people. Others are maliciously contrived fables used to deceive and control the unwary and ignorant. The goal of this is to give people a false sense of security that causes them to be resigned to their role in life, and ultimately leads them to delay preparing for eternity until it is too late.



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## Chapter 20 – Epilogue

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After the near death experience, there were three things foremost in my mind. The first was cleaning up the unrepented sin in my life. So, I contacted all of the people (or their heirs) that I could find that I had sinned against, to offer my apologies and make restitution.

There was a definite pattern I observed in this. Real Christians were glad to receive my apologies and arrange to receive restitution. The rest were either indifferent or hostile to my overtures. I spent more than two years searching down people and making monetary or in-kind restitution for my wrongs.

I expected God to bless me financially to make this easier, but if anything, our family finances were tighter than normal. Yet, I found that we could manage and make these sacrificial efforts, although I did have to make amends in installments. This showed me that there is really no excuse for not making restitution, in addition to apologizing and asking forgiveness. This is a strong argument for not putting such things off.

Restitution takes a good deal of time and effort to do properly. Proper biblical restitution is full reparation of material damages plus a fifth part (20%). For pain and suffering, a sincere apology should suffice, but more is recommended.

Harm to a reputation must be repaired to the fullest extent reasonably possible. For example, if a person is viciously and wrongly maligned in a front page article in the media, a single line retraction buried in an obscure section is entirely inadequate. In the case where restitution cannot be made to the victim or their heirs, it must be made to the Lord (Numbers 5:6-8).

Making amends to unbelievers was quite difficult. Even some

close family members did not want to forgive me; and in certain cases, were upset at even being reminded of past hurts. I was often disappointed at their indifference to my efforts, and disbelief in my explanation for the source of my motivation.

I can say even one such individual died of lung cancer; adamantly refusing to believe me or accept my attempts at reconciliation. They even refused my prayers for their recovery! This caused me deep concern, both for them and for me. This situation firmed my resolve to avoid making more mistakes with people; especially those who do not know Christ. In the few cases I could not get resolution; I just had to give the matter over to God to work out.

The next thing that caught my attention was that I discovered a new sensitivity to people who also had a near death experience. When I was in their presence, I would feel a unique tingling sensation on the back of my head and a “feeling” that is difficult to describe, that told me they were like me.

As I learned to identify such people, I would try to elicit their stories from them. Not surprisingly, most were reluctant to tell me their stories. As I learned later, the common result of sharing such stories is rejection, disbelief, and even hostility. People who have not had such experiences have great difficulty relating to them because of the implication that they need to change their ways and because it is so alien to their world view.

Not a few are inclined to attribute the whole experience to an unusual dream, altered state of consciousness, or even mental illness. For that reason, those who shared my experience learned not to tell others. However, when they learned that I was sympathetic to them, they would relax and tell me amazing stories of the afterlife.

What really surprised me was how commonly people who have either had a near death experience or a comparable visionary experience are found. A rough guess based on my informal observations

would put them at about 1-2% of the general population!

The third and most profound change was a deliverance from demonization and the activation of spiritual gifts. The feeling of an evil presence within and without me was wholly gone. I also began having vivid dreams of future events; some of which have been realized. When listening to sermons or reading the Scriptures, I found my discernment of spiritual truths was greatly heightened.

Sometimes I would even find myself being prompted to read the very Bible passages during the week, that the preacher would teach on in church on the next Lord's Day. This happened too frequently to be merely coincidence.

Then there was the gift of healing. When I laid hands on, or even prayed over the telephone for sick or injured people, some were instantly healed. Some of the more profound cases involved stopping bleeding instantly, relief from paralysis due to a spinal cord cyst; and in the most interesting case, an apparent cure from widespread, terminal cancer!

Strangely, most of the people I met who were ill, refused my offer to pray for them; even fellow church members. They were so sure that God does not heal through prayer, that they would not even try. I suppose some of them were also reacting to the fact that it was I who offered to do so. And, remembering my former conduct, rejected the idea that God would use me for such things. Others senselessly preferred to go under the surgeon's knife rather than seek healing on God's terms of faith and repentance.

The instances of disbelief and rejection — especially within the Church — were very disappointing; even crushing to me. With each instance of rejection, I could feel the power and the desire to heal diminish, and the evil presence return stronger with each rejection. Finally, I stopped even looking for opportunities and offering to intervene. The gift gradually diminished from disuse, and eventually

could only be summoned to service after much repentance, fasting, and prayer, if at all.

Even when I did do this, I was surprised and disappointed that those who were healed were typically ungrateful and did not give glory to God. In such cases, the illness that they were healed of returned with a vengeance! Fasting and prayer for days at a time are not things I enjoy and are difficult to arrange with family and professional responsibilities.

So, I had begun to feel that my efforts may have been in vain for a few — in which case, divine healing did not appear to bring them closer to God and they did not seem to make the necessary efforts to retain and sustain their miracles. This is a sad affair for the Christian, because healing is God's will, and well within our ability to obtain and maintain.

It astonished me that they would pay a physician great sums of money, and often endure significant pain and inconvenience while diligently following the physician's instructions to obtain healing in conventional ways. But when it was freely and miraculously given, they showed no thankfulness and little regard!

Worse, at least one individual who was healed even denied it had ever happened! I still cannot understand how a person's mind works that they could forget such a thing. Then again, look how the Israelites forgot the mighty works of God in the wilderness!

*“And he said to him, If they will not hear Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if one from the dead should rise” (Luke 16:31).*

After I returned, I found it quite difficult to raise my children in the faith, due to their mother's interference in church attendance and home instruction. Christ had not given me any overt advice on this matter before I returned, so I sought counseling on this from the

church leadership. However, they were not very helpful.

Then someone told me about help they received through prophetic ministry. On this lead, I was able to take them to a prophetic ministry in Austin, Arise Christian Fellowship. There, God gave prophetic words regarding my three children. This helped me to identify my children's divine callings.

It was interesting to note that my daughters received prophetic words that were quite profound, relative to their brother. This difference led me to seek prophetic words from several sources, though this generally followed the same pattern. Clearly, even our children may have remarkably different destinies.

I do not think my decision to return to this life was wrong, but the outcome will require significant time and effort to be fully resolved. I pray and continue to believe God for a good outcome. And I use my additional time on earth for my own development and good works.

I definitely do not want to go to heaven with neither rank nor reward achieved here! Moreover, I believe if God had a purpose for me returning, He had a plan for realizing both the salvation of my children and a reward for my life lived right. I know nothing can ultimately thwart His purposes in the lives of those who are obedient to Him.

A final word here to the reader is this. I have read many books on spiritual subjects and always found something helpful in each one. Yet, in none of them — except the Bible — did I find something that really transformed me. I expect that in these words, some people will find encouragement, warning, and even good, practical advice.

Yet, my story is not a substitute for the plain truth of the Scriptures. Nothing I relate should become the basis for a person's faith or give them an excuse to diminish or reject the true and holy teachings of the prophets and apostles.

There is no inerrant revelation in these pages that sheds any more light on the truth, than the necessary revelation in Scripture. If it appears that anything I write conflicts with the Bible, then I defer to the Scriptures.

It is my hope that what I write will direct the reader back to the Scriptures and to the Holy Spirit; for in them are the same truths and more, and better than presented here. Were it not for the situation that many of us are in need such writings as this to direct us back to the true source; this book would be irrelevant and unnecessary.

It is my hope that this will be the result and that the reader will be encouraged and edified for having read my account. We are all expected to testify of the works God has done in our lives, and to encourage each other to live for Him.

“How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,  
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!”

– *From “How Firm A Foundation,”*  
*by George Keith and Anne Steele*

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