

**The Threshing floor**

**DEDICATION**

**DANIEL DEL VECCHIO  
Torremolinos, (Málaga)  
SPAIN**

## P R E F A C E

I have sometimes watched the primitive method of threshing wheat still used in some parts of Spain. The farmer usually chooses a high promontory for this task. The threshing floor must be in a place where the winds have ready access.

First, horses or mules are driven around and around on the cut wheat dragging some heavy instrument. Their sharp hooves pound the newly harvested wheat until it is broken into mulch. Then when the strong winds come, the men, using ancient looking winnowing forks, throw the mixture high into the air. The wind separates the chaff which falls at a distance, while the heavier wheat falls into a golden pile. Finally the chaff is gathered and burned.

John the Baptist used this analogy to describe the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. He said, "One mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to loose; he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire; whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable." (Luke 3:16-17)

It is the Lord Jesus who baptizes the believer with the Holy Spirit and with fire, who fans the smoldering flame into a burning blaze that is destined to devour all the impurities. "He will thoroughly purge his floor."

The chaff is necessary for the growth and development of the wheat, but before the grain can be ground into flour for bread, all the trash must be burned out.

The chaff that is to be burned suggests our immature, carnal efforts that are often mixed up with the sincere spiritual worship. Things that God tolerated in the growing process He now has destined to eliminate before bread can be made.

If we are to be as bread to feed the hungry, and truly minister the LIFE OF GOD, then this cleansing process is essential in each of our lives.

Paul could affirm, "Death worketh in me but life in you." (2 Cor.4:12)

God sometimes places His chosen servants on a high promontory like the primitive threshing floor and He does not shield them from the cruel winds. Paul remarked, "We are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men." (1 Cor.4:9)

Although this refining process involves pain, yet we can be assured that God will not use more severe methods than are absolutely necessary. Dr. Follette once said, "Don't fight it, don't run from it, don't

## **The Threshing floor**

be afraid when it knocks at your door. Let it come in. Receive it. Trouble is permitted by a loving Father who wants to bring something good out in you -- for His own glory. He will never send it but to beautify you and to mold you more into the image of His lovely Son. He will not send you more than you can bear; make trouble your servant."

Isaiah wrote, "Bread grain is easily crushed, so he doesn't keep on pounding it." Isa 28:28 (L.B.) As the musician must tune each string to the proper tension for perfect harmony, and the potter must fire each vessel at the right heat for durability, so our Lord knows exactly what we require.

"Everything that may abide the fire, ye shall make it go through the fire, and it shall be clean."  
(Numbers 31:23)

The personal experiences recounted in this book, and the subsequent lessons that were learned, are developed in the following messages.

May He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food also multiply the seed sown in this book, and through it, increase the fruit of your righteousness.

This book is offered in love to all those who have felt the TRAMPLING HOOVES, and the FIERCE WINDS, and the BURNING FIRES of the THRESHING FLOOR!

The author.

## **AN ANGEL UNAWARE**

"Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." (Heb. 13: 2)

The first time I read Dale Evan's book, entitled, "Angel Unaware," I was frankly unimpressed. In fact, I was mildly critical. It seemed to me that she went to great lengths to create a spiritual lesson from a personal tragedy. In this book she tells of the birth of their mongoloïd girl, Robin, who died at an early age.

A few months after reading this book, I was to painfully pick it up and attempt to read it again. I could not get past the first few pages because of the scalding tears that blurred my eyes and the racking sobs that nearly drowned my reason. For we, too, had experienced a visit from an angel that came to us -- unawares!

David Paul was born September 9th, 1972, in a small private clinic in Torremolinos, Spain. It was a difficult pregnancy for Rhoda, and I often experienced a reaction that was totally foreign to my former attitude. Many times when I would look at her and think of the unborn child, I would feel irritated and restless. It was senseless and I knew it.

My spirit was sensing something that my mind could not grasp until one day it struck furiously, as a numbing, blinding pain!

I paced back and forth in the corridor of the hospital waiting for news of the long overdue birth. After what seemed like hours the tense face of the doctor appeared. He curtly said that if the baby did not come quickly he would have to perform a cesarean section. The water had burst prematurely which was a bad omen to him.

The baby was in a wrong position and he could not do anything about it. He was clearly disturbed and agitated. I begged him to wait for at least another twenty minutes feeling intuitively that it would be best for Rhoda and what she would have wanted.

Fear sometimes nagged at the back of my mind when I remembered that a Roman Catholic doctor may sometimes decide to save the infant if he is faced with a desperate choice.

My nails bit into my flesh as I tried to pray and cry out to God for my wife. Finally the tension was broken by the appearance of a nurse who announced perfunctorily, "Your wife has given birth to a baby boy." Even though I was clearly relieved, I still had that numb feeling that I could not explain. The joy that normally accompanied the birth of one of our children was plainly missing.

## **The Threshing floor**

The doctor reappeared and seemed tired and upset. He spoke to a Christian worker who had been working with us for a number of years. She had been a Roman Catholic nun for eleven years and had known this doctor when she worked in the hospital with him as a nurse. She had been filled with the Holy Spirit in our apartment shortly after our arrival in Spain.

The doctor ignored me completely and made several observations to her. He was obviously very careless with his words and seemed not to realize the traumatic experience those words would create for me. He said, avoiding me, "It is a mongoloid. It is terribly deformed. The liver is distended and the spleen is enlarged. It is the worse case of mongolism that I have ever seen. It cannot possibly live for more than twenty four hours. In fact, it would be much better for her (Rhoda) that it die." And then he said words to this effect, "What a horrible thing God did to give her this part to play!"

The blood drained from my face. I sat down heavily, my throat was suddenly dry. I was disbelieving and numb. The blow had been totally unexpected and I was caught completely off guard!

Later the question would be shouted from every part of my being, Why? Why? WHY? WHY? did this happen to us?

God showed me much later that even though our Lord said from the cross, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" yet He did not die with that question on His lips. He went beyond the WHY to these words of confidence, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit."

At this point my mind was racing ahead, already making plans. I thought of the funeral plans. I would bury it secretly. No one would ever know and we would somehow adopt a normal child.

Then the doctor broke into my thoughts with these words, "Be sure not to tell her. The shock may be too much for her in this weakened state and she can go into shock or haemorrhage. Keep it from her at all costs."

That was to prove a difficult task for me!

With leaden feet I climbed the stairs, my eyes avoiding the operating room where our son was being given auxiliary attention. As I came into her room, she was lying quietly, still under the effects of the anaesthesia. Her face was white and drained. Her lips parched and swollen where she had bitten them in pain. I kissed her gently. I wondered how I could face her questions. How could I keep this a secret until the death of the baby?

She must have sensed my presence in the room for she opened her eyes. A smile flashed across her tired face. She had won -- and lost?

"How is the baby?" That dreaded question was already upon me!

"Is it a boy? It IS a boy, isn't it? How is my David Paul?" And now her voice was soft and warm. We had planned to give him this name, months, in fact years before. But such a lovely name seemed so senseless to me at this point. I mumbled something. She kept insisting, "It is a boy, isn't it?"

"Yes dear." I replied.

"He IS well, isn't he?"

Then a look of fear and consternation crossed her face.

"Is he alright? He is well, isn't he? HOW IS MY BABY?" Her voice was rising now. I tried to comfort her and to get her to relax but: she insisted.

"Does he have all his fingers? Is there something wrong with his leg? SOMETHING IS WRONG WITH HIS LEGS!" She said tensely.

"No dear." I said, trying to keep my composure. "He is alright. Nothing is wrong with his leg."

"There is something wrong with my baby!" She was becoming more tense by the minute. This is what I had feared and had desperately tried to avoid. The doctor had warned me about this. "Be sure she doesn't know, the shock may be too much for her." But she had seen it in my face, and said later that she had seen a strange sorrowful look of pity in the nurse's eyes.

I was nearly drowning, not only in my own pain, but now seeing her tortured face only compounded the agony in my heart. I fought desperately to keep my emotions under control. I would try to keep it from her for as long as I could. She must have time to recover her strength. But soon she would know, and how I feared the consequences! Then it dawned slowly upon her. She seemed to gain strength. "It is a Mongol." She said softly.

I went to the bathroom and all the pent up pain came flooding out in torrents of grief. I felt suddenly so alone and helpless. Who could help us now? Where was God? What had happened? What had gone wrong? It was devastating!

A few days later, the Lord graciously gave me this song. I cannot sing it now, but then it meant so much to me.

Is there a God who understands,  
Is there a God who holds my hands,  
Is there a God who feels my pain,

## **The Threshing floor**

Is there a God, I ask again ?  
Though darkness hide His lovely face  
And pain becloud His saving grace  
Yes, there's a God, I still believe  
THERE IS A God!

Some day as God I'll understand,  
Some day in that bright, other Land,  
Where there's no pain, no death, no night,  
Where God Himself, shall be the Light.  
Then He will tell me of His plan  
To form my life, at His command  
Yes, there's a God, I still believe...  
THERE IS A GOD!

David remained at the hospital under intensive care for a few days. Three days later the paediatrician came to examine him. Rhoda was still in bed when he arrived. The paediatrician's attitude was completely different from that of the obstetrician. He was a young, boyish-looking man, possibly in his early thirties. He was trying to encourage us, but everything he was saying was creating another, even more devastating reaction in me. I had resigned myself to the terrible tragedy that had struck our home. Soon I thought, it would be over and we would be able to pick up the pieces. Hope would return and the roses would bloom again.

On and on he droned, while I became more impatient. Finally, I blurted out, "Doctor, will he live?" "LIVE? Why? yes, he'll live. He is recuperating rapidly. He'll live for at least thirty years! Mongoloids do not have a very long life span you know!"

His words struck me as a sledgehammer blow! I reeled under them and nearly fainted on the empty bed next to Rhoda's. It was as if a prison sentence had just been pronounced by the judge.

David would not die, but we would have to live with this day after day, year after year! My God, it was too much to endure!

Rhoda took it well. Much better than I had expected. In fact she had had some premonition of the approaching tragedy. Nine months before, the word MONGOLOID had flashed as a vision across her mind. The weaker sex is not so weak, I discovered!

After the doctor had gone, she insisted on going down to the nursery to see the baby. "I want to see my baby." she insisted. "I want to hold him."

I could not bring myself to hold him, nor even to look at him after the terrible and vivid description the obstetrician had given me. The mental image that I had formed was torturing my mind. Sensing her inner bravery, I reluctantly agreed. I had no idea of the desperate battle that had been raging within her for the last three days.

The Holy Spirit had insisted, "Go get your baby." Her heart had not yielded to the point of accepting his deformity. It was a cross that she recoiled from. There was no joy that she could see beyond the cross -- only pain and shame and hopelessness.

Then the Lord gave her a solemn warning. It was in the words recorded in Matthew 18:10

"Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father, who is in heaven. "

She took the baby into her arms and brought it with her into the privacy of her room. She now says that it was as if the Holy Spirit had covered her with a glorious canopy, a protection from the terrible pain. His presence was so strong in the room that she was enfolded in His warm love. She was bathed in it! Then she could see the Saviour hanging from bleeding hands from His cross. His arms were opened wide, not held there by the nails. But she seemed to understand as never before, it was because of His love. Those arms were embracing the entire world. He had willingly received us, vile and deformed and unclean. He had not been ashamed to draw our uncleanness into His bosom. And now He gently said, "Will you not receive your own child?".

He assured her that His love could change the vilest sinner. It was a transforming love. Those who willingly came within the embrace of those arms, and who were touched by those nail-pierced hands were changed. It was redeeming, transforming love.

He impressed upon her that His love would strengthen her and give her the ability to change this situation into a blessing. She began hoping that God would heal our son. New faith was growing into her heart. She thought, "It is for the glory of God, He will perform a miracle!"

She was to learn later, that even though He may not perform a miracle by changing our outward circumstances, He could perform a miracle in our hearts. Though He may not choose to deliver us from our TRIALS, He can use them to DELIVER US FROM OURSELVES!

There, in our Gethsemane, we both learned to pray, "Father, let this cup pass. Nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done."

I have discovered that when the Lord allows the heart of one of His children to be broken, He always deposits within it something precious of Himself, before He closes the wound.

## **The Threshing floor**

The Lord was to speak to me a few days later. It seemed that for the first few days after this experience, the pain was so severe that I could not, would not hear! Finally, the message came through.

"And whosoever shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me." (Matt. 18:5)

We wondered how we could tell our other three children that David would never be a normal child. They loved him and doted on him. But I wondered what they would think if they knew how their little brother would be when he grew up. My fears were totally unnecessary.

One day while in church, we received a visit from a kind Jewish couple from New York. They had spoken to one of our church members and found out that our boy was Mongoloid. There is usually an instant rapport between parents of retarded children. It seems that suffering these heart-breaks is like speaking many languages. It helps one to communicate to many different people.

They came in with their David, a little Mongoloid boy of about nine. He was perfectly behaved, and was a precious child. He seemed quite alert and sat quietly by his mother as she proudly told me of her boy's accomplishments.

Before they left, an idea occurred to me. Would she mind if we introduced her David to our day-school class? The class was being held in the church school room and our three children were present. David marched proudly in, with no sign of embarrassment or timidity. He had perfect composure. He introduced himself and shook hands with each one of the children. The kids were thrilled! He promptly picked up our youngest girl, Becky, and began carrying her around. He wanted to take her home, he said. The children instantly fell in love with him. He was different, and they loved it!

After David had left, my children asked, "Is our David going to be like him? I wish our David would be like him. We just love him!"

And so, our God has gentle ways of leading His sheep beside still waters and restoring their souls.

Prophesying of the coming ministry of Christ, Isaiah wrote:

"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted... to comfort all that mourn;

TO APPOINT UNTO THOSE WHO MOURN IN ZION to give unto them

BEAUTY FOR ASHES,

THE OIL OF JOY FOR MOURNING,

THE GARMENT OF PRAISE FOR THE SPIRIT OF HEAVINESS." (Isa. 61: 1-3)

The Lord has shown us that disappointment is His appointment.

No good thing will He withhold,  
From denials oft we gather  
Treasures of His love untold.  
Well He knows each broken purpose  
Leads to fuller, deeper trust,  
And the end of all His dealings  
Proves our God is wise and just.  
Edith Lillian Young (1)

Ezekiel the prophet said, "Then I came to them of the captivity... and I sat where they sat, and remained there overwhelmed among them seven days." (Ezekiel 3: 15)

"I SAT WHERE THEY SAT."

This experience has opened up a new world for us. The world of the handicapped. It has unstopped the fountain of God's love so that it can flow unhindered to people who are different and who are unloved. Every time I see a Mongoloid, I almost feel as if he is my son. A new horizon of opportunities has risen. I pray that God will lead me daily, to open my arms to all people.

It has also given me a deep appreciation for a normal child. Oh! The incalculable worth of a perfect child!

What a precious gift God lays at our feet; what opportunities to invest in eternity! How little I appreciated the miraculous handiwork of God before. How deep is the grace of God, the sufficient supply of God Himself, given to us unmerited and undeserved!

I will not doubt, though all my prayers return  
Unanswered from the still, white realm above;  
I will believe it is an all-wise love  
Which has refused those things for which I yearn;  
And though at times I cannot keep from grieving,  
Yet the pure ardour of my fixed believing  
Undimmed shall burn.

I will not doubt; though sorrows fall like rain,

## The Threshing floor

And troubles swarm like bees about a hive;  
I will believe the heights for which I strive  
Are only reached by anguish and by pain;  
And though I groan and writhe beneath my crosses,  
I yet shall see through my severest losses  
The greater gain.

I will not doubt, well anchored is this faith ,  
Like some staunch ship, my soul braves every gale;  
So strong its courage that it will not quail  
To breast the mighty unknown sea of death.  
O, may I cry, though body parts with spirit,  
"I do not doubt," so listening worlds may hear it,  
With my last breath.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox (2)

Today David is a happy, loving, mischievous little boy. He still cannot speak intelligibly but he surely can communicate! He has brought us many blessings and taught us many lessons. He is teaching the meaning of mercy and the exercise of love. God has used him as an angel to show us our own hearts. I was able to see so clearly the selfishness that still exists. Our human love is so impure, and we always expect something in return for our love. During this time God gave me a heart-searching prayer that became a song :

Burn deep within my heart O flame of God,  
For I am barren clay without Thy love;  
Burn deep within my heart O flame of God  
And baptize me afresh O heavenly dove.

Burn deep within my heart O flame of God,  
For long has sinful passion held control;  
Burn deep within my heart O flame of God,  
And cleanse my selfish heart and make me whole.

Burn deep within my heart O flame of God,  
Lord cleanse my way until I am pure gold;  
Burn deep within my heart O flame of God,  
And may I be the fuel to light the world.

Send Thy cleansing flame, burn up the dross

And may I now with love embrace my cross,  
Burn deep within my heart O flame of God,  
Let the glow of heaven shine from me.

If God has allowed pain and tragedy in your life, if today you are going through deep waters, be strengthened and know that the Lord always has His way in the storm. He will not forsake you! He has a glorious purpose in this that you cannot see now. Trust when you cannot understand.

Remember,

"All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." (Rom. 8: 28)

"This is from Me," the Saviour said,  
As bending low He kissed my brow,  
"For One who loves you thus has led.  
Just rest in Me, be patient now,  
Your Father knows you have need of this,  
Though, why perchance you cannot see –  
Grieve not for things you've seemed to miss.  
The thing I send is best for thee."

Then, looking through my tears, I plead,  
"Dear Lord, forgive, I did not know,  
'Twill not be hard since. Thou dost tread,  
Each path before me here below,  
And for my good this thing must be,  
His grace is sufficient for each test.  
So still I'll sing, "Whatsoever be  
God's way for me is always best."

Author unknown (3)

(1) "Disappointment -- His Appointment," by Edith Lillian Young

Poems that Preach compiled by John R. Rice

Published by "Sword of the Lord Foundation" Murfreesboro Tennessee

(2) "Faith," by Ella Wheeler Wilcox

## **The Threshing floor**

Poems that Preach compiled by John R. Rice

Published by "Sword of the Lord Foundation" Murfreesboro Tennessee

(3) "This is from me", author unknown

Poems that Preach compiled by John R. Rice

Published by "Sword of the Lord Foundation" Murfreesboro Tennessee

## THE DWELLING PLACE

"... dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things. " 2 Cor.6:9-10

To know that one is living on borrowed time can be a revolutionising experience. Whether this knowledge comes from a revelation from God or from the unanimous voice of medical science, the knowledge of imminent death can be a sobering thing. To know that life hangs from a slender thread, that it is but a flickering flame in the wind, can deeply tint one's relationships and have a profound effect upon life.

For the deeply committed Christian, the sentence of death need not cast the pall of gloom upon him. Paul said, "But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God, WHO RAISETH THE DEAD.. "(2 Cor.1:9)

"We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." (Rom.8:36) At any day we may be pulled out of the flock and sacrificed on the altar of God's will! This knowledge in Paul elicited his glorious confession of faith.

Writing to his spiritual son Timothy, Paul confides, "For I am now ready to be offered (as a sacrifice), and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." (2 Tim.4:6-8)

The Psalmist David spoke of walking through "the valley of the shadow of death." In his famous Shepherd's psalm, we read "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." The awareness of the presence of God broke the power of fear over him.

In Psalm 91, the writer speaks of the secret place of refuge. I recently saw this Scripture in such a new light. It says, "He who dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." (Ps.91:1)

Not the SHADOW OF DEATH; but IN THE SHADOW OF THE PROTECTING LOVE OF GOD!  
Under His WINGS, in the shadow of His hand!

I have learned that this shadow is not a fearful place but a place of rest from the heat of the day.

Afraid? Of what?

To feel the spirit's 'glad release'?

## **The Threshing floor**

To pass from pain to perfect peace,  
The strife and strain of life to cease?  
Afraid -- of what?

E. H. Hamilton (1)

This secret place of the Most High also assures us deliverance from the trap that is laid for our feet. "Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler..."(Ps.91:3) We need not fall prey to the wiles of the devil.

We can overcome the fear of the ravages of disease that slowly wastes away the body. "Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day, nor FOR THE PESTILENCE that walketh in darkness, nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday." (Ps .91:5-6)

Death has no power over us because its sting is gone.

Jesus causes us to triumph over our enemy. He said, "Because I live, YE SHALL LIVE ALSO." (Jn.14:19)

Life comes out of death.! Christianity came out of the empty tomb! From the dungeon Joseph ascended to the throne. (Gen. 40) Fruitfulness comes after sowing. The seed lies under the suffocating earth, till it bursts forth from its prison into new abundant life.

What we hold on to, we lose; what we keep is what we are willing to give away.

Do not hold on to life; relinquish it in the hands of Him who is the source. Holding it, kills it. As a child squeezes a small chick tightly to its breast, until it has taken its life, so we can lose true life when we will not let it go. Yielding brings blessing.

Giving we receive, dying we live. Jesus said, "Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." (Jn.12:24)

As there is a new birth of the SPIRIT when we are born into the Kingdom of God, likewise there is a new birth that the SOUL must know, if one's life is to be completely fruitful. The soul with all its selfish desires hinders the working of the life of God through us. The sentence of death is upon us. Accept it, and from the ashes there will come forth a life that is truly victorious, which cannot die.

Nature obeys this law instinctively. We learn it by revelation. Knowing that time is short and life is but a vapour should cause us to "redeem the time," to buy up every opportunity, for soon we shall all stand before the King of kings.

David prayed, "Teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." (Ps.90:12)  
Do not count the days but make every day count!

To some, it is the certainty of death that frees them to really live. To others, it is the conviction of the nearness of the Second Coming of Christ.

I am convinced that there is nothing that can give meaning to life and purify one's motives, as the certainty of the nearness of the end. We are admonished to "Watch, therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." (Matt. 24:42)

Referring to the "Blessed Hope" of the Second Coming of Christ, John said, "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." (1 Jn.3:3)

We generally tend to think of the Second Coming as somewhere out there in the future. Theologically we know it is very near, and yet we reason, not today! But Jesus said, "For in such an hour as YE THINK NOT the Son of Man cometh." (Matt.24:44) He MAY come today or your life may be snatched away today. What if it were today!

The words of our text have taken on new meaning to me:

"AS DYING AND BEHOLD WE LIVE!"

The worldly says, "AS LIVING and behold we die!" But the true Christian can say, "As dying, AND BEHOLD WE LIVE!" Life is not vanquished by death, but death is swallowed up by life!

The emphasis is on the latter part of the phrase, "BEHOLD WE LIVE." It is LIFE with a new and profound meaning! It is LIFE WALKING WITH GOD such as Enoch had, who by faith walked into eternity!

"By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death, and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." (Heb.11:5)

Suddenly, more than ever, we want to PLEASE Him, and every act or word we speak becomes sacramental. We tread carefully when we know that each footprint left behind us is our last; we shall never walk this way again! "Goodness and mercy all my life, shall surely follow me and in God's house for evermore, my dwelling place shall be." (2)

"There is no death, though eyes grow dim, there is no night, when I'm near to Him!" (3)

And then the apostle says, "AS SORROWFUL, YET ALWAYS REJOICING!"

## **The Threshing floor**

True rejoicing does not come from uncontested happiness, nor from idealistic circumstances, but from the ashes of sorrow.

"As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." It was not the joy of the RELEASE from pain, but the joy of the release from the FEAR of pain, that Paul knew.

It was the JOY of the LORD that cannot be extinguished by darkness. The darkness of despair can put out all human joys. It is joy that has been resurrected that can triumph in the night!

The writer to the Hebrews tells us:

"... After ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions..." (Heb.10:32)

We wonder sometimes, why this is so. Why the ecstasy and joy of our first encounter with Christ should be so easily taken from us?

Here we have a ray of light on this question: "That no man should be moved by these afflictions; for ye yourselves know that WE ARE APPOINTED TO THESE THINGS." (1 Thess.3:3). Disappointment is God's appointment! From the death of crushed dreams comes the life that is everlasting. And from the depths of personal loss and sorrow, comes the rejoicing that enriches the heart.

O Joy that seekest me thro' pain.  
I cannot close my heart to Thee;  
I trace the rainbow thro' the rain,  
And feel the promise is not vain  
That morn shall tearless be.

O Cross that liftest up my head,  
I dare not ask to hide from thee;  
I lay in dust life's glory dead,  
And from the ground there blossoms red  
Life that shall endless be.

George Matheson (4)

In Numbers 31:23 we read, "Everything that may abide the fire, ye shall make it go through the fire, and it shall be clean..". Peter said, "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to test you, as though some strange thing happened unto you, but REJOICE, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings..." (1 Pet.4:12-13) We rejoice not in the fire but in the fellowship of His suffering that is the result.

It is the fire of testing that purifies the gold, " ... that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth (eternal things are faith, hope and love), though it be tried with fire, might be found unto PRAISE and honour and glory (when?) at the appearing of Jesus Christ..." (1Pet.1:7)

Samson gave a riddle that baffled his enemies. "Out of the eater came forth food, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." (Judges 14:14) It was from the carcass of the angry lion that had viciously attacked him, that food came. It was from the powerful beast that he had been able to overcome by the power of the Holy Spirit, that honey was formed.

**GOD PUTS HIS HONEY BEES IN VERY UNLIKELY PLACES!**

Your victory over temptation and despair will one day yield food and sweetness.

Often returning from Timnath,  
The Christian now homeward bound,  
Turns off from the dusty roadside  
Where the place of spoil is found,  
And humbly gathers sweetness  
Where his roaring flesh once died,  
Enough for himself and others,  
From & carcass bleached and dried.

John Wright Follette (5)

**AS HAVING NOTHING AND YET POSSESSING ALL THINGS.**

Paul had nothing that he could call his own. All the things that were formerly gain to him, he counted loss for Christ. "Yea doubtless" he said,..." and to count them but refuse, that I may win Christ...!"(Phil.3:8)

It is when Christ is our life, and "to live is Christ," then and then alone, can we be truly rich and possess those things that are eternal for which we have been apprehended. We can possess the gates of our enemies when we do not count our life dear to ourselves. Paul was able to win Christ, and to win that incorruptible crown because he had become the bondsman of Jesus Christ.

**HE HAD NOTHING THAT DID NOT BELONG TO HIS MASTER, BUT ALL THINGS THAT BELONGED TO HIS MASTER WERE HIS!**

**AS POOR, YET MAKING MANY RICH!**

As His Master, Paul was poor. He sewed tents to support himself. And yet from this sacrificial life of

## **The Threshing floor**

abnegation there has flowed unceasingly for nearly two thousand years an enriching river of revelation!

AS SORROWFUL, yet ALWAYS REJOICING!

Paul wrote from his cell, "Rejoice ... AND AGAIN I SAY REJOICE!" (Phil.4:4) Why? The Lord is at hand! Our deliverance is nearer than when we first believed. Sorrow lasts the night; Joy comes in the morning.

In Hebrew's 13:15, we read,

"Let us offer the SACRIFICE OF PRAISE to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name."

The burnt sacrifice to God in the Old Testament, was to be without blemish. The lamb was not to be blind or lame or diseased. We should not mix our praise with grumblings and complainings! The same mouth should not pour out both bitter and sweet water.

God led the children of Israel through the desert for forty years until all the unbelieving complainers were left bleaching in the wilderness. Only those two spies, Joshua and Caleb who believed and gave a good report, entered into the promised land. The principle remains the same today. God will lead us around in circles until we learn to give thanks IN all things. Then our prisons will be turned into BETHELS and our deepest pain becomes our greatest gain!

Of Jesus it is written that on the night on which He was betrayed, "He took the cup, and gave thanks..." (Luke 22:17) Even though it symbolized His life's blood, yet He was enabled to give thanks!

We, as New Testament priests, have a sacrifice to offer to God, it is: The fruit of our lips, our sacrifice of praise. It costs to praise! It is a sacrifice well pleasing to God when we offer thanks in adversity.

It is easy enough to be pleasant,  
When life flows by like a song,  
But the man worth while is one who will smile,  
When everything goes dead wrong.  
For the test of the heart is trouble,  
And it always comes with the years,  
And the smile that is worth the praises of earth  
Is the smile that shines through tears.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox (6)

Praise is to be offered CONTINUALLY! Like an eternal flame upon the altar of our dedication, the flame rising from our bodies, laid on that altar as a living sacrifice unto Him. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (Rom. 12:1)

We read in 1 Thes.5:18 "IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS."

John Bunyan made a flute from the leg of his stool while in Bedford prison. When his jailer came to stop him from playing on his strange instrument, he slipped it back in its place in his stool. May God help us to turn our prison stools into an instrument of praise!

The joy of the Lord is an unquenchable thing. It is like a spring, that flows fresh and pure from the mountain heights.

IT CAN BE DEFILED AT ITS BASE, BUT NEVER AT ITS SOURCE!

The Lord is the Keeper of the spring, and He tends it, and removes the defilement that would clog it, so that it can continue to flow unhindered to the waiting multitudes.

The redeeming effect of the Spiritual Christian in this world is a clear result of the Joy of the Lord. Without it, not only our lives are barren, but those to whom we minister are left in an arid desert. The water of Life is to flow from the Spirit-filled believer. We should be the channels of God's vitalising life. The world has no other source. The polluted springs of this world can spew out only pollution. It is the salt of Christian dedication poured into the stream of humanity, that can heal the fountain.

We may not be able to give thanks FOR All things. That would be unwise, but we can give thanks IN all things. In six out of seven translations, the word is translated IN: I believe that this is the mind of the Spirit, otherwise we would make God a partner in evil and in suffering. He came to give life and healing, not to bring pain or suffering or death. But we can give thanks IN all things, "And we know that ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD to them that love God.:",'. (Rom.8:28)

Give thanks as well, for those who have generously shown the love of God to us. See them as channels and instruments of the pure love that flows from God to us --from His heart, through their hands and lips, into our needy souls.

Fred Arnot, the great missionary of Central Africa wrote in his diary, "I am learning never to be disappointed but to praise."

## **The Threshing floor**

The attitude of THANKFULNESS will be the soil from which praise can grow. Ungratefulness is the soil from which all depravity springs.

Writing to the Romans, Paul lists the results of human depravity. He says, "Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, insolent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents; without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful." (Rom.1:29-31) But the reason he states for this moral corruption is ingratitude and self-centredness. He states, "... they are without excuse; because, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful..!". (Rom. 1:20-21)

God found in St. Paul a clear channel through which to pour Himself forth into the stream of human need. As Paul expressed it, 'So then death worketh in us, but life in you. "(2 Cor.4:12)

A poured out life is an abundant life. A flowing stream enriches the land through which it flows. The farmers draw from it to irrigate their fields. A dead, stagnant, selfish sea, gives life to nothing, but creates an atmosphere of death all around it. Fragrant, fresh, vitalising breezes come from a life that is poured forth in sacrifice.

It is written of our Master, "Though He was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich!" (2 Cor.8:9)

Those who have gone down to death can minister life. Those who have experienced and won over sorrow can rejoice and minister comfort to others.

From the carcass of the vanquished lion can come honey to sweeten the lives of all who pass by.

Jesus said, "Give and it shall be given unto you." (Luke 6:38)

The gift that counts is the gift that costs. Giving from the depth of poverty is the gift that enriches.

As dying, and yet gloriously alive;  
As bereft of all things, yet incalculably rich;  
Suffering the loss of all things corruptible, but left with Christ!

And from the ashes there comes forth the beauty of conformity to the Divine Image.

From the heart of Thomas à Kempis came this prayer:

O, to be nothing,  
To possess nothing,  
To desire nothing, BUT THEE! (7).

(1) "Afraid" by E. H. Hamilton

Poems that Preach compiled by John R. Rice

Published by "Sword of the Lord Foundation" Murfreesboro Tennessee

Hymn "The Lord's my Shepherd"

Crowning Glory Hymnal, compiled by John W. Peterson

published by Singspiration Inc. Zondervan Publishing House Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Song "I walk with God" from "The Student Prince"

(4) Hymn "O Love that Wilt not let me Go" by George Matheson

Crowning Glory Hymnal, compiled by John W. Peterson

published by Singspiration Inc. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Broken Bread by John Wright Follette

published by Gospel Publishing House, Springfield Missouri

"Worthwhile" by Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Poems that Preach compiled by John R. Rice

Published by "Sword of the Lord Foundation" Murfreesboro Tennessee

(7) Thomas à Kempis, "The Imitation of Jesus Christ "

## **The Threshing floor**

### **THE CALLING**

"Thou, therefore, endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully. The farmer that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits." (2 Tim.2:3-6)

This letter to Timothy was probably Paul's last letter. It was written from prison towards the end of Nero's reign. He had been abandoned by nearly all his friends and it could have been a time of great depression and despair. However, such was not the case.

We still can feel the strength in his voice and see the flashes of fire in his eye. His passion is not diminished and his purpose is stronger than ever. He is now looking forward with keen anticipation to his coronation day, and he says triumphantly :

"For I am now ready to be offered, ( as a sacrifice) and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day.... "(2 Tim.4:6-8)

"I have fought a good fight..." says confidently. He therefore encourages his son Timothy, "Fight the good fight of faith...."

"Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." There are three disciplines mentioned in this portion of Scripture.

The first is the DISCIPLINE OF OBEDIENCE as a soldier of Jesus Christ.

The second is the DISCIPLINE OF PERSONAL MASTERY AND SELF-CONTROL as an athlete.

And the 'third is the DISCIPLINE OF PATIENCE.

I would like here to deal with the first discipline: THE DISCIPLINE OF OBEDIENCE as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

The picture Paul paints is of a devoted soldier, one who has thrown personal safety and comfort to the winds, and has willingly cast in his lot with a highly honoured and distinguished Commander-in-Chief.

It is not the picture of a conscript soldier.

It is not of forced or obligatory military duty,  
But one of devoted allegiance to the Commander.  
Paul serves because of love.'  
The motivation is "to please him who hath chosen him to be soldier."  
He is not therefore serving self-interests.  
He is not taken up with the question of personal security or popularity.  
He is not a MERCENARY who fights for reward --  
But a soldier who fights because of allegiance and love and devotion to his Lord.

Notice also that Paul has been chosen ,-- "That he may please him who hath chosen him."

I see shining through Paul's words, a distinct sense of honour at having been chosen by the Lord. On many occasions he commenced his letters with the words: "Paul, a bonds slave of Jesus Christ. "Paul, an apostle, an ambassador, a delegate of Jesus Christ. He spoke of his calling as a "high and holy vocation." He was grateful to God for having chosen called him to the ministry. He had been apprehended God and knew the pride that comes from having been called and chosen. He knew He was one of the elect -- according to the foreknowledge of God.

To the Ephesians Paul wrote: "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him, in love....' (Eph.1:4) This same commission Timothy has received, and he reminds Timothy of this heavenly calling.

Paul has been honoured by the commission, and now encourages Timothy to fulfil his calling and to honour his Lord by ENDURING the HARDSHIPS that may come by reason of this vocation.

Paul urges him to "war a good warfare - holding onto faith."

Not only do we see devotion to the heavenly Commander and Lord but allegiance to the cause. We have espoused the highest calling possible to man. We have been called to be servants of righteousness. We WERE slaves of sin, but we have obeyed "from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being, then, made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness." (Rom.6:17-18)

The comprehension of this calling gives purpose and drive to life.

We are no longer victims of circumstances, no longer blown by the winds of chance, but consumed by a driving passion!

We are now ambassadors of Jesus Christ!

We have been apprehended of God:

## **The Threshing floor**

We are NOT our OWN.

We are bought with a price!

We are enjoined to glorify God in our bodies and in our spirits.

Whether imprisoned or free, Paul still knew the dynamic drive of purpose. In this same chapter, he admonishes Timothy to:

"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Tim.2:15) Even though he had been shamed and suffered as an evil doer, he could proclaim:

"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God ...." (Rom.1:16)

Therefore, as Christians,

elect ones,  
called into the fellowship of God's dear Son,  
partakers of the heavenly calling,  
members of the household of faith,

We must remember that we are not to serve our own self-interests!

It is not our desire for peace or salvation, and comfort that must take the pre-eminence in our lives, but the interests of Him who has called us from darkness into His marvellous light!

Before we begin to make request for ourselves, we are taught in the "Lord's prayer" to pray :

"Thy Kingdom COME; THY will be done; on earth as it is in heaven."

Before we are instructed to say "GIVE US," we are to seek God's interests. We are commanded to "SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND ALL THESE THINGS SHALL BE; ADDED UNTO YOU ." (Mat. 6:33)

It is HIS KINGDOM, we are to seek, and to help build. It is HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS we are expected to acquire, not the righteousness of self effort, but the righteousness that comes by faith; and all our other needs, our material needs and our need for strength and comfort direction and peace will be added.

Put God FIRST, and the spiritual results will be life and peace. If we sow to the flesh and self-interests and pleasure and self-comfort and self-gratification, we will reap corruption.

Nothing of eternal value can come from corruptible flesh, therefore, sowing to the flesh is destined to destruction.

Immortality cannot: spring from mortality.

Life does not come from matter!

Spiritual power will never come' from affluence!

Paul admonished Timothy to EN DURE HARDNESS,

Not to seek personal comfort and live only to gratify the whims and fancies of personal lusts,  
but to endure hardness, to be ready to suffer for His Name's sake.

Unless there is within us that confidence of a high and holy calling,

Unless we can see a definite purpose in adversity,

We shall attempt to flee anything that is distasteful,

For PERSONAL happiness and gain

Become the driving ambition of our lives.

But when we realise we have been called by our heavenly captain

to be a soldier,  
and to fight in His army,

when our allegiance and commitment to HIM is complete, and our devotion to the Lord is the motivation of our heart, then, suffering has meaning and becomes a sacrament. Pain, then loses its venom and despair is turned into hope.

Vance Havner says:

There is a dreadful state among orthodox Christians whose doctrine is as sound as a dollar and who could not be called worldly by any stretch of the imagination, but who have become fed-up and heavy until they are harder to arouse than the grossest sinners. They have lost their capacity for being stirred. Their reaction to any sermon is:

"We've heard all this and got over it and so will you." That sort of thing is hard on a young Timothy, an if he doesn't let' God use him to get them out of their state, the devil will use them to get him out of his!

## **The Threshing floor**

A good football coach drives his men to the extreme limits of their endurance! He cajoles them, urges them, threatens them and disciplines them! What would you think of a coach who fed his men on ice-cream sundaes, gave them plenty of leisure time, and told them to come in once a week to memorise some of the play !

He would be training them to lose!

GOD WANTS TO TRAIN US TO WIN!

HAVING TOO MUCH OF WHAT WE WANT USUALLY SPELLS NOT ENOUGH OF GOD!

"And he gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul!" (Psalm 106:15)

The Church is always endangered by a false sense of security,

but secure when in danger!

She is rich in faith, when poor,

and poor and naked and blind, when she esteems herself rich!

We are proud when we think we are humble,

and truly humble when we lament our pride!

When we weep over our hard hearts, we are truly repentant,

but very hard when we think we have repented and that repentance is for others!

We live when we are willing to lose our lives for His sake,

and die when we would keep our lives!

In Psalm 119:67, David said:

"Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy Word."

Make adversity your servant and not your master.

It is also important to note that when there is an **ULTIMATE GOAL**, there will be definite, **PRELIMINARY** goals. If we have no burning passion, it is unlikely we shall have much daily **COMPASSION**.

Unless there is an ultimate purpose for our lives, we will probably not set any daily goals.

When we can say, "For me to live is Christ," then we will be able to say "and to die is gain."

If we are living for Christ, and His glory, and to please Him who has laid hold upon us and chosen us for Himself, then we will have definite goals in life. And our energies will be channelled and directed into these avenues of service.

Then our assets, such as  
our TIME,  
our WORDS  
and our POSSESSIONS

can all be directed into the war effort.

For we are fighting for the right.  
We are called upon to free the captives,  
And no sacrifice is too great  
When you catch a glimpse  
Of souls in the prison house of sin,  
Being tortured by the enemy of God  
And chained by the chains of darkness,  
And fear, and passion,  
And hate and lust!  
We have been called upon to preach deliverance to the captives,  
the OPENING OF PRISON doors to the bound,  
to RELIEVE the oppressed,  
to HELP the fatherless, to DEFEND the widow, to BIND the bruised and broken,  
and to DIRECT the blind into the paths of peace.

**ALL OTHER INTERESTS RECEDE BEFORE THE MAGNITUDE OF THAT CALLING!**

When we catch a vision of our heavenly calling, then we begin to lay up treasures where thieves cannot break through and steal, nor moths corrupt, nor rust tarnish, nor economic depression devalue. Where our treasure is, our heart will be also. Maybe that is why so few Christians have any heart for the work,

because their hearts are NOT IN THE WORK but in the world!

They are in love with the world, and not with Christ! The work of saving souls does not thrill them,  
For they have never yielded to that restraining hand,  
that constraining love  
that royal commission!  
they have never turned when they felt that tap on their shoulder!

A clear indication of our love for our Master is the way we serve Him, and lay His interests to heart.  
And no man can do a good job unless his heart is in his work. If he lives merely for his paycheque, he

## **The Threshing floor**

will seldom do his best.

More likely he will do the he least necessary to retain his job.

And if we merely worry about saving our own souls, and thinking of ourselves first, it is unlikely that we shall know the HOLY BOLDNESS, nor the DRIVING CHALLENGE, nor the THRILLING ECTASY to win souls for Jesus.

Then all Christian service becomes dull and listless. It lacks lustre because the heart is not linked with the Lord. Our interests are miles apart, and our joys are not the same as HIS.

He has meat to eat that we know not of! It is expected of stewards that a man be found faithful.

Faithful in goods not his own,

Faithful under pressure,

Faithful in temptation,

Loyal and true,

One whose self-interests are sacrificed for the interests of his Master.

As soldiers of Jesus Christ, we must remember that we have been given clear marching order's.

Those order's are

to make disciples,

to evangelise,

to spread the good news of Christ's death and resurrection,

to declare and to proclaim the Lordship of Jesus Christ

and to witness by our sacrificial lives, to the fact that we are pilgrims, and that we seek a city whose builder is God!

Driven from his throne by his rebel son Absalom, David gathered around him a rag tag army of discontented men. God has chosen today, the POOR, rich in faith. He has

"chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are...(1 Cor.1:27.28)

He has chosen those who search for truth, and those who are weary with the slavery of the world and the tyranny of things.

He invites them, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take

my yoke upon you, and learn of me ...." (Matt.11:28)

When God calls us into His army to build His Church and to shake the foundation of hell, He expects TOTAL and IMPLICIT OBEDIENCE!

Obedience to the great commission that becomes the driving force of our lives, and obedience to the Spirit's inner urgings which are His daily guidance and direction.

Delayed obedience is disobedience!

The sons of God are led by the Spirit of God. We cannot choose our position, or our task. We are given an assignment, a commission, and He who knows us best assigns us a place in His Body that will bring us great joy, and that will ultimately bring the Body most benefit.

It will be a work that will bring us greater dependence upon Him and more devotion to our duty. It will bring death to self-interest and distaste for the praise of men.

"Father, where shall I work today?"

And my love flowed warm and free

Then he pointed me out a tiny spot

and said, "Tend that for me".

I answered quickly, "Oh, no, not that,

Why, no one would ever see,

No matter how well my work was done.

Not that little place for me! "

And the word he spoke, ' it was not stern,

He answered me tenderly,

"Ah, little one, search that heart of thine.

Art thou working for them' or me ?

Nazareth was a little place

And so was Galilee."

Author unknown.

Ours is a life-time commitment. There are so many people who fail because they have made a habit of quitting. In regards to our discipleship, it is ALWAYS TOO SOON TO QUIT!

We are in a warfare and quitting means turning traitor and denying the Lord who bought us with His blood. He has promised, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."(Rev.2:10)

## **The Threshing floor**

When our conviction is deep, and our conversion is genuine, then our purpose will be steadfast. Holy boldness will be the result.

"The Lord knoweth them that are His." He will never leave us nor forsake us. He will keep pouring His strength into us and sufficient grace to meet every situation.

We will be MORE THAN CONQUERORS through Him who loves us!

The STAKES ARE HIGH in this game. We have life eternal if we persevere in well-doing and are not turned away from the hope of the Gospel, and everlasting shame and contempt, everlasting suffering and woe, if we fail the test! It is too soon to quit! Press on, faithful pilgrim. Our present trials and testing are not worthy to be compared with the joy that shall be revealed in us!

He is watching from the high balconies of heaven. May we walk before Him and be perfect,

Be bold and brave,  
and above all,  
be faithful  
"endure hardness as a good soldier..."... for good soldiers never die.  
As Enoch, they' walk with God, and are translated!  
Give us a watchword for the hour,  
A thrilling word, a word of power;  
A battle-cry, a flaming breath,  
That calls to conquest or to death;  
A word to rouse the Church from rest,  
To heed her Master's high behest,  
The call is given: Ye hosts arise,  
Our watchword is Evangelise!

Henry Crocker (2)

## **GOD CAN MAKE YOU UNBEATABLE**

The Bible tells us:

"But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence." (1 Cor.1:27-29)

God did not come to choose winners. He makes winners out of ordinary material. If He has chosen you, then has predestined you to win!

There are three keys to successful Christian living, three steps into faith that can make you unbeatable. Please allow me to share them with you now. The first and most important is:

**TAKE GOD'S SIDE!**

We were all born on the wrong side of God. We were on the wrong side of the controversy. We were alienated from God by ignorance and enemies of God in our minds. The purpose of the cross was to reconcile man to God and to work out this reconciliation in our hearts and attitudes. Don't try to get God to take your side, but take HIS side!

If you are on God's side, you will abruptly find yourself in a warfare. God's ancient enemy, the devil, will be YOUR enemy. Peter admonishes us:

"Be sober, be vigilant, because YOUR ADVERSARY, the devil, like a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist steadfast in the faith.." (1 Peter 5:8-9)

When you take God's side you will find that many of your worldly friends will abandon you. Those who love darkness hate light. John warns us: "Love not the world (this present evil social order), neither the things that are in the world (the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life). If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." (1 John 2:15)

James speaks even more bluntly when he says, "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?" (James 4:4)

If you take God's side you will be against sin. Sin caused the alienation between God and man. Sin brought Christ to the cross. Sin brings death and sorrow and suffering. God hates sin!

If you take God's side you will loathe the sin that separates you from the love of God and that drives

## **The Threshing floor**

the heavenly dove from your breast.

When you take God's side you will discover this transforming truth: YOU AND GOD ARE A MAJORITY!

You may be completely alone, you may have no friends,

you may have little money,

but when you take God's side "El Shaddāi" will be with you. He is the ALL SUFFICIENT ONE, and you will discover that God and you spell ENOUGH!

Now you cannot walk with God until your mind is renewed.

"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3)

There must come an exchange of your thoughts for God's thoughts, of your ways for the ways of the Spirit.

You must not form any UNHOLY ALLIANCES. "Blessed is the man who walketh NOT in the counsel of the ungodly.: " (Psalm 1:1)

Each time you face that internal conflict and a controversy rages in your heart, TAKE GOD'S SIDE!

Take His side concerning the final judgement and even though you may not understand, your love for Him will build confidence.

You will be able to affirm as did Moses, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen.18:25)

When you have taken God's side you will know His abiding presence. The sweet fragrance of Jesus will fill your life. And as Robert Schuller said, "Nothing can stop the man who feels the presence of God with him!"

When you decide to take God's side you will want to know what His will and purpose is. What is He primarily interested in doing? The ancient commission read by Jesus in that synagogue in Nazareth is still applicable today. He stood up, unrolled the scroll and read, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised..." (Luke 4:18)

When you have taken God's side you will become involved with His work and inspired by His purpose. You will progressively be reminded to, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ

Jesus..." (Phil.2:5)

You will have ONE CONSUMING PASSION in life: to please God and to tell the good news of redemption and reconciliation to others.

Lesser pursuits will pale before the enormity of that commission: to preach deliverance to the captives, to heal the broken-hearted and to let the oppressed go free. David took God's side when he had to face Goliath. All the soldiers of Israel fled in fear before this man for they were thinking of their own safety; Saul was thinking of his own name, but David had God's interests at heart!

He indignantly demanded, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the LIVING GOD!" (1 Sam.17:26). David's God was alive and God's glory and honour were at stake. He threw personal safety to the winds and with faith burning in his heart he began to confess victory with his mouth. It is a good thing to confess our faith!

Learn to confess truths such as these:

"Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." (1 Jn.4:4)

"I believe God will guide me. I trust myself to His loving care."

"I believe God will always make a way where there is no way."

"I believe I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me. " (Phil.4:13)

Because David had taken God's side in this issue, he was assured of God's intervention. He realised that he served the Living God and that He was a God of miracles. Just in case he should have a moment of fear as he ran to face this giant, just in case his legs began to shake, David made his position clear. He confessed his victory with his mouth. He shouted out his defiance!

"Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hands; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air..." (1 Sam.17:45-46)

Goliath met a young lad with giant faith in the omnipotent God, and Goliath was no match in a spiritual battle. David did not face Goliath with sword and with spear. He did not attempt to drag Saul's armour with him, but bravely ran forward in the Name of the Lord.

Today we are faced with a spiritual battle, and "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds..."(2 Cor.10:4)

## **The Threshing floor**

"Giant Despair" will tumble before the clear confession of our faith. Not only did David foresee the overthrow of the giant, but he prophesied the defeat of the entire army of the Philistines.

"Giant Despair" has a host of enemies with him, but they can all be vanquished when we take God's side, and fight with His weapons and are clothed with the armour of the Living Word of God!

The second key to successful living is this:

**EXPECT A MIRACLE.**

David expected God's intervention in his extremity. He did not take Saul's armour and ask God to bless it! He placed himself in a position of total dependence on the miraculous intervention of the Lord. He said, "The battle is the Lord's." and he knew God would not allow him to be ashamed in the hour of truth.

He confidently affirmed, "And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD's..." (1 Sam.17:47) Following this statement we read, "and it came to pass."

Job lamented, "For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me." (Job 3:25) And what David believed and confessed came to pass as well.

Either what we fear comes to pass, or our faith opens the way for God's intervention.

When I say "expect a miracle," I do not mean that we should merely look up into the sky for falling manna. I believe we should PREPARE for a miracle; make provision for a miracle! God does not drop loaves of bread from the sky, but gives grain to the sower, and sends His blessings upon the ground that is plowed and sown. So today, before you see any indication of God's intervention, PREPARE FOR A MIRACLE!

When Jesus came to the tomb of Lazarus, He asked those that stood by to first remove the stone. He did not pray first and see what would happen. He made provision for the miracle that He knew would take place. "Remove the stone, Lazarus is about to be raised." Make way for God! "Prepare ye the Way of the Lord!"

When Christ fed the five thousand with a few loaves and fishes, He first instructed the disciples to have the multitude sit down in groups of fifty so that they could more readily be served. Jesus took the loaves and fishes that were made available to Him and blessed them. The miracle of multiplication took place and thousands were fed.

Begin with what you have. Don't wait for exceptional opportunities. Don't stumble over an opportunity at your feet while reaching for the moon. Use what is in your hand, available at this very moment. Remember, one little candle can light the world. And as Robert H. Schuller succinctly said, "Only God can count the apples in an apple seed."

The prophet Elisha instructed the widow of the prophet to go and borrow many vessels, all that she could find. The magnitude of the miracle depended upon her provision. The oil did not stop flowing until all the vessels were filled to the brim. (2 Kings 4)

Our limitation depends upon what our vision can perceive and what our faith can appropriate. Make plans big enough for God to fit into. When Jesus was about to perform the first recorded miracle of His ministry, He first instructed the servants to fill the waterpots with water.

Not only are we to EXPECT a miracle and to PREPARE for a miracle, we are to CREATE THE ATMOSPHERE, by praising God and giving Him thanks even before we see the actual answer to our prayer.

Sometimes the miracle that takes place is within our own hearts. While we expect God to work on situations and circumstances around us, He may have planned to work a miracle of His grace in our lives.

When you are on God's side, expecting a miracle,

You find yourself THINKING GOD'S THOUGHTS!

God is never depressed, He is never anxious.

Jesus said, "Be not anxious," i.e. worried, uptight, distressed.

Observe the lilies; see how they grow. See the flowers of the field. Contemplate God's generous provision in nature and then remember, you are infinitely of greater value to God than the whole world in which you live! God loves you! When you begin thinking like God, you know He has everything under control. You are confident!

God says, "Be strong and of good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed; for the LORD thy God is with thee wherever thou goest." (Jos.1:9)

"Fear thou not ... I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." (Isa.41:10)

How important to think the thoughts of God, for when we think His thoughts, we will have His

## **The Threshing floor**

feelings; and His feelings are what brings heaven down to earth. Tolstoy once said "Where love is, God is."

The third and last step I would like to share with you is this:

**NEVER GIVE UP!**

Nobody can beat you but YOU!

There are no hopeless situations, only hopeless people! There are people who have overcome every conceivable situation, even the one in which you now find yourself. It may seem utterly hopeless; it has appeared that way to others as well.

Remember you have taken sides with the GOD OF HOPE!

When England was besieged and battle-torn during the Second World War, people were talking of surrender. Winston Churchill rallied that nation with these fighting words:

"Never give in. Never give in! Never! Never! Never! In nothing great or small, large or petty; Never give in except to convictions of honour and good sense."

Hitler had stormed all western Europe. France had fallen. America had not committed herself. The world waited for Hitler's next insane move. The radios of the world gave Churchill's historic speech to the Commons.

"You ask what is our aim? I can answer in one word. Victory, Victory at all costs.

Victory in spite of terror,

Victory however long and hard the road may be...

For without victory there is no survival.

I have nothing to offer you but blood, toil, sweat and tears."

Two weeks later Mr. Churchill was to utter the inspiring words that would weld his nation together into an invincible fighting force. He said,

"We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds,

We shall fight in the fields ... and in the streets.

"We shall fight in the halls. We shall NEVER SURRENDER!"

As great a man as Winston Churchill was, and as inspiring as were those words he uttered, you and I today rally round the Captain of the Hosts of Israel, and we recall His dynamic words that stand as true today as when they were first uttered.

"Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (Jn.16:33)

"I will build my church, and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it." (Matt.16:18)

"All authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations" (Matt.28:18-19)

"Behold, I give unto you power ... over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt YOU." (Luke 10:19)

"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors ...(Rom. 8:35)

We are to go into the world as conquerors and not shamefully as the conquered. God can make us unbeatable!

If you leave a door of escape you will probably take it when the going is rough. God must put His unconquerable Spirit in you. Amy Carmichael in her book Thou Givest ... They Gather (1) writes of the Crusaders: "Behind the soldiers was the sea. Before them an unknown land, where weariness, hardships and battles awaited them. Their leader knew that if things were very difficult, they would be tempted to re-embark in their boats drawn up on the shore. He did not want them to have any way of retreat, so he told them to burn their boats."

We are to go forth as liberators to free the captives of Satan, to open prison doors, to represent our Lord among forgotten men. We go forth in HIS NAME, under the banner of HIS CROSS to fight for the glory of His Name!

The world is full of losers, but God can make you unbeatable!

Remember,

**NOTHING CAN BEAT THE MAN WHO IS ON GOD'S SIDE!**

For you and God are a majority!

(1) "Thou Givest ... they Gather" by Amy Carmichael published by Christian Literature Crusade Fort Washington, Pa. 19034