Janine's Testimony: Salvation, Falling Away, and Recovery



I got saved at the age of 12. Not by a prayer that I had to say. I got saved while I was reading a Christian book my grandma told me to read. Before the person reads the book the author prays over the person in the book and asks God to let those that are blind see. It happened to me. After a some months though I wasn't on watch and I fell astray. It was a very dark moment in my life. My addictions that God set me free from came back and worst. I was watching porn, masturbating, all the resentment that God freed me from came back. I wasn't doing good in school and i started losing friends. I started drinking and smoking weed trying to fit in. I was constantly going to court with my mom. I also started getting panic and anxiety attacks. I hit rock bottom.

"But God." He cared about me still after I back slide from Him. He brought me back and made me repent. I wanna give hope to those that might have back- slid from God also. He will accept you again. I'm not going to lie. It will be hard coming back to God. You might feel dry but if you hang on to Jesus eventually in time if you continually seek Him and faint not the relationship, and the joy of salvation and fellowship with Jesus Christ will come back! I'm a witness of it and God has taken me to places I never dreamed of! Hallelujah!

Janine

Terri's Testimony: Finding Truth Outside of Roman Catholicism



I was raised Catholic, parochial school, (5 brothers- 1 sister), had a good education, taught by nuns as you may have heard, quite strict, but learned a lot. Priest came in once a week to teach Catechism, but never did I hear about salvation all those yrs. Then I knew about Jesus, but didn't know Him as my Savior until 1971, by then I was an adult. Nothing seemed to change in the church, same things were said which was nothing to do with the Bible, of which we were told not to read, nor listen to anyone on the radio (then) or the TV, had to listen and believe what they told us and of course, the Pope. This went on for a lot of yrs; the not knowing, I was married in the Church, had three children. We did attend church, but again, nothing. They went to CCD classes when asked what they learned about Jesus; not much, either colored or played games. So I stopped taking them and taught them myself. We were going to a church but again, not getting anything new.

My blessed day was when I started to go to my friend, she had a hair salon in her basement. Several ladies would come with their Bibles. After a while, she invited me to a Bible Study and I said "no." I thought I knew a lot, as any Catholic would think, but found out I knew nothing. The saying is that "Catholics are the hardest nuts to crack," I was one of them. I did start going once a week, learning every time, and enjoyed them so much. I looked forward to them each week. I was not reading the Word exactly as we were told not to, instead I would stay up until the early am hours reading starting with the Old Testament. Then I was invited to her church, Assembly of God. What a

difference! The people were so friendly, shook hands and even hugs, you didn't see that in the other Church and the singing was something else. I had never heard those songs and took it all in – the praise and worship as never before. So my children and I looked fwd to going, they got involved with the classes, were so happy too for the change, it changed our living.

After a while, the minister asked me to teach Sunday school, told him I didn't know enough of God's Word, said I would learn from teaching the children. I did and taught there for 5 years, but then due to the business we moved to a different state. Of course by then I had gone to a Bible study previous to all that accepted the Lord as my Savior and felt so clean, as though I had gone through a wringer washing machine and from then on it was wonderful to know more about who Jesus was, and He is more than we think He is! The children had also accepted the Lord, my husband too, but he fell away after a few years and started living a not so good life. He died in the early 1980's and was only in his late 40's. So after that my two children were married, one girl at home. But I was not provided for so I went back to work where the Lord blessed me. I will not share much about that it wasn't easy, but can I say that the Lord brought me through it all. I did struggle but knew He was there for me all the way.

I had left the Catholic church in 1972 and had a whole new life and am still going. When we moved to a different state we attended another Assembly of God church, again taught Sunday School for another 5 years. Myself and my older girl attended Bible School for 2 years and loved it. I learned more and was quite happy. She graduated in 1981, I did in 1982, and the blessing there too was the pastor took a group of church people, plus I was as happy to go too, we went to Israel. What a glorious trip, from Dan to Beersheba, went everywhere the Lord was. It is a place you never ever forget where you had been and what you saw. It has been a while, but seems like only yesterday.

Now I am attending a wonderful church and it is great, the praise and worship is wonderful. So that is my testimony, but a lot more "in-between" things; as I said shared all this with a certain Catholic friend, praying that he will think about how he can serve the the Lord. I pray for him daily, to open his heart and mind and come to the Lord, give up that way of life, which is not God's way as we know. He is the only way…so I know that God has heard our prayers, is in control, up to him to follow through and serve the Lord in a better way instead. Of all that church stuff which doesn't mean a thing.

I realize my testimony is long, but could not share only a little.Thanks again, Lord Bless.

Testimony of Steve Homola formerly of Decatur Michigan from Prison



I was married at the age of 15, divorced at the age of 18, with two beautiful daughters. I was a self-employed carpenter since the age of 15 and owned my own renovation business. Both my daughters lived with me at my mom's since the age of 11, and I would say we had a good relationship. I was into drugs, smoking, gambling, and pornography since the age of 13, this is not all I was into but for space I am going to use this now. The older I got the more drugs I did and the deeper I fell into pornography. It was not long before I was doing everything and anything to get high on. I became so obsessed with pornography that I was spending hundreds of dollars a week on it. My obsession for this kind of behavior was fueled by my drug use, and the drugs gave me the courage to do things I would not do if I was sober.

As I look back now I was living in a fantasy world, and because of this behavior I am now serving a 37 to 70 year prison sentence, and have now been incarcerated for the past 20 years in a Michigan State Prison.

I was in the Van Buren County Jail awaiting trial for 14 months on the crime I am now serving time for. I was on 24 hour suicide watch for most of that time for making threats on my life. I no longer desired to go on living at that time. My lawyers kept telling me that the best deal they could get me

was 20 to 40 years in prison for a crime I did not think deserved that much time. This had me in a deep depression, and I was having deep withdrawals from all the drugs I had been using. The chaplain from Forgotten Man Ministries would visit the jail once a week and would try to get me to read the Bible and attend the service they held in the lobby, but I would always tell him that Christianity was not for me, but on December 31, 1993, the chaplain and a friend came to my cell and invited me to the midnight service they were having that night. I felt that tug in my heart so I attended. (John 15:16).

This was the greatest day of my life that has changed the way I think and look at life. The pastor that was speaking that night spoke on putting your hope and trust in God and that no matter what man says, God has the final say so. This had to be what I need to hear and was looking for. That was the night I gave my life to the Lord and have been faithfully seeking Him with all my heart since daily through His word, in prayer and studying of His word and serving Him where ever I can. Hebrews 4:12, 1 Peter 2:1-3, Psalm 37:5-6, Colossians 1:21-23.

Since I have made God the Lord of my life, my life has changed dramatically. I now look at life so much differently now. I no longer take thing for granted anymore. It's not about me anymore. The Lord has delivered me from smoking, a foul mouth, gambling, drugs, pornography and so much more. He has filled me with His Love and compassion in my heart towards all people, even people that I should be at war with in here. Being in a controlled environment, I cannot just get up and walk away from issues that arise. I have learned to trust in Him and use His word to guide me. (Psalm 119:105) I have grown in my relationship with the Lord through correspondence courses since the day I accepted Jesus into my heart. Every day since I gave my life to the Lord I have been seeking Him daily in prayer and His word. I am thankful for being alive and set free spiritually even in prison. Thank You Jesus!! God has worked miracles in my life for healing many injuries over the years according to His word in 1 Peter 2:24, Isaiah 53:4-5, and Jeremiah 30:17. God continues to pour out His blessings and goodness in my life as I continue to grow in my relationship with him. Thank You Jesus for saving me!

Note from the Editor: As of this posting (June 2013) Steve was incarcarated at the Chippewa Correctional Facility in Kincheloe, Michigan. He can be reached by email at jpay.com, search for Steve Homola. His ID number is #19041.

Arynn: The Diary of a Young Christian



I gave my life to Christ at the age of 7, and at that moment I would never fathom the paths life would lead me down, and how that would affect my life with Christ. At that time I was shrouded in an innocence that comes with being 7.

I could have even called my life "perfect" until the age of 17. As a junior in high school I thought Id found the love of my life and I gave him everything I had, including my virginity. Now us all being Christians we know sex before marriage goes on the list of "no no's" and especially being a young Christian girl growing up in a house of devout Christians I was supposed to know better. So this became an even bigger "uh oh" in my eyes. Somewhere the line between love and lust became dangerously crossed and I committed what I consider my first major sin against God. Now we know there is no sin bigger then the next, but I was a girl who had gone through life playing by the rules with barely an ounce of rebellion in my body. I had put myself on a pedestal and idolized myself as the ultimate picture of perfection. I was the perfect teenager until I came tumbling off my pedestal and landed on the harsh cold ground of reality. I looked around and realized I was better than no one else, and for the first time I saw myself through God's eyes as a sinner. For the next three years I inflicted my self with spiritual fasting making endless promises to God to never mess up again. Each time I would feel better as if I somehow restored my own sense of perfection, to only fall short and begin the tumultuous cycle all over again. As I entered college things only seemed to worsen spiritual for me. I was having a spiritual identity crisis and I felt so separated from God. I felt like I hadn't heard God's voice in ages. I thought that that he abandoned me in one area of my life, but still made his appearance in other parts of my life. It took me all the way until second semester freshman year to stop trying to fix everything or recreating perfection and instead surrendering myself to God. My pastor once told me that God will use your sin and work your consequences back into his will. For some reason I only saw that on a macro scale at first, like for girls who got pregnant and their

pregnancy was the consequence, and their baby the blessing of Gods life and creation. Once again I was wrong it works on all levels. My spiritual torture and facing the music of my own sinful nature was my consequence, but also my blessing. It was only in the aftermath of that storm that I was able to accept my role in the relationship between God and myself. I finally saw God for the all controlling, powerful, loving and mostly FORGIVING God he is. I saw God's strength, warmth, and gentleness, and I experienced it. Once I let go of my own sense of perfection, pride, and need to play god I could finally experience him. I stood in my own way and blocked myself from Gods grace and loving relationship.

I'm telling this story because we all often feel abandoned by God as youth especially when we are trying to traverse everything life is throwing at us. But once we stop focusing on the roadblocks and our own short comings and look up at the God who wants to so desperately help us through these moments, I promise your spirit will get 8000 times lighter. He wants to be our father and best friend so open yourself up and let him. Leave your comfort zone and grasp onto his hand and he will lead through ever moment or misstep you'll encounter in the future.

I am no way a perfect Patty now, I still have things I struggle with but now I have a budding relationship with my closest friend God to help. I don't want to ever be perfect again if that means I would lose what I have with God now. God never said a walk with him would be easy, but he did promise it would be worth it. Every obstacle, struggle, and moment is worth it for me. And as I continue to fumble my way through young adulthood and the rest of my life ill have the steady grip of God to hold my hand. My name is Arynn and this is my testimony.

Some Insights from the Bible on Pride and Humility



The concepts and words that express pride and humility are very prominent in the Bible.[i] The purpose of this study was to catalogue the scriptural verses related to pride and present several insights gleaned from the process. Due to the vastness of the material and the limited space, the study was primarily concentrated on eight common words related to pride and humility. A word search was done using the four main biblical texts in common use: NASB, NIV, KJV, and NKJV. The results of the search were significant in terms of the volume of the results with 250 matches for the eight words catalogued in the NIV. There were 233 matches from the NASB, 190 in the NKJV, and 156 in the KJV. In the NIV, 200 matches were located in the Old Testament (OT) and 50 in the New Testament (NT). In order to provide the best sense of the uses of the words, the search results from the NIV were selected for analysis in the KJV text using an interlinear Bible since that was what was available. A spreadsheet was developed showing the various Hebrew and Greek words, along with the contextual usages and corresponding English translation in the KJV when it differed with the NIV. This is included in a separate document in the PDF version (see attachments).

The first OT word which expressed the concept of pride was found in Leviticus 26:19. Strong's says that this Hebrew word *ga'own* is the same as *ga`avah* meaning arrogance or swelling.[ii] The context of the usage was Moses' giving of the detailed instructions of the Law. In this text, Moses had finished a statement of the rewards God would give if the people kept the law, and then proceeded to state the punishments for disobedience. Verse 14 began the treatise, "But if you will not listen to me and carry out all these commands." Verse 17 continued, "I will set my face against you so that you will be defeated by your enemies." Then verse 19a expanded the warning, "And I will break the pride (*ga'own*) of your power." A word search in the NIV for the opposite concept, humility, surprisingly located it in the very same spot in the text. Although the first occurrence of the word "humble" in the NIV was in Exodus 10:3, the first of a similar word "humbled" occurred a few verses later in the same section of Leviticus. The Hebrew word *kana* in Leviticus 26:41 is very

similar in meaning to *anah* in Exodus. The former expresses the idea of "bending the knee" or "bringing low," whereas the latter expresses a concept of "looking down."[iii] The context in Leviticus was such that the humility spoken of was something that God was going to enforce on the people because of their disobedience, as in making the people bow before God. The context in Exodus revealed a similar interpretation, with Moses and Aaron asking Pharaoh; in effect, "how long would it be before this ruler bowed before them in obedience to let the Hebrews leave." The first occurrence of a word related to humility in the NT expressed a similar concept. In Matthew 11:29 Jesus spoke about putting on his yoke, for "I am meek and lowly (*tapeinos*) in heart." The Greek word *tapeinos* means "depressed," "cast down," or "lowly."[iv] Other variations in the NT expressed similar meanings, including *tapeinosis* in Luke 1:48, *tapeinoo* is 2 Corinthians 12:21, and *tapeinophrosune* in Ephesians 4:2.[v]

The first NT word which expressed the concept of pride is the Greek *phusioo* and was found in 1 Corinthians 4:6. The word literally means "puffed up," and was rendered that way in the KJV.[vi] The NIV rendered the word "pride," and only appears in 1 Corinthians and Colossians for a total of seven times in the Bible. In the modern sense, we might think of a long-winded politician (or minister) and say that, "he is full of hot air." Such a usage would properly express the concept of pride that Paul made in the Epistles. In this context Paul was warning the people in Corinth that they should consider themselves equal with each other as Christians and not act proudly with their wisdom. The first occurrence of the word rendered "proud" in the NIV was spoken by Elizabeth in Luke 1:51 and was the Greek word *huperephanos.* This word means "appearing above others, haughty, or proud," from the sense of the Greek root "huper," meaning above, and "phaino," meaning to shine.[vii] In this sense the word means literally "one that is shining above others." The context of this first usage was Elizabeth's blessing of Mary, in which she moved from a specific blessing of Mary to a general blessing of God, "He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts (1:51)."

There is often a narrow difference in the language of the Bible between words that refer to a humble person and those referring to the proud one. This creates a greater volume of scriptural references to pride and humility than can easily be located in a word study. In Psalm 18:27 the NIV reads, "You save the humble (*aniy*) but bring low those whose eyes are haughty."[viii] The KJV translates the Hebrew word *aniy* as "the afflicted," a rendering which may do better justice to the Hebrew which also means poor, lowly, or needy.[ix] Many other nuances of usages of common words in Scripture point to pride. Sometimes the proud are equated with the foolish. In Psalm five, King David poured out his heart to the Lord in a beautiful prayer for protection, "Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto thee I will pray (v. 2)." David went on, "For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy site (v. 4-5a)." The NIV renders the same portion of verse five as "The boastful shall not stand before Your eyes." Isaiah chapter 33 speaks of what is considered arrogance in the NIV, but "fierce people" in

the KJV (v. 19). The NIV translates the Hebrew word *mits'ar* in Job 8:7 as "humble," but the same word in the KJV is "small." Since the same common words are used to express both pride and humility it is clear after examination of the preceding verses that an understanding of the context is critical. A hilarious example of the translational difficulties that arise when common words are used to represent pride is found in Proverbs 17:7, "Excellent speech becometh not a fool: much less do lying lips a prince." The humor is that the NIV translates the same verse as, "Arrogant lips are unsuited to a fool– how much worse lying lips to a ruler!" Which is it, *excellent* speech, or *arrogant* lips? The Hebrew word in question is *yether*, which means "overhanging, or an excess."[x] It is evident that the later NIV more accurately reflects authorial intent. Another text that displays a similar translational issue with the common words is 1 Peter 3, in which a word translated "humble" in the NIV is translated "pitiful" in the KJV. In the author's *humble* opinion the translation of those particular verses is *pitiful*!

God viewed arrogant people as lowly or unimportant in his eyes, even if they held high priestly offices in OT Israel. The prophet Zephaniah made an interesting statement in the context of his pronouncements against the nation of Israel. In chapter three, Zephaniah said, "her prophets are light and treacherous persons: her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law (v. 4)." The NIV rendered the passage, "her prophets are arrogant, they are treacherous men. Her priests profane the sanctuary and do violence to the law." The Hebrew word rendered "light" in the KJV was *pachaz*, from the sense of froth from boiling water, or figuratively as "unimportant."[xi] Zephaniah's rebuke of the religious authorities was eerily similar to Jesus' rebuke of the Pharisees in Matthew 23. In verse 17 Jesus stated, "You blind **fools**! Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred? (NIV, emphasis added)." Jesus' statement followed his clear commandment not to call anyone a fool: "whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire (Matt 5:22b-ff.)." Jesus was righteous in speaking through the power of God in condemning the pride of the Pharisees. God especially hates pride and arrogance among religious authorities. All of us in ministry would do well to heed the caution given by Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:12, "So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! (NIV)."

There is a fine line in the Bible between prideful arrogance and boldness of witness for God. This is especially true in light of the similarity of the Greek NT words for them. In 2 Peter 2:10 the word referring to arrogant (men) in the NIV and "presumptuous" in the KJV is *tolmetes*. Tolmetes comes from the word *tolmao*, meaning "boldness."[xii] The context of 2Peter is an address to the early Christians warning them about the false prophets that were among them in OT times, and a prophesy about them being in the church. Tolmao appears in different contexts in a variety of ways. For example, in Matt 22:46 tolmao means "dared" and was translated as such in the NIV, with the KJV reading "durst." In this context, tomao meant something like "nobody was bold enough to ask (tolmao) Jesus any more questions." A similar usage is found in Mark 12:34. Later in Mark, *tolmao* appears in a different context such that the meaning is "boldness." In Mark 15:43, Joseph of

Arimathea went to Pilate to ask for Jesus' body so that he could properly prepare it for burial in his new tomb. The NIV renders the text, "Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly (tolmao) to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body." Second Peter is the only place where tolmao appears in the NT. The other ten usages of the English word "boldness" in the NT are from the Greek *parrhesia*.[xiii] In every single case, the word is used in the positive sense of godly boldness in proclaiming the message of the Gospel, or in resting upon the promises of God. In Hebrews 10:19 the text reads, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness (*parrhesia*) to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus" In 1 John 4:17, "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment . . . ." It is interesting that Peter's use of *tolmetes* refers specifically to the false teachers, who likely spoke with similar *boldness* as that of the real disciples of Jesus. Boldness can be a godly attribute, as in Peter and John's joint prayer in Acts 4:29, "Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness (*parrhesia*) (NIV)." Alternatively, this quality can be that of demon led teachers "to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever (2 Peter 2:17b, c.f. v. 10 in the NIV)." As future ministers, we must boldly proclaim the Gospel to outsiders, but must be careful not to fall into the prideful ways of the false teachers. We should heed Paul's caution regarding our reputation among those outside the church, "Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil (1 Tim 3:7)."

James provided two excellent examples of biblical humility using variations of the same Greek word *tapeinoo*. Variations of this word throughout the NT indicate a state of humility, or the verb (to) "humble."[xiv] In 1:9 James said, "The brother in humble (*tapeinos*) circumstances ought to take pride (*kauchaomai*) in his high position (NIV)." It is evident that the English word *cacophony* is related to the Greek word *kauchaomai*, which means "rejoice" and is translated as such in the KJV.[xv] James used the word pride and humility in the same sentence, with both words spoken of in a positive, affirming sense. The KJV rendered the word *tapeinos* as "of low degree," which again revealed the OT concept of bowing to authority. In 4:6b James said, "God opposes the proud (*huperephanos*) but gives grace to the humble (tapeinos) (NIV)," with the KJV rendering the same. The word *huperephanos* was frequently rendered "proud" and occurred five other times in the NT, including James 4:6. The NIV rendered it this way except in Romans 1:30 where it read "arrogant." James hit on the common words for both pride and humility in the same verse, and used them in ways that it was easy to determine a sense of good or bad. Dan Denk from Intervarsity Christian Fellowship wrote in the mid-1980's on this subject of good versus bad pride.[xvi] The point of his article was that we could put on a false humility and in so doing, actually *become* proud. We don't drink or smoke or go with girls who do, so we are extra special Christians! "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts (Prov 21:2)." We must strive to conduct our studies with these cautions in mind less we get pumped up with pride.

Pride can be shown in a variety of good ways, but again there is a fine line between good pride and sinful pride. The Book of Numbers tells us in an editorial comment regarding Moses, "Now the man

Moses was very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth." It is evident from Scripture that Moses was a very humble man (Heb 11:24-28), yet he was "mighty in words and in deeds (Acts 7:22). Just because he was powerful did not mean he fell victim to pride, although at times this was evident even in his life, as when he struck the rock twice in either impatience or unbelief (Num 20:11). David was also such a godly person as Moses, called a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14, Acts 13:22). The Psalms speak to the greatness of David through his love for the Lord. Psalm 47 is a song of praise, "Clap your hands, all you nations, shout to God with cries of joy" (v. 1b-ff., NIV). The KJV renders verse 4 as, "He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency (*ga'own*) of Jacob whom he loved." The NIV renders the Hebrew word *ga'own* as "pride," such that the verse reads, "He chose our inheritance for us, the pride of Jacob, whom he loved." Strong's says the word means "the same as (arrogancy), excellency, majesty, pomp, pride, proud, and swelling."[xvii] The closest word in the Greek NT is *thesaurus*.[xviii] Along that fine line, pride can be a good thing when it is in the eyes of God. David's son Solomon with the Proverbs attributed to him (Prov 1:1) was second only to Jesus in wisdom (Matt 12:42). Proverbs 17:6 reads, "Children's children are a crown to the aged, and parents are the pride of their children (NIV)." The Hebrew word *tiph'arah* translated "pride" in the NIV is translated "glory" in the KJV. In 2 Corinthians 5:12 Paul said, "We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride (*kauchema*) in us . . . (NIV)." Paul also used positive references to pride in several other texts, for example 2 Corin 7:4, 8:24, and Galatians 6:4. James did so in chapter 1, "The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position (v. 9 NIV)." Due to all the negative biblical baggage that has come from the word pride, perhaps we should use a different word when we make our own righteous statements in a manner acceptable to God. Instead of saying, "I'm so proud of you Kathie for finishing your homework," maybe we should say, "Kathie, thou art the excellency (*thesaurus*) of my household, and I glory (*kauchema)* in you. Thanks so much for finishing your homework." This would move the object of our affirmation to Kathie's accomplishment through God's providence, and away from our "proud-ness" of being the father that raised this smart, pretty, overachieving, witty, and happy child! We can look approvingly upon the accomplishments of others, but we must walk a fine balance when we begin to compliment ourselves, even though this may not be sinful in and of itself.

In the Book of Matthew Jesus addressed the Pharisees and said, "Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ. But the greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted (23:10-12 NIV)". Jesus' statement preceded a series of stern rebukes against them, primarily on the basis of their arrogance and pride. Perhaps we can miss the deeper insight of this section of text, which speaks to the rulership of the future kingdom. The leaders of the *future* kingdom will be from among the humble in the *present* kingdom. This insight into the future kingdom stands in stark contrast to the failures of God's people throughout the Scriptures in the areas of pride and humility. Spurgeon commenting on the verse said, "The way to rise is to sink self; the lower we fall in our own esteem, the higher shall we rise in our Master's estimation."[xix] **James 4:10**states**, "Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord and He will exalt you."**God's teaching in Proverbs is clear, "The fear of the LORD is to

hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverted mouth, I hate (8:13)." For a study on pride and arrogance, these say it better than anything can!

Seminary mentors would do well to monitor their protégé's "pride meter" in light of the vast scriptural evidence of pride among God's people in the OT, and specific warnings in the NT. In Galatians 6, Paul cautioned the churches in Galatia to be on the lookout for this very thing. "If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else (v. 3-4 NIV)." The context of the passage is in a short discussion on church discipline, "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin . . . (v. 1)," and as such would be of special relevance to the church leadership. The NIV renders the middle of verse four as, "Then he can take pride in himself . . . ," showing once again the concepts of sinful pride alongside that of godly pride. Paul's warning can be taken by seminary students literally, at least in part, as a caution regarding the power they have at their hands while exercising church discipline. Power can lead to pride, hence the reason for Paul's explicit caution to the church when dealing with matters of discipline.

"He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8 NIV)."

Jim Hill, Christians for Christ Ministries, May 2013

END NOTES

All Scripture is KJV unless otherwise indicated.

Strong's Hebrew Dictionary, #1347, 1346.

Ibid., #3665, 6031.

Strong's Greek Dictionary, #5011.

Ibid., 5014, 5013, 5012.

Ibid., #5448.

Ibid., #5244, 5228, 5316.

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United States Patent and Trademark office by International Bible Society.

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Daniel Denk. "I Wanna Hold My Hand, Can We Love Ourselves Too Much?" Intervarsity Christian Fellowship, March 1982. [N.B. The author has a copy if anyone would be interested in reading it.]

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Some Insights on Pride and Humility by Jim Hill.pdfDownload

Reflecting Upon God's Grace



When we think about God's grace, we must approach it with the splendor and complexity inherent in how God manifests and expresses Himself. God's grace is theologically defined as God's unmerited favor. I like to define grace in these terms: "Getting something good when I don't deserve it." But is there more to grace than this?

Since the time of the Reformation, theologians have defined grace in at least two categories: common grace and saving grace. The first category, God's common grace, refers to God's goodness that is enjoyed in everyday life by both the saved and the unsaved. Jesus hinted at this when He said "For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 4:45 ESV). God is gracious even to the unsaved by providing order in the universe that allows one to carry out life without any need for saving faith. The crops of the righteous do not necessarily yield more than the unrighteous. God's common grace is experienced in common life by

common human beings.

If you are a good Bible scholar, you may recognize that Jesus was using this illustration as concluding evidence for a primary point he was making in the Sermon on the Mount. His point was not to unpack the merits of common grace (this was assumed knowledge). His point was to bring out the amazing kindness of God which is to be seen in those who follow Him. The preceding verses read: "43You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven." Jesus was ushering in an outrageous value system that would characterize those in the Kingdom of God, those who willingly bow their knee to the true King, Jesus the Messiah. [Note: This value system is expounded on in Dallas Willard, The Divine Conspiracy (San Francisco: Harper/Collins 1998).]

The gift of saving grace was the prerequisite for being able to show common grace, which in my opinion is anything but common. Loving one's enemy, praying for those who persecute you is unnatural and untenable without the love of God Himself infusing one to die to self and live for another cause. This was not a warm and cozy fireside chat; it was a battle cry for all who would take up their cross, deny self and come follow Jesus. The only way a human being could live out this outrageous new code of honor was due to the radical relationship God offered through His Son. God's saving grace is so transformational for us who believe because we would finally experience an unconditional love that the world system cannot give. God Himself loves His enemy—namely us! (Col 1:21). In acknowledging saving grace, we get something good (love from God) which we don't deserve. That is the basis of grace, which is the basis of God's character.

So what does all of this have to do with us who believe? We're saved. Period. But that's not the end of the story. God uses us to be evidence of His transformational love to those who have yet to bow the knee to King Jesus. God uses us to be His walking billboards of who He is. We are supposed to make the watching world jealous of us (in a good way), so that they will see the source of all delight is really God Himself. The saving grace God gives us allows us to move toward others with an unnatural and untenable love. Without some supernatural explanation, our lives should not make any sense to unbelievers.

The question is: do we live in such a way that really causes the watching world to scratch their head and ponder what in the world motivates us to be such gracious people? Is that the reputation that God's people have among those who are in the world? Unfortunately, this does not tend to be the perception. So that means that we will have to be even more strategic about embracing opportunities God gives us to "love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us" in all its many forms. That means we will need to depend on God's grace to flow through us when our flesh is crying out to be satisfied by being judgmental, vindictive or angry.

One counterintuitive way to grow in becoming more gracious is to ask God to help us become more aware of our ungracious ways. We can be broken over our internal lack of grace to someone who

invades our space at the grocery store or to a friend who talks solely about her problems without overt concern over our own issues. When we treat people like annoyances, threats and problems to fix the clear message of God's grace gets muffled. This should grieve our hearts and lead us to a place that confesses: "I can't (fill in the blank with your own struggle: love, treat people like You do, forgive . . .), but You can." Our dependence on God to love through us becomes a lifeline of His grace to us. And maybe as we participate in showing His common grace, He will use that to lead hearts to trust in His saving grace.

Dr. Christy Hill

Questions for Reflection:

· What does God's grace reveal about His character and why should grace define our new identity in Christ?

· Why is common grace an implied assumption about Kingdom life?

· What difference does it make if I know about common grace and saving grace as theological constructs?

This article was originally written by Christy Hill and published in Women's Spectrum.

Gods_Grace_Womens_Spectrum_Article_Christy_Hill.pdfDownload

Praying for our Lost Friends and Coworkers, Insights from Genesis Chapter 18



Many of us have a heart for spiritually lost family members, coworkers, friends and others and spend time in daily prayer pleading with God to reach their stony hearts with the Gospel. Like those that share this concern I pray each day for a large group of people including many with whom I used to work in one of my previous careers. Of the people on this long list five particular people stand out, let's call them the "five guys." One day as I was pouring out my heart to God about this long list of people and I came to an interesting understanding of how I could be praying for them but especially my five guys.

Genesis chapter 18 chronicles a very interesting exchange between God and Abraham. The context is that God just announced that He was going to destroy the world because of their sin. Abraham pleads with God not to take this extreme action. Reading from verse 23 Abraham says, "Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked? (NKJV and all verses thereafter)." He goes on, "Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city; would You also destroy the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous that were in it? The dialogue continued.

> Genesis 18:25-33 NKJV 25 (Emphasis Added) "Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" 26 So the LORD said, "If I find in Sodom **fifty** righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes." 27 Then Abraham answered and said, "Indeed now, I who am but dust and ashes have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: 28 "Suppose there were **five less than the fifty righteous**; would You destroy all of the city for lack of five?" So He said, "If I find there **forty-five**, I will not destroy

> it." 29 And he spoke to Him yet again and said, "Suppose there should be **forty** found there?" So He said, "I will not do it for the sake of **forty**." 30 Then he said, "Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Suppose **thirty** should be found there?" So He said, "I will not do it if I find **thirty** there." 31 And he said, "Indeed now, I have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: Suppose **twenty** should be found there?" So He said, "I will not destroy it for the sake of **twenty**." 32 Then he said, "Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but once more: Suppose **ten** should be found there?" And He said, "I will not destroy it for the sake of **ten**." 33 So the LORD went His way as soon as He had finished speaking with Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place.

Abraham started his plea asking God to save the world if just 50 righteous people could be found within the city of Sodom. After he received a positive answer from God Abraham worked his way down from 50 to 45, then 40, 30, 20, and finally stopped at 10. God agreed that if He could find just ten righteous people in all of Sodom He would not destroy the rest of the people because of those ten.

As I was praying my daily prayer list including pleading with God for the salvation of the long list of my friends, family and others I came to a wonderful understanding of how I should pray for my five guys from my very long list of those who need the Lord Jesus. It went like this:

> *God, if there is only one person (me!) praying for these five guys I ask you to save them. This is because when they get to heaven you can show them that you brought them to believe in the finished work of Jesus on the cross through your hearing of just **one** believer's prayer!*

Next I changed my prayer:

> *God, if there are only one or two of us praying for these give guys I ask for you to reach out to them and change their circumstances such that they come to trust in Jesus as their Lord and Savior.*

My five guys are a diverse group whom I met over many years through various circumstances. One of them is a man who I added to this list in response to a challenge that I gave a small group to whom I was leading a Bible study on evangelism. I challenged my small group to begin praying for the salvation of person whom they knew personally and that would be the most impossible to come to faith in Jesus Christ. The reason that I gave that challenge was because my brother Mike issued a similar challenge to a small group that he was leading. After I came to faith in Jesus Mike told me about this challenge and that the person that he chose was me!

What about you, are you praying that God will save someone that you know? Perhaps you and and at most one other person are praying for them. Do you consider it to be almost impossible for them to come to faith in Jesus Christ? In closing let's pray.

> *Dear God, You are King of Kings and Lord of Lords. You alone are worthy of all glory and praise. I bring to you the remembrance of your word to Abraham. I fall at your throne and even*

dare to go beyond what Abraham asked of You. I beg of You that if only two of us believers are praying for the salvation of my five guys that You would intervene and save them. Please show them when they get to you in heaven that you answered my prayer just because it would glorify your name. Today I lift up Tony, Erik, Doug (the impossible one), Mike, and Ken. I pray this in the boldness and name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Please let me know your thoughts on what I said here. Jim Hill, May, 2013 Winona Lake, Indiana

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Liz's Testimony: Difficult Childhood and Thoughts of Suicide turned to Jesus Christ



I once heard someone say when someone is anointed, chosen to do good things the attacks for that person start early. I believe that's where my testimony begins. Starting from a young age the devil tried to break me, to destroy my hope in the people around me or take away my dreams of bringing peace and being a light that would shine bright. He started with love, love was never something that came easy to me. I couldn't really find it in those around me. I was born into a chaotic point in my parents relationship and although I knew they loved me the devil took away their ability to express it to me or to show me what it means. At the age of 2 my parents divorced and I had to learn quickly how to take care of myself, at the age of 9 I was a mother to my brother and taught myself to cook to provide food on the table. I spent a lot of time alone, the devil whispered in my ear often, trying to

convince me that I was unloveable, that I was just here, nothing special, nothing great, not worth much. As I got older I struggled a lot with depression. In front of friends or family I seemed fine, happy, strong, normal. Inside I hurt, my heart was always broken. I became very hardend and cold inside but there was always that piece of my heart that just wanted to give anyone and everyone some sort of peace, someone to reach out to when they felt no one else cared or understood. I became the go to person to talk to and confide in but the bitterness inside me never let me forget that I couldn't be that person who received peace or was worthy of compassion from others. At the age of 12 I experienced first hand just how dark evil can be. I was put into a situation that changed my life, that drew me deeper into darkness. Rumors were spread and I remember people talking every where I'd go, the looks, the stares, phone calls with threats on my life or to harm me in some way, I was left to deal with those things on my own. The devil had me right where he wanted me and I was to young to even notice the path I was about to travel. At the age of 13 I considered suicide. I became sucked into the numbness and emptiness in the shadows of those who walk around completely lost and confused. I had a lot of why me moments, those why be here moments, those undeserving of life moments. I resented God, I felt abandoned and forgotten.

My loneliness began to change when I met my husband. I was 16 and head over heels with the idea of love and having someone by my side, finally a glimpse of light. We were young and he was never fully ready to commit to a relationship and I chose to turn the other cheek a lot in our relationship and ignore things because I wanted to be loved, to just have one person tell me I'm worth it. He joined the army and we always talked about marriage, you see even though we had our struggles I knew he was it for me, he had my heart and he would have it forever. We grew apart while he was gone, he got into things that distracted him from our relationship and when things got bad they got horrible. I remember being 19, at that point my dad became a preacher, and for the first time going to my dad and completely breaking down, letting go of everything. I'll never forget the first words he said to me, sissy girl it was never your fault, you've been let down by a lot of people but it was never your fault. My dad became my rock that day and after Josh and I got married and things got the worst they've ever been I sunk into the darkest deepest depression you could imagine but my dad always pulled me through.

I began to turn to drugs to release my pain, to erase that pit i was surrounded by, to try to find that place we all want which it to just know you have a place to lay your head and have peace. There were days I couldn't even get out of bed, I felt defeated. Every time I saw my dad I could see the worry in his eyes, the fear that he was gonna lose his baby girl. I was ashamed of who I became and I knew he could see it, I knew he could see the desperation in my eyes. One day he sat me down and he just held me while I cried for what seemed like hours and when I calmed down he looked at me and he said sissy girl I know you don't see it but you're special, you've been given these burdens for a reason and Gods gonna use you to do big things. At the time I thought to myself you're wrong, that's just not ever gonna be me. I went home and I sat down with my bible and I began to think

about my dad, all the things he's overcome to be the most amazing and incredible father, preacher and Christian I've ever known. His faith is so inspirational to me, it's unshackled, undeniable and so special. I thought to myself I want that, I want to be completely emersed in the spirit, to always walk with The Lord right beside me. My mind was spinning with all of my struggles, all my pain, and it clicked for me. I thought to myself thank you God for seeing me as worthy of knowing this pain so I can be the light to all of those who are lost and carry that pain I've carried. Thank you God for seeing me through it, there are times I should've been dead, thank you God for protecting me through it all, for ignoring my cries and pleads to take me away and ending it all. I was finally ready to be my Heavenly Fathers daughter, ready to embrace my responsibility to stand up and be strong through the salvation of Christ we are all given. He took my addictions, he gave me love, and he filled all the lonely broken places in my heart and my soul. He took my husband and he made him new, my God gave me the strength to always forgive, even when I was lost I always heard the lords voice whisper to me Liz don't you give up on him, watch how I will bless him, watch how I will change him, watch how I will reward you with the husband you deserve, his grace provided, his mercy overcame, his love won. I stand before you now blessed, stronger in my faith and focused on my purpose of being a strong voice for those who are lost and need compassion, direction and not be afraid of judgement. My husband is who he was always meant to be growing in faith every day. My future is bright and full of amazing experiences that I can't wait to have. The Lords spirit is in me, he saved me and with him I can do anything. He conquered my demons and gave me light. He over powered every time the devil tried to shut my mouth and quiet the strength in my voice. **My name is Liz and I will forever be a child of God.**

My Walk of Faith and Lou Gehrig Disease (ALS) by Ron Christy



Many who read this testimony account, or perhaps by God's supernatural grace will listen to me give a verbal testimony, will know that it comes from my heart and spirit. I was encouraged to write down personal spiritual thoughts by my beloved friend and prayer partner, Gary Austin.

My desire is that the Lord and Holy Spirit will use what I share in your life. I will not focus upon the many trials of this disease, but mainly on my Lord, His Word, prayer and my walk of faith. I have asked the Holy Spirit to direct my thoughts, so that what is written will bring much glory to God the Father, and the Lord Jesus.

I am so very thankful for my wonderful, loving wife Wendy, for her diligent care of me throughout this very challenging illness. I thank God for giving me such a fantastic wife who has always shown a servants heart. I love you, Wendy! Our two children, now young adults {Angela and Matthew} are both very precious to us.

I am also thankful for my brother, Dave Christy, for his prayers, loving concern and our close friendship throughout the years. I will also include my relatives in Indianapolis, Indiana who have been faithful in their love and prayers {Derrick Christy, Jeanene Christy, Blake Christy, Jena Christy, Sarah Christy and Debbie Cunningham}.

I have been privileged by the Lord to serve Him and His people in the prayer ministry of Winona Lake Grace Brethren Church, Winona Lake, Indiana. I love and hold the pastors in high regard as men of God who consistently demonstrate a Christ-like servant's heart. I have appreciated so much the spirit of love and prayer that many at WLGBC have extended to me. You and many other friends are all dearly loved!

"I will lead you in paths you have not known before"

"Do not fear; trust me"

You may be questioning why I included the two statements shown above. I'll explain later why both are significant. But before presenting the balance of my testimony, I'll share brief comments about the disease.

I was officially diagnosed with ALS late in 2011. However, I was pretty sure that I experienced some signs of the disease earlier that year. I have seen ALS close up as both my mother and sister suffered from this disease and went home to be with the Lord years ago.

For those who don't know, ALS is a degenerative neural/muscular disease for which there is no known cure. Oversimplified {from a layman's perspective}, defective neuron cells originating in the brain enter the spinal column and body areas attacking muscle and nerve tissue and progressively weakens them. The body is covered, or as I would put it, lovingly wrapped by God, in muscle to provide us organ protection, structural support, balance and strength for everything that we do. Imagine the extreme exhaustion your body feels after hard exertion. You collapse in a chair, or lay down, seemingly incapable to move for a given time. That's far from a perfect example of what happens to someone with ALS, but they do progressively become weaker and weaker until they lose body strength. It can get really challenging as the diaphragm is the primary muscle controlling breathing. Other symptoms arise which can further complicate daily living. But that's not what I want to focus on.

What has it meant for me to live by faith, prayer and walk with the Lord? I expressed in some detail what it means to walk by faith, living a life of prayer with dependence upon the Holy Spirit, in my book "*Holy War of Faith*". What I will do now is apply these spiritual principles briefly to some of my life experiences before and during ALS. I will not cite many Scriptures in this testimony (reference my book), but I trust you will detect spiritual truths.

During my adult years the Lord has spoken to me verbally once, at other times in my mind with clear messages and has dramatically captured my attention on a couple other occasions. I have frequently felt His presence as I worshiped, praised and fellowshipped with Him. The Holy Spirit has filled my soul enabling me to pray and worship the Father and Son. The Spirit is my constant loving companion. God has placed godly men and families in Wendy and my life as dear friends for many occasions throughout the years for great Christian fellowship. They are all dearly loved and are precious to us. There are too many to mention and I would never want to omit anyone. The Bible states that iron sharpens iron *{Proverbs 27:17}* which applies to dear brothers that I have had the

privilege to know and frequently met with for mutual challenge, prayer, Bible study, and encouragement.

The Lord got my attention as a young man to seek Him through a life of prayer and a heart commitment to know the Word. On one occasion during my early adult years while seated on a couch intently reading the Word, I distinctly heard my first name {Ron} whispered (still, small voice). I immediately looked to my left down a short hall curious if someone was standing there. As a single adult in a two story home this experience could unnerve someone. The opposite was true, as I felt completely peaceful. I later determined that the Lord graciously called my name to express His love and to encourage me. On another occasion, while seated on my bed reading the Word, I suddenly felt the presence of Jesus sitting near me. It's impossible to fully describe this experience. I was definitely surprised with the realization of His presence, but when the Lord decides to come near, He always brings peace to the heart and mind as we enjoy His loving, sweet presence.

As a father with young children the Lord kept drawing me to be alone and fellowship with Him. I was always intrigued and challenged with the invitation and desire our Lord expressed to abide with us *{John 14 & 15}*. During those years I dug into the Word to better understand truth while serving in church ministries. I was greatly challenged to grow in my faith by a godly pastor Larry McCall, who was and continues to be my friend. I was privileged to serve on the church deacon board which God used to further grow me in faith. You can read about a couple other experiences during this time in my book.

During those initial 10 to 15 years I loved to discuss Scripture, evangelize and at times enjoyed debating to get my views across with others. I was much too head-strong and prideful. The Lord caused me to realize that He wants us to know the God of the Word intimately, not just fill our minds with His Word for the sake of knowledge. Knowledge alone will puff up. All true knowledge and understanding are found in revealed truth and comes from God. The disclosure of an amazing God is the main subject of the Bible. The Word reveals the heart of the Father, how He thinks and responds and it invites us to enjoy the miracle of saving grace and closeness with Him. We are His children and He is our ABBA "*Daddy*" Father.

I love the profound truth expressed at the close of *I Corinthians 13 – "So now faith, hope, and love abide {they're all important}, these three, but the greatest of these is love."* I knew that a deepening love for the Lord would spill over and cause us to share that love with His people. I wrote about that in my book concerning the Holy Spirit and drinking from His endless well, His river of blessing. Love is an action verb originating from the heart for the benefit of others. As an adult believer, I eventually understood many Bible truths, yet I was increasingly aware that I needed to grow to know God. I would later understand more completely what this would mean.

The Lord never lets His children drift very far away without getting our attention. He allowed me to drift in the spiritually dry desert of this fallen world so that I would better understand and appreciate my great need to love and to be close to Him. He is intensely jealous for our love, and

desires to purge our lives of false idols. The most important truth in this life is that He can only satisfy the soul. When all the materialism and vanity crumbles, we discover that He is all we ever had and ever needed.

Yet, He understands us completely, because we are *one spirit with Him {I Corinthians 6}*. The full force of this truth defines our close intimacy with Him which is closer than the marriage bond. Our relationship with the Father and the Lord Jesus is foundationally that of a loving union. I love *Psalm 139* which describes not only God's majesty, but how precious we are to Him. When I fail to live in this truth, I miss the enjoyment of walking in step with the Spirit. However, He never stops teaching me to know, love, and serve Him and to become more like Jesus. I am so thankful how God has worked in my life during those years to mold and prepare me.

Prior to being diagnosed with ALS, my employment at Zimmer Corporation and home responsibilities kept me very busy. But I was committed to make time to meet with the Lord. Nothing is more important than to be alone with the Lord. Investing much time in the Word and in prayerful union will spiritually transform us. This will impact everything in our lives. When we allow the world system values to control our priority choices, we fail to live as we are called by the Lord. I was also committed to be a witness for the Lord and to do my best to be a light for Him {though imperfect I may be} to impact others. I discussed one account regarding this in my book. Please refer to that for a more detailed explanation.

I'll mention an important life situation that significantly impacted me. I prayed during one of several work force reductions to be released from my company and God answered my prayer in mid-2009. That may sound weird to some, but I had a growing heart passion to invest more time to be alone and diligently seek Him. I sensed God calling me to meet with Him to further transform my life and to direct me into ministry.

It was June and the weather was pleasant. The first week I was home I carried a chair, my Bible, note pad, pencil and sat under the shade of a tree in my side yard. I remember saying something close to this – *"Well, here I am Lord. I'm here to be with you and listen to you. Lord, strip the other needed layers of worldly crud off me that would hinder our fellowship and change me."* Those daily meetings, plus long walks where I would praise, worship, listen and talk with Him continued intently for six months. That period of spiritual commitment and renewal established the pattern for my life forward. It's so incredible when you get alone and seek to turn the world off and the spiritual dimension on, asking the Holy Spirit to direct you. Don't get the impression that I am some spiritual man who always walks in the Spirit. I wish that were true, but we are all dependent upon His grace and daily sanctification. Life is a spiritual war zone and God was not through changing and using me. All I can say is that I experienced a whole new spiritual dimension and direction in my life. I was really meeting with my heavenly Father, Lord Jesus and Holy Spirit. WOW!!!

The Lord, in His providence, led us to another church when I reached my mid-fifties {Winona Lake Grace Brethren}. We were unclear why we had changed churches other than my belief that God was directing our path. I had decided to keep a low profile initially, but I enjoy serving so much that this would change during the following year. Wendy and I became involved in an Adult Bible Fellowship {ABF} and were beginning to get to know some of the church family better. During that year a leadership opportunity presented itself in the ABF and I offered myself as their temporary Shepherd. A few months after this I was getting better acquainted with pastors Bruce Barlow and Kip Cone. I also started to become involved with my heart passion- the church prayer team. That's when my relationship with Tom Julien started. The pastors wanted to relaunch the prayer team and expand its vision. I was more than willing to serve the Lord and the church.

Initial leadership committees were forming and meeting for *Imagine The Potential* campaign to expand ministry facilities and Pastor Bruce included me. God was clearly involved. I never sought a leadership position, but God was orchestrating everything. I discovered that my name was included on the Finance committee. It's not that I don't get turned on with finance, but I was puzzled why I was seated in a room with a half dozen very capable team members. I recall offering my services to pray at the beginning and close of the meeting, but that was the extent of my interest. God took care of this as Pastor Bruce scheduled a meeting with me soon after that team meeting. I had no idea what the meeting subject was. However, this meeting stands out in my mind. I can still visualize Bruce telling me that prayer was going to be a vital focus of this stewardship campaign and he wanted me to consider leading such a team. I recall responding that I didn't need time to consider this ministry, because I believed God had called me to do it.

The reason that I included the details in the above paragraph is to illustrate that God was working in the specific details of my life after I had yielded to His leading and to walk by faith. I communicated with the prayer team about the Hub project and we worked to pray for and to encourage the church body. I don't consider myself to be an accomplished speaker; in fact, I tend to be a bit timid when I speak before people. However, I had made a promise to the Lord that I would never shy away from prayer-speaking opportunities, in any venue, but I would depend totally upon Him and the Spirit for the ability. God has always been faithful. I committed to the well known Scripture in Philippians 4:13; *"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."* This has been dear to my heart to the present time. All things are really possible through Christ who loves and strengthens us. We simply need to believe what the Word declares, then step forward and walk by faith. Christ always honors faith.

I really enjoyed a couple circuit journeys visiting most ABF's the next 18 months to talk about the Hub and prayer. I had opportunities to teach about prayer for several Sundays in a couple ABF's. Some may recall the "prayer man" which is the title several groups would use to introduce me. I loved that introduction. I soon lost most of my fear of speaking before people, because I loved the ministry God had called me to, and the people I was speaking before. That makes all the difference

in ministry; it's not about duty or us. The Lord wants us to follow the leading of the Spirit to serve with a heart of complete dependence upon Him.

During this time I started meeting with Tom Julien on a fairly regular basis. That continued for about a year to discuss the prayer team, the prayer partner ministry, future prayer initiatives and to pray. He quietly, patiently, yet purposely discipled and encouraged me. What a blessing it was to get to know Tom on a personal basis. I continue to enjoy our fellowship time. He is a great man of God committed to the Lord, God's people and prayer.

I also got acquainted with Mike Grill and attended his prayer class in 2010. The Holy Spirit led me to share with this class my heart concerning prayer and fellowship with God. In 2011, I began coordinating with Mike on church prayer ministry issues. I loved this man so much and greatly benefited from our times of sharing and personal emails. He possessed what I would term a *radical faith!*

The pastors were emphasizing the prayer partner ministry to the church body. The prayer team functioned to encourage everyone to pursue a partner to pray with. Several of us visited most ABF's and youth groups to encourage them to have prayer partners. I spoke briefly words from my heart stating that linking with a brother or sister is so vital to the Christian life. We all need each other in our battle against the world, flesh and the devil.

I really enjoyed meeting frequently with my prayer partner, Gary Austin. I could write much about these interactions; how challenging, provoking, point-counter-point stimulating, fun, prayerful, etc. they were. We still meet regularly, although it's a bit more challenging for me. Gary knows that I like to talk and he finally has the verbal advantage {ha!}. When you fellowship for 2 ½ years with someone, you soon get personal and share deep personal truths. Only my wife, immediate family, several friends and Gary have heard me share how the Lord has been near me. I'll try and briefly explain below.

Let me first state that I have never questioned or have been angry with my Lord that He allowed me to have ALS. God is purposeful in all that He does and He loves us so much. His wisdom and ways are far beyond our ability to fully comprehend in this life. That's why the Bible states the righteous are to live by faith and trust in His infinite wisdom and goodness. The flesh cries out for immediate relief when life hurts, or when we suffer. That's natural and the Lord understands our frame. When the props of this life are removed we face the truth that we are all really quite weak and totally dependent upon our heavenly Father. All things really do work together for good to those who are called according to His purpose {*Romans 8:28*}.

You will recall the prophetic messages that I documented at the beginning of my testimony. I also stated earlier that I enjoyed taking long spiritual worship, praise and prayer walks. I often sensed the nearness of the Holy Spirit and the Lord. I loved to listen and enjoy their presence. On one such

walk the Lord clearly spoke this phrase to my mind – *"I will lead you in paths you have not known before."* I knew right away that this message was from the Lord. I did not ask what these paths would be, but ALS was the vehicle the Lord chose for me. I always carried my iPhone to play songs of worship and praise. On one of those walks my iPhone started to play a song I had not chosen. It was about the Father's love, provision and care for us.

One day, a few months later, while seated in my living room quietly meditating, the Lord impressed this message to my mind – *"Do not fear; trust me."* Often when I have been seated outside in my yard praying and worshipping, I have sensed the presence of Jesus right beside me. After preparing my heart, I have been graced to pray in the Spirit when I asked for His enabling. There are many other such experiences that I have had with the Lord.

I do not state these experiences to impress anyone to think highly of me. Please do not! Think highly of our glorious, gracious and loving God. Seek closeness with the Holy Spirit with your total being and crave such union. I've learned by faith to seek with all my heart to listen and to be led to pray with the Holy Spirit. We learn to do that by patiently waiting, by a heart commitment, and by living for His glory with a sanctified life. If we regard iniquity in our hearts He will not hear us (Psalm 66). Another way to say this is if we harbor or retain sin that has not been confessed, we can't expect His fellowship or blessing.

Many of you could also cite precious times of fellowship. I firmly believe, based upon Scripture, that close spiritual fellowship should be normative for all believers with their heavenly Father. In John 14, Christ promised that he would manifest himself to those who loved Him and the Father. I'm convinced that we frequently receive what we value most in this life. Wendy and I have been blessed to have faithful brothers and sisters in Christ for encouragement and to pray for us. I have loved to study the life of King David because of his heart passion to know, love and obey his God. He was far from a perfect man, but he was a great confessor of his sin demonstrating a humble, contrite heart. God referred to him as a man after His own heart. WOW!

I will relate one other transforming event where the Lord graced my life to experience personal revival in my total being. I discussed earlier how the Lord stripped layer after layer of this fallen world off me. Purging the life of false gods and having too much of a worldly focus can be quite difficult and painful. However, the other side of the cleansing, renewal and revival process is such a spiritual blessing. Yet it's not a one time in life experience. It's a daily spiritual battle to achieve victory. It's not that I hadn't asked the Lord's forgiveness for sin and believed I was forgiven. There is something more powerful and needed that He wants to do within us – namely to confess *all known sin* to others we have sinned against and to seek their forgiveness. The Spirit led me to do that which resulted in me writing letters to people naming the sin and asking forgiveness. That wasn't easy, but it was so freeing!

Following what I described above, I read the Bible, gave thanks in prayer and enjoyed a great time of worship and praise. I continued my inward meditation for several hours. When I went to bed my

heart was still reciting Scripture, praising and worshipping Him and this continued for 90 minutes without a pause. The best way that I know how to describe this was that the words seemed to flow from the inner recesses of my being from the Holy Spirit. I was praying in the Spirit and at the end of that blessed time, I was not at all fatigued. I simply closed my eyes and soon went to sleep. There are other times that I have prayed with the Spirit's enabling and leading.

I'll conclude this testimony by sharing some thoughts from the past year up to the present time. Despite ALS, my heart and spirit is steadfastly committed to walk by faith and completely trust the Lord. His goodness and faithfulness is unchanging. We need to trust this truth in both the good and bad times. I have asked the Lord to fill me with His love to express this with His people. The flesh interferes at times, but I believe God has enabled me. During my days at home, I constantly talk with the Lord and recite Scripture promises. I breathe, walk, swallow, move and do everything by faith. He has answered so many of my prayers to be near me and to provide for me in my weak and helpless state. Praise Him!

It has been my joy and privilege to serve WinonaLakeGraceBrethrenChurch in the prayer ministry. I enjoyed many weekly visits to the church office during 2012 to encourage and pray with several in the staff. They are a hard working group of dedicated servants of the Lord. I appreciate and love them all. We should pray for them daily. I frequently surprised Bruce Barlow and Kip Cone by stopping at their office doors to say hello. They always had time for a hug, brief expressions of mutual love and praying together.

I am so thankful that many in the church are committed to prayer. That's very remarkable and demonstrates the fact that the Holy Spirit has been at work. He deserves all the praise and glory. My desire is that you will ask the Spirit daily to lead and direct your life and take every opportunity to talk with the Spirit and the Lord. God is always there waiting to hear and talk with us if we diligently seek Him with all our heart. Taking needed time to be quiet and to listen to Him is important. He doesn't shout. He may even surprise you with a blessed encounter.

The tables have been turned. Instead of my privilege of serving to bless others, many wonderful people have been showering me with multiple expressions of love. They always express love and speak encouraging words to me each Sunday. Even though I have lost my ability to speak clearly, they have understood and poured out love and kind words. I have seen the love in your eyes, and felt such love in your hugs. Wow, I am truly a blessed man! With the help of a dear brother, I was able to attend the last evening of the April 2013 Men's Retreat. I was greatly impacted by many men walking up to hug and say encouraging words. It was a powerful session with many men attending. Many in the church body have sent me encouragement cards, prayed with and for me – thank you! Several have stopped over to our home to say hello and to pray. You have taken me to special church and ministry events. I am overwhelmed by your many expressions of Christ-like love. Wendy and I thank God for you.

It's been a privilege and joy to minister with such a fantastic Prayer Team. They have ministered and encouraged me in so many ways. I love them all. There names are worthy to be mentioned: *Gary Austin, Steve Friedberg, Kathy Friedberg, Jim Hill, Jason Lenon, Tami Miller, Tom Miller, Cathie Peebles, Jim Mccoomb*. Keep up the great work team to fan the flame of the Holy Spirit's work in many hearts regarding prayer. I am reminded what our Lord said -*"My house shall be called a house of prayer"* {Matthew 21}. I am thankful that our pastors are committed to prayer and the vital ministry of the Holy Spirit. They have lead the way regarding Prayer Partners along with a prayer emphasis during many Sunday services. My prayer is that all in the WLGBC church body will have a prayer partner.

I'll conclude by again saying that I appreciate and love Wendy so very much! Words cannot adequately express what I feel for her. I have faith in God and His Word to be healed, but I know God's perfect plan and purpose will be done in my life. Praise and bless His holy name!

Pray Without Ceasing!

Note: Ron passed into glory in the early morning hours of October 16, 2013. We encourage you to leave a comment below. Jim Hill

Ron_Christy_My_Journey_of_Faith_and_ALS.pdfDownload

Do Catholics and Everyone Need to Be Born Again and How Does it Happen?



Study Notes for the Sunday Mass Published by Christians for Christ Ministries. We are a non-denominational Christian ministry that seeks to encourage and facilitate Christians in studying the Holy Scriptures. **"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus."** 1 Timothy 2:5

Revised and corrected on 2/24/2013

In an article[i] by Roman Catholic apologist Mark Brumley the author answers the question, do Catholics need to be born again?" He opened the article with the headline, "'Have you been born again?' the Fundamentalist at the door asks the unsuspecting Catholic.'

Brumley goes on to explain that as a Roman Catholic one is born again through baptism, and that the fundamentalists are wrong about their understanding of the need for a spiritual conversion experience or confession of salvation through praying of a sinner's prayer. He incorrectly states, among his various false assertions throughout the article, that "The only biblical use of the term "born again" occurs in John 3:3-5 . . . although, as we shall see, similar and related expressions such as 'new birth' and 'regeneration' occur elsewhere in Scripture (Titus 3:5; 1 Pet 1:3, 23)"[ii]

What's at stake with being wrong on the answer to this question whether one needs to be born again to go to heaven? What happens if one sticks with a false belief for their entire life and then passes into realm of the dead with an incorrect understanding? Would a just God condemn a person just because they held an improper belief about this one thing?

The Bible records not one use; as stated by Brumley, of the phrase translation "born again," but three. One may do a search for themselves through the use of a popular online Bible study tool called Blue Letter Bible by visiting the web page cited below.[iii] From a quick search we see that there are actually three mentions of this exact phrase, two in the Gospel of John and another in the Epistle of First Peter. Delving a little deeper into study through the use of this online study tool we find that if one clicks on the number just to the right of the phrase we can locate the underlying word in the Greek (or Hebrew, depending upon if we are looking at the New or Old Testament) original. In this case we see by using that web site tool that the original word is "anothen."[iv] We urge the reader to follow the links and see this for themselves. Without even a basic understanding of the pronunciation of the Greek we can find that the word was most likely read in a way sounding like "ah – know – then." Digging a litter bit deeper on the Blue Letter site we see that it reveals that there are thirteen (13) uses of the Greek word in the New Testament! Brumley was mostly correct in his assertion that the other appearances are for related terms but looking over those thirteen we find that the exact phrase does appear one other time outside of John's Gospel and that is in the Epistle of First Peter. We will look at that further in our article.

First, let's read what John was saying about the need to be born again in the Gospel according to third chapter of John. We will hbold the uses of the important phrase that we are studying, and as well will mark the text anytime the phrase is referred to either by Jesus or Nicodemus through the use of brackets [].

John 3:1-14

1 There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

2 The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be **born again**, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time **[born again]** into his mother's womb, and be born?

5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit **[born again]**, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be **born again**.

8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

9 Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?

10 Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?

11 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.

12 If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?

13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:[v]

We see from a simple reading of the text above that Jesus mentioned the phrase "born again" to Nicodemus no less than three times and Nicodemus evidently understood since he repeated it to Jesus in verse four. Jesus said very clearly in the text; we are paraphrasing, "you must be born both physically (which happens by default) and spiritually (born again, 'anothen') to enter the kingdom of heaven." Again, you must be born spiritually to enter the kingdom of heaven either in the present sense to become a Christian or in the eternal sense, go to heaven. Regardless of the intellectual

musings of the noted Catholic apologist can you see that you must be born again? Can you also see that being born again is a mystery done through the Holy Spirit such that even the learned Jewish teacher Nicodemus didn't understand at this point in his life? How could he when the church was yet a mystery to be revealed after the rejection of Messiah Jesus?

A critical question arises. How does one become "born again," is it through being baptized in the Roman Catholic Church *and* faith in Jesus Christ as alleged by Mark Brumley or through faith in Jesus Christ alone? Let's look at what the Bible has to say about this very important necessity of having to be born again to enter the kingdom of heaven. In Ephesians chapter two we find Paul stating the following about how one enters the kingdom, or becomes born again (emphasis added):

> 8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:
>
> 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.
>
> 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.[vi]

At the same time as we reason the meaning of those verses consider one of the other mentions of the exact Greek word (anothen) in I Peter 1 verse 3 (emphasis added): "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be **born again** to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." From these two biblical texts we answer the question, "Who (or what) causes someone to be born again (anothen)? Is it the work of another in baptizing us and through our faith in Jesus, or the work of God alone through faith in Jesus? Can we see that it is God at work here, through the instrument of our faith, which God has given to us as a gift, if we accept the free gift?

Let's look at another passage (emphasis added). In Romans Paul explains this concept of salvation through faith alone a bit further. "9 That if thou shalt **confess with thy mouth** (*this is the sinner's prayer mentioned by Brumley*) the Lord Jesus, and shalt **believe in thine heart** (*faith alone!*) that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."[vii] The sinner's prayer *does* appear in the Bible! The Bible is clear that we believe through God's gift of a changed heart and then as evidence we confess to others this belief and together we can have the certainty that we are saved. John said in the Book of First John, verse thirteen, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may **know that ye have eternal life**, and that ye may **believe** on the name of the Son of God."[viii] We can know and believe, or know through belief, that we are in the kingdom of heaven, both in a present sense as we live our lives as believers, and in a future sense that when we die we will go to heaven. Far be it from what the Roman Catholics call the "sin of presumption," we can have this certainty right now.

As a former Roman Catholic we came to the knowledge of truth back in 1999 I make a tearful

request that you consider the truths of what God says through His Bible about finding eternal life through the Lord Jesus Christ. I urge you to see these truths for yourself, like what Nicodemus died in his inquires of Jesus. If you would like to read a deeper analysis of Jesus' discuss with Nicodemus in John Chapter 3 of the Bible please consider another article that we wrote which is posted on our web site.[ix]

May God bless your journey towards the truth. My prayer is that you are not misled by our enemy to misguide you into believing that you are saved through being a "good person," weekly attendance of mass on Sundays and "holy days of obligation," and obtaining the sacraments of the Catholic Church. You are saved by faith in the Lord Jesus and even that faith is a gift from God because there is none that does good, no not one, all of us have turned away, for "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."[x]

Jim Hill, Winona Lake, Indiana

End Notes

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[i] Brumley, Mark, Catholic Education Resource Center. [http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/apologetics/ap0022.html] cited 2/23/2013.

[ii] Ibid.

[iii] Blue Letter Bible. [http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/translationResults.cfm?Criteria=born+again&t=KJV] cited 2/23/2013.

[iv] Ibid. [http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=G509&t=KJV] cited 2/23/2013. All Bible verses are from the King James Version (KJV).

[v] Bible Gateway. [http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=john%203:1-14&version=KJV] cited 2/23/2013.

[vi] Ibid. [http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=ephesians%202:8-10&version=KJV] cited 2/23/2013.

[vii] Ibid. [http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=romans%2010:9-10&version=KJV]. Cited 2/23/2013.

[viii] Ibid. [http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20john%205:13&version=KJV]. Cited 2/23/2013.

[ix] See http://www.christiansforchrist.org/articles/bible-studies/where-does-spiritual-life-come-from

[x] Bible Gateway. [http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=romans%203:23&version=KJV]. Cited 2/23/2013.

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