

Δεφινιτε Σιγν Ποστο Οφ Τηε Ενδ

Gene Hawkins

“But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” Matt. 24:37 “The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.” Gen. 6:11

Jesus reference to the days of Noe, are but a part of His answer to the disciples question at the beginning of Matthew 24, “...and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” (age) V. 3 Those same days are described in Genesis 6 as being both corrupt (“to decay, i.e. ruin--batter, cast off, utterly, waste,”) and violent. (violent, maltreat, take away violently, damage, cruel.)

Jesus seems to enlarge on the inward, out of control, corruption of man, as He says: “For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” V. 38,39

The apostle Paul defines both, the corruption and violence of this end time, declaring that “.... in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, (without self control) fierce, (savage) despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.” II Tim. 3:1-5

Some may look on these words and claim they simply show that “...there is no new thing under the sun.” Eccl. 1:9 Indeed, scripture does bear out tremendous violence during the times of the kings when men hungry for power would stop at nothing, to achieve their goals. Secular history is likewise, filled with the same scenario as multiplied conspiracies violently removed one head of state and replaced him with another. We have heard over the years that such conditions

have always existed in this earth, and the only reason we hear so much about it now is because of a global communication, which did not exist heretofore. However, scripture is very plain to record that, though every dispensation ends with the judgment of God upon it, He deemed the world worthy of destruction in only two of them: Noah's age of conscience, and the present Church age. Thus, Jesus Himself likens the end of this Church Age to the days of Noah, proclaiming, "Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left." V. 40-41 There are many who use these words to describe the "rapture" of the Church, but that would be completely out of the context in which they are written. The little word "then" signifies "at that time," meaning the time in answer to the disciples question, "what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" It will be a day of total destruction; days wherein no flesh should survive except they be shortened. V. 22. Verse 39 tells us that those of Noah's day, were completely oblivious to the coming judgment, for they "...knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." There is absolutely no indication that those "taken away" in the time of Noah, were in any wise taken away to heaven. Quite the contrary: for they were taken away by the waters of destruction. Likewise, the scene described here will happen "then" or well after the Church is already in heaven, when the unbeliever is taken away in judgment and the one "left" will remain, even as did Noah inside the ark, to be a part of the new millennial kingdom that Jesus will usher in, **after** the fullness of judgment has been poured out.

The key for us, is Jesus' assertion in v. 24, "For as in the days that were **before** the flood....." Whether men want to admit it or not, we are in days immediately prior, to the destruction of this world, and news items from around the world leave no doubt that we are living in very corrupt, violent and destructive times; times wherein the governments of this world are proving themselves powerless to find answers.

Iran and her nuclear program are still very much in the news and it is evident that she has no intention of abandoning

it. The recent assassination of top nuclear scientist Massoud Ali-Mohammadi outside his home has touched off a firestorm of accusations and denials by Iran, Israel, and the United States. According to a Washington Times Editorial, "Iran has accused Israel and the United States of assassinating Mr. Ali-Mohammadi in an attempt to disrupt Tehran's nuclear program." The World Jewish Congress reports, however, that "The slain man was described by state media as a nuclear scientist who **did not** work for the Atomic Energy Organization, which is at the center of Iran's controversial nuclear program." Commentary by the 'Washington Post' indicates that Ali Mohammadi was part of a regional research project based in Jordan and operating under United Nations auspices and was acquainted with Israeli scientists also involved in this project."

The Washington Times editorial goes on to say that "Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu gave the Obama White House a year to make progress with Iran, and instead, the situation has grown worse. Israel repeatedly has stated that it will not tolerate a nuclear Iran, and the Jewish state is receiving significant behind-the-scenes encouragement from Sunni Arab states wary of the possibility of Iranian regional hegemony." Furthermore, "The Obama administration's diplomatic outreach effort is dead, too. Iran announced in November that it planned to construct 10 new uranium enrichment facilities, a development former International Atomic Energy Agency chief Hans Blix called "puzzling" because "even big countries don't have ten enrichment plants." Last month, top-secret technical notes from Iran's nuclear program were leaked that detailed research on a neutron initiator, the triggering mechanism for an atomic bomb." The entire controversy, and powerlessness over this situation with Iran, seems to be summed up in the words of Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff who said "that Iran developing a nuclear weapon is "potentially a very, very destabilizing outcome" but taking military action to prevent it "also has a very, very destabilizing outcome." Washington prefers the third way, a mix of sanctions and diplomacy, in the hope of somehow preserving stability. But soon, the choice

will be made by others, and the real question is what role the United States will play when war comes.”

There is also great unrest in Afghanistan, and President Obama was hard pressed to do a balancing act between accepting the Nobel Peace Prize and ordering additional troops into that country. Since that time, 30,000 American troops have been added bringing the total to 98,000. Nato is also sending an additional 7,000 reinforcements. Despite all this, the goal being to eradicate the Taliban and win the war on terror, violence has continued to plague this region.

What has come to be known as “domestic violence” has also greatly increased in recent months and years. Spousal and child abuse is rampant reinforcing Paul’s assertion that men are indeed without even natural affection and are completely out of control. The Kansas City area was absolutely stunned just a few short years ago when a pregnant woman was slain in order to rip her womb open and steal the unborn baby. We cannot even conceive of such wickedness but the facts remain, to bear out the absolute authenticity of God’s Word.

Violence also prevails in events happening completely beyond the control of man. News headlines have held Haiti centerstage in recent days because of the massive earthquake which has devastated that small island. Secretary of State Clinton said “It is biblical, the tragedy that continues to stalk Haiti and the Haitian people,” This was in reference to the “long history of natural disasters plaguing the Caribbean country.” We do not know exactly what Mrs. Clinton was talking about in regard to this being “biblical” unless she was recognizing the awesome power that only God can unleash. Evangelist Pat Robertson has also drawn tremendous and widespread criticism for his assertion “that Haitians had been cursed after they "swore a pact to the devil" in the late 1700s in order to gain freedom from French colonial authorities.”

We heard similar comments from some after Katrina roared through New Orleans, and some devout Christians, who also had to endure the devastation of that city, most assuredly agreed that New Orleans was, and continues to be, steeped in corruption. However, Jesus Himself warns us against jumping to judgmental conclusions when such disasters strike. The

story is found in Luke 13. "There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." V. 1-5 It is rather enlightening that these comments immediately follow Jesus scathing rebuke in Luke 12 when He assailed the Jews because they knew how to predict the weather, but were oblivious to the time then present. "Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?" V. 56 His Words are most applicable to this present time as men simply refuse to acknowledge that the signs of the coming of Jesus are all around us. It is not a time to point fingers of judgment, as though some peoples were more wicked than others, for the indictment of Matthew 24 includes the whole world. It is rather a time to ensure that our own hearts are looking and longing for the coming of Jesus. Such a message is extremely unpopular in our day as the nations are working feverishly around the world to restore order and stop the corruption and violence that plagues them. Even now, the nations are, as they should, clamoring to get aid to Haiti. But scripture is very plain that there will come a day when such aid will in no wise be available. Jesus describes the time in which we are living as the "beginning of sorrows." The word sorrow is a term used to describe a woman locked in the throes of childbirth. The birth pangs begin somewhat mild and sporadic, but as the time for delivery draws near, those contractions become much more frequent and severe. Thus these "natural disasters" will, according to scripture, become more frequent and much more intense, to the point that the nations will in no wise be able to supply aid to all of them. Many, even in the religious community, do not want to hear such words, for their agenda in the "spiritual sense" is much like the political aspirations of the nations. Both seem bent on

complete revival. God's Word declares otherwise in the second chapter of II Thessalonians. "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day (the day of the fullness of "our gathering together unto him," V. 1) shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;..." V. 3 This simply means that the antichrist must be revealed and judged, before the restoration for which all the world longs, will come to pass. The "spiritual revival" so worked for, and hoped for, in the religious community will not happen until God does it through the nation of Israel in the millennium.

As Jesus said, it is high time to discern the time in which we live today, a day when He could come at any moment and transport us to glory. The theme of Paul's message to the Church is not to save the world from destruction. We are rather told to make preparation for departure out of it, even as Noah was instructed to build the ark, offering a way of escape, a beautiful type of deliverance through Christ Jesus. We must not be deceived by a wrong agenda, but are rather to be prepared so that we are not caught unawares when Jesus makes His first appearance as The Lord of Glory. "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober." I Thess. 5:4-6

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Once upon a time I planned to be
An artist of celebrity.
A song I thought to write some day,
And all the world would homage pay.
I longed to write a noted book,
But what I did was - learn to cook.
For life with simple tasks is filled,
And I have done, not what I willed,
Yet when I see boys' hungry eyes
I'm glad I make good apple pies!

-- anon

BE STILL.....AND KNOW

Paul N. Smith

“BE STILL, AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD: I WILL BE EXALTED AMONG THE HEATHEN, I WILL BE EXALTED IN THE EARTH” - Psalm 46:10

This forty-sixth Psalm may be divided into three divisions:

God's Omnipotence - Verses 1 - 3

God's Omnipresence - Verses 4 - 7

God's Omniscience - Verses 8 - 11

In the first portion, God's might and power are contrasted with all other forces. The greatest trouble means nothing to God. Though the earth be moved away, the mountains cast into the sea, the waters roar, the mountains shake; yet, He is greater than all. His voice of power can put everything back into its proper place. He is a very present help; that is, He is always here. Whatever trouble crosses our threshold, we can say, "God is here." Now! He is present! We think sometimes, "Perhaps He will come in for us tomorrow." He is here, now!

Each division of this Psalm ends with "Selah." This word signifies to weigh, to put a value upon. Thus, we are to pause and meditate on that truth that has been presented. Perhaps we are in a battle. Pause, and consider the great power of God which is unleashed in His Word. Faith is the ignition which sets this might in motion,. The Word of God means very little unless we meditate upon each portion we read. As we let the truth infuse our being, it brings to us the reality of its substance. At last it awakens us to the fact that, "This is mine; it belongs to me!"

The second division gives us assurance that God's Presence can be felt at all times. The river of God's Spirit flows through the avenues of our souls, refreshing the weary of heart. Though trouble may rage within and without, we know that "God is in the midst (heart) of her: she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early." He is never too far away, to miss a cry for help. David exclaims in the 139th Psalm, "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from Thy Presence?" The answer is obvious.

The third division arrested our attention. Here most wonderfully portrayed is God's wisdom in all His ways with us. It takes a long time for us to realize the immeasurable wisdom which God displays toward us. At the outset, the Psalmist says, "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations He hath made in the earth." We are the works of the Lord today. Come, look at what God is doing. We are too often concerned with what we are doing. It seems much more important than the silent steady work which is going on within us. We mortals must see something. We are occupied with our own endeavors. We think God is pleased with our great display of energy.

God does not need our help. He may instruct and guide us to do something; but our responsibility is to listen to His instructions. We are important to Him, just so long as we are able to take criticism and instruction. We may even realize that the Lord is working in us, but we feel He must hurry. We fret, we stew, we fume, we fuss; but God takes His own time, and we learn to follow Him. Have you ever tried to tell God what He must do, and also when? I hear many people echo, "Yes." God cannot use us when we are full of anxiety or restlessness. Thus, we understand the words, "What desolation He hath made in the earth!"

He tears down all our well-meaning endeavors. He makes desolations of our plans. Our works, which seemed so beautifully constructed, crumble at the first wind of adversity. Our resolutions so sturdily erected, bend to the ground when temptation's tempest is unleashed. There comes a time when we ask, "Isn't there something I can do right?" We become desolate - barren; and our trembling cry reaches to God's understanding and wise heart. It is then that we begin to learn about His working. Ours is not important. Our childish traits begin to disappear. We learn that we do not have the wisdom or strength to do what our Father does. But, oh, how we tried! Father's shoes do not fit our feet. Saul's armor impeded our effectiveness.

Before we learn all this, there is a terrible struggle within us. We find that we are not only battling ourselves, but we fight even God! We resist His ways with us. But, "He maketh wars to cease." Peace always follows conflict. James shouts, "From whence come wars and fightings among you?" The Spirit and the flesh engage in a conflict until one is

overcome. We rise to the defense of our pride and ambitions. We endeavor to build up the things which God tears down. We hold to our own goodness and human righteousness; not knowing that it stinks, and God wants to throw it on the dung pile. We hold to the filth we have become accustomed to; our strongholds of false ideas and unrighteous ideals must remain erect. By our attitude and action, we say, "No, Lord, you have no right to destroy what is mine." "He maketh wars to cease."

"He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder."

Oh, yes, our weapons are even made useless. We cannot shoot our arrows at God; He breaketh the bow. We are unable to shoot our darts of criticism at others. When God takes over in our lives, He brings us to utter desolation - ruins all around. We cease to protest to Him any longer. We have no more strength to resist. The spear we used so effectively on others is split. The sharpness is gone. We realize then, that the sword which the Lord uses is sufficient for every situation. "Come, behold the works of the Lord." This is His responsibility. Leave hands off. If God is not able to take care of His own affairs, who is?

He is able to make overcomers out of others without our help. Our rules are not always His. We cannot demand perfection from the other fellow, until we are perfect ourselves. And even then, it is God's business. We do not need our bows and arrows, or our spears. God takes away our fighting spirit - our natural energy and fleshly ambition. We have to go down to nothing before God can use us. We cannot direct others through force. That comes by example. The struggle is always there at first. Wars will come until Jesus brings peace to our restless and troubled spirits. We learn to commit all things to the Lord first. He will always work things out for the best, and our eternal good. The cross must precede the crown; suffering before glory. In creation we read, "The evening and the morning were the first day." It is always that way with God. The night comes first; then the dawn. The devil's day begins in the morning and ends in the evening.

What does God say to all this? "Be still, and know that I am God." Yes, be still, restless spirit. Be still, troubled soul. These words, "Be still," mean "cause to fall, let go, cease." In Psalm 37:8 we read, "Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil." In the preceding verses, we are instructed to disregard the workers of iniquity. Their

actions are not to trouble us in any way. God will take care of them. Perhaps they are prospering, yet wicked; while we are in want. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him. Delight thyself also in the Lord." Be still.

In Exodus 5:2,8, 17 the Children of Israel were forced to busy themselves with making more bricks for Pharaoh. It did not matter to this ungodly man that they wanted to worship God. His reaction was: if they had time for that, then they were too idle. "They be idle; therefore they cry, saying, Let us go and sacrifice to our God." Doesn't that refrain sound familiar? Others would force us to keep busy, and neglect to worship God. The old man fancies that he can worship God by the works of his own hands. God says, "Be still!" Be idle awhile. Forget your work for God. Is all your activity really worthwhile? How much worship does God receive?

This word is used in Job 27:6. Bildad tried to make Job believe that his sickness was because of sin. Job knew he was righteous, and he declared, "My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me as long as I live." He knew that God was working something in his life, and he did not sin foolishly by taking things out of God's hands. He became still before God. If we know that we are in God's will, do not let anyone tell us we are not. If Job had agreed with Bildad, he would have sinned.

A most precious and instructive use of these words is found in Ezekiel 1:24,25. "And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of good waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of an host: when they stood, they let down their wings. And there was a voice from the firmament that was over their heads, when they stood, and had let down their wings."

There are times when we are to let down our wings. The living ones followed the Spirit. When the Spirit moved, they were active. When the Spirit stopped, they let down their wings and were quiet. When they heard God's Voice from Heaven, they became quiet, and listened to what He had to say. Our wings of activity may hide God's Voice. We cannot hear His tender words because of the noise of our wings. If we continue to move contrary to the Spirit's leading, He may clip our wings. We will be unable to fly for awhile. "Be still."

We learn why He wants us to be still - "Know that I am God." We might be shocked at the realization that we have

been our own god! When we take things into our own hands, we become our own gods. He says, "Be still, and know that I AM God." Oh, yes, we learn that eventually; but it takes some battles, and failures, and weakness, before we really know it. The Lord continues, "I will be exalted." He has the right to sit on the thrones of our hearts, because He bought us with His suffering and blood. We sometimes refuse Him that place; but He is neither happy nor satisfied until He is truly exalted within us, and neither are we.

The Psalm closes with this wonderful statement. "The God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah." Think. Why did the Holy Spirit write, "God of Jacob"? Oh, we must go back into Jacob's experiences to find that answer. For most of his life, Jacob was the supplanter. He was always "taking hold of the heel." In Genesis thirty-two we see that he, too, was beginning to learn to "be still." Our experiences parallel his. God had sheltered him up to this time. Everything he laid his hand to, it became his; but now was the time for him to realize that he must begin to walk by faith. He was soon to meet Esau, and he had made elaborate plans to appease him. There were fear, anxiety, and dread in his heart. "Would God be with him in this?" he may have wondered.

So, he goes alone over the ford Jabbok. This means, "pouring out." He, no doubt, "poured out" all that was in his heart. Meanwhile, God was pouring out all the refuse that would hinder his future progress. It is not defeat to be "poured out"; that only makes room for the spirit and power of Christ to be made manifest. Immediately, Jacob begins to cling to the heavenly Visitor. "Oh, don't leave me," he pleaded. "I'm so weak, I cannot go on by myself." The life of faith is strenuous, and it takes supernatural strength to walk by faith. Jacob clung to the security and sanctuary of his past experiences. "I will not let Thee go," he cries. But, he must. The Lord had to use force, and Jacob ever after was lame. We come to the end of our strength, and never regain it. God cripples us and never heals that lameness. We carry around with us forever, the knowledge of our own weakness. He does not always heal; but He never forgets to bless.

The Lord asked him, "What is thy name?" Jacob's answer proved that he did not yet realize his weakness. "I'm still the supplanter." The Lord said, "From now on, your name will be Israel - Prince with God." It was still some time before

Jacob realized God had named him Israel. We, too, try to hang on to our own ability and strength. We continue to hobble around carrying the burden of the whole world, but, we learn to "let go," and let God have His own way with us. It is His choice to use cripples for His glory. And, if that is His way, we may as well say "Amen" right at first and save ourselves a lot of struggling. So, "Be still, and know that I am God."

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### **Only Jesus**

In stillness I can hear Him; midst throngs I'm made aware  
He's ever present near me; ne'er a time He isn't there  
Each season of my life tho, lends a cross I've always known,  
When companion doth surround me, in truth I'm kept alone.

It matters not my being, that joy should fill my soul,  
Or flood-tides o'er take me, with sorrow, pain and woe.  
Tho' love be round about me, with family and with friend,  
Alas, I'm but a pilgrim, sojourning till life's end.

God purposed this; He knew 'twas best for me this way to take.  
I'm set apart; claimed by The King, 'tis all for Jesus sake.  
My path at times has lonely been, and often have I cried,  
And lo He whispers in my ear, "'tis all for you, my bride."

The Master of the universe He is, and yet He's chosen me  
To reign with Him in Heaven's court, throughout eternity.  
I'll run the race before me set, with patience to endure.  
My life, my heart, my faith like gold, by fire is made pure.

Marilyn Higgins

*No matter what my daily chores might be to earn my  
livelihood,  
Still may I see, my job, the real position that I hold, Is bringing  
Others, to the Master's fold..*

*--Salter*

## It is Well With My Soul

When peace like a river attendeth my way, When sorrows like seal  
billows roll –

Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, It is well, it is well  
with my soul.

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come, Let this bless  
assurance control, That Christ hath regard my helpless estate, And  
hath shed His own blood for my soul.

My sin – O the bliss of this glorious tho't- my sin not in part but the  
whole, Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more: Praise the Lord,  
praise the Lord, O my soul!

And, Lord haste the day when my faith shall be sight, The clouds be  
rolled back as a scroll: The trump shall resound and the Lord shall  
descend, "Even so"- it is well with my soul.

Chorus:

It is well, with my soul, It is well, It is well, it is well with my soul.

### **“It is Well With My Soul”**

*Author*-Horatio G. Spafford, 1828-1888

*Music*-Philip P. Bliss, 1838-1876

*Meter*- 11 8 11 9 with Chorus

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Psalm 46:1

This beloved hymn was written by a Presbyterian layman from Chicago named Horatio G. Spafford, who was born in North Troy, New York, on October 20, 1828. As a young man Spafford had established a successful legal practice in Chicago. Along with his financial success, he always maintained a keen interest in Christian activities. He enjoyed a close and active relationship with D. L. Moody and other evangelical leaders of that era. He was described by George Stebbins, a noted gospel musician, as a "man of unusual intelligence and refinement, deeply spiritual, and a devoted student of the Scriptures."

Some months prior to the Chicago Fire of 1871, Spafford had invested heavily in real estate on the shore of Lake Michigan, and his holdings were wiped out by this disaster. Desiring a rest for his wife and four daughters, as well as wishing to assist Moody and Sankey in one of their campaigns in Great Britain, Spafford planned a European trip for his family in November of 1873. Due to unexpected last minute business developments, he had to remain in Chicago, but he sent his wife and four daughters on ahead as scheduled on the S.S. *Ville du Havre*. He expected to follow in a few days. On November 22 the ship was struck by the *Locheam*, an English vessel, and sank in twelve minutes. Several days later the survivors were finally landed at Cardiff, Wales, and Mrs. Spafford cabled her husband, "Saved alone." Shortly afterward Spafford left by ship to join his bereaved wife. It is thought that on the sea near the area where his four daughters had drowned, Spafford penned this text whose words so significantly describe his own personal grief -- "When sorrows like sea billows roll ... " It is noteworthy, however, that Spafford's hymn does not dwell on the theme of life's sorrows and trials but focuses attention in the third stanza on the redemptive work of Christ and in the fourth stanza anticipates His glorious Second Coming. Humanly speaking, it is amazing that one could experience such personal tragedies and sorrows as Horatio Spafford did and still be able to say with such convincing clarity, "It is well with my soul."

In 1881 the Spafford's fulfilled a life-long interest in the Holy Land. They left Chicago with their two young daughters and a group of friends and settled in Jerusalem. There they established the American Colony which cared for the sick and destitute. Although Horatio died just eight years later at the age of sixty, this significant ministry continued. The story of this special family and their ministry is told in the book, *Our Jerusalem*, written by the Spafford's daughter, Bertha Spafford Vesper.

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## An Interesting Letter

Dear Folks,

What a pleasure to read the article posted on your website "The Veil Removed---A Sabbath Keeper Delivered" by W. E. Luther. As a former Saturday Sabbath keeper, many years ago, I learned that Jesus Christ is the ONE and ONLY REST and neither Sunday or Saturday have anything to do with the truth in Christ.

My wife and I were once members of the Worldwide Church of God/Ambassador College/Herbert W. Armstrong organization, which was a Saturday Sabbath group, as well as observers of Old Testament "Holydays" and many other strange teachings. Thankfully we were delivered from those false teachings, and took an exit in 1974, never to look back.

We know beyond doubt that Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, the Life, the Living Waters, the Bread of Life, the Manna from Heaven, the Light of the World, the Vine, the Door, the Resurrection, the Good Shepherd and the only Master. He NEVER taught "blessed are those who keep the Saturday Sabbath", but He did teach such teachings as "when I was hungry you fed Me", and "when I was thirsty you gave Me drink", and "when I was naked you clothed Me", and to do so even unto one of the least of the brethren is to do it unto Christ. He taught "blessed are the peacemakers", "blessed are the merciful", "blessed are the meek", and so forth. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you", and "love your neighbor as you love yourself.

I have never been able to understand why the minds of some people are opened to see the truth of these issues, while many others go to their graves, never set free from the captivity of such false beliefs as keeping the Saturday Sabbath, as if salvation hinges upon it??? There is no doubt about being sincere, about the Saturday Sabbath, but sincerity is not necessarily the truth in Christ.

Cordially,  
Van Robison  
Kentucky

# Editorial February 2010

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” II Tim. 3:16

The above text is a part of the following e-mail, received some time ago, by a very good friend of mine, and while I am absolutely confident that the writer had every good intention of using a number of scriptures to bring comfort and instruction to one in great pain, their interpretation of this verse, carries a message that will rob us of the tremendous blessing and instruction, God would impart through His glorious grace.

“Another (scripture) that I really like is 2 Tim. 3:16 *Scripture* (not sickness and disease) *is given to me for instruction*. By this verse I wrote.. God doesn't make us sick to teach us something...why would we want to serve a God like that? If we believe that He makes us sick then wouldn't it be a sin to go to the Dr? Of course it's not! He's put Godly wisdom in our physicians to help us, give us the proper medicine, treatment or surgery. He made us, He knows our bodies tire, age and sometimes wear out but He's given us His *Word to instruct us* . Maybe that's one of the reasons He tells us in 2 Tim 2:15 to *study to show ourselves approved...*”

Sadly, this is a message that is widely published throughout many charismatic circles today, and it is a message that is contrary to scripture. As quoted in our opening text, “all scripture” is inspired or “God breathed” and is profitable in the four areas mentioned. However, all scripture also includes God’s practical instruction through experiences, such as those recorded in Job 33, where Elihu plainly speaks of two major ways of God’s instruction. “For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not.” V. 14 The first way God speaks begins immediately in the very next verse, “In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; Then he openeth the ears of men,

and sealeth their instruction,....” V. 15,16. This is the marvelous path of revelation, wherein God abundantly pours His Truth into our hearts, often without any great effort on our part, except the sincere desire to know His mysteries. The purpose of such revelation is found in verse 17. “That he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man.” It is a pattern throughout scripture that God simply speaks His Word to deliver this message. However, there are some messages we can learn only by coming to the second way He speaks as we read in V. 19-23. “He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain: So that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat. His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen; and his bones that were not seen stick out. Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers.” God always speak with a purpose, be it verbally or by experience. The purpose with this second manner of instruction is to prepare the heart of one like Job to receive it. “If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness:” V. 23 The purpose revealed here is to “shew unto man his (God’s) uprightness,” and we must be persuaded that what He is doing is exactly right for my life. Some seeds of instruction require a greater “breaking of ground” for God to convey such a message, and Job himself said in the midst of his difficulty, “God maketh my heart soft....” Job 23:16

Verse 24 further testifies God’s reasons for teaching through suffering. “Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom.” Ultimately God simply wants to reveal more of Christ and His marvelous grace to us. Paul learned the same lesson when God refused to remove his thorn in the flesh, but simply stated: “My grace is sufficient for thee.” II Cor. 12:9 It is a lesson the apostle could learn only by experience, and if we believe that God teaches only in “ the classroom of study,” we will never learn that “...that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” Rom. 8:28 We will never understand the power of His resurrection, unless we experience the fellowship of His sufferings. Phil. 3:10

GH

# FURTHERANCE OF THE GOSPEL

Glenn Vieta

***“But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened to me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel.”  
Philippians 1:12***

Many things happened to the Apostle Paul, and they were neither nice nor pleasant. But Paul walked in the will of God, and no matter what we go through, He will direct our course, even if it is in a “Philippian prison,” or a “Roman jail.” Whatever God does has a purpose behind it. What seemed hard for Paul was for his (and our) benefit. What we experience is not only for us, but also for other lives that we touch. This is the nature of the new creation.

The old creation always thinks of himself, even when he pretends to care about others. The new creation is totally opposite of that. We read in John 3:16 that He gave. He did not ask for anything, He gave His Son. His Son gave His life for us, not asking for anything in return. He just simply took our place. He did that for each of us. He gave His word to the new creation, not to the old. The old creation was crucified and left in a grave, and out of the grave came a new creation. If we have been born again we are a new creation and these words are for us. They are instructions for when things do not go according to natural reasoning. All things will turn out for the “furtherance of the Gospel.”

“So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places.” Paul was a prisoner of Rome, and chained to a Roman soldier day and night. He had to pay his own rent for his jail cell, but he always declared that he was a prisoner of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We may be in circumstances that make us feel we are a prisoner, but when we are in God’s will, we are His prisoner. There are many “prisons,” but His grace is sufficient for anything we have to endure. We will never go to the Cross where Jesus died, nor endure the suffering that took place there. Only Jesus could take that place; our suffering is a lot easier. Just as with Paul, when we are in a trial, word gets around.

“And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the Word without fear: - 1:14. It is the same today, when we take our place in Christ and go on. Regardless of our circumstances, others will be encouraged to go on also. Contrariwise, if we are discouraged, we will discourage others. God wants us to **encourage** others. He is ever present and He knows what he is doing in our lives. He is running His own business and has never turned it over to man. If it were not for God, nothing would work. It is all God’s power; it is His Word. Notice: “The brethren spoke without fear.”

“Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: - 1:15. The envy and strife comes from the old man. It is not a part of the new man’s nature. The new creation is not envious of anyone and does not strive. So if there is any striving or contention, we know where it comes from -- the old nature.

These things went on then, and still do today, as Paul says, “the one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds.” This is not of the new man. The apostle further declares in v. 17: “but the other of love, knowing I am set for the defense of the Gospel.” Thank God for those who knew the Word and were firm about it. We need to be this way also.

“What then? Notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea and will rejoice. For I know that this shall turn to my salvation and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death” 1:18-19. We have the two natures in our body, and either one of them can be manifest, or magnified. But Paul’s desire was that Christ would be magnified (out in the open, exposed, operating). It would not be easy to be in prison, chained to a soldier day and night, but Paul was in many places that were no wise easy.

Paul continues, “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain” 1:21. The subject is living and dying. He is saying, for me to live is Christ, because He is my life. It is Christ who is being manifest and He will be magnified. Then he says, “to

die is gain." If Paul lived, Christ would be magnified, if he died, he himself would gain. This is a personal gain.

"But if I live in the flesh (or in this body), this is the fruit of my labor; yet what I shall choose I wot not" - 1:22. He had a choice. The Lord offered him the chance to come home. It was as if the Lord said, "You think about it and let Me know what you are going to do. You can stay on earth a while longer, or you can come home to be with Me." He hasn't offered me that choice yet but everything that is written is for us to learn and profit thereby.

"I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ; which is far better" - 1:23. The Revised Version says, "very far better." This means much more. When we shop for an automobile, and look at a couple of them and the salesman makes us an offer on both of them, then we choose which one is the better deal. The new man doesn't follow that rule. He will simply say, "Lord, you make the choice, the one which is best, because we don't know which it is." In the natural we can examine something all we want and still have it turn out bad. Paul was in quite a strait and He wanted what was best, not just for him, but for the furtherance of the Gospel.

"Nevertheless to abide (stay over) in the flesh (his body), is more needful for you (his brethren) - 1:24. It was more needful for Paul to remain a while longer on earth for the sake of these Philippians, as well as all the saints. God knew exactly what was the best for everyone, and He knew that Paul would make the right choice. If he had gone home that would have been fine; he would have been welcomed with open arms. But he did not consider his own needs and wishes, but rather the needs of the saints. This is the Christ-life within him. Christ also considered our needs when He went to the Cross. We needed a Savior and He became that. He might have wished for some other way, but He said, "Nevertheless, not my will but Thine be done." When Paul admonishes us to follow Him and walk in his steps, that, is doing the will of God.

"And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all" - 1:25. In other words, Paul said, "I am going to company with you." He was going to live in the same conditions in which they lived. He could have gone home and left all of it, but he chose to stay with them....and

with us! It was more needful for them, and us, for him to stay a while longer. The need determined the choice, and it was the Christ-life within him that made that choice. It is the same with us today.

Paul made that decision “for your furtherance and joy of faith” - 1:25b. Faith is the pre-eminent quality here. They had need of him, and it was for the strengthening of their faith that he stayed. It was also for their joy of faith. They had “undisturbed delight” because of their faith.

When we hear a sermon, or as we meditate upon the Word, the Holy Spirit may quicken a portion to our hearts, and our new creation life just revels in it. Many times it is so joyous that we cannot keep quiet. Later, Satan will try us on our revelation, but this kind of joy remains undisturbed. Our enemy is a defeated foe. The Lord handled him in the wilderness when He said, “It is written!” Then Satan will say to us, “Are you sure?” You bet we are sure! He will try us to see how strong we are in our faith, but the Lord is our Strength and our Enabling. All we need do, in these times of conflict, is to listen to the Holy Spirit’s voice, quickening the Word to our hearts.

Paul was going to stay for the “furtherance” of their faith. This is the advancement of faith. Those saints had faith to a certain stage, but they needed to progress in their faith life. All of this is instruction for us, as is all of God’s Word. Our faith needs to advance until the day when it is complete, perfect. This is accomplished by allowing the Holy Spirit to reveal the Scriptures to our hearts. Every time we believe a certain revelation, it is a step of faith.

It is to our advantage to believe all the Word that is revealed to us. Is it really so important that we advance to perfection? It is so important that this man, Paul, loved us so much that he chose (for our furtherance) to stay longer here on earth, when he could have gone on to glory! It’s the same love that God had for humanity when He gave His Son. Christ showed the same love when He willingly gave His life for us.

Our faith needs to advance until it is completed. Advancement is progress, and this word means, “to drive forward,” as driving a team of mules. It means also to “advance in amount, to grow, to grow in time, to be well along,” down the road in full growth. Another meaning is “proceed and profit.” We profit only if we proceed.

“That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Christ Jesus” – 1:26. Abundant means “super-abound, more than enough, way beyond.” Paul continues: “by my coming to you again.” It wasn’t just his coming as a person, but that the Gospel would be coming to strengthen them and confirm the letter he had written while in prison.

He was also concerned with the saints’ rejoicing. God wants us to rejoice today in Paul’s Gospel. Why? Because everyone will be judged by Paul’s Gospel – not that of John, Matthew, Peter, nor anyone else. Everyone who has lived in this Church Age will be judged by the Message that the Lord revealed to our Apostle Paul.

That is why this man stayed over when he could have gone home!

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The Hope Of Canaan Land

When a slave way down in Egypt land, my Savior called to me,
And by obeying His command, I crossed the great Red Sea.
When the waters were rolled back, to the escape route I did flee,
And left my sins and guilt down there, in the bottom of the sea.

Then when I reached the wilderness, I shouted “I am free.”
I’ll go right in and take the land, the Lord has promised me.
I wandered in that wilderness, for many a night and day,
And with heav’nly manna, strengthening me, I started on my way.

Soon I reached the Jordan’s bank, I knew The Lord was near,
And that, the waters would roll back, I need not doubt nor fear.
So I stepped right in, on dry land, for the other side,
For The Lord had dried it up, as He’d done before.

I’m living now in Canaan land, it’s a land so rich and free.
And The Lord has brought me out, where He will fight for me.
For the giants in this land, before me, they shall fall,
For thru God’s great and mighty hand, I shall possess it all.

For all those who believe God’s Word, and on it they do stand,
Are feasting on the corn and wine, only found in Canaan land.
For when our blessed Lord returns, for His waiting bride,
They will rise to meet Him there, from the Canaan side.

Lowell Pieper

Hebrews 12
THE RACE AND GOAL

This interesting chapter begins by referring to the worthies of faith, as the great cloud of witnesses, recorded in chapter 11. Their manner of successful running is placed before us as an inspiration and encouragement. First, observe seven rules for racing; then observe the glorious goal.

1. **“Lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us.”** These words are addressed to Hebrew Christians. The immovable kingdom was the prize for which they ran - vs. 28. But the weights were practically the same as ours. Hence, Phil. 3 points out the weights as things of the flesh. Paul says, **“Have no confidence in the flesh.”** He had greater reasons for trusting the flesh than any one else; but he refused the worst and the best of the natural man, counting all things loss and dung, that he might win, or gain Christ. Natural gifts, attainments, ties, prospects -- all these things impede progress on the race track to glory. Unbelief is the powerful sin that besets and upsets racers. Do you remember how vigorously unbelief and faith were contrasted in chapters four and five? And why is faith emphasized in chapter eleven? That un-faith may have no chance to hinder the racers. Weights and THE weight are dealt with at the very outset.

2. **“Run with patience.”** The race is not for one day only. It extends throughout life. Hindrances and handicaps will arise. Satan will stop you if possible. Men will try to detain you. Patience will be tried to the uttermost. A snail's pace will not win. **“RUN”** is the exhortation, and that with divinely-given patience. Beware of impatience (imps of fret and weariness). If people are willing to spend years to obtain an education, or to amass wealth, which last for a brief time only; how much more willing should we be to run for a Prize, which we will enjoy for all eternity? The Lord gives grace and patience to run and win.

3. **“Looking unto Jesus.”** He is the racing attraction. He is the **“Author (or File-leader) and Finisher of the faith.”** He ran before us, resisting religious sinners, who were bitterly opposed to Him. He reached the goal - **“the throne of God;”** but the climaxing joy is still ahead. His faith starts us running. His faith will take us through. We are linked up with Him.

Nothing makes our racing easier than gazing steadfastly upon our coming Bridegroom, and considering His conflicts and triumphs. Our running cannot be as difficult as was His. "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin;" as He did in His agony in the garden - Luke 22:44.

4. "Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord."

The Apostle quotes from Proverbs 3:11; for the Proverbs of Solomon are a most excellent fodder rack for scriptural racers. We do well to eat often and abundantly of its provisions. The interferences on the way are to be received as necessary chastenings, which tend to make us hardy racers. We are made overcomers by obstructions in the road; because get over them we must. Let us not therefore despise them, but use them as leaping hurdles to higher heights. Resistance demands food, and food makes muscle. Our Master-Runner feeds us well before He gives us a whipping, so that we may be able to bear it.

5. "Nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him." Yes, chastening and reproof have a weakening effect at first. We seem to have fainting spells; but the new life is simply given opportunity and room to grow and increase in strength in the Lord. The old self-life is curbed and broken down; but the new heavenly life is invigorated and stimulated. "No chastening for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto those who are exercised thereby" - vs. 11. The Lord trieth the righteous because He is fitting us for a throne. Study verse 6 - "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." And consider the next one - "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" He is not a son; he is a bastard. He does not belong to the family. He is an illegitimate, of spurious birth. Hence, he has no claim to parental care, or training.

6. "Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees." Unselfishness toward other saints is a striking characteristic of successful racers. Chastisement may induce heavy-heartedness, a drooping face and dragging feet for a brief time; hence, the need of lifting up by a word of comfort. Evidently, the Apostle quotes here from trial of faith. Indirectly, he is cited as a typical runner for the prize. Isaiah 35:3 intimates that the remnant of Israel will need such

encouragement in the near future. Let us render our part to help weary racers today. Finally,

7. **“Follow after peace with all men and the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord”** - R,V. Under this last point, four possible divergences from faithful running are mentioned. Satan tries in very subtle ways to trip believers, and so much the more near the end. He will disturb the peace of every one and cause him to break rank if possible. These things are evident at this very day. Some are actually failing, or falling from the grace of God. A root of bitterness springs up, causing trouble and defilement. How it behooves every one of us to keep our eyes upon the File-Leader, Jesus, and do all we can to maintain peace, or endeavor to make peace when it is ruffled. Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God” - Matthew 5:9. Let us judge any semblance of bitterness in our own minds, lest others be defiled. “The little foxes spoil the vines” - Song of Solomon 2:15.

“Lest there be any **fornicator** or **profane** person as Esau, who for one morsel of meat, sold his birthright” - Vs 16.

On this verse we quote the following from “Afterward” in Grace and Glory, July 1935, pg 3. “Esau has not one thing recorded against him, as men could see. He was an exemplary citizen, a likeable fellow, a man of the world, full of life and vigor - a hunter, going in for all sorts of sports. A fisherman, probably, an amusing sort of man, a good-time Charlie, the world would call him. A punster and wit, he was no doubt the life of the party, a slap-you-on-the-back kind of chum. Everybody was his friend and spoke a good word for him, and he was the friend of everybody. He was his father’s favorite. There is not a hint of evil in his life according to the history. **Profane** signifies to leave God out of our thoughts, irreverent, no fear of God, joking at religion, or sacred things. We have heard many profane people in our lifetime. God does not allow us to know them, lest we should idolize them. **Fornicator** signifies one who has fellowship with the flesh, living with unspiritual people. Therefore we can readily infer why God chose Jacob to carry on the line of faith. Esau sold his birthright (he was the elder by a few minutes, or hours); but he cared naught for the inheritance. He sold it for a few moments of enjoyment, and Jacob obtained the blessing which his brother lost. Esau represents Adam, the first, the

man who ate of the forbidden fruit and lost his inheritance for himself and his progeny. Jacob figures Christ, the Second Man, who desired the things of God, sought them and bought them with His blood upon the tree. And He secured them for all His followers. Those that believe and are born of God, have a right to share the heavenly inheritance with the great Overcomer.

“But this is the special fact which was so striking to us and which we desire the saints to see. Our attitude to God and His things is what counts. What are His things to you? How do you esteem His riches in comparison with the mammon of unrighteousness? What place do you give His things and His honors? Are the pleasures of sin more to you than bearing the reproach of Christ? Your attitude to God and His Christ classifies you. **Esau** did not care for God. He wanted to have a good time upon the earth. And he received his wish. He prospered in worldly things; but he missed the best. The spiritual things were lost to him. He cried out in anguish when he realized what he had lost; but it was too late. He had sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. **Jacob** on the other hand was not a popular fellow. We believe the men of the world, Esau included, laughed in secret and maybe in public at the “poor sap” who had his head in the clouds and never had any enjoyment whatever. Jacob was not a bright and shining light, as men would read his life story: but he desired the blessing of God. He wanted the inheritance, went after and secured it. But observe this fact -he did not get these by his crooked dealings. He received them because of his heart-longing for God and His things. He wanted His blessing and inheritance more than any earthly honors, or riches. And this is what counts.”

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Why is He silent when a word  
Would slay His accusers all?  
Why does He meekly bear their taunts  
When angels wait His call?  
“He was made sin,” my sin He bore  
Upon the accursed tree;  
And sin hath no defense to make --  
His silence was for me.

(Hebrews continues next month with “the glorious goal.”)

# Prayer - - -

## The turning point

Carolyn Kirkman

C. H. Spurgeon's book, "The Treasury of David," provided a good base for this article on Psalm 13.

All too often as some people think, when we accept the Lord as Savior and King, our lives aren't immediately fun and games. There will be hard times through which the Lord brings us. Without God I could not make it. In my job as a school teacher I learned long ago that if God did not help me, I would be in big trouble. There have been lots of things I tried in my classroom that I didn't know whether they would work or not, but they did, and I know these ideas came from the Lord. Basically, this Psalm is divided into three sections: Mourning (grieving), Praying, and Praising (rejoicing).

"How long wilt Thou forget me, O Lord? Forever? How long will thou hide Thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?" vs. 1 & 2. In times of trial this is the normal progress of things; for me, anyway. There are parts of my life that are in this first section, and I am still waiting for the rejoicing. I believe God is still working, or I would really live in daily despair.

Time flies when we are enjoying ourselves, but when we are in trouble, time moves slowly. A week in prison is much longer than a month of freedom. The question, "How long?" is asked four times. It begs for deliverance and it shows great anguish of heart. This illustrates my own impatience -- it is not easy waiting for an answer to a prayer request that is dear to my heart. We need grace to wait for God's answer, given in God's time. It is especially dear when no one but God knows how much our heart is involved, but God does hear; He does not ignore our moaning. His Spirit will help find the words to tell of our desires and hopes. Sometimes we feel like God has forgotten, but I know better! God is Omnipotent and Omniscient -- He knows everything. He has never forgotten and He never will. Sometimes we give

God human traits that we fret about. God is above humanity in every way. That is why He is worthy to be worshipped. He knows everything about each one of us, and above all, Jehovah would not forget His child He is working something in us.

When there is a lot of debris in gold, it must spend time in the fire; the more dross, the longer time spent in the extreme heat. Maybe God is preparing us for something and that is when we seem about ready to give up. God always gives us the strength to hang on a little longer. It was bad enough to think that God had momentarily forgotten, but now David suggests that He has forgotten forever. The time waiting is what weighs most heavily on me. Isaiah 54:8 shows God's mercy to us: "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." Even when God hides His face, it doesn't mean a forgetful heart.

When our parents disciplined us, they did not baby us, along with the correction. When our parents distanced themselves from us, we felt sad, but we learned from discipline, and were glad to be in their presence again. This is true of our Father in Heaven; we despair until we share with Him again. We are a part of God and engraved on His hands. "But Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me" - Isaiah 49:14-16.

To take counsel in my soul. To me that means to separate myself from everyone. I tend to do that, although I realize it is not always good to dwell on the negative, but there are times when I need some time to sort out things and regain my balance. We need to feel close to God and often that is when we are alone and have enough quietness to think. In these quiet times we are able to grow calm inside. My "blue times" seem to be endless, and it is so difficult to be positive when time drags. It is a hopeless feeling. We think that if we could just see something happening, it would satisfy, but if we actually see it, there would be no need to hope any longer - (Romans 8:24) I have found that when I am so desperate in my "blue" times, the only relief is to find someone to pray with.

I really know how David felt, to search and search for something to uplift my mood. There just never seems a happy way to erase the despair of hopelessness. To dwell on our troubles is a bitter pill.

I remember as a child, having to take medicine. My Mom would say, "Just swallow the pill and it will be gone." I could not swallow it and would end up biting it. Oh, how awful! My Dad showed me a trick. He put the pill in a spoon with jelly and it slid right down. I just knew my Dad had to be the smartest man in the whole world! He knew how to make the bitterness go away. So it is with our heavenly Father, when we place our trust and hope in Him he takes away the bitterness and gives us comfort and peace, even in the midst of the "blue times."

When trouble comes on you, it is very hard to see evil winning. When evil laughs at our grief, we truly feel despair. The devil loves to laugh at a Christian's misery. He lets us know that he knows all about our troubles and he rubs it in that evil is winning. We must remember however, that it only seems like evil is winning. Just hang on, God always wins eventually and eternally! It may seem that God does not always win the battles; but He sees us through them and He wins the war! I really need to pray for this truth to be imbedded in my heart, as I tend to dwell on the negatives. I plead, beg, murmur and whine to God about the injustices while I spend little time on the mercies I receive daily. I put up "tombstones" for my sorrows, but fail to put up "monuments" for the blessings I receive.

There are many times in life when God waits to deliver. In John 5:5, a man lay at the pool of Bethesda, who was ill for 38 years. A woman had a spirit of sickness 18 years before she was set free - Luke 13:10. Lazarus all his life labored under disease and poverty until he was released by death and transferred to "Abraham's bosom" - Luke 16:20-22. This should give us hope and show that God does not forget His people. Help will come, and in the meantime, "All things work together for good to them that love God and are the called according to His purpose" - Romans 8:28. So we move from grief to prayer; we go from stillness to doing something - reaching out to God.

"Consider and hear me, O Lord my God, lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death" - vs. 3. Now, prayer goes

up. Just as we see a new day dawning, so we see hope in despair. There is still gloom, but he asked God to consider - think and hear him. Now things will turn around; the one shedding tears will dry his eyes. God is asked to see and hear, and when He does he feels compassion for us. Here, David cries out to God. Sometimes when we speak with God we do so in such a detached way. David drew near to his Heavenly Father; he says, "MY God." He is our God too. When I get frustrated with time, I feel the most fear when I think God must surely have "thrown in the towel" concerning me. I feel like giving up, but I don't want God to give up, and He won't. The covenant God has with us isn't written in shifting sands. It is written on the eternal parchment of God. We are engraved upon God's palm and heart forever!

David wanted God to lighten his eyes, to see God in everything, even in this world of darkness. I want my eyes opened to see with the illumination of the Holy Spirit. In darkness it is easy to fall asleep. When a person is depressed his eyes grow heavy. Hopelessness breeds faintness and loss of vision. In our down times we are in danger of the "sleep of death," because despair becomes overwhelming. David was afraid that his trials would cause his death. We feel at times that the hope in our hearts will completely disintegrate and we will die the death of failure; but God's grace helps us to keep running the race.

"Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; and those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved" - vs. 4. It isn't God's will that Satan and evil win; this would dishonor God. It should give us a sense of peace to know that our salvation and God's honor are so closely related. They stand together. Our covenant with God is strong forever and confuses the enemy. Our enemies may laugh at us but the day of victory is coming soon. Justice will win; it will come to those who trust in the Lord, after prayer turns things around. Now it is time to praise God.

"I have trusted in Thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in Thy salvation" - vs. 5. What a change! The rain is over; now it is time for celebration! David has received mercy and he is ready to sing. If we grieve with the Psalmist, let us also dance with him. The joy is more sweet because of the extreme sorrow we have felt. The calm is more treasured than the storm. One day early this Spring I went to get groceries and

on the way home it rained heavily, then sleeted, then snowed. After the storm passed, the sun came out and a beautiful rainbow appeared. It wasn't against a blue sky, but a gray one, and was especially beautiful because of the storm that preceded it.

David and his faith are intertwined, and he is exercising his faith. All the powers of David's enemies have not destroyed his stronghold -- his faith and trust in God. "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God. They are brought down and fallen: but we are risen, and stand upright" - Psalm 20:7,8.

"I will sing unto the Lord, because He hath dealt bountifully with me" - vs. 6. Now, not only the heart and mind sing, David's voice rings out also. David answers the question he started with about God's forgetfulness - "God hath dealt bountifully with me." So it will be with us if we are patient just a bit longer. We are like David and we will also testify how the Lord has dealt bountifully with us; our faith keeps us from sinking beneath the heavy trials, God has heard our prayers and seen our tears and we emerge with a song in our heart and on our lips.

The world can do nothing to you as long as God is your Captain. The world can imprison our bodies (like Paul), but that will set our souls free to talk with God. When the world throws us down, God will lift us up. Our enemies may destroy our bodies, but this only sends us to our everlasting home and into the presence of God. When trials and troubles come our way, that is when we draw closer to our Heavenly Father. This Psalm is extraordinary because in such a short time, David goes from despair to joy, because of the turning point -- PRAYER.

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- \* The witness of those on the road to heaven is a warning to those on the road to hell.
- \* It is better to suffer for the cause of Christ than for the cause of Christ to suffer.
- \* Live so that when people get to know you they will want to know Christ.
- \* If you want to convince folks of the value of Christianity, live it.

## PERFECT PEACE

I LOOK NOT BACK - God knows the fruitless efforts,  
The wasted hours, the sinning and regrets;  
I leave them all with Him that blots the record,  
And graciously forgives, and then forgets.

I LOOK NOT FORWARD - God sees all the future,  
The road that short or long will lead me home.  
And He will face with me its every trial,  
And bear with me the burden that may come.

I LOOK NOT AROUND ME - then would fears assail,  
The wild tumultuousness of life's restless seas;  
So dark the world, so filled with war and evil,  
So vain the hope of comfort and of ease.

I LOOK NOT INWARD - t'would make me wretched,  
For I have naught on which to stay my trust;  
Nothing I see but failures and shortcomings,  
And weak endeavors crumbling into dust.

BUT I LOOK UP - UP - into the face of Jesus!  
For there my heart can rest, my fears are stilled;  
And there is joy, and love, and light for darkness,  
And perfect peace, and every hope fulfilled.

Annie Johnson Flint

- \* The Christian life is like an airplane -- when you stop you drop.
- \* Many people get unlimited mileage out of a limited vocabulary.
- \* Honest mistakes need correction just as others do.
- \* There has never been an over-production of kinds words.
- \* Character is like the foundation of a house -- below the surface.

