

Hornswoggled in His Love

Captured with and by God's Love

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Forward

An historically fictional novel about a young man that was brought up with high moral standards, and not caught up in the goings-on of this world, at least to the point that his life is submerged in it.

I have tried to be as accurate as possible, using as many sources and references as could be had; most of the greater details are hidden in Scripture, and with an understanding of the region and human nature could conclude many of the finer detail.

This young man, like most any of us, at least those of us that seek a deeper relationship with our God, struggled through life with a feeling of emptiness, although happy in every other aspect, knew that something special was missing in his life.

Each step of the way brought him closer and closer to that fulfillment, but still seemed to stumble with each step taken. This

man, born Simeon, and later surnamed Peter, was not unlike those of us that search for a truer and far more developed life, as any who have reached it, will confess; and can only be attained thru the Christ of God. Can we see ourselves in these pages? I think we can.

This world, which is enmity to God, throws out a net to contain and capture as many as would follow its empty rules. The façade of the glamour it offers, with its so-called great morals, and the pie-in-the-sky attitudes, reveals itself to all those that are seeking God, and a relationship with Him, wanting more than this world can proposition. The people of the world are generally good, but few if any, are ever taught that there is a greater Life that lies beyond the veneer this world pretends to possess, and this story shows that for not only Peter, but any who want this new Life, not dictated nor owned by this world, can have it.

This story brings an understanding of the men of old, with their life that is very much like ours, to an empathetic awareness that these were just common folks, people like you and me, empty without Christ, and wanting more than just an acknowledgement of Him, wanted Life abundantly. Struggles, we'll always have, and this story shows many, but it will also show that these same struggles aren't there to bring us down, but to take us to an appreciation of a greater life than this world, and its circumstances, are offering.

These 'things that we call church' are counted among those that are letting us down. There should be a vast difference between the world and these entities called 'church', but there is not.

The Awakening

A young boy, about the age of thirteen is sound asleep when the squeaky voice of his brother wakes him. The responsibilities for these two boys are great, for at this age they are required to help their parents about the many chores that come with running a fishing business. Early, before the town, or mom and dad gets up they have what they call free time to do what they want, and both want to explore. Both are mature for their age, but both are young boys, and boys like to explore, and this day, which was made up between the two of them, was made to do just that, they were going to the sea shore. Just south of their home in Bethsaida, was the Sea of Galilee, and the things found on the beach after an overnight squall could be great, and that's where they were heading, to find what treasures were lying there as the gift of last

night's winds would leave stationed in their appointed territory. This was fun, and fun is the main stuff that the marrow of boys was made for, it was going to be a delightful two hours of enjoyment, as they planned to accumulate the resources of the sea, before both had to go home by the time dad awoke.

It didn't rain much in their part of the country this time of the year, the sky's normally blue for months at a time, A typical day was a lot of hard work, good meals, more hard work and maybe a few moments for themselves, but they lived a good life, and dad was well respected throughout the region. On the days dad would go to Temple, the work would go on, but maybe not as fervently as it would on those other days. Neither knew of any other way of life, so life was good, very little complaining ever went on, as their life, for a fact, was very good, especially with the adventures of the sea.

The sunrises were beautiful, the sunsets could take you to far away horizons with their shades of pinks, reds, oranges, blues, and all the many different shades of greys and whites, it was a good place to live. One day not too long before, early, the boys did the same earlier trick as aforementioned, exploring and found, some hundred yard down the coast, a washed up net. Wasn't hard to tell that the net was recently lost for the fish that were tangled in it were still alive.

Long before sun-up, waves calmly striking the shore in three second intervals, the half-moon far in the west with its' many sparkles lined up across the water like a silver road they could walk

on, there it was, a net churning in the water, just knee deep and theirs' for the taking.

Within an hour they had it on the shore, and lined up in neat columns of diverse fish, all sorted to species, and all theirs. This was the day that both were to become rich; that is until their father was shown the accomplishment. "No, the owner of the net had to be found, and the fish were to be distributed among the widows and the poor"; but dad was still proud. To make things better, their well-known dad spread the news about the boys throughout; they were famous. Well, they thought they were.

It was on the cool, quiet mornings, that the two brothers could be found, sometimes with their assorted friends, fumbling up or down the beach on the south side of Bethsaida. Not every day, but as often as they could sneak out. All this rambling about was okayed as long as chores were kept up, and respect given to the shore line and their folks. Never was a time that either felt bored.

It was early on a Thursday morning, somewhere around two hours before the first gesture of the dawning of the sun, when a young man woke to meet the day. As usual, he just laid there on his pallet that was always positioned in the same corner of the room as it had been for several years now. Not a movement he made except the opening of his eyes and a small swipe at a fly that had landed on his forehead where an encounter with a rope with

the attached tackle had brought about a small cut with a trickle of left over blood from the day before. “It was another beautiful morning”, he thought as the stars could be seen from the narrow window that was up and to the right of where he was laying.

The young man just lay there thinking. Quite often he did this as it was his most favorite part of the day. Thinking of the earlier escapades with his brother, not so many years ago, thinking about things that had happened in the last few days, but mostly thinking of the goals he had set for himself for the day that was gearing up to start. Lazy, he was not; work was something that his youth was very familiar with and he found his element in the sweat and toiling of each day. Working with his hands, and a disciplined mind is how he provided for his young family, and those that worked with him. As he watched the stars, the smell of smoke was carried into the room by the slight hint of a fog and a light breeze, he’d just lay there motionless as thoughts would run from his wife, to the days’ objectives and back to her again. This was a good time in his life and he enjoyed the responsibility of providing for their new home and the men that worked with him.

This newly wed young man was from Bethsaida on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee, where he grew up with his parents that had taught him the advantages of hard work and how to give a square deal to everyone that he’d meet. Yes, he grew up under the teachings of the forefathers of old, and although he did not frequent the Temple, except on occasion, he loved the Lord God and continued to build his life under the principles of God’s love for his people. He now moved a few miles west to the villa, not a

small town, but not large in any stretch of the imagination, called Capernaum. It was there that he met his wife a few years earlier, and it was there that her parents also lived close to the Sea of Galilee. They both now made their home not far from where she was raised, close to the sea. Every day was spent enjoying the many amenities of such a gorgeous body of water, they loved it.

Still lying flat on his back pondering the day that was about to begin, still looking out the stone window, still smelling the freshness of the waters that were not too far from where he now lay beside his wife, the young man surveyed his mind of how this day could be prosperous and how he could catch enough to make enough money to sustain him and the men that worked for him with the abbreviated necessities of life. The three men that worked with him depended on his leadership to provide for their families also, one was married, and the other two still helped supplement their own parents and siblings.

As he laid there quiet in thought, his wife beside him, she not knowing that he was awake, he began to rejoice in the expectations of the day to come and what would be accomplished. When suddenly he heard a voice from outside calling "Simeon", he knew who it was, for nobody but his brother called him by his true name, a name of old.

Slowly, ever-so-slowly, he raised himself up to walk through the threshold to greet his eager brother, not wanting to wake his wife. "Andrew, we have at least an hour before daybreak, what's the hurry?" The young man quietly spoke in a somewhat of a hoarse voice. Before Andrew could answer he spoke again; "are you as

excited as I am about the opportunities that lay before us, this is the day of the new moon, and you know what that means.”

“I sure do”, Andrew said with excitement in his voice, but still, he was speaking in a whisper, for he knew his brothers’ new wife was probably still asleep, “remember last month and the month before, we did well on this same day of the month, and I didn’t get much sleep last night thinking about it. Hey! Where are James and John?”

“Hold your voice down so as not to wake up everyone,” Simeon spoke while his brothers’ voice rose at the same rate of his excitement. “Brother, it’s a bit too early for them, but they’ll be here before the dawn cracks, they always are.”

There was a light cover of fog that hung close to the ground and over the water, but it was thin, meaning easy to see through, only about three foot thick. The stars were bright as the night seemed to be going from dark to darker. Knowing it’s the darkest just before the break of day, it meant it was only an hour or so before they and the other two would board their two large boats, maybe even call them very small ships, and begin their day of fishing. Fishing was their way of life. Five, six, and on rare occasions, seven days a week at least two of the four men would set sailing in hopes of bringing in food and an income for their families and several others in the country of Galilee. This was early autumn, the air still warm, and a hint of crispness hung about that would last ‘til at least noon. This meant a great time fishing the waters, as fish sensed the same change and were on the move, which meant it was vastly easier to net the migrating creatures, and especially on

the new moon cycle. Anticipations were high for the days' journey because the last several weeks weren't all that good. High tide was about three hours after sun-rise, and even though it was minimal on the Sea of Galilee, it still added up to a great day of netting. Simon, whom his brother called Simeon, and John would navigate one boat, and Andrew and James the other. Even though they worked separately, they were usually within shouting distance of each other, but not always.

This was one of those rare moments that Simon and Andrew could sit on the sand and just talk about things that brothers talk about. They were best of friends, and had, thus far, shared their whole lives together, well most of it. Often their conversations were reflections of growing up together not too many miles west of where they now sat.

They'd reminisced about their parents and growing up on such a beautiful body of water, and the good times they had in and on the Sea of Galilee. Both Andrew and Simon were young, but had the maturity of older men thanks to the way their loving parents had raised them.

"Have you heard about", Andrew said to his brother, "that man some hundred miles south that's making quite a stir?"

"No, hadn't heard a thing, and what kind of stir is he creating?"

"Down on the river Jordan," Andrew continued, "he's telling people of the coming of the Messiah. And a lot of folks are listening to him. What are your thoughts about that?"

For the last couple of decades, and probably a lot longer, there had been much thought and conversation about a messiah coming into the land and turning things upside down, especially to the Romans that occupied their precious and Holy land. Simon had heard these conversations often, but still didn't have a strong opinion about it either way. He was a Jew, and that was a fact, but he didn't spend much time in or around the Temple, thought it was more politics than Godliness, and so did what was required of him and not much else. Simon fished with his father Jonan all his life, and so did Andrew, learning the trade and evidently learning it well. His dad spent much time in the Temple and with the things concerning it. And since they fished together for so many years, that is, until Simon was introduced to that pretty girl in the next village over, Simon heard and learned much from his dad. I guess because of his youth, most of what he was taught didn't stick, that is except the fishing stuff. He heard much of the hope of an upcoming Messiah, and God truly knows that Israel needed help, especially from the yoke that the Romans had placed on them. Several had recently prophesied, even one of the older gentlemen a couple of years back said that God had told him that he wouldn't die until he had met the Christ. Well, that man died about twenty something years back, and not much had changed since then. Simon didn't dismiss the Idea of the coming Messiah, but he didn't dwell on it, but then again, he did think on the subject every now and again, more than he was willing to confess.

Thinking to himself, he answered his brother Andrew saying; "Right now I don't have time to think about what some man in the Jordan River is doing, I've got fishing on my mind. Talking about

fishing; here comes Zebedee's boys, let's get things ship-shape and head out."

Looking up and to the left, Andrew saw the two brothers coming and shouted out in their direction, that's because they had walked down closer to the shore, "it's about time you two got here, we're burning daylight."

Turning to look at each other, with a smirk on their face, they said in unison: "The sun ain't up yet"

"Good morning James and John, how's it going?"

James spoke first. "You know what today is?" And then John injected; "The new moon with a mid-day high tide."

"Yeah, we know, we've been talking about it. Are you guys excited as much as we are?" Andrew responded.

Both shook their head yes, but before either could say anything, Simon motioned with his hand as if to say come-on, and then spoke. "And a beautiful day it is, let's get both boats rigged and ready."

Just as the eastern sky had a faint gleam of the breaking of the day, both boats had been readied. "It's time, let's get going," Simon said in a soft voice. "Today's the day. I can feel it in my bones."

It was mornings like this that the two older brothers loved the most. This same scenario had happened in their lives many times

over, an anticipated moment that happens several times a year where all the factors come together at the same time, making conditions perfect. Heart rates up and energy soaring, they were ready. "Today is the day, and now is the time", spoke James as he waded knee deep, pushing the boat, and jumping in.

As they paired up, aligning their two boats together, and began rowing, both boats right next to each other, James hollered out: "Have you guys heard about that man down next to Jerusalem, stirring up all that noise about the Messiah coming, and that stuff about baptizing?" Simon, and Andrew both just shrugged their shoulders, but no one spoke a word. They just kept rowing.

After about fifteen minutes of hard rowing, Simon and John were getting into position, and Andrew and James had a little farther to go. And then James quietly spoke. "That man down there in Jerusalem, the one called the Baptist is making a ho-do around that part of our country. Heck, it seems that that's all everyone up in our parts are talking about." Andrew didn't say a word, but you could tell he was thinking, he laid his oar down as James continued to ready the equipment, grabbing the first buoy, and motioned to James to stop rowing.

Since Andrew and Simon were brothers, it didn't take a long look at them to tell they were. Andrew was a little taller, and his beard was a little less dense, Simons' crook in the middle of his nose was a little more pronounced, both of a slim build, it was obvious they were from the same stock, both had their mothers' eyes.

It wasn't but minutes, maybe even seconds before the sun broke the horizon, and Andrew and James had the first net out, with its' buoy, and were now stretching the woven mass due south. As the net unfurled, they were making sure that there were no tangles, for the net had to be near perfect for all to go well. "Easy goes it." Andrew spoke, but I think it was mostly to himself, as they neared the end of the two hundred foot long tapestry of woven hemp. Looking to his right, he could see Simon and John doing the same, probably about two hundred feet to their west; and maybe about that same distance closer to the shore.

As for that set, they were both finished, but had to row some thousand yards farther south and do the same to the second set of nets. The waters weren't very deep, and had a turquoise gleam to it, if it weren't for the ripples from the two boats; the water would have a look of polished crystal.

Since they were now finished with the sets, Andrew and James rowed a little towards the west and both just laid back against the boat, one on the stern and the other against the bow. They didn't have to drop anchor, for there wasn't even a whisper of wind, and both could see that Simon and John had done the same. Andrew was the first to speak. "What did you hear about that man they call the Baptist?"

Stretching his arms above his head and in a low keyed tenor James said; "I don't know a lot to tell ya, but he is stirring up a ruckus. They claim droves of peoples' lives are changing, he's asking folks to clean up their lives and make ready for the Messiah."

This struck a chord deep inside of Andrew, for he too wanted something more substantial in his life, so he pondered on the thought of such a change. His life consisted of fishing and little else, for he too wanted substance in his being. So the chord struck was more than just a fleeting thought.

Now Simon and John were having a similar conversation, but Simon would rather talk about fishing. He'd always fished with his dad Jonah since about age six, and it was deep in his blood. It's only been a few years since him and his brother moved out of their dad's house in Bethsaida and took up the business on their own in Capernaum. Andrew liked fishing, but it was in the marrow of Simons' bones, this was his life, and he looked forward to everyday that he could be on the waters of Galilee.

Although most of the gentiles in and around town spoke Greek, Simon and Andrew were schooled in Arabic, but were also versed in the other two languages of the region, and were raised in the ways of their forefathers. Their father had taught them, with intent, of the old ways, and each listened with anticipation when he spoke, but at this time in their lives, it just didn't stick. I guess, being young, and most likely adventurous, they liked spending their days under the sun and on the water, and dad's teachings weren't that closely adhered to. This was their life, and all the men liked it. As they waited, Simon cast a net out repeatedly to pass the time and maybe catch a few extra fish. This would often work, and the times when he was the only one fishing, he'd spend all day casting the net, and many times with decent results.

Some four or five hours later, Simon shouted across the water and told Andrew to start pulling the nets in, and then move a little more south and do it again. At the end of the day, making two sets, both boats rowed back to Capernaum with a pretty good haul, but not as much as Simon had thought it would be twelve hours earlier. But still it was a-good-days catch, and well worth the tiredness that his bones felt.

As they pulled the boats upon the shore, and assessing the days catch, Simon said to the others; “Tomorrow is the second best day we’ll have in the next couple of months, that is, with the signs right, so we’ll do it again in the morning.” Taking the fish to market was not the easy part, but it certainly was the rewarding side of fishing. It was a better catch than normal, but still didn’t meet the expectations that all had that morning of the same day. Exhausted, after selling their fish in the market, they all headed toward their homes, Simon to his new wife.

The sun was inching over the western horizon, which was the back side of Simons’ home; the sky was red which meant another beautiful day tomorrow. Greeting his wife, Simon was tired, but the kind of tired that makes one feel good. It was his time to relax, reflect, and spend time with his loved one. A dedicated man he was, to his business, but mostly to his wife, whom he loved very much. Many times they would just set there between the two posts near the front door, and just talk, or maybe not even say a word, but always enjoying the cool of the afternoon and each other.

They were watching a heron trying to steal a rather large fish that washed upon the shore line that three seagulls were trying to tear apart, a scene that had happened many times before, but none-the-less it was always interesting to see who would win the battle. The sun had dropped out of sight and the daylight was waning, but still very easy to see across the vastness of the waters. The clouds in the distance were pink, as the sun still bathes them with its last rays. This day Simon and his wife just talked, talked about this-and-that. It was a good day for all.

Running a business was not the easiest of jobs, but Simon was created to do it, and do it he did. He was responsible for his brother and his two longtime friends, and his job was taken seriously, but there were certain privileges and notoriety that came with the job, and that pleased him. No, to be well known was not one of his objectives, but the reputation of dependably was important in selling his catch.

As the next year passed, each day and night were about the same as before with the exception that Andrew went south to check on the so-many rumors that he continued hearing about the Baptist. So Simon temporarily replaced him with another longtime friend, and also had to replace John and James, for they too had to go back and work with their father Zebedee, who was recuperating from a sickness that wasn't serious, but kept him off his feet for a while. Simon knew that they were to only work temporarily with him, as their father also was a fisherman, but had this problem he had to work out. It wasn't hard finding good men to fish with, for

Simon was well favored in town with most of the folks. And since Bethsaida was only a few miles to the east, he, and his father, were already well known, before Simon was to be married, in Capernaum. Problem solved, Simon kept riding the tide and waves as each day dissolved into another. He was truly a fisherman.

Andrew was intrigued in the first few days of sitting on the banks on the Jordan River, and watched and listened with intent as the Baptist preached and taught of the preparation of the soon coming of the Messiah. There was a following that watched and traveled with this man called John, and it seemed each day that Andrew sat on the bank, he would inch a little closer than he was the day before. Something had pricked in his heart, and he knew what was being said was true, and the whole country needed this Savior to rescue them from the tyranny of the Romans. Occasionally in the evenings, Andrew would talk with the Baptist, as he usually walked right past him on the way back to town. And then would ask a series of questions each time, for he always gathered thoughts as he listened to John speak while half way across that river. He knew of the help that Israel needed from the upcoming messiah, but he himself also wanted help from Him, and like his older brother, there was a hankering in the pit of his bowels.

Now John, the one called the Baptist, was noticed to be a peculiar fellow, with his strange clothes and his unorthodox

speech, but Andrew liked him, and was certainly interested in all John had the say, so they talked often. John was not schooled in the normal sense, but had a vast knowledge of the scriptures and the things of God, so Andrew listened and studied the man and the words coming from his mouth. A week or so later, this still continuing, John asked Andrew why he wasn't standing in the water with him. Andrew, looking down with a little bit of embarrassment said; "that's a place for your disciples, I'm just a fisherman from up north."

"Actually", the Baptist said trying to look him straight in the eye, "I probably spend more time teaching you than I do most of my other disciples. Come with me tomorrow and let's see what happens."

It had been raining with high winds in Capernaum the last several days and fishing was not to be had. So Simon caught up on his other many chores, not to mention the town gossip, and had already heard that brother Andrew had gotten involved with the man called John the Baptist, down near Jerusalem. His father Jonas, that many called Jonah, told him about that bit of information, and Simon didn't know, at that poin, whether to be happy for him, or concerned for his welfare.

Simon was a simple man, common in every way, at least from the appearances from the outside. I guess that was because he

didn't talk a lot, especially to those he didn't know well, but on the inside, thoughts, ideas, dreams and plans were going on in his brain from before sun up 'til the time he fell off to sleep. Simple would be the wrong word to accuse Simon of, for he was a man of deep thought, but few knew it. He wanted something different in his life, but really had no idea of what it was; something to give meaning to his existence. Fishing was good, and the business was thriving, and he was instrumental in having a hand in several other peoples' lives and their prosperity, but still something was missing. Being married to his new wife was special and he loved being with her, but there were still places in his heart that were unfulfilled. Even though he didn't spend much time in the Temple, nor practiced that religion, except when he thought he had too, he loved the Lord, and knew that all good things came from Him. It was the Lord God that he looked too, and in this situation of his life, he again looked toward Him, but as yet the answer hadn't come, so he and his crew continued fishing. Simon even had a couple of dreams that he thought were from the lord, but when he'd wake up, could only remember pieces of them. Twice, while fishing, he thought he'd seen someone walking across the water toward him, and once, while appearing into the waters, he thought he had seen himself walking, walking as if he was a blind man.

The days were getting a little cooler, but that just made things better, and relaxing while he worked was easier, and at times Simon frequently had many thoughts, in the midst of these less troubling times, that went beyond himself. The what-if's ran rampant in his mind; what if this happened, what if that, what would happen if he became hurt and couldn't support his family

and the others. Worrying really wasn't part of his behavior, and saying he was concerned would slightly overstate it, at least from the outward appearance, but there was a nagging in his soul of something better in life, but couldn't pursue it, for he surly didn't know which way go, so Simon waited. Although he was known to have impatience, and quick decisions was something he was good at, or maybe not, he still didn't have a direction to otherwise go; except he knew to fish. Fishing, he understood all the ins and outs, and he knew how to love those that were close to him, but the complex manner of the inner thoughts, he was at a loss.

It wasn't a dream

After a year or so Andrew returned back to Capernaum and took off where he had left before going to Jerusalem and learning under the leadership of the Baptist. It was in the cool of a late afternoon, looking up, Simon saw a man walking toward him on the beach. Thinking little of it for this was a common occurrence, but in a few minutes looking again, saw that it was Andrew. After their genuine and affectionate greetings, both sat under the clear cooling sky, a

time that the birds gathered close to the shore to stock up on food for the night ahead, they talked.

At first the brothers caught up on the day to day occurrences, and then slowly worked their conversation to more important issues. Now Andrew had a lot to say, and Simon was certainly willing to listen. Simon was only running one boat now because this was the time of the year that fishing fell off, but the larger of the fish frequented these northern waters, making it still profitable, even though the count was down. Both men leaned on the side of the beached boat and talked, they talked about how the fishing has been and they talked about what went on in Jerusalem. Andrew was astonished with the happenings in and around the river Jordan and felt his life, at least his soul, had been rejuvenated, the reunion was great and it wasn't hard to tell that both enjoyed each other's company, but as the sun was now almost completely set, the two walked toward Simon home, and would, that night, spend the entire evening together.

The next morning Andrew was to travel east to see their parents and catch them up on the happenings of down south, and the changes that were going on within him. He left with excitement, and thought their parents also were looking forward to his return.

It wasn't but a few days that Andrew and Simon were back together fishing, leastwise when they could, they couldn't fish as much, the numbers were down, but the size and weight of each fish had substantially improved. A living, they provided, but not much more than that, but fishing is what they knew, and fishing is what they did.

The two could easily keep up with the work, and still they had plenty of time to spend sharing the many experiences that Andrew had down south. He had an excitement in his voice, and pep in his walk, Andrew was glad to be home, and not once did he ever regret going to Jerusalem and meeting and listening to the man called the Baptist. Although the rumors of the Messiah were all over the countryside, Andrew heard the prophet explain in detail the words that God had given him, and now the younger brother wanted to share them. At times, while expounding on the events prophesied, a small group would gather to listen to Andrew speak, but probably not with the same authority that was carried in the man standing in the river Jordan.

Now Simon would be what I'd call a skeptic, that is a man wanting to learn, but then again wasn't going to follow just anybody's ideas of a prophet, yet he wouldn't write him off either. He would set to heart the things that his younger brother told, yet he wasn't willing to jump over barrels; that is, jump to conclusions, so he stashed the sayings away to be pondered later.

It was now getting to be close to noon, but this was one of those days that they could afford to use in a different direction, so as both sort of tinkered with getting the boat ship-shape, they talked; well, really Andrew did most of the talking. A large gathering of seagulls had congregated on the shore some hundred meters up the coast, and about twice that many were making circles above them. Both men stopped just to watch them. They were eating something, what, no one knew, but it was enjoyable to watch the hierarchy of the birds take their turn as some would glide in as

others would sail away. It was unrecognizable at that distance, but the catch of the day could not be accredited, but to so many, it was a feast. The day was nice, warm but not too hot, just one of those days to get caught up with the chores that were left undone for the last few days, and acquaint themselves, and also to hear the groundbreaking news from younger brother Andrew. Both cherished days like this.

Andrew had much to say, and Simon was just as eager to hear. Something was stirring intrigue inside of him, and wondered if the Baptist, as told by his brother, was right in that the Messiah was to come and rescue their land. Even though Simon had a wonderful life, being married recently helped to fulfill his seen life; outwardly, things couldn't go better, but on the inside, something was still missing. Emptiness filled the depths of his soul, and he knew the desolation of the man within, for surely his man within had a purpose, but was now emptied with a void. Business was good; his wife was great, lots of friends, but hollowness was felt in the pit of his stomach, especially when things got quiet. So he worked, and work he was good at; successful, he was in every way, except when no one was around but himself. He would often ponder in the afternoons of what he called lazy days, a rainy or wind struck day, he could only do so much, so he meditated on the things of life. Somehow through all his thinking, he'd end up in the same place he had started, a despondency of the richer things of living. He had a wonderful wife, and their relationship was great, but what I'm talking about is that deep lonesomeness that cannot be filled with the stuff seen in this world, a yearning. Simon was not antsy, nor was he looking for adventure, he just knew something was

missing, creating this void. With all the stories being told around the country and Andrews' first-hand knowledge, slowly a picture was being formed within him, and the wandering of his mind took him many places.

A few months later John the Baptist was still drawing people by the droves to the banks of the Jordan River. Some say he was inflicting havoc, others thought him to definitely be a prophet, it depended on whether you were a noble or a common man as to which way you were swayed. But certainly his words were powerful, and many climbed in that river with him. His claim was to prepare a way, a path for the Messiah that He would be welcomed and would walk through. A people readied for the arrival of the soon to be revealed Christ. "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord; Make His path straight." People listened, lives were changing, an awakening was happening throughout all of Judea, but as of yet, he had not met the Messiah. The Baptist himself claimed that it was God that created his life for this purpose, and was following the Spirit in every way, and would know the Messiah when that time came.

Yes, people were coming from all regions, and the Baptist made quit-a-stir, most were everyday people and were moved to hear

this man that certainly was preparing the way of something, for he held nothing back.

“But when he saw many of the Pharisees coming, he said to them, ‘Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bare fruits worthy of repentance, (change your way of thinking), and do not think to say to yourselves, we have Abraham as our father. For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones... I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, (to change the way you think), but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry, He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and Fire.” These words were powerful and many took them to heart, but few, if any, completely understood a single one, but they were still hid in the hearts of many of those that were listening. John didn’t care what you thought about him, he was raised for a mission, he knew his part, and he spoke with zeal.

It was not many days later that he met and baptized the Christ of God.

In the early days of Jesus’ ministry he began to journey north, some month or so after crossing back west from the wilderness on

the other side of Jordan, teaching along the way. Soon He found himself in Capernaum, and walking along the shore, sky cloudy, wind blowing, but a good day to travel, he saw two fishermen with their father Jonah, casting a net into the waters of Galilee. As he came closer he said to the younger men; "follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men." And immediately Simon and Andrew looked at their dad, who shrugged his shoulders and then leaving their nets to follow him, asked as he looked upon His being with intrigue; "What shall we do Lord?" And he said; "change the world."

Simon had sensed an inner voice that spoke to him from the marrow of his bones, and for some odd reason he knew it was the right thing to follow this man, and he assumed Andrew felt the same. They talked for several hours. Jesus and the brothers, under the shade of the trees that grew within sight of the waters of Galilee; and later that evening, as Simon was taking Jesus to his meet his wife, a stir was heard. It was then, as they approached his home, with the sun over their left shoulders, that his wife came running out to meet him, and in an excited shrill voice, she commenced to telling them about her sick mother.

Now Simon was a hardworking man, he learned this by the labor of fishing with his dad Jonah ever since he could hold an oar at a very young age. Working, and working hard and long, was not one of Simons' problems, but the gnawing from the inside was. Since maybe the age of thirteen he had this gnawing from the inside that there was more to his life than just catching fish, which he dearly

loved. He felt something that continued to grow within him, a prickling, that was neither good nor bad, but was unrelenting and nearly constant, a feeling of knowing something that he just didn't quite know. He'd talked with his wife about this several times and he thought that she understood, at least as much as possible. Simon normally really didn't fret over what was going on inside him, but the inner voice, which was a quiet voice, was the steadiness of his life, the part that kept him uniform and grounded to the earth, and knew this time it was to be adhered to. The older of Jonah's sons was a reactor, for he seldom just responded to a situation, he would just plow into a problem and sort it out later, patching together the pieces as he went. This yearning within him would help as a reminder to keep his feet on the ground, which seldom happened, but it helped. Being raised loving the Lord God was established in him from his youth up, and he loved the stories of old, especially the accounts of King David. It was kind of like loving the Lord but not knowing how to love Him.

So when Jesus came up the shore of Galilee and said follow me, Simon knew, that leaving with this man of authority was what he was supposed to do, and he went with no hesitation.

After hearing of her mothers' sickness, Jesus and the young men went straight towards the center of town, and meeting James and John, all followed Him. But first stopped by the synagogue, as that was the direction Jesus led them. It was there that he healed a man of an unclean spirit. It was there that the four were amazed and questioned amongst themselves; "What is this? What new

doctrine is this? He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.” And immediately they left the synagogues and went to Simon’s mother-in-law’s home, where his wife was already by her side.

As if Jesus knew exactly what to do He and Simon went straight to the bed side of the ailing mother-in-law. The mother-in-law, not old, but not young by any means, lay nested on a pallet, a stack of various blankets, near the window that had a stretch of cloth draped about it. Having this fervent look about Him, Jesus walked over and took the hand of the older woman and lifted her up, and immediately the fever she had been inflicted with, left her.

Now with all the debate that was going on within Simon these last years, he knew that where he was right now, this place with this man, was where he was supposed to be, and his wife knew it too, that is, that he was to walk with this man Jesus.

In the months ahead, Simon saw many wonderful, remarkable things happen while walking with this man that was called Jesus. He saw lepers healed, unclean spirits released from several people, he saw the deaf hear, the blind that could now see and he heard many parables and saying that Jesus spoke. Simon spent most of his time with Jesus, but there were times that he would return to his wife, and times that he spent alone. And it was the times walking alone, sometimes by the shore that he noticed that when he was with Jesus, things couldn’t be better, but in solitude, he still had that nagging feeling. It was then that he’d decided to spend as much time as he could with this man called Jesus. As long as he was with Jesus, seeing and listening, things in his heart couldn’t be

better. In the mind of Simon, he'd never heard a man speak as this man did, nor do the miracles that He could do, Simon was certainly where he was supposed to be, and now his wife knew it too, with this man that the Baptist called the Christ, the Messiah of Israel. Was he waking up?

Is my Head above water?

For the next months, I, Simon, saw many extraordinary things happening while walking with the Lord. I can now call Him that because He has proved himself over and over. I've seen many miracles; lepers healed, the dumb talk, the deaf hear, and the blind healed so they can see, but the strangest of our walking together; were the parables. For I have not met nor heard of a man like this Jesus is. To say it is perplexing would be an understatement, for as different and mysterious as Jesus is, in no way is he outlandish. He has this demeanor about him that is calm, tranquil and very peaceful; a man with the authority of life, a man of knowledge and power, and I loved being around Him. I wanted to listen to Him, and I'd be attentive to all that he said, but I just couldn't grasp the meanings of all these parables that he was telling us. There were twelve of us now walking almost daily with Jesus, three I'd known before, one was my brother Andrew, but the other eight, were new friends to me; I liked them. There were several more that

walked with us, as someone new was added every once in a while, and at about the same speed, several would leave, some were even women, but all in all, we were a pretty tight knitted group. A couple of us had what you might call a shady background, one was accused of stealing, one a tax collector, which of some sort means thug, and didn't have much of a reputation, one was even called a whore; myself, well let's just say that quite often they'd ask me to take a bath to wash the years of fishing off me, but like I said, we all got along agreeable with each other.

For days now the crowds of people were pressing upon us, many great and mysterious works were done by the hand and the words of Jesus. Early one morning Jesus came to where I was sleeping under a small palm, and spoke softly until I awoke. His words were to the effect that we should all leave for the mountains, escape the crowd, and hear the things the Father was giving to Him. So as we all gathered, we walked. The sun was just rising, the air had heaviness to it, and the thirteen of us set out on a journey, that none but our Leader knew.

My thoughts once again ran rampant, as they usually do, but I did know that this same Jesus could be trusted, and we were becoming pretty good friends. Not knowing what to expect, we all talked amongst ourselves, and came to the agreement that this trip too, would be good. I think each of us understood that being with this man Jesus, was exactly what God had ordained individually for each, and would follow Him in which-ever direction that was asked.

As the sun rose high in the mid-day sky, we was now climbing up a mountain where the air had sharpness to it, sometimes singing, sometimes discussing, and at times quiet, but always following. For where else could a man go and hear the things of God unless he followed this man called Jesus. After several more hours of climbing up narrow paths, around great boulders, and through brush that would take the hide off one's shins, He thought it was time to take a rest, so finding shade and a nice place to sit we stopped for what we thought was going to be a few minutes, an hour at most. After nestling in the tall grasses and relaxing under the blue of the sky, we noticed down the hill, not far, was a multitude coming up the same path we had taken.

Jesus, standing just feet below us, spoke that this is a time to pay attention, open our ears and hear these things of the Father, and took a seat on a large rock that was rounded on the edges from the eons of weather. As the crowd grew closer, I slide down the side of that mountain to set beside Him, the others found places close enough that they could hear, even if He spoke in His normal soft voice.

And He began to speak about the blessed poor, the blessed that mourn, the blessed who are merciful, and several others that were blessed, and all that He said was beautiful. It felt like I understood what was said, but truth is; I didn't. At the beginning I'd think that He was speaking about how blessed it was to be poor, sad, and soon, but years later, remembering all that was said, I understood more fully the deeper meaning of the sayings. The poor in spirit and the sad (those that mourn), were those that were not rich in

the things and ideas of this world nor did they take stock in what this world offered, and have gone against their natural self. The sad, well, were not mourning because they left the old-man behind, but because many didn't. The Spirit wars against the flesh, and at the beginning of transformation the flesh man mourns. Even when Jesus would speak of adultery, in the early years I was thinking he spoke of carnal knowledge, He did not; the words were given to us that all would take heed before placing man or object, or even a person before the Lord God. I'm not sure if I was the only one that didn't get it right-away from the start, but I think the others had problems in this area also.

To bring this point across so you will understand, reflecting back, of how me and the other eleven disciples comprehended, or should I say looked foolish in our misunderstanding, let's talk a little about the parable of casting a net into the sea and the gathering of every kind.

It is written: "Again the kingdom of God is like a drag net that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, which, when it was full they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew thirteen) We listened, and listened intently, glued to each word as it proceeded out of Jesus' mouth, I was even watching as His lips were moving, wanting to grasp every word and its' meaning, and when He'd finished, I thought that I would have absorbed the

meaning, but understood nothing. Now if this wasn't bad enough, and since He knew our thoughts, Jesus turned around, looked straight at me and said: "Have you understood all these things?"

All of us said in unison; "Yes Lord." But dumb me; I had to say it the loudest. I didn't have a clue of what Jesus said, I knew the words, but not even a trace of value was apprehended by them. I was either bluffing or completely bedazzled, for yes I answered 'yes', but the parable sounded too cruel to be what I thought He was saying, but didn't want to look stupid, and stupid I was.

Then Jesus said to us, in a nice way, to prove we were all wrong in our answer: "Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of Heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure, new and old."

All of us were, as yet, thinking through our senses; all had a carnal mind that wasn't able as yet to understand the deeper or higher meaning of His parables. And He flat out told us that we were trying to mix His new way of thinking with our old ways, it wasn't going to work. The wicked and the just that are among us, in the parable, was speaking of my way of thinking. How man tries to combine the 'good and evil' and put it into the same basket. It can't be done, nor can you pour new wine in an old wine skin, it just won't work. The mixing of the thoughts that I had, was keeping me tied to this earth and its' way of thinking. I didn't understand this then, for as yet I hadn't received the power of the Holy Spirit. So looking back, I can now see why those that are blessed and mourn, (wailing and gnashing) are truly blessed, for they have come to the level that separation of the meaning of the

'senses', and meaning of the 'Kingdom of Heaven thoughts', are on two completely different levels, and cannot be combined. The different fish, that were lined up and sorted, (the good and wicked), are the same aspects of the same person, (the understanding of the Spirit, and the understanding of the flesh), is that war that goes on in each of us. And this combination won't work, for to grow to a higher level of Life; has to be 'rightly divided'.

Anyway, this was a time in my life, the beginning, for me to come to understand just how much I didn't understand, nor did we comprehend but a little, if any, of the teachings that Jesus gave to us these past months, even for years. Little did I know then that all that was spoken, all the parables, even all that He did was to give us an identity of himself, and a route to follow to the apprehension of thinking, believing in this new way. For Jesus alone is the Way, that leads to Truth, that leads to Life.

I was so caught up in the things of my life, and the world, and especially the miracles that were done often before me that I hadn't stopped long enough to truly try to understand the meanings that Jesus taught. It was one day, sunny and bright, and we'd just got through talking with some of the Sadducees, walking in the region of Caesarea Philippi, when Jesus asked us; "Who do men say that I, the Son of man, am?"

One of us heard that he was John the Baptist; another heard someone call Him Elijah, even the prophet Jeremiah or one of the others were named.

We, the disciples, had talked about this several times amongst ourselves and none of us could really come up with an answer, so we all just answered in the way He asked; and that was, what others said. Then out of the blue, point-blank, He asked us who did we say that He is? Without discernment, without meditation what-so-ever, and also without my brain being involved, I said; "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Now where did that come from, I was thinking rapidly in my mind, it makes sense, I thought, but at this point, I really didn't know that statement to be true, so I guess I spoke a little too quickly. But immediately Jesus came back and answered to me and said that I was blessed and that; "flesh and blood had not revealed this to me." With quick deliberation, I said to myself, you got that right, but before I could finish my thoughts He continued; "but my Father, who is in Heaven, has revealed this to you..."

Wow! This is pretty good, I'd done something right, I thought, still not listening to Him very closely, and he uninterrupted said; "...you are Peter and upon this rock I shall build my Church." And He would give me the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and I could bind or loose anything I wanted in Heaven or on earth.

Let me stop here a moment and tell you that I Simon, I mean Peter was on top of the world, I was the big man now and was given that title by the man in authority. I'd so often wondered whether I was top ranked in this group of twelve, and now I know that I was. I was to lead the other eleven by example, I was no longer a misfit, but a man with responsibility, and He said He was going to build something on me, now that part I didn't quite get.

It wasn't but a few moments later that Jesus began telling us that He must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and the scribes, and then be killed. Now wait a minute, I was thinking again; I'm not going to let this happen, not to this man, He is the Christ of God, and it was my responsibility and obligation, since I was the leader of the others, to not let this happen as long as I have the power to stop it, and I have the power, or so I thought. So as leader of the twelve, I took Jesus to the side and told Him that I would never let this happen, and that I would never let anything bad, much less this ever happen to Him.

Jesus turned around, looked at the other eleven and then looked straight at me and rebuked me, right in front of all that were watching, and all of them were watching. Saying; "get behind me satan, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but only of the things of man."

At that time in my life I was only mindful of the goals that I had in life, and mostly of the things that I could see. As long as I was with this man Jesus, and seeing all that He's done, and hearing all that He spoke, things would go well. By well I mean, that I thought I was on top. When I had to go home for a while, or Jesus would go someplace by himself, and no one was around me, I'd even doubt what I saw, and especially be confused about what He said. But up close and when we were personal, I had the bull by the horns, I'd feel the power of His presence, but not in His absence. When Jesus wasn't with us, and mostly when He wasn't with me, I couldn't hang on to the Truth if my life depended on it, except in rare occasions.

When Jesus asked; who do we say He is, and I announced His authority, it was as if something had taken a hold on me, and proclaimed it through my voice. I, at that moment, slipped out of my skin, and without thinking made that proclamation. And saying the right thing, at the right time, went to my head and I was swelled with gloat. So, being proud of myself, and as He continued talking with us about His upcoming persecution and death, I thought it appropriate to make sure all knew that I would defend Him with all my flesh. Yes, you heard me correct, my pride and flesh was right where it always is, in the wide open, and this time everybody saw that I was a fool, for there was no escaping the reprimand that was given, and I thought to me, with the reference to satan. It hurt, and it hurt badly, for I was humiliated, but later in my life this disapproval would teach me something that would help shape my life forever.

There were more than a few, what we might call failures, in my life, and really they are not classified as bad or wrong, it's just back then I saw things literally. I had known of nothing different than the carnal ways of man, it was my eyes that kept getting in the way of me seeing. What little training that I did have was an extension of the teachings from the Scribes, Pharisees, and the Priest of the Temple and the synagogue, for they taught the precise, literal laws of Moses. In fact when we were told not to go more than fourteen furlongs on the Sabbath, it was fourteen furlongs, and not one step farther, not one inch more could we go even if we had to go hungry knowing our next meal was only feet away. But, you know,

I really didn't hold to all that teaching, that is unless someone was looking, but I went along with it most of the time, I guess to keep peace.

Anyway, back then, before the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, I saw and heard things pretty much the way they were outwardly, you know, with my flesh senses.

A few days after Jesus was walking and talking with us and about, that some of us would not taste death till the Kingdom of God is revealed, He took James, John and myself up on a high mountain. He was transfigured right in front of us, I mean everything about Him had changed, it was like He was transparent, and His face shone like the sun, and His clothes were white like new fallen snow, only brighter. Behold, there appeared two men, and all three were talking to one another; both were speaking in a quiet voice to Jesus. It was then that I approached them, little did I know and little did I accomplish, for all I could see was that their voices and appearances were like bright clouds, very bright clouds, but I knew something of significance was happening; and I wanted involved. There before me was my Lord and Moses and Elijah, all translucent, and I felt I had to do something to show leadership in front of the others, so I spoke. "Lord, our Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." I said this because I didn't know what to say and certainly didn't have a clue as to what to do, for the fear that surged up inside me was great, and I honestly didn't know what to do, so I did what was always standard in my life; I opened my mouth.

It was then that a cloud came and overshadowed us, and a voice came from that cloud speaking; "This is My beloved Son, hear Him." If I wasn't afraid before, and I was, it was a guarantee that fear had a hold of me now, and I think the others also. One might think us to be dreaming, but on this beautiful sun shining day, this wasn't the case. James looked at John, then at me, John seemed bewildered, and I had this expression of amazement, for what took place, we didn't know, but it was real, more real than our own being. As we stood in a stupor, looking this way and then that, all we could see was ourselves and Jesus as He normally is.

Standing there in a half daze for more than a few minutes, without a word we all began to walk down that mountain. Maybe a half hour later, while still walking down hill, we talked with Jesus about Elijah, but even that conversation didn't make a lot of sense to any of us disciples. This was a time of significance and I missed it; or so I thought.

All twelve of us were close at this time, and truly enjoyed each other's company; we were working as a single unit, and even though we didn't realize it at this time, had not developed inwardly to the level that would only come later. The closeness we had was an advantage to all of us, at least the three of us could speak to one another openly; and that was a certainly a comfort.

These episodes about fighting the flesh, in my carnal way of thinking, reminds me of the time when Jesus wanted to be alone in the mountains, and sent the twelve of us on a ship to cross the sea and wait for Him there. Often he spent time alone, but not for long periods of time.

We had just gotten through feeding well over five thousand with the smallest amount of food, and my thoughts were running deep. So I thought, and as the group of us had just about reached the mid-point of the waters, somewhere around midnight, a couple of the disciples saw Him walking toward us on the waters of the sea. Some thought Him to be a ghost, but I didn't really know what to make of it, but it was troubling. As Jesus yelled across the open water, it was then we realized for certain who He was, and wanting again to be the big-shot, and with a feeling of desire to please Him, I bid Him to let me come to where He was, and both could then walk to the ship together.

Jesus responded; "Come."

With Jesus less than a hundred feet away, with a moonlit night, I could clearly see Him as He paused and waited on me. I was feeling good about this, and had no doubt that I too could walk across the water. The moon behind Him in the clear sky, the sparkles from it on the water, my eyes were adjusted to the darkness, and I could clearly see; I was focused. And as I come down from the boat, and stepping upon the water, it held me up, just as it has done Him.

If this didn't prove that I was the other eleven's leader, I surely wouldn't know what it would take, so I walked. Yes, right there in front of all, I walked across that water focused on Jesus, and heading straight toward Him. In a few moments the wind began to blow, I really don't know how hard, but hard enough to make some pretty good size waves. Looking at the waves I became afraid, and began to sink. What was I to do, a storm in progress, my Lord still some fifty or so feet in front of me, what was I to do? I didn't even have time to think that the men that depended on me were watching, I cried out. The sound that came from my mouth sounded more like a shrill than it did coming from a grown man, I panicked, and I was looking in every direction but at Him, but knew to call out or drown. "Help me lord", was all that I could get my voice to say, but it was enough. He led and helped me back on the boat and we carried on toward the other shore.

It began to barely penetrate that I was not as strong as maybe I was thinking, maybe not the man for this position; maybe I wasn't even supposed to be here. But as we sailed toward the eastern coast, not a word of humiliation was spoken, in fact, all talked and scuffled around the boat as if nothing unusual had happened; but I went inside myself. My intentions were good, I felt, at times, I was up for the job, and I knew I loved this man called the Christ of God, but when He wasn't around, I didn't do so good.

Looking back at this and several other situations, knowing what I now know, I understood that I knew Jesus in the flesh, I knew Him in my mind, and always knew that as long as He was close by,

everything was going to be alright, but on my own, not so much. We were connected, and this I knew, but in the puberty of being transformed; I struggled. As long as I walked with Him, and my eyes were fixed on His presence, I believed, as long as I did not look to the left, nor to the right; I could sustain.

All the emptiness, the deep void in my life, and the lack of purpose were well remembered, for I had carried them for so many years, and still did to some degree, for these few years; but when I am with this man, all my life, my soul, had a meaning that I certainly was not willing to walk away from, for I needed this man Jesus. I had a fulfillment with Him that cannot be expressed, and my hope was that this relationship with Him would never end. For many times I had felt like a man in the vast ocean, swimming as if my life depended on it, as if I would drown at any moment, but now, it's like I keeping my head above the waters. Life began to have meaning. I even knew then that much more was yet to come, and wanted to absorb all of this Christ that my being would soak in, and what would lie ahead of me?, I had the faintest clue, but from somewhere within, I knew it was coming. The Spirit within was speaking unto me; but my listening skills, weren't that acute.

I don't know or Do I

In all the years of listening to the Lord speak, and all the times that He held my deepest attention, it took a long time to realize that Jesus' words were all in parables. Yes, that language that many knew, but not everyone spoke in, the language of symbols and allegories. For many times He would speak to us and the multitudes, with this mysterious language, and all listened intently, and maybe even occasionally understood, but for the most part we didn't, at least at this time in our lives. I now know, this many years later, that to grasp the deepest of value from the many parables that Jesus spoke, one had to go beyond the surface of the sheep, the vine in the vineyard, the blindness, the halt, the marriage, and even the little children to comprehend, much less apprehend the truest of meaning. The art and gift of the parables

go far beyond the surface values of the subject, because they spoke about the meanings of what they represented. But back then, I pretended my way through it, but understood little; nevertheless it was printed on and in my heart; I would always remember.

Knowing our thoughts, and the confusion I think most of us had, Jesus again began teaching in parables.

“No one puts a piece from a new garment on an old one; otherwise the new makes a tear, and also the piece that was taken out of the new does not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskin and be spilled, and the wineskin will be ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved. And no one having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, ‘the old is better.’”
Luke 5:37

Let’s look at this and see if we can make anything of it. If the parable is truly about wine, and new and old bottles that it’s put in, then we get this small lesson of how to make wine without it spoiling. And if this is all we can ever decipher from it, then why did God waste our time placing it in the mouth of Him that proclaims His true eternal Word; but it isn’t. A life-changing meaning is attached to each and every parable, once it’s understood, but back then, I didn’t understand.

Vineyards are always in the ancient language of parables representing schools, or a school-of-thought, therefore grapes that grow on the vine are the product, or fruit of the school-of-thought, and turned into wine, the final product and purpose. Wineskins or bottles are the vessel in which the final product is to be placed in; us. Not just people, but those that think on a higher level of thinking, but not to those that maintain their lower level of thinking.

Remember that John the Baptist came preparing a way for the Lord, and called us into repentance, which is to say: a changed way of thinking, this is exactly what repentance means. So we either continue thinking through our carnal, sensual mind, or we allow Spirit to transform us into a new wineskin, a new vessel to receive this new Way, Truth, and Life that Jesus is talking about in this parable. This is a completely different way of thinking.

The same thing is equated when speaking of the rent garment. To embed or sew a new piece of material onto an old garment, will in the first place be a waste of the new, and in the second it will never match. The new patch is stronger, so different, that it will make the old garment rip up anyway, and much quicker. Again we, that is our way of thinking, are either on the earth level, the sensual minded; or on the heaven level, the things of Spirit. The parables therefore is given that those of us that are satisfied where we are, will never understand the higher levels of God and His word, but those of us that yearn for a deeper walk, a meaningful relationship with the Father will open themselves to allow the Spirit to renovate us within. Man can't figure this out on his own,

nor will studying give him an understanding, but we can open our man within to receive the teachings of the Holy Spirit. We can allow Him to completely change our way of thinking; repent.

“And no one, having drank the old wine, immediately desires the new.” Barring none; all of us have drank the old wine, the old school of thought, and has readily accepted it as being true and right. Therefore, when Jesus came with this new wine; the barriers of the carnal way of thinking had to be broken. So He spoke in parables. Giving those that are still attached to this world, and what it pretends to offer, even those still involved in the laws of Moses, a means to continue to understand only through their flesh. But those that seek a much deeper value in life, become, by God, a new creature, a new creation, a new wine vessel ready to receive His new wine. We are not reformed into a new wine skin, but through the transformation of God within each; are created.

Having walked side by side with Jesus, you'd think that I would have understood all He said and did, but by no stretch of the mind did I. In writing these memoirs I am now in my old age, and looking back I can see clearly who and what I was. At this age of sixty-four, and having gone through the whole process of my growing and understanding, it is unmistakable evidence from the trials and tribulations that I Peter was destined to go through, that growth, at least for me, had to be achieved. There

were times the sun would shower us with its' warmth and beauty, yet I would still be cold and miserable, and the rainy days, when we were wet and soaked, I might have felt energetic and full of joy. For in these early days, that is my walk with Jesus, I knew very little about things of the Spirit, but with reason. At this time in my life I was really not a hot head, but I did have a tenancy to speak quickly, that is, before I thought anything through, and there were struggles because of this. So reminiscing with you through this epistle is not meant to justify myself, but to explain that thinking through the carnal mind about the things of God, just won't work. During the years of my thirties, at least the first part of them, it was my senses, the eyes and ears and so on, that did my thinking for me, that was a mistake, but then again, I'd not as yet received the Spirit.

It was not long after our experience of walking on the water, and many a wonderful days together, we were all sitting one night under the waning moon just talking about one thing and then another. The night was cool, and this night, the stars were in greater abundance, we all had gathered around a small fire as one would do on a special outing, the mood cheerful, everyone rested, we sat and talked for hours. We were discussing several of the topics brought up by Jesus in the past weeks, such as the mustard seed, the trees and their fruits, and the little girl that was restored.

But the subject that caught my attention and wanting to talk about was; that Jesus said he came not to bring peace.

Now I knew of the talk all over the region, and my feelings on this subject of the King of Israel, but didn't as yet understand how He was going to rule over our nation. I'd heard loud and clear that He came not to bring peace, but a sword, and wanting a few more details, I asked Him to speak on this. For to set father against son, and mother against daughter and so on, it seemed like a real full blown battle was to take place. Even though Jesus elaborated on this privately in detail, it still took well over a year for me to understand this warfare. I didn't get the tone of His conversations, none of them, at the time it was going on, but all the sayings, and all the doings were hid in my heart until I was readied to grasp them in some detail.

Come to find out, the sword and all the dividing was really not about fighting Romans, nor any that wanted our country for themselves, nor about the soldier king that most were praying for. For it was taught by most of the elders that the coming messiah was to rule severely as king from a military platform, conquering the Romans back into their place.

The father and mother were the inside of man, flesh, the teacher of carnal knowledge, the keeper of the material world. The old man that doesn't want to let go, our past that is addicted to this world and the façade that it claims is real. Therefore the father of carnal man becomes at odds with the Son of Spirit, "and his enemies will be those of his own household". Both father and son, or mother and daughter, and so-on, dwell in the same person,

the same household, until Gods' transformation is complete; therefore causing turmoil within, or division. Jesus came to bring that sword of division to separate the carnal from the Spirit.

The sword is Truth and Spirit, the divider of the Real from that which just seems real. This same sword, I came to find out, that cuts in both directions, is a good thing. For without the cutting, man would be lost in himself, no place or direction of his own accord would bring him into the mind of Christ, only Spirit can do that. The sword can cut, to those that seek Truth, the gulf that lies between the Spirit that dwells within, and the fleshly approach that carnal man views things from through his darkened eyes.

So will there be peace on earth in the flesh man when this division is taking place in the individual; no, not on the earth man, but it will begin inside of the Man that it is taking place in; the transformed creation of Gods' work, the inner man. The sword of division should be welcomed, but seldom is.

I struggled many times while walking with and listen to Jesus. And I also know that several of the other disciples, especially Matthew and Judas, did some struggling about understanding the symbols also. We were torn, and this new way of thinking didn't take within us at the beginning, but Jesus was patient, and His longsuffering toward our reluctance to change was incredible.

Jesus wasn't with us all of the time, for He too had things that had to be done. There was time taken, occasionally, when He would spend time with His family, and especially with His friend Lazarus. So it was at these times that the twelve of us would

acquaint ourselves further with each other, and often discuss these matters to obtain clarity, which seldom happened.

It was one morning, early, and the sun had rose a crimson red, with streaks of yellow and pink in the curly clouds that covered only the eastern half of the sky, when James , John and Nathanael were cutting up with each other over cooking breakfast. The rest of us were still asleep, that is, all but me, for I usually lay quiet in my bed roll for an hour or so before stirring. This is my time to think, and thinking on the things that were happening in my life, was what mornings are for. But the ruckus going on between the two trees where the fire was built was more than a sleepy body, much less one contemplating, could handle, so I went over to see what all the shrieks and scrambling was about.

Should it be flat bread or some with a little leaven? They were teasing each other in fun, for none would really care, but the tossing of the flour back and forth and the mess it made was what all the shrills were about. All three were covered in the white dust, and James, with only his eyes revealed under it, sought to make his brother look the same.

Usually after we ate, all would sit and toss back and forth the sayings and doings of our leader, trying to make practical sense out of the many things said, and the healings that were taking place where ever we went with Jesus. We talked amongst ourselves what it meant to worship in Spirit, what He meant when telling us that He is the living Bread, how He would heal a man that was blind or had a withered arm, but on this day the conversation meandered to the overturning of the Temple.

Although I grew up close and around the Synagogue, and went to the Temple on many occasions, I wasn't stuck in their rituals and laws like many were, but I knew their traditions. On this particular day, not so long ago, Jesus had an issue with the people that were selling goats, sheep, oxen and doves at the Temple that our group was passing by, and I strained to understand the heart felt anger that he had. This had been going on all through my life and really didn't see anything out of the ordinary, but evidently He did. So, this day, after the younger boys got through with their horsing around, I attempted to turn the subject to the men changing the money in the Temple. Matthew said that since he had made his living handling money, and grasping what he could in his walk with the Lord, he thought maybe the business should have been done outside the walls. Another argued that by rights they were allowed to do business in the temple and didn't understand the commotion. Me, the one that's usually quick to speak, said that I thought it was the manure that shouldn't have been there, but at this point, anything the Lord did, had to be right. But after some few hours of discussing and debating, we finally figured out the house of God was a place of worship and not that of entertainment, nor of making money. So then the things of God really didn't pertain to money in the first place, and turning everything upside down must have been His disapproval of those that had made His Fathers' house, a den of thieves, and Philip spoke up and said that that makes sense because they pilfered the attention that is supposed to go to God and put it on the animals and money, the things of this earth. But again, later in life, I again saw that the turmoil of the temple was man within himself being divided, rightly being separated. And we are that temple of God in

which Jesus came to bring division, so each could establish our rightful relationship with the Father, and not of that made of stone, nor by the hand of man.

Anyway, this is how it went many of the days that we were in wait for Jesus' return, and sometimes we might have even saw through a few of the happenings. We'd all become close friends and enjoyed immensely each day that we had a chance to spend with each other in the Lord, but our growth, at this point was slow..

It took us, especially me, several years to grasp that we were with Jesus to learn, and that coming up with solutions was not why we were following Him. The times that one of us would speak up clarifications with of our daily happenings and position our self to act as if we really knew; we would then, most of the time, and with the gentleness of a lamb, be set back on our heels, for our understandings were limited by the carnal, earthly way we were thinking.

Where did He go and why

Now it was on a day that the twelve of us were on our way to Jerusalem, that He took me to the side and said: “Simon Peter, listen to what is going on in the days ahead, I have prayed for you, and you will be alright.”

At this time we were all much closer to the Lord than we had been in previous years, and I still wasn't sure if calling me to the side was a reprimand or that I might still be the favorite disciple of Jesus', but in the days to come, it had become very obvious.

It had taken more than a few days to travel to the holy city, and on this particular day, with the sky portrayed in two-tones of gray, and the mountains barely visible because of the humidity hanging

in the air; that it began to rain. It seemed down-hill to Jerusalem, and as the sands were saturated, the smooth rocks slippery, it was not an easy task to travel by day, and on occasion we walked at night. There was no thunder, but the sky seemed dark enough to have it, for one couldn't tell what position the sun was in, so the time of day only had to be guessed at.

He had begun to speak with us in a different way. His tone was different, but the same, His demeanor was slightly altered, but then again, it was just like Jesus. Anyway, I thought something was different, but couldn't really tell what it was. Judas and I were close friends, and he thought that he too saw a variance in His manner, but like me, couldn't put his finger on it.

After two or three more hours of walking, still traveling down-hill and still raining, and just before we were to enter into the flat country, Jesus asked if we would like to stop at this out-cropping ledge of a cliff, maybe some fifteen feet tall. It was like a cave, and probably had not rained inside of it in the eons of time, so all set and rested next to a small spring that seeped from the rocks. It had eroded out a small bowl shape where the water was trapped before running off down the cliff, where it seemed to evaporate to nothing before reaching the bottom, for there was no sign of a trail imprinted into the ground. After a short period He again continued speaking to us about the days to come. He spoke of love, joy, hatred from the world, He spoke again on the true vine, but what caught my attention the most was when He talked of the Helper, the Comforter that is to come.

Jesus talked and it made sense, but I continued to struggle in my understanding of what he was referring to. The commotion of my confusion kept going on in my head, and many times wanted Him to clarify, but again, it was like I did understand. And, in truth, I didn't. Thinking Jesus was our helper, but He spoke of another. What could this mean? I kept asking myself, were we to have this man and maybe another leader also? Anyway, my mind was going in circles and going fast.

“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning. They will put you out of the assemblies; yes the time is coming...”

Since my youth I had always waited on the king (the messiah), and his army to come to Judea and conquer the Romans, and thought maybe this is what was being spoken about in referring to the helper. And again Jesus spoke.

“A little while, and you will not see me, and again a little while you will see me, because I go to the Father.” And again we talked amongst ourselves of what He meant by a ‘little while’. The looks that we gave one another went from a down-cast expression of bewilderment to a hope of better things coming. As for me, I was sticking with the theory of putting together an army. But what he explained, nobody knew. Yes, no one knew what these words meant, but again, we were afraid to ask.

“Are you inquiring amongst yourselves of what I said? Most assuredly I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice.”

If He thought that He was clarifying; He wasn't. This seemed to only bring about a greater misunderstanding, we, especially me, didn't have clue of what He was talking about, but all knew it was to be important. By this time in our conversation it wasn't looking as if making war with an army against the Romans was what was being talked about, but who knows? I stuck with my theory.

I loved this man, and my affection toward Him cannot be understood nor explained, it was real. Something about the way He could hold my attention, it felt like power was in His words, and I was glued to His very being. I seemed to be getting closer in our relationship, and somehow knew that the time of understanding would come, and I was going to be there. Struggles was not something new to me, for all my life I had to work at what was wanted, and as a surety, I wasn't going to quit on this opportunity to find that inner peace that was ever longed for.

As long as I continued to be within reach of Jesus, it seemed to go well, that is as long as I kept my mouth shut. But when he didn't walk among us, or was out of reach, even for a moment, things didn't really go that well.

The next morning the rain had stopped, but the clouds still hung low. The air was filled with a mist that one could not tell where the sky had ended and the mountains began. There was a heaviness in the air, but more than normal, the birds were singing and the many

critters were shuffling to and fro, but we all, at a slow pace continued to the holy city.

He said things that weren't spoken before, and none of us was accustomed in thinking in that direction, but we all knew He had something to say, and I wanted to be close by. He spoke of 'good times' ahead, but there was to be several periods of 'course times' ahead also. I thought I was ready for anything that could be thrown at me, and wanted desperately to grow and understand, and knew that this man Jesus had the answer. This seemed to be the fulfillment of the void that continuously filled my soul from my early days as a youth. So one part of me was still bewildered, but the other side of me, was excited to be set free.

In the days and weeks, past and present, after hearing Jesus talk on many subjects such as the Way, Truth and Life, the indwelling of the Father within us, the promise of the helper, love and joy, and so many other matters, He then mostly consulted on going to Jerusalem and the hatred many had towards Him. This was a time I think he wanted all of us to be near Him, for His demeanor was changing, not that anything was wrong, but there was a sort of sadness in the air, but it was still pleasant to be around Him, only a slight notice of change was detected. At one time we were told that all of us were to be scattered, and that didn't sit very well, but Jesus spent a lot of His time expressing great love for us, and the several others that followed, so we were not worried a great deal, but still concerned.

We still had no real Idea of what was to happen, especially me, but because of the love from this man, and genuine caring that

flowed from Him, we were all becoming more and more attached and devoted. Calling us disciples was a true statement, for in every sense of the word, we were students.

All day we had been walking towards Jerusalem, and now it was dark as we came to the very outskirts of the city. The rain had long stopped, the air was crisp; the stars out in exceptional beauty, and the flicker of light could be seen in the city on occasion, depending how you moved your head, as we set to rest. Matthew had built a small fire, flat bread was all we had left to eat, but it was enough. The ground was smooth with only an infrequent clump of grasses, and a sporadic cedar tree here and there, and the atmosphere was somber, but all of us rested while listening about the things that are to come. Jesus spoke about the hatred that the world has toward him, as they, in their lack of understanding and indifference in accepting Him, but those that could hear, with ears that could hear, would know Him in all truth when the comforter came, and He continued to teach us of the soon coming Holy Spirit.

You'd think by now that I could have had at least a small smidgen of understanding about the Holy Spirit, but in truth, I did not. I knew that spirit was an unknown force, but had no perception of who or what the Holy Spirit was, especially acceptance of an indwelling Spirit. Sometimes I'd look at one of the others and shrug my shoulders, and at other times one or two of them would look at me and do the same. It was obvious none of us comprehended what was said, and I know for a fact I didn't, but something was penetrating in the depth of my soul, maybe even

deeper than that, that the acceptance of the impression given to us hid within.

There were many moments of silence, I think to give us time to digest this new information, and not always was this time spent meditating. We were men, we were somber, and all wanted to understand, but at times I caught myself watching shooting stars rather than contemplating on these true meanings.

As the waxing moon just began to break the horizon in the east, all was quiet, and we settled in for a nights rest.

It was early on a Tuesday when all awoke and began to stir, for this was the day before, the season of Passover, and I asked him how and where we were to prepare. For now, in early spring, was the time that all the Jews prepared for the yearly High Sabbath, it was this time they celebrated the Sabbath twice in the same week. Maybe I wasn't exact on my attendance on the everyday affairs of the temple and all the rites of our fathers, but Passover was one event that was never missed.

As we continued walking at a slow pace I could tell that Jesus' demeanor was once again deepening, for there were times when a small trickle of a tear could be seen sliding down His face. He resumed His teaching us in parables, and once in a while another was healed; but still, we had little if any appreciation of what He spoke concerning this trip into Jerusalem.

The Passover room was supplied and prepared, and I was somewhat looking forward to this time of feast with Him. Not long after we'd all gathered, while Judas and I speculated on the events that would happen, Jesus too came and sat, but had another worried look on His face, but He was smiling at each of us, and gave hugs to all. The person that Jesus is, will not, and cannot ever change, he may show concern, but His direction never alters.

It wasn't all that long into the supper that he said one of us would betray Him, and now the twelve of us had a look of stupor written in our faces. I was, or so I thought, a strong man, a man in the making, but also realized that I had good intentions but at times couldn't back them up. The depth of His words cut deep inside of me, and I was surely worried that maybe I was the one that could betray Him. Thoughts ran profound, as I searched within to see if I could do such of a thing like this, it was unsettling. More than once I had stuck my own foot down my throat, and it wasn't going to happen again, so after a song was sung and things got a little quieter, I said to Him privately: "Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not."

I said this, not that I really believed it, but in hopes of speaking the proclamation; that I would believe. He smiled real big, put His arm across both of my shoulders, pulled me up close and said; assuredly, on this night, that I would deny Him three times before the morning cock shall crow. It was evident that Jesus loved me, even with the pain showing in His facial expression, he genuinely cared, and that was obvious.

Looking Christ straight in the eye, all I could do was weep. With no understanding of why I would deny Him, that was out of my range of thinking, and I didn't, in the least bit, at this point, believe that would happen. My friend Judas had left us a little earlier, I heard the Lord telling him to get the job done quickly, and he then rushed off. Maybe I had a thought of also leaving, but instead joined the others. There wasn't much laughter at this point, but each had his own opinion of the seriousness of the evening, and again, no consensus was derived so we each settled in to a melancholy of watching the fire as it burned in the pit.

It was some time later that Jesus came and asked all to go with Him to the garden and pray. Without a word spoken, our little group stood and walked out through the night air. It was still cool for this time of the year, the air still, and a ripple of clouds could be seen from the near-full moon in the sky overhead. We walked, it wasn't far, and not a word did any speak, until Jesus asked us to sit, but He took the two sons of Zebedee and me to walk a little farther with Him. It was not far and we were just out of sight of the others when Jesus stopped and said with a crackling voice of someone in great distress; "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, stay here and watch", and He slowly walked a distance beyond the trees. We three sat, me leaning against a sycamore tree that had grown at about a thirty degree slant toward the dark of the night, and James and John rested with their backs against a large smooth boulder. The long miles each had walked these past weeks was taxing to each of us, the tiredness went all the way to the bone, so leaning

back resting and the quiet of the early evening took its' toll in the form of sleep.

It didn't seem long before Jesus had returned and tap my feet to wake me up; "are you sleeping? Could not you even stay awake and watch one hour? Watch and pray, for your spirit is willing, but not your flesh." This was spoken to me, for John and Andrew were still asleep sitting on the ground, legs stretched, and leaning against the large rocks. It was sometime later that small sounds were heard, and once I even thought that my name was called, but sleep was heavy upon me, and maybe it was just a dream, if in fact He did return, I wouldn't have known. But again, I heard the same small sounds, and the same voice whispering my name, and although sleep was still weighty upon me, I opened my eyes to see, if indeed, I was a dreaming, but instead Jesus stood before me. He was standing almost straddling my legs, His arms folded across His chest, and His face wet with tears, and trickles of what looked as blood on the robe beneath His chin, and He spoke in a much louder voice. "Are you all still sleeping?" He said loud enough to wake up the three of us and maybe anyone else that was within a stones' throw. "Rise, let us be going, see, I have been betrayed."

Now, the way I see it, is that the twelve of us, a couple more of the long time followers, had become very close in heart and soul, maybe call us best of friends. And, at this point thought that perhaps I still might be the leader of the group of us, but was having serious doubts, but couldn't shake off the time that He looked me straight in the eye and said; "Peter, follow me." That was a look and feeling that had never possessed me 'til that day,

and I'll never forget the power in it. So though doubtful, I still attempted to maintain my being as a leader. Judas Iscariot and I had become very close friends, as close as James and John were, which I had known most of my life, and thought Judas to be next in line as the leader of the twelve, in the case I failed. At this time and place in the middle of the night, Judas still had not come back, and was thinking at this point that I wished him to be with us. If Jesus is going to be betrayed, we all had to stand together, the twelve as one.

The morning Rooster

The other eight, that were down the hill from us, heard the authority in Jesus' voice and came running up to us to find out what trouble had befallen. And had found us with Jesus watching as torches, many of them, were marching up the hill in a single row that had the look of lanterns lined up as if a night time celebration was taking place in one of the nobles' home, and was being displayed.

As the rather large group approached, Judas was one among, and walked up and kissed the Lord. I knew my ole friend would not let us down, for he too was now one of us, in the case something ill was to happen.

Looking closer, as my eyes adjusted to the sudden band of lights, I could tell that many of them were carrying clubs and swords, I fully awoke from the recent slumber and my demeanor changed instantly. But when one reached out to take hold of Jesus, I too raised my sword, and wanting to inflict a non-lethal pain, cut the ear of Caiaphas' servant completely off his head. This was a warning, and all was to understand that the Lord was protected, and I was his protector.

The matter was resolved by the hand and the words of Jesus, which really didn't suit me at all. They arrested him and were willing to drag Him back down the hill, but Jesus walked peaceably with the scribes, Pharisees, and elders, in the same snake-like lit up trail that they ascended with. Waiting only a few minutes, and with stealth, I followed. If something could be done, I was going to do it, for this was the man that had brought the change from emptiness to purpose in my life, and I would by any means possible, rescue my greatest friend from any turbulence.

The night sky had only an occasional curly cloud, and it being only three days 'til full moon, it was not hard to see as I walked a distance behind the mob. Once in a while I'd happen close to some passerby, or someone camping with a fire close to the trail. They clearly had seen the precession before me and every once in a while one would chance to ask what was going on, but all were ignored. Not being far from the city, and it being the day of the Feast of Passover, many a fire could be seen flickering throughout the city from this vantage point, as I approached.

All night was spent wandering from one fire to another in an attempt to stay warm, but staying close to the court yard, where just inside the Lord was. I'm not sure what my strategy was, but I still remained hopeful that a break would come and the rescue successful. Once in a while I'd get too close to the fire where the light was brightest and someone would recognize me, but I'd run off trying to be more careful at the next fire, because the night had more than a chill in it. The mood in the city was festive at times, and somber in another section, as I wandered around looking for opportunity and in hopes of maybe hearing news of the goings on inside. Someone would come from inside shaking his head, and then another with this cheerful look on his face, but most of those on the outside seemed oblivious to anything, but of the needs of the Passover, or those that were attending to it.

The night was wearing on, and still no word of what the Pharisees were up to, and I still didn't know when they would release my Jesus back to us, so as, that we could get back to the teachings and healings. Great words had been said, and I think they were being absorbed within me, but at this place in my life, I was nowhere near the maturity that was needed to sustain peace in my life. The general anxiety, had for the most part, subsided, but the emptiness still lingered, but with much less intensity. I knew my life was on the right path, but still at this time needed my Lord to return back with His authority to maintain the course of my being.

Near a fire, warming my hands, for the night had become much colder, a man in a colored robe had approached me and we talked.

He spoke mostly about the crispness in the air, spring coming soon, and the doings of the Passover, it certainly helped to pass the time and get my mind off of whatever was happening inside. It was then that an older lady, sitting across the fire, looking at me with an intensity that cut right through my existence, stood up and shouted: "That man is one that followed Jesus; I'd seen them several times together.

I backed off, so as the light from the fire couldn't reach my face, and mumbled that it was not me and ran to a secluded ally between two close together buildings. Heart racing, legs tired, sweat trickling down my cold face, and all I could think of was, why all the fear? This man that had led us and many others had done no wrong. He had authority over all things, whether it is sickness, unclear spirits, and even raising the His friend Lazarus from the dead, and had on several occasions set the scribes and Pharisees back on their heels with His evidence of the Truth. I was scared and couldn't figure out why. Jesus didn't live for life; life lived for Him, so why was all the anxiety raging inside of me? I thought as I panted to catch my breath. Jesus was a man of wonder, I thought, why would someone want to do harm to Him, and then again the thoughts were that the Sanhedrin wanted only to talk, and all would be well. It wasn't hard to see that the very essence of my soul was being attacked from every angle. So as I relaxed, my heart beat now normal, I began to see strength rise again inside me. With my attitude lifting, I now slowly began to see that we were all going to come through this alright.

Walking through the ally to the other side of the same building, which was near, if not beside the temple, I could hear a group of gathered people singing some of the old songs of Abraham, and stopped just to listen. As each song ended someone would stand and give what sounded like a eulogy, and then the singing began again. I could see food being passed around and each was in good cheer. As I approached, taking deliberate steps, so as not trip over the left behind trash still in the roadway, one of them noticed me and asked if I sought to join them. Hearing this, another advanced holding his hand out, grabbed my arm and pulled me toward him with a hug that seemed genuine.

Sitting down among them felt to be the right place, and all were welcoming me as another song began and I allied myself with them to sing the song that many times my family sung of yesteryears gone by.

Food was plenty and I was hungry, so when asked to join in their celebration with drink and food, I obliged. We sat and sang and ate and talked there around a fire that had to be stoked every few minutes so as to keep it at its' present intensity. It was truly a celebration.

Sometime later, as we all enjoyed each other's company, a young girl, I'd say about the age of fifteen, said that she, in amazement had watched Jesus, in and around the city, and thought Him to be a prophet. Had seen him and heard Him speak on overcoming the world, and thought it to be very interesting. Once seeing Jesus with women followers, she had at one point thought of maybe joining His group.

In a calm expression, looking me directly in the eyes, with a smile that could light up the world, asked if I was one that also followed Jesus. My mouth flew open, eyes almost shut, and thinking to myself whether this girl was a friend or foe. Her innocence was written all over her, and not knowing what to do, for I knew many wanted Jesus and those that followed Him, in their hands. As I turned to run back to the same alley that I arrived from, I twisted my head and mumbled that it wasn't me.

In the small passageway I stopped to catch my breath, set down and looked both directions to see if someone else was occupying the same haven as I now rested in.

This time in late night or maybe thinking it was early morning, I sat squirming, wringing my hands, thinking of how I was to rid myself of this mess. Thinking in one direction and almost at the same time thinking in another, my mind ran rampant, as I studied the situation to reckon out the best course to go from here. It was perplexing as I thought of leaving the city, and then a thought of busting through the temple, or maybe join a group of the pilgrims as they were leaving the temple, in hopes of escaping and no one recognizing that I too walked with Jesus.

Several times in the process of going from one fire to another, I had seen John. He seemed to be much bolder than I, or maybe just didn't understand the gravity of the situation. We didn't speak at any of the times, and I'm not sure he even saw me, but even his distant presence was of some comfort to me, and maybe it helped a little just knowing he was here.

Still dark and getting colder, and knowing this alley was not the place to be, I staggered ever so slowly toward the passage of the temple. Wanting to see what the shouting was that echoed through the passageway and filled the street with many cries of anger. While creeping ever so slowly to the stone channel that led to the inner room, the place where they surely held my Lord against His will, I peered in as day ever so slightly began to break. Only a faint trace of gray was hinted in the eastern sky. Leaning back flat against the corner stone, I rolled my head to the left, twisting it to look around the corner to see the goings on. A young man, from across the street, pointed and shouted; "there he is!" I shook my head in disapproval to him to be quiet. It was then that a rooster crowed, and Jesus turned and looked straight at me as if he'd known all along that I was there.

It hit me, and it hit hard in an instant, legs weakened, heart racing, my head went flush as I bent forward with a pain in my stomach as the shame of my very being was on trial. Realizing for the first time just what a wretch I was for denying the only man, that I called Christ, His right position in my life. Realizing instantly that I shamed my very existence before Christ, the world, and my own ego, to save my neck from the same fate that stood before me, bound and humiliated. I ran fast and as hard as I could for as long as I could until collapsing under a fig tree, just as day broke bright into sunshine.

I wept, teeth gnashing, and moaned from the deepest part of my being as bitterness toward me filled the bones of my withering frame. Everything that I stood for, everything that I stood up to,

the leadership I so desired, all washed away by the act of preserving myself, and the false humility that stroked my pride during these past few days.

The day had broken, the sky red against the curly clouds that look more like waves on the sea than they did floating alongside the rather large hill that now brighten west of the city as the sun cast its beauty on it. The air still cold, but not that I noticed very much, the ground damp as I watched a dung beetle scampering across the sand where some animal had previously been. My mind was on the guilt and shame of the event that had happened in this very hour of the morning. It was not a matter of getting caught denying my Lord; it was the impact of realizing that my whole life was represented in that same hour. I was a shallow man, a man motivated by fear, a man of good intentions, but no back bone in my belief.

As I watched a flock of geese flying north in an almost perfect V-shape, I wondered what I'd do if the elders of the temple came after me. If my life could be as carefree as the above birds on wing above me, I too would fly to some remote place up north and hide my days out. Everything I wanted, everything I believed, everything that I stood for, vanished in the few moments that it took that rooster to crow.

The city was filled with people going to and fro, in and around the city, and as the day was now brightly lit by the sun squinting between the clouds, I could see that this place too was surrounded by activity. With my stomach in knots, and my head pounding, I sat among a small grove of fig trees and wept. The pain was so

severe from the wrong that I did to Jesus; but mostly from the anguish in discovering this flaw in my own life. Who would be next? I thought. If I did this before Him, what would I do to others? I just sat there wallowing in my pity, with my face straight against the sun, for shadows were not formed yet by the sun's low appearance. The tears no longer running down my cheeks and soaking my feet as I sat with my knees bowed into chin, staring off in the distance and looking at nothing. They had all dried up, I was still crying bitterly, but had exhausted all tears, and now the only sign of my weeping was the convulsive jerks that my body made in response to the repulsive act of the night.

Where did He go, and Why

As noon approached, the people outside Jerusalem were virtually non-existent, so I did what they must have done and made my way back into the city.

Folks and their commotions were everywhere, the crowds were large, packed in tight as the whole mob worked its' way down a street as if one single organism.

Tired from the doings of the morning, I was now coherent enough, and back in this world enough to realize something big was happening. Still afraid, I wasn't going to make myself available for any would-be evil-doer, so I kept my distance. What was

happening, I didn't have a clue, but from the signs of the reactions of the crowd, it was a sizable situation. Whatever the event was, it was making some people dance, and some were in lamentation with great wails and sobbing. Not willing to be discovered, I stayed a distance and watched to maybe gain some clue of what was proceeding.

Jesus had spoken several weeks earlier that He was to destroy the Temple and build it back in three days, so my thoughts went to: Could this be what's happening?

Like I said before, this was the High Sabbath, and this occurrence was celebrated by the Jews but once a year, for in two days they again had their regular Sabbath, and it all begins tonight. The get-togethers of last night were nothing in comparison to the events that were to come together tonight.

I had seen John a couple of times but not the others, that is, until now. Crowds were gathered every place that had room enough to accommodate a family or group of people that came to the city to celebrate this event with their own like-minded company. It wasn't hard to hide yourself in plain sight, as the activities were too many for most to notice. I saw Philip, and he saw another, until the biggest part of us were collected where we could sit and talk about all that was going on.

Still no one knew what had truly happened to Jesus, but John thought he had a pretty good idea, he was known to the high

priest, therefore could get much closer in the temple, and he had seen the Sanhedrin leading a procession out of the Temple with Jesus carrying what looked to be a heavy piece of lumber.

Spending little time together the disciples split up as John wanted to follow them to find out if what seemed to be happening was truly what he thought, a crucifixion. Not wanting to be out of the sorts, and still with my shame firmly implanted, I followed, but at a distance. They took Him to the hill that had somewhat of a look of a human skull.

The sky was overcast with many different shades of gray, the sun not seen; something in the weather was going on as these clouds had streaks of green hanging around and under them. The wind was blowing; the sand swirled around and between the many boulders and trees that were scattered about the plain that set before us.

Not all the folks in the city followed, but what did had a look of a mob, with many Roman soldiers, with numerous jeers and jesters coming from every direction, and all focused toward the Lord.

I was still afraid and numb at this point, as shame and guilt were eating me from the inside, not at all coherent, I shadowed the crowd as it moved slowly toward the hill. Walking beside the mob, and now many more Romans, staying what I thought was out of easy sight, I followed along the down-hill flank.

I stood watching the whole scene, as it encompassed the entire hill, and could from my vantage point, from the next ridge over,

see that what was happening wasn't good. Of a truth, they surely nailed Jesus to a cross, standing upright and pitted deep in a dug hole. His body had the look of a torso that had fallen victim to a stampede of horses, He was bloody from the top of His head downward and shredded as if beaten severally, as every inch of His body was a cut up and a bloody mass. Being this distance away, it was difficult to see the individual cuts, but easily could ascertain that His flesh was ripped from what we knew was the Christ. This was a hard moment and time in my life, watching as now the soldiers made sport of Him. I could now see that John and Jesus' mother, and another called Mary were at His feet, and uncontrolled sobs coming from each as they held each other. My knees buckled and I also wept out of control, for the loss of the Love that came from this man, my friend. It's hard enough to watch a man die, but to spend as much time with Jesus as we did these past three years, this was more than my finite life could take.

As they laughed and mocked Him, and shook each other's hand, the soldiers' hung a wooden sign above His head, that at this place, I couldn't read. Words were spoken between Jesus and the three before Him, but I couldn't hear, but when said, the wailing progressed ever so much louder. Why are they doing this? I asked myself, as I too felt responsible, as the guilt and shame encompassed every inch of my being, but all I could do was watch, or turn my head to look off at some unknown distance.

As I sat sobbing, my head between my knees, noticed that night was coming, but it was much too early for that. The clouds were thick as a spring storm, but even much thicker than thick. There

were no more shadows being cast, and all was taken over by an eerie calm, without warning the earth shook and a moment later a thunderous sound erupted from what seemed to be the whole universe. Looking back up toward the crowd on the other hill, I could tell that it was finished. Ten minutes later the sky was blue, a calm wind blowing, and shadows returned, but the sun was now low in the western sky.

Soon two men that I thought looked familiar came and took Jesus down, and gingerly carried Him to where I did not know, but not a long distance, as they also returned just as last twilight of the evening melted.

Why did all this happen? I was thinking to myself, why did the man that had power and authority and the words of Life have to die? Especially why did He die this kind of death? My legs wouldn't work, arms limp, and my head was spinning with every sort of gloomy thought, as I sat in the puddle of my shame and fear; many thoughts raced through my mind and brought a numbness all about my body. The pool of pity that I sat in, for what they had done to my Lord, was terrifying; but the self-pity I had for my own life, was shameful.

I sat there for how many hours, I know not. Trying to remember the things taught, and the people healed, but most were escaping my mind, but a small amount of strength was returning to my limbs, as now I could move about a little more freely. Getting up, I could see the city flickering of the many torches and camp fires

scattered throughout. A whippoorwill sang with his one note, followed by two more stretched out ones, the stars were so bright that the narrow band of the Milky Way looked more like a cloud than it did of many stars that were grouped together. The air still chilled as it had been the night before, I walked toward Jerusalem, and there met three more of the disciples that said that they had gathered, all ten, in a house just outside of the city.

A fire was built in the corner as we entered the door way, and the seven other disciples were standing looking out a slit of a window, talking amongst themselves, and little greeting was exchanged between us. We loved each other, but the mood in the air was not that of a cheerful nature.

Eventually all of us gathered close to the fire and slowly began talking about our feelings of Christ, the day just finished, and what we were to do from here on. No one really knew all the particulars of what happened, but all understood that our Lord was taken from us; gone, and not to be returned.

It wasn't long before four of the women showed up, and they were giving us the ins and outs of the tomb, and all that went on. The wailing and sobbing started all over again, but it wasn't long before all got quieter again, as each of us sobbed in our own pity. It was a somber time, as I sat back against the wall, mostly watching, as once in a while someone would give a eulogy. The women later left the group of us men, as we grieved with one another.

I sat in this two story house for several days, my mind racing, going over and over the events of the latter days past, and not once did I leave for food, nor water. Word had spread that the Roman soldiers had been ordered to hunt down the remaining bunch of us followers, and I was sorely afraid. Every noise in the street below sounded louder than a bray of a donkey, I would jump as if I myself was speared. Jittery would not suffice to explain the turmoil that was going on in my mind and body, not even to mention the things of the heart. I was scared. No telling how many times I'd ran to that window, looking down and thinking the soldiers had found us out, to only see that it was all in my head. Once a small group of camels were coming up the street, and the sound their hoofs made on the hard packed ground, reverberated the same as marching soldiers. This was the one time I knew, in my head, that it wasn't my imagination, but it was. My fear had spread somewhat to the other disciple's, but it was obvious that all were much more relaxed, and could somehow talk about Jesus and His powerful words, but I could not. Fear and shame had a grip on me, and the actuality of denial that I knew Jesus, and then getting caught at it, was more than this man Peter could bear. Maybe I should have slept, but I couldn't, the visions going on inside me were more than I thought I could bear awake, and wouldn't risk the dreams of sleep.

It was early in the morning of the first day of the week, when all were still asleep; when a sound, sort of like thunder, had awaked me, and immediately my thoughts went once again to the Romans, their chains and swords, coming to carry us away. Looking ever so stealthy through the corner slit of the window, I could see it was

Mary banging on the lintel with the edge of her basket that contained jars of who knows what. Going down, I let her in. She was out of breath and couldn't speak because of it. I held her arm, and with my still wobbled legs, led her to the pallet that just a minute earlier I was laying in. She rested, trying to speak, but still as yet couldn't get the words out, as the others were stirring out of their sleep also.

I went to Mary, not knowing what to do. It was hard to tell, at this point, whether she was crying, mad, or excited, for apparently she had been running so hard that she had completely exhausted herself. John went to her side, held her hand and waited until she had caught her breath.

“John, He’s gone,” Mary spoke in a hoarse voice.

“Who’s gone?”

“Jesus, Jesus is gone, someone has come and taken Him in the night, He’s not there. We were taking spices to the tomb to make preparation, but He was gone.”

I jumped up, yelled something to the effect that I was going to see, started toward the door, but before I could get through it, John had passed me and on his way out of the door. We ran, and I ran as hard as my weakened legs could carry me, thinking this time I wasn't going to let another calamity pull me further down. I loved Jesus, and it might have been because of me that He was crucified, and with all my might, the Romans weren't going to get away with this.

The sun had not fully risen. The town was silent; the path plainly in view, my determination was focused. John's younger legs and quieter demeanor, was not going to qualify as a deterrent, to make up for my past failures. As he ran by me through the doorway, he turned, not quite making eye contact and said; "Peter, don't just stand there, let's go."

I was but slightly behind John when we reached the rolled away stone, John fell to one knee, held his hands skyward as if to pray, but I ran past him and straight inside the opened tomb. I saw the linen cloths lying there, and then to the side, not with the cloth, was a kerchief folded and laying by itself. The folding of it was a deliberate act, but what, I wasn't sure.

For as yet we did not know the scriptures, that He must be raised from the dead.

Not realizing how tired I was, for last night was the first time that I'd slept in days, and it wasn't much; I sat on the ground of what was supposed to be the burial chamber of our Lord, the Christ. Elbows on my knees, the palms of my hands on both cheeks, eyes wide open in amazement and fear; I saw John then enter in with me. John believed immediately, when he looked over the arrangements of the empty tomb; me, not so much. To me Jesus was dead; a friend lost forever, the true Quality of my life was lost to the selfish ambitions of me, of the Romans and the Sanhedrin that took Him from us.

Reflections

Maybe I'd better stop here for a few moments and tell you how and why I, Peter, wanted to write this down, therefore giving the whole story of the pertinent measures of my life.

I am now near four and sixty years old, and at this place in my life, I'm looking back at more than thirty something years. For the past short while, I've been living in this small crevice, for lack of a better term, and most likely will for the rest of my days be content in here.

I wanted to share the evolution of my life as a young man; to show that in my flesh I was like everyone else is, carnal. What I mean to say is, that I thought like a man of the world thinks, I saw only that of the three dimensional world, and I heard only that which the outer ears could hear. In other words, I was dumb, blind and deaf.

When one looks back, he can see the foolish mistakes that were made in life and learn from them. We were not given the empowering of the Holy Spirit at this point, and had to, therefore, evaluate circumstances with whatever faculties we had at the time. It was, and is still an opportunity to grow. Let me continue sharing, as life decreases and increases to the depth of a man, in which I very much was, that is; flesh and blood only.

Now looking in and around that tomb, all I could see was emptiness, a total of lost hope, and a failure on my part to keep

Jesus alive, and now the theft of His body. The sorrow that was eating me before seem pale to the agony that now encompasses my being. Without saying a word, and not even looking toward John, I left to go back and ponder in my pity, I was hopeless.

Mary Magdalene had a story to tell about a risen Christ, but none listened to her, except maybe John, for it didn't make sense. She said that she was to specifically tell the story to me, but in truth, I didn't really hear what was said. My mind was elsewhere, and not on some fable of an overly excited woman...So I smoldered like the last burning embers of a fire before it is all but a vapor in the air.

We talked that day, that is most of the others' talked, and the one that we call 'the twin' wasn't there, but many a theory was passed around, with each adding his own view to it, John still believed that Christ had risen.

It was the same day, the first day of the week, in late evening, with the door shut tight, for we all feared that they would come and arrest us also. As I sat in the far corner, for the other nine talked between themselves; the twin called Thomas was not amongst us, for he went to acquire vittles, when suddenly there was a light that encompassed the room. A man standing there said peace unto you. All were a little startled, but I hardly noticed as my mind was deep in the thoughts of the day. This man showed all of us His hands and His side, and they then knew that it was Jesus. As a movement perceived, I began noticing, but only as one would glimpse a shadow or reflection from far away, and out of the

corner of his eye; looking up and directly at him, I also saw that this new visitor was Jesus.

I ran stumbling across the room, fell prostrate before Him and with both hands grabbed both of His ankles and wept. Could it be that Jesus had risen? And in an instant I knew that Jesus is alive, truly alive, and alive with us right now. It was as if light was coming from everywhere, out of the walls, the ceiling, the floor, the room was filled with a glorious light that emitted a sweet floral smell of a desert flower. He was ALIVE. Jesus, standing as I held His feet, bent down to lift me to mine, but as far as my weak legs could get me, was to my knees. I sat there a few moments, sitting on the back on the calves of my legs, and looked Him in the sweetness of His face, focusing on my Lords' eyes, and worshipped. It was then that every fear, every piece of shame, every chunk of guilt that had flooded in me evaporated into love and peace. My Lord is not dead, He's ALIVE.

As great as it was when I first began following Christ, as much hope as I had then, was as nothing compared to the release that entered into me as I looked into and through His eyes. All the emptiness melted, and I was filled with the fragrance of His Love.

Not more than a few hours after Jesus had appeared unto us and left, the missing twin, the one we call Thomas, showed up. It was not an easy task to explain to him what had just happened. No matter how much we explained in detail the phenomenon that only hours ago occurred, Thomas wouldn't hear of it. He was dead-set on the idea of Him just being dead.

It wasn't but a few days since we heard the news about Judas. He was a good man, and as far as I know, he loved the Lord, for each time that he was asked to do something, Judas made sure it was done. All of us grieved; and all spent many-a-hour speaking well of him in our grief. But what actually happened, no one really knew.

Some week or so later, as all were gathered together in the same room, again something strange materialized. It was late afternoon, a mist of rain had fallen most of the day, and the light within the room was dim, a dreary composite of the thick clouds that hung over the rolling hills of Galilee. All were doing nothing, except the other disciple called Judas, the brother of the Lord, he busied himself with cleaning, and when the room again was flooded with a light so bright that none of us could see. Jesus appeared once more; again somehow He entered without the door being opened, the brightness of His joy was unmistakable. Nathanael asked if He could quiet the light that emanated from Him, that we may be able to see. So Jesus turned the light much brighter and the air cleared and all could see as never before.

Thomas rushed to Him, mouth wide open, hands held out, and asked; is it really you Lord? Jesus opened His robe, and held out His hand and told Thomas to survey the wounds.

In an instant, Thomas lifting his head toward heaven with his hands following said; "My Lord and my God." It was then that Didymus, the one called Thomas, the twin believed. It was a glorious reunion, not just for Thomas, but for all.

Let's go fishing

Not long after Jesus returned to us this second time, we were still gathered, and mid-morning I jumped up and said that I was going fishing.

Even though all of our lives were changing, most were really doing much of nothing but contemplating and talking to one another concerning our three year walk with the Lord. The fellowship was wonderful, but being cooped up in that house was not the place for me to be. Fishing had been my life, and fishing was what I knew, fishing is where I went and a few of the other guys went also, when I said; I go a-fishing, they went with me.

This was not to be one of those short trips so we took a few supplies with us, bread, figs, dates and a hunk of goat cheese, for if the weather held, we might fish all night. At dusk the sky turned a beautiful shade of pink with swirls of yellows and hinted among the curls of the few clouds were traces of blue. Every person knew

that this meant a calm night, and knowing this, we were of one mind to fish all night.

Using every advantage of knowledge we knew, angling, trawling, casting, and I even tried harpooning into a school of fish that were revealed under our torches, nothing worked. We stood tired and at the crack of day, long before the sun appeared, John and I decided to head back, but trawl on the way.

Not long after the sun had risen, and not far from the shore, James saw a man and his camp fire near the place we were to land the boat. The man called out and asked if we had any food, and John hollered back that none was in the boat. The man said to throw the net over the right side of the boat, and I said that I didn't want too, for not only I, but all were tired, but John talked me in to it, so we did.

When the net went down, the water started to boil, there was fish everywhere, some jumping out of the net, and some jumping in, this was more fish than any had seen in years. James and John hopped in the little boat that we drug behind, and pulled the net and its' contents up on the shore , it was a full load, no more could have been placed in that net even if one had tried to shove it in by hand.

None of us knew who this man on the beach was, but it certainly helped to have his support. Myself, seeing all the trouble they were having, I jumped in the water and wadded thru to give 'em a hand. Thinking, I thought that the person looked familiar, but not certain enough to put a name on him yet.

James counted the fish as we layered them in four straight rows along the waters' edge, there were a hundred and fifty-three, not medium, but very large, shining in the sun, fish.

Still, we did not know this mysterious person, and him asking us to eat with him, we sat beside the fire that was already built, and ate breakfast. It was then, after half the meal was devoured, that John leapt to his feet and said; "It's the Lord." I think we had so many decades of seeing through our carnal eyes, that seeing Truth evaded each of us, therefore, we readily could not tell until now, that it was Jesus. After settling down, we all enjoyed the bread and fish, but mostly the time we got to spend again with Jesus.

When all had eaten, and all were relaxing in the sun, Jesus came to me, as I was but a little separated from the others, and asked: Do you love me? This question startled me. I really didn't know what was going on here, for He asked virtually the same question three times until I was somewhat confused and maybe a little aggravated, and snapped off an answer a little too quickly. Of course I loved Him, but at the moment didn't understand what was being said about the lambs and sheep. But He was okay with the situation and told me that not long from now, I would understand. This statement didn't set well either, and adding to the disorder of something about my death.

Now Jesus had told us all to go home, and we did. John, James, and Andrew walking with me, talking and examining all that was said and done these past weeks, and wanting very much to

decipher all the events, for within, we all understood that growth was at hand. When we passed people in our journey, sometimes they would stop and talk. They'd all start with the weather, or how much longer the days are getting now, but always one of us would turn the conversation to the resurrection of Jesus. The joy we felt was greater than the imagination could comprehend. These were good times.

When we entered Galilee, and getting close to Capernaum, each went to his own home. The thought of seeing my wife for the first time in a long while was exhilarating. John was in a hurry and went on the last few miles ahead of the rest, and evidently saw my wife and told her that I'm on my way, for she was expecting me as I arrived.

Still walking, not far off from our home, early evening, an effortless wind out of the east, I could smell the sea that was to my right, and there she was. Standing under a small grove of fig trees, and a small group of sea gulls between us, my wife, and I just stood there a moment, me looking at her beauty with relief. Even from this distance I could tell, by her body language, that she was as happy as I, our love for each other only strengthened. She stood, and I began to run. The birds going in every direction, and we held each other for a long time, but in my opinion, not long enough. Setting there under the trees, the figs were in blossom this time of year, we talked, first about her mother, family and our friends, and after a while, about the things that I'd heard and seen. I began to tell of all the miracles, the words spoken by Jesus, and the circumstances of our ordeal with the Sanhedrin and the soldiers.

We sat under those trees for several hours, sun to our backs and in the shade of the afternoon, until the light first started to fade. No matter how much or how fast I could talk, I barely began to scratch the surface of all that had happened on this past journey. This was a glorious reunion.

Holding each other's hand, we walked up the beach and went home.

Several times in the weeks to come, us few disciples got together, and reminisced of all that happened, but most of all we were elated to know that Jesus indeed was resurrected from the dead, alive and very well. Once in a while one of us would receive a revelation of our past experiences, and it would be shared.

My wife noticed, and so had I, that all the emptiness, the fear, the things in my past was gone, melted into space. I had a peace in me that cannot be described, a joy that there just aren't words to express, my life had changed, and I could tell it had changed for life. When Jesus had looked at me with those eyes, that you could see the universe through, my life liquefied into His, I was healed.

The Gathering

The days following were good, the men and I would talk almost every other day, the excitement of the past years were wonderful and exhilarating. Most of our time spent together, when we weren't reminiscing, was disbursed mending the nets, patching the boats, and pretty much just sitting things ship-shape, but I really didn't seem to have an urge to fish, so we just spent this time together and enjoyed the sunshine. This lasted for more than a week; and one afternoon, after all of us had eaten, when we were all gathered, I said: For some reason not be known to me, I believe that we are to go again south.

The other three were quick to agree as they had similar thoughts, and none of us really knew why.

After telling my wife, which was still very supportive, and the others', their families, we started our journey back to Jerusalem the next morning just as the sun had breached the horizon. Not knowing what was ahead was now part of our lives, but it always

had a way of surprising us in a beneficial way. All felt good as we walked. The first day was always within sight of the sea, with its' many attractions of birds flying, birds trotting up or down the shore in hopes of a dinner, fish swimming close to the banks, and some jumping in large schools not so far out.

Once in a while one of the brothers would bring up a subject and we'd talk about it, and then exchange our views, and then another matter would jump from nowhere, and we'd hash it out. The journey was a good one, for the weather was perfect, we slept well at night, and the fellowship couldn't be better.

On the fifth day of our excursion, with the sun already set, the sky was a deep gray, and we could see torches and camp fires in the far distance, knowing this was Jerusalem. We stopped for the night to rest, and were to go into the city first thing in the morning. Not long after the fire was built, the bedrolls spread, and the food made ready, I could see out of the corner of eye, movement. Not knowing if this be man or beast, I studied quietly in that direction to affirm if what I saw was true or just residue of my experience of five or six weeks ago. There was no moon, just stars and the background of the distant city torches.

A voice sang from the darkness that sounded like my ole friend and fellow disciple Bartholomew. Andrew rose up and knew who it was as he first hollered back; "come in and sit with us."

Not more than a minute, with plenty of sounds of shuffling coming through the darkness, a whole line of men came marching into camp, in fact, there was seven of them, Bartholomew leading the way. As they approached the light of the fire, I then saw that it was Bartholomew, Philip, Thomas, the other James, Matthew, Simon and the other Judas, all of us were together again. It was a nice reunion, and we talked and ate and relaxed together by the warmth of the fire and had a good-o-time. They too had similar stories, as was those of ours. We kept close to each other and met almost on a weekly basis. When asked why they too were going to Jerusalem, Philip put another stick of wood in the fire, rubbed his chin as if thinking and began to address their mission.

All of them had a dream, a vision, call it what you may, an encounter with Jesus, He presented Himself and told us to go to Jerusalem, in an upper room of a certain house and wait on Him.

Now I couldn't believe what we was hearing, and probably the other three also, for at this time he stood up as if anxious to speak, but wasn't going to interrupt. When Philip had expounded on their happenstance, and sat again by the fire, I began speaking. "Men, we too had the same encounter, and were told the same things, and were in-fact going into the city to wait for His movement in the same upper room. The affirmation of this moment was planned by God, for His will is always done, therefore all of us will go together and wait upon Him."

The next day as the eleven entered into the room, which by all standards was very large, we all began to pray. Night and day we prayed together. The next few days, men and women began to trickle in, and entered into the same room with the same prayer. All were in one accord, as the others also heard the movement of the Spirit from within, in all account, there were about a hundred and twenty.

I stood up in the midst of the hundred and twenty disciples and said that it was right that we should replace the one lost disciple, and we did, by drawing lots. Matthias was chosen, not by us, but by the moving of God.

Times were managed without our consent, as the Spirit was perceptibly in control, the devotion each had toward the other was common and unexplainable; warming. Men and women that had never before met, blended with each other, as does one star with all the others in the Milky Way. Being in one accord is an understatement, for it seemed we were fused in mind and spirit as one organism. The exhortations, the words of knowledge, the prayers, the wisdom and all understanding were given and received as if we were one body, that body being Christ.

I was sitting in the floor at the far corner from the doorway thinking back on my life and all the emptiness that was felt during all the years of my young adult life, and it now seemed a far distant memory of the person I once was. The sun shining through the window in front of me, and a vineyard on the hill opposite from us, I could tell the beauty of the day. Not a breeze was stirring, the temperature was comfortable, the smiles were abundant, the

circulating flow of Gods' Spirit was more than the imagination could contrive, and I thought; where did this man inside of me go?

As I continued surveying the past life and past thoughts of the man I was, and the transformation that is taking place from within, I began seeing the facades of the life that this world offers. The barrenness of life only lived through the senses, the vacancy of true living, was being rightly divided from the inside, and now began coming to the surface that could now be seen and meditated on. Even the modesty of my simple life had been affected by the views of this world, and the accomplishments that it portrays that we should value. This world offers a bottomless pit of destruction and that is exactly where each goes when following it. I no longer placed value on many of the thing that I once did; my life was continually changing.

When one lives life to the fullest, is it not him that is living life, but life living him? Were we not slaves to the goals and riches that we once thought to be admirable? Thinking as I sat quietly in my thoughts, looking out in the distance, but seeing nothing, as the true inner eyes were focus on the man within, the real being of my existence. If we strive to feed our family, to meet our intensions, to find favor in our community, to be the man the world wants us to be; are we not then slaves of our own making, to the very thing that was to be avoided, slavery? Does not God provide, but we travail in agony to be something that was not to be, a man of means, but instead end up empty? Looking back at the piece of a man I was only days ago, I can understand the abyss of the inner man sinking into a life like this, that was taught from our youth up

to be more than it is capable of. If we spend a life-time pursuing our freedom, to meet our dreams through hard work and stamina, but in the process lose the joy of living, and consumed in the daily task of providing, all to make life more abundant, will we, if looked at closely, have placed our being in this endless mode of slavery? Yes. Why is life, if it is not to be appreciated, accepted as being fulfilling? But we instead replace that joy of abundant living with the daily task of making a living. Still pondering on the thoughts of an open heart, I realized that I was only touching on the surface of what true life was to be. Anyway, all the inner turmoil, the longing to be fulfilled, the void of the emptiness was gone, evaporated in the sunshine of the direction I was facing; I was being healed.

Little did I know at this time that the best was yet to come, for after standing up and going to mingle with the others, a sound that began as a distant thunder rumbled across the land and into the very room the ten dozen of us fellowshiped. The sound was made by a fierce wind, filling, or rather packing the room with the smell of sweetness that one senses after a summer rain. The wind was smooth, but the sound of it was as storm driven through a forest, a force that many went to their knees to observe. The room of this uppermost part of the building was truly filled, that is with the presence of the Lord.

Now not too long ago we were told by Jesus to go throughout the world and preach the forgiveness and Love of Jesus Christ and our God. To tell all that where they are, and even what they do, would not separate them from His Love.

In the twinkling of an eye, everyone in the room was filled with the charisma of His existence, and all women and men began prophesying in a language that was not known by any of the group. The sound of the Spirit was broadcast into the air of that city with the authority of the Lord. Many came to see that which was happening, and I think inwardly wanting to seek the cause of it, or maybe it was curiosity. One man stood in the window watching as one would over his sheep, and turned and shouted out to those outside that much wine had been passed around and they, we, were drunk. Most of the outsiders were men of distinction, gathered in town for some function from all countries, to come to a settling and agreement on the matters of their religion, they were Jews. But I think God had them there for an entirely different purpose, to witness the Spirit moving and maybe that of which they lacked. For nothing was hid, and the profound happenings stretched far beyond the walls of that room as many observed.

For each man and woman filled with the Wind of God's Spirit spoke in a tongue unbeknownst to the one prophesying, and speaking the oracles of His message to them in their own language. That is; that God's Love is extended to all. I think this added to their confusion, as many left, and still many looked as if they were bewildered by the authority that was supposed, in the mind of many, to be theirs'.

The diverse languages, at least the way I see it, was for the purpose of going to all the different languages with the Good-News of the resurrection of Christ, and the total Love that God forwarded to all, so His clear message could be understood by any.

It was still early in the day, the excitement went throughout the building and also spilled into the streets below, the indwelling of Christ was real and accepted by all. As I walked through the room, and watching as men and women were as one, my heart and soul were filled with the joy of His presence. The other Judas came to me as I hugged and kissed many of the brothers and sisters, and was I asked; “Peter, what is it that has filled our heart and this room with a manifestation of the authority of Jesus?” It was then, stepping on top a hewn table that I addressed all that was in the room, and especially those that were standing outside looking in.

“Men of Judea...think not what you see, is, as it appears...” I addressed all with the same authority that befell to me when Jesus asked; “Who do you say that I am?” My mouth opened, the words came out, but what came from it was not Peter. It was as if I no longer lived in my body, and the life that lived in me was not my own, but His who bought me. I spoke from the prophet Joel, and from the words of King David, and to the whole house of Israel, with power and authorization.

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to me and the rest of the apostles; ‘men, brothers, what shall we so do?’ And I said unto them; change the way you think, think not in the world’s way, and be submerged in this same Holy Spirit, and you also shall receive this same gift. And many that day and the days following, were added to the Church, many were healed, many delivered, many were set free from the bondage that this world had imputed into them.

Great things had happened to us, and I speak mostly of me, starting with the room when Jesus appeared for the first time, and then when He gave us His Spirit, and as these were the greatest of all events, none compares to the experiences as yet of today.

While walking with Jesus in our journey throughout all Judea, with all the parables, miracles, and healings, I then saw that my life was to be nowhere except with this man Jesus the Christ of God, and it was more than wonderful. For truly this was the Christ, the Son of the living God. The forgiveness that I received when He appeared after the resurrection melted my soul and heart to a place that I didn't know existed. And as real as it was walking with Christ, eating with Him, watching Him move upon others to make the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk, and even bring Lazarus back to earth from the dead, all was not so impacting in my life, as has this day brought forth. Then I could see Him, touch Him, talk face to face, but now Jesus is closer to me and more real within me after the Power and Spirit had fell upon me through that wonderful rushing wind that came to us this day. Even though my eyes cannot see Him, I see Him far more clearly than any day past, and though my ears do not hear His voice, I can hear Him with clarity, and though I cannot touch Him with fingers, I am now in constant contact, the Christ is real, and really living inside and through me now and forever.

This was a powerful day, meaning a day with much power, and my mind was not just renewed, but as if one poured it out on the ground, and refilled it with the mind of Christ. It was amazing how so many of the things taught to us in the past, were now organized,

prepared, completely reasonable, but a few short weeks ago, made no sense. A change had come over us, and the only thing that was done by each, was to be obedient, that is wait on Him as He had asked.

Not so many weeks ago, we were told to go through the region of Judea, in fact the world and preach this Gospel of Love that was given to us, but none understood what that meant, or what that Love really was, until now. This gathering of some hundred and twenty men and women were filled with the Spirit, which is the Love, of our God and His Christ.

Doing hard Time

Now John and I went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, which was late in the evening. This day was another like the several of past, the sun was in the west sky, an orange ball, larger than normal and centered between hefty clouds of pure white. The blue of the background was livelier, thus brighter than one would customarily see, not a breeze could be felt, and the air was comfortably warm. A pair of doves pecked relentlessly on the ground, as some passer-by had evidently dropped crumbs of something not determined, and three unattached goats were grazing on the grasses of a near-by abandoned house. Glancing up and seeing a certain man lame from his mother's womb and being carried; whom they laid daily in the gate of the temple, which is called Beautiful, to ask for money from those who entered the temple; who seeing us about to go into the porch of the aforementioned, asked us also for money. When both John and I turned, we asked for him to look us in the eye, and he responded,

thinking we were to give money also. God's power continued to be upon us, and without looking, nor speaking to one another, John and myself were in agreement, and I spoke; "silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have, I give to you in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk." John taking one hand and I the other, we reached to stand him up, and strength entered into his legs and ankles. The man stood, took a step and leaped off the ground with a shrill of excitement, and then followed us into the temple. After walking in, all the people of that area knew this man and him lame. And when many had seen him clinging to John and me and him walking, ran to the three of us as we commenced through the porch of Solomon, with an amazement of this, what they thought a peculiar happening, and wanting to find out if this was true.

It was not that many days past that I too doubted, and was filled with despair, and had this happened then, I too would have joined them looking for hope in a not-so-hopeful world. But since the time that we were baptized in the Holy Ghost, and completely filled with God's presence, this and all other situations seemed normal and as if it had always been this way, and why would any situation be different? The power and authority felt as if all of my life I had possessed it, a normal part of living. The events of within seemed to have been stored, waiting to be released, so that, which I seemed not to have, was there all along, waiting to be awakened by that same Christ from within. The healing from within me was being unconstrained, therefore was now able to be extended to other, or so it seemed.

A rather large group had gathered, as many knew him from his daily routine of being in the same place for many years now, came towards us as we entered the toward the temple. I then turned, looking over the crowd, then spoke; “men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? You have denied the Holy One, murdering Him, thus killing the Prince of Life, whom God raised from the dead. And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong. Now I know you did this in ignorance, as also the rulers’.” I then spoke to all from the scriptures of Joel, Moses and the words of father Abraham the things prophesied, concerning the Lord; “and now we are to change the way of our thinking, turning to Him, and relying no more on the strength of man.”

As we were responding to the gathered people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came up to put hands on us; we were arrested. The next day taken before their rulers, scribes, elders, as well as Annas the high priest for something that was supposed to be a trail. After several words from both sides, and threats being made from them, we were released and they threatening us not to speak in the name of Jesus again, for at that time, to place us in prison could not happen, for they feared those standing by that did believe. But we could not but speak of the things of God, and His son crucified. Many, in those days, were added to the Church, men and women, the ones called out from amongst them, and we also continued as vessels that God served through. Many signs and wonders were wrought to the people, for many believed, the increase of those seeking to follow God were

great, as multitudes were healed and could also see God's mighty hand.

Once again, for their indignation, the rulers and scribes were greatly against us, and again arrested us apostles and were to put all eleven apostles in prison, for what they had contrived in their religion, and it was not to be messed with. But in that very same night, all of us, bound, were led to the prison behind the locked gates, and placed where nothing else could happen that would upset their forms of godliness. But that very same night an angel came and opened the prison door and let us out, and told us to go back to the temple and preach the Words of Life.

The next day after having heard of the prison being empty, it was broadcast throughout the city of how furious the scribes, elders, and all the rest of those involved in the temple, and that sect of religion, especially the Sadducees, wanted us killed. But God gave increase daily, for many were added to the Church, that is to say, to the ones called out from among the world, and its' religion.

Now in those days, many disciples were added in Jerusalem and also many were to believe elsewhere, for the Word was being spread throughout the region. Many were obedient to the Word and even several of the priests believed.

The glory of the Lord, and His word was expanded all over Judea, for many believed, but many were distraught for what was

happening to their form of religion, that was invented and carried out through man; a form, but no power; a unity, but no strength; a way that seemed right, but were full of dead mans' bones, for there were no Life.

Much of the time, the twelve of us would split up and go to different regions, but mostly John and I were together, and sometimes Andrew and James, for we were longtime friends, and seemed to know what the other was thinking. We traveled well together.

We'd heard that a wonderful brother, one that became a disciple, named Stephen, held firm in the love and Truth of God and His Christ, was used to bring about many to this new way of thinking, as God gave provisions, but was stoned to death by those that would not allow their congregations to be torn apart by this new way of Life. When we heard this bad news, we were cut to heart and our teeth gnashed, for Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit, even forgiving those that stoned him, just before dying.

For the weeks following, I would ponder on the events of my life, and could then see an evolution taking place, with or without my consent, I don't know; but I like the works being done in me. I still wake up each morning long before the sun rises, and on this particular day, as I lay quiet on my bed thinking about nothing particular, but still having many thoughts going to and fro within my mind. Most of the thoughts have little meaning to me, as for a surety, my whole attitude and demeanor has changed; like Lazarus,

when they were told to unwrap the binding of his grave cloth, the things of this world no longer keep me bound to it.

It was mid-summer, so dark I couldn't see my hand when held between the window and my bed-roll, not a star was shining, so it had to be completely cloudy, and still very warm, even for this time of the morning. In a far off distance, I could hear a dog barking over the top of a whip-o-wills' song to a mate, there was a slight breeze, and could faintly hear the waves as they gently lapped the shore of the sea not so far away. My wife, still sleeping, lying beside me; I got to thinking of my life before, and my life now. The thought started with a man not so long ago that tried buying his way into our group, and the power that comes with the indwelling of the Spirit. It had sort of made me mad for what he was asking, and maybe a little indignation rose up in my soul. Anyway, this was the thought that stuck that morning, and I began to inventory the cloak of my soul.

It was not that many years ago that complete emptiness consumed me from the inside. Being married was wonderful, but was not destined to fulfill that inner need. Andrew came back with stories of the Baptist, and this excited me, so when Jesus showed up and ask for me to follow, I knew the answer lay within me doing just that, and it did. Even then, with my fast actions and quick mouth, I absorbed very little, but knowing that this is where I should be. And now the Spirit was given unto us, and then His empowerment that washed over me in that upper room, I now

have a greater understanding of the works within. But I still have a long ways to go.

So the man that tried buying his way in the Holy Spirit, that angered me to the core, was not so much different than the man I was, not but a very short time ago. This man also was given to me from the Lord to keep my arrogance in check, and even though my evolution has been great and has taken me far, it is but a stepping stone to the places God wants to take me. The man just didn't know. And how could he? Him being slightly younger than myself, I mean in this walk of the Lord, had no great sin, at least not as big as the errors in my life, and looking back, he might have been years ahead me, that is before the Holy Spirit fell upon me in that wind, he just wasn't there. So I expected too much from him, and surely could have used more patience than I did with this man that also wanted more in life. But still the truth is; The Spirit of Christ cannot be bought, for it is a true and free gift to all that seek His Way, that leads to Truth, that makes us free from the World and its' religions, and can only bring Life to those that follow Him.

So now, as I look with serenity at my evolving life, I see a man in me that's got masses to learn, and still many more places to go, and with a few falls from obstacles, I now call obstacles blessings, could grow to the vessel God has set for my life. And with His help, I will.

Still lying in bed; and the darkness of night was still about, and I would guess about half hour more 'til the slight break of day, my wife rolls over and knows that I'm awake and probably knows that I was thinking again. Putting her hand to my arm she asked if I was

worried about anything. “Heck no, for the first time in my life, I quit trusting in myself, therefore concerns of life have vastly vanished.”

She said that she already knew that.

We were close and could almost read each other’s mind, and she knew that things were getting better with me, and I think just wanted an update. She had always supported me, and since her mother was healed by Jesus, she too knew how important my walk with the Lord was, and this changed lifestyle was most significant in our pursuit of happiness and fulfillment. She encouraged me at every opportunity, and grew as I also grew in a deeper relationship with Jesus,

Jesus was in my inner man, the depth of my heart, more real to me, a greater friend, and closer to the touch, after the crucifixion, and after being Spirit filled, than He was in our three year walk together. I now know who He is, we talk constantly with each other, I can see Him, hear Him, feel Him continuously, in more intimacy than we ever had when He was walking on earth. Times were good, and my wife was as thrilled as I was about this new found Life.

We talked to way up past the rising of the sun, enjoying each other, we talked about our life together, and how it was enhanced by the relationship that we both now have with Jesus.

She asked many questions, and we spoke of the future, and our future, and things about our friends and so-on, as the sun had now

eaten up the light fog and the few ripples of clouds that were scattered in the eastern sky over the waters before us. As our conversation paused for a few moments, I went to thinking about my new life, and its' changes, and how my relationship with my wife, was also changing. In the mission of what lies ahead, and my need for my wife's support, it is very important that she be teamed with me, and I believe that somehow I could pull it off without her, which isn't the case, but having her with me, always in my heart, is an ideal situation, and I thank God for His work in this matter.

She then asked how I felt when put in prison, and wanted to know in earnest what I was thinking at the time. Was I scared?

"A little, well not really; you see, when my life changed, it all happened in a moment, in a twinkling of the eye, and I was healed of twenty-something years of the peace that was missing in my life. And the deliverance from, and of, that void is now more than I can explain, but all came together at the right time. So being shackled and locked up felt inside as the right direction for that moment, and no fear was in me, for then I knew that I need not be in control, because that was the Lords job. There was a peace within me, and certainly more thankful than scared."

"What were you doing or thinking during all this?" She asked as we faced each other holding hands.

"Not really much of nothing. The small group of us began to sing, we then prayed, and had discussed that no one was going to eat until a sign from Jesus had been shown. You know, we weren't in there long before the angel came, set us free, and gave direction

of our next move. This was not a night of fear, but rejoicing, a night when fear had escaped us, and a peace had a filling throughout, it was really a good time for the hearts of all, except maybe the Sadducees. All of us had gathered again at the temple, and more were added to the group of believers.”

We both spent the rest of the afternoon together, and I knew Andrew was to drop by later, to begin again our continued mission, so we talked and enjoyed our day together.

Several hours later, my brother came by, my wife and I said our good-byes, and me and Andrew headed south on the perpetual journey of witnessing peoples’ lives changing. Both were excited, for neither of us knew what God was going to do next, times were brilliant with His presence.

As we walked, I was telling Andrew of the remarkable support and encouragement that was given to me from my wife and her friends, and he said the same was coming from our parents also.

The Meeting of Many

It was not so many days later, the apostles met and began traveling south and west and some even north, to tell and teach this Good-News that had now come upon many. I can remember that multitudes in those days were being healed and were filled with the understanding of Christ as the Holy Spirit had fallen upon many. It was not long after Simon tried buying the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem that we would separate to go in different directions preaching the Word that was given to us daily. As for the four of us that usually traveled together, we again went toward the holy city.

It was good that each of us had these little breaks, as they too were enlightening times. We'd share with one another the experiences each were having, as we spent these times with our family and friends, learning much from the acquaintances that each had in their daily visits to town, and all that was being said, as

many-a story was told of events and happenings, that made their way into the villages and towns scattered throughout this southern region.

The one story that often came up was of this certain man that had a reputation of coming against those that came to Christ. In fact we'd heard that he was there when Stephen was stoned, and aggravated it on. This man's name was Saul, and he was known, by permission from his superiors, to wreak havoc upon as many as fell within his grasp, including death by making human torches out of them. But in the rumor that each of us had heard, and several times each, we heard that this same Saul was preaching Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and was now a changed man. The man was bold, according to rumor, and taught and preached in every synagogue that was in his path, and that is; his experience on some road going to some town and his encounter with the Lord. As of yet, we have not gotten all the information, but still it made for good talk as we continued walking toward Jerusalem.

We'd walked awhile, and talked awhile, and sometimes we'd not talk at all, and at other times we'd meet someone, and they'd recognize us, and maybe asked a question, or maybe tell of an experience that they too had with the Lord. All in all, the whole lot of us enjoyed being together. The days were cool, the nights cooler, and when we stopped for the night, the fire made for a closer encounter, as we'd set telling of the people that were seen healed in the name of Jesus.

John asked, while poking a stick in the fire, if anyone understood what Thomas was going through. There was a silence for a minute

or two before James spoke up; “Of course all of us know that he too was changed at Pentecost, but didn’t all of you know that Thomas is one of the strongest believers, and God has wrought great works through him?”

John was rolling flat bread into ball, stuffing it with dates, and had a mouth full when he tried telling us of the people that he’d seen healed by God’s works in Thomas. It took several attempts before John could get it out his mouth, but when he did, all rejoiced, the times together were good.

It was on this trip that the four of us decided to split up again, for I had it in my heart to go along the coast of the great sea, all were in agreement. We prayed together, hug, and took off in the direction that each thought the Lord was calling us in; I went to Joppa passing thru, stopping only to eat, and talked to very few while there, then went on to Lydda.

A small crowd had assembled just outside of the village, and I preached in authority as all were eager to hear, about this new Life that was available through the resurrection of Jesus. Staying there; or there about, for a few days, many manifestations were seen by no small amount of people, as the Spirit moved upon many. And the Lord had moved on a man called Anarias. He had been paralyzed for over eight years and was completely bedridden, but was then completely healed, and could walk normal. The deliverance was at the sound of the name of Jesus, when spoken into the air, even His name held that much authority. There was nowhere any of us went, that the power of Christ was not there.

It was then that a certain man from Joppa was sent to me, and asked if I'd return with him, for one of our dearest disciples, named Tabitha, had gotten very sick and died.

Now this lady was very dear to all the apostles, and was known for her loving deeds and good works, as she expressed her love for the Lord everywhere that she went, and she seemed to go numerous places, for she was well known throughout the region. It was then that I was approached and told about her death, and would I come to Joppa? Not but a mere days' walk, I immediately stopped and went straightway to the city of Joppa where she now lay. Being taken to the upper room, where more than a few women were weeping and making preparations on the body, and showing the evidence of Tabitha's good works by holding the garments and tunics had she had made for them and many others, for Tabitha was surly dead, and these were their remembrances of a lady well liked and deserving of high honors. I asked that each would leave as I walked toward where she lay with a shroud over her body, including her face. As I knelt next to her, turning as I pulled the garment off the face, said in a whisper of a voice; "Tabitha arise." Instantly, without hesitation, she sat up and smiled, as I reached for her hand, and smiled back, she was no more in the midst of the dead, but now talking as if nothing at all had happened. We both walked out together from the room that just moments ago she lay dead, and presented her alive and well to her many friends that waited on my return, but not expecting this moment.

The news had spread throughout that area next to the great sea, and many believed on Jesus the Christ, and others also were healed of diverse diseases, as I was asked to stay for a time, teaching them with truth. One Simon, a tanner by trade, asked if I'd stay with him, and this I did for many days. More than a few were healed, and many came to an intimate relationship with Christ through His Words, and the manifestations of His works thru me and several others that proclaimed His Word. Miracles and wonderful works from God thru us was common-place, some would even call them extraordinary, but I thought it was extraordinary if they didn't happen.

Now in those days the Roman soldiers had been commissioned to seek and find those, the followers of Jesus' teachings, and cause chaos, if not complete turmoil and devastation in their lives. Each that had an encounter with the Lord, knew of this, but lived as if nothing had been ordered against them, yet still understood that their lives were in danger, but continued without ceasing the forwarding of God's Word. In the back of our mind, the disasters from the soldiers remained, but our commission prevailed at every level of the heart. So we continued steadfastly. These wonders and works were not wrought thru our flesh, for no man in his carnal ways can are used, but the living Spirit of God living within us could, and He did.

One evening after expounding to a group of men and women just inside the gate to the city, I was the one touched in the inner being of my soul, of the wonderful things that were happening, and most through the speaking of His Word, I was grateful. And coming back to my friends' house, the sun just barely over the tops of the horizon, I sat to meditate on all of His events that were worked through us. I knew they were happening, and I understood why and how, but for the life of me, I didn't understand why a lowly fisherman like me was being used, when, what seemed like so many others that looked well qualified, were not.

I sat there with my back leaned against the porch of Simons' house, and watched the many seagulls search and divide for their last meal of the day, and began to pray.

“Lord God, you are the God of all, for no other god can stand beside you, for you alone stand in your' might, your wisdom, your knowledge, your understanding, for you alone are the God of all heaven and earth. Not the earth only, but also the stars, the planets, the comets, the moon, and all the space between them, for of a truth, you are the only true and living God, and I thank you. I thank you for being who you are, where you are, and how you are, you are my God, and not mine alone, but all that was created by you, all that is made in your similitude, and all that were not, for even the mountains, the rocks, the ground that we walk on, and the sea that we sail on, all have been formed by your Word. I beseech you Father to open within me the hope of your Kingdom, to come to that complete understanding of your existence, to know you within my deepest being.”

I continued for some time in prayer, as I was in awe of all that was His, and still wanted to know why He had chosen me above others. At least that was the way I was thinking back then. Why did he choose me and the others to walk with Jesus, a lowly bunch, some, like me with little education, to sit at the feet, day and night, to watch and learn from the true Son-of-God? Why were others overlooked, were we better than them, did I have something they didn't have? Did God love us more? These and many other thoughts came to mind while leaning against those bare stones. I continued in prayer:

“Lord you once said that you could make the rocks turn into Abrahams’ children, and they too would praise and worship you if you wanted them to. There is none that’s not yours, even the creeping and crawling things are under your’ might; why are some people seemed to be ignored, especially those of other nations? There are places for me to go, and I believe that you Father, want to take me there, so help me to become that living vessel, that I may follow. All praise and honor and glory and thanksgiving, belong to you, and you alone; for of a truth, your’ Kingdom, your’ Glory, your’ Power and your’ Word is forever and ever, Amen.”

Although my thinking was by no means to full maturity, at the time, I thought it was. I was mistaken. Mistaken in the point that us apostles, especially me, were important, and we were, but not to the stretch that I was thinking. It took some time and meditation trueing myself to the standard of Jesus to realize just how much further I had yet to go.

Feeling refreshed as I inventoried my life, the shore birds scavenging for their last morsel before all light had vanished, I realized that nothing was taken for nourishment this whole day, I was hungry, very hungry. As I went in the house, the smell was obvious that foods were being prepared, which added to my sense of hunger, so walking up the steps, I went to the roof top, where it was a might cooler, just to wait.

It was now fully dark, the night sky filled with its' many specks of stars, noises from up and down the coast could be heard thru the night air as if they were made right under me, and smells of food being cooked from the many houses that lined the shore, I fell asleep. You might even call it a trance, and I saw a vision.

And Heaven opened up, and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to me and was let down from heaven to earth. In it were all kinds of four footed animals of the earth, wild beast, creeping things, and birds of the air. And a voice came to me; "rise Peter, kill and eat." But I said, not so Lord, for I have never eaten anything common or unclean. And a voice came again the second time; "What God has cleansed, you must not call common." This was done three times. And the object was taken up to Heaven again.

Now as I wondered within of what this vision that I had seen, and what it meant, three men were at the door of house of Simon, the tanner, at the gate asking if Peter lodged here. Still in thought of the vision, the Spirit said to me; "Behold three men are seeking you, arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing, for I have sent them."

Going down the stairs, my mind still fogged with the vision, I met the three men that said that their master, a centurion, had sent them to me. They said; "Cornelius, a just man, one that fears God and has a good reputation among all the nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to summon you to his house, and to hear words from you, but as you know, he himself is not a Jew."

As I spoke earlier that many works were being done by the power of Jesus, even some at the sound of His name, but this vision still had me a little perplexed as I attempted to focus because of what just happened moments ago. Not wanting to reestablish some of my old habits of making quick decisions, I asked them in the house. This was also an opportunity to refocus at the task at hand, for the Spirit told me to doubt nothing.

After we talked awhile, and all slept through the night; the next morning, taking a few of the other brothers with me, we set off from Joppa for the two day journey. The journey began as a brisk walk on a beautiful morning, with many of the song birds singing their greeting of the new day. Several scorpions scattered as we rounded the first corner trying to make their way back to the hole they had excavated before the sun's heat scorched the day. Not long after the mid-day sun, the wind started swirling in small dust devils that could be seen in the endless plains of the desert. But not two hours later did that wind turn to a full-fledge sand storm, blowing so hard that the six of us took shelter between a group of out-cropped boulders, they'd looked as though a hand had placed them there from the ancient past.

Settling in we attempted eating the flat bread that was carried with us on our travels, but it was much too gritty as the sands had penetrated every crevice of our being and belongings. Hunkered amidst this group of large stones, that had a similar expression about them of giants looking down, maybe even watching over us, as we did have a reprieve from the wind, but not the sand. Only an hour or so later our small group set off once more in the direction of this ordained trip.

The following day as we entered the town, and went straight to Cornelius' house, I could tell that he was waiting on us, as he had assembled his friends and family. And when walking in, Cornelius fell to the ground before me as in worship, but I told him to stand back up, as I myself, am also a man.

We sat and talked, as I explained that a Jewish man is not to keep company with, nor enter into the house of a man from another nation, that it was unlawful. But God has shown me in a vision that I should not call any man common or unclean, therefore I am here without objection, for whatever reasons you have sent for me.

Cornelius explained that four days ago, a man in the brightest of clothing appeared to him, as he was fasting, and that his prayers were heard, and to send to Joppa for a man called Simon, whose surname was Peter, lodging by the sea, and you would speak to me and I would hear all things commanded to you by God.

Watching this man, with his pleasant demeanor, and his relaxed temperament, and his soft voice, I pondered this as it was the

same day the Spirit gave me the vision on the roof top. It was God, and it was all God that was putting this together for reasons that as yet I didn't know.

As the rather large group of us sat in silence, it was as if an outward force was working inward in each of us, an image of expressions from my soul, or maybe the heart of my heart, the morrow of my being, began articulating utterances from within. And I opened my mouth and said:

"In a truth, I perceive that God shows no partiality, but in every nation, whoever fears Him in love is accepted by Him. The Word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all...It was proclaimed throughout Judea, and began in Galilee after the baptism that John preached; how God had anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with Power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed...And we were witnesses of that which he did in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging Him on a tree.

It was Him that God raised on the third day, and showed Him openly,...and He arose from the dead.

As I was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those that heard, and those of the circumcision that were with me, believed also, as they too were astonished, as many as came on the trip with me. Because the Gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also, and many were brought by God into the Church that day, His presence was more real in that place

than it was when I walked with Him throughout Judea. Lives were changing before our eyes; mine too was evolving as God continued working in me.

Traveling High

Now in those days, that is, the early days of the called out ones coming together, many great works and miracles were showing multitudes the evidence of Christ and Him raised from among the dead. Many times a group would meet, and for the most part, it would be only two or three that had gathered. Disciples were added daily, and sometimes there were a thousand or even much more, that were added to those that came out from among the world, and its' way of thinking. These peoples' lives weren't being changed because of our power, nor because we were great speakers, but by the calling of the Holy Spirit that fell upon the many in our travels, of those that now lived a changed life. When there were meetings of large numbers, it was purely by the hand of God, for no effort was afforded from our part. I might walk from one city to another, meeting someone on the side of the road, and testifying of what I'd witnessed, and would be asked if I would come and lodge with them, for they too had family and friends that

they would like for them too, to hear this great news. Living this life was exciting, and in no way was any day predictable. Normally it was but one or two others that listened as I traveled throughout.

I would, on occasion, meet with one of the original disciples, but for the most part we journeyed alone, and separate. Several times my wife was to go with me, and many of the women's lives would be changed by her testimony, as she too could expound as the Spirit gave her utterance. But, by-in-large, each set out alone, as God would scatter us in every direction fulfilling His desire upon His Rock that I now understand is the Revelation of Himself.

One time, maybe five or six years after the resurrection, in a small village called Nain, not far from, but in the mountains, outside the city of Nazareth, I ventured. A quiet place, but many believers dwelled there, as on several occasions a disciple passed through and preached on the change that God was calling for from within, that this same neighbor, the one called the Christ, not so many years ago, lived and walked among them, and would expound on the change of what was happening in the lives and the heart of many. For many there also believed.

The group had grown, for many, and several of the men and women in that village were considering erecting a house where each could commonly meet, an organized place of worship. I listened as their excitement emanated from all around the room that we had collected in, and the ideas that arose from that excitement. Maybe they weren't quiet together on every issue that was being spoken about, but most had the same common

ground of wanting a building dedicated for the meeting of the saints, a place of worship.

In that room were many sincere folks, ones that received the presence and indwelling of the Lord, but it seemed that the men of the highest nobler status were the ones pushing the hardest for the establishment of a house of God. The food was good, the crowd was cheerful, but the atmosphere was lacking one essential ingredient, the Spirit of Christ. Watching and listening as I observed the hugs and handshakes, the chatter of what was to happen and the prestige that it would give this small town to have such a place, and what it would mean to so many.

Standing up, clearing my throat, and in a loud voice said: "Men and women of Nain, keep silent and listen to what this man that walked in the days of Jesus' ministry with Him, has to say concerning this that you are about to do. Many of you mean well, but there are those among you that are looking for an outward construction, but lack the inward dwelling of Christ and His Spirit. This that you are about to do, ought not to be so, it was not in the beginning of this new life that he has built in us, nor will it be in any of the days to come. Those that are called up into this life, will go, we will not be asking those to come, to gather in a place built by the hands of man, His true Church is built on the Rock of His revelation, not upon a stone hued by mans' ideas. He asked that we should 'go ye into all the world, not forsaking any', but never has His Spirit shown that we should institutionalize the Rock in which He is building. I'd rather say that there are several amongst you that are without, that is the indwelling of Christ, that make

pretense that they too have had this experience with Christ, and have not. They are those that are still filled with dead mans' bones, but want only to clean the outside of the vessel, and again, this ought not to be so. This Gospel of the Kingdom will be spread by folks like you and me, people sharing that which God has done, and still doing, not by erecting a shine, as I too had learned this from yesteryear. We show not ourselves in beauty, but in humility, not in fluent speech, but in those Words that he has appointed to us, not in zeal to worship that which our hands have made, but this which His Spirit points to, the only God that is living, and He can and will live in you."

The silence around the room was that of a secluded man standing completely still on a snow covered mountain top, some were smiling, but all were reflecting on the Words the Spirit had to say. As I continued: "This, that God is putting together, let no man put asunder, for this, my brothers and sisters, is built by the hand of Christ, and not on the stature of man. The true Church is not a gathering, but of those that are called out from among the world and want to live this new Life, and share it with others along the way that we are led to walk. To make something tangible from that which is intangible is a mistake that I also, in times past, tried to do, but was told to go back off the mountain. Christ is alive, and I know that He lives in many of you, and it will be Him that gives the increase, not the ideas of our mind. Wait on Him."

In those days, some nine or ten years after the resurrection of Christ, people were being added to the called out ones daily,

sometimes tens of them, sometimes hundreds, and on a couple of occasions, a thousand or more. For as many believers that traveled from city to city, I would receive word almost daily of the progress of the forwarding of God's Kingdom. Many a-men were made disciples, had an encounter with the Lord and journeyed spreading that good news throughout. Now Saul, that we'd heard was surnamed Paul, was preaching throughout the land, and most of his times were spent in other nations, up along the north coast of the Great Sea, but preaching this same Jesus, the Son of God. I was told by one in this company of folks that Paul, and his companion Barnabas, both were again being searched out to be put to death for his testimony in Christ.

It was now about this time that I'd received the bad and sad news that my long-time friend James, the brother of John, was killed by King Herod, for at that time much expense was delegated toward harassing those that believed. John and I were friends, and much more than friends, we'd grown up together, spending not only our youth, but most all of our walk in Christ together, this was sad news. Each of us understood the consequences of our appointment in sharing the Gospel, but James was still a young man and had a great zeal for the Lord. He was sorely missed, and I hurt for his brother and parents also, for we were so close. But James' life, or death, was by no means in vain, for God had wrought great works through his hand, and by his willingness.

Herod seeing that the death of James by his sword pleased the Jews, he also sent out seeking me, for much the same. It was then, during the feast of Unleavened Bread that Herod's men seized me,

and placing me in prison, bound both hands and feet, and stripped naked, it was no small company of soldiers that were placed to guard me; in fact two were required on each side of me, even as I slept. All of this was done, not because I'd done anything wrong, and certainly not because I went against the Romans, but that Herod made favor with the Jews these harassments, and that gave him clout.

I was not at all alone, for many of the company of believers and companions were constantly in prayer. There was no fear, for of a truth, my life had changed, and still continues to change, as I relinquish my control to the Father of all. There is no greater freedom, than the freedom one receives after giving up his own. I think we were all created to follow, and yes many are to lead, but the greatest of leaders are those that can serve and follow. God continued to move within my life and this also was a moment in time that was needed to bring me closer to Him.

My so-called trial would have been the next day, if not for the Passover, but again Herod was going to make favor with the scribes, Pharisees, elders, and priest of the Jews, the trial was to be the day after. But the night of the Passover an angel stood over me in the prison, a light so bright that it filled the jail, and said for me to rise quickly, and as I did, the chains fell off. I was then told to shod my feet, gird myself and follow him. As we passed through the first guard, and then the second, I thought this was a vision, not knowing that what was happening was real, but when the gate had been reached, and the irons fell off before us, the gate opened on its' own accord, and the angel was gone. Moments later, when

I came to myself, I knew then that this was real and not a dream, and had been delivered out of the hands of Herod, and the expectations of the Jews.

I, knowing where John and the others were, and at the house of Mary his mother; and after walking up the street, the air chilly, the night quiet, approaching the door, I knocked. A young girl answered, but when she had seen me, jumped as if she seen a ghost, slammed the door, and I could hear her running as if for her life. I continued knocking. It was but three or four minutes, and the door opened again, it was John, surprised but happy in a loud way, and I motioned that they were to keep silent, as I entered and shut again the door.

That night there was much rejoicing as I explained all that had happened, about the angel, and the things that the Lord was showing me, we all had a good time 'til daybreak, when much stirring and rustling was heard from the Romans outside. Later I'd heard that several of the guards were put to death because of what happened, but as far as us, we enjoyed each other, and caught up on all that God was doing through each.

There were many in Judea that believed, and the Word spread before us in every place we were or had been. God's kingdom was growing daily as the news of this new Life was spreading.

It was not long after leaving and going to Caesarea that I heard the news that Herod, while giving orations to 'his' people was struck by God and died, being eaten by worms, but the Word of

God grew and multiplied throughout all Judea and elsewhere. Herod's death being a sign that God was moving among all.

As I traveled in those days, many wonderful works and great miracles happened on a daily basis, and many were also led to follow in Christ as the Spirit gave them leave. Saul, whose surname was Paul traveled to many of the cities and many other nations, as from time-to-time I'd hear word of what God was doing through his life. I will admit that at first when I heard of Paul and the change he claimed to have in his life, I was a little skittish, and even though he and I haven't seen eye-to-eye in every detail, I believe the work he's doing in the name of Jesus is real. For he too has been threatened, beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, arrested, and vows to have him killed were often made, but he's never wavered, not an inch from the encounter he had with the Lord, yes, it was real, a fellow-apostle.

In my days of traveling the cities of Judea, and on occasion, to Cyprus, and a few more of the distant places, I was always in contact with many believers, and each day was fulfilled with the excitement, mystery, and enjoyment of the Lord. And on this trip John and I ventured to Judea to a town called Machaerus, four or five miles east of the Salt Sea, and placed at the end of a ravine between two hills maybe not big enough to be called mountains, but rugged just the same. Both of us knew that this trip was necessary, but why, we had no idea. We had previously been in Medeba, which is northwest about fifteen miles and in the same large valley that we now traveled. It was a summer day, hot,

humid, and the wind blowing out of the south, which it always does this time of the year, and talking with each other as we walked. John thought the people in Medeba, which we just left yesterday, were not as open to the Gospel as most of those on the other side of the Salt Sea, for the Word had not spread very much in this region. But the time there was not wasted, nor could it be, for when the Spirit moves one to go, the going is always peaceable, harmonious with what seemed ordained, as there is always a purpose.

On this trip, the one we just left, a young girl about the age of twelve, an only child and born in the late years of her parents, laid sick from a fever, and had been crippled from birth. Having heard that two of the Apostles were there, called on us to look upon their child, with hopes of her being healed, as they too had heard the news of Christ and His resurrection and how He still walked among His disciples and continued working through them. And once we'd laid hands on her, lifting her up by the hand, the fever was gone and her legs were straightened, all in the name of Jesus. The young girls' folks were ecstatic, but the town people thought it to be through sorcery, and tried mocking us with their trickery.

Often when folks, and their religious ideas, feel threatened, many would attack with their imitation, or their counterfeit of what the Holy Spirit, and His power offers, with their less-than adequate forms of trickery.

So as it went, we did what was desired of us from the Spirit, and the awakening of the town, was most likely to come later from the Holy Spirit, so we left, not staying more than a few days. And now

on the brink of the village of Machaerus, not more than ten furlongs, decided to stop and rest for the night, before entering the next morning just after the rising of the sun.

It was a pleasant evening, the sun still two hands above the horizon, the wind was a calm breeze, but still hot, as we settled between a huge boulder and a thicket of scrub brush. Laying back against the rock, feet stretched out before us, eating flat bread and a piece of dried fish, we relaxed watching the seagulls as they would make a circle above our head before returning to the sea. Once, two of the gulls were harassing a larger bird, attempting to get the larger to give up its' catch, which it did, and was caught in mid-air by the two much smaller one, but the weight of it was more than they could bear.

A small fire was made, for the dead brush was in plenty, and we rested and talked a little, but mostly watched as the sky was still lively with the never disappointing fowl, and now the crawling creatures that were coming out of every hole, whether under a rock or from between the sage, we indulged in the best part of the day, resting.

Just as the sun was about to go completely down, only a sliver winked to say its' goodbyes, John began talking, or maybe asking about the life we now had since the apparent death of Jesus, and why it was that He seemed more alive today than he did while we walked by His side. Many times I'd had the same thoughts, and had studied this with great reasoning, so I said as John nestled in what seemed like a tub scratched out of the sand into a bowl shape. "Before the crucifixion, and especially until Pentecost, we

did not have His Spirit, for He said the Comforter would be sent, and at that time and place none of us knew any of the meanings of the parables, or the saying, or the purpose of the places we went and the things we saw, until our eyes were opened. Our lives were changed that day, after receiving His presence, and all before, as we walked with Him, we had only the mind of man, and couldn't see beyond the natural, for our eyes kept us from seeing."

It was then that John crawled up out of his nest, excited, and said; "You know, that also is what I thought it was, but needed a confirmation, thanks." He walked around awhile, talking to himself, talking to the sky, at least talking upward, flinging his arms in every direction, going in circles until the affirmation had settled deep inside, and then said, "I could see before, but through a dark glass, but now I understand; He's alive in me, walking on earth in me, carrying out His Life and Will in me, no more death, just Life. I knew that the Spirit was given to us at Pentecost, but I guess I just didn't realize His complete presence on earth in me, and of course you and the others' also."

Times were good, a lot was happening, and we were all growing. It's so pleasant to see ones' life change after an encounter with the Lord, and it was happening everywhere we went; simply put, it was rearranging our lives. I was just a glimpse of the man that I was before the resurrection and the out-pouring of the Holy Ghost. Thinking back, it's now hard to relate to the person I was, all had changed, and all that was required on my part was, to follow Him when asked, no efforts were made by me nor for me, it was all Christ's doings in me. And to watch this young man have the

blinders removed, and understand the alive Christ within himself, is an experience that will never lose its' excitement.

The next morning, before dawn, for the night sky was totally dark, and only a hint of light appeared in the eastern sky, and one had to study to see the small suggestion of haze that was beginning to show, I lay awake, doing what I've always done; ponder. I lie there silent thinking on the meanings of each event as it happened, and on occasion, would see through it to the implications that Christ intended in his hidden Ways. The first sound of John stirring was that of a branch breaking as he tried to build the fire from the spark of last nights' ashes. It was a warm morning, and no dew had fallen, the air dry and more stars shown than usual, the beginning of another exciting day.

"Good morning, how'd you sleep?" Looking at John as he blew on the few remaining embers, I could see smoke, but no flame.

Backing away from the handful of smoking twigs and brush, he coughed, set it down and rubbing his eyes, said; "not a wink." I laughed watching him twist and turn, but not able at this point to give up, he kept blowing until the magic was done; a flame.

"The 'something' that happen in me last night, opened up a whole new vision, so I stayed awake all night in excitement, to see all that I could see. Jesus is at least as alive in us now as He was when we walked with Him on earth."

I spoke back; “More so. Before, we needed not faith, because we had Jesus next to us, now after He has revealed himself alive, our faith is what brings a reality to the purpose of life, we are no longer blinded. It has not been long since I too realized His presence, but have also learned that the mustard seed, that we are, is as yet, but a sapling, the real growth is yet to come.”

“You mean it gets better?”

“I suspect so. I’m just learning this as you are. For the men we were, no longer exist, we willingly have laid down our lives for a better one, not a reformed life, but one that’s being transformed by Him. A life that we no longer have to make decisions, we just listen as He arranges everything for us, and continue following. This is not for us alone, but to all that are willing, for there is nothing special about who we are that matters, but what we are; His.” John just smiled, the fire was built, and his face was brighter than the flames.

Author’s note: God will use us for ‘what’ we are in Him, regardless of what we’ve done or not done, which is the ‘who’. The ‘who’ that we each are, is not important, it’s earthly; the ‘what’ is that which each is; the child of God, for he lives in each. Read 1 John chapter 3.

Not long thereafter, bellies full, filled with amazement and wonder, we both headed toward the town of Machaerus. You could see the tell-tale signs of the wind in the mountains, as small clouds of sand were swirling on the leeward side of each peak. We walked in on the northeast side of town where small stone houses had been erected, some from handmade brick. The streets were

sand, well-trodden, and the town of unexceptional size, and the folks modest in every way, as we could see small groups gathered as we approached the middle of the square. A man with a robe, that looked as if it had not been cleaned in several weeks, approached us and was the first to speak; introducing himself as an elder, and knowing who we were, as he had had a vision from an angel that we were to come on this appointed day, and was waiting. He explained: "Our town and most all the folks in it have been overwhelmed and preoccupied in, and with depression. This is now to the point that more than a few have killed themselves, and those remaining are of a very low esteem."

I could tell by his countenance that the man was worried and at his wits-end. Looking around, I could now see, that was there was no laughter or even smiles in the people we've encountered thus far; he was more than concerned as he continued speaking.

"We had heard through various people that there was a group that is growing daily, and about a man called Simon, who surname is Peter, and another man from Tarsus name Paul, and both and the other's carry the power of the Lord wherever they go. So several weeks ago, myself and a friend began praying and fasting about this, for we too are believers, and want Gods' movement upon our town and the people in it. And two nights ago during a dream, an angel of the Lord woke me from sleep, and said that the Lord God has heard our prayers, and moved with compassion, has sent two men to expound on the news of Christ Jesus, Him crucified and raised from the dead. You must be them."

John looked at me, and I him, for we knew now what this trip was about, and were thankful that another group, maybe the whole town, was open to hearing about the works of God, through His son Jesus, who lives today in each that would receive Him. This is the Good News that were both set out to tell and express through the Power given to us, and we were to also give that same Power to them.

“We are them, I am Peter and this is John, we both walked with the Lord during the days of His ministry, and were witnesses of His life and His resurrection. Can we go somewhere to talk?”

The anticipations of our arrival must have been high; for several of the concerned folks were gathered in a small room as the three of us walked in, and were introduced. There were small smiles upon the faces of those collected in that room, but it was easily discerned that the smiles were covering worried feelings. For most held their shoulders low, and slumped in a forward position, indicating a low demeanor with heartache. We were introduced.

“Men, brothers in Christ, we too knew it was urgent to get here, for the Lord had placed you and this town on our heart, not but three days ago. John and I both walked with the Lord during His ministry on earth, were daily with Him, and did not understand who we were with, until the days of Pentecost, when each received Power by and of the Holy Spirit. Even I did not believe that he was resurrected from the dead until he had revealed Himself to us, and I could see with my eyes. But even then I could not fully understand until a mighty rushing Wind had blown upon

us. To know Jesus externally, is not a bad thing, but to know Him alive internally, is that of faith, and is the greatest of all matters.”

Zecharius, the man we first met in the town square, seated himself on the floor, his close friend beside him, and listened with all intensity, as I continued explaining that the baptism by the Spirit, and His indwelling in us, was the means of our life, and the motivation of living. For in truth, there is no life without Him, He alone is the covering of our lives, and always expresses Himself in Love. I told them of the separation and condemnation that was taught to all, by those that served the Temple, with all their rules and regulations; and that Christ came to set us free from all of that, and Free we are. And that freedom expresses itself in a Love that cannot condemn, nor does it separate, nor can it be contained in any one person, but thru the whole body of Christ. For we are His lively stones, with Christ as the Chief corner stone, and fitly arranged and joined together to make up the true body of Christ.

“We were bound to the many laws of the Jewish religion,” Zecharius began speaking, “and I think to the ones that enforced them, and were taught that we are not to associate with those of other nations. Our people flourished in times past, but this spirit of depression has a grip on us and has not let go, and our people are dying. For the bondage of religion, and our acceptance of it, is more than our people can bear.”

John leaned over and said something in my ear, and we were both in agreement as to the problem that had a hold on this city, and the folks in it. Still standing, I walked to the stone table that

had evidently been used for eons to grind and roll out flour, and leaning against it I began to speak as the Spirit gave utterance.

“Men, brothers, I perceive that a spirit of selfishness has been carried here from those of a sect that want you in bondage, and all for themselves. There are those that teach that theirs’, and their religion alone, are for those of the seed of Abraham, and I too thought the same at one time in my life, but God spoke to me and said ‘what He has cleaned, call not common.’ The Lord Himself said that God so loves the world and all the world, all those in it, because each were made in His similitude, each belong to Him, that He gave His only begotten Son; and each and all can believe. But you have been given a yoke that you cannot bear, a burden that you cannot carry without these repercussions; therefore all those of this city have attempted to walk in both worlds, but they must not be combined. You have believed in Christ Jesus, and Him crucified and Him raised from the grave, believe also that He who can resurrect your Spirit can deliver you from this bondage that was set upon you. For what God has put together, let not man put asunder.” This I testified about while still leaning on the work table, and all gave attention to the words as I hesitated to allow the word to be digested. “Now as each have fallen into the teachings of the scribes, Pharisees, and even the priest of the temple, know ye that you have been set free, free from the bondage of effort, free from the yoke of pleasing men, for Jesus came to give Life, and give it abundantly to all that pursue Him.”

As I spoke, a Light began shining from within the room, a Light that came from everywhere, for the Light drove shadows from the

room, or could one yet pinpoint from where it came. Small particles floated about the room, but were not falling, as many traveled in an upward or sideways motion, it was like Manna coming from Heaven and layering themselves upon all. And I looked outside through the doorway; I could tell that the same was happening throughout the whole city. People were standing, looking up, arms wide open, and many fell to their knees as this and the brightness of the Light shone upon all. In an instant the entire town broke out in praise and worship, for their hearts were filled with the joy and freedom from the Lord. A deliverance had happened. And there were more than twelve hundred that day brought into the intimate fellowship with the Lord God.

John and I stayed there many days teaching and exhorting those in the Lord, and many, if not all, were set free from the tyranny that the elders had burdened those people with, and the oppression lifted, along with the depression. We thus traveled again to Jerusalem.

My Other Eyes

After leaving Machaerus, John and I were heading towards Jerusalem, and knew of a small villa, maybe I should call it an encampment, due west on the east side of the Salt Sea. It was about five miles, and a man there ferried people across for a small sum of money, and if he's still there it could save us about three hard days of journeying around the waters, so we took a chance. Anyway we were to meet Andrew, my brother, in Hebron in a few days, for we made this arrangement several weeks ago when we'd split up, us going southeast and him going southwest.

It was late evening when we walked up to the camp; it was still there; said our hellos' and made preparations to leave the next morning to cross this rather large body of salty water. There were no fish or fishing in the Salt Sea, it was dead to all life that we knew of, and was the final containment of the waters of the Jordan. Mountains on the west side and desert on the east, it was just a large body of water that served no purpose except to extract salt from by damming up a lesser cove and letting the sun bake it dry, for which there was a high demand for the salt.

That night around a make-shift cook stove, the wife of the man that was to transport us cooked rolled bread with figs in the center, and gave us both a cup of fresh camels' milk, and we talked about this and that. This small group of folks, I think they were all one family, have never heard the name, much less the story of Jesus and were very interested as we took turns telling the news. Nothing special happened that night, but I believe that each of them were intrigued with the telling of Jesus and Him being Christ, for His presence was certainly with us, maybe they were even fascinated, but the whole story was told.

The next morning, after another cup of camels' milk, we went to the small boat that was pulled on the shore and looked as if it hadn't been moved in weeks. The sun now barely above the hill behind us, the sky red, but very few clouds, as we climbed aboard, knowing that a storm was on the way, but all thought we could beat it before it broke loose, for the voyage was to be no longer than three or four hours. It was a fifteen mile trip, uneventful, except when the tops of the highest hill peaks before us could barely be seen, the clouds began to gather, and thunder could be heard in the distance. Not wanting to be caught in the storm, two rowed instead of just the one man, John and I took turns, for there were only two oars, but all got relief by swapping back and forth. Each man would row hard until he got tired and another would take his place, this exchange happened several times, but we made it before any of the rain fell. In fact it didn't rain at all. Since we had about twenty-five more miles to go to reach Hebron, decided to walk a couple of hours, until the sun was hid behind the mountains, and then rest for the night. We had met no one on the

trail as we walked at a slow pace; just reminiscing about all that God was doing since He'd sent forth His disciples to tell this good news of his Son, and Him alive and well, still walking upon the earth in the presence of His people.

John got to thinking about his brother James, and how God had used him in so many ways. I think John was sorely missing him, but was eased with the conversation we had about this very special friend and brother. What a horrible way to die, but James knew the restrictions that the Romans, and hierarchy of the temple, put on those that followed Jesus and His teachings, and to him, it was well worth it. So as we continued walking we rambled about James' love for the Father and our love for James; and of course the Father also.

Near dark, one of us spotted a small cave, or rather an overhang, on the side of a precipice not more than a hundred meters off the path, and decided this was where we were to spend this night. Building a small fire, we cooked the four eggs that the ferry man had given us, and the small piece of bread, before calling it a complete day; and having the ledge to keep the dew off; it was a good trip thus far. That night as we sat relaxing, we spoke again about James, and then about Steven, and talked of some of the ideas that floated in each our heads.

Beside the fire was a bush that I kept watching, as a caterpillar had almost eaten every single leaf off of. It was a fuzzy little thing, orange with dark gray stripes, not more than two inches long, and smaller than the circumference of my little finger. It took less than three minutes for the creature to eat an entire leaf, and then move

to the next, and I began to wonder. "Was man in this world as the caterpillar is?" I spoke out loud, reflecting back on my younger years, I think I was just like this soon to be insect. This creature had been eating all summer, as much as he could cram in, but not growing a smidgen, just gulping up as much as he could take in, which seemingly didn't make any difference, except for the fertilizer piling up around the trunk of the brush. Still thinking out loud, sort of rambling on about what I see in man, in comparison to this crawly thing, and then I asked the question, expecting no reply. Is man, that is without a relationship with God, like this caterpillar, eating all or taking in all of this world, and the things therein, but going nowhere until he has built himself a cocoon, where he then becomes blind, restricted, and living as if sound to sleep? Does not every man do as I did, and walk this world with his eyes open, but see nothing; eating, drinking and have his fun, but going nowhere, until the spring of his life, when the cocoon is ruptured, the man is awakened, and comes forth as a new creature? Are we all born as larvae, an eating machine, a sort of parasite, immature in every way, but destined to become a moth or butterfly, and then as we seek the wholeness of life, become nothing, wrapped in our individual cocoon, lying dormant until the Spirit awakens in our body in a new form, and the transformation takes place; not that we determined this, but God. I know that no man can build himself, or at least to any effect, save the hand of God being upon him. But yet we struggle to achieve, finding nothing worthwhile, until each gives up on this life, laying it aside, and allowing God to do that which every man was created for. That is; a butterfly."

John just smiled. I think he saw what I was saying.

After a few moments John spoke what was on his mind, and it was somehow along the same line. He talked in an almost whisper when his insight came out.

“Peter, I’ve known you most of my life, and I want to ask you if you’ve noticed that we disciples all acted about the same way when we were walking with Jesus? There were miracles happening often, people being healed, unclean spirits driven out, even several being raised from the dead; but did you notice that we gave more attention to the gift that was given, than to the Giver? Did you see that we gave more credence to the blessing than we did to the Blesser, more devotion to the healed, than the Healer; more to the deliverance than the Deliverer? Of course we had to walk this walk, but when that which is perfect, (which is Love), has come, then that which is in part, (which is virtually everything else), is done away with, leaving only the emptied vessel, readied only then to be filled.

I just smiled at John, we were both on the same road, and both knew that much growth had taken place in each of us; of a truth, not just us, but all the students following the Lord were growing. At this point in our lives, we now realized that growth was a major part of Life, and we were now just coming out of this cocoon, wrinkled, wet, and still not able to fully fly. So the best is yet to come, and at least we had enough maturity to understand that we were still immature, and not yet fully understanding; but growing.

The next morning John and I woke refreshed, ate a few figs, drank from the skin containing our water supply, kicked dirt over the few remaining live coals, and headed west to Hebron. Neither knew if we'd get there before Andrew, or vice-versa, but it was a pleasant morning to walk with the sun to our backs. As we traveled, both ruminated about James, him fishing, him walking with our small group with the Lord, and him allowing Gods' power to flow thru, and the growth of so many, as he ministered in the Lord.

It was not but maybe twelve or fifteen miles of easy walking, even though in was mostly uphill, and we'd make it well before sun-down.

It was still forenoon when a large group of men and women, with their camels, goats and donkeys, crossed paths with us. Their leader, an elderly man dressed in a colorful long robe, and a turban that I had not seen before, for they were from a tribe that was not be known to me, stopped to chat a few minutes. The man's beard was worn down to his waist, and his smile was genuine, asked where we were going, for their caravan was heading north to Jerusalem. John spoke first and told them that we too were going to Jerusalem, but had to pick up a brother named Andrew in Hebron, and then would soon leave north to be in the holy city in maybe three days. We then introduced ourselves, and they too were from a smaller tribe of the Israelites, and had heard some kind of news of a man and His disciples making waves in Judea, Samaria, Galilee and many of the other regions thereabout, and

were intrigued, and wanting to know more, went searching for any remnant of His disciples.

He'd told us in a very soft expression, his head drooped down looking toward the sand; that their family, which is this large band of people, searched for the called-out-ones in hopes that they would expound to them these new oracles from God, and maybe even be given a miracle. For they too were in need of a healer, because the last four babies born in their extended family, had been born withered, each from different parents.

We talked a little longer, and I could tell by the tone of his voice that they were concerned if they'd done something wrong, lost favor with God, or just maybe, this was a tribulation to bring them to this message of the Kingdom of God.

I told them about Jesus, Him being the son of God, Him crucified, and of our redemption from our sins, and He being resurrected, and the message was readily accepted. For he told us of the emptiness of their lives, their adherence to the rules of the temple, but no one or nothing cared about them or made any difference in their life, and supposing they didn't know of any true power; but this Jesus that they'd heard about did. And they were going to Jerusalem and even farther if they had too, expecting a new revelation and maybe their babies would be healed, but as for now, they mostly wanted answers.

Standing, my face to his, I placed both hands on his shoulders, John beside him with his hands on the man's head, we prayed.

After a short prayer, all of us still touching, I looked this bearded man in the eyes and said; “go forth to your families, your children have been healed, and the Power of the Spirit has fallen upon you, and all that are yours’.”

The man fell to the ground, worshipped God in praise, jumped as if he were a young man, and ran to the folks in his caravan to tell them the News, for the Holy Spirit had leaped in him with all vigor. As he ran toward the group, two men ran toward him, both telling the news of their babies being healed by straightening their arms and legs, and about the others two also.

We left, but could hear great rejoicing as the hill before was climbed. It was well after an hour of walking, that we could still hear the shouts of joy. We were praising also.

The sun was now over the mountains as we entered Hebron, a little later than thought, but there never-the-less. The city was busy with people going in every direction, and the streets seemed filled with six or so herds of goats, not large herds, but herds just the same. Small street-side shops of folks selling their wares and produce lined on each side of the city square, with a drinking well placed in the center. It was a nicely organized city, with the many torches that lined the street, and the people appeared pleasant.

Our first stop was to take a long cool drink from the fountain, for all we had for the last few days was the heated water in our goat skins, sufficient, but not the tastiest, being it was stored in there some three or four days ago. Just as we approached the well, I heard a familiar voice that called out; ‘Simeon’. Turning to

my left, and not seventy-five feet away, and clean as a pin, was Andrew. For John and I were covered in dust, sand, and soot from our overnight fire, we were filthy, but glad to see him. We said our hellos', asked about each other's health, dusted our clothes, and followed Andrew to a place that he had waylaid as a temporary lodge while in wait for us. It was out of the heat of each day's sun, now darkened, set back in an alley, therefore, much quieter than that of the main street; it was perfect for the needed rest that John and I were looking forward to. After just a few minutes of reminiscing on the high-lights of the last couple of weeks, Andrew mentioned that he was missing James with great sorrow and was saddened. Just the reference of his name brought a trickle of tears down Johns' face, but he was okay, just missing him with compassion, and said; "it was an honor to have James as a brother, and that his presence will forever be with those that his life touched." All of us sat silent as the camaraderie set in and ran its' course. This was fellowship without speaking.

Some quarter hour later I mentioned that John and I were hungry, but first needed to wash the dust off, and maybe wash our clothes. Andrew knew of a man-made pond that was ditched and dammed to catch the run-off of a wet weather creek not far from the center of town, and that it would suffice to meet our needs. And after that we'd eat and resupply for our trip to Jerusalem that started in the morning.

It was good being with my brother, and it was good for the three of us, one missing, to be together and talk out concerns about the death of James, truly, he was sorely missed. The four of

us spent so much time together, growing up and walking with Jesus, it was an odd feeling with one not among us.

That night, with the air warm, the street still busy, the three of us sat near the square in the middle of town and talked, catching up mostly on the things that God was doing through of lives. Each had his own stories, and each listened with intensity as it was obvious that the Lord was using all that would follow Him in the forwarding of His Kingdom, it was enjoyable.

The next morning we were up early, John and Andrew stirring some hour after I had already awakened, kinks worked out of our joints, wide awake, we headed north toward Jerusalem. It was a hard two day trip if we were to travel the mountain tops, if choosing to go the shortest route, but we opted to go west and then north through Beth Haccerem, and not having to cross all those mountains again. It was one of those beautiful days that made traveling pleasant, and having the three of us together again made it that much better. The sun was on our backs and a large valley stood before us, the birds singing, the night creatures heading back under cover, we walked to the center of the dish between the two hills before turning north. It was scattered with many flocks of sheep and goats, some going north, and some traveling south, but the shepherds were friendly, as frequently we'd stop and talk a few minutes. During a long stretch of emptiness, John started making animations out of the puffy white cloud that were sprinkled here and there, and it wasn't long before Andrew and I both began seeing all kinds of strange things those

clouds could resemble; it was fun. The land was flat and travel was easy. We'd occasionally still speak of James, but I really did think that we'd talked the biggest part of his death dealings out.

That evening, about an hour before sun-set, we decided to make camp part way up a hill, for we were nearing the town of Bethlehem, and the air a little chilly, and knew that the nights get much colder. Going up the hill would get us above the colder air that would settle in the valley, and make for a much more pleasant night. Gathering brush and what sticks we could find; made a fire and began resting for the next days' journey. We weren't alone, for three more camps could be seen within shouting distance of ours after dark had fallen; and the valley was speckled with the fires of the many well-traveled neighbors.

Besides a goat skin filled with water, we'd not taken much for food, just a small loaf of bread, it was enough, but we weren't going to feast that night. But soon a man hollered toward our camp, asking to come in, a friendly guy, but also looked to be a little tired. We talked about his sheep, that still grazed in the green grass below us, and he'd talk of his family that traveled with him, he'd speak on the good times of being a herdsman, and a few of the mishaps along the way, we all enjoyed chatting with this friendly face. Maybe it was an half hour later that he'd noticed that we traveled lite, and wanted to know if the three of us would join him and his family for dinner; the answer was yes.

Goat's milk, wonderful loaves of bread, butter churned last night, cheese, and both hind portions of a sheep that was slaughtered last evening was what he offered, and we all said

among ourselves that it really never gets any better than this. He had a nice family; all were well behaved, and all wanted to ask questions about our quest, and all waited for their turn to talk, starting with the oldest first and working down the chain.

When they'd heard that we were a few of the disciples of Jesus, which they were very well versed in, the conversation changed to a different topic. The man's sister had gotten hurt a few years back when the goat she was milking kicked the leg off the short stool she was sitting on, she then fell over, hitting her head on the corner of a stone trough. The elder man said; "although hurt, she seemingly recovered, but had severe headaches. But after about two weeks, was bed-ridden, and began having convulsions, later diagnosed as seizures, and now was completely disabled. This only happened less than a month ago. Along with being cared for constantly, she also would speak some of the most vulgar words that man or beast had ever heard, which was not like her at all, she had been a kind lady. And they were on their way to Jerusalem to find some of the called-out-ones to set her free."

Andrew was the first to go to her tent, and seeing her lying on the bed-roll, walked over the now still and sleeping body, and John and I right behind him. Andrew turned to look at us, shrugging his shoulders, and said that something must be done, for compassion ran completely throughout the room. I then held her right arm, John the left, and Andrew lifted her head slightly, we all prayed. And in a moment, looking at where her eyes were, said; "Woman, peace be with you, rise and see the glory of God, for Jesus has delivered you from this that was stolen." Immediately she awoke,

stood and praised the Lord with all enthusiasm, being healed, but only remembering the headaches but none of the seizures.

There was great rejoicing as the three of us left their camp, going back to ours', to prepare to enter the Holy City sometime before noon.

Meeting of the Hearts

A large group of apostles and believers had assembled in Jerusalem, and it was good. This was a rare time that many of those that were sent forth could gather and explicate and explore what each were doing as each traveled the direction that God led them in. It was a time to exhort one another, and learn the different ways that the Lord was leading, it was certainly enjoyable listening as one by one would detail the happenings of the Holy Spirit, and another would then expound on what he saw.

There must have been more than a hundred and twenty of us meeting here; and the new ways, and the words of knowledge, and the words of wisdom was being heard and spoke in every different direction, but orderly, all by the hand of God. There was much singing, praising and worship going on as with that many believers', how could it be different? And it was good that meetings like this took place from time to time, as some journeyed to Mesopotamia, some to Galatia, some even farther than that, and a few went east out into the desert, and one small group went all the way south

into Egypt. The word of God was spreading throughout every region.

It was good to see Matthew, Thomas, Judas, and all the other apostles, and several of the women had also met with us, along with the many disciples, it was nice hearing about all the works and wonders that were happening through the name of Jesus.

We had been meeting for several weeks, people popping in, some having to leave, the news of the Gospel traveling in and out from every direction; it was good. Bother Paul, the one whose life was changed on the road to Damascus, now called an apostle, came and shared great news of the works of God; for of a truth, he carried the message of Christ to many regions that were inaccessible to many of us, and it was incredible to hear all his goings on. He declared of the many miracles and wonders that God had worked through them among the Gentiles. It was an absolute pleasure meeting those who traveled with him, for they too had a great zeal for the Lord.

This was a time to exchange how the Holy Spirit was moving among His own, and how we all had the privilege to witness it, all hungered and thirsted for more as He moved within those seeking Him in the many nations.

Sometimes we'd get into a slight debate as of how the message should be presented, and a few times it would turn into a confrontation, but all-in-all, it went well. For the Spirit of Christ dwelled among many, and unless one's flesh came out, we continued in one accord.

Let me set back and reflect a minute as to the growth of each of us, especially me. I was in my late forties at this time, and most of the original disciples were. Although much growth had taken place in each, we were by no-means fully mature, as for me; no more than the rest, we all had a ways to go, but still learning daily. At each meeting many topics would be discussed, many subjects mulled over, and since we didn't really know what or how to do this, we were completely dependent on the presence of Christ being with us, but I have to admit, sometimes we, especially me, would get out in front of Him, and make what I now call a happy little mistake. To put it bluntly, set sail before all the fishing tackle had been boarded.

Many would come to me asking questions of what they should do, or how a certain things could happen. Things like, who could come to Christ and His teachings, and what, if any restrictions were to be placed on those of other backgrounds, should or should not we baptize those of another sect, and does proof of His indwelling need to be shown before any are accepted? The issue of circumcision was brought up often, and the matters, at times, would become overwhelming, it would, at stretches, be more than this finite creature named Peter, could solve. Many moments, I would be in over my head, but would take a stab at it anyway; my mistake. At one time I appointed that certain restriction were to apply, such as staying away from things strangled, and had even given in on circumcising, knowing that man is not justified by his works, or the flesh; but it happened anyway. I may have been what one would call middle-aged, but apparently not very mature in Christ at this time in my life.

At each stage of my life where growth was apprehended, where light of revelation was conceived, and even where knowledge was being obtained greatly, I would truly grow, but evidently not to the place that I'd thought I was. As a young man, I thought I had life by the bridle, but learned just what was missing after meeting the Christ. Then again before His crucifixion, when I thought I was top leader of the disciples, to find out, after being rebuked, that I was my own fool. Later, during the Pentecost experience, when great, mighty, and wonderful things happened thru the Holy Spirit, I thought that my life was set on top of the world, and in a way it was, but not quite where I thought I was. I had grown, that is a fact, but not to the end of the means, it was just another stepping-stone, but then again thought that where my life was now, placed me as high as one could go, but this was not so, and that's a fact. And now that my hair and beard is turning gray, meaning, at this meeting with the other apostles, Paul included, it seems that I would have learned by now; but I once again, trying to play the big-shot, stuck all ten toes in my mouth.

Looking back, I was in no way a failure, although that was exactly how I felt, but at another place of learning, a place to fall, but also a place to let God stand me back up again, and continue with this journey He had set for me. Not knowing at the time that this was my walk, one ordained by the Lord.

But it was now time for this man to journey again north, but this time farther north, probably around the horn inlet of the Great Sea, but stopping at Capernaum to see my wife before going further.

In this place of coming together, here in Jerusalem, was wonderful for all, and just about everyone was there at one time or another, for we'd met for several weeks now, and many great things were being composed by the Lord's hand being on each. Without going into all the details, I can tell you that the might of God's hand is either growing in strength, or we believers are receiving It with greater capacity, for the improvement of the power of His Love is growing within us mightily as our walk with Him continues.

I left towards the north while some were still rejuvenating, but I know that each received an energy that was somewhat like that of the days of Pentecost. I was excited to go share that which God was doing within me, with as many as would listen, and I was also excited about seeing my wife, as it's been many months since we'd shared a day together.

It took seven days to get back to Capernaum, because the six of us stopped at Scythopolis where many were eager to hear more about the Words that God was giving us, but after one night I left again going to Gadara by myself, leaving the others' behind. It was there that a close friend of mine lived, name Lazariah, a true brother in Christ and a man of great wealth, but humble in every way. He too received the Holy Ghost at Pentecost with the rest of us, and was on a level with Christ, that at long stretches at a time, would hear from Him daily, a man that loved his relationship with the Lord.

It was late in the evening, the sun had already set, fog began to blow in with the south breeze that would sometimes get captured

in these mountain valleys to form fog that was much too thick for traveling, but I made it to his home sound and safe.

“Good evening my brother, hope all is well, and maybe you could spare some time for an old friend.” I said all this before he even knew who it was in the dark, but recognized my voice.

“Peter, my friend, I was expecting you some few days ago, but never-the-less welcome, come in, sit with me.”

It was late fall, the air cool, but it couldn't put a damper on our warm friendship. Saying my 'hellos' to his family, we sat beside the door and talked looking over the low lying fog at the many stars that stood out on such a crisp night, we both had a lot to say, and to listen too. For he too was an ambassador of Christ, and spends many of his days expounding to many on the Word of God, for God has wrought many wonderful works and miracles through his hands. An authentic believer that puts his assets to the helping of the saints, a man of true internal means, for he lived daily the life that he professed. Lazariah told of the people healed and about the several that were delivered from spirits that were unclean, but mostly of the accepted response of those wanting to meet and know this man Jesus; and many met Him from within. It was pleasant seeing my good friend again, and most of the night was spent exchanging the happenings of the last few years, catching up on all that God was doing.

It was early when I woke, laying still and silent as I meditated on the new day, and if I was strong enough to get all the way to Capernaum, and do it all in one day. I had told Lazariah that I was to head out early, and it was now about two hours before sunrise, and instead of lying here, might as well get up and leave, for I had about thirty miles yet to travel. And seeing my precious wife again was the motivation of the day, but then again, only God knows what's been stored for this day.

The night breeze of the morning was cool with a crisp hint in the air, a chill that would make one shiver if just sitting, but I was set out to walk the whole distance in one day if possible, the perfect temperature for my traveling. I was to walk along the west coast of the Sea of Galilee where every few miles I would encounter another town or city, my work getting there was already cut out for me, and I was excited, and feeling strong for a man in his mid-forties.

It was an uneventful trip thus far, starting to get light; and the breeze off the sea was much warmer, but I had, at this time, just came up to the town of Magdala and still had some eight miles yet to go, and still excited. I think that God had prepared this day for me to make it all the way home, for other than speaking a few times to the people that I'd pass, nothing seemed to slow the pace down.

The coast gets a little steep as I approached Capernaum, and could now see the flicker of light, at least now and then, and my enthusiasm was running high as day gave way to night. I think my wife knows I am coming, for Andrew was to stop and tell her, but

I'm not sure as I advanced toward our home and it was now in sight. No one was waiting, nor watching as the sound of my heavy foot-steps pounded on the hard ground of the entrance-way as I entered. There she was, cooking a leg of something over an open fire, looking as beautiful as the day we wed, I was glad to be home.

When she turned around, seeing me, chirped like a song bird, and ran and gave me the biggest hug. "Been waiting on you, thought it would be a might earlier though, this goat has been ready for three hours, I hope it's not burnt pass the eating stage." She said as were still embracing.

"My love, all I had on my mind these passing miles were you, the food smells and sounds good, but let me hold you a few more minutes first." She smiled, we held each other's hand, talked a little bit, and then realized just how hungry I really was; it was good to be home, to be next to her, to sit beside the woman that is the greatest of all help-mates.

As I'd said earlier, I had the complete support from my wife, and she encouraged me in every way. She'd known in my youthful years of the twisting in the soul, the knotting of my stomach, of the missing peace of my life, and fortified every support toward the ministry she could, it pleased her to please the longing held deep within me. She knew who Jesus was, and knew of the personal relationship I had with Him, and she had it too, and we both continue with Him each day, just sometimes in different directions. Our love for each other is real, and when I'm gone for so long, it loses nothing, it sustains us both, we are both able to love each other the same, whether we're near or far apart.

Earlier, while still in Jerusalem, Judas, the brother of Jesus, told that he was going north, maybe all the way to Tarsus, for there was a call out from them beckoning the apostles to come forth and show and help Paul in the teachings of the revelations from God. He was then to report back to those of us now staying in Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida the news and happenings of Galatia. It might be a week from now, it might even be much longer than that before he makes it this far south again, but all were waiting; and each knew of his soon arrival, as we talked with one another every few days. We didn't meet in a group, per-se, but somebody would talk with someone else, and our messages would be relayed, and by the end of every few days everyone knew all the goings-on. Our fellowship with each kept us all going, and the presence of Christ was our backbone.

It was a pleasant evening when my wife and I returned from a small fishing trip. Well it really wasn't as much about fishing as it was just being alone together. Our time together was a precious commodity, and every day we made the best of it. The sun was barely over the mountains to the west, when all was straightened in the boat, that we sat on the beach to relax some more. A large school of fish began to feed just off the shore bank, not more than seventy-five feet from us, and we looked at each other, without saying a word, and knew that this trip wasn't about fishing, so we just sat, not enticed at all that we didn't catch any.

She too heard many revelation from the Lord, and I was always excited to hear what was being said through her, the might of God

was flowing throughout all the regions, and it was certainly nice to learn of the wonders and works thru others, especially hers'. She knows that what I'm doing is important, and knows that this message of the Kingdom of God has to go forth, and she also knows of the dangers that lie in wait, but, to her it's worth the risk. She is not a woman that's ruled by fear, but her faith and belief that what God started, He is faithful to see it thru to the end.

It had now been dark for an hour or so, and we still lay on the sand watching the incoming tide, the thousands of stars, and hadn't spoken a word in a while, when the sound of my brother's voice was heard from a distance, probably from our house, calling for us, and he sounded a little excited. As soon as we stood, he recognizes us and walked in our direction.

After we said our 'hellos', spoke about the beauty of the night, Andrew told that Judas had just returned from Galatia, and about the people wanting to hear about this Gospel, and their hunger for the Words were great. And particularly had asked for me to come, which I knew was going to happen, for I too knew, weeks ago, saw that this northern trip was the next road to travel, for Jesus had put them on my heart.

Andrew thought that I might want to know this information, and that was the excitement that we were hearing in his voice. So we talked a while longer, walked back to the house, said our good-byes, and he left, leaving the rest of the night just for us, it was nice, this reunion, so we stayed up most of the night just laughing, talking and enjoying being with each other.

You know, life is a lot more pleasant when a body has that special someone that they can pour their heart out too, and the last few days have been wonderful. We have total trust in each other, and the time spent apart, we really aren't apart, as for me, and I think her also, we are never separated except in body, for our hearts are always together. I know that I've given my life to the forwarding of God's Kingdom, and I think from deep within that I'd probably testify of Christ and Him resurrected, even without her support, but having the extraordinary wife that I do, helps tremendously. Love conquers all things, and I'm not talking about that worldly love, I'm speaking of the kind of Love that just Loves, and has no conditions. I am positive, at this point, that a long time before I met the Lord, or even heard of Him, that my life was being arranged, I just couldn't ask for a better woman, our hearts are connected.

The next morning I did what I always do, that is wake up early, lay motionless, and listen to what God had planned for me, that is, if He wants to let me in on any of the details. And most of the time He doesn't. But this time, my wife, well aware of my morning habits, knew that I was awake and began talking about the harvest of the north regions, that is; the hunger and thirst that these people had for this new message of Grace. We spoke quietly, but sincerely until this fresh day cracked with a small hint of light. She then got up, fixed a large breakfast, bundled a large roll of flat bread with dried fish, and put it in my traveling pouch. The sun had been up for an hour or so before both said our good-byes, and

I headed out toward the sun to pick up Andrew and a couple of the other folks that were to go with us. It certainly is a beautiful day, I thought while walking along the shore-line; and God had stored so many things for my life, that I was enthusiastic to see what was stored for this trip.

As approaching Andrews' house, I could see that he and maybe eight or ten more were waiting for my arrival. It was several of the folks that we'd journey with before, and I was glad to have them on this trip also. It was getting towards high sun before we took off north, and it seemed everyone in the group had a positive discernment about this trip and was also excited to see what God was going to do next. This venture was going to take a while, for we were on a three-hundred mile walking voyage, and at most, could cover twenty miles a day, and that's if nothing comes up, which it always does. Anyway, I told my wife that I'd probably be gone about six months, maybe longer. So when approaching, I ask the guys if they'd did the same to their families, all of them had.

The sun straight over head, not a cloud in the sky, temperature was just right for walking, and a lot of walking was ahead of us as the eleven of us set out towards Antioch in the region of Phrygia, but were planning to stop at Tarsus for a week or so. The trip would have been much easier if we'd taken a ship straight across, but Andrew and I both heard from within that we should walk; now here we are, walking, and enjoying every minute of it with this great group of brothers, all handpicked by God.

Three weeks later we were coming up to the town of Tarsus of Syria, right next to the sea-port city of Seleucia, it was getting late

and we'd decided to camp some mile or two out of town, and were walking toward a group of clustered tree that could be seen to our left. And I'd got to thinking about the journey thus far, and was reflecting back to the people that were met along the route, for it was often that we'd pass by other travelers, and occasionally stop and chat for a while. Many of them would know one or two of us, and would want their families to hear from the ones that walked with Jesus as he ministered. It was commonplace for someone to be healed, delivered, or even filled with the Holy Spirit, and all we were doing, was doing what we do best; testifying of the things we saw, or the things that were heard; all the wonders were done by the Lord, we were spectators, just like them. Legs were straightened, a blind lady received her sight, a man with boils was delivered, and once, God healed a families' only donkey; times were good and the anticipation of Jehovah's movements was what kept our legs strong to keep moving. It was just one of those days that a body just reflects about the days, and what were in them, that are gone by, and maybe glean a tid-bit or two out of 'em; just a day for thinking.

We'd set up camp, fire going, sitting back relaxing, and some were in deep discussions, but me, I sort of back away from the rest of 'em and continued in my thoughts. At this time I was thinking on process of the growth and the different levels of development that had been done thru the many stages of increase in my life. As a young man, I was a hot-head, quick the speak my opinion about anything, would act before my brain even knew what was

happening, I'd stick the ole foot in the mouth more times than a person would like to admit to, at least out loud. I guess that this sometimes comes with immaturity; I just seem to have carried it too far. Even when Jesus had given us the Spirit right before His crucifixion, and my eyes were opening, you'd think that stuff would start falling into place. Maybe it did, but not to the point that the maturity level was noticed.

At that place in my life, after His death, all that could be seen was that He was dead, gone, the man that gave me hope and a vision, a purpose in life was gone, and I'd felt that life was right back to where it started, empty. But there was more. When at Pentecost and the force of that wind hitting me in the face, made all the difference, I was then filled with His Presence, and at that place could see that all the delusions of being again alone, were not true. For then, Jesus was more alive within me than he ever was when walking with Him daily. I prophesied words that had no need to be run thru my brain first, for they weren't mine, but His; all I had to do was get out of the way. But then again, for the most part, that was short lived. Thinking these great words made me someone special occupied the inner thoughts to the point that I started believing them, thinking I was special, but then again, I was reminded by the attacks and prison that I too was just a common man, a man without true means. I had the true means alright, and that wasn't my problem, but my flesh kept interfering, and at many times, my brain would dismiss that works that were actually done within me.

After so many were added to the called-out-ones, and so many were healed, and many looked to me for the next step, why wouldn't I think that I was special? My eyes were still focus on the things outside, on the things that the brain gets involved in, and didn't realize, for any length of time, that it was the Christ within that was doing the work, and not me. Boy-o-boy, growing up is sometimes a hard process, but I persevered, not giving up, and slowly I began to learn, but not without many more trials and tribulations. At the time, I was thinking at each new level that I'd reached the top, but not so, this was just a stepping stone to the next level, but at the time; I didn't know that to be true.

Still pondering, I was watching the stars as they slowly rotated across the sky. The other men had broken off into several groups and had their own dialogues going, but all that was blanked out as I continued in deep thought. A shooting star shot from the east and traveled from one horizon to the next, and some people said it would bring good luck, and even though I might not have grown much in these past few years, I'd grown enough not to base my life on old wives-tales. I was in one of those modes that while a person is thinking, he doesn't know he's thinking, it just sort of takes its' own course, it was the stars that I was looking at that my thoughts were supposed to be at, but evidently, not so. Even though I'd seen the star shoot across the black sky in its fiery blaze, only a fleeting moment was given to it, for my thoughts were elsewhere.

Jesus many times reminded us to embrace our enemies, to love those that despitely use us, and to not be anxious when someone persecutes any of us, and that makes sense, and many times his

presence ran through me, but there were still circumstances that I had to do it on my own, in other words; I was still stupid. And thinking at each new and higher level, gave me a carnal knowledge that maybe I was something special, until this night. And I remembered. Jesus once told us that God was able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones, and then on another occasion He said that if these folks didn't praise Him, that God was able to raise up stones that would; and all this time, I still thought that I was 'The Leader'. In truth; I am special, not for my abilities, but my availability, not for the way I could capture the attention of a crowd, but for the quietness of hearing His voice and speaking it, not for my strength for protecting Him, but the strength of professing Him, not for gift of healing folks, but for the knowledge of getting out of the way and letting the Healer heal. Yes, in a way, I am special, but only because God chose me, a fisherman, that reeked of the smell of fish, a common man at a place in his life that he, (I), was ready for change, and I'm thankful.

Now I'm wondering how many trials still await me.

On this certain morning after eating a hand full of figs we all headed into to the town of Seleucia for a short stop and then go to Antioch, which was but a furlong farther, the two towns almost touched.

Our whole group was still excited, had a good nights' rest, and was alert with anticipation of what God had in store for us in the days to come, as for me, last nights' thoughts were the energy to

keep me going with hope. Hope of a life within and its' evolution to become the servant that God created me to be; it was a day of expectations. Hope has always represented the expectations of positive change, and change in that direction would be welcomed.

As we entered Seleucia in the forenoon people were busy, for they trekked in every direction, but seemed to have purpose. This was a fishing village, and the boats were lined up all across the shore, the waters were dotted with the many boats coming or going, and some so far out they were but specks. Being a fisherman in my youth, I continued to have a fascination with all the goings-on of the industry and the many different ways that folks used to catch their dinner. I'd always thought that people living near the sea had an advantage over most, for their next meal was only a short distance away, weather permitting. Two of the men traveling with us were brothers, and it didn't take them long before spotting a couple of men that they had been acquainted with. They talked a few moments and motioned for us to come in that direction.

After introductions, they began telling us of the needs and wants of those in the next village, for many had been waiting on this new message; for a man called Paul had been there a year or so earlier and had pricked their hearts with the message of the Grace of God, and they wanted more. Times were good for this area of Syria, but all didn't accept this Gospel, for the Jews still had a strong influence here and wouldn't let any be swayed, if it meant that their livelihood was in jeopardy. But many openly professed

Jesus Christ, and Him crucified, and had a thirst for the Word being taught.

They were friendly, with smiles as big as the moon, and offered to feed this whole bunch. We were hungry, for regular food was not available on this trip thus far, and the offer was quickly accepted.

As the food was served, and swiftly eaten, they continued talking of the desires of many for the Word of God, that came through non-religious means. It impressed them greatly that the Gospel was being preached without a cost in money, for now it made sense to them that this Grace is special, and has to be real, not at all like that of the religious leaders, with their rules and regulations, for Paul would accept no money for his labor of Love. Anyway, they were thrilled with us being there, and wanted to follow us as we went to Antioch, where no small assembly gathered every day to express their interpretations and views of Paul's message, but wanted more. The two towns were connected, at least when it came to the believers', and our new-found friends were to collect the other supporters and walk with us the short distance to Antioch, and were anxious to do so.

As we entered the town, the people knew immediately who we were, for so many from Seleucia wouldn't announced our arrival and be massed together, if not for a disciple being in their mist, anyway, our small group was not so small. A man whose name was Samuel, calling himself a disciple, first met us as we approached the trade center of town. The sun was well up, the

wind blowing off the sea through this narrow valley, and it was still cool as we began our exchange of small talk and introductions.

“We folks here in Antioch are not religious in any fashion, and the Jews have spent much time trying to proselytize us into their belief, but we wanted no part of their labor, nor bondage to so many of their strenuous rules and regulations. For when the Apostle Paul spent time here and told us of the grace of God through Jesus; we listened. Our town and the people in it, are just common folks, we put ourselves off on no one, and haven’t, as of yet, allowed outsiders to invade our privacy, but hearing him and his genuine behavior, decided to accept this new lifestyle, but only a few days before Paul had to leave. But now need the Word of God to be expounded in greater detail. Many have been in wait for an Apostle to venture this way and teach us more of this Grace, to show us in truth, the Truth. So all are excited that you folks are here, and we greet you with enthusiasm.” Samuel said in a matter-of-fact tone, but with a giant smile on his face the whole time.

As us disciples and Apostles looked at each other, then smiled, knowing that God had sent us here with reason; and this was it, at least part of the reason. God always knows what He’s doing, it just that most of the time, we don’t. Our enthusiasm grew. With people like this, that is, folks that God has already prepared, all of us agreed that the trip is, and is going to be, well worth our tired legs.

“Thank you sir, this time together is going to be all our pleasure,” I said as the others were in complete agreement.

It was then that we were taken to a small house, in the middle of the part of town, where the food vendors gathered daily to sell their surplus. The smells, especially the bread, was an odor that could make a man that had just eaten, hungry. We were placed in the midst of many folks that wanted to hear more of Jesus Christ, and about His resurrection, but especially more about the Gift of Grace.

Paul had told them that Grace came with no charge, not of money, nor that of labor, it was truly a free gift, and the Gift was Jesus, the Gift was true forgiveness.

Then, as we had gathered talking with so many, and at any given time someone was always at the door, or in the room with questions, the Spirit of God and His Christ was upon us, and those gathered wanting to understand this new way of life that is so much different than the religious leaders have tried burdening them with. This Gospel that Jesus came to express is greater, much deeper, it is not about a reformed life, but a transformed life, and much different than the yokes of the Sadducees, scribes, and the priest of the synagogues, for it contained no such weights of performance, only Love and Grace. The Gospel taught that the act of 'being' was all it took to fall under the Love of God. And I knew this, at this place in my life, but this Truth still hadn't reached its' completeness in the morrow of my soul, as of yet. I was learning, and this I was sure of, and if not obvious to others, it was to me; for I could look at myself and know that there was much more to learn than what's been yet comprehended. Anyway, this meeting

of the hearts is the place that God has sent us too, and we knew it, not just for them, but us also.

As men and women continued coming to this little house, and we'd minister too many, the day began waxing into a dull gray as the sun had barely set, but the folks kept coming. It was somewhat of a strange time, for when asked a question that had not been proposed to us before, and really didn't know the answer, the whole group would become silent, and after a few moments, God would give an answer, therefore, we'd all learn. And it was this learning process that kept our energy highly motivated, a very crucial evolution for both, them and us, we were all still students, meaning disciples, learning as we go.

It was shortly after sundown that Samuel returned and told us of another large room where most of the people had gathered, and wanted each to follow him there, and we did. It was massed with a great number of individuals ranging from the very old to the very young; and all still seemed to have a smile on their face. As we entered, an older man approached me with a comment and a question. "I can hear that this message from Paul was one of freedom, and that we are acceptable where we are, in the sight of God, but is this really true, is there not something that we must do to earn favor?"

I had leaned back against the stone wall, thinking, if not showing, that this question was perplexing. For it made sense that God would want to expect something from the believers that sought Him, so I settled back in my usual position to wait on an answer, but it didn't come. So, looking the man in the face, laying

my arm on his shoulder, I told him that I would shortly get back to him on this. It was not ten minutes later that a woman stepped up and asked somewhat of the same question, and my response was the same.

Moments later, Andrew, John and two of the other guys went with me outside the doorway to talk this over, for none of us really knew the true answer. Andrew said that in one way it didn't make sense that we would have to do something, but on the other hand, it makes sense that there would be something on mans' part to show himself available. The other two were just listening. "I don't know what to say", I spoke point blank, and wanting a sincere answer, and told them both that we'd get back to 'em; how do I respond?" I said as my eyes were going from one to the other, but speaking to Andrew. All they did was shrug their shoulders. I was the supposed leader, and still felt the need to look the part. We went back in with nothing established.

The meeting, or should I rather say gathering, had somewhat of a festive atmosphere, as the laughter and arm gestures indicated a people of great zeal and freedom in their belief of this new way of Life. I watched as many would greet, hug and chat as they walked around the room, with a genuine glow of personality. These folks believed, and as new believers, had an unusual grasp of the things of God, they were hungry for the preached Word.

Thinking in long intervals, and meditating on what's really needed here, I began to work my way back into the midst of the crowd, to make, what I thought at this time to be appropriate, an announcement.

Samuel saw what was going on with me, he knew that I wanted to speak, and with the rapping of his walking stick on the side of the wall, got the attention of the loud group. And I began to speak. "Men, brothers, friends and all those that can hear my voice; I beseech you my beloved that you would give ear to my words, that you may take heed to this reasoning. There has been a concern over a few matters, and maybe this night we can address them to find resolution. A good while back God had showed me in a dream that there was no difference between the Jew or the Gentile, and that my thoughts, nor by my mouth should I call what he created unclean, and that the Gentiles should also hear the word of the Gospel and believe, and He has made no distinction between them and us, and will purify their hearts also. Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of us, or each other, that neither our forefathers nor we are able to bear? But we also believe that through the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that the Gentiles shall be saved by faith, the same as we. For God had declared aforetime to take out of them a people to be called by His name. We will not burden you with the yoke of circumcision, that are turning to God from among the gentiles, for the cutting away of the foreskin avails to nothing, but the circumcision of the heart is essential to the finding of His Truth. Therefore trouble not those of the Gentiles who are turning to God, but instead love all in the Grace of God, and His freedom. But I do say unto you to abstain from things strangled, from blood, and from that that is polluted by idols."

These words I spoke, but they were not given to me by the Holy Spirit, but I believed with His permission, or so I thought. The

people were silent, for none had anything to say, nor were there any questions, but the atmosphere stayed positive, as all continued to mingle.

Later in the night a man approached and said that he'd heard all that I said, and would still like to be circumcised. "Brother, there is no law in Grace that says that any can forbid circumcision, and in this case, it is no burden, do as your conscious allows."

It was a great night of festivities and many more words were spoken to those that desired a greater walk with the Lord. But the next morning, we were to begin our next trek to Tarsus, a six or seven day journey, and then again, this meeting of the hearts was, in its' self, worth the trip, for many were healed in their bodies and in their heart.

The Long Road

This was the year that Festus became the Procurator of Judea, taking the place of Felix, and how this is going to go with the folks in Jerusalem, only time will tell, but what I've heard about him thus far, the news ain't good. If his past reputation is any indicator, then the future of our holy lands are in jeopardy.

We've been now walking north from Antioch three days and not even close to the inlet horn of the Gulf of Issus, and the journey, so far, has gone smooth, but slow. We have had very little contact with other travelers, for this area of land is seldom traveled. Most people, when going between Tarsus and Antioch, sail by ship, it's much shorter, and needless to say, much easier, but unfortunately not an option for our larger group.

It was near high noon, sun blistering hot and very little shade, and with me getting up in years, thought it would be nice to settle under these three or four cedar trees for a rest and maybe take

something to eat. Of course John, being much younger, took it to make a little fun at me about, seeing my hair and beard was grayer than it was black, and thinking because of my age; that this journey was rough on me; but it wasn't, and all his cutting-up was done in humor. I could see for miles ahead, and this was the only shade seen, and I might be a little older, but in this case wiser; and he'll probably thank me later when he too will learn to look at something besides his feet making prints in the sand. It was hot, but we were all use to that, but nestled between the trees offered some relief, and with my stomach growling, some relief there too. We ate, we talked, and some of the newer men would take opportunities like this and get into a deeper conversation with Andrew and myself to learn a little more history of our walk with Jesus. Wanting to know more about His character and personality, and how He would see certain situations, such as the last time he walked into Jerusalem. How did He feel? Was He scared? Or was His destination understood from the beginning?

I told them that: "Jesus had a relationship with the Father just like we had with our own parents. Yes, we can hear God speaking to us from within, but He could hear and see Him fluently; all that the Father did, and all that the Father said, He was one with Him. And so can we be. Our lives are ordained for certain trials and many tribulations, and this walk, this trip to Tarsus, we must have, before each is readied for that intimate relationship, an understanding that each day, all of us are being purged of the old man within, and until we realize this, and our focus has narrowed to Him, we still travel in this life seeing through a darkened glass. I think he was slightly scared, but understood the necessity of going

into Jerusalem, it was what the Father wanted, and as far as Jesus was concerned, that's the only thing that mattered. It gave him great pleasure to please God, and His only focus was on that. And that too is what this journey is about, preparing us to take our eyes off of ourselves, and fix them upon the Father."

The younger men seemed amazed at these few words, but especially John, for he said that he knew the importance of the trip, but didn't see that it was more for him, than it was for those hearing the Word of this Grace. And it now took a completely different meaning knowing that what is to come is designed in detail, just for him, and of course all of us individually. That this venture was ordained to set the captured creature within free, to bring about a nurturing into the spirit of each apostles, to purge us from accepting this life on earth as final.

I smiled; it was evident that at least John understood, and you know, by saying it, I think that I too understood it a little more precisely.

John looked at the other men, as if to say; do you get what was said? And later, during our rest, and also as we began walking again, I could hear John talking to the others of the revelation that he'd just heard. At one point I could hear him telling two of the men: "That Gods' hand is not shortened, that He can work every corner, every nook, every disposition, and cause everyone involved to learn, whether you are the one coming from or going to, both sides are growing." He was elated, and as time passed, he could expound to me in even greater details, and teach me of what it all meant. To be on the giving end, places you on the receiving end.

After our band of men rounded the Gulf of Issus, a large inlet that stretched some fifty or sixty miles into the mountainous region of Cappadocia, we again stopped for the night. This time thought it was better to make camp several hours before sunset, and had chosen an out crop of boulders on one side, and a cliff on the other; we were in the pass of the mountain. This was probably the only traveled pass in which donkey and man could make their way through for a hundred miles or so in any direction, so we set camp. Wood was a little easier to come by, the air much cooler than the desert floor, and this was not the first time that this spot had been chosen for a camp. The remnants of many overnight fires were scattered over a small area, the ground trampled flat and hard, and the upward ledge provided shelter from the nightly dew, it was perfect for us. Besides all that, two of the men had leg cramps from climbing up the steep terrain, and one other had blisters on both feet; that was the reasoning we used in stopping early to begin with.

Later that same evening, a man, his wife and two daughters, coming from the opposite direction, passing by just before the mountain had swallowed up the sun, paused for a few moments to chat. And after a short conversation we convinced them to camp just slightly down the hill from us; and they did. I suppose that they were going to camp in the same place we were, and being friendly, acted as if they were to continue, but I saw through it, and we made one big camp with little distance between us.

They were coming from Tarsus, going into Syria, and only three days had passed since beginning their trip. Their three donkeys were burdened with sacks of provisions, and most, of all they owned, were carried with them, and when they'd asked us to sup with them, the answer was swift and to the point; "of course we will." It had been a while since any of us had a real meal, this often had seemed to be the case, and this man seemed very genuine in his request. Other than figs, dates, stale bread, a few dried fish, and some varmint of who knows what, snared by one of our men, none of us had had a real meal in weeks, so without being too forward, took him up on his offer.

The donkeys' burden was quit-a-bit improved after the meal was consumed, and to our pleasure, well received. This was a nice family of God fearing people; were raised in the Jewish faith, but were not taken in with all the rituals of their sect. They had heard the Apostle Paul speak on several occasions, and drawn to the Gospel of Grace, excited in this new Life, and were going to find his nomadic in-laws and tell them of the things that God was showing His people. He'd felt the inward power of God, and believed this Good-News to be real, and wanting to share it with the ones they loved first, but also to any other that would listen, a man of hope.

And when he'd found out from an extensive conversation, as they talked through much of the early night, that several of the apostles were in our group, the man wanted to ask many questions and gain an insight into the person of Jesus. He was warned by the scribes and elders of the Pharisees not to listen to, much less pursue, this so-called heretic belief; this life preached by Jesus and

the apostles, that taught that we can have a relationship with the Father without going through some institution. That, from their point-of-view, a man has to come under the authority of an overseer, and be guided by their set of rules and regulations, but years back saw thru that foolishness and stepped back some distance from the synagogues. And for that reason, him wanting to follow the message of Love and Grace, they began to persecute him, and as of late were putting much pressure on him through his family; so they left. And now with the disciples and apostles in the same camp, he wanted to take this opportunity to learn again, first-hand, from those that walked with Him and received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. For he had heard Paul preach and expound several times and knew this life was for him and his.

And again, like in Antioch several weeks back, I began to explain the freedom that Jesus came to deliver to earth; that man, was not to be weighted down with the burdens of those seeking to serve themselves, with their lengthy prayers and self-righteous public attitudes. That circumcision was not necessary, but we were to refrain from things strangled, sacrificed to idols, and have no consumption of blood, for the Love of God covers every multitude of sin. And He operates within the perimeters of true Love, and Grace without dimension, for He loved the people of the world so much that he gave His only Begotten, a Sacrifice, that all would know that He alone was the Father of all.

Authors note: Peter, only in this time and place of his life, taught the three above deeds, but later changed his views on them.

We talked, exchanging our views, one to another, 'til midnight, with growth; the one talking would grow the same as the one listening, it was a great opportunity for both, him and us. But then, after settling into my bed-roll, I got to thinking that some of my words might also put a weight on people, a yoke that's not supposed to be there, and thinking about this a few minutes, I fell asleep.

The next morning, after my usual meditations, I arose to find the man making ready to continue his journey, but waiting on me. We exchanged messages with each other that were to be carried and forwarded to let the folks and family know that all was well, and God continued to reign. After eating a small meal, both groups set out in opposite direction, but with the same course.

Some less than a week later, our group of eleven men walked into Tarsus, it was afternoon, the first day of the week, people stirring with their everyday business, and no one noticed our arrival. Since a group of the 'called out ones' have been meeting together for decades now, it wasn't hard to find one of the elders, and after asking a couple of people about who they were; the second one asked, pointed us in the right direction. Meeting Silas was a thrill for both him and us. He'd been side-by-side with the Apostle Paul, and knew in great detail many things about Andrew, John and I, and was glad that we had arrived.

Silas was a man of integrity, he was loyal to God and His works, and had a deep grasp on the things of God, humble in every way,

but bold in speech. Although he would speak to the Jews concerning the things of Jesus Christ, his main interest was toward the Gentiles. Silas was still under the stewardship of Paul, but very capable of hearing and following as the Spirit gave him guidance. But still yet, a courier was sent every week or so, to and from Antioch of Phrygia, where Paul had been teaching and building the understanding of those that believed in that region. But for Tarsus; and Silas being there, was a greater challenge, but one that Silas could overcome easier than Paul, for that was where Paul was from. All of Tarsus knew Paul, or at least knew of him, and more than a few were reluctant of his testimony because they had personally known him in the past, that is, the many times that he persecuted those that believed on Christ and Him crucified, so Silas at this point was much more effective with these people.

So when entering the tent of Silas', we were welcomed with a bowl of fruit and nuts, and asked if we'd like to clean-up in the mountain stream that ran only a few feet from where they made their temporary home. The water coming off the nearby hills was cold, but refreshing. And reentering the tent, we were again made welcome. After a few exchanges of chit-chat, Silas wanted to know all that the Spirit was doing thru our lives, and we wanted to know about his, it was as if we'd always known each other.

Many wonders and works were being spread throughout all the regions between the Black Sea and the Great Sea, all of Asia, even to Rome and farther still, this Gospel message could not be contained. Our time together was wonderful, for us, and I believe

for him also. Being an instrument of God's hand, we all appreciated the privilege of the works being done thru them.

Silas told us of the teaching, to both the Jews and also the Gentiles, and the problems that the folks had with each other, for normally the Jews would not speak to the gentiles, and vise-versa, but in this case at Tarsus, great strides had been made.

It was then that I told of the vision the Spirit had given to me some twenty years ago: "That a sheet had been lowered down from Heaven with all manner of unclean animals, and was told to kill and eat, but I said, not so Lord, for nothing common or unclean has at any time entered my mouth. But the voice came again and said; what God has cleansed you must not call common. This happened three times, and then it was drawn back into Heaven." I paused for a few moments and then continued. "It took time, maybe months, for the understanding of this dream to be understood, but I now know that God was sending me to the gentiles, or at least the acceptance of them, and probably for this reason, I am here."

There was a long silence before anyone spoke. I could tell by their face and body-language that each person in that room was contemplating on the words of the vision. Then in a soft tone of voice, Silas said that; "God had shown me years ago that the message of the Grace of God through His Christ was to be preached to the Gentiles, and this word coming from you was the news that I'd long hoped for. That this is of a truth, God had sent you, Peter, to Tarsus to help Paul and I to get this message out, and I am thankful."

Each man in that room looked at one another, for each knew that God was the provider of the trip, and each had a part in it, but now understood the exact value of all those weeks of walking. It was an affirmation that each expected, but now fully understood.

The next morning I made a straight course to the place in town where the Gentiles assembled, not an organized established place, but a junction where many would linger and talk and get their daily news from, a place where two streets came together. It was a beautiful day, the sun bright in a cloudless sky, and many of the women and men had assembled the day before, the Lords' day, and seemed to have much to talk about.

Great strides had been taken, and many of the believers were growing daily in their walk with Christ, and Monday mornings seem to be the day that many would exchange the works and wonders of the previous week, and a little more festive than the other days. All this was according to the implication of Silas' words, so that was why we were there.

By this time, all the folks of Tarsus knew who we were; which included the many Jews. It was a bustle of activity, unheard chatter was going on everywhere, and some animated; but when approaching, all went silent. Two men, one Simeon, called Niger, and another named Manaen, who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, came up and introduced themselves. Manaen explained that he too was with Saul, now sir-named Paul, when they worked for Herod, but both were transformed by that

meeting with Christ on the road to Damascus, and Niger had joined with them shortly thereafter. It didn't take long to see that both men had a deep understanding and zeal for the things of the Lord. It was a pleasure to be with such men with the appreciation and love that they had for the folks, and were often called outsiders, but neither, were in this for the glory. They understood this part of the country, and their offer of help in this region was extremely valuable. We seem to hit it off as if we'd known each other for years. And I think that John and Andrew took a personal liking to the both of them.

They took us to places, that by ourselves we would never have been able to go, introduced to many that had an unmistakable handle in just what Grace is.

Grace is the gift from God, that man with his thinking and works cannot earn, for no matter how embedded into sin one gets, Grace is always there. It is so simple, and man spends much time trying to complicate it, that to have Grace is one thing, but to acknowledge it is something quite different. As many as are loved by God is given Grace, whether we love him or not, to those that believe this unmerited gift, can walk in the freedom and the Love that God has sent to each through His son Jesus; this is for all, not just some. For God so Loved the world, that He gave, and He gave all He has. These words were exchanged as we all looked out about over the traffic going in every direction.

Many times several of us were taken to the many homes of the folks living in Tarsus, and each one of them would have a different set of needs, some would just need an understanding of the things

of God, and others a healing or deliverance. Paul had done a wonderful work here in the time that he had spent with these people, for many had a comprehension that went sometimes beyond those that traveled with us, including me. On more than several occasions, an elder or scribe would stand in the door as we would minister to a family, and with their gestures and grunts, it was obvious of their disapproval. Their religious blindness would keep them from the Light of this new freedom, but not all, for many of the Jews have come to believe; and to those that are open about it: have been persecuted. This is no easy task, this walk with Christ, not the way the world views it; but it is a privilege to those that are in Christ Jesus and live no longer for themselves, but in Him. It is the blinders that religion has place on man, with their view points, that has kept many in the dark, therefore not wanting to seek a deeper understanding of the Freedom Christ brought.

We continued in Tarsus for many weeks, and the number of believers, and the depth of their belief, grew to the place that many of them were gathering and contemplating building their own place of worship. I've seen this happen before and it never works, for the people begin to think that the building is the place to find God, and the expanse of His work is narrowed to the four walls in which the building is made; so they begin to believe that Christ is limited, and He is not. Trying to place God in a box, a building, and then preaching that their so-called sanctuary is the place to be, to be taught, then places the folks in bondage as long as they fall to that way of thinking, but none of it is true. Jesus told us to 'go you into the entire world'; but with this frame of thinking, they seem to be saying 'come', all that's in the world, and we will

give you light,' but then is not this, the blind leading the blind? Anytime we go against the Word that God gave us, are we then walking without His guidance? Have we not stepped out on our own? I have come against this way of thinking several times before, and many see that none, not one, is to organize the Life that God has given us. But there are always a determined few that want it their way, and convince others into following them. This ought not to be so. I have stood with objection to this way of thinking, and will until I die, and come with opposition to any trying to organize or institutionalize the things of God and His way of Life. Where the few have succeeded, at least in appearances, in this form of religion, that is, building an empire unto themselves; it has always failed and the people began to perish. The power of the Word of God failed, not that it truly can fail, but their approach to Him has caused a delusion to so many, that it emerges as failure.

We give up nothing on our journey for Christ, but are instead, fed daily on His manna. What cost is accounted to us, is but nothing compared to that which is gained, not only for us, but also the effectiveness to others. God has His way, and man ought not to be tempted in any other, but many are. Anyway, when the group again came together, I went also to stand in opposition to the forming of godliness, and knowing that the power will not be within it, for sooner or later they will deny the Power thereof.

“Men, brothers in Christ, fellows believers, this task that you are called upon to build, is not the Way, Truth, nor the Life that Jesus has set up to build within His called-out-ones, nor the Rock upon which His Church is built. Of a truth, God is surely organized, but

not in the way man thinks, we see through a glass that is darkened, and He nurtures those that are led as the Holy Spirit cultivates His people thru the trials and temptations of life. This attempt to organize God into mans' way of thinking, is to a point, a mandate to turn our backs against Him. Each of us have seen and felt the burdens that the scribes and Sadducees have placed upon those that are within their reach, with the many rites, regulations, and their man-made laws, and by doing so, have positioned a yoke on those, that man in his own strength cannot live up too. Jesus came to set us free, and free indeed we are. He came to give life, and give it abundantly, not by the strength of man, but by His strength, that is; His Love and Grace. My beloved, this regulated institution that you are pursuing ought to be set aside, and we should, rather, seek instead a relationship with Him thru his Grace and Love. Where two or three are gathered in the name of Jesus, there He will be also. Watch you therefore, and let not your vanity rule your soul with this yoke that is being contemplated. Walk you in the freedom of our Lord, not these vain repetitious works of the man-made rituals."

As I turned from side to side, looking throughout the crowd, I could see Andrew, John, Silas, Niger, and Manaen standing together in the corner close to the doorway, and by the look on their face, I could tell that they too were in agreement. "It is inside every man that his vanity wants to organize everything of God the same way that I too wanted when the transfiguration took place in front of me. Having learned from my past, and learning it acutely, by having to remove myself from that mountain, I now understand that God is God, and cannot be put into a box, nor limited in any

way where Truth abides. But, also understanding, that all have to grow, mature in the Lord, and come to this deep intimate relationship that is a continuing journey, for I too have just begun, and my journey is far from completion; much more remains before me than has already been traveled.”

It was several hours later before the five of us left the meeting, and as we walked toward the place that we were staying, we discussed again the issues of tonight’s subject. Each one of us had something that needed to be spoken about, but Silas took the most time elaborating on his feelings of organizing Gods’ Church.

As Silas reached out and touched my arm, indicating that he wanted undivided attention, our whole group stopped to listen to what he had to say. “This matter was brought to the Apostle Paul on many occasions, and he too tried reasoning with them, and for the most part, the majority of the folks in Tarsus agreed with him. For he too knew of the devastation that many of the Jews have placed upon folks with their many so-called laws of empowerment; by giving a few the higher seat, and elevated position, shows all an hierarchy that God, nor His son Jesus ordained, I know that Niger and Manaen both agree, for we have spoken about this matter many times, and have set down in many instances to reason with as many as would listen, and evidently to no avail. Once the church, or could better say, the called-out-ones are yoked by their misunderstandings, have organized, it is then that God is pushed out, being replaced by man. I’ve always thought that God called His people to come out from among them, but man with all his

vanities, continues to ensue power, and like Paul said; ‘this ought not to be so.’”

There were times that I thought that what I was saying aligned with the will of God, and sometimes, I just wasn't quite sure, but with this issue I was certain, but it was also still appreciated to learn that it was not just me that heard from God on this matter, and I was blessed to know that this same Word was spoken to many. God's people were to go throughout the world preaching; and never was it said to ask them to come to you, and in this; we were all six in complete alignment. The office of supreme leader of an assembly had been offered to me several times; and not now, nor in the future will I accept such nobility, as to lower my sights on anything short of God. It was God's work thru Paul that started this New Life in Tarsus, and it was our pleasure to help him, Silas and the others, to continue this word of revelation as we were given knowledge by Him that created the message to come out of her, my people.

The next morning, our small group did what we always do, and that was going from house to house expounding on the Word of God as He gave us privilege to hear. It made no difference whether they were Jew or Gentile, anyone with a willingness to hear, heard. But the group of Jews that were sent to follow us for information to give to their superiors, continued. I now know that this was a small matter, what people thought about me; but then, a decade ago, it was more than a small matter to me, for I was annoyed and began to doubt, even that which God had given me,

at least in this issue of what folks were thinking about me, for I still had an occasional problem with my vanity. There were times, when in the house of a gentile, one of the Jews would approach, and I would up and leave. I think that I did this to keep a higher status with them, but whatever it was, I was wrong doing so, but it would still take over a year to learn just exactly how wrong I was. At one point Silas pointed it out to me of this double standard that I seem to portray, and again that same night, my brother and John spoke to me about this matter at length. For some reason it just wasn't registering, or my thoughts were someplace else, for I just didn't truly didn't recognize what I was doing, or so I told myself.

This walk, or journey, that I'd dedicated my life too, was at times, anything but simple. I could speak about the freedom in Christ, and of a truth believed it, but at this time in my growth, there was a war going on inside of me. That is, at certain times, or in a few situations, my flesh would instinctively get in the way, I speak this to my shame, but never-the-less it is true. I wasn't the hot-head that I used to be, surely had made great progress on not being so quick to blurt out my thoughts, but what others thought of me; was for some reason, still far too much important. And I knew this, and these three men pointing it out, my own brother included, still didn't have the capacity to show me the era, at least deep enough to be truly recognized. So I continued to stumble from time-to-time.

The Edge of Correction

After several more weeks in Tarsus, our same group, minus four of the other younger men, set off to travel toward Lystra by way of Antioch in Pisidia. It was a cold morning, a cloudless sky and the wind blowing from the north at a speed that would just about knock us off our feet as we ascended the rather large mountains that lay before us. We were walking in a northwest direction, the same direction the wind was coming from, and at times, it would gust over the peak and down the slope of the small valley we were traversing uphill, and cause our legs to wobble with its force. The temperature probably wasn't below freezing, but with the hard wind, it definitely felt as if it was.

We had spent more than several weeks in Tarsus, and I think the Lord had used us on more than a few occasions, and I know that Silas and his two companions welcomed the help in extending the word of God. A week or so ago Silas had sent two of the disciples, men that labored by his side, in the same direction that we now

travel. For they were carrying messages from Silas to Paul, that was somewhere in Macedonia, or maybe still on this side on of where the Black Sea and the Great Sea met, anyway, it wasn't going to be hard to find him, for wherever Paul went or came from, it was noised through-out the whole region.

We may have stumbled from time to time, but I am convinced that the wonders and works of God were received by many while we labored in Tarsus. Therefore making each of us at least slightly more mature, but maybe hidden within our spirit for later recognition. Many times, I would realize that God had placed into me a new growth, and knowing it was there, hadn't received it fully as yet, but still knew something had taken place within.

The first two days of the journey were going to be the hardest, for we were told of the steep terrain, howling wind, and the extreme dryness of the land, but we all believed that God was sending us there, and we had no other pleasure than that of following His direction. Derby was to be our first stop, for it was the only town between here and Lystra, a long five day venture, and then there were at least four more days after that before we entered Lystra.

The first day we walked up-hill the whole day, and saying up-hill is a mild way of saying it. The trail was steep, and I would suppose brutal is a better way of explaining it. At times the path was so sheer that our feet were trying to slip out from beneath us, twice I'd fallen, but only slid a short ways before regaining my footing. The second day wasn't much better, but we were descending the

mountain, as the summit was cleared around noon, which was better in one way, but much harder on our upper legs.

That same evening, an hour or so before sun-set, on relatively flat ground, we made camp, and by that time it was welcomed by everyone in our small group. We had earlier passed two parties of folks traveling toward Tarsus, and both had told us about this spot to make camp, and to make sure that we took advantage of it. And finding the place they had described came none too soon, we were tired, and the clearing was a cheered relief. The seven of us all pitched in, gathering dead brush for a fire, setting up our small canvas, and clearing the rocks where we were to sleep. This night again, all had decided to eat the provisions we'd brought, no one wanted to work even a breath more than he had too. It was much warmer in this lower elevation, and that helped tremendously.

Just before complete nightfall, the sky only a dingy gray, but cloudless, a group of five women and one old man, going the opposite direction as us, arrived looking for the same camping area that we now settled in. They were going to Tarsus.

The clearing was plenty big enough for both groups and we welcomed them, as they also were glad to have a chance to rest. We were told that this was the only real place to set up a camp between here and Derby. I began to think that if they were this tired now, what were they going to feel like after the next two days? It gets much worst for them, an old man and five women, and one looked as if she were with child, for this was their first time going to Tarsus, and had maybe underestimated the roughness of the mountains. I felt sorry for them. Andrew had

told them that they could make use of our fire; the old man thanked us, but said the women might feel uncomfortable and he was stronger than he looked, and would build their own. The rest of the night went calmly with very little talking between us, except for John, he motioned for me to meet him at the outer edge of where the fire would spill its' light. He wanted to talk.

I could tell that something was on his mind, for in the last two days he didn't say more than a few sentences and none of them were grouped together. His countenance was not, by any means down, but being raised up around him most of my life, I could tell that something of a seriousness nature was in his thoughts.

“Peter, God's been dealing with me to strike out on my own, and I've toiled with it for the past couple of days, and now know that that's what I'm supposed to do.” I sat quietly as he spoke; not wanting to add nor take away from what I knew was lying heavy on his heart. So as John continued, I watched the shadows swirl around in the cup of wine that I held in my hand, and at times could see the reflection of the stars in it, if I was perfectly still; I just listened. “I'm thinking when we get to Lystra, that I'll cut southeast and go toward Lycia, but for some reason, I was thinking that you wouldn't want me too. I too have been in this journey from the beginning, just as you have, I know the voice of the Spirit, but have wrestled with these thoughts ever since we left Tarsus, and believe for whatever reason, this is my calling to be examined in the coastal region of Lycia.”

I continued to sit quietly for a few moments to see if there was yet something else that he wanted to say. Still watching the stars

in my cup, and then looking up to find them, but all attention was on him, as I pondered knowing that a great friend would be leaving.

“John, I support you in every way, and by the tone of your speech, and the look on your face, I too know that this is a serious matter. Although I will miss you greatly, this venture is something you have to do. The Kingdom of God, and Its forwarding, is not tied to this small group, nor any other of the small groups proclaiming Christ and Him resurrected, the Spirit began this journey, and the Spirit will see it thru to the end. It might be that it will take two weeks to get to Lystra, but every minute of that time with you will be appreciated.” I knew that this was what he was called to do, and I knew that God would use him in a mighty way.

It was that night, in the foothills of those cold rugged mountains that I began again to miss my wife. She was with me, in every step I took, our hearts were together. I knew it, and she knew it too. I understand how God engineers our lives, and I believe that all that He’s called me into, would carry on even if I didn’t have her, but having her made my life all the more rich. I was just missing her a little more than usual that night and spent the rest of the night with her in thought.

It was a restful nights’ sleep for all of us, the small group camping beside us, made not a sound all the night, John was back to his old self, and I had one of the most wonderful dreams of being back in Galilee fishing with my wife. The other five men

were chipper and ready to go. We made short work of our cleanup, said our good-byes to the women and old man, and then headed west to find out why God had sent us here.

It was still early as we headed away from the rising sun toward Derby, our next stop. It was in Derby that we understood that help was needed, for they had its share of impoverished folks, those coming across the mountains and couldn't make it any farther and those coming from the west and now too weak to go on, it was a sort of last-resort town. Still two days away, but our energy was high, and this second leg of the journey would be accomplished. We were now walking thru a valley floor, and it was so much easier, the sun was warm and we were out of the dry cold air of the high terrain.

Although this journey in my life was exactly what I was supposed to be doing, it was still a long road, but one that was determined to be traveled. Andrew and I were walking side-by-side and were chatting about our stay in Tarsus. In a very gentle way, Andrew mentioned and asked why I was leaving the homes of the Gentiles when one of the scribes would come by, and what my thoughts were about it. I told him that there wasn't much thought about the matter, for at that time I'd not seen the whole picture of what was going on. Since we were brothers, and loved each other very much, I think now that that was why he allowed the subject to be dropped so quickly, we never did talk about those days after that. But we did spend many hours discussing why people wanted, in several cities, to organize a way of Life into structure made by the hands of man.

Andrew had known John the Baptist and his preparing the way, more than the rest of us, for he'd spent much time with him, and knew John's thoughts on the topic. "The Baptist didn't align himself, nor affiliate himself with any group or organization, but instead lived away from the main-stream, gathering nuggets from God with no interference from the synagogue, or those that were influenced by them. He himself was prepared in the wilderness, like that of the Israelites when they were in the desert; his flesh man had to die first, and then was he able to hear the voice of God."

Andrew asked; "would the Baptist or Jesus settle or allow His Church, His called-out-ones, to fasten themselves to a immoveable structure of dead stone, and then call it church? Of course they wouldn't. Would He'd wanted His people to stand outside some beautiful monument of man, ringing his mission bell as the Pharisees and Sadducees do, gathering support for their own agendas? That wouldn't have happened. So I can see how right you were in taking a stand against this matter, but I can also see that this is not going to go away easily."

I just looked at him with a smile, for we both knew we were on the same page.

Our plans were to walk more than half the distance and stop for the night, leaving only a half days, or so, journey for tomorrow, before entering Derby, so on this day, we ate while still walking, and even at that, we'd have to travel up to full darkness.

The next day the seven of us walked into Derby shortly after high noon, to a town that had a look of something more than just being impoverished. At least when we'd first gotten there, it wasn't hard to tell the countenance of the folks, for it seemed a deep depression had overwhelmed each in it. Most people either didn't see us, or hung their head as we walked by, and nowhere was a smile to be found, but we did what we always do, and that was go to the center of town. There, we were either met, or would make arrangements to secure a place to stay, for I believed that the Spirit had placed us here for a particular reason, and what it was, no one at this point knew.

Several times one of us in our group would reach out to a passerby, but to no effect. We were ignored, probably not because of them being standoffish as much as it was an unhealthy spirit seemed to have taken over. But after a few hours of meandering around the same spot of town, two elderly men approached us, and already knew who some of us were. Polite gentlemen in every way, smiling from ear-to-ear; and with a loud voice spoke his welcomes to their little town. He had heard we were coming, but expected us tomorrow. As he made his introductions, I could see that one of the men must have been the town leader; full of energy, boisterous in his high-pitched voice, but friendly in every way, his name was Manual. And it didn't take long to figure out that he was severely concerned about the folks in his town, and that was part of the reason, at least the way I added it up, that his speech was so loud. He'd taken the roll as a leader to attempting to lively up the people with kind words and

pleasant conversation, but seem genuine in every way. I liked that man, and he certainly made us feel appreciated.

Manual would have it no other way than the seven of us to stay at his house. A large structure made eons of years ago, but now that his rather large family had, for the most part, moved to other cities and villages, said he had more than enough room, and besides that, he was wanting to talk with us extensively. He offered water to wash our feet, food enough to feed seventy, every comfort that a man could ever want, and he really never did stop smiling, a gentleman in every way, and his companion, that was with him when he met us, was his brother. They both lived in the same house. He let us relax 'til nightfall, and asked if it would be permissible if we could then talk.

With more stars showing on this dry night, I'd doubt that one could count how many, even by placing his thumbs and fore-fingers together and counting only the ones in that small circle. It was beautiful sitting out on the terrace, and it didn't take long before Manual began talking about the situation in their small town.

"Last year there was a plague that hit our town, I think from a group that came up from Cilicia, and many of our folks got sick and died. When I say many died, I mean almost half the people that lived here. There was fever too high to get down, sores that ate the flesh off those that got it, and the agony was so great that screams could be heard day and night, it was a nightmare. We have mourned ever since, with great pain and suffering, but that is not the main cause of our misery. Brother Paul had been through

here some couple of years ago, he left a few months before the sickness struck, and had given us the revelation of Jesus the Christ. Many days and nights he would preach and teach God's Word, and thru his reasoning and testimony, most in our town came to believe; our now life, thru the Spirit, was real and beyond our expectations. Many were healed of diverse situations, some from sickness, some from birth deformities, and many were filled with the outpouring of God's Spirit. And when this Plague hit, we continued in our faith, even after many had died, we continued in our faith; but when the religious leaders of the Jewish sect came by, it was quite a different story. We were told that it was God's revenge upon us that brought this devastation. It was that God was punishing us for things that we had done wrong, and we were to cease from this heretic new Life. Many of the folks knew that what they'd received from Christ was real and stood firm, some doubted and some even walked away from this life in Christ. Ever since this encounter with the Sadducees, the countenance of our town has gone down, getting worse by the month, with no end in sight. I shiver to think what might happen if this depression continues. The folks that persisted in our relationship with Jesus have been meeting every night at dusk to pray for help in this matter. And three days ago we got word that you were coming, and for a fact, knew God had sent you. Peter, what has God spoken to you?"

I knew what the answer was, but hesitated as I thought it through, wanting to get the full answer from God first. "Manual, God has been talking briefly to all of us about this infection, although He has given no details, until now, but we knew that we

were to come, and knew of the urgency, but not the facts. We'd met some folks two days ago, and knew something was wrong, but not a word was spoken. I knew they were fleeing from something, but God held back the answer until our arrival. Yes, God has sent us here, and tomorrow at dusk we will discuss this topic."

Manual left and went back into the house, the other four in our group stayed for a while, but nothing was said for five or ten minutes, so they went back into their room also. Andrew began to speak at the same time John spoke; and John yielded. "Brother Simeon, we've dealt with this before, but not on such a large scale. We all know the enemy, and as long as he lives, there will always be trouble. This matter of buying in, and being blindly led about the false 'ruthlessness of God', will always prevail, as long as man focus' on the things of the visible world. The enemy is not the Jews, no, not by a long shot. The enemy is the unstable mind of man, and all that watch thru their natural eyes will be blinded to the Grace, Love, and the friendship of God. For it's neither flesh, or blood, not the effects of the plague of that we wrestle against, but the spirit of the carnal mind that has been inflicted on many by the infectious words from the self-serving religious leaders.

The stars were still as bright as before, as they slowly rotated towards the western mountains, each of the three of us were relaxed, and then John whispered in a soft but concerted voice; "This stay here in Derby is meant as much for us, as it will be for them. It is our time to learn, and to watch God grow inside of each of us."

The three of us knew each other well, and most of the time, knew from the same Spirit, what had to be done. The other four were good men, they loved the Lord, and were growing daily, but we didn't correlate with them, nor they us, as John, Andrew and I did with each other. It was not that they weren't good men, they were, and we all loved them, but their journey, as yet, has been but short.

The next morning as I awoke, still lying down motionless, the Lord spoke to me thru the quietness of the pre-dawn day ahead. "These people are my people; they are those that I gave my Son's life for. When they hurt, I hurt; when they are stolen from, it is me that suffers the loss also. In me there is no condemnation, nor any separation, for my desire is to be their God, for they are my people. I Love them because I Love them, not for what they do or don't do, but because My Love desires a relationship with them, and all others."

Still lying on my back, looking up, but seeing nothing, for it was still as dark as pitch, I meditated on these words until they became a part of me. Sometimes my thoughts would go to these people's hurt from their loss, or their pain coming from being impoverished, or why they would receive the rejection from the religious leaders, but the thought always came back to their need to be Loved.

An hour later we were stirred by the clanging sound of metal against metal; it was a call to breakfast. Walking outside, the other six were already there, and Manual stood at the doorway of another building, motioning with his arms to come. With all the food spread on the table, I could tell that the women folk were up

a lot earlier than I; there was enough food to feed twenty. And within five minutes, there was about twenty scattered about the table. The mood was pleasant, but I could still see concern in Manual eyes.

After eating, my brother, John, and the other four men met in the center of his elaborate homestead, an area somewhat like a court-yard, flat, clean, swept dirt and three trees growing right in the middle with a stone stool to sit and wait out the summer heat on. John was first to speak as he told us his thoughts about these folks in Derby. Andrew said he had a dream about the goings-on of the folks here, and could somehow feel the extent of their pain. Both men were on the same plain-of-thought that I was; we were in unison.

That day, as we separated into twos or threes, we walked among the houses and people of this downcast but clean town, listening as God spoke His word-of-knowledge of the truth behind this unfortunate situation. And as many as would listen to us, we told them of the meeting that was to take place at dusk, and asked if they would come and share their thoughts and ideas of this spirit that consumed them. Several of the other men in town said they would help, for they knew that many would not be there unless encouraged again to come.

This was one of those extraordinary situations that it was better for them to come to a central place, than it was to individually minister to each of them. Nearly half the town was in depression and the other half were needed to stir them into coming, their help was appreciated.

This leadership role that I had taken from the beginning of this walk was now thought of by me as an ideal of youth, and no longer held the prestige of my younger years. So going, to first Andrew, and then John, I asked if they would be willing to direct tonight's events, for I knew that God had used them many times before, and their discernment for the things of God were at times superior to mine. Both were puzzled, as expressed by the look on their face, and both said they were uncomfortable taking the role of leadership, and could be used more effectively in the background. I felt confident in the nurturing role that lied ahead, but I too began thinking in their same direction.

That evening, as the sun began to hide itself over the western sky, the people of Derby began coming towards the three trees that sat in, what I call a court-yard, just outside of Manuals' house. The masses of folks looked like ants coming back to their nest when a summer rain began to fall, there were more people living in this town than I'd thought possible. And it wasn't long before the whole area was filled with all ages of men, women, and children, and most had carried their concerns on their faces.

"My beloved, my brothers and sisters in Christ, take heed to the words as the Spirit of God moves among us all. This plague that has ridden through your town was devastating in every way, and my heart is with all. I beseech you to give ear to the things of God, for those that have ears to hear, a healing is forthcoming. God is the God of Love, not that which has been spoken about from those of old, He is always kind. This loss that the entire town has

suffered, only God knows the end from the beginning; and I hurt with you, but all will be revealed before long.”

“In my youth, while walking with God’s sent Shepard, saw a certain man that was crippled from birth, and I asked the Lord; ‘from whose sin does this man suffer, from his own or from that of his parents’? And the Lord spoke in that usual whisper of a voice and said; ‘from neither sin does is this man made crippled, but for the Glory of God’. I know not the end result, but I have confidence in our Savior to see this thru to the end. Take heed, and wait upon our Lord, for he is always faithful to Himself thru his Love; and you are His Love.”

As I looked around, I could see a stirring among those gathered, not necessarily a gleam of hope, but an arousal of the spirit within, for their attention was focused on the Word spoken.

“I know some years back that our brother Paul passed this way and gave you a hope of redemption, an inner peace to those that believed, and you did believe. That same hope cannot be removed from those that wait upon the fulfillment of His promise. The plague is indeed an eating away of the flesh, and must not be misunderstood as the wrath, nor punishment from the Lord. And I too know not that which God will build to His people from this calamity, but I am assured of His restoration. For what God has begun, He will see it thru to the end. But folks, this is not the real problem that has entered into this town. It is the intrusion of the man-made laws and ideas from those that come serving on behave of a structure, that three days after Jesus’ death was rebuilt in the hearts of man, that is; His temple. Let not the traditions of men

take that which was freely given by the Christ through the Apostle Paul, from those that received his Word.”

This time as I again looked around, I saw most sitting up straight and their eyes fixed upon that which they did receive from the Spirit; and the hope of their redemption was beginning again to refocus. My brother, John, and the others also, were now sitting in amongst the crowd. A veil had been lifted, although there was still a sense of fog among the crowd.

“We are not to be pleasers of men, nor followers of the fables given to many from the sect of our forefathers that has placed a yoke upon as many as would follow their regulations. Our Lord does not bestow upon us condemnation, and this plague is not from no sin, nor from doing, nor not doing, of that which is required of us, nor is there any condemnation to those that are in Christ. Jesus, while still hanging on the cross, asked the Father to forgive them and us; to not hold this to our account, so why then would this never changing Christ, hold any sin to yours’? Let not your heart be troubled, nor receive this separation that has been attempted to be place on you. You are God’s children, and this I am assured and this calamity will be used to purify a people, and will bring about a result of Hope that God had stored from the beginning. Be strong, for there are among us those that are dressed in sheep’s clothing, but on the inside, are full of dead mans’ bone, wolves and vipers ready to strike at any weakness they perceive. For I assure you that what God has begun in you, He will stay with you through it, to the end.”

As I finished speaking that which was given to me, a whirlwind entered the area where we had gathered. It was now like the sun had risen in the midst of darkness, like an awakening as all rose to their feet to greet this new-born day. With very little help from me, the Holy Spirit established Himself in the hearts of these people, a reunion of sorts. Where emptiness once prevailed, Hope now reigned; where sight was lost, a new beginning sprang up.

As the days went by, it was noised abroad of the happenings in Derby. The Apostle Paul had spent much time here and the unbelieving Jews and part of the Gentiles stirred no small matter of evil against us that had brought this word of Hope. Paul had previously been expelled from this town and now, again the unbelievers were stirring up the prominent devout women and the chief men of the city; raising up a persecution against us also to expel our group from the town and region. But the multitude in the city were divided, part sided with the Jews, and part with us Apostles. And we had heard that they had made a covenant to abuse and stone us, but we had become aware of it and fled. If not for those that were awakened and believed, I would have thought that our days would have been done, but God had different plans, and I now know, looking back, that our group was protected from the beginning.

Leaving, we each continued to preach the Gospel as God gave us lead.

Places of Hope

Two weeks later, our small group was, after much rest in the wilderness, walking into Lystra. This city was on the fringes of the region where the main population had gathered over the centuries, and the cities were getting to be much larger. We were glad to be there even though John was to depart from us and go the way the Lord had shown to him.

The last couple of days in Derby were fearful, but enlightening, as we saw a people filled with despair rise up in an awakening and stand firm in the things of the Lord. And all of us witnessed a change of heart in a people from the spiraling descend of destruction, to a correlated mass of Hope. God had used them in a mighty way, teaching all seven of our group, a deeper truth than we'd reached before, in me an awakening by His profound wisdom. I was no longer the teacher, but the student.

Much more activity was going on in this city of bustling folks, Lystra proclaimed to have the entrance gate of the new world, for much of the trade world stopped and ended here. This was the central stopping place for the southern half of the region, where the east met the west. The people in their colorful clothes were friendly, but not personal. They would nod a hello as they sped by, or begged a pardon if in the way, but not a person stood long in one place, at least, not long enough to be talked with; to say the least, it was a busy city. Normally we would walk to the market square, and today was no different, that was the place where the most information could be had in the shortest amount of time. But on this day, we stood there for several hours before the pace slowed to the point to where someone would talk with us.

Finding accommodations, we spent the evening hours talking to the few that had the time, or had slowed down enough to speak, for even after dark there was much ado. Just saying the name of the Apostle Paul would bring a reaction, some were glad that he was gone, and some hoped for his soon return; the city was filled with many different ethnic groups, and it seemed all had heard of him in one way or another. And it didn't take long after that to find out where the believers gathered, and their feelings on the subject of their gathering.

Lystra was similar to Jerusalem with its' commerce, and the many different cultures that did business there, for the port cities down south used this route to carry their goods to the bigger cities to the north and west. Most of the friendliness was due to public

relations, more than it was just a considerate gathering of settled people.

Three or four streets over, were two long rows of shops and shanties that lined each side of the street that split them. There, people were much more relaxed and moved at a much slower pace, a friendly section that was made up the folks that worked for their living, and were permanent to the city. This was where it began to look more like the down to earth folks, and they each had time to chat about the weather, talk about their ailments, or sit around watching for the next shooting star, it was enjoyable being with these people.

A certain man that had been healed was the first to recognize who we were, or rather what we were in the Lord, Apostles. For years before, when Paul had observed him, a man without strength in his feet, sitting, crippled from his mother's womb, and had never walked, spoke to him. For Paul knew that this man had faith to be healed, saying in a loud voice; "stand up straight on your feet", and leaping to his feet, he walked. This man greeted us knowing that God had sent others, us, to their fare city, and had been awaiting these years for our arrival. He was filled with the Spirit and proclaimed the name of Jesus throughout every facet of his life, a man full of joy and appreciation.

Going to this man's house, for he still lived with his parents, we were introduced and made to feel welcomed. Shortly after the introductions, the men traveling with us left to search out others in the city. John was preparing his thoughts to leave, but wanted to know more about that which this man proclaimed, so he and

Andrew went inside with me. We were given all the normal salutations, a bite to eat, water to wash our feet, and were made comfortable in every way.

As he told us of the happenings with Paul, we sat in amazement, for this man did not appear to have had a problem in his life, much less having been born crippled. He told us the story, and spoke about after his deliverance; saying, the folks in Lystra said; “The gods have come down upon us in the likeness of men.” But at that time, neither Paul, nor Barnabas were privy to what they said, but when they both found out what was being said about them, rent their clothes and cried out. “Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn away from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them, who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless, He did not leave Himself without witness...” And as the once crippled man continued in telling the story, he began to show pain from deep within, not for his own pain, but for the way Paul was treated. But Paul was not to be swayed by the likeness of men. And a few days later, men from other cities came and they conjoined together to stone Paul, and then dragged him from the city, supposing him to be dead.

This took place less than two years back, and the temper of those of the Jewish sect, and those that wouldn't believe, still carry their doings with pride, and would surely do it again. If not for the sake of believing they were right, but because of the nobility from those of the same sect gave them.

So the three occupants of this certain man's home told us that unless God was speaking directly, discretion should be used. But they were thrilled that we were there, and their home was open to whatever we decided, and for as long as was needed. For, with not only them, but many in the town also, put much stock in the Words of God from the apostles.

The next morning as the sun rose pink over the eastern horizon, we said our good-byes to John as he journeyed toward the leading of the Holy Spirit. John wanted to seclude himself for a time, as he said God was dealing with him about certain issues, and thought if he would put pen to parchment, and began writing, he could sort through them. He was not one to keep silent, for much was given to him, and the isolation would probably not last all that long, God was going to use him in mighty ways, but we were to miss him greatly.

We were not to stay long in Lystra , for our call was to go to Antioch of Phrygia, for God had stored something, engineered just for me, but what, I, as of yet, had no idea.

The sect of religious leaders in this part of the world thought the same way those of Judea thought, but in this region they were more blatant in their attacks on the followers of Jesus. For many years, really centuries, their synagogues and temples were placed in such a high esteem, that they were worshipped it in the stead of God. They had left their first love and did like Aaron had done, and that was make an idol for substitution, their so called place of worship. To become a leader in their sect meant that the outward appearance of godliness had to be kept up; when they fasted, it

was flaunted in every street; when they prayed, it was done openly and long for all to see and hear; when they gave alms, it was to be seen, and of course; when it came to keeping the law, their own law, it was done with anything but righteousness, and with pure diligence. The law was kept and worshipped with every jot and tittle in place, every letter of it paraded in every form of the imagination. But of a truth, they denied the power of God with their method of so-called godliness. Proselytes, those recruited to join their band were, for the most part, humiliated or forced to surrender to their arranged customs. All this I understood from my youth up, but what concerns me is; that the believers have seen nothing else but this form of religion, and may want to start their own private church. People are not to be recruited to an organization, but to the God that organized the universe; not to a form of godliness, but to the bodily form of Christ Jesus and Him resurrected; not to the way that seems right, but to the righteousness of God ways, that which he expressed through His son Jesus; that is Love. When the Sadducees, Scribes, elders, and chiefs of the temple felt threatened, they would simply remove the threat, this is if they could. A few years back, Paul was in the way, and now, I am, and this friendly man that was healed reminded us of that.

A few days after entering into Lystra, and the meeting of more than a few true believers, we made ready to leave for Antioch, but without John. He said that God spoke to him about going to Perga, and was leaving the same time as us. The other four men thought about going south to Myra, a seaport town, and maybe head back towards Galilee, by way of ship. Andrew and I knew what we had

to do, and that was go to Antioch of Phrygia, a four day journey, for we both knew that God had stored something special for us there.

The next morning the sky was filled with clouds, but not the kind that rain fell from, it was pleasant and we were ready. John turned toward the west, the others toward the south, and Andrew and I took our first steps northeast just as the sun was rising on our backs, and a rather large swarm of gnats had gathered between us and our destination. We had known before we'd entered Lystra that our stay would be short, maybe gather a few supplies, for our goal was still farther down the road, sensing urgency, two cities up, and were ready for this leg of the trip. I'd asked the younger men that were going back to Galilee, to give my wife messages from me, and they said that it would be one of the first things they did upon their return.

Now Andrew and I both were in our mid-fifties, both of us strong, but could tell that my legs were not as strong as earlier days, but had no doubt that there were a lot of miles left in them. As we walked this well-traveled road, began to notice all the many different cultures that used this same corridor, as it was one of only two that could be used in this hilly terrain. Each region of the middle-east had their own attire, with their own individual markings or symbols that represented the clan from which they had lived. Some were brightly colored, some striped, some of different cloth but solid in color, but all wore their own unique head dress. Occasionally we'd stop and ask where they were from or to where they were going, and several of the times we'd sit and

talk, and frequently our conversation would trail to the things of God. Most of the folks in this area were followers of the off-shoot of Ismael that gave them similar, but yet different variations of that which was taught by Abraham, and most were friendly.

They knew Jehovah God, they knew of circumcision, and these they practiced, but only a few knew of the Son of God and of Him represented on earth. And it was our privilege to tell them of such matters. Many would listen and ask questions, showing a genuine interest, for their God was our same living God, but all they now had was, some man that now interpreted what God was saying to the people, and called His name something different than we used. Hearing about God's Son being resurrected from the death and grave intrigued a hope that they'd never experienced, and sometimes wanted to hear more.

Sometimes a single man was traveling, sometimes it was a whole family, and many times it was a group of business men that traveled this corridor with their wares from one city to the next. At least a half dozen times there were caravans of folks journeying with large parades of camels, some with herds of goats and sheep, and some using a string of donkeys as pack animals, all had somewhere to go, but none seemed to be in a hurry. The country was arid, and anyone that had ever traveled before knew not to hurry, but once in a while we'd see someone making haste.

In late evening, Andrew and I stopped, making camp, to eat and prepare for a nights' rest, and this time we were with an already gathered group. Most of the time the groups would spread out over several acres and were made up of many different families

that weren't traveling together, and it made for some interesting nights of entertainment, but with Andrew and me, we were focused on the mission ahead. So when someone would advance to invite us to their tent for talk, it was, for the total part, for the forwarding of God's Kingdom; and most folks were interested. Of course they would talk of their lives, back-grounds, families and such, but always the conversation would turn to the resurrection of Christ, for at this place in our lives, we knew of nothing else to talk about. It was our lives.

The next night, after sitting up camp, I'd noticed that up the hill, slightly, was a camped group of people that looked prominent in every way. Their caravan was not large, but still contained at least forty folks ranging in age from new-born to very old. The patriarch and his family traveled in these coaches that straddled two long poles on each side, carried by eight men each, and there were three of them. It was not hard to see that this was a man of wealth, maybe of nobility, but assured myself that he was well known, from where, I didn't know. As I stood a distance off observing, for I'd only seen something like this twice before, the head-man came out from the large tent, approaching me, and asked if I'd like to join him for a cup of herbal tea. It was a concoction of roots and leaves off some unknown plants, but good, as we sat just outside the doorway of a large, striped colored domain that was called their temporary home, and sipped. He introduced himself as Joahaz.

After our usual chat about how dry it was, and how hot the sun gets right after noon time, we began to speak in more personal tones. He was a man from Philippi and was traveling toward Jerusalem, and had been doing so for the last three months, looking for , what he called a 'man of healing' to heal his daughter. She had gotten sick the summer before with fever, and it soon escalated to the point that she couldn't move the right side of her body. Her speech was slurred, could only hear out of one ear, and in her right eye, she was completely blind.

I listened carefully as Joahaz humbly told the story of his daughter, which he loved dearly, and how he was on a quest to find this man, if indeed the man really existed. The humility in his voice was not that of a man of nobility; nor of the usual wealthy type, for his love for his daughter was worth more than any prestige, notoriety, or anything that money could buy. Joahaz was an upright man, and lived among the Ammonite clan of people from the north, but they could, in no way help with this debilitating ailment.

The man did most of the talking, and I could tell that something inside him had a need to get it out, so I listened. My attention was on his words, but once in a while I would look around at the other camp fires, the silhouettes of the distant hills in gray night, or ever-so-often, watch a falling star, but always my concern was on his child and the brokenness that it was causing in the family.

Joahaz had taken her to the synagogue and temple of the Jews, some month's journey from his home, but all they would say was, that it is because of his misarranged life-style that caused this to be

placed on her, and needed to pay penitence. He continued by saying that he knew that everything in his life was not always pleasing to others, but always tried living a fair and decent life, one that the family didn't have to shun from. The village where he made home was far to the north, and had many sheep, goats and camels in his possession and was called rich in other peoples' standards, but now felt poor, for the welfare of the daughter was more important than anything money had ever done for him. Her name was Janomi. Joahaz had heard that the people from Abraham had a Savior, a Messiah that walked on earth healing as many as would come to Him, called the Son of God. For he knew of Abraham, and knew him well, and the stories of old, and he heard of Moses also from the same stock, for in the legends of his own country, these were mighty people. But when Joahaz had approached them, the Jews, they hadn't a clue as to what to do, they just shrugged him off. But it was then that he'd heard about this Messiah, and pursued to find Him, only to learn, and that of late, that the Roman's and Sanhedrin had him killed.

It was hard to listen in silence, and although Joahaz had his facts more or less straight, he had no comprehension of whom or what Jesus is, but knew that there was hope within this Savior. As he continued, I sat hearing a broken man wanting more in this life than it had afforded thus far, and now knew that life was more than the prosperity money could or couldn't bring. He wanted Life.

"Although, it is said, that the messiah is dead, we'd heard he implanted his will and Power into those that followed Him, and that my friend, is my mission to find, those called apostles. Finding

these men of God, I am assured, will restore my daughter to health. As my servants obey me, I also will render to the Word of God. These months of travel has shown me that no one in any sect can bring about this change that is sorely needed, but I am convinced that this God of the Messiah can.”

I sat a few minutes pondering the root of all he said, for I also, at one point in my life, pursued money and the prestige it could buy, but now I was at a loss of words to speak to this shadow of a man. I knew what to do, but just didn't find the words to say to him. I'd thought about calling for Andrew, but that didn't make sense either, so I sat quietly for a few moments.

In a short time it came to a remembrance in me, 'the vision' that the Lord had given to me those decades ago. "What God has cleansed you must not call common", and then after Jesus had risen he spoke to us; "All authority has been given to Me in Heaven and earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...I am with you always, even to the end of the age." It was brought up in my memory that the same word 'nations' in both of these teachings were used, for Cornelius was also of another nation, and God, with His never-ending Grace reminded me again that night; and I was thankful.

Looking up as I stood, looking Joahaz directly in the eyes Spoke: "I perceive that you are a man of sincerity, and your faith has brought you thus far, this same God that you seek is not cornered in any particular place, but covers the whole of the land. This same Jesus, although was crucified, is now resurrected and able to minister to as many as come to Him in Faith. For the Spirit in man

to be complete in this life, his soul must be willing. I am solidly confident that in the name of Jesus, your redemption is now observed, and your daughter is healed.”

Joahaz was listening with intent, and as I spoke, a stirring began in his tent, noises of varying pitches filled the air, and he didn't waiver in any degree. And as two of his servant ran toward him shouting many inaudible phrases, Joahaz turned to see that behind them was his whole family, including his daughter.

Even though the large camping area was spread out over a lot of real estate, the sounds coming from this family was enough to bring them all together, to ascertain the cause. It was then that a party of Jews wandered in and saw that I too had a part in it. Showing their dissatisfaction, I left.

There was much rejoicing, and that night was festive with music and praises, as the wholeness of his family was returned.

Early the next morning, as Andrew and I arose and made ready to travel, for our next stop in Iconium was but a short distance away; and from there, go to Antioch. No one in any of the other camps had stirred a muscle, for it was quiet with the exception of some of the night creatures, and a distant call of a bird. This time, thinking it would be better to leave before we said our good-byes, Joahaz will be firm in his belief, and solid in his faith as he would probably turn around and go back to his land, still not knowing that it was one of the apostles that spoke with him.

It was two days later when we reached an oasis, and two days after that that we reached Antioch. It was a large city nestled in the pass of some fairly rugged mountains; the only pass one could travel without going a hundred miles north, and had grown large, as it was the gateway from east to west, or vice-versa. Most of the north/south traffic centered also in this city, as a road was carved eons ago on the peaks of the mountains ranging the same direction. This city was almost as big as Jerusalem, and had about as many people, but this municipality drew a lineage quite different than that of the Galilee region. These were hard people that scratched their living from the mediocre sparseness of the surrounding land, made up of more than a few ethnic groups. But still a welcomed sight as we approached, we were glad to be there, for God has specifically told Andrew and me both, that this city was to be reached. Without a doubt, I knew there was a purpose, but what it was, I would shortly find out.

As we walked into the city, it had already been noised that we were coming; Barnabas and Titus met us, not knowing our face, but were certain of our identity. Greeting us with smiles and a Holy kiss, embraced us to follow them to the place where they camped, asking if we would camp near-by, and the answer was yes. That evening, after everything was squared away, Andrew and I followed them to the city where many acquaintances were met. Now Paul was in the city also, and pitched his tent near us, but as of yet, we hadn't met him, but knew of the great works that were wrought thru him by the Grace of God. Paul, being a Jew, had an encounter with Jesus on a road some decades ago, and now preached mainly to the Gentiles, and in Antioch made no small

stirring among the people, for he was known through-out all the region between the two seas.

Now Titus and Barnabas worked hand-in-hand with Paul, for they too had a call from God in their spirit. Many introductions were made that night, and to my surprise, many had already learned of the name of Peter.

It took but a short time to find out that circumcision was of no small matter among the many different ethnic groups, and many were rigid in their belief, for as many were on one side as there were on the other side of the issue. In meeting someone, it took but a few moments before the one met would voice his opinion on the subject of circumcision, and most were boisterous about it. Many times we were asked our position on the subject, and not wanting to close any doors, I tried to remain neutral on the subject.

Now Titus and Barnabas both ministered with Paul, and were in agreement with him in just about every detail, and were also favored with Paul amid the people, at least a large portion of them. They were men that reverend God and could hear His voice; men that very genuinely had a personal relationship with the Creator, and walked in His Grace. It was a true asset to count them now among our friends, and their introductions were well appreciated, for through them, I'm sure, the true mystery of why God sent me here would be revealed.

That evening ran well into the night before I thought to turn back to camp to pray and evaluate this new city that was so far from home.

New Friends, and old Ways

I'd been traveling now for more than a few months, getting close to sixty years old; my legs may hurt once in a while, but feel almost as strong as I did twenty years ago. This is my first week in Antioch of Phrygia, having spent most of the days making new friends and meeting a somewhat different kind of culture, but all-in-all, glad to be here.

Over the past months, especially the last few weeks, I began missing my wife. On occasion, I have sent messages to her, and twice, I've received back dispatches from her stating the happenings of her doings, and each was a refreshment to hear. In these travels, I have met some very special people, and most were entwined in their families, and to watch their interconnection was one of the pleasures of the trip. But on this particular night, I was missing my wife more than usual. In the past twenty something years, I have spent little, and occasionally no time at all, with my

family; with the exception of Andrew, and on this night was exceptionally home sick.

I know that what I'm doing is right, and, I think predetermined by the Will of God, and I have no regrets; the sacrifice is well worth the journey to adulthood, and seeing the Ways of God preformed before my eyes. In this still and somewhat cool night, I began to consider my old life; not that I'd go back to those ways of living, but evaluating if indeed I'd made the right decision. I love my wife, and she me, and we made this choice together, and was still hoping that her verdict about this was remaining the same as before. And from the relays, I'm confident it is.

As I laid on the flat of my back, looking through the flap of the tent, watching the small curls of clouds float by; thought about this life that was placed on her, and knowing it was to be unpredictable, and just what she thought, this many years later. I sure couldn't have picked a more precious woman, and in my foolish way of thinking, wondered if she thought the same about me. We had talked extensively about our choice of my travels, and all that we could ascertain from that thought process, and didn't know where they would lead, but did we still think the same way about it now that these many years had passed? The last word relayed to me from her was in Derby, and it was from a man that was told by a group in Tarsus to pass it to me when and if they found me; the message was a great word of support, and all is well down south. I too have sent many messages to her through other travelers, and I'm confident that most of them made to her.

I continued lying there, with all these and other thoughts running thru my mind, some carnal, and most on the things of the Spirit. I knew God had a purpose for me being in Antioch, and for the most part never knew what lied ahead, for who knows the thoughts of God, or His ways, but one thing I'd learned through the years, was not to fear Him with regret. Looking for Him in one direction, He'd always reveal Himself from another; getting 'so-called smart', and watching the backwards door, thinking, that's the way He'll show Himself, again, the revelation would yet come from a place not expected. All I can say about the matter is; who knows His thoughts or His ways? God is always God, and I am pleased to have met Him thru His Son Jesus.

I really didn't get much sleep that night, and when the sun had roused me, I realized that this was the first time in many years that I didn't see the new days' arrival, but for an odd reason, I felt rested. I must have slept at some point, but didn't realize it, and it was a pleasant night of thought, as I woke to the sun fully out.

Getting up, I could see in the distance, the swarm of folks doing their daily business, and walked in that direction. Andrew had been keeping an eye out for me as I entered the main part of the city. Filling me in on the goings-on of what he could observe. He'd found out where Paul was, for earlier Titus had spoken about his work in Grace throughout the area, and was as yet preparing a larger group on the other side of town, ministering to them the mercies and love of God. Andrew wanted to go in a certain direction, but my mind was set to go in another, so we split up early that day.

Walking along a row of houses that looked as if they were made of hewn stone, like those we walked by coming up the mountains, neatly made with great care, and I could tell they were built centuries ago, but still solid as the mountain they were made from. Indeed this was where the older families of the city lived, as it didn't take long to meet several people that were willing to tell the story of their history; where their ancestors came from, and how many generations had lived in the same house. These were not uneducated folks by any means, but men and women that knew the country, and why this city began ages ago, and how several of the families, still living here, had grown rich in this cross-road capital of trading. Through tradition, they had their own beliefs, but the man standing in front of me now, a Gentile named Heziriah, knew the transparency of their religion, and it was now growing old with its' worthlessness, for the elders would speak of spiritual prosperity, but nothing was happening to their followers except they were dying off. He wasn't old, but still living in the same house with his parents that were old, that looked to him now to run their affairs.

He had told me of this rather small group in town that brought into it a new message of hope, and wanted to know if I was privy to the situation.

"Sir, have you heard of the Messiah from Bethlehem that brought Truth to those that searched?" I said, but not waiting on his response. "And He that was sent by God, in fact from God, knows the end from the beginning, for He Himself is the Alpha and Omega. One that has brought proof that the living God reins. For

no other name shall be called upon for salvation, but the name of Jesus, the Christ of God. For that which man had tried to do, but could in no way do, this same Jesus conquered by the Grace of God, redeeming man back to the Father of Creation, by Love.”

This same man that was leaning upon the lintel post, now stood straight with interest gleaming from every part of his face, for the words spoken had hit an inner place in his being that began to burn with interest. And then spoke; “I have heard tales spoken about this man Paul, and of his encounter with this one you call Jesus, but have only heard through others; and from his mouth, I have heard nothing. Are you in association with Paul?”

“Paul, also a brother, and an Apostle in Christ, and I have not crossed paths until now that I have arrived in Antioch, and as of yet, we have not met, except once in Jerusalem, but there is but one Father, and one Son, and only one Spirit for all in Christ, and we speak the same one language through the same Creator of all. Those in Christ are united by the Love that God shared thru His Son; therefore we are all of the same family.”

Bending back, while looking me straight in the eyes, he smiled, as if content in my rendering of the subject, said in a low keyed tone of speech; “I know where this Paul is, if you’d like, will take you there, for I too want to hear more of this Love that is spreading throughout the country. For the words that I’m hearing that are preached about, are not that of the religious leaders that we have heard before, do you want me to take you there?”

As we began walking thru town, I could see multitudes of people about their daily chores, some would stop to speak, but most were determined to conquer their daily goals. While walking, but not more than a block or two, I saw Titus and Barnabas on the other side of the street looking in our direction, and began thinking through my flesh, that being with this man, a Gentile, might be inappropriate. Feeling flushed, and a little embarrassed, I excused myself for a few moments from him, and walked in their direction, only to see their face turn from a smile to disappointment. At that time I didn't realize that they understood exactly what I'd done, but then remembered the words that I spoke to Heziriah about the same Spirit for all who are in Christ, for both brothers in the Lord knew what I had done. At that point, I was unacceptable to myself. Especially after the Lord had given to me, those decades ago, the vision of the sheet with all manner of unclean beast in it, and I said that nothing unclean had ever entered into me. But was told to kill and eat, and call no man common, for all have been cleansed.

“What was I to do? Did I hurt Heziriah's feelings? How about Titus and Barnabas? What's God thinking about me now? My thoughts were going every which way, and far too fast to process, I just didn't know what to do, so I ran back to where I'd left the bewildered man standing in the street; but he was gone. Not knowing exactly where he was taking me, I began to wander in the same direction in hopes of finding him, or for that matter, the Apostle Paul. When younger, I'd put my foot in my mouth with my haste of words, later I'd act them out in some useless deed or motion, but that was maybe thirty years ago, and you'd think, Peter, that something would've been learned” I said to myself as I

walked aimlessly through the streets. My mind went places that it shouldn't ought to go; I was ashamed, not just of what I did, but how it came so easily.

As I continued wandering through the streets of Antioch, and some couple of hours later, I found the place that Paul was preaching, and sitting on the-out-skirts of the room, I listened. As I heard the words spoken by this once met Apostle, I could see in clearness, that for a fact, Paul had had a true encounter with the same Jesus that I and the other eleven had walked with. The words spoken by him were similar in kindness and empathy to those of Christ, even in his tone, which made me glad inside, but for obvious reasons, also deepen my embarrassment. At this moment, I began to think to myself, and evaluate the real person that lived inside of this skin I, called Simon Peter; then remembered, that I too was an Apostle, which only added to the down-hill slid I was already in, I was hurting inside. A hurt so deep, knowing one thing, but doing another, that I thought my bones would shatter. I knew I had a journey to travel, but this ache within me hurt more than when Jesus, looking at me, said; "get behind me satan." I just sat there with my chin in the palms of my hands, and my elbows on my knees, crying in self-pity for who I was.

It was probably hours that I sat there, I could hear and see what was going on, but my mind wouldn't let it register, before Barnabas came to sit beside me. He had been walking among the gathered crowd in exhortation and any other means of ministering, but said not a word, at least for a while. I believe he knew I was

hurting for some reason, not known to him, sat quietly, therefore giving me time and space to regroup before speaking.

“What do you think thus far? Barnabas said with a pleasant look that I didn’t expect.

“Right now I don’t know what to think, but this I know; Paul has an understanding of the things of God.” That was about all that I could get out, at the time.

“If you’d like, when all have gone back home, would you join the three of us over by the stone table that we use as the centerpiece?

My mind was racing much faster than the mouth could speak, and I’d felt sort of backed in a corner. Looking back, I can now see that it was me backing myself in the corner. All I could do at that point was to say “yes”.

Before all the gathered folks had left, pitch dark, still sitting in the same spot, I heard a voice over my left shoulder, it was Heziriah. “Peter, from the look on your face, I’d say you’re troubled, and I hope it isn’t from our little ordeal earlier. Things like that happen to us folks, Gentiles, all the time. I understand the segregation and disposition that we sometimes place your people in.”

This only added to my sorrows. I knew that it was his kindness that was coming out, a gentle man in every way, but to me, it was

a blunt reminder of who I was. In my youth, I had never struggled with prejudice, nor was I tempted by my peers and the pressure they put on me, I walked where I wanted to go, and did what I wanted to do. But with this defect, that was working from within my flesh, I couldn't understand, people were always people, and I've never really seen them as anything but equals. It didn't matter about the color of their skin, or their nationality, or for that matter, what they believed, but now, even though my spirit is willing, my flesh wants to segregate.

Looking back up to meet my eyes with Heziriah', all I could see was a man more godly than I'd ever hoped to become. Genuine in every way, standing there with a smile that was as big as the Orion, a man with true compassion, or he wouldn't be talking to me with that soft tone of voice. I knew that if this man could forgive me, then God would, and maybe, just maybe, I could also.

All I could say was; "thank you, maybe, with your help, we could become best of friends."

The Tables are Turning

When arriving back at our tent, the only one seen was Andrew. Him sitting there, on the ground, and leaning against some kind of tree I didn't recognize, I spoke to him that it was nice seeing another friendly face. We had chatted only a very short time before he noticed that something was troubling me, and spoke. "Is it that you're missing your wife?"

"No, it's not that", and I hesitated a long moment, "I know God had a purpose for sending me here, but right now, I'm having doubts."

"Simeon, I never would have traveled this far unless I was assured that the purpose was from God, and I am sure."

"We'll see," is all I could utter to come out my mouth.

Andrew looked at me puzzled, thought for a minute, and then spoke; "You're right, we will see, we'll see the value in God's time,

for He is the beginning and the end of all things, and this too will bring His people together, for God is not slothful.”

Later that night, Titus and Barnabas snuck up while I must have been in a trance, or at least deep in thought, and asked if I could come to Paul’s tent shortly after daylight the next morning, at Paul request, and I said I would.

It was one of those rare nights that sleep again evaded me, as I continued in thought of the ‘who’ that I am, but to no avail. I was stuck in this blindness and couldn’t see pass my own nose. At times, I’d think I was on the edge of discovery, but then the process of the tally would again elude me. It was there, almost on the tip of my tongue, but it seemed the more I thought, the more confused I was.

Long before daylight, I was up and stirring, the stars, of the last evening, had for the most part left, and a new set of them sparkled above my head, so I watched them slowly rotate while in wait of the first sign of gray as dawn announced itself. After several hours, Andrew joined me around the small fire I had kindled only an hour earlier, and we both sat quietly allowing the morning dew to settle on our shoulders. Finally, the gray gave way to the first glimmer of the sun’s rays, and I did know that this past night was gone, and gone forever, and I was glad. Was that ray of hope, or the blindness of the dark, or did I really think that I had one more new beginning as the sun crested the hill above the city? I wasn’t

feeling good, by any means, but much better than I had when the night was dealing her darkness.

Looking across the flat of the land at these groups of tents were pitched in, I could see the three men that we, or I, were to meet, which was only moments away from now. At least, I wished that Andrew was going with me. At the time, I seemed to desire his support, for at this time in my thought system, I didn't know what to think or what was going to take place.

Before I could make it all the way to Paul's camp, he was out to greet me in a very pleasant manner, his arm extended and a peaceful smile upon his face. This helped to alleviate the fear that was welling up inside, and I could now replace them with a genuine hello. Now, the last time that I'd seen Paul was many years ago in Jerusalem, and as a matter of fact, that really didn't go so well, but I loved my fellow brother in Christ and had a deep respect for what he was doing.

"Peter, I've so much looked forward to this." He said as motioning for me to sit between the other two disciples. "It's been a long journey for the both of us, and at our age we seem to take things slower."

"It's seeing you again Paul; and the road, thus far, has been worth the effort through Christ, and I guess that you can see through these gray hairs that I too, am moving a little more meticulously."

We sat and talked about our encounters, the people healed, and those delivered, and once in a while would speak about our persecutions, and about those blinded by religion that thought they were doing the world a favor with their attacks.

Paul looking up slowly, spoke even more slowly, when he said; “those without this illumination in Christ are doing what they believe they’re supposed to do, the blame is not on those instructed, but on those that instruct. And even then, through their blindness, they are not at fault, but on a mission for their belief, the blind leading the blind, for they have not the vision of Christ, and Him resurrected.” I just shook my head in agreement, as he continued. “My mission, granted to me by Christ, being a Jew by birth, am sent into the gentiles to show them a better way thru life without the burdens of the law placed on them by the religious sect of their region. For those under the law are instructed by the law, but those in Grace are no longer under the weight of the law; and we can therefore live free without that yoke.”

This same Jesus that speaks to me, speaks also to all that seek Him, I thought pleasantly as Paul was giving his preamble. This same Jesus is one in all, the same, to those that seek, knock, and ask for His, and for his indwelling. And of all the different ministries, there is but one Minister, we are all in this together. A refreshing thought I as listened to one that had also met Him face to face.

“I have met several in my journey,” I now spoke out loud, “that have had a true encounter with the Lord of all who lives, and

talking with you this beautiful morning, and hearing these words from you, is like a cool drink for a thirsty man, for the same message given to me, has also been enabled in many others of like-mind, thank you.”

Paul looked at me as if what I’d just said hit a button in his spirit, paused a few moments, and began to speak in a matter-of-fact tone, which I knew to have something in it just for me, so leaning forward, I listened with intent, but not expecting to hear what was to come from his mouth, or should I say, the mouth used by God.

“Peter, I know you to be a man of God, and from Him great works have been achieved thru you, and many of His mysteries have been revealed, but, I somewhat have aught against you. For before certain men came, you would eat with the Gentiles; but when the Jews came, you would withdraw and separate yourself, fear those who were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with you, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.”

I wasn’t expecting this kind of prolog from this man, whom I much admired, and began to hang my head in shame, and at that moment wasn’t about to say a word, I just listened, and I thought from within.

A short instant later, Paul continued. “If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of the Gentiles and not as a Jew, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews? We, who are Jews by nature, know God’s truth, and knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by faith

in Jesus Christ and not by the works of the law; for thru the works of the law, no flesh shall be justified.”

These words were hitting home, and what could I say; I sat there listening to this Apostle, surnamed Paul, tell me, an Apostle also, about the things of God with this tone of voice, but all I could think secretly was; he was right. As Paul hesitated for a long moment, with my mind racing, the best thing at this point was to put away my flesh and continue listening.

“But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, and we ourselves are found again sinners’; is then Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not. For if I again build those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I, through the law, died to the law, that I might live to God.”

My heart ached; my brain was beginning to settle down, but not without my Spirit, with the calming voice within, saying; “take heed of my sound as I nurture you thru this man.” I again began to hear as the Spirit was teaching me, but I still felt shame, not necessarily from Paul, but from the already established knowledge of Jesus’ words that lived within.

As Paul, now sitting, seeming to relax a little, lowering his voice a notch below the already proven efficiency of his words, continued again to speak, with a look of sincerity, and said. “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set

aside the Grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”

“What could I say?” I thought, but have not yet spoken a word as yet, for I knew these words to be true, and I’d known it from our experience at Pentecost. I had already known from the inside that what I was doing was done away with by the vision at Cornelius’ house, but my attitudes of pleasing others to gain status hit me in a place I could no longer avoid. All that was said was true, and now I had to own it. My shame began to melt into a firmness of Spirit that I thought long ago was established, but evidently not, but this seed fell on the good ground of my being.

Titus and Barnabas were still sitting only feet away and heard every word spoken, and it was plain to see that Barnabas too felt the impact of this reprimand, for his head hung low of the reprisal just heard.

Paul, evidently a gentleman in every way, sat quietly, and with no foulness of expression, waited for all this to sink in, as I began to look one way, and then another, before I spoke. The air was not filled with bitterness, as I would have expected in my earlier years, but a peace from pain of the establishment of Gods’ Truth in a man that sought to grow, and I did. For the last, more than several, weeks, God was preparing me for this visit in Antioch, and at the time, had no idea that it might be for this purpose, or am I supposing, but still as yet, the full impact of this learning session, hasn’t fully sunk in.

What could I say, at least at this point in the postscript, I thought with no facial or contrary response, for all that needed said, Paul said it; I had wronged more than a few, but more importantly, I had wronged the Grace in which I'd lived. So I said nothing, at least for a space of some minutes, before getting up, walking to Barnabas, and apologizing to his face; for of a truth, I was sorrowful and had shamed myself with this immature behavior.

Paul knew what this meant, and also knew that the words that, I'm sure, he too toiled with, had taken root and was accepted. And as I turned around, looking in his direction, I could see a glimmer of a smile in the corners of his mouth, with relief now settling upon the face, he knew that this dreaded analogy was from God and had to be spoken.

For the next couple of days, I thought it wise to stay to myself in prayer, and allowing the seed planted, to grow. There were times of turmoil, times of gladness, times that seemed dark, but after all the deciphering, I had an appreciation for the mercy that was shown by God to me through Paul. This was one of those rare events in life, that is, this trial of my nonsense that I had performed in just about every city I'd gone too, and the lesson learned, and learned well, was well worth every pain and humiliation endured that I put myself through; for as of now the tables had turned once again in my life, and now am therefore much farther in my walk with the Lord.

Then after these days of inventorying and cleaning out these, and a few more, skeletons out of my inner cloke, I discovered a man, that for the first time, truly sought the will of God without inhibitions. I am the beginnings of a man, with a reach much farther than the one that had walked these many miles; for more of the blinders were removed, the air clearer, and my focus was much more on the journey yet to come, and not on me.

After these days, Paul again came to me with words, and I again listened with no anxiety, but glad to hear whatever tidings he brings,

“Peter, not many months ago I learned from God a truth that might be helpful to you, an understanding of a factor that has made a tremendous difference in my thinking. And I’d like to share it with you, if I may.”

“Being Apostles in Christ together gives each a privilege that cannot be broken by man, nor principalities, nor of any who are not Christ minded; “speak on.” I said in a clear and assertive voice, for now, nothing will detour me from learning all I can of Truth.

“As we ponder on the things of God, we sometimes wrongly divide His word of Truth, for that of the flesh, is temporal, a carnal thing to consume upon that flesh; and that of the Spirit is not given to be wasted on the carnal aspect of man, but is sent as an exhortation to the eternal man within.” Paul paused a few seconds, and looked to me with smiles, his hands clasped and leaning slightly forward to me in meekness. “The ‘who’ of man is temporal and always earth bound, always seeking earth ways; but

the 'what' of man is that which was given by God for His glory and must not be confused with the 'who' that we think we are. The 'who' is that which this world has created thru the people we know, our parents, all that in our environment, it is made up of the strengths and weakness of man." Paul said as he now moved a little closer to me, but still smiling that genuine grin, and paused again as he sat on a half burnt log next to our pit.

"The 'who' of man only matters in this world, but God can use that 'who' whenever he wishes; but remember, it is restrained by the dimensions of this world, the dust of this earth, and has but little effect concerning the things of God. For God can make the stones cry out in worship, or can make a dumb donkey speak, or even turn rocks into the children of Abraham; all can and are used by the Lord, we are limited, but He is not. But the 'what' of man is that which was made a new creature thru Christ; and all value is bestowed upon it; the 'what'."

My Spirit began to blend with these words, and it was like a hand reaching into my bowls to unplug that which was constrained. These were new words to me, but were received as if I'd known them all my life, and, another part of my emptiness was being filled with the Spirit, and began to overflow through my being as I spoke. "The 'who' that I am, is as filthy rags, and has no righteousness of itself, but that which was planted by Christ in man, 'the what', has from the beginning, been righteous." This was like the time in Pentecost, when no thoughts of my own proceeded from my mouth, just the fullness of the Spirit as He flowed thru me.

“The ‘who’, that which was given by man,” I continued speaking, “has but temporal value, but the ‘what’ was given to each by Christ, and the indwelling of the ‘what’ that I am, and that alone, matters, to those that truly seek Him. We are the Sons of God, created from the foundations of the world, children designed for purpose, His righteousness, for of truth; God is the ‘what’ of man, His son. And He desires a relationship with each.

Paul knew that I knew, and that was all that was said, we hugged a long time, and without a word, both of us turned to go our designated way, and left walking. The table had truly turned. The self-pity that had, had far too much of a hold on me, was now gone, I was delivered.

What's on the Next Hill

The goings on of Antioch was no worse for wear because of my arrival, for I'd made amends to all that I hurt with my shenanigans, and now awaited the eastern sky to announce itself with new beginnings, so I could once again head in the northwest direction.

A few weeks ago, the time Paul confronted me, was once again one of those experiences in life that can turn one's life around and be a true blessing of prosperity, and for a fact, it was for me. Heziriah had become a very dear friend to me, and I to him, his heart had been unchallenged with the pride of prejudice, and a man slow to anger; therefore, forgave me before I could get the whole apology out of my mouth. He was very instrumental in the advance of my growth, and I think kind people, such as him, know that as an end result, for patience will give a man much of what he'd never receive without it. So between him, Paul, and several others of this city, this Peter was a changed man, or at least honestly changing, and the roads ahead, and that ones left behind,

are the building blocks of my new life; and I was excited. You know, once in a while during our life, things happen in greatness, or at least what we call greatness, and less than a handful of events such as this, have happened to me. Meeting my wife was the first, and certainly when meeting the Christ of God, but the reprimand given to me by God thru Paul was one of those moments that has internally changed my life forever, and ranks within the same group of special highlights of my days.

John had already left us journeying south and west, and now Andrew had decided to go back towards Galilee. We'd discussed this in detail for the last couple of days, and he wanted me to go also, but I couldn't; for God had plans for me, and in no way was I going backwards. Writing letters, and giving him messages, everything was set for him and me to depart as friends, as well as brothers. Andrew was dear to me, and I knew that the rest of my journey was for me alone, and I was glad that he carried letters to the ones I'd left, and that, I could trust. We hugged, exchanged exhortations, and as the sun lifted to full view, we both began in our separate directions.

Just writing the long letter to my wife made me feel close to her, for love has no boundaries, nor can distance hinder it, but in the letter, I could say things that only she could hear.

I know not what awaits me as I travel to Philippi by way of Troas, but I do know that God reigns more abundantly from within me. My soul is now at rest, as I have given it to the Spirit that dwells in me, and that marriage alone, the soul and spirit, can bring nothing but peace.

The genesis of this journey, now beginning, will take three weeks, and that is if all goes well. I have been supplied, given maps, and been well versed on the terrain; and from Troas, there is still much farther to go; and with anticipation, and this new revelation, I'm looking forward to it. Now knowing that God punishes not, but loves his children, even with their faults, gives me a zeal for the road ahead and the plans that God has stored for me in this adventure. All self-pity has been put aside, for the flesh of Peter continues dying, I was now walking on the south side of a long mountain range that leads past the half-way point of this journey, and I am excited.

This path that I follow is wide enough for three men to walk abreast, at least in most places, but not nearly as traveled as the road that led from the south to Antioch. Since there was a far distance between these two cities, not many purchased its' path, I was for the most part, traveling alone, which suited me just fine. Many new thoughts and recollections traveled with me through my mind, which began again to take the form of the mind of Christ, and having this quiet time with just me, I also set an adventure within my heart that was sorely needed. I prayed, sang, and sometimes I'd dance, for with this new renaissance, I was regenerating with every step.

The first group of people I met was tired from their venture, for they had weeks of fumbling foot steps behind them and were now in a state of exhaustion, but very friendly. We sat and talked for an hour or two, and for the most part, talked about the road behind them, and its' relentless miles of nothingness. I think they thought me to be nuts, but said very little about it, and by the side-ways smiles of their faces, I could tell they were somewhat amused of my need to dance and rejoice, as I gave them the short version of the resurrected Christ. They listened, but not profusely, but then again, maybe a seed was planted.

Miles lay ahead, and every one of them lay as a path within my heart to study to show myself approved, for God has already shown His approval. With each step I seemed to understand the approval in which all, which already has in God thru Christ, that is, in that event of that dreadful day of His crucifixion, has already been paid for by Him, and has been given to all. Love, and I mean the true and real kind of Love, conquers everything, every deed, every ill of man, but all that the religious leaders want to use to hold us to, and their misguided attempts to control man, are a far cry from it; we are free, and free indeed.

At an earlier point in my life, the confrontation from Paul would have felt inexcusable, but as it was, God had prepared me inwardly to receive it as a blessing, a true life changing event, a forum that I can now stand upon, for in truth, I was guilty. The guilt too, cannot, nor will not bring anything but growth, all things work together for good to those who Love the Lord, and Love Him I do.

The road, at times, was rugged, the scenery beautiful, the people met, well, let me say they were of a different breed but entertaining. The temperature just right, for I enjoyed every breath of air these lungs were filled with. And it had taken but thirteen days to reach Troas, my first real stop for these legs that just didn't seem to get tired in any way, and I was refreshed with energy as when the first day I'd left. I would meet people and some would pause long enough to chat awhile, but most were in a hurry for this road behind me was made for the determined and the business folks, for to travel it, one would most likely have to enjoy the solitude or be bored with the loneliness. For in that three hundred mile stretch, only every day or two would one walk by another traveler, and in most cases, it would be as one of those I just described. But being in Troas was quite different, as this was a seafaring town built right on the shore of the Great Sea, just south of the Straights of a lesser sea before it entered into the Black Sea, and in nowhere that these feet had taken me, had I seen such large and lavish ships.

I'd made it to this first city of maritime in two days less than was told it would take, and had to take no immediate rest upon my arrival.

It was almost daily that some ship would enter port, or one would leave, for from here one could reach the far ends of the earth, or at least I believe, and had heard talk that ships sometimes sailed to Caesarea, just north and west of Jerusalem. "What an easy way to travel", was my first thought; but then again, look at what I would have missed.

The people here were friendly; most, I had something in common with, as far as being on boats, but the fish here were far different than those of my home sea, and the sailors, maybe a little tougher. But it took not an hour before meeting a man that looked as if he'd been raised by the sea, as tough as a rock, and very animated in his tales of the sea. We talked for hours, and some of the stories told might have been true, but for the most part, I think they were designed for entertainment, as this port served as his refuge and his deposit of seafaring rubbish that wasn't heard, or couldn't tell to the ones he sailed with. But I thought him a man of interest with the way the arms were used to express, sometimes in great detail, the whole of the story.

To say the least about this city by the sea, I was amused, sometimes saddened, but always anticipating something new around each corner or across the street that would hold my interest.

I didn't stay in Troas but less than a week, seemed there were so many different kinds of gods that they couldn't understand, much less come together in and to separate one from the other, and had but little time to hear of our true and our living God; so I left.

Sailing on a ship that navigated northwest, a two day journey that weekly ferried folks to and from Neapolis, a town just south of Philippi, I was again feeling at home in my element. Now Philippi was cradled next to the mountains that ran close to the sea, but not in it, a far safer place for the folks of that area to plant themselves, for the mountains provided most of their protection, at least from storms. Things happened in that town, and some of

them were life changing. I had a story to tell and at times people would gather to listen, and most of what I'd say had been heard before, so I guess God sent me to follow up and water, that which had already been planted. For the words of Jesus Christ was readily accepted; and many were eager to hear more, as I would sit, and sometimes walk among them preaching Him crucified, and resurrected.

For the next three years, what I did was; go where the Spirit led me, sometimes teaching, sometimes learning, for the Holy Spirit was continually working from within the marrow of my being. About the time that I'd think it was my turn to teach or preach, in reality, it would be my turn to learn, for God expressed Himself through diverse means, sometimes from within, but many times through statements made by the folks I thought were there to learn. In truth, I was there to learn. I was challenged in every corner of my life, for many times, again, I'd look for Him thru the front door, but God would slip in thru the back, it was always exciting to see what was next.

Anyway, those three years were great. I traveled to just about every city and seaport of that region, and several times to the far away ones, once even going to Rome, but not for long stay. As God would move me from one village or town to the next, even the tent cities were not to be endured for long. I never did return back home, and several times I could send messages, but only twice received them. This was the reason I was born and tutored for, I'm convinced, and with all the many defects in me that had to be

combed out, I now sense that I'm prepared for these days and those ahead.

I met masses of folks during my trekking across more than a few countries, many different ethnic groups, several languages, countries of little people, and some villages of almost larger than life people, and no matter where I went, all seem to have their own particular ceremonies of another man-made god. These obstacles were what all the years of grooming were for, in the Spirit, nothing could detour me from that which I was sent for.

Although most of the people were not affected by my Words of hope, but then again; many were. God's Spirit moved within and among every step I took, either healing them, or purifying me. What a great time and place to be alive.,

Looking back to see Forward

After many years of travel, and many trials and tribulations, and the aging of my body, I began to spend much more time alone, and when I say alone, I mean with just the Lord beside me. Spending weeks in the wilderness with the few birds and the many crawling creatures, I would look back in depth at the preparation God has made for me and those that would listen to His Word. The things taught by Jesus, remembered but not absorbed, began now to take root, especially the past hand full of years. I would go sometimes more than a month and not hear a human voice, it was just me and the flavors and sounds that God would lay at my feet, that was riveting me to His Truth.

Times were good in those days, and I guess it was the mellowing of my soul, and the marriage between the soul and spirit, that put me in tune with His Presence. Some days I would hear nothing, but

on occasion, His revelations would come at me with an explosion of Truth, that at times thought I could not contain them and their beauty. I could remember, in detail, all that happened during those three years of walking with Jesus, the tone of His voice, the waving of His hand, and every syllable that proceeded from his mouth. And gradually as my mind and body slowed down, I was positioned to hear again for the first time. People have tendencies to organize, and institutionalize any and everything that they perceive as a foundation, and what was spoken by me, had nothing to do with religion, it was a way of Life, and founded on Truth. So He kept me traveling. And to break these barriers of religion in the folks met, were sometimes impossible, but on more than a hand full of times, they'd listen with their hearts. People's lives were changing, especially mine, and the warmth from seeing those changes was more fuel for the spirit than I'd ever imagined.

Once, I'd heard that Paul was imprisoned, and twice I was; but this is what comes with the territory of forwarding Gods' Kingdom; and I accepted it. If one bucks the system of their many gods, then the tendency is to attack those that they perceive to be a threat, and more than a couple of times, I escaped with only my life. But God was there with me through it all.

Through all the decades of my life, and the times that I managed to make enemies, and at times, that was often, I now look back to see that the only enemy that was ever begotten, was me. For of a truth, seeing now what I had done then, my antics of the flesh, and my reactions to others, were the only adversary that was truly beheld, it was all me. No, I'm not ashamed of these years

of foolery, my past, just happy that they were caught now, rather than never, for growing up, to some, is not an everyday occurrence. And without this walk, I tremble to see the man that I could have made of myself, 'oh wretched man that I am,' but God through His mercy saw to put an end to that, or should I say me. For my flesh is dying.

Those three years were wonderful in every way, the people met and the challenges of the different cultures were all accepted, as for this time, I was prepared for all that lied ahead. Most of my flesh had been burned off, and the real Peter, the one that God created from the beginning, was now being revealed, and I liked it.

I'd missed my wife and the life that I'd left behind, but not to the point that regrets were apprehended. I loved, and still love my family back in Galilee, but the genuine folks met, and the Hope that is now raised in them, and me, was worth every day that was spent away, and by the message received from her, she felt the same. ...These were now my family.

My wife was not the kind to sit idle, for God spoke to her also, and with great might. Not only was she too learning, but was one to pass it on, and many others received the Grace and Mercy of God through her. We were on the same page. So in these 'old age' years, I am content to know that what is happening was engineered to happen, and neither of us would change a thing.

Many a mass of people were met in these three years of my nomadic travels, and the migration of God's word was carried by and thru me, and several others that I know did the same. I would,

at times, hear an exhortation about John or Andrew, and this too would ignite me to glorify God, for it was only for the purpose of His Kingdom that we were sent. Lowly and common men and women were used in this forwarding, and none had any particular talent to do so, but then looking quietly about this matter, God always seemed to use the simply things of life to confound the so-called wise. And it always amazed me to see how great of an effect God could raise through unrefined folks, that, in no obvious way, could be set apart from any other, but still stir such unusual miracles.

Many people tried to mimic those that were anointed to spread this Gospel, and often would attempt to make money from it, but only those of a pure heart were used, and there were no gimmicks attached. How and why He uses me is still something I've yet discerned, but this I know; my heart yearns to know all I can know of this beautiful God that we serve. The things I've seen, the folks healed, the ones delivered from all diverse conditions, and just simply those that grow in the Truth of His Love, never ceases to astound me, and never was a step taken by these feet with regret.

It was mid-summer, I was either sixty-two or sixty three, my beard now matched the hair on my head, completely grey with the exception of my eye-brows, that now had a touch of the youthful black still remaining, and I sat under a Carob tree pondering. A scorpion played, or fought, whichever the case may be, with

another of the same species, but twice his size, as I sat in the shade with no one for miles around me. I was in the area of Bithynia, some two day journey south of the Black Sea, where the climate was a little more tolerable, and grass was much more abundant from the plentiful rainfall of this region. It was obvious the smaller of the two fighting creatures, began this battle with his desire to keep what territory he possessed from being overtaken by the larger, and somewhat superior but clumsy other one, with his right claw missing. I watched this war between the two for a half hour, before my mind began to wander in the direction of the time that the twelve of us walked with Jesus.

None of us knew much of the scriptures, except of the stories told by our elders, and I think some of them were embellished a little, just for the factor of entertainment. We weren't very smart, but made up for it with our zeal, at least I, and I'm sure the others, wanted to know all that could be known about living this abundant Life that Jesus spoke about.

He'd teach and we would listen. The words were coming from our Christ, there meanings deep and solid, but my apprehension, and my comprehension of them were very limited, but all that was said was stored in the marrow of my spirit for later retrieval. So I sit here in this battle zone contemplating some of the goings-on of those days, and of their meanings that have slipped by me through the years.

If the Sabbath was to be kept Holy, why were so many of the deeds done, and places gone, so often done on that day? I studied this for years until seeing that of a truth, the Sabbath was made for

man, and not man for the Sabbath, and the Son of man is Lord, even of the Sabbath, and then it came to me; Jesus is the Sabbath. Anyway, I sat those days under the shade of that Carob tree thinking of the things said and deeds done and gleaning what I could from those days of remarkable wonder. Maybe I sat a week, but then again, maybe it was two or three, the Spirit was flowing thru me, and all I did was relax in His presence, as He gave values to that which wasn't gained in those earlier years.

He'd talk of the scribes and Pharisees, and more than once called them vipers or hypocrites, and for years I had somewhat of a hate for them, but then realized that the Pharisee is inside of each of us, that desires to be seen, in which we all have. Those that want the attention of others, (look close inside and see we all do,) and to be recognized for our good works, the scribe wants to keep record of all of what we call, 'our own good deeds.' I came to realize that it's not the people we hate; it's usually the things they do that remind us of those same things in our own lives that we hate. Not always, but often, it's our own faults seen in someone else that is despised, and rather than to admit this, we only see the splinter in their eye, while having a log in our own.

The way I see it; Jesus never met a person He didn't love, whether they be a prostitute, a thug liken to Matthew, a thief liken unto Judas, someone sick or unclean in spirit, or maybe someone like Andrew and I that smelled of fish, He counted them all the same. The things these afore mentioned people did, was not even remotely close to that which was done by my actions and words, for only one of us did as I; deny Him, but I did it three times, which

is completely inexcusable; but he still so dearly loved me. I'm not sure if there is any deed worse than denying Christ, not murder or theft, nor any such deed, but I did it, I did it completely, but I never lost favor in my Lords' heart. He loves us, because He Loves, not for who we are, or what we do, but because of creation. Nothing can separate any from the love of God.

Jesus can see past the flesh of man, and placed no emphasis on the carnal things of the flesh, save those that reflected the inner man of each. Did he hate the Pharisee? God forbid; it was that outward symbol of the inward work, that which desires the notoriety and praises of men, and wants to be seen, that His words came against. And not one of us are guiltless in this behavior.

It was not then, nor now, that Jesus spoke of the pharisee as other folks, and that of vipers, and the hypocrite that lives in those that still live in the flesh. For to walk in the Spirit is to put off that old man, letting him die, as those in the wilderness were forced to do, and then, and only then, can we cross that river Jordan, allowing Joshua, (meaning Jesus), to lead those children of God, and entered into the land of 'milk and honey', the Kingdom of God. This Kingdom, given to us by God, is not somewhere beyond the blue of our sky, but is, and now, available to all, all that will lay down his carnal life and follow the only Son worthy of praise.

The Words of our Lord, wrongly divided, will in most cases, speak to the unwise about the other guy, replacing the truer and deeper value that the parable represents, which is the inner being of ourselves. The flesh of man is rotten, inferior in its weakness, and has but greed and selfishness as its existence and will decipher

meanings from the 'old man' in which it's made of. And for years, I too, thought in this manner of evaluations, as Simeon (myself), kept getting in the way of Peter, but as I began to get quiet, I then could hear as the Spirit gave me His utterance, and only then, did I begin to rightly divide His Word of Truth.

Therefore, let us look back and remember those Words spoken by our Lord, when talking about the scribes and pharisees. "The scribes and pharisees want to sit in Moses' seat, (Judging by the law). Therefore whatever they tell you to do, observe and do, but do not do in accordance to their works, (the flesh), for they say but do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on other men's shoulder, (It is our flesh speaking), but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. They love the best places of the feast, and the best seats in their assemblies, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by a title. But you; do not be called by a title, nor any label of nobility; for One is the teacher, the Christ..."

"But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever exalts himself, (again, speaking of the flesh of man), will be humbled, and he that humbles himself, (puts away the flesh), shall be exalted."

The flesh, or carnal state of man, can never bring glory to God, for that is something that I'd thought, and the world also, for the world gives to her own, and that being a facade of glory, but when the rains came, washed it away. But when the Spirit speaks or

acts, it is to bring glory to the One that is worthy, Christ Jesus. Therefore, let us now continue in what the lord said, remembering His words about the pharisees, and that it is really speaking of the carnal, earthly, ways of man.

“But woe unto you scribes and pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the Kingdom of God against men, for you neither go in, nor do you allow those that are entering, to go in...And for a pretense, you make long prayer. Therefore you will,(your flesh) receive greater condemnation...You travel land and sea to win one conversion, and when he is won, you make him twice as much the son of flesh, as yourselves...For you pay tithe of mint...and have neglected the weightier.” The weightier is that which is asked for, or given by the Holy Spirit. The flesh, above all things, is wretched and seeks its own, and can in no way be trusted with the oracles of God.

Now, as we continue a little farther, let us endure to consider who the pharisee of each man is.

“Blind guides, who strain out the gnats and swallow a camel! Woe to you pharisee, hypocrite, for you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortions and self-indulgences...For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead bones and all uncleanness.” Now look inside of yourself to see where this pertains.

Much time was given by our Lord as he expounded on this subject, and I believe it's because the tree of most of our troubles are

rooted there. Again, if we think He's developing aught against the scribes and pharisees, and not see that it's the way men think as truth, then, it is a life lost to that reasoning. For He Himself is the Way, Truth, and Life, and no other door shall we enter, only by Him, and His Word. As we continue.

“Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your assemblies and persecute from city to city.”

Anyway, as I still sit under the shade of this Carob tree, still watching as the two scorpion's battle to obtain what they think is their right to be there, hoping the intruder is laid to rest by that which is right. For this small scene is what's got me to thinking about the war that goes on between the flesh and the Spirit. The pharisee in every man, wars against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the pharisee, the flesh, and as long as man thinks himself right and honorable in his own ways, he fails; then failure is all that can occur. The flesh will render all that it owns, but nothing in the flesh is more than filthy rags, except that of which the Spirit does thru it.

These last days of mine are not as eventful as in the days of old, but far more enlightening, and of greater pleasure; for the slower I go, the faster I get there.

Under the Shade

It has not rained in these few weeks of sitting under this same Carob tree, the sky cloudless, the temperature couldn't be better, and not a thought in my mind was sheltered from the Truth. The battle between the insect of claws and stingers, have long since played out, and the outcome not recognized, for in life, the one that owns, sometimes loses. Bigger doesn't necessarily mean better, and ownership doesn't necessarily mean the right to own. In this life, contained in the cosmos, stuff wasn't made to come to pass the way each thought it should, nor should it, for if we get what we want, what challenges are left? Those of us that see ourselves through an out-of-body experience; can look inwardly with objection and honesty, will understand that reaching beyond the known, moves us forward. It's not a matter of which scorpion won, it only matters what's done with the results, whether we think we lose or come out on top, matters none, but what can be done with what's left can, at times, changes a person's life forever.

So I remain in this same place pondering on Life, and what God can use in it to teach me to live Life more abundantly.

For the things that I'd thought were good or right, seemed to have been the other way around, and that which I believed to be wrong or bad, seemed to have always taught me something that made a true inward change, again turning me around. For Jesus spoke, and spoke often, about the first being last; and the last were made to be first. This was a hard saying for me in those years preceding, and after His death, for this ideal was not taught before He was revealed, therefore, at times, when we think that all has been overcome, the Truth begins to expose itself with a completely different discloser.

He that tries saving his life; that is with his own efforts, will lose it, but those of us willing to lose our life for His sake, will then be shown the Truth in abundant living. I now see that that which I thought to be right, as in the time when I cut off the ear of the priest's servant, was what I thought, without considering what the Lord thought, and needless to say, what the servant thought. But was quickly shown the error of my ways, but gently, when wholeness was returned back to him by Jesus, with the exact opposite of the ramblings of my mind.

My heart was steered one way, and then at the same time, my mind another direction; and all this going on within me was accepted as normal, but when the teachings of Christ were revealed and accepted, and began to be mind placed in its' rightful position, then what was left was a cool drink from the stream, on a

hot summer's day. It had seemed that the more I relaxed, the more the Truth began to be revealed.

It is now close to dark, as only a hint of gray hung over the haze that began to form in the valley below; and the understandings discovered within the quietness of my heart, flowed as if music resonated thru my spirit, I was at peace. Like David, my cup began to run over.

I'll admit that in my younger years, and while admitting, just some few years back, I saw the parables and doings of Jesus from the outer view, and now can say with certainty; I had missed, back then, most of the deeper Truths. Seeing the pharisee within each man, that is ourselves, is not a harsh thing, but a fact; for none of us escape the fact that the flesh of man has no lasting value. And understanding that the flesh wants to be known, is superficial, even in its core, and cannot in any wise resist to be seen, except that Christ begins to rein, and that is not just some people, but all. For laying down our lives to follow Him, is then, to take that 'old man', the pharisee, sitting him aside and walking away from the selfish wants, while changing the way we think, and then following Him that is the only begotten Son of God, which we also are sons. Can the pharisee enter into the kingdom of God? The answer is no. For flesh and blood cannot enter, but since the will of the flesh will never be allowed, and as long as he prevails, we cannot in this life see the true value of His Kingdom. When our flesh dies, the pharisee goes with him, and only Spirit remains, but in this life, as long as the pharisee exits, we can only have existence, but without

victory. The pharisee represents the man that cannot evolve into that which God has created all to be.

Liken unto what we just spoke about; the parable of the ten virgins, is likewise of the same way of thinking, that is, changing our mind, (repenting), is one and the same, and must also be viewed from within. All these years, I was thinking it was about getting in, or, so-to-speak, missing the boat, but it too relates to the flesh that wars against the Spirit from within man.

There were ten virgins called for into a wedding, five foolish, and five wise, and even though this parable, when given to us by Jesus, has an earthly meaning, it was many years later before I began to understand the truer and deeper value of it, for the parable itself, was speaking to me, about me. It starts off as:

“The Kingdom of heaven is likening to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish.” Let’s me stop for a moment and point out that ‘five’ means the five senses of man, and it is evident that all ten were in their flesh, but five of them were consumed with it, foolish, that is, the flesh; and other five understood a deeper esoteric value that goes beyond the superficial, and called wise in the way they think, or see things.

“Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.”

And at midnight a cry was heard: 'behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out and meet him!' Again I stop, mostly to show others the error of the way, that for more than a decade, I understood this the wrong way out, and in fact, didn't comprehend it at all until my life slowed down enough to begin to see a far more profound significance. The oil represents a valued substance, things of the Spirit, a deeper way of thinking and viewing the things of this world. The foolish took 'their lamps', (a means of light), that is; a desire to have a different way of viewing life, but did not take that of which makes it glow, (the oil), rendering it useless. All ten slept, and all heard the midnight call to come to the bridegroom, and since he was delayed, for whatever of the many reasons, five took not the time or willingness for preparation.

Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise. Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out. But the wise answered saying; 'no, lest there be not enough for us and you, but go rather to those that sell, and buy for yourselves.'" They all arose, and again, all wanted a better life, or more properly said; a deeper way of viewing life, so all ten trimmed their lamps, (the product of enlightening), but five made no progress in the development of the way they thought, so had no reference, no desire for insight. To light their lamps, just having only the lamp, which is worthless without that different way of understanding life, a deeper approach to its truer meanings; the oil, they were blind to follow in the darkness because of it.

"And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those that were ready went in with him to the wedding, and the door was

shut. Afterwards, the other virgins came also, saying; Lord, Lord, open to us! But he answered and said: 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.'" Look here, and see that which I'd also missed. First of all the five foolish was sent back to the world in which they were so much involved with, and were told to have them, the earthly way of thinking, to correct their problem, which it can't. And through some other means of thinking found what they thought was the invited wedding, but weren't allowed in because of that thinking. They viewed life from its outward form, worldly way of thinking, and had no inward revelation of the richness of the Spirit, and were told that only those that understand Truth are within; and so were rejected. Not because they weren't as special, God forbid, but because they possessed not the esoteric understanding of Truth, and entering in would be impossible, and even if they could, which they can't, would have zero knowledge of what was going on. Lacking the Spirit of Truth was a decision which was never ventured. The door was shut, but notice here, that the bridegroom didn't shut it, they shut it on themselves.

When Jesus gave us this parable, and all the others, each of us acted as if they were understood, when in fact, they weren't, but retained in our hearts for the right display of meaning, or rather when we were able to grab a hold on them. In my early thirties I heard, in my mid-forties I began to develop into them, so I thought, but not until my late fifties did I truly apprehend each parable for what it truly was; a story about me.

John and Matthew spent a lot of time discussing these stories of ancient language, and often attempted to divide them in the text

of what a parable really is; and at times, I would join in, and discerning little, but I still kept them stored in my heart.

So every now and again, I would ponder on the values of such stories of old, the parables, and again thought them to be for their face value, and would often see a resemblance between those people talked about, and me, but could not put it together; that it was about me, until my life slowed down enough to listen. For intellectually I heard, and received little, but when heard thru the Spirit, it all began to make sense, for then that seed that was planted, germinated, initiated into growth, until its' sprout burst thru, that even in spite of the flesh, they grew through. For even in my mind, that is my earthly mind, had grasped this new and startling meaning of Life, and even now I see these values thru the dawning of a new day. Wonder what's left to behold?

There were days, and several of them, that we'd go to Jesus and asked why He would speak to us in parables, and He answered and said unto us: *"Because it has been given unto you to know the mysteries of heaven, but them, others, it has not been given. For whosoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. Therefore, I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see..."*

Back then, the time I was listening, he said that I was hearing and seeing, but of a truth, I had little knowledge of what was being

spoken, and at that time; knowing Him, I believed it to be true, with little knowledge of the teachings; and thinking Him, I was to be in error, but instead, these sayings, in spite of my thinking, were being hid in my heart, and Jesus knew it. I was being blessed, even without the understanding of being blessed, sometimes I wish that He was still here so I could thank Him, and then I realize; He is.

Again looking at the parable of the sower, once again, in these later years, I seized the deeper meaning of the true value of what was really being said. I'd like to take a look at it from a different prospective than what I once heard a man, calling himself a preacher, stand before a crowd and disseminate countless hours about. I had met this particular man several times earlier, and knew him to sell himself, or rather the Gospel, for profit, a profound clairvoyant. In one event, as walking close to his quarters, I saw and heard him rehearsing to the wind his next day sermon, shaping each word to look as if what was being preached about, was true, but in fact, when God gives, the words come as if natural from the Spirit. Anyway, I'd like to look at this parable of the sower with the prospective of what God has been teaching me, and maybe see if I can shed a little light from a different angle.

Jesus spoke as us twelve were gathered listening, and, at the time, not fully understanding, but again storing, waiting on His later guidance. *"Behold, a sower went out to sow (seed), and as he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and the birds came and devoured them. Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up they were scorched, and*

because they had no root they withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choke them. But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

To hear this parable, and to understand it as a farmer sowing seed, has but little value, and probably, in itself, as of how to plant, was not something that Jesus was concerned about. So as I began to think on this, a new revelation initiated new growth in me. And besides, the word seed was never mentioned by Him. My idea was; if Jesus spoke about it, the words were worth listening to, for idle talk was not something He did. That meant to me, at least in my way of consideration, that since most of all that was spoken by Him was in the forwarding of the Kingdom of God, or you could say, the Kingdom of Heaven - the same thing; I would listen.

By-the-way, what I've seen in my study of the parables has not been rehearsed, nor do I speak to the sky, but instead, this is the very thing talked about wherever I go, and at times, sometimes often; folks understood.

Let me establish that this and the other parables were about the Kingdom that God has set into place, not necessarily for the life beyond, but as life now, as He establishes His Kingdom in each for our walk on this earth.

As previously mentioned, Jesus told us, when asked, that parables were given so those that sought the Truth and would

hear, leaving all others to only hear the surface, and in the above parable He authenticates this to all by giving its' interpretation.

“Therefore hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the Kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches it away what was sown in his heart. This is he that received seed by the wayside. But he who received seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Now he who received seed among thorns is he who hears the word, but the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. But he who receives seed on good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces some a hundred, some sixty, some thirty.

Whether it is rocky ground, thorns, or even the wayside, I see different aspects of the same man, different emotional and physical properties that man, either of himself or through his environment, has been placed in him thru this world of attitudes and viewpoints. A part of man, which is given by God as natural, wants to hear that which He is speaking, and so hungers for His voice, but when heard, is easily overridden by the wickedness and doubts of this world.

The man whose ears and heart are of stony ground, readily hears Gods' Word and immediately receives It with joy, but has no depth in his heart because the fears and worries, or even the opinions from others, stumbles by the never ending, unrelentless

darts that are thrown by this world and its problems. Although stone is use as a foundation, and at times, these tribulations can bring about change, it is also resistant to weathering with its hardness, and some say coldness. This particular part of man has no room to set roots, therefore rises quickly, and withers just as rapidly.

The cares of this world and all that it persuades to offer is represented by the thorns; for the sacrifice the world asks for is at the expense of merited living, and will never suffice. The riches that one seeks need not be extravagant, for it the seeking that debilitates, and thus causing a belief in the world's deceitfulness, again choking out God's Word with its' lies.

Although God is a jealous God, he chooses not to compete with the world that is called enmity, and does not reveal His mysteries to those that choose otherwise. Therefore, whether His seed fell on the wayside, stones, or among our thorns, Gods' secrets will not be revealed until we turn from the old man that lives within our flesh, and then back to Him, from whence we came.

Each child, man, or woman, is created in the image of God, in His similitude, and have been given, what has been described; good ground, and therefore worthy to turn back to that right to obtain all of His formulation since creation, the right to be called the sons of God. That part of man, the part not involved in their flesh, who can hear His Word and indeed bear fruit and, produce after our own kind. We then have root in ourselves that produce fruit that remains; good ground. There are four different types of ground represented here, all of the same man; may it be you or

me, that expose itself at one time or another, but the harmony of the 'good ground' is that place where man and God are one.

As long as man lives in his flesh, and caters to it, and allows its selfish desires to be attended too, we therefore are living under the rules of the flesh, and this will always fall under one of the categories of wayside, stony, or thorny ground. But when that which is sown falls upon our 'good ground', it is received with joy and understanding that remains.

Every man born; was born to walk with God, and even those that forsake Him, or even desecrate Him, have the same void, the same emptiness, the same loneliness that yearns to be one with Him, and searches, and at times unwillingly searches, for the same reconciliation with the God that created us. We are His children, and, somewhere or sometime, every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that Jesus is the Christ and Lord of all.

So I say, that whether it be of thorny ground, or rocky ground, or even the wayside of our lives, if we understand these different aspects of our lives, we are then positioned to find our good ground with reconciliation, and are much more able to allow his Word to fall upon that already fertile garden of our being.

A person doesn't have to have an expanded knowledge of the things of God, nor does he have to hear from Him daily to be prepared 'good ground', but he does have to turn loose of this world and the smokescreen of what it pretends to offer, and have an inward yearning for the things of God; His seed.

Jesus said that the Kingdom of God is in our heart. Not out yonder, but here within the living man. Those that ask, seek, and knock upon His door; revelations begin to flow.

Where did my Life go?

I must have sat under that Carob tree for three weeks, it could have been four or five, how long, I really don't know; and the weather must have been pleasant, for if not, I probably would have remembered. I was thinking and pondering on all that went on and happened in those days while I was face to face with the Lord. For it was not often that He didn't sit, or stand, teaching and expounding the things of God, and being young and dumb, I understood little. But thru the decades of assessment of this-or-that, and the things taught, I slowly began to catch the meanings of much of what was said. For back then, my head were filled with idleness, and at times laziness in hearing His words, but Jesus remained stable and steadfast concerning the words and deeds of God. What a beautiful experience it was being with Him.

On this particular day I awoke from what seemed to be sleep, but who knows, it could have been an abstraction, and looking towards the setting sun, I could make out a shimmering herd of various beasts of different kinds, crawling creatures were near my feet, and a small swarm of flying insects pestered my head. I had

been asleep for hours, maybe days, for my body was rested and my hunger was great, and had some sense of revelation about what all my life was meant for. And could now see that all that had happened, and that that I'd done was for a reason, a purpose; for I was being groomed to carry forth God's Word and His Presence throughout the travels that were also destined for me; or was it just for my personal knowledge?

It came to me, as I methodically rose from my vantage point that everything has a purpose, a point; a point that works together for those that just plain and simply love the Lord, and now that I've learned how, I do.

This day, or maybe I should say evening, was one of those special days that one receives just before an event happens, a feeling, a perception, and whether it be pleasant or not so agreeable to my flesh, only the coming hours will tell. As I looked across the narrow valley, I watched as the shimmers of the last heat escaped from the hot sand and sparse grass beneath it, the sun in its final stages of the day, but I was listening, awaiting instructions. Across the valley and probably on this side of the adjacent mountain, I heard a roar, with its deep reverberations echoing several times as it bounce from one hill to another and evidently back again. A sound that was unfamiliar to me, but by the low pitch, could easily tell that I was thankful that whatever made those sounds wasn't any closer.

It got me to thinking; why in this world would I now, at this old age of my life, be scared? Why would I spend even a minute in fear, even if I were still young it shouldn't matter, and at my age,

knowing that God is my provider, any fear made no sense to me? Then as my concern subsided, I noticed it to be just another reminder of how much I've allowed my flesh to control.

Jesus had told me many decades ago, after His resurrection, that when I was young, I could gird myself and go where I wanted, but when I become old, I will stretch forth my hands, and another will gird me and carry me where I do not wish to go. I knew this to be true, but had no understanding of what it actually meant, and on this particular day studied to make sense of it. And as the sky turned from aqua-blue to an orange/red, I continued watching this mass of animals and creeping varmints do what I guess they do best, survive, the sound of the roar still ringing thru my head; I sat quietly, listening for that familiar Voice that always comforts me. Before Gods' voice was heard, I became completely relaxed and no longer gave thought to the latter event, but instead chuckled at myself for how much of the past I allowed to remain. Having accumulated no wood for a fire, and the soon-to-be night becoming cool, I hurried about to make the nights' provisions, but in my continued tranquil demeanor.

Again, it got me to thinking; how could I waste so much of my life fretting over the selfish wants of the flesh, the lesser things of life, and not have focused on that which is true and forever? This wasn't a bad feeling, no, not by a long shot, but instead very comical, even to the point that I laughed out-loud. Not just me, but virtually everyone pursues the silliness of this life, giving little thought to our real Life, that which, God has placed inside with abundance. Our natural life is a stopping place, a place for

preparedness, important to a point but temporal in every aspect, and it seems that our addiction to it, this world, has caused many to stray from the complete peace and joy that each was created for. How much more silly could we have been? But I too continued to struggle with these issues from time-to-time.

These pests that earlier buzzed my head, or the stingy creatures crawling on my feet, are but reminders that tribulation, the true and real kind, are but what makes us grow, or defeats us again back to where we already are. Everything is but an opportunity, a privilege, a subtle notice to remind us that the world is enmity to God, therefore, also us, and that which lies ahead for those that follow the Spirit could be much worst, or better, whichever the case may be, but darn-well worth the journey He gives us.

On more than several occasions Jesus spoke about fire. Now fire can kill and do great damage, and many fear its existence, but on the other hand; fire is used to create life, and for that matter, save life. I've seen fields ablaze to great heights with fire, and heard many moan about its course, but in almost every instance the grasses and brush return in greater abundance. But when Jesus spoke about being tried as with fire, I now realize that that is a virtuous thing. And to purify gold, it must be tried by fire three times before reaching its purity, and worthy to have value. Therefore, when tribulations come our way, fire, one can do as I did in my youth, deny; but now we are the children of God, and trials are sent our way as preparations, as uneasy events to bring those that seek Him, to become rearranged for His use.

Troubles are not necessarily happenstance, but sent by God to purify us to be fit for His use, and should be welcomed as a privilege. If all things work together for good to those that love the Lord; then does not tribulations fall under the category of things, therefore being good? Of course; then unlike my past, they should be treated as a blessing, of which it is. Most of my life was spent groaning over stuff that wouldn't even be remembered the next generation forward, and because of my immaturity, I'd belly-ache to anyone that would listen; I speak this to my shame.

The benefits of trials and tribulations can far exceed those that this world calls a blessing, and should be received in that sense, for what the world calls 'good', can bring one involved in it, to a temporary ecstatic state, and is short-lived; but to the children of God, we can receive each and every affair, whether 'good' or 'bad' as a course to travel by looking only at God. The moaning and groaning then fade into space.

Jesus told us that; he that is persecuted for His sake, is happy, and again, to rejoice in your many trials and tribulations, and again, to bless our enemy, pray for him, and to prepare a meal for him. Does this, the things the world call 'bad', sound like troubles; only on the outside of mans' flesh, for inwardly we are His children and being readied for His service?

In Antioch, I once heard Paul say that his flesh was as filthy rags, and that he counted it gain to be persecuted.

Anyway, as I sat looking at the zillion stars cross the night sky, this was what was on my mind, and on more than a few occasions caught myself talking to them about this matter.

Uh Oh

The next morning as I rose from my bed-roll, it was not quite light as of yet, and could see that the moon a risen during the night and was now straight over my head. Once during my slumber, I'd thought that sounds were heard of sheep and the bugle call of a camel, but now that I stand here watching and listening, all is quiet. I didn't need a fire on this morning, the air had a hint of raspy cool to it, but not to bring a chill, but I stoked what few red embers that remained back into a small but still welcomed friend. Some hour later, the sky had turned this beautiful red color, streaked with hints of yellows and greens, just as the sun crested the hills to my east. In my sailing days this was a sign of a storm to come, but in this area, very little rain ever fell, so I shrugged it off while sitting for those minutes until all the beauty faded into oblivion.

I'd been thinking, these last few days, that maybe my final journey would be in the direction of my home in Galilee. It's been years since my presence was there, and a reunion with my wife and friends would be a welcomed relief, not saying that I regret

this trip in any way, but I'm sure that being there would be pleasant.

I'd been up and about for some few hours, when the same sounds that rattled through the valley, or so I thought, during last night were heard again. Walking slightly north, topping a small crest of sand, I could now see a party of travelers encamped along a flat, at the bottom of the opposite hill, just as it transitioned from valley to steep hillside. It was no small group, having segregated animal on just about every side, a string of camels east, a small but healthy herd of goats half way down, and donkeys mixed with sheep on the western side. They must have been still sleeping, for only a trickle of activity could be seen, and this was probably because they traveled up into the tiny hours of the night.

An hour or so later, I walked back over the same dune for another look-see, and could then see much bustle within and about their camp, and at least a half dozen fires were observed by the smoke that was rising straight up. As I stood there watching, one of the older men saw my silhouette and motioned me to come and join them, which I did.

I sat around his fire as this man with soft features told of what they were doing, how the trip started, from where, and talked about family at the end of their destination. Often someone would come and introduce himself and have a friendly word to say, and it took only a short time before an offering of food was sat before me. We had a slight language barrier, but both of us could understand just a little of what the other said, at least we could communicate, if only in fragments.

This was a friendly group of folks, made up mostly of a few families, and all were related to some degree, and no harshness could be seen among any.

By this time, I'd decided to put off my journey towards home until daybreak the next day.

I asked a lot of questions, and they seemed to be relaxed in answering them. All were Jews, from the sect of Sadducees, and lived by the rigid standards of the law. Observing every custom by the letter for which it was made for, the washing of hands, the circular motion done with their hands, as if presenting the food they were about to eat, unto God; and the long and loud prayers that all seemed to be involved in.

He told me about a radical group, that in Antioch, called themselves christains, and to him, were seemingly taking over the world. I just listened. There was a great scurry of noise broadcast throughout, to hunt down and destroy each and every one of them, and many groups were organized to do just that. In fact, it took but a short time before hearing that a bounty had been set on the capture of each, and if it were an Apostle, it would be tripled.

Now I'm just sitting here listening, and I think that anyone could visualize what was going through my head. My first thought was trying to find a means of escape, my second was to present myself as someone else, but my third thought was to be honest, and thankful to be what God created me to be, and hide nothing, and then let God be in complete control.

We talked for an hour or so longer, for to get up and leave abruptly would not have sat well, and as I stood to stretch, began saying my good-byes, and taking a step toward my camp, a man stopped me, that was fluent in my same language.

“Now, I’ve told you much about our group, but you’ve said nothing about yourself. Sit again, and let’s talk more.”

My mind went back to those two scorpions, each trying to maintain his ‘thought-to-be’ territory, and then remembered the evasiveness that Paul talked to me about, then the dream on the roof of Cornelius’ house, and finally the thought that came after the complete denial of knowing Jesus Christ before His crucifixion. It was not the Jews that were my enemy, then, nor now, and that mishap was not to be spoiled thru me again, and my thought now was; what a privilege it is to be counted among those that love the Lord, and Him being the true son of God.

I turned back around, smiled and said it would be my pleasure to sit a while longer. By this time, this hour or so of our back and forth conversation, several others of the numbered men sat with us, and no one but me had a hint of what might take place in the next few minutes. All had smiles, and a relaxed demeanor, and I supposed understood me to be just another traveler.

“My name is Simeon, surnamed Peter, from the region of Galilee, a fisherman by trade, and my excursion in life has been long and at times hard, but worth every step and trial of it.”

“When I was a young man, and hadn’t been married long, my thoughts of worth began to bother me, and being raised a Jew, sought council with God after many days, if not months, of prayer. And after a hard nights labor of fishing, my brother, a friend and his brother, pulled close to the shore, and busied about my affairs, heard a voice from the nearby coastline, saying; “Simon, put down your nets and follow me.” And immediately, I did just that. And looking Him directly in His countenance asked; ‘and what shall we do Lord? And he said; change the world.” Looking at each, one-by-one, in the eye as I spoke, they listened.

Thus far, they seemed to relax further into their quiet and attentive mode, with smiles expressed, and interest in my words displayed, but not a word was spoken by them as they listened.

“I had never heard this voice before, a stranger to me, but knew Him from within, that this man was worthy of obeying.” I continued speaking, as each one of the men looked upon me with interest. “Not me only, but all four of us dropped that which we were doing and went to investigate this man of Authority. It rang within me, at the time, I think by the Spirit of God to put down my troubles, my worldly possessions, and turn loose of all, to be fed by this man of conviction.”

By this time, with unison, all four of these men leaned forward with brow together, and their chin pointed directly at me, but still saying nothing. There was no evidence of a change in their demeanor, but it was easy to tell that their interest was climaxed.

“It was not many days thereafter that I completely understood that this decision to follow Him, and to cease from my labors, was exactly what was ordered for me, on behalf of God. The days, months, and years to come, wonderful things were seen and heard by this man, and even if given a choice, would not have returned to the smelly and fruitless life that I was living. And with one exception, there was never regret; for the way I now see, and the way I now receive the separation from this world and the One sat before us, is in no manner, a life to go back too. I was then, and still am today, engaged in the Life He has given. I am swelling at the seams to carry that, which has been sat before me.”

I was, in no wise, trying to deceive them in any way, but purposely held back the name of Jesus to perplex them into maybe understanding the principles of my evaluation of Christ. But these were hardened by their religion, and probably like most, abided by their strict standard of obedience to the law.

“There was never a man that spoke, that spoke with the God given Authority that this man conveyed. He had no idle words to say.”

By this time their brow came completely together, their eyes wide open, and now in a half sitting, half kneeling position, as if to pounce upon something, but still refrained themselves. I think they understood what I was saying, but an element of doubt stayed them for the time-being.

“This man made the weak strong, the strong weak, and healed a diverse number of the halt to stand upright and walk. He

penetrated into the marrow of man, and recreated him into the knowledge of the living God. His life was set apart for the inward health of all mankind, and of a Truth, sent by the same God that you and I claim to follow.”

“Who is this man that you speak of?” One completely rose to his feet and said. “What kind of man could do what you say he’s done, and not have been announced to the whole world?”

I began slowly to speak, as I didn’t want a single word to be misconceived. I now realized that for this purpose was I sent. “He hid from nobody, He spake openly, for those that had ears to hear, heard, but those that shut up their bowls heard nothing, nor will they now.”

At the reverberation of this; all four were on their feet, and even though they held back, were now in the attack mode. Faces were turning red, hands shaking as if in a readied position, their feet shuffling as if they could no longer maintain themselves, but still held back.

“Who is this man that you speak of, and in the name of God, who are you?” The tallest among the bunch asked.

“I told you before; my name is Simon, surnamed Peter by the Lord of Hosts, and at one time, many years ago, I denied Him completely, that is three times, but now, I’d rather live with Him, or die with Him than turn my back around even once. God had given Him the authority to forgive sin, and my entire life; at this point and time, I was missing the mark. I am that Apostle that

many were told to capture, and I stand before you a humbled man wanting nothing else but to please Him that created me. I am now your servant, for if by serving you, I serve the Lord, you can now do to me as you see fit.”

The whole lot of them relaxed slightly as I spoke these latter words; but still, three of them approached to retain my body to their order, while one went to secure a thong of leather to tie me from behind. Even having been bound, I don't ever remember being in so much peace, a release of sweetness overflowed throughout my entire being, and I freely went with them.

The days to come were anything but quiet, as meeting after meetings were held within eyeshot, but little could be heard. At first the interrogations were short and to the point, but as the days turned to weeks, the intensity of the examinations became louder and more brutal, but the peace remained within me. One of the men, the leader I presume, appeared more like a statue with his firm jaw tightly bound and twisted, his movements slow but precise, and said very little to me, but often whispered what I think was a command to the others, as we traveled by day to who knows where.

I had little idea of where I was being taken too, but the direction was noticed daily as a northwest course, the sun was warm, and so was my heart as we traveled some fifteen or so mile each day. The women seemed uninvolved with the actions of my capture, and ever-so-often a young recruit would pretend to examine the character of my being, only to find, at least to my discernment, a man of no threat.

There was no desecration in me towards them, only a Love that seldom ever developed in me before, except on rare occasion, poured from the real being of the Peter that was hidden for all these years. I didn't really pity them, but maintained a hope that the illumination of Christ would show through, that they too would respond to Him, but none of this was ever realized. Their position was firm, and rigidity was upheld by the high standard that man had invented as law, and then placed in their religion. Those of that sect didn't follow the teachings of God, but only proclaimed their righteousness outwardly with their stern set of rules and regulations. These men were no different, and would rather please those of their authority, and be seen, than that which God had sat in force, which I now understand to be Love.

The small tent that I was placed in was kept guarded by night; and by day, and as we traveled; many eyes were upon me while still bound, but a joy continued rising within me that could not be expressed by my limited vocabulary, but I can say that the seed growing in the heart of my heart, was an experience, that thru the years of my fumbling, was now achieved thru an unlikely situation; but welcomed. I was at peace. Some mechanism evidently was triggered in me that instantly placed in order much of what life was meant to be, or at least, to achieve. Many of the happenings of the past began falling into place, arranging themselves in a distinct pattern of my total reconciliation to the Lord, those failures of the days gone by, now seemed to work for good. I have stumbled often during the course of my life, especially in my youth, but even those were being rearranged to lift in my spirit a character that wasn't known to exist, or at least I'd never realized it. This time,

nothing of my personality was showing its face; only the works of the Spirit of Christ poured from the pores of this old man.

On occasion, a sympathetic observer would come by and want to uplift me to some degree, thinking the obvious peaceful disposition was of my integrity, and not knowing that it was the Christ that lived in me. Then at times, others would either pass to gawk or have some sly remark to say; but all-in-all, this was no lowly bunch of folks with bad character, but just a zealous group doing what they've been taught by their religious sect. I did not use the Love that swelled in me in any way, nor was it flaunted, so at every circumstance, I would have thought that Christ could be seen flowing thru me, but instead, the bondage of their prejudice held them from it.

This Love that I now felt and received was larger than man himself can conjure, for it was not me that Loved, but He that lived within, and it could no more be dammed up than one could dam the ocean. For the Love expressed itself from the essence of what it is, pure and unmovable. Jesus had told us on several occasions that the Love of God conquers everything, and holds no remorse, and in no way is haughty, and this Love in me was just that. Being filled with this entity was not something that I earned nor deserved, and when it was perceived, changed my life, even without me knowing the change happened. I now know that Love, Mercy, and Grace never needs to be propped up, for it is Life in the deepest of meanings, and sustains itself with no effort of man, and is truly the character of God.

It was sometime later that I was taken to a rather large city, displayed in a cage before all, and several days later placed in a dungeon. The Peace and the Love for these folks never left me, and their understanding of what they were doing was never realized, they saw me as a threat, of which I was not, and therefore treated as a malefactor.

What a true privilege it was for being alive in Christ, and His Love for all. This Love, that now dwells in me, is conquering every fault and defect that it took those almost sixty years to build.

Reflections

Two weeks later, still in the same dungeon, not alone, but as of yet have not seen, but only heard those that were incarcerated with me in this almost blackened place of underground real-estate, and at every turn of events, I found space to rejoice.

The almost daily beatings, for the most part, have stopped, and still not having met any of the other inmates, but speaking often with them, we began building a repertoire of friendships. Each man classified a criminal, but having done nothing that could separate any from the Love of God. Sometimes we'd sing together, sometimes pray, but always did we talk, and on many occasions, at length.

After many months of interrogations, and now understanding that I was not to bow to their set of self-made rules, the elders assigned a young scribe to do that which they couldn't, that is break me to their will. He was to relentlessly harass and agitate

me until, supposedly, I began to see their point of view, and submit myself to their idea of godliness.

His name was Jereriah, not much older than I was when asked by Jesus to go fishing for men. A well-mannered youth with very little knowledge of scripture, but made up for it in his willingness to please those that sent him. The first day we met, who knows, it could have night, it was a rainy one, for when it rained, water would trickle down the walls and fill the stone floor with ankle deep moisture, making for a very uncomfortable experience. He'd brought me food that was better prepared than that of the last few months, and appeared polite in every way, but had a determine look about him, as it was apparent that a mission was to be accomplished. But I sure didn't think that the task assigned to him was of his nature, and I'm not really sure that Jereriah even understood just what his commission was to incur. And from the other stand-point; they didn't know that he didn't know.

We talked for hours, mostly just the introduction stuff, with each trying to gain a feel about the other. He was raised a Jew, from the tribe of Benjamin, and lived, his only few decades, within the city that we both now presided. When he talked, there was firmness about his demeanor that just didn't quite add up, acting as if this goal was to be conquered by a rigid rough attitude. But we talked, and day after day Jereriah would arrive carrying that same brashness to his approach of my conversion, wanting only to please those above him, and, I think, make a name for himself.

Through the first year of this adventure with Jereriah we learned of each other's little quirks, and we began to grow fond of

the one that so much time was spent with, at least I did him. Even though his attempt to hide his true personality behind the stern facial expressions, and with the tone of voice, I could easily tell that he was a man of mixed feelings about my stay in this dark hole. For once in a while his friendliness would creep out to exact his true nature, I really liked this boy.

Jereriah's interest in me, and the things that I said, began penetrating within him, as more and more questions were asked; and them edging towards the things I knew about the Lord. He'd ask about Jesus, how He saw things, about His temperament, about the folks healed, about the meanings of the parables, and mostly about the general stuff that one would like to know if there was a genuine interest in them. We'd talk for hours, and as the weeks ran into another one, the conversation evolved more and more toward the things of God, and Him personified. The questions asked became extensively deepened as each was expounded on, and the perception received.

Jereriah was a man much like me, especially in my youth. When about his age, I too grew up around the temple and the synagogues, understanding little, but doubtful about much. He knew his obedience toward the law was required by family and those that surrounded him, and gave little thought otherwise, except in secret. And at this point, I think, he began to question the ideologies and rituals of that certain religion, even before we met, but having had so many of his impressionable years given to it, knew of no other course to take. He did what was expected of him. Anyway, Jereriah's interest in this new-found Gospel

intrigued him in every way, hitting home on many of the questions and answers that the past so many years of evaluating, created.

Within the first three or four months, I'd told him that more time was spent either talking with him or interceding for him, than all the time put together that I'd spent with my wife.

His response was; "not all marriages were meant to be, and I'm sorry that yours didn't work out."

I looked at him, smiled, and proceeded to tell him how much love and tenderness that my marriage had brought to the both of us. "If not for her love toward me, and the concern and affection she showed, my life might have been in a place that I shudder to imagine. And when meeting Jesus; and her knowing the emptiness that I felt about life otherwise, her love encouraged me to find that missing link of Life, a decision neither her, nor I ever regretted. I have so much love for that woman, at times, it's hard to contain, and her for me."

Jeremiah smiled back, reaching for my hands, grasping them tightly, breathed a sigh of relief, and said; "thank you."

We both just sat there with no words spoken, both soaking in the ambiance of the love spoken about, and seeing, thru my eyes, a man melting into a dimension never ventured. It was at first hard for him to understand that my walk with Jesus, whether Him being on earth, or Him living within, was worth every effort of sacrifice either was to endure. He just couldn't stop smiling.

This pause must have lasted for close to an hour, and as he stood to leave, only the two small words spoken, still smiling and relaxed in every muscle of the body, Jereriah left with that loudness of silence.

Over the next year or so, Jereriah, still assigned to me as an interrogator; and we spent most time together, almost on a daily basis, and became the closest of friends. As I watched him, and he watching me, we both could see in the other that our lives were changing, for his so-called daily cross-examinations of me turned into a profound fellowship of friends. His heart was enlightened with the radiance of Christ; that which was taught from his youth vaporized into the oblivion, and I also began seeing those fumbles of my early immaturity, as now seen, as the path that I had to take and learn from. I was learning, and so was he.

The dungeon was dark, and without the one torch that hung on the wall thirty feet away, there would have been no light at all. At night, which would never have been noticed, I was alone, except for the sounds of other prisoners long past my viewpoint, and at day, Jereriah was always there. The only way to ascertain my days from the nights was my friend's morning arrivals, and by this everyday occurrence, it was quite easy to maintain stability. Each night the torch would burn out, but each morning my new-found acquaintance would refurbish it with a new one.

The knowledge I gained from the quiet of night, and the conversations by day, regenerated the seeds planted by Christ, and I continued to grow. I never would have known the deep effect of the teachings of Jesus without this solitude that gave me time to evaluate. The questions asked by Jereriah caused me to dig deep for the truth of an honest answer, therefore creating growth in me thru His wisdom, which was a welcomed and appreciated alternative of even that which was accumulated under that Carob tree.

The next morning, still pitch black, I heard the familiar footsteps of Jereriah's approach, and then the fresh light from the new torch, as the same pleasant face made itself clear. Each night he seemed to measure up more question as his interest in Christ grew. And on this particular day wanted to know what was meant when I said; "by His stripes you are healed."

"Friend and fellow disciple, this answer has two meanings, and each has its great value. For by the so-called punishment given to Jesus by the Romans, and the great suffering He endured, and doing so in our place, we are healed, no longer accountable for our past. Also, just being in this prison is another example, and some would say that being here is punishment, but of a truth, it is not. Often in this walk of life we stray from one mishap or calamity to another, and something is programmed in our life that effects our walk with Christ, and as many as God loves, He chastises. And His blessing upon us is often thru that chastisement, therefore His stripes given to me, or let me say, imprisonment upon me, is exactly what it took to open my eyes to the thorough nature of

Gods' Love. For without this stripe I would not have understood the complete nature of man, or the complete nature of Christ living in me, which is, by-far richer than that of the former mentioned. Therefore this stripe of my arrest, and this dungeon has created a bloom of Love that will produce seed after its own kind, and has lifted me to a level never thought to be achieved."

The soft spoken man listening to my answer, simply said: "Wow."

Jereriah was hungry for the Word, and it was evident by his actions; and purpose was given to him by the power received each time understanding was apprehended. Looking at him, as he studied every spoken syllable, as he watched me, was like flashing back to the memories of me. More important than his collection of what was being said, and the comprehension of it, was the eagerness, and willingness, to absorb every nugget that could be had. For it was the Christ that Jereriah was hearing, and occasionally it came from my voice.

I believe thru the course of the year, Jereriah listened to every event, from me, that took place while, myself, and the other twelve disciples, walked daily with Jesus, but now, thru all the stories, slowly began to understand that walking with Jesus in the now, is much more effectual than when we, seeing Him face-to-face, ever obtained. At first this was hard to grab hold to, but now, through a personal relationship with Christ, it was becoming more and more vivid to him, and his eyes were beginning to open even more.

What a thrill it was to watch this young man grow in the Wisdom of the Lord. I believe every recollection in me was reflected upon, and it was as if most of it was received by mouth, for most of the time his was open. It was fun, and a pleasure being with one, such as Jereriah, and to watch this young man being transformed by Christ into a disciplined believer.

A New Beginning

It was not many weeks later that the Sanhedrin, that is, Jereriah's superiors, once again became involved in my imprisonment and started to take over, leaving him pushed to the side as if a stone. We still spent time together, and once in a while, the entire evening and night discussing, what now had become the important part in his life, Christ, Him crucified, and Him resurrected, but now had to use stealth. This only served to make the both of us stronger in Faith.

Sometimes the Sadducees, and at times the Roman soldiers, would enter into my dark habitat and try to convince me, through various tactics, to turn from my so-called 'wicked ways' and deny that this Jesus was really the Christ. The soldiers, they were there for fun; it was their entertainment to harass me in any way that was comical to them, but to neither did I give in, and never could that happen.

No, I denied Him thrice just before His crucifixion, and got caught doing so, and this, my friend, served as a great building

stone for my life yet lived. I was thankful. It might have taken awhile before coming to myself about this denial, and who it was that I denied, but when it took root, the tree within me began growing. I will not, at this point, ever return to that mire, of which I've been washed from; the world.

So, with all the pressure the Sadducees thought they were placing on me, and my unwillingness to conform, and because of the stir that was created by Christ speaking thru me, a death sentence was announced. This news brought no sadness to my bones, nor did it affect my countenance in the slightest, but instead, brought a deeper peace that could only be understood when completely yielded to God's Messiah, the Christ, and I was at total peace with it.

This young man understood and received Christ earlier, and much faster, than was ever possible for me, that being that Jereriah had received the Holy Spirit, and now dwelled from within him. With his perception of Jesus as the Christ, and the personal relationship that was had, he had understood and received more in this year or so, than was had by me in the first decade. In no way was Jereriah a follower of me, he'd learned early and knew from the Spirit that he was to be a follower of no man, making Christ, and Him only, the center of life.

He could now see that following this, or any religious sect, was not the street to be traveled, and had to, at some point, break away from the teaching of father and mother. They were devout in their opinions, and he decided that this matter was to be handled subtly, but could and would be broken quickly if need be,

for a Truth had been given, and could in no way return back to the fables of the blind.

The word was given to Jereriah that I was to be put to death, and I had to be moved to another city, farther north, to receive that punishment. He was willing, at that point, to go with me as an intercessor and mediator, and sometimes an interrupter for me, to those that would hear my case.

Three weeks later I rode into, on a donkeys back, a larger city than my last abode; it was night when the small caravan arrived, but the city still continued in much business. Jereriah, still at my side, went with them that again, placed this body of mine into another dark dungeon; still feeling the presence of Christ, that hole was received as well as if it were under the stars and that Carob tree. And my face expressed every bit of my satisfaction to Jereriah, and also, to those that led me in there, for the peace that dwelt in my bowels could not be disturbed, not by this, nor any other ordeal that this body could be placed in. Me, being in peace, brought my friend and companion into peace also. The good folks that brought us here were tired, and after the chains were locked tight, left, and only the two of us, with no torch, settled in for the night.

Jereriah was privy to certain information, and at times would try to see if the details were wanted, but in this era of my being, I had no interest, what-so-ever, in why or how the coming days were to unfold, but he did. The Love that lodged in every aspect of my

being conquered every fear, every regret, every trouble, now or back then, that had a hold on me, and at last, he began to understand it. I've really never seen or met a man like this, to say, no matter what's given to him, whether it be simple Truth or a complex meaning, Jereriah stayed with it, until the understanding was begotten. It was his hunger and thirst for the principles of God that this young man lived for, and at times he would assign a word of knowledge to me, that otherwise wasn't understood, and I too was growing.

Some months later, Jereriah came for our daily visit, but on this particular evening he had a look about him, showing within the face, and the slumping of the shoulders, I knew something was bothering him to the core. We said our usual greetings, but this time, instead of his normal enthusiasm, he sat bent over with pause in his demeanor, not a word was spoken then.

"I perceive that you've heard something that has got you to thinking." I said this after more than several minutes. "It's as if the news is bad, and maybe hasn't yet been dissolved. If you want to talk, we will, if you want to sit quiet; that we'll also do."

He'd look up, and our eyes would meet, but only for a short period before hanging again his head. After a long pause, I could see droplets of tears soaking the robe that was worn, and as loudly as the silence was quiet, he spoke in a determined voice and almost shouted; "they're going to crucify you."

I couldn't get any closer to him for the length of the chains that bound my ankles, wouldn't allow it and asking him to come nearer,

he did. “Jeremiah, don’t be troubled over such things, for this same God that brought me into this Life, is able to see me through to the end.”

“But you don’t understand, in three days, those that call themselves righteous, are going to kill you.”

“Jeremiah, I knew this was to be months ago,” I said with him now laying his head on my chest, “I am old, I have lived my life, I have walked my walk, seeds have been planted in me, and a few, I have strewn in my walk with Jesus these past years. My time is come, be not troubled for this that has to be.”

“But Peter, what the Sanhedrin is about to do destroys your ministry, your life, and in the process, destroying themselves also, this ought not to happen.” He said, but this time sitting up with his hands on my shoulders, looking me forward in the face with an expression of despair.

Settling back and reflecting for a long time, waiting on him to compose himself, and then told him with a smile that conveyed and articulated every true thought that was filling my body with Love. “What a privilege to be counted worthy of the same blessing that Jesus gave to us all. And totaling my whole life; and this journey traveled, to be found in earnest with Him that gave this Life to me.”

“But in three days.” That’s all he said, but now began to come back to himself a little more relaxed, but still tense.

“When I was your age, I could go where I wanted, and needed no help in doing so, but now in my old age, I cannot gird myself, and where I go, someone takes me. This was told to me many years ago by our Lord, and now it is coming to pass, and all that remains in me is; Love. For of a truth, I am ready.”

My close friend and I chatted most of the night, hashing as many particulars of God that either could come up with, and every time a subject was disseminated, the Spirit would show one or the other, and sometimes both, a revealed meaning of the scriptures. He understood that his time with me was short, and I think, therefore wanting to glean or understand as much as he was able, but I told Jereriah that the Holy Spirit knows all things, and will never leave him, and will in fact, teach all things that he needs to know. I might be of some help, but until God is ready to reveal to you certain things, the help I give would be futile.

But I did have one request to him, and it was at his convenience; “would you write a letter for me to my wife and those back home? Seeing how my hands are tied, and you’ve been such a wonderful encouragement to me with your writing thus far, I thought of maybe writing a small epistle of reassurance to those that care, and to those that love me also.

The answer; although with tears was; “yes.”

That early morning, after Jereriah had left, for he too needed rest, the Lord fell upon me as mightily as that of the special day at Pentecost. A Love flushed thru my heart and soul, and also filling the body and mind of the same, lifting me to heights never before

entered. I had had rushes of His presence, on occasion, but just about the time that the night broke into day, His existence in Love, or, His Love in His existence, fell into every orifice of this dark dungeon, and expanding into every crevice of me being. IT WAS WONDERFUL!

The acceptance that I'd thought in my understanding of Love, the indulgence thus far perceived in Love, nor even the forbearance of what I grasped as being Love, were far short of the revelation that plummeted upon me that beautiful morning. Or did I fall into It? My eye have not seen, nor my ear heard, nor has it ever entered into my heart that the presence of Christ, and His unfathomable Love, would have such richness as that which, that morning, was generated in me. I knew Him to have a hand on me. I burst from the 'old man' that had held me to the dimensions of this earth, and now floated above and beyond what this planet could contain. To attempt to articulate the greatness of the Love of God thru His Christ would certainly be unsuccessful at best, and on the other hand, certainly be inaccurate, for what flowed through me was more than the mind of man could ascertain. His presence lit the dungeon as if it was outside, and even now, a halo of glow remains. Those other prisoners, thru the several tunnels, also cheered with excitement at the manifestation of His authority of Love in this underground vault, for they too could see the brightness of His existence as it illuminated thru every crack and crevice.

Again, to explain this with the limited words of the language of this earth would be inadequate, so don't fault me for trying.

The beauty of the presence of Christ was far more real than I'd seen during our days of walking together, in the flesh that is, and the colors of His speech, the multi tones of His movements, the sounds of the glow in His eyes, and the fluid of His smile was more than this man, or I think any man, could truly receive and still be in our earthly body. The presence of Jesus and His Love filled me to overflowing, and at first, I fell on my face, being paralyzed with an overwhelming influence of His being. This was much like the day after His resurrection when, without a door being opened, revealed Himself in Glory, but much grandeur. A few moments later, or so I thought, the emanating light had somehow become brighter, therefore giving me a window to see Him clearly. As Jesus spoke, telling me of His presence, and saying; "fear not, it is I," I arose from my stupor to His open arms which held an unforgettable hug.

Not much was said by either, nor did we need too, but instead, a communication existed, detailed in every way; that established our friendship and His great and tender Love for me. I could see what he saw when looking at me, and at that point, all he could see in me was Love, for every person that Jesus saw, all that He viewed, was filtered through the Love of God, and I received it in fullness.

I didn't, from that point forward, have to ask nor seek the truest of the meanings of Love, for I too, soaked every morsel of its value thru my being. As inadequate as the speaking of my precept about this encounter is; it is all that can be spoken with the derisory language we have. This unbeknownst Love ran straighter and truer

with its' unequaled existence to illuminate the righteousness of God; and this was done to me, or should I say for me?

Love, at least the way I viewed it in the past, was a precept, a definition of a thought or a feeling, but now understood it to be a living form of life; in fact, the expressed form of our living God. To miss, or not find this Love, I now know, was to think that life is a set of circumstances, accidents, or just plain luck, but the Truth is; Love is the final evidence, the last stage of mans' existence and the true fullness of why we were created.

Hornswoggled

The same evening, when Jereriah arrived, a hint of glow remained throughout the dark walls of this dungeon, but little noticed by him as the demeanor carried was not much different than it had been that same morning. But what was different, was that the smile carried earlier was now imprinted permanently upon my face, and in recognition of that, he mustered somewhat of a smile himself.

“Peter, tomorrow at the sixth hour, you will be crucified by those that I thought, in times pass, to represent the things of God.”

“Jereriah, relax,” I said to him while still shining like a lamp, “for a purpose I was born, and now that purpose has been fulfilled, the Sanhedrin cannot hurt that which lies within, and this shell of my body counts for nothing except in this dimensional walk on earth. For this morning I realized that all the works of Jesus thru me, was but negligible, compared to the true perception of His great Love

for us. Therefore, since that which is perfect has come, His Love, then that which is in part shall be done away, and this my closest friend, is the completion of Life. But I now have the privilege to share it with you.”

That entire day was spent sharing and conversing with one another about the Love of God, and how it affects everything on this planet. Jereriah came to see that which I had seen, or maybe should say experienced, for his reception of my words filled him too with a joy unspeakable, and it was then that he saw the remainder of the aura of light, and leaped with joy. This young man visited with the same Christ that had so much affected me, and his joy was as much appreciated as only Love could deliver. He stayed with me thru the night, and wanted also to be with me as long as possible, even thru the end. The conversations we had were solemn, quietly conveyed, but also energetic, for the body cannot contain the volume of Love spilling from one to another.

Early the next morning, many of the older scribes and elders of the synagogue approached with much arrogance, and pride, as was plainly portrayed by their haughtiness and rigid profile, wanting once again to justify their upcoming deeds. One would ask me a question, but before I could answer, another question was slung in my direction, and this went on for several hours until each was satisfied that their egos were stroked.

“Men, for the law you know, and every letter of it has been accounted for by your knowledge, but the Love, Grace, and Mercy of our same heavenly Father has been overlooked. For you, yourself, are not vipers, but your rigid system that will not tolerate

change; is. For you strain thru your filter every gnat, but are choked on every camel as passes thru it. That which God has sent to you, you rejected, wanting only to protect that law in which so much of your time has been spent perfecting and protecting, that the true goodness of God has been neglected. You have left your first love to seek your idle of your ego, and turned it into a law of death. The law, given to us by Moses, was meant only to point us away from our sins, by showing them, and to prepare us for Gods' upcoming Testament of our hope in Jesus Christ."

It was then that the chief elder, I think to be the priest, took three steps forward and slapped me across the cheeks with his cane, saying; "why do you blaspheme the law of God, given to us by Moses?"

"The law was given to us by God, not to bring us to His will, but to show all that no one, no, not even you, can withstand the rigors of it. It was given to show all that, in ourselves, we cannot hit the mark, therefore showing only the transgression, it is a school master, and only death can remain by it. But, Jesus Christ....."

At this time four men approached, one grapping me by the hair, while another rent my robe, and the other two threw my body to the floor and began kicking my head and back, then screaming in a shrill voice that God would not tolerate such blasphememes.

After some time, I know not how long, and sitting back again on my stone, used for a chair, the interrogation continued, but not without abuse. No amount of exploit could render my affection, even for them, from within my heart that was so securely fastened.

Evidently this was my first true test to be considered, that is, to come to a positive understanding of Gods' Love, and my reaction from being hated by those that He loves equally.

The mishandling and violence continued, and Jereriah, still standing in the corner that he was forced to stand in, watched; and at times, as one would get tired from his protest, another would step up to persist in the rhetoric of their misguided ways. But within me, unexplainable, the Love of Christ just deepened with every act of violence and injudicious passion that was brought forth from their every effort, but to no avail. The Love planted in me was rooted on the 'good ground' of my spirit, and had already grown into my flesh.

About noon time, for Jereriah had made a comment about the strength of the sun, the elders and others just quit, standing with their long faces of protest waiting on me to make the next move or comment, but it didn't happen. And then in a soft, but yet not humbled voice, the oldest of the group said; "what do you have to say for yourself?" But before an answer could be made, he again spoke; "You are guilty, not only of heresy but for following a heretic, a man calling himself the Messiah, but in truth, was found guilty of treason and a blasphemer. Admit your guilt and the punishment will be swift and painless. Now, what do you have to say?"

"Gentlemen, we call upon the same God," I began to slowly speak, only to see if my words were being heard, "but our usage of His being is quite different, but God's Grace is sufficient for you also, if you hear His call to repentance."

The group of men, one looking at the other, curling their fist, holding their shoulders in a reared position, and their indignation showing at every level, shouted; “who are you to call us into the things of God?” But no one took even one step forward, but rent their robes instead, saying; “you are guilty of also being a heretic.”

“Sirs, you are right in one point; and in one point only. For of a truth, I am guilty; I am guilty of being hornswoggled in the Love of God thru His Christ Jesus, captured by and with His never-ending Love, and for that; I AM GUILTY AND THANKFUL.”

A Reminder

To my brother Andrew, my fellow Apostles and disciples, to all my friends and followers of Christ, and especially to my wife; receive my new and very close friend Jereriah. Salute him and welcome him as one of us that love the Lord from the depth of his bowels, one who has stood beside me and with me thru all these times of mans' peril, but counted unto me as Glory. I beseech you to receive him in my stead, as one who has also been captured into and by the Love of God, a disciple and scribe of the highest order.

Jereriah and I have spent much time together these past years and some months, and he has patiently written the story of my life as spoken thru my mouth. He was born a Jew, a scribe by trade, and grew up under the bondage of religion, but was set free from his old nature by the revealing and revelation of Jesus, face to face. And he brings to you, my beloved, greetings from your fellow believer born Simeon, and surname Peter by the mouth of our Lord Christ Jesus, saying to all; I have lived a good life, and now count it

a privilege to die with the testimony of Jesus. My worthiness is not of myself, but it is He that gave me Life, and Life ever-lasting. And since it is my body, and my body only, that they put to death, I have objected strenuously to be crucified in this unworthy carnal shell, as that that was done to our Lord. Whether my objection was heeded or ignored is not as yet known.

Being raised in the Jewish faith, but not adhering but slightly to their form of godliness, and still living a life of morals; I became dissatisfied with my inner life. For emptiness created a void in my soul, that, even being happily married could not remedy. And in a time, met Him that was the Messiah, dropping everything to follow Him that claimed to have the Truth, and did; I began a journey that waxed both hot and cold.

Being counted among twelve, I saw myself as leader, chief among our small group of those that laid down our old life to follow Jesus, a mentor of those chosen ones, and not knowing then, but was unqualified in every capacity.

My life and walk with Jesus was ordered by our God, but my ego and my small amount of knowledge of things spiritual, held me to only that which the flesh could comprehend. When told that what I said was the rock on which Christ would build His Church, being in my flesh, took as a reinforcement of my leadership role; again, I was mistaken. But, when told to get behind Him, even speaking in my direction, calling out satan, and him being rebuked, I shrunk with embarrassment, for only a few moments earlier, I told Jesus

that I'd fight for Him to the end. Again, this was only my flesh speaking with pride.

When told by our Lord to feed His lambs and sheep; again reestablished my idea of being in-charge, and not understanding His meaning, retained that which was spoken, and not knowing that on a certain day; all would be revealed.

I loved this man Jesus, and much more so now, and I believed with all my being that He gave purpose in life, therefore most of the emptiness had faded from within me, and with all that I possessed, loved Him. But right before He was nailed to that tree, I denied that I'd had ever known Him, not once did I do this, but three times, that is; I completely rejected His identity, and had become a total failure. If only I had understood Grace, for His Mercy was great, and beyond my understanding, I surely wouldn't have thought Him to forsake me; which he didn't, but so I thought.

After His death, living in despair, a failure in every way, I became bored and went fishing, if most of what I'd thought were true, then maybe leading these other men on a successful fishing trip would reconcile me again to their favor. But even that failed, for it was then that Jesus caught the one hundred and fifty-three great fish, I was glad for that, but again felt as if I'd let them down.

I operated then as many I see today do, in the flesh, attempting in every way known to man to prove myself worthy of the Love of our Jesus. Expecting every 'good deed' to be recognized by Him with favor, and of course, it was not, nor will it ever be. The flesh was not made to be perfected, and it began to sink it at Pentecost.

Without my effort, and without my will, the Spirit of God used my vocal cords to preach His message. I was changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, my corrupted flesh was set aside, and the incorruptible Spirit from within took over. Jesus, thru the Holy Spirit, filled me to the running over place of containment, for He could not be contained, and again, my life changed. My mind-set was altered from speaking only from the flesh, to allowing Him to speak thru me.

The whole world looked different, that which was out of kilter, now seemed aligned; that which carried a hint of darkness, was now brighter; the sick could be visualized as healed, the blind, as if they had vision, everything that was looked upon had clarity. And as long as I kept my eyes off myself, looking only on Him that created this world; then it was only Him that I could see. My flesh had no significance. The void that had plagued my soul for all those years was nearly gone, victory was mine.

Thinking then that the mark to be achieved, was achieved, and little did I know that much more purging was mine to be had. Although I adhered to little of the particulars of the Jewish religion, I did follow, to my shame, the prejudices taught to me from my youth. And until that evening at Cornelius' house, and the vision of the sheet being lower down with all manner of beast, I allowed that practice to control me, but God showed me that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile. Thinking then that this error of my life had been overcome, was lifted again in pride some years later, subduing my life once more to the standards of those that presented themselves as the principles of the law.

My life was changing, this was a fact, and at each stage of change, I thought that I'd reached the end, the totem of maturity, but in reality, it was just another level of my growth, with many more changes to come.

If what would have happened, when Paul rebuked me to my face, had happened several years earlier, it would have angered me to the point of a rebuttal. But as it was; this was the one circumstance that was so sorely needed to place me on the path that I was intended for. For God had moved on Paul, so He could move on me, to once again bring me to His Graces, which at that time was essential. For revelation after revelation, and understanding after understanding, and knowledge after knowledge illuminated from within my spirit to bring the purpose of the journey to fruition.

But not until that time, those weeks, spent under the shade of that Carob tree did this entire journey really begin to find its value. Times were quiet, the noise of my soul silent, as my feet rested, my inner man was awakened, a major comfort of the Spirit was taking place. The seed had been planted decades ago, maybe even had sprouted, but then was the flowering stage of what was to come, readied to put on fruit, it was all God, for of a certainty, I Peter, couldn't in any strength of my own, cause this growth. An awe-inspiring flow of Gods' Love poured from the window, or the tree from which I rested, of God, and filled me to the brink of overflowing. I was no longer scared, for all fear had slipped from my being, for that which is perfect had come, and all that was in part began vanishing, for Love conquers all.

Meeting these men that camped along beside me was no happenstance, but was a true gift from God, an opportunity to show myself that that which was given; was received. I call that time; the first beginning of the rest of my purposed life. Love had entered this emptied vessel, and occupied the space reserved within me, for from it, completing this man, surnamed Peter, with the fullness of His Glory.

So being placed in this prison was no great matter to me, it was again an opportunity to shine His light in the darkness of gloom.

I had, in days past, written two epistles of short, but now, thru the hand of Jereriah, have this prospect of a chance to share with those that have interest, the historical story of my life as it evolved from a moral, but smelly fisherman, to a confused and misunderstanding disciple. The story never ends with misapprehending, no, not with the Lord, with His Truth and Love, His all, being revealed to those that seek Him. He that was called a stumbling block, is now the chief cornerstone, therefore we that follow Him are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a Holy nation, a special people to proclaim the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. Who were once not a people, but now are the people of God, who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained Mercy.

Each step in my life brought me to another place, another level of development of spiritual growth, gaining understanding and insight, but at the same time, still had at least a piece of void

left in me. It was not until the total reception of Love from the ever presence of Christ filling my inner man, that total completion was had. For me, this happened in my last days, but never-the-less, I was filled with who He is and where He comes from; Love. For God is Love; that is His name, and His Mercy and Grace endures forever.

And who is he that would harm you if you become a follower of what is Good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness sake, you are blessed. And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled. But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give an answer with meekness and reverence. Having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, may, by your behavior, be ashamed.

Greet on another with a kiss of Love. Peace to all, for Christ Jesus lives in all, and received by those that are awakened.

I looked Jereriah in his eyes, smiled a friendly smile, hugged him the best I could, and reminded him to not forget as God's Word went forth from him, that where two or three are gathered in His name, Christ will be in the midst of them. And that mans' organization of God and His bride will always fail, if adhered to; but God will never fail.

At least a dozen men came to drag my best and closest friend Peter off. Being told by him for me to remain here; I did. It is now my job to put pen to parchment; that the story of his evolution

may be told to those that have ears and to those that can learn from Peters' mistake. He had found rest in the Lord long before they came to take him away.

Authors Note

As each of us travel through this world, that is enmity to God, the road is sometimes long and many times full of obstacles, but the length and troubles are of Gods' design, meticulously engineered by Him just for us. Man in his natural state, that is his carnal mind, wants to murmur and whine over every obstruction or difficulty that is set before him, but in truth, God will never leave us, nor forsake us, and He will use every evil to build and purify those that seek His face. "All things work together for good to those that love the Lord."

He that has no enemies or adversaries is often weak, and has but little opportunity to grow; for many times, it is the obstacle set before us that can halt man, and bring him into the realm of change, that can bring about that growth.

As we search and research the scriptures. One will find that every single person or character will evolve thru a catastrophe, or a series of painful events. I need not go through all of them, but to name a few might get us into the right way of thinking. Our

culture, especially in the western world, has deepened man into complacency and self-indulgence of thinking that this soft life is deserved and earned, when in fact it has been paid for many times over by many of those that have preceded us. If we are strong, whether in spirit or soul, it is most likely because of the hardships endured and then was overcome. Whatsoever comes easy, probably has but little value, the road well-traveled, probably goes nowhere. For if it did, (broad is the way), many would have found our abundant life; but the road filled with obstacles, (narrow is the way), and its straightforwardness can bring Life to those that can look beyond the obvious, for but few travel it.

The love of Jacobs' life was Rachel, but fourteen years of hard labor were required by his father-in-law for her. And many times he was lied too, before the requirements were met, and still these obstruction did not detour Jacob in any way; not for the love-of-his-life. This was a representation of a Godly goal that was met, and we too often struggle through this life, with its trials and tribulation only to find, to those that seek God, that they too were especially designed by God just for us; a blessing.

Jacobs' son Joseph, the first born from the love of his life was thrown in a pit, sold as a slave, and spent something like twenty-two year in prison, before becoming Governor, and having the opportunity of saving his family, including Jacob, his nation and those that surrounded it. He had to face many oppositions, such as lies, and even his own ego, before God could use him in a mighty way.

Moses was hunted as a murderer and spent forty years in the wilderness; being prepared by God to remove the accumulated Egypt from him. These were times of loneliness and troubles, and though God knew what had to be done, and many trials persisted, Moses prospered in the Lord in spite of them.

In the wilderness the Israelites whined and murmured through just about every situation for forty more years, after their escape from Pharaoh, and all but three had to die before they could enter into the Promised Land, (the Kingdom of God). And when the 'old man' had all died out, it was Joshua (the same name as Jesus) that was to lead them there; Moses, carrying the law, was told to continue in the wilderness, blessed but not accepted.

David was anointed King of Israel, but had many battles to fight, and a preceding king to contend with, and spent many years hiding in caves with a threat on his life; the oops of the next door neighbors wife, the death of children, before he was made ready to accept God totally with the Ark of the Covenant, (by the way, is you and me).

Elijah had Jezebel, Sampson had Delilah, The Baptist had Herod's step daughter to contend with, Job lost everything and ended up sitting on a dung hill before being restored back to the obvious prosperity of God; and even Jesus, after spending forty days in the wilderness, had many attacks and tribulations to go through before He was fully engaged in the commission God gave Him.

If we believe in the 'pie-in-the-sky' theory, which I hope we don't, then the road to be traveled will come with many obstacles, for the roads already traveled by many others are cleared of every piece of debris, and if they could have worked on our behalf, would have; but they don't. That which we look for in Christ is free, but the growth sometimes comes with a cost of our 'old man'; being either laid down, or purged away by the blessings of persecutions, etc., therefore leaving us with the comfort of God's strength, knowing that our own attributes can only hinder.

What some call evil could be a disguised blessing from God, especially orchestrated just for us. And I'm not sure, but I wonder if Peter's life, since he was ordained to be an Apostle, was designed and premeditated by God, ingeniously put together to bring him to a point and place to fully understand the Love that God had for him, and all. For at that period preceding his death, Peter gave up on the self that he was, to become the completed being of God's creation, personifying Christ and His Love.

By reading scripture and other historical books of the age, there is no indication that Peter adhered to the organization or institutionalization of the Church, or the 'so called church' in any form. There is evidence that he came against that mentality of 'higher and lower order', (as seen in the churches of today), and the formation of a building dedicated for the purpose of people coming to worship. "Go ye into the world, preaching the Gospel of this Kingdom..." But nothing has been said about calling folks to 'come' to the form of man's ego, and his ability to create God in his

own image. Which is exactly what is happening when we come together, place a name on our gathering, form committees and business meetings, allot a certain time and day for so called worship, send our preacher/pastor to school to learn how, take up money, and maybe even charter our organization. This is not the way that the Ekklesia, (Christ's Church), was to be built, nor does it resemble the Rock, (the Revelations), on which His indwelling is to take up residence. The Gospel will be shared throughout the world, but not by the mass gatherings of what we call 'church' today. This is a far cry from that which Christ was building with His people, fitly joined together, with Him the chief cornerstone, meeting here or there, mobilizing each other as God gives the increase. "Where two or three shall gather in my name, there I will be in the midst of them."

To the causal 'christain', those that just want appeasement with their weekly meetings, the same-o, same-o will work for them, but for those that seek a relationship with God thru the King of Kings, will have to break away from the nonsense that man has created to stroke his own ego, for it's not of Christ. Right now, I believe, the true Church of our God is still wandering in the wilderness, waiting for the 'old man' to die, be enlightened to lay self aside, and then walk away, following the only Master that man was created to obey, Christ Jesus.

Peter was never made pope; I think it's just wishful thinking for some to justify their institutionalization of their control over their underlings.

Jesus said; “come to me, you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest, for my yoke is easy, and my burdens are light.” Peter, especially in his beginning days of ministry, did not fully understand this, but as he grew and waxed strong in the Love of God, realized that it was Grace, the Mercy of God, and a relationship with the Father, that God sought for His people; not the many washings of hands, or outward appearances of worship. For He is Spirit, and much be worshipped in Spirit.

As it was with the towns and people in the travels of Peter, so it is with many of the same of our time. Religion was not designed to bring any to God, and He knew it. For the timing of Jesus’ arrival to earth was not happenstance; but He was sent at a crucial time to save man from himself before total destruction was had. Today, as it was during the ministry of the early apostles, man continues to step in with his egotistical formulas of self-reliance and man-made doctrines. They didn’t work back then, and certainly won’t work now. It’s time for change, every aspect of our thinking has to change, which is what the word repentance means, we have to turn around our way of thinking, putting on the mind of Christ, turn to God, turn away from our self; and let us develop a relationship with the Father of creation.

It is not our own ‘good deeds’ that bring any to the righteousness of God, but that of receiving His Love, and the relationship we can have, and He wants, with each. Contrary to that in which has been taught; God does not place expectations on any, that’s a carnal man thing, He loves us because he Loves us, and desires a relationship with all. Not because we’ve acted right,

nor because we've earned it; but because we fall under the category of being created in His similitude, and with no cost but acceptance; it is offered to all. In fact, even if we don't accept it, it is still freely given, for he so loved the world that he gave; and what was given, was LOVE.

Can we read this novel, looking at Peter, but really see ourselves? At least in my walk with God, I have found that each profound and deep lover of the Lord arose through many obstacles and tribulations, before finding their revealed life thru a relationship that God had determined for them and us.

Hatred, prejudice, resentment, strife, and envy of others' is not from God, for these are all from the ill-begotten fruit that man plucked from the tree of knowledge, of good and evil; and must be set aside, before all that is from God can fill the heart of man. For if the vessel is full, how can He fill it more? We must first be emptied.

Consider Jesus, he's already considered you.

Thank you

Please, go to my web-site and check out my other books, and while you're there, listen to some of the songs written by a very dear friend of mine. Watch the 'you-tube' video, and maybe leave a comment. www.themanwithin1.com

Other Books by this Author

The Man within

This is an historic autobiography of a knucklehead growing up in the 50's and 60's. The story starts with a devastating disease, moves into the foolishness of my teenage years, and the immaturity of being a young adult. Several funny stories, and some not so funny that led to my growing up into adulthood.

God has opened my eyes to the illusions of what we call 'church' and has uncovered to me a truth regarding the transparency of the rites and rituals of this 'thing'.

The Two Trees Within

Man has built an empire unto himself throughout the last seventeen centuries, and institutionalized, rationalized, justified, and flaunted on most any and every street corner, in any and every town or city.

As the tower of Babel was destroyed by God, so this 'thing' called 'church' will also fall. The monuments man has built unto himself, by his own hands, are being exposed; for these too will have to fall, as God said about the temple; "Not one stone shall be left upon another."

This is an attempt to expose man, his carnal mind, along with the structures built by his hands; for these also will fall as did the tower of Babel.

Please go to You-Tube and watch my short video at 'The Two Trees Within' and see if what's being said makes sense. These books can be downloaded for free from my website.

www.themanwithin1.com

