

Listening

and

Learning

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A BIBLICAL JOURNEY

Genesis

Thoughts come from a wide variety of sources. Some from messages I have heard from individuals, some from assembly Bible studies, some from home life and some from books I have read. The Holy Spirit is the Teacher who makes them real to me.

- "The Believer's Bible Commentary," by William MacDonald
- "Genesis in the light of the New Testament," by F.W. Grant
- "The Gospel in Genesis," by Henry Law
- "The Life Application Bible." Tyndale House and Zondervan

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

GENESIS:

BEFORE THE BEGINNING

I started a journey early this morning, hoping that in some way I could better understand the dealings of God with all humanity in general, and in particular, with me as a man.

I looked back into the ancient past, before there was earth, sun, moon and stars. Back even before there was dark - back to all I know for sure that was there, was God: eternal in existence, Three Persons in One - Father, Spirit and Son.

Each One is Light, for God is Light, in Him is no darkness at all. So, I must conclude, before there were "things" all must have been light - everywhere, for everywhere is where God does dwell.

In my journey of thought, I needed a basis: a standard to guide me lest I go off on some tangent that is beyond being biblical. I thought of plans God had made before the days of creation began. There was fellowship and love between Divine Persons [John 17:4]. There was a harmony that existed between them that now was being planned to share with mankind. The plans for creation and mankind were done with a reason [Acts 15:18]. God had a purpose [Isaiah 46:11] and He was going to do it.

In the fathomless mind of God, He chose people [Ephesians 1:4] that He could develop into a family to give love to and receive love from. A closeness would be there that would blend the infinite intellect, emotions and will of God, with the limited intellect, emotions and will of humans. In view of that He would create man in His own image.

So, as I watched in my mind all this unfold, I saw a book of names written - names of prepared people. Not one was insignificant, not one was a mistake - every one capable of loving God and devotion to Him [Revelation 13:8; 17:8]. A plan was designed and a way made possible for love to be a choice, not just a demand or a trait. It began to unfold before me as I watched light and darkness divide; and ways of intelligent choices to be developed unfold in a beautiful pattern of the divine will taking place in six remarkable days of creation [1 Peter 1:20].

The life that was uniquely God's, was planned and executed so that man could partake of the life of God [Titus 1:2]. Love was not just a form of obedience, just a duty; God allowed sin to give mankind a choice as to who they would love and who they would serve - and who they would follow into the waiting eternity. God provided a perfect redemption for the coming imperfect people [1 Corinthians 2:7] who He knew would need this means of reconciliation. All of this was planned before there was a world, a planetary system or galaxies - or human life at all.

As I watched in my thoughts, I wondered and worshipped at the amazing foresight and plans of an omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent God. He who has a perfect and complete panoply of all the right personality characteristics, wants to share them with as many as possible.

I am absolutely awed - because He means - even with me!

*What holy convocations! What holy conversations!
Were held between divine Persons before the world began.*

*Each One the same in essence! Each One different in personality!
 Divine order was maintained in the Godhead relating to the plan.
 The place to start was in empty space and hung there on nothing.
 There came from the mind and power of God -
 A work that is beyond human description -
 The imprint of those Personalities indelibly impressed
 On every part of that remarkable creation.
 There is no way to fathom it all, even though men have been trying
 To find and describe in words what humans have always been eyeing.
 We can see the beauty of a matchless creation -
 We can measure heights and breadths, but beyond our imagination
 Are degrees of heat, the brightness of light -
 The activity beneath our feet, the power to produce life.
 The vastness of space; the smallest of all particles -
 The uniqueness of our place; the greatest of all articles.
 So, with awe and amazement, I look into the past -
 And simply accept that God has done what is best.
 So, I can accept with even my small amount of faith -
 That God has given me enough so that I can trace
 His handiwork, His wisdom, that reveal to me -
 There is a Supreme Being who I cannot see.
 But much more than that is the assurance that He
 Is not just a force, but has a personality
 That is full of love, mercy, grace and compassion -
 All directed my way that I can know and love Him.
 Therefore, in childlike faith, I lift up my voice
 And praise Him and honor Him for giving me the choice
 To believe and trust Him without any reservation,
 And I accept the Bible facts that He gave me His salvation.*

"Holy God, it is with reverence and faith I come to Thee and thank Thee for including this insignificant piece of humanity in Thy eternal plans. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 1

IN THE BEGINNING

In this journey I am on, there came one of the most challenging concepts to my mind - "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" [Gen. 1:1]. As I thought about these 10 words, it was plain to me that the universe had a beginning and that its creator was God. The only other viable alternative is that there never was a beginning. For someone to think there was originally a dark vacuum where nothing existed, and then for no reason, the vacuum made something out of nothing, and time began, defies both faith and reason. Someone had to throw the switch.

In this journey of thought, I came to the confident assurance that this world and all the system around us, are not the result of a meaningless chain of events. There is a God: there is a reason for this special creation process He completed. There is a specific purpose for everything. None of the things I see or think of are for random reasons.

I stopped in mind to wonder at the intelligence, the amazing and intricate order of everything from galaxies to atoms. Though I cannot think it is possible to scientifically recreate the events surrounding the beginning, I know there was a beginning.

A voice was heard where never a word was heard before, "Let there be light" [Gen. 1:3]. The power and authority of that voice spoke again and again - ten times over across the silence, until in orderly fashion there followed the separation of light and darkness, sky and water, land and sea; sun, moon and stars all put in place and functioning orderly because of the supreme intelligence of the Creator. Trees and herbs, fish and birds, animals - and then man. All came in segments designed for orderly life by a God of order.

God saw all that He had made and knew it was very good.

Even as in my journey around this blue planet, speeding through the universe in this galaxy at 490,000 miles per hour; I wonder at the complexity and intricacy, the beauty and the astounding facts revealed about God Himself in His creation. I had to stop and consider - these were not random acts. There is a reason behind all this revelation of Divine Persons.

And then I thought - and perhaps in a measure, began to understand, that behind my ability to think and reason, to love and enjoy, to come to logical conclusions - I am one of the reasons all this happened. God: The Almighty, the Eternal, the Father of Eternity - did this for me. That I might be joined to Him and share with Him: perhaps even be a participant in the eternal purpose He has in His own mind.

He has included me - Even me!

*It started on time according to the eternal purpose
The creation unfolded in orderly fashion as the Bible told us.
Every action following in precise action the one before -
Each developing creative work like the opening of a door.
Each one bearing a unique and different characteristic -
Each one revealing supreme intelligence, not that of a mystic.
As one creative act followed the one before it -
It was plain to see that God is a Spirit.
But more than a Spirit, He has a soul
With a mind and emotions, and a will to make the whole.
There is also the bodily part of the divine Godhead -
For God wanted to dwell with man in compassion, not dread.
Every new evidence of the creation that unfolded -
Gave testimony to the fact that it was God who was holding
All things together by the word of His power,
From the galaxies in their order to the forming of a flower.
Untainted by sin in creation's original state,
Was unspeakable beauty, evidence of a power that is great.
From all of that came forth the wonderful truth -
That when God made man, He thought we were worth
Creating and maintaining that we might enjoy with Him
The blessings of fellowship and communion, so then
He placed the first couple in the garden He planted -
To keep it and use all the bounty it imparted.
What a wonderful life to enjoy life with God -
And to be in close contact with Him and hear every word
That He would share as He explained everything
With all the joys that perfect fellowship with a holy God brings.*

"Father, I have been coming here and preaching here for over 50 years. Now I am here again to preach the Gospel. Would it please Thee to grant again the blessing of salvation for sinners that would bring honor to Thee in this place. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 1:1. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

IN THE BEGINNING GOD.

*In the beginning - past unknown, before the Voice on earth was heard,
The "Three in One" in symphony, made plans so fine that they defy
All thoughts of those who seek today, in quest of knowledge, to fully learn
How things happened and came to be, as looking around at all they see, many try -
To explain with words, what came from nothing, made by - "The Word of God."*

*Designed by Intelligence so supreme, from the smallest vein to the largest star;
Evidence is there for all to see who look with eyes that link to minds.
A plan of God, still incomplete, reveals to us what all these things were created for.
God unfolds to us who want to know; when we seek, we will surely find -
The intricate forms, sizes and colors too, reveal to us, "The Mind of God."*

The display of glory as I search for reasons clearly shows, the One who does all this has Love; Love that He wants to express that He might share this glory and the wondrous joy it brings. In making such beauty in so many different ways, I easily see that wherever humankind does live; The harmony: form, color, size - different in each the print of the One who made these things – And wants to share them, not for selfish gain, but fellowship that shows – “The Love of God.”

I touch and taste and smell the essence of all created things that are there placed before me; I wonder, amazed at all I cannot see but know its there and fulfilling the role of divine intention. What is behind all this, what is the purpose? Then I understand all this around that I can see, Has been provided that I who cannot do it or do without it, evidence of gracious intervention In my existence, is given so I can know the blessings of “The Grace of God.”

I do not understand, nor ever can or will, all that God is able to accomplish with a word. And it is beyond my grasp to think such awesome thoughts such as His mind conceals. But I know love and have experienced its blessings in my life coming from my gracious Lord, And the grace I needed to be linked by bands of faith; the cross of Calvary has revealed. And through my daily walk here on earth and in heaven to come, I know – “The Blessing of God.”

“O Lord God Almighty, who has revealed Thyself to me in many ways, but clearly in Thy Word: I am thankful for the power of simplicity. So much has been said with so few words. I am far too wordy to be able to express myself appropriately to Thee, but this morning, I worship by saying the word – “God.” It unfolds to me thoughts I cannot say but I offer them in praise to Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

GENESIS 1:31. *“And God saw every thing that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.”*

VERY GOOD.

*Empty space
Darkness, soundless, airless,
And then –
An eternal Person, an eternal purpose –
Love looking for a place to show itself to others.*

*Plans long before made –
Begin to unfold in careful orderly design.
From nothing – God creates!
Movement on the water.
The sound of Greatest Voice!*

*“Let there be Light!” and there it was –
Day follows night and God speaks –
Again, and again until six times pass –
And everything works in its order –
Just as God planned –
And it was “Very Good!”*

“Everything is like Thee, my Gracious, Heavenly Father, all Thou hast done is ‘very good.’ No wonder there was the satisfaction of seeing the perfection of the original creation. I am so sorry for all the chaos caused by human sin. But I am anticipating, with joy, the time when there will be a new heaven and a new earth. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

GENESIS 2

FIRSTS

A new day has come and I journey on watching and learning as new things unfold. There was the *First Sabbath*, a time to “cease.” God rested, not because He was tired; God doesn’t become weary [Ps.121:4], but the creative task was finished. He blessed His creatures [Gen.1:22] and He blessed man [Gen.1:28] and set a special day aside that I might rest too and consider, “There is a rest for the people of God”, [Heb.4:9]. For a chosen earthly people, He made this a sign of a special covenant He had with them [Ex.31:12-17].

In my journey, I visualize the *First Garden*, an orderly beautiful place God planted Himself to put man into. Surrounding the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil were all these plants God made

for the benefit and food for the man and woman He created. This is the first of four special gardens that summarized all of Bible history. This established the fact of the divine authority of God over everyone.

There was also given by God, the *First Law*, "Thou shalt not eat of it" [Gen.2:17] - not complicated, a simple statement I could easily understand. But in my mind's journey, I thought, "Would I have obeyed that law, or would I have reached out to take that which was forbidden?" How strange is the concept of free will, a choice to obey or not. There was no compulsion or reward - just a fair test of my will to respond to One who is so great. And yet there that one tree that stands: beautiful, full of fruit but not to be touched.

I have been to weddings, but there never was a marriage like the one there. The *First Marriage* took place when God took the woman He created from the man and brought them together in the bonds of marriage. There was established the covenant of companionship in that beautiful place. God's plan was that in this way the human race would be continued and bring out the best in the human race. I could see the first beautiful picture of the Christ who would come and the church that would be His bride.

I see in all of this God has a plan - for me!

*What a remarkable thing to consider, God is resting at "ease"
And looking on His creation, with it all He is pleased.
The display of its beauty is there able to be seen now with other eyes
That look upon God's creative glory and with Him personally prize
What God has chosen to share with them, all the things He deliberately planted
And they were able to live in the First Garden, Adam and Eve were granted
That they might tend it and keep it, and enjoy God's presence each evening
Finding great delight in all they were doing and seeing.*

*Beside the First Sabbath and First Garden, there were other "firsts" too.
The First Law was given so that man's free-will would show.
It wasn't some complicated form that was difficult for them to learn.
It was simply that you are free to eat what you want, except from that middle one.
A commentary on the human will is that when one is free to choose -
He wants to take a chance on what is forbidden just to see if he will really lose
What he was warned about when he got his instructions from God,
Alas, to his own condemnation he found God is always true to His word.*

*Another important "first" was the First Marriage of woman and man.
These were brought together by God to share together in God's unfolding plan.
What a blessing it was for each other to participate as one -
And fulfill the divine purpose for humans by doing what needed to be done.
The First Marriage is a type of the future when Christ and His bride are together.
It will be experienced at the Rapture when in the air unto Him we will all gather.
The covenant of companionship will last, we will live with Him and with Him reign.
Back in Eden there was a little foretaste of the new kingdom when it will begin.*

"Lord God, the lessons of Genesis need to be learned over again. It seems to me people are forgetting what Thou hast planned in the beginning is really going to happen. May a sense of Thy reality and Thy purposes and Thy presence be produced in people who today will hear Thy Word. May our worship, service and testimony bring much glory to Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 2:5. *And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground."*

BEFORE IT GREW.

*What was it like when God made it first?
The beauty was such, when from nothing it burst
From God's powerful words, full fruited and grown.
But not into earth did He place it till man,
Was in chosen garden, and ground then did till.*

The plants full did flourish and continued to still.

*How did it look before each thing in place;
God carefully made it in each separate space?
When creation was done and man there could work;
From each plant and fruit for his joy he then took,
The privilege of work and a meaningful life;
Continues today, though the world's full of strife.*

*What did man do the first thing each day?
Did he eat for necessity or only for joy?
And when he went out early to till all his ground;
Was it for dew to go in, or for crops to abound?
Every tree in his sight looked pleasant and good;
Did it ever decay or just stayed there for food?*

*I have questions but no answers about those first days.
God hasn't told all, but I know all He says
Is enough to make clear to me plans that He has.
So I'll learn what I can about following His path
To the place that He wants me to work in His field;
And I'll be satisfied full, at the fruit it does yield.*

*I'll leave all the questions in the white between lines.
And seek by His grace, to use what strength is mine.
And when the time comes, maybe Adam I'll see;
Then he'll answer small questions that rise up in me.
But mainly I'll be glad to see Him who me took
From a slumbering bed and sent me to work,*

*The plants I have seen are results of a seed;
Planted carefully down where all that they need
Is drawn by God's power to do what men can't.
And the final result is a bountiful plant;
Bringing forth fruit for God, yet I've had a part,
'Cause He called me to be there right at the start.*

*To see the seed bud, and the plant start to grow:
How it does all that's needed, I never will know.
But to see the plants growing and bringing forth fruit;
Is enough to keep me praying and trying to work,
When the harvest is done and He calls workers home,
I'll be more than happy to see all that God's done.*

"O God of all creation, and the Maintainer of all that is made: I am interested in the order of things that Thou hast prepared and done. Plants prepared and ready before being planted; people chosen and ready to hear the Gospel; history known and waiting to happen – all these wonders are in my mind. It is so different from the way I am. Can it be that I am that far away from Thy mind to not get what I should? If I am, please draw me closer. If I am learning and working in the way best pleasing to Thee, leave me like this. I am still able to worship at these wonders! In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 2:9. "And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."

GOOD AND EVIL.

*The knowledge of good and evil, was made clear right from the start;
But as time went by, it seems these two distinctions began to blur.*

*It started with excuses made to cover sin so stark—
And now the blend is so obscure, it is hardly him or her.*

*What is good to some – is if it pleases them, no matter what God says.
If they think it's alright – no one else has a right to judge.
The sole decider of right is self, they say— it is only if I am pleased –
Not realizing that someday they'll face Him who knows what each one does.*

*The fact is – what is good – has to be the same as God –
For no one else is “good” but God alone.
The standard of all righteousness is determined by God's Word –
It is only mine when all my sins have been by Christ's blood atoned.*

*To try to put my spin, on what God has said is fact –
Is the worst kind of self-exaltation that really there is.
It is sensible when thoughts like this arise – to go right back;
And learn the lessons of Eden and the reasons for the curse.*

*To listen to contradictions that come from the devil or from men,
When they raise their puny voices to bring God down;
Is about the same as hearing dogs howling at the moon.
The howling doesn't change a thing, it only makes a mournful sound.*

*When God gives us the privilege to make choices in our lives –
It behooves us to consider, whether it leads to good or bad.
The knowledge is there in scripture, always then be wise –
To make the right decisions so you'll not be sad but glad.*

“Father, I am glad you are patient and longsuffering, because so often I hesitate when I should act, and act when I should hesitate and consider things more carefully. I do not want to grieve the Spirit by hasty actions, nor do I want to quench Him by dragging my feet. For help to develop habits of discernment is what I am asking. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

GENESIS 2:18. *“And the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.’”*

NOT GOOD.

*Balance happens when there is more than one
To consider each issue that arises.
God knows our need of one suitable to us:
And He makes one.*

*Different enough to see from a different point of reference:
Alike enough to see through my eyes,*

*Moderation doesn't fit easily with strong ambition.
My personal bias has power over common sense.
That is not good – God knows.
And He acts.*

*A help-meet fresh from His hand comes alongside.
She takes her place close to my heart.*

*Challenges are part of life, but are often too large for one person.
Some things we are responsible for.
God knows my inability to fulfill my expectations;
And He brings her.
A life that was incomplete and “not good”
Becomes what God intended – two become one.*

"Father in heaven: I am very grateful to Thee for ever bringing Linda to me. I am thankful for the life that we share together. I am thankful that we can share the work of the Lord together. I am thankful that she can often know the best way to approach an issue, before I even know there is an issue. She is truly a "help meet." Keep us with oneness of mind and heart in all we are called upon to fulfill. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 3.

THE FALL

The dawn has come and gone on another day as this journey I make. I look into the beautiful First Garden, Eden, with its unmatched beauty, designed by the Master of all landscape architects, the Lord God Himself. How awesome it is as those two perfectly matched persons go about their tasks of maintaining that which God planted. Could anything be more perfect?

Moving through that place of such holiness and beauty, comes the crafty serpent, the host body of the original liar and deceiver. I watch the *tempter* draw near to Eve with smooth sounding words and he finds his *target* - the mind of Eve [2Cor.11:3; 1Ti.2:13-15]. By attacking the human mind, made in the image of God, Satan attacks God. His *tactic* is to get the mind to doubt God; to question God's Word; to deny what God's Word says and to substitute his own lies for God's truth.

As I watch, I learn - to question God's goodness and love is to play into the hand of Satan: "You will be like God." And I saw the *tragedy*: instead of resisting, she yielded. She omitted some of what God said, and added other words. And I watched as the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life brought both Adam and Eve down - under the pressures of TEMPTATION.

Unseen perhaps to their eyes, but easily seen by mine is the great black word, CONDEMNATION. Temptation yielded to - produces condemnation. To be tempted is not sin. To yield to it is. I watched and learned some lessons for myself: when tempted, pray to God for help to resist; run from temptation - literally if necessary - flee from the place and person of the tempter; and when I know something is wrong, reply with a resounding "NO!"

From my view of hindsight, I can see the *internal* effect of condemnation. With the loss of innocence and the ascendance of guilt, comes fear and shame, carving a place inside to stay forever inside me. Self-defense and blame placed on others is the pierced conscience's way of trying to cover my own guilt.

As I watch and look into the past, I see the *external* effects of their awful choice. The serpent falls to the ground where it crawls in the dust and dirt. The woman cries out in severe pain during childbirth. The man labors daily against the unending battle against thorns and thistles, useless plants that try to overcome the useful ones. He labors hard and endlessly in sweat against the lasting effects of his sin. "The fall" was swift and hard and lasting.

I turned to look around the 360 degrees of past, present and future, and saw the *eternal* effects of man's fatal choice. But I saw all is not lost, for the seed of the woman crushed Satan's head at the cross. He was truly defeated in his purpose, even though he bruised the heel of the Lord when He died for my sins that I might be born again and begin a new life in Christ. Victory over Satan, death and hell would come through the second Adam, and light will again shine over all the universe of God.

Above the dark words, TEMPTATION and CONDEMNATION, I see the blood red word -SALVATION: larger, greater and more enduring. I see through "faith-eyes" the first literal, physical death that took place on earth - the death of an innocent. Life-blood flows that the result of sin can be covered. The innocent dies for the guilty, the sinless for the sinful. These are not the "works" of sin-polluted hands, but the evidence of the cost of salvation by grace. Not only did God's grace provide a covering for their guilt as an atonement for sin, but grace drove them from the First Garden - and kept them out. They would not be able to eat fruit from the tree of life and live forever in their sinful state.

As I turn to look again into the future, I see the death of Christ giving back far more than Adam lost when he sinned. We have been given a place far greater than Eden, where we will live forever with the Lord.

And that includes me - even me!

*We don't know that we're up against when the pressure first comes
But when we sense there are some questions raised against God and His name
Then we need to stop where we are and face this serious fact -*

We are being made the object of a satanic attack,

*The whole downward process begins with temptation.
Temptation when yielded to leads to condemnation.
If Satan can get us to doubt God, he has a terrible hold.
And it won't be too long until our resolve does fold.*

*After doubt comes a subtle form of distortion.
Instead of the whole truth there is quoted only a portion
To suit a person's desire to do things their own way -
And it is not long after that one is starting to sway.*

*Denial is a way to excuse one's behavior.
It is often used to try to curry another one's favor.
But denial is usually another way for a person to lie
Or else excuse what they know is wrong, they will try to deny.*

*When God says there are some things He wants us to do -
And we disobey Him because we didn't want to -
Then we will find ourselves outside of God's will.
Disobedience is proof we are going downhill.*

*There is no doubt sin has a terrible effect.
Once a person gives way to it, we hardly know what is next.
The curse came not just on failing man alone -
All of earth was cursed because of what man has done.*

"The fall into sin Father God, is not hard to discern. Everywhere there is evidence of its consequences. May there be some way Father, that there could be the encouragement of new life brought to these people here. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 3:1. *"Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, 'Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'"*

HATH GOD SAID?

*"Downward" is a word, beginning with a "D,"
That leads to "doubt," a very serious downward act.
What God has said, always begins with a "I,"
For like the Holy God Himself, "truth" is always fact.
The consequence of doubting God's Holy Word is true,
Is like me saying to my God, "You just told me a lie."
Take heed if you think He is just a "man-god" made by puny man,
For the truth is really this, "The soul that sins shall die."*

*Another "D" word is "distortion" changing what God truly means,
It's like saying, only part of the truth has been told to us.
Men fall for this, thinking it's just what's seen is wrong,
Not realizing or admitting that it is "the lust of the flesh."
Deception leads to doubt, and distortion follows fast
On the steps one makes when he's intent on going farther down.
The darkness in these words, comes from the devil dark himself,
Determined to do anything to take the Sovereign's crown.*

*Then comes "denial" a "D" word that just means "No,"
As the sly and evil voice of the tempter makes appeal.
When this comes from within full-blown, that attitude does show,
The inward heart and choice of man is now revealed.
Each downward step we go makes it harder to return to God,*

*As farther from His fellowship and joy we will go,
The curse falls hard upon those who disobey God's Word,
Denying His authority is what rebellion shows.*

*"Disobedience" is the result when from God's will we turn our ears,
And listen to the devil when he spreads his subtle lie.
The only thing that we can do when this temptation comes,
Is to resist the devil strong, knowing he will fly.
God Himself, in words we know, has made clear what is true;
I must avoid the downward course in order to maintain,
A fellowship with God that allows me in Christ to grow.
So, I choose to listen to my Lord, and not deny His Holy Name.*

"My gracious God and heavenly Father, I know the tempter and deceiver is always seeking to bring down what Thou has declared is true. I am asking this morning for wisdom to always discern between the truth and a lie; for the will to always obey the truth and resist a lie; and for wariness to know that when something seems too good to be true, it usually is. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 4

A FAMILY

From my vantage point of looking down on the history of the ancients from above and beyond - I could see a social structure develop that bears a similarity to God's divine intent. A group of people developing from themselves into a social order that is effective in its simplicity and serves to keep order in spite of individual failings. The benevolent dictatorship of a father, tempered by the loving compassion of a mother, both fulfilling their God-given roles, making family life what God intended.

Two boys from the same parents, raised in the same environment, learning the same lessons - did not turn out alike. Their understanding of God, and approach to Him was different. One understood substitution but not the value of a life poured out as a sinless sacrifice. The other learned from the same parents, but could see beyond himself to the reason for the sacrifice. Both knew the substitute of a sacrifice was needed and what God expected. Only Abel, the first shepherd, obeyed.

A lesson I learn from this first family is: God has guidelines for us to follow. His expectations from us are not beyond our ability to perform. God does hear those who come to Him. I must obey Him regardless of the cost and trust Him to help me do what needs to be done.

I also learned that in families, every child is different. No matter what our differences, God has the right to expect from me what He asks. All parents should teach their children to joyfully give God our best of time, talents, money and possessions.

When I need to be corrected, it is better for me to accept corrections gratefully and gracefully, rather than resent the corrections. Family life is one way to learn from others. When left to oneself we tend to get worse in behavior and attitude. When rubbing against others, I can learn without having to always be corrected.

As I turn from that first murder scene, I can see the danger of unrestrained anger. God deserves the best I have and also would expect me to give what He wants, not what I want to give.

Going on in my time-journey, I am made very conscious of the fact that the consequences of sin may last for a lifetime and its results will be felt by generations yet to come.

I saw that God is interested in and involved in, family life. He was not finished with families because Cain failed, murdered and was driven out. He has plans to fulfill no matter how failing human families are. Through Seth He carries out His plans that Satan cannot stop. Righteousness is much more powerful than sin. But sin left unchecked gets increasingly worse as time passes.

I was caused to rejoice and be comforted because I know God is not done with nations, His people and families. He intends to share with us His plans and purposes - and His goals.

He has given me a family heritage - even me!

*The social structure of a family is so wise
 Because it gives worth to each person regardless of size.
 A father may be large and full of strength
 And his infant child only half his arm's length
 But a great huge man can be brought to tears
 By the cry of a child in the midst of their fears.
 The unique position of a mother is special from the start,
 For the child she bears came from right near her heart.
 There is a special bond there that men never know.
 You see it at the birth of a child when the mother's face glows.
 People looking on are touched by a new-born
 Who has the unasked for ability a family name to adorn.
 However, there is an inborn problem that came right at the first;
 When sin entered the human family, it kept getting worse.
 And what began way back in the book of Genesis -
 Continues to be mankind's greatest nemesis.
 No matter how innocent a child seems when they're young,
 It doesn't take long to know something is morally wrong.
 We pass on to our children a nature that is fallen -
 And it is within their own personhood in spite of what we call them.
 Cain passed on to his seed many of his characteristics.
 Even the godly line of Seth had similar instincts.
 As members of families we all need to remember -
 Attitudes are caught more than taught by the on-looking members.
 Though we are all subject to the curse caused by the fall
 God is able and willing to save us when we on Him call.*

"Lord God, please remember our family today. They have gone away from their homes to different places for vacations. Preserve them from temptations and evil attractions. Give them all a genuine appreciation of Thyself and Thy ways. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 4:26. *"And to Seth, to him also there was born a son and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the Lord."*

THEN MEN BEGAN TO CALL.

OFFERERS AND OFFERINGS

*There is a reason for thanks, so I bring a gift;
 Appreciation in this way is able to be shown.
 Or maybe there's wrong that must be made right,
 And the offering brought, for sin does atone.*

SINNER AND SIN

*Self-will in worship is shown to be wrong,
 By the righteousness of one that does right.
 The judgment of God on such a person is strong,
 When he goes against truth and a holy God defies.*

APOSTATES AND APOSTASY

*Rejection of God and His truth may start small,
 With the simple word "but" when self takes the throne.
 When men take their way – no longer on God call,
 Then God takes their choice – and leaves them alone.*

PROMISED ONE AND THE PROMISE

*What God has planned can never be stopped,
 Satan himself is powerless to change.
 But still the adversary continues attacks,
 And uses man's weakness to display his rage.*

*But God has promised blessing to the world of men.
Through His divine will, the Savior has come.
His divine plan has defeated the problem of sin,
Those who call on the Lord, know the power of His name.*

"O God, there are many chapters in human history that show how quickly we forget who You are and how sinful we are. Forgive me when I fail to learn from the lessons, I read about from those in the past. Keep my memories in the forefront of my mind so that I am quick to respond to what has been proven to be right. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 5

THE ANCESTORS

I stopped in my journey before a list of names and noticed how long people lived. The father and son relationship continued for many generations as I learned that God populated the world in a way very different from that of today.

Adam lived a long and fruitful life even after Seth was born. He must have had hope renewed in him even though the guilt of sin was passed on from one generation to the next.

As I considered all those people and the genealogies of those who came after, I was impressed with the fact that God is interested in individuals. God made sure these names are listed so I would know each one is important to Him.

Not every one was a star as far as success or even personal holiness in their life. But still God knew each one and his family.

I wondered if Enoch was changed when he became a father at 65. For 300 years he seemed to have a special fellowship with God that was unique to both him and God. Could God have said to him one day when they walked together, "Why don't you just come home with me?"

Would it be possible for me to do the same? Can I walk with God today? I know if I walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship together. That is why I am on this journey - so I can better learn to look at things through God's eyes and see where I fit and what I am supposed to be doing as the passing years bring changes on me.

I wondered as I pondered - did other people know Enoch walked with God? Would they be able to tell if I did? And then I thought, what difference does that make? As long as I know I am walking in the light with God - that is all that counts. God who blessed people then, has blessed me now.

He has abundantly blessed me - even me!

*The list is there, unreeled before my eyes -
A historical time-line, impressive, because of its size.
And the centuries of living that God knew personally -
Not one person was born by mistake or haphazardly.
Each one recognized as a person in his own right -
Each one known by name and important in God's sight.
Everyone different in some ways, and in other ways the same.
Not one overlooked by God, each one loved and known by name
Although some stand out more than others.
All needing the substitute of a sacrifice that sin covers.
Even though there are billions in the world today -
God in infinite knowledge will still show each the way
To come to Him if they will seek Him with an anxious heart.
He will not turn away any one who from his sins departs -
And in repentance will turn to God and put full trust in Him,
Everyone on the long list of humanity, God is willing to save from sin.*

"The list of names of people I know is long, Father. Every one is known to Thee. Some on my list in this place need Thy salvation and know it, but haven't made it their priority. Please speak to people tonight in the Gospel meeting. Thou dost know every one. Awaken and save them I pray. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 5:22. *"And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters."*

SONS AND DAUGHTERS.

*I wonder what he thought about the day he first held,
That small baby boy God had given to him.
Did Enoch acknowledge to God just how he felt?
Did his walk with God start because he turned from some sin?
Did the thought that a child is going to learn how to talk,
And use the same words that his father would use?
Did the places he went when alone he would walk,
Now change because his boy, like his father would choose,
To walk now with God instead of walking his way?
Did his whole life change for fear his son he would lose?*

*I know for myself when I held our first child,
My first thoughts were that this child forever will live.
Heaven or hell depends on whether I was willing to yield
Myself and my family to God – was I willing to give
My pledge of honor to God that day, that the choices
I make that affect them will challenge them to grow
In a way that both they and their God can rejoice?
The family God gave me will find it easy to know,
Whether I'm just a fake or if my faith is for real –
Because in my life and my walk – the real me shows.*

*After the first son was born God was willing to trust,
His companion, Enoch with a heritage from Him.
As each child was born, he would realize he must
Never take for granted that God gave him them.
God has blessed Linda and me with some wonderful daughters.
Their husbands and families are to us a great joy.
When around us in fellowship our children all gather,
We bless God in prayer, letting our gratitude show.
God has made us aware that all that really matters,
Is they will all be ready when the Lord calls us to go.*

"Father, sometimes I wonder if my family knows how much I appreciate them. I rejoice in them because You gave them to us. I am proud of them because they have chosen to honor You in their lives. I intercede for them because I know Satan will try to trip them up. I commit them into Your care and keeping because I know You care for them even more than I do. They are Yours; please use them to honor You. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 6

1700 YEARS

I look from the vantage point of history and see the downward trend continue. As the years and generations pass, there is a deterioration of moral and spiritual integrity. The increase of the population seemed to reflect the lack of interest of all humanity in the interests of God. The distinction between the descendants of Cain and those of Seth was blurred. The Spirit of God had then, the same as now, the work of convicting people of sin, righteousness and judgment to come. His striving continued but now came with a warning: "You have 120 years to repent."

Every form of wickedness that men had devised, continued. People were thinking up new ways to live depraved lives. There was moral corruption that God could see; there was violence wherever one turned; the course of humanity if left unchecked would be gone so far there would be no hope of recovery - and God could see it all.

The sorrow God had because of what mankind had done to itself, was real, Men had chosen sin and death instead of fellowship and life with God.

However, there was one man, God showed His grace toward. Noah wasn't a perfect man, but he did love and obey God. He was just and fair. He was a man who could not be blamed like others, because he obeyed God. As a man of faith, he got right at the work of building the ark, the work God called him to in spite of the wickedness of the times.

From where I stand in this unfolding saga of human experience, I see history repeating itself. People have gone back to the same practices of trying out new sins; walking in the evil desires of their depraved nature, and are not satisfied until they can find some new sin to indulge themselves in. One person's experiment in sin challenges others to try and go farther.

But for some reason people today think they are not going to be found out. To convince themselves that sin is only what they say is sin, and God is only what they say is God - leads the human race deeper and faster into a moral mudslide from which there is no escape. They consider God's truth only fables, God's warnings only the ranting of strange people, God's salvation only a win at the lottery or the luck of the draw.

As I consider my day, I wonder if there are any people who will listen to God's Word. Are there any warnings I can give that will stop some and help them turn from sin to God? Is there something more I can do or say that will turn people from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God?

There were those of an earlier day who did that very thing. God is still the same unchanging and unchangeable God. His truth is the same. He can still bring light in the darkness; hope to the hopeless; grace to the needy; mercy to the guilty; love to the unlovable.

As I thought on my Gracious Heavenly Father, I was strengthened and encouraged to call people to come to the ark of safety which is Christ. By God's grace to me, I will seek to obey Him and apply myself to this work I am called to and I will trust Him to produce the results that can bring Him honor and glory. He has purposed to build His church.

I am allowed to be His servant - even me!

*If I were living in Noah's day
Would I be any different?
When I listened to what people had to say -
Would I from those people be absent?
To accommodate to the pressure to live
The same as everyone else -
Would mean I too would have nothing to give
And I too would be put on the shelf.*

*But I am not living then, I am living now -
There are a lot of similarities in the times.
I am not always wondering how
To adapt to the changing moral climes.
My obligation is to be consistent
In the messages I pass on.
Even though ignored, I have to be persistent -
And give warnings to every one.*

*I would like to be considered righteous
And blameless among all men.
Even though some people are not the nicest
The Gospel needs to be told to them.
If I can be faithful to the Lord
And seek to represent Christ well
By teaching and preaching only God's Word -
Perhaps some will be saved from hell.*

"O Lord God, may the efforts of this day and the messages Thou dost give us to pass on, be used by Thee this day in reaching souls. Give to Thy servant acceptable words as well as acceptance with the people in this place. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 6:8. *"But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord."*

FOUND GRACE.

*What can be done to find such grace?
Is there some action to take – some pathway to trace?
That we might claim God's presence filling this space?
For this need that's surrounded by wickedness in this place –
Oh Lord God Almighty, I am seeking Thy face!
This nation needs desperately Thy salvation!*

*A man and his God who have both walked together,
Have nothing to hide they cannot share with each other.
God knows the heart-thoughts and the wickedness they foster.
Noah had some children who would follow their father.
Judgment was soon coming, and the remnant would gather –
This family is in need of salvation!*

*The grace of God was directed to this man of faith.
He had no problem believing what the word of God saith.
His response was to understand and act on the warning God sent.
When the result of the years of labor and ark-building were spent –
They moved into the place of salvation!*

*When God warns us of danger coming in the years up ahead;
And we are sure God does exactly what He already has said,
Then it is wisdom on our part to go where God's grace has led,
And accept God's "Ark of Safety" just as Noah did –
And receive Him who is the God of salvation!*

"Father God, for these 55 years of enjoying the blessings of Thy grace, I give Thee thanks. For all the way Thou has led me in the paths of Thy choosing, I give Thee thanks. For experiencing the fellowship of God in the service we are involved in, I give Thee thanks, honor and praise, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 7

THE FLOOD

From far beyond the events of the past, I stop and look back at a huge wooden vessel, the proportions of which men still follow in ship-building. To see a man with such a project committed to him personally, is very unusual. He knew the dimensions of the ark from God. He knew the materials to use for God told him what to use. The long-term commitment he made to building the ark is an example to us who are called by God to a task that seems much larger than our ability to accomplish.

Noah has two very motivating factors that prompted him to finish the project in the exact way he was instructed. First, he had walked with God and wanted to obey Him. He knew his God. Secondly, he had a family and wanted to save them from the promised coming judgment. By faith he did what God told him to even though the work was long and tedious.

I hear in my mind's ear, the voice of God calling from inside the ark, "Come thou and all thy house into the ark." The time had come, and drawn by the power of God, the creatures of the wild and those tamed by man came in harmony without their natural instincts controlling them, into the ark for safety. I am amazed at the supernatural changes that happened there so that the Lord God could carry out His sovereign plans.

I wonder what Methuselah thought when he died. He must have urged Noah on to complete his work as he knew his day of death was drawing near. When thousands of animals drew near to the ark, Methuselah perhaps just smiled at the wisdom and power of God, pulled his feet up into his bed and died.

The details of ark building were Noah's responsibility. The details of gathering animals of such a variety, had to be the work of God.

I watch and learned that I cannot neglect the things under my control and responsibility, and I do not need to worry about those things only God can do. By His grace, I will rest in Him and do what He calls me to. I cannot save souls. I cannot create anxious thoughts about spiritual things. I cannot convict sinners of their sin and need. But I can prepare myself to give warnings of coming judgment. I can apply myself to learning how to explain the way of salvation. And I can identify myself with those who are in need of salvation that they may seek the Lord.

As I looked and watched in my mind's eye, I saw the waters rise over the cities, the valleys, the hills, and then the mountains disappeared under the rising water. The cleansing power of God should never be underestimated. He who can cleanse a world, can cleanse a sinner who repents of his sin. How sad to think of hard-hearted sinners who lost their lives in the deluge. How sad to know that there are those today who can be saved in the Ark which is our Lord Jesus Christ, but want to go their own way without God.

Inside that great ark I can visualize the family in safety and doing the things that needed to be done there until the year passed. I too find myself in a place of safety in view of coming judgment.

I am safe in Christ - even me!

*The Voice of God - the response of a family
The Power of God - thousands of creatures obey Him
The Grace of God - provision for safety was made
The Judgment of God - sin's wages have to be paid*

*The faith of a man - acting on what God said
The obedience of a man - believing without dread
The walk of a man - in fellowship with the Lord
The acts of a man - building according to God's Word*

*A family is secure - the father really cared
A family is safe - the father prepared
A family is inside - the storm is without
A family is preserved - able to make a new start*

*God expects to be obeyed - He has our best interests at heart
God knows the future - His grace sets us apart
God has the right to judge - He knows the end from the beginning
God punishes evil - He wants to preserve others from sinning.*

*The reason for the flood - evil was getting worse and worse
The fact of the flood - to cleanse the sin on the earth
The result of the flood - a whole new day was ushered in
The lesson from the flood - reject and turn away from sin*

"I know O God, there are many who will not accept the account of a world-wide flood. But I also know that I, like Noah, am obligated to warn people of coming judgment. Help me to be a preacher of righteousness like Noah. Give to Thy servant the compassion to speak of these things with grace and truth. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 7:1. "And the Lord said unto Noah, 'Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before Me in all the earth.'"

COME THOU.

*From inside the ark, God spoke clear and plain –
Noah's family went in before it started to rain.
God's message was "Come", He didn't have to say it again –
Because when God says "Come," He means "Come,"*

*"Come" never means it's okay for you to wait awhile,
Or wait till you're done with some sin that beguiles.
Not everyone you know will greet with a smile –
The call from God when He says "Come."*

*God's door of salvation now stands open wide.
His call goes to people to come on right inside
His place of dwelling and with Him to abide –
God's invitation to you is to "Come."*

*Come inside now while you are able to come.
Do not ignore God or His invitation dare to shun.
Act in haste now before the day of grace is done –
God's voice is still telling you to "Come."*

"O God of my salvation, I thank You this morning that the Holy Spirit drew me and I came at the call of the Gospel. May others be constrained this day to come. May I be able to clearly define the invitation of the Gospel message to come. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 8

THE LOST YEAR

In my journey through the past there is one year that stands out. People all over the world ate and drank, married and were given in marriage. The normal course of life continued as if nothing was wrong. The evil ways of people had become common-place. People had gotten so used to sin, they were no longer bothered by it and the effects on them and others.

For 120 years Noah worked at building the ark and now he and his family, along with thousands of animals were inside with the door shut. A whole week passed, and then the judgment God warned him of happened. Water spurted up out of the ground. Torrents of rain fell from the sky and the whole earth was flooded. After 40 days of flooding, the waters were stopped. All was silent outside the ark for 150 days - then a wind started to blow all over the world.

After six months of floating, the ark settled on high ground and remained steady. Six more months passed until the surface of the earth was dry and could be walked on. Deep canyons were formed by the rapid run-off. The whole surface of the earth bore the effects of the great flood.

Plant life again began to flourish and the cleansed earth was ready to receive the refugees from the ark. Animals found their way to suitable habitats. Noah offered burnt offerings of praise and thanksgiving to God. The lost year was over and a new beginning started with offerings to God.

I thought as I considered all that was lost, of all that was gained by that cleansing judgment. Sin left unchecked; evil left unpunished will continue to pollute the earth until there would be not vestige of righteousness to be found. Noah preached righteousness and was ignored. Righteousness has been preached down through each generation. God has called me to preach righteousness, but very few will even listen, and even less will turn from sin to Christ.

Then I remembered from my place in the history of earth - the Lord Jesus said, "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the coming of the Son of Man."

So, I considered in my thoughts that it is happening like that now. There is no question about it. Even in my lifetime I have seen the course of sin and its evil results grow in a rapid course. Marriage vows are not honored. Debts are not paid. A person's word can't be trusted. Doors have to be locked. Friends can't be relied on. Murders and wars have not abated. Technology has not brought stability nor peace. God is not considered in decision making. Righteousness is a cause for scorn. Grace has given way to greed.

But occasionally we find the holy smoke of worship and thanksgiving ascending to God. I am thankful that there is still faith on the earth.

I give God praise and honor - from even me!

*It is there - from that one spot I can see arising
The sound of voices praying and worshiping and praising
Our Gracious God for His mercy and His grace
That has been shown to us and appreciated by people in this place.*

*There are not very many compared to all who are around
Who are interested at all in giving heed to the Gospel sound.
They seem to want the loud and raucous noise
That comes when people make the world their choice.*

*From an altar in the past there ascended to God
Burnt offerings of worship as Noah thought on the Lord
And realized that by God's grace he was alive -
He and his family alone were all that survived.*

*There are not many now who will pay attention
To the Word of the Lord or the way of salvation
Because people know that God's presence interferes with their pleasure,
And they want to try out new sin to its fullest measure.*

*Judgment is coming, of that there is no doubt.
The soul that sins - that sin will find them out.
There is no way to avoid the awful consequences
Of willful sin when the Judge passes His sentence.*

*The ark of safety is available now.
It is my responsibility to tell people how
To escape coming judgment and the wrath that will fall
On the head of every person who refuses to on God call.*

"O Righteous God, may there be some kind of move in this village toward the Savior at this time. May we be able to get people to attend the meetings, but more - may they repent and believe the Gospel. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 8:1. *"And God remembered Noah and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark: and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters aswaged:"*

GOD REMEMBERED.

Does God forget *anything* He does like men who forget so easily? No, it is impossible that from His hand or word there comes anything that is so insignificant that He would forget the reason for its being or coming into existence. God has a purpose in everything, whether it be the smallest vein in my body or the shape of my skull; whether it be the ceaseless muscle of my heart, or the smallest muscle that makes my eye twitch. Perfectly coordinated in every way is the order and movement of the planets and the atoms. He who makes it rain can stop the rain. He who forces water from the ground can stop the wells. He who made the wind can send the wind. He who moved the animals to seek the shelter of the ark remembers each one in its place.
God remembers what He does.

Does God forget *anybody* like men forget names and faces? No, it is impossible that any person He has given as a heritage to human parents could go unremembered. Never will He cast off from His memory and reused by man in the interest of science, a being made in His image. God remembers the millions that mothers reject. God remembers those living in forgotten orphanages and shelters – because they originated with Him. Men abuse and forsake – God remembers. Men ignore and forget – God remembers. The sparrow on the housetop alone and separated from its kind – God remembers. The pelican out in the desert far away from its natural habitat – God remembers. The baby left on a doorstep in the middle of the night – God remembers. One man and his family rejected by men, perhaps ridiculed and despised, floating on a shoreless sea - God remembers. Among the billions of people on earth today, troubled souls listen to the Gospel and seek the Lord – God remembers. Insignificant preachers praying for those they will speak to – look to God for relevant messages and ways to reach the lost – God remembers. Alone like a small sliver on the

face of the waters for five rainy months, the ark and its precious cargo floats in the rain as millions die – maybe Noah wondered if

God remembers where he is.

“Father in heaven, in this small place among the huge cities of the earth, this small insignificant man calls to Thee on behalf of those who are listening to the Gospel. None of us is worthy of the least of Thy mercies. Yet, for Thine own reason we are here in this place seeking for the salvation of the lost who listen to the good news of forgiveness and eternal life through Christ. Hear my prayer; save these souls; remember them for Thy Son’s sake; move upon the dark waters of human unbelief and disregard; send the wind over the earth that they might live. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

GENESIS 9

COVENANT

In my journeying I watched the four families start a new life. Now not only can they take their food from plant life, but from animal life too for their sustenance. They were forbidden to eat blood as it is the life of the flesh, but they flesh of animals they could now eat.

The rainbow arching across the sky in front of rain clouds was there in its beauty as a promise from God that He keeps His word. There would never be another world wide flood. That rainbow is a sign to us today that God always keeps His promises. That covenant also includes the promise that the seasons will come each year at a time expected. Even the animals know when seasons come and go as a result of that covenant God made with Noah. Some animals go into hibernation at certain times of the year. Others travel miles north and south as that covenant of seasons acts on its regular time.

I am reminded that God is faithful to His Word. He will never fail to fulfill the terms of the covenant He made with Noah.

With a kind of sinking feeling, I watched a godly man fail in his influence on his sons. I was reminded that our children will always watch our lives for exemplary conduct, even though they are adults with adult children of their own. Respect can be lost over one failure and may never be fully regained again.

I was made aware of the fact that there is always the possibility of evil coming to the surface in the life of a righteous man. I am never free from that possibility. In my heart, in that of my family, there still exists the potential for a fall. It may come from the most seemingly innocent source, but the potential still remains.

Even though there was the great deliverance from the flood, there was a latent danger nearby and it came from the activities of every-day life.

I learn from those in the past that I myself am not immune to temptation, but I am not subject to temptation. I do not have to yield to it. God's grace is greater than all my sin.

That grace is for me - even me!

*The growth and success of our family can lead
To benefits both great and small.
But there is the danger of personal pride
Tripping us up that we might have a fall.
It is important that parents and children alike
Take heed as to how they walk,
I can stumble those who testimony was bright
With even a bit of careless talk.*

*The children may not do what the parent does
But there is an attitude that is formed.
They may go even farther away in what they choose
And think what I did is the norm.
I hope I have not turned them aside already
From the path I know is best.
It is very difficult to keep a full cup steady
And think that is evidence that they are blest.*

*It is my prayer that the covenant I've made
With God relating to my life and service -
Will help my family to keep looking ahead,
And God in our family life can trust us.
It would bring great joy when our lives are complete,
If God could be able to say to us, "Well done."
When we gather in a complete circle at His feet -
We will say, "We are so glad to be finally at home."*

"Father, my family holds a special place in my life. Please help me to fill a special place in theirs. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 9:12-13. *"And God said, 'This is the token of the covenant which I make between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud.'"*

A TOKEN.

*Across the dark sky because of the sun and the rain;
A colorful bow makes an arch.
To man and to God, the bow is a sign;
God has promised no more flood as a curse.*

*Instead He has made a covenant with men,
The seasons will continue each year.
The animals and fish are under man's hand,
And the plants of the earth food will bear.*

*Each time we sit down at a table to eat,
We stop what we're doing to give thanks.
We remember God made, and His covenant will keep,
The rainbow puts this fact on our hearts.*

*Covenants have two sides between the parties involved;
Each is responsible to keep covenant with the other.
When difficulties arise, the issue must be solved,
Whether it's between God and me, or me and my brother.*

*God never fails at all to do what He says,
The breakdown is caused by us humans.
The covenant assures us He is ready to bless –
The terms of covenant work when we do them.*

"There are times Father God, when I know better than to do what I am pressured to do, because I may worry about what people say. Still part of me wants to do that to keep their friendship or approval. Then I remember the covenant of His blood and the rest loses its attraction. Thanks for forming such a vital covenant as to make us acceptable in Thy sight, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 10

THEIR NATIONS

As the years passed by and the families grew, I saw how they were dispersed to various parts of the Middle East and then beyond. It was of great interest to me to see how from Mount Ararat, it is possible to see to the north and south, the east and west. The three sons of Noah and their families went in those different directions fulfilling God's original intention again of multiplying the earth.

I could see and understand how each family, though from the same parentage, could quickly develop an identity far different than that of their siblings. There are different tastes individuals have that are passed on to their children. Some like different food. What they choose to eat is different from those who came from the same family. Before long, those tastes are part of the diet people choose to eat and it differs from those in

other places. Traditions are formed and habits followed that in time to come becomes laws simply because everyone in that area does them. A culture takes form that adapts to the climate, food preferences, the animals and plants in the area and the habits of those in earlier generations. Even the weather affects how people live, and what they believe to be evidence of God.

I took notice that Shem and his descendants settled to the east and southeast of Ararat. This included the area where God planted the Garden of Eden and placed Adam and Eve in that garden to dress it and keep it. To me, it was a great encouragement, that though sin and failure brought down a whole civilization, God is not finished with man. He has made His plans and He will see them completed. He has a sovereign purpose, and He will see that it is done to His honor and glory.

And I have a part in it - even me!

*Names are just names to most of us.
We hear them but soon many of them we forget.
The ones we remember are people we trust,
Or those who owe us some back rent.
But it is different with God, He knows every one.
He is the very source of their life.
For every single person, He sent His only Son -
That each one would walk in His light.*

*Opportunity came after the great flood
For mankind to make a new start.
The atmosphere changed, and even the food
But there wasn't a real change in men's hearts.
Japheth went to the north; Ham went to the south
Shem went to the east by southeast.
Families and nations were scattered about
As the population across the earth increased.*

*There are multiplied billions of people now on earth
Forming nations that formed their origins back then.
There hasn't been any change in what a person is worth,
God is still concerned with the family of man.
What are just names to me are much more to the Lord
Each one is loved by God most dearly.
When the Lord Jesus Came in the flesh to the world -
It was that men would love Him sincerely.*

"O Lord God, in Thy sovereign will there are great nations of people still living in the world because of Thy provision and care. May the truth of Thy Gospel go beyond the barriers made by men to reach seeking souls wherever they are found - And may we find some seeking souls here. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 10:32. "These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations: and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood."

THEIR GENERATIONS.

*A father hears from God – a warning is sounded from the Highest Possible Source;
Trouble is coming – insurmountable by mortal mans' choice and design.
Listen – God explains and gives all the directions needed to save the family.
Noah listens and heeds – his family is saved!*

*Three sons watching the turn of events that changed their father's life and occupation.
God's grace made him a preacher and a carpenter, just like his Master would be.
Learning, watching, participating, becoming skillful as the years pass –
Three sons learn – they and their wives are saved!*

*The passing of years – the monument to God's grace – the ark of safety is complete;
God moves inside and calls to the listeners near enough to hear His voice;
Father, mother, sons, wives – animals that function as God intended –
All move inside – all are saved!*

*The danger is passed – children are born – families take shape again under new leadership.
Seven sons to one – four to another – five to another as new generations arise.
How will they train their children? Will they tell them of God's grace?
Will they become believers? Will the children be saved?*

*No longer warned of world-wide disaster but of little disasters – each day – at home.
Now they have a chance to live and learn God and His ways together – new families.
Willful children – the younger taking leadership – their children following the fathers.
Not all the children are saved.*

*Their children – their families – their generations – their nations – divided;
Going farther and farther apart, and farther and farther away from God.
My children – their families – their generations – their nations:
I wonder – will they be saved?*

"O God of all the ages: I am looking ahead today but I cannot see the future of my family and their generations following them. So Father, I am again interceding for those who are young, and those yet to be born – may the fear of God be upon them; may they recognize the God of their fathers; may they be willing to look back over more than seven generations and see where they have come from; may they be wise in looking ahead and see where they are going; may we all dwell in the house of the Lord forever. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 11

FROM HUMANITY TO A FAMILY

As I watched the journey of man, I saw them gradually spreading out to the far parts of the earth. However, pride and existentialism were obvious as they gathered to build a monument to themselves and their achievements. As the ziggurat rose in height, it became the center of their attention, and the God of heaven was increasingly ignored. They wanted to make a name for themselves and a center to gather to - a sort of United Nations building, only they were saying in essence, "Up with man - down with God."

One day, perhaps when work on the tower was being started for another day, a brick-layer called to the hod-carrier for more mortar, but neither could understand what the other said. One may have called out to the foreman in complaint, and the foreman couldn't understand either of them. Confusion reigned as workers got in each other's way not knowing what other workers were saying. The whole work came to a stop. Probably at home the workers' wives and children were trying to make sense of what the neighbors were saying this morning. Whole neighborhoods were in confusion. Some found others who could understand their words, so they banded together. Before long groups of people were heading different directions as God had silently stopped their self-exaltation and God turned the people back on to the track of His original intention.

Groups grew in number as those of the same speech found their way over the years to various parts of the earth until they were large enough in number to settle an area. There came about several thousand different languages, some with tones to set the basis of the language; some with phonetical words to build their language on. The variety of languages dictated as to where people lived in the world. Tonal language in the Far East, phonetic language in the western parts of the world and other language fundamentals in all other areas. Other languages use other ways to differentiate themselves and those languages, though different, had enough in common that they went to areas when they could communicate though on a limited basis. Shem, Ham and Japheth were separated completely into tribes, and ultimately into nations.

Then I noticed as I watched the unfolding of God's dealings with man that He chose one family not too far from where the Tower of Babel stood abandoned. From a rather obscure tribe, God intended to bring to pass His plans for the future of fellowship between Him and mankind.

This impressed me with the fact, even though God knew every human being that was traveling to the far parts of the earth, and even though every human has placed with in them by God, a consciousness of Him; He had a redemptive plan for the whole of the human race. That would come through the line of Shem.

The ziggurats of Ur were often used as places to offer sacrifices on, to the gods of man's imagination. The moon was, and still is, in the Middle East an object of veneration. The crescent moon is seen on flags and symbols of power and authority there today. In the ancient times when the moon was seen in a particular place over a ziggurat, there were sacrifices made of virgin daughters as men worshipped the creation more than the Creator.

But God had His eye on one family and through Abraham, all families of the earth would be blessed.

And that blessing has come to me - even me!

*Strange as it seems, men like things complicated
When it comes to God; they think He can be placated
By their ideas of what is right or wrong
Resenting the implication that there's nothing they have done
That can earn favor with God or make themselves worthy -
Not even days of fasting when they are hungry and thirsty,
Hoping that God will think they are sincere -
Sometimes even parting with things they hold dear.*

*The false holiness men claim is to make them feel good
About themselves and then they think maybe the Lord
Will think they had earned the right to be in heaven -
Even if they ignore and despise the Son God has given
To be the only sacrifice for sin that God can accept.
Today, as in the past people God's way reject -
And design for themselves what pleases them -
Not facing the problem all men have of indwelling sin.*

*We might wonder at the tower people in Babylon built
And then turn in horror from innocent blood from children spilt
By arrogant and self-serving men who made their demands
And would not recognize God and His righteous commands.
But the same thing is happening right where we now are.
People deny God's authority over them and the life-changing power
Of the Gospel, so they decide what they're going to believe or not,
And actually, resist the redemption Christ's blood has bought.*

*People in their minds have devised a foolish scheme
To get into God's heaven without a Mediator between
Them and God, they think they can do it on their own
Without God's grace, and faith in the Person and work of Christ alone.
Even though it seems much of our preaching is futile;
I must speak the truth as it is without deception or guile.
And though people may refuse to listen to the Gospel preached,
It is still important that I seek to see that to them it has reached.*

"I am really disappointed Father, with how few have attended the Gospel meetings this week, I had thought there was an interest here. The prayer meetings were very good and the brethren all participated. But Father, help Thy servant to be ready anyway with a word from Thee for the people. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable unto Thee. And if You think we can be trusted with precious souls, please either lead them to us or us to them. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 11:9. "Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth."

CONFUSION.

It starts with one discontented person – determined to rise. Not enjoying God; not loving God; not following God; not obeying God; not satisfied with divine provision – he thinks God is holding out on him. Facial

expressions begin to change, and what is inside starts to come out. Tone of voice changes and becomes harder in sound though the words are the same. The eyes harden, when once they were soft with laugh lines. The lines are between critical squinting eyes that glance sideways a lot. The hands are now always firm – no longer the softness of concern is felt by those who need the comfort of touch.

Then after a comment or two – another person catches the same virus; and before long each has talked to another and then they go to others. The words may change, but the discontent, the disruption of life, the determination to advance self-interest goes farther and farther. The one polarizing issue is “up with man – down with God,” and men unite for the wrong reasons. Bricks are formed, weak bricks held together by slime – all the works of man’s invention as man climbs higher and higher to reach God and try to pull Him from His throne. They want to make a name for themselves and form an unholy alliance.

Instead of people uniting to seek God’s name and glory, the unity they sought was glory for mankind. God made His move and now confusion swept the construction site. Commands could not be understood; conspiracy fell on ears that misunderstood and men sought for those of like language. Farther and farther they went from each other. Barriers arose that could not be seen. Distances increased and clusters of people gathered here and there all over the world. Origins were kept in the language and then in the written words – but confusion still reigns. It will until Shiloh comes – then to Him shall the gathering of the people be.

“Even visiting today Father, I am made conscious of the fact that many people have no guiding principles in life to live by. Each seems to have their own agenda and religious confusion that they do not care enough about to get straightened out by the Word of God. May I be able in some way tonight, to make plain some of the statements of God for the benefit of those who listen, In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

GENESIS 12

THE JOURNEY OF FAITH

I noticed as I focused my attention on the Fertile Crescent, that in spite of the godless, self-centered city where he lived, Abram was there with a sense of God’s presence. God saw him as a man of faith. So, he departed from all that was familiar, to go to a place as yet unknown to him. He didn’t even know where this place was, but he trusted God completely to guide him. His departure was a *Departure of Faith*. Probably many asked him where he was going and why he was leaving all the people he knew all his life. He would have told his neighbors he didn’t know where he was going but God told him to leave and he believed God would direct his way. To people today as well as then, the life of faith is not only strange but foolish. Faith has a certain authority to it and the actions of faith are based alone on what God says. God told Abram all he had to know at the time, and he obeyed God.

The *Destination of Faith* was when God told him “this land” was God’s gift to him. This led him to the sincere *Worship of Faith* as he built altars for sacrifices wherever he moved. At those altars was where he could pray to and worship the God he had learned to trust. The altar would be a reminder to him of God’s promise to make a great nation of the seed of Abram and through him all families on earth would be blessed.

I learned as I watched in my mind, this man leaves Ur for Haran, and then Haran for Canaan; that when one knows God has called you, then take action on what God says even though one might not know the outcome. Faith in God can always assure us this is the right way to take. The call of God has authority to it. The call of God will be a separating call. The call of God will be beneficial. The call of God will preserve me. The call of God will be effective.

Even though Canaan was cursed, it was in that place Abram was blessed. I don’t have to leave the world to know the blessing of God. When there is the obedience of faith and I am prepared to walk in the path of faith, that is when the portion of faith, a better city, a better country, becomes real to me today. The response of faith will keep me worshipping as I go forward. Faith is the basis of God’s giving to Abram and it is to me. Faith spurs us on to go farther for God than we thought we were able to.

As I observed this man of faith, I noticed the barrenness that came over the land of Canaan and instead of faith being strengthened to trust the Lord, his faith declined when he went to Egypt. The attractions of a seemingly successful world are always there to tempt us to find our source of sustenance there. One must be watchful because almost without knowing it, I can fall not only to the temptation of the moment, but into the trap of half-truths.

To rely on part of the truth to avoid the pressure of the system around me, is really denying the faith that I profess.

A *Declining Faith* can affect my whole spiritual life. It will affect my love for God and His people. It will adversely affect my knowledge of God and His Word. The grace that is manifest through a person of faith will give way to a critical spirit and a lack of Christ-likeness in my life.

I need that faith to be in me - even me!

*When there comes to me a call from God
It is wise for me to quickly obey.
Often that call will be directly from His Word
As I read God's messages every day.
There are some times when my spirit with His
Is urged to act on common sense.
Whatever way God calls, I have learned to know this -
It is time to rise up and go hence.*

*The promises of God are "Yea" and "Amen,"
So that to me there can be no doubt
As to what He has said and what He means
When His work I must be about.
"Lo, I am with you to the end of the age,"
Is a promise that motivates me -
To press ahead with what He gives me every day -
To claim promises, obedience is the key.*

*"An altar" to a believer takes us to the cross;
I have gained everything when the Lord paid the cost
With His life when my sins on His body He did bear.
Now, an altar to me is a place to worship and pray -
A time and place to be with the Lord in fellowship.
At that altar I take time to hear what He has to say,
And from me there goes to Him praise and worship.*

*Abram had his hits and sometimes had some misses,
But the bent of his life was to live by faith.
And I found personally that God truly blesses,
Those who love Him and appreciate His marvelous grace.
People today find as Abram did, God is always faithful to His Word -
And in spite of our failures, He remains true.
To "build an altar" of praise and worship to the Lord -
Is one of the best things in life a Christian can do.*

"Father, I thank Thee for allowing me to hear Thy call. I know I have not always been faithful to Thee. But I pray Thou will forgive the failings of Thy servant and for Thy own name's sake, be glorified in the preaching of the Gospel here, and in the salvation of souls. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 12:4. "So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran."

THE LEADER

*A call from God should never be taken lightly.
Divine in origin, it comes from the Highest Source.
Exceeding every other claim, He who is the supreme Authority,
Never makes a decision thoughtlessly, or makes a wasted choice.*

*To leave a place of comfort, or a situation leading to earthly gain;
May seem to family and friends, a lack of careful planning,*

*However, when we have heard the Master, and His will is made very plain,
Then my highest wisdom is to respond to Him without any hesitating.*

*The way from start to finish may not be plain at first.
The road I travel may only be some lines on my life's map.
Even the end may be obscured when I walk a life of trust,
But I'll know I've done what Master wanted when I reach the last hill's top.*

*God's call is separating, from the familiar, we walk away;
Only knowing this for sure, it was the Master's call.
And even though there's some fear of mistakes from day to day;
We know what is the outcome, was His plan after all.*

*I may not be successful in the eyes of my fellowmen,
And I may look back when life is over and see little that's been done.
But if I am assured that all this was planned for me by Him,
Then I think I will be contented, when the Master calls me home.*

"Father in heaven, I am not sure whether I am a leader or not, but I know some are following whether I like it or not. It is my desire to lead them to high ground, where the air is pure and the heights give a sense of closeness to Thee. The humid ground of the valley may make things grow good and people can get rich because of it, but I fear lest a "Lot" be left in that valley to live a life that grieves them day after day. Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 13

POTENTIAL CONFLICT

As I observed the ensuing years, it became obvious that the family connection was doing well and getting richer. At that time wealth was evidence of God's blessing. Both Abram and his nephew Lot were building larger herds and flocks. The problem was obvious - there wasn't room for them both in the same place. There was the beginning of conflicts that had to be faced. Abram took the initiative and gave Lot the first choice. In my mind I could see Lot setting his heart on getting more and becoming even richer. And the scripture came to me, "If riches increase, set not thy heart upon them."

When different family situations come: take the initiative to settle the conflict, give the others first choice even if it seems unfair to you, put peace above personal rights and desires. I learn by watching a man of faith, that trusting God is a very practical matter. Another scripture came to me, "Them that honor me, I will honor."

It is possible for rivalries to be in families and instead of pulling together, we pull apart. I learn from these two men that rivalries can damage trust and goodwill; can hamper growth and progress in the things of God as well as daily living; and they can make me self-centered rather than love-centered. The Lord Jesus prayed in John 17 that we would be one.

Decision making often reflects on a person's character. In life I have to make choices and I also have to accept the consequences of those choices. If I choose the best for myself and ignore the needs and feelings of others, I end up going in the wrong direction. This in turn leads to serious problems that will affect my wife, my children and all of my family connections.

In my journey I look down from my high view of history on to the high ground of spiritual experience, and see spread out before Abram and Lot, the well-watered plains rich with good grass and the promise of increasing wealth. Abram said, "If you go right, I'll go left, or if you go left, I'll go right." But Lot made a very different decision. In essence he said, "You stay up here, and I'll go down."

I learn from that example that if I yield to the temptation to live for worldly gain, it will affect me, my children and my grandchildren. God forbid that I would ever take them where the temptations of a Sodom would claim their souls. I know there is the temptation to go the world's way in lots of places, but by God's grace, I will stay as far away as possible from Sodom.

The high ground has an appeal to me. I saw Abram in a place where he could see in all four directions. And God gave all he could see, to him as a gift. What a gift! To me the high ground is a good place to be with God.

What gifts God has given to me - even me!

*We make these decisions from day to day
Forgetting the implications of what we do and say.
In a moment we can make a decision based on what we see
Not stopping to consider what the outcome will be.
Far too often our own self-interest is what we consider
Not taking time to think how it will affect others.
What may seem a smart move is not always wise -
And it takes quite awhile before we realize
That move was only good for me, and for a short time.
Down the road a way, what a difference we will find!*

*It is a basic principle in life for a child of God,
To take time to find out what God says in His Word
Before we make a decision or act in undue haste -
Lest our willful decision leave a lasting and bitter taste.
God has graciously put in the scriptures by example and phrase -
Almost every situation we will meet through all of our days.
They are put there to guide us on the road map of life -
So we can do what is right, and avoid what brings strife.
Lot chose to avoid strife but ignored what was right -
And lived with a grieved spirit for the rest of his life.*

*God expects us to act according to His revealed will.
It was that way at the beginning of life and it is that way still.
What men call the Golden Rule still to us does apply
To all I do and say, or even what I sell and buy.
Every activity in which I choose to engage -
Will influence others in my family regardless of their age.
The young ones will use me as a model as to what is okay.
And the more mature may mock what I have to say,
Because initially I acted on the basis of self-interest alone;
Not taking the time to think about the final outcome.*

*There is another thing to consider when making a choice.
Take the time to listen to conscience and the inner voice
Of common sense when it speaks to you loud and clear,
And impresses your soul and spirit that you might hear
The voice of reason and give it your full attention.
For not only will it instruct you how to avoid contention -
But it will direct you to find the bright path of the just
Assuring you of what is unnecessary and what is a "must."
Be wise, choose the area of life where there are both hills and plains -
And you will find God can bless what you can honestly do in His name.*

"Lord God of both the mountains and the valleys: make Thy servant content wherever I am found. I am so grateful for the pressures of high ground and holy living, and for guiding us in the valley to walk on the path of the just which is as a shining light. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 13:14-15. *"And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, "Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.""*

LOOK.

*What do I see looking up ahead at this land that lies before?
Is it evidence of success and the things people are living for –
The goal that through my eyes, finds its way into my heart?
Or can I see beyond that view, to what God called us for at the start?*

*Others see their own potential in the plains that lie below.
Their object seems to be how successful they can grow,
Measured by possessions or positions that they fill.
I think they'd rather live down there than up here among the hills.*

*God has kindly shown to me a far greater and distant view.
As I look into the future, I can see an expanse I never knew –
Of mountain-living people forming an enormous loving band –
People who in their life on earth, live in Beulah-land.*

*And way beyond still higher up, they see what Jesus saw –
A joy that is set before them that from the soul does draw
The desire by the Holy Spirit to live in view of heaven;
And their life as well as heart is to the Savior given.*

*To look at folks like these, you would not really know,
They are so very different until their inner life does show –
By words and deeds unsung, they for the Lord do live –
Content from day to day to receive what He will give.*

*Success to them is different, they choose to live for their Lord's glory;
While others down on the plain below have a very different story.
May I never be found comparing or coveting what those folks have –
May I die to earth and all its claims, and my life on earth I'll save.*

“Father, I am wondering today what will happen to all these young families that seem so discontented with the lives they are living. For some reason they are looking for some personal success as the proof of Thy blessing. Help them to look above what they feel is insignificant living to where they can trust Thee alone for guidance. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

GENESIS 14

CONFLICT WITH THE WORLD

In my journey through the past, I learn lessons from both Abram and Lot. From Abram I learn that there can be recovery from the failures made in the world. When we refuse what we know is wrong and confess what we did was wrong, and return to where the Lord wants us, He is there waiting for us to call upon His name. Lot was with Abram in the right position but without personal exercise and faith in God.

I learned also that riches can be a snare and may in time produce division and strife. When there is the evidence, or even the sense that there is danger looming over the horizon, in faith take steps to act for the good of all involved. Abram's position of faith revealed his heavenly-mindedness and Lot's choice revealed his worldly-mindedness. Poor Lot made his choice based on fleshly desires when he "lifted up his eyes and saw the well-watered plains of Jordan." He left the blessings of Canaan forever. Abram's confession of faith was approved and affirmed by God when he was told to "lift up his eyes, and look..." to see all God promised him as a gift.

As I followed the paths of these men, I saw Abram on a high plain where there were great trees for shelter and shade. At the same time Lot had moved from the low plain where there was just good grass for his animals, right into the city of Sodom. In a very short time, he had gone from being a stranger and a pilgrim blessed by God because of his association with a man of faith, to a man of the world who had moved right into a sinful city.

In the world there are always others who want to claim what you have for themselves. In five years, Lot had lost all he had and was taken captive along with all who lived in Sodom. It is a lesson to me to be careful where your ambition leads you. If I act without knowing God's will and following God's leading, I will be "fair

game" for any worldly power that comes my way and puts pressure on me to conform to it. I will find myself captured without the power to resist. God plainly tells me, "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable, and perfect will of God." The world has a mold and it wants to pour me into it. I need to stay on the high land of Beulah.

My interest was focused on a messenger bringing the news of Lot's capture to Abram. "When one member suffers, all suffer with it." The man who renounced the world, now rallies those he is in fellowship with and those he has taken the time to train, and follows the enemy until he overtakes them and conquers them. From the *Conflict* with the world and renouncing of it; and from the *Capture* of the fallen away kinsman; in *Contrast* he is victorious over the enemy and recovers the worldly-minded believer. How sad to see the one who was rescued, return to the same place from which he was saved. It was *Compensation* enough to the man of faith then to rise above opposition of the obvious enemy, and not fall under the subtle kindness of the enemy, to see a brother come back.

There was in my mind as I watched, a very significant time when Salem's king came out to give the victorious man of faith, the symbolic food of fellowship. He was the representative of God and to him was given the tithes of responsibility that people of faith are privileged to give back to God, even though its source was God in the first place. But even farther, to be able to participate with God in an act of worship after a victory is one of the highest experiences in the life of a believer.

This seemingly short stop on the journey of faith has a lasting and profound impact on a child of God. I know - because I have been there and experienced it. Some things are of such profound spiritual importance, that it is hard to explain to those who go through the forms but miss out on the value of the Person and event.

Real peace in the middle of a godless world and all the turmoil of its mad search for fulfillment, is hard for people to understand. I learned that for me, some things are better for me to just do, and hope that my kinfolks and others who know me, will recognize that there is One who is of supreme importance to me. A command He gives isn't just a choice I make. A commission from Him is not something I can take or leave. Fellowship with my Lord cannot be jeopardized in any way by my own personal preferences.

The journey of faith brings one back to the vision of faith when the clean hands and heart, and the spirit and soul are under the control of God as a reality. All hindrances are gone so one can enjoy God, His Word and His fellowship - and faith advances.

And that faith is real to even me!

*When one walks away from the path of faith
Not often do they come all the way back,
To take for granted the blessings that come by grace,
Means I will forever something integral lack,
For me to expect this ungodly world to fill
A perceived need that I sense in my soul;
Means I will not get back to God until
I am prepared to walk away from the world.*

*Once one goes so far there will be lasting effects
From which we can never fully recover.
There are other worldly forces working that attack
And capture our interest, seeking to sever
Our fellowship with God and His people that care
By substituting the temporary rush of emotion.
The result of those actions leaves guilt to bear
Until there is no longer for God any real devotion.*

*When the world has drained a Christian dry,
It spits them out like a shell on the sand.
The broken in spirit and contrite will cry
With remorse over the loss of what they once had.
God is still their Father so He will wait
Until repentance and forsaking of sin takes place.*

*Even though the prodigal's sins are so great,
God still has a great abundance of grace.*

*How much wiser it is to stay separate from the world,
And seek ways to enjoy fellowship with God.
Faster than time, this sinful world is being hurled
Downward on that broad and crowded road.
The one who trusts that the Lord knows the best for him,
Will find that on the narrow and upward way -
God will send someone along to encourage him then -
As they go higher toward the bright and cloudless day.*

"Father God, I thank Thee for answering my prayers of yesterday and encouraging us with people attending the meeting last night I thank Thee for making it possible to speak Thy Word with confidence so that it seemed like it was going somewhere. I thank Thee for the news of two of those we have been praying for who are in the hospital coming to the Savior and for saving them. For the recovery from sickness for Linda to good health - I am very grateful Father. I appreciate so much the answers Thou hast given. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 14:18. *"And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine; and he was the priest of the most high God."*

A DIFFERENT KING.

*A different kind of man steps forth from the wordless shadows of history.
No known father, mother or descent, this ancient king-priest steps out with full hands.
Like the Son of God, the true King-Priest who came from heaven's glory -
This man came with symbolic emblems to give to him who understands.
The bread and wine of fellowship he carries, and he gives to Abraham,
Reminding us of the willingness of Him who came to bring us to God.
He truly had no beginning when He was found in fashion as a man;
And the blessing of new life began when He became our food.*

*The blessing of the bread we eat tells us we are each a part,
Of the body of the King, under whose authority we gladly fall.
One ancient seed fell into the ground and died - and by dying then did start,
A multiplication process - seeds die and from them new life calls.
Each one finds its beginning in another and each the source of more;
Until in full-fruited glory, each ground together makes one.
The bread in fullness and life-sustaining power - one Body in the Lord
The Head and all the members are one - and we feed on Him, God's Son.*

*A cup in the hands of this different King - One who was truly born a king;
Comes symbolic evidence of a new kind of life - from the Giver of life Himself.
This life, not passed from Adam to man - not contaminated by sin,
Is drawn from His life, without a beginning; sinless; eternal - to God a fragrant smell.
The nature of this life is perfection, for all God does is good;
This king of peace with bread and wine in hand to blessings bring;
Foreshadows the Coming King; from whose hand we take wine and bread;
Blessing our God who provides us life through Christ, the Different King.*

"Heavenly Father, every good and perfect gift that comes from above, is a blessing from Thee to be received with thanks. For new life in Christ, I give Thee thanks. For being a part of the Body of Christ, I give Thee thanks. For a life that's hid with Christ in God, I give Thee thanks, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 15

DON'T BE AFRAID

I noticed as the years passed, and Abram was looking ahead, things didn't seem too clear to him. He had promises from God but nothing was happening to make him think they were going to be fulfilled. I smiled as I watched him go to rest and then the Lord drew near to him and assured him of His protection and His provision. The *Revelation* of God is not something to be taken lightly and forgotten quickly. And I thought to

myself, "God was with Abram through difficult times. He didn't abandon him in times of doubt and disillusionment. God is the same now as He was then, so why should I ever allow myself to be discouraged and wonder why more isn't happening in the work right now."

Then I heard the words of God to Abram and listened through the Word to the promises of God and the blessings that were, and are yet, to come, through the working of God, not of men. The *Response of Faith* is so precise and simple that as I watched, I was convicted of my doubts. "Abram believed in the Lord." I realized that had happened to me as I was watching Abram and God. I had been looking at people and events around me, and I had been responding to them rather than believing in the Lord and trusting in His promised blessings. So, I rested my soul awhile as I observed the dialogue between a man of faith and his faithful Lord.

From that communication between God and His friend, Abram, I could see unfolding ahead of Abram unseen events and promises that seem to be impossible. But because of the closeness of their fellowship, Abram could express his doubts as well as his trust and confidence in God at the same time. And I thought, "What a blessed paradox! Even when one expresses his doubts to God, he can also have full faith in God." I realized God understands me better than I understand myself. He promises the *Reward of Grace* even when I question how it will come. I admitted that my problem is not whether God's promises are reliable or not, but how is He going to fulfill them? How is He going to make it happen? Right away it was plain to me that, that is none of my business. It is up to God how and when He makes His promises come true. For Abram - and me, there are things I must leave to God and tend to my own responsibilities. I must simply do my work to the best of my ability.

One other thing I learned from listening in on their conversation: God *Reckons Righteousness* to the one who unquestioningly believes in God. I learned, or am at least learning, to look, listen and believe God. Right actions will follow the inner confidence, the inner faith, that God is truly working now to do things in His own time. The by-product of right actions follows true faith.

Abram need that visible covenant with God to assure him, and give him the needed confidence to go on. I have the Bible for the instructions as to how and why to live by faith. I really don't need visible sacrifices. I have the visible, written words of a faithful God.

As that scene passed from my eyes, I knew God was going to deal with the enemies in His own time and ways. God does everything that is true to His character. He is merciful, He is plenteous in mercy. He is full of grace and gives grace where grace is needed. He knows everything and always acts with justice and fairness. I may wonder why things are not happening quicker; why there are not more immediate results. But of this I am confident - His timing is perfect.

And He will fulfill His promises - to even me!

*It didn't seem probable that God's promises could be fulfilled.
Really, it seemed impossible that those doubts within were stilled.
But when one believes in the Lord, there is no impossible situation.
God can do far more than we can think with our limited imagination.*

*When God declares Himself our shield, that is real protection.
As the exceeding great reward, there could be no greater provision.
So, when other promises are given then they are as good as done.
Of all the hundreds God has made, there won't fail a single one.*

*The reason we can live at ease is, "The just shall live by faith."
There is no need to worry about the future, God lives in every place.
There really is no past or future with God, He lives in an eternal "Now."
I know this to be true, but it is beyond me to explain how.*

*This I know also, when a covenant is formed with God,
There is no cause to doubt the outcome, it has been sealed by innocent blood.
Acceptance with God came to me through His Son Beloved.
And eternal life and heaven is sure, based on His unchanging Word.*

*I was once a Gentile, alien to God, but now I'm a Gentile-Jew.
Not because of my heritage or some rites I have passed through.
But because my Savior was from the tribe of Judah, and from the seed of Abraham.
And I am accepted in the Son, and a child of faith I am.*

*Whenever I read of Abram, the first word I think of is faith.
He acted in faith right from Ur, and wherever his life I trace.
There is something about that man I wish could be said of me.
Though he wasn't perfect, his faith was in God alone for his whole earthly journey.*

"Lord God, this leg of the journey has had some ups and downs. But I praise Thee for bringing a number of answers to prayers in a remarkable way, Thou art saving souls around us. For Thy glory, please save some here I pray. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 15:6. *"And he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness."*

GOD'S FRIEND.

ABRAM DEPARTED FROM UR, 12:4. Hindrances may come from home, family, and natural attachments. When the Word of God calls us to leave any or all of these, it is not easy – but right because God knows best. Strings stretched long are still attached. Weights tied out of sight are still weights. To lay aside every weight and the sin that easily besets us is not an easy choice. *I must do this for His sake.*

ABRAM WENT UP OUT OF EGYPT, 13:1. Egypt has attractions and legitimate things to offer me - but it is still the world. It may be beneficial - but it is still the world. It may appeal to and attract my reason and intellect – but it is still the world. *I must stay in Beulah-land.*

ABRAM DWELLED IN THE LAND OF CANAAN, 13:12. All around are things that are wrong, but this is where He told me to go. People in this place are indifferent to what is righteous and holy, but this is where God wants me to be. The moral ways of the place are getting worse, but I must stay till He tells me to move. These rocky fields and rugged hills do not produce good crops, but here is where He has placed His name. *I must work in these fields until He moves me.*

ABRAM REMOVED HIS TENT AND DWELT IN MAMRE, 14:18. When it is time to move, may the tent pegs be easy to pull up. May the roots that remain be that of fruitful plants producing well. May my roots be in Him, not in the earth. May my hands not claim nor grasp what should be left behind. May my heart's desire be where the altar is. May my sacrifices be true and from a free heart. *I must dwell in the house of the Lord.*

ABRAHAM ROSE UP EARLY IN THE MORNING, 22:3. The morning watch is a special time. Darkness seems to fade away without notice in the morning watch. Light is dawning and takes my attention in the morning watch. To stand before the Lord in the rising of the sun, is to see clearly what is ahead and to see the past for what it was. In the early morning, the chill of the soul leaves and warmth is received from the power of the Light. *I must see the Light come each new day.*

ABRAHAM BUILT AN ALTAR, 22:9. The offering of that which is most important to God, is a sacrifice that is acceptable. God does not expect what I cannot give. He may expect what I do not want to give. The nearest to my affections may have to be given that He may give it back in a more sanctified way. My best is not mine but His. My dearest is dearer to Him than to me. If He keeps it or gives it back, He has that right. *I must let go of that which I love best.*

"Father in heaven: I can better understand that the cost of friendship with God is high. Any friendship that is worth having is worth the cost. Help me to pick and choose with discretion. Friendship with Thee, is the highest privilege of all friendships. I have some, and for those friends, I give Thee thanks. Do I seem friendly towards You? Amen."

GENESIS 16

PROBLEMS AT HOME

When I saw the wonder of the covenant of Abram with his God, it seemed like everything should have been perfect after that. But the first *Test* of faith came from a place most unexpected - at home, from his wife. A man in his mid-eighties would think it very unlikely he would have a new-born son. As a consequence of his own natural expectations, his patience broke under the testing of time and the voice of his wife.

There are times it seems when we are most vulnerable to the *Temptation* to take things into our own hands. Even after we have experienced high and lofty spiritual experiences, we are still susceptible to the subtlety of our own nature. The Egyptian woman, Hagar, who he probably got as a servant for his wife when they were in Egypt, was used to turn Abram away from the path of faith. Faith is not fragile, but when turned away from, the world is right there to take our time, attention and passion. Moreover, when the world has claimed us even for a short time, it is always there afterward to charge us with guilt, take our time, demand our attention and seek the prominent place in our life.

I learn from this test and temptation that came to Abram, the *Teaching*, that there is a covenant that leads to bondage, and one that leads to liberty. The law leads to bondage as in the case of the bondswoman, Hagar. The law can never be satisfied. Its demands allow for no freedom and no true fulfillment. Also, the law will just increase the sense of guilt because of the failure of our faith and will continually make demands for our conformity to it. Even when one seeks to do what it says, there is no possibility of satisfying it, for by it is the knowledge of sin, not freedom from sin.

Strangely too, there is the *Tendency* to go back under the law, even though we have been made free from the law of sin and death. There is some sort of perverse bent, an inclination to want rules to direct us rather than faith. If there is a list of rules for us to live by, we can pride ourselves if we keep them. But a serious problem comes from that attempt when we find ourselves unable to fulfill the law. We find that to have any sense of self-satisfaction, we have to change what the law says to suit our inability to keep it.

Then there arises another and even more serious problem. We find others who are trying to do the same thing have made changes to what they think the law means. Their changes are not the same as my changes. So, who is right? This leads us to "bite and devour" one another. Then comes pride, strife and vainglory - and the *Tragedy* of continual conflict from the futile effort of the flesh to keep the law's demands. To further the tragedy is, it leads to despising the One through whom all blessing will come.

The law despises grace which brings blessing to us that we have no right to expect. The law has the effect of leading us into the world again because of the conflict and it hardens the heart so that we can find no fellowship with others whose interpretation of the law differs from ours. When believers apply the law to themselves, it is a *Type* of those who make it a rule of life. A smug, self-righteous hardness develops and instead of faith and grace abounding, we find ourselves under the law of sin and death.

I turned away from that heart-breaking scene and I could see no one come out of that situation unscathed. Grace (Sarai) is grieved because law (Hagar) seems to have become the one who has taken over faith (Abram). Abram is grieved because Sarai and Hagar cannot co-exist. How sad and difficult to mix what God intended with the confusing opinions of our own doubting nature. Faith remains but failure to live by faith in one point, leads to problems in every other part of life. As faith diminishes, confusion increases.

And it can happen to - even me!

*The goals were the same, but the attempts to reach them were different.
Faith without grace, is to a large degree very deficient;
Because there are other forces around waiting in the wings
To step in and provide what we hoped time would eventually bring.*

*But grace doesn't work on the failing timetable of men.
We cannot see all the events that are well known to Him
Who knows everything and can see all from His point of view,
For God delights to prove His unfailing faithfulness to you.*

*By waiting until nature's course has run and is past.
He is able to reveal to us the value of faith when it is cast
On God alone who in His grace does what we cannot do;
And is glorified even by feeble men before His is through.*

*The test and temptations of the world are not done.
The tendency we have is to try to do God's work alone.
If we take the time and wait patiently for God -
He will use us to ultimately bring glory to the Lord.*

*The final accounting of life's efforts is still to come.
We are not finished with our service until we get home.
When the life of a believer comes up for review;
Then the actions of life will show if our faith was really true.*

"I know Father, there are times when I have not acted in good faith when I should have. There have been times when I /have gone ahead on my own when I shouldn't have. But I thank Thee for Thy grace and patience with me. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 16:13. *"And she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after Him that seeth me?"*

THOU GOD SEEST ME.

*Wherever one goes in the course of a day,
There is One who looks over our path.
He sees what's ahead every step of the way,
And He remembers each deed of the past.*

*Whatever one thinks when no one is around,
God knows each thought of the mind;
Whether it's good or evil without the slightest sound,
There's not a thought I ever had He won't find*

*Whenever I choose some action to take,
I must always consider my Lord;
Because all I do – any decision I make,
Must be according to His will and His word.*

*However, I apply myself to life's everyday tasks;
Is a reflection on the values I already have.
God knows my incentives – do I have to be asked,
Or does my attitude reflect "God is love?"*

*Whoever I see or share some words of my faith,
Will be impacted by who I really am.
If the others are saints and I talk about grace,
My life must be lived without blame.*

*If when I'm alone or with those still in sin,
I still must my integrity maintain.
If I say and do wrong, I will never win,
But will lose any influence I gained.*

*I know God sees me in every aspect of life,
There's not a thing that is hid from His eyes.
If I live so I'm conscious that all's in God's sight,
I won't be ashamed when I rise to the skies.*

"Father God, here in this room away from home and from the sight of people, I am conscious that no one really knows what I am doing. At the moment it is just You and I that know what I am thinking and doing. But for me, that is enough to make me want to honor You in this quiet place. I am sure that You see what I am writing and know what I am thinking. So, may this knowledge serve to keep me pure in thought and word and deed. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 17

90 AND 100

On my journey through history, a very impressive event took place when Abram was 99 years old. God spoke to him personally and repeated the terms of His covenant with this man of faith. As soon as God addressed him, he fell on his face before the Lord. I watched him in this position and thought, "That is the way I should be when God speaks to me." There is something about bent knees and a bowed head that sends a message of respect more than any other posture a man may take. But this was obviously a special moment. Something was different this time between God and His friend. Even after all those years of communion with God, there is the evidence of the reverence and awareness of the Almighty God that prostrated this man before his Maker. Previously God was to Abram a shield and reward. Now He is revealed to him as the Almighty God. At 99 years of age Abraham has learned to depend on God alone for everything.

The effect of this revelation brought him to realize as never before, God's greatness and his own nothingness. Previously his interests were in himself and his needs. Now God Himself is the Object of his delight and life. God was for him in grace and love before. Now the covenant with the Almighty God takes on a new dimension and new meaning. Before, he was Abram, "the exalted father." Now God Himself renamed him calling him, Abraham, "the father of many (nations)." Now the issue isn't just focused on God's grace to him; but through him, God's grace goes to the many - and still does today.

God honored His servant and assured him of his fruitfulness even though he was well up in years. He and his family would enjoy a special close relationship with God. Now, instead of being the head of a small obscure tribe of people unknown and overlooked by the great nations of earth, they would be the source of inspiration and blessing to all the nations of the world. Through this man of faith, "the father of the faithful," there has come everlasting blessing to millions of people down through the ages.

Something new happened to him at 99 that changed his attitude and his whole family direction. Now his walk was suited to God's desire because he was blessed *by* God, not to obtain a blessing *from* God.

As Abraham had raised himself to rise and walk before the Lord, the Lord repeated a promise He had made years before. At an earlier time, it would have been a natural event. Now it was supernatural. In the past it was expected. Now it would be a miracle. Sarah was to have a son at 90 years of age. Instead of being called Sarai (controlling), she was now called Sarah (princess, noble female). Abraham would be 100 years old when the promised son would be born. There would never, nor could there ever be, a question as to the fact that this was the promised son; the answer to God's plans for the ages to come. The blessing of God to the world would come through this promised son.

In my overview of looking back on events, I can envision the heart of the father of Ishmael who could already see the tendency of the son of the bondwoman, and he asks God a favor for the son of his flesh. How gracious of God to assure His servant of the future of this willful son.

I noticed a very impressive, and to me impacting, response of Abraham to the covenant God made with him. Immediately he kept the terms of the covenant that was his responsibility and the blood of the covenant ratified the agreement. He did not wait for a more convenient time to do what God told him. And even though the whole tribe would have been in jeopardy for some days following the rite of circumcision, in faith he trusted in God's protection and made sure the Lord knew the reality of his commitment.

As I watched in my mind, I learned that God is faithful to His promises and according to His timetable, He will bring to pass what He has said He will do. Perhaps in a sense it is even more important that I learn to respond quickly to what God expects of me. There is no reason for me to wait to do what God tells me to do. To put anything off until it is convenient for me is an act of serious neglect, and in a sense, of defiance on my part. That would imply that I will do what God says, only on my terms. How insulting and sinful such a thing would be.

I must be careful to quickly obey - even me!

*To have a meeting with the Lord is always a significant moment.
There is an awareness of our acceptance with God because of the blood of atonement.
Other times there is a different kind of fellowship because of God's authority.
There is a sense of overwhelming awe, when I speak with God Almighty.*

*This is not a time of fatherly care but of just and eternal affairs.
The present situations of daily life fade as everlasting things seem to appear.*

*When God speaks of nations as "a drop in the bucket," all other things seem so small.
One really needs his face to the ground when I then on His name will call.*

*This is different from "Give us this day our daily bread," the future is in full view.
Centuries in the future are spoken of as already accomplished, and the past is rightly reviewed.*

*Instead of the things of daily and family life, God gives a glimpse to me -
Of how things are going to happen in days to come and what my little role will be.*

The impressions made on me when such experiences come are hard to describe.

I am caused to stop and review my own life and it truly humbles my pride.

Who am I to be able to be involved in helping to build an everlasting kingdom?

And what have I ever contributed to future days that I might be able to see them?

I believe it is true because the Bible says we are heirs and joint heirs with Christ.

So, I do accept this as fact but with fear and trembling I rise to walk in His light.

There is no reason except for the grace of God that He would speak to me.

Yet in spite of my nothingness I have a part in the kingdom which I will see.

I learn from Abraham that he felt the same as he fell on his face before God.

Then again, he fell down before God when he learned he would have a son when he was old.

By God's mercy and grace, He has allowed me to see spiritual children even yet.

When I hear them pray and see life-changes, I am thankful that God didn't me forget.

That is why I am here after many years and am still allowed to preach God's Word.

I know I couldn't so a thing or produce anything to profit without the power of the Lord.

Still I am expecting God to bring blessing even though I am feeble and weak -

Because He is the Almighty God who created the universe and still spiritual children seeks.

There is no doubt my faith is weak, but still, I think it is stronger

Then it was when I was young, because I know my limitations more now; I have lived much longer.

Anything that is done that has eternal value is a work of God alone -

Yet He gives me the privilege of speaking for Him, so I must give God all the glory when done.

"Father, at this moment for some reason my knees are weak, I feel like am face down before Thee. May I never, ever take Thee for granted. May I never lose sight of the fact that Thou art the Almighty God. May I never get casual with Thee. May I always give due respect to Thee, even though I am privileged to say, 'Abba Father.' In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 17:3-4. "And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying 'As for Me, behold, My covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.'"

ON HIS FACE.

All that attracts me in the world around; all that draws my attention to the trivial -

Is not seen when I am on my face.

Every beautiful aspect that reminds me of God's great handy-work and power -

Is out of sight when I am on my face.

For when I am on my face it is God Himself, who has undivided attention from me.

No shades of color in the evening or morning - no flash of a bird's beautiful wing,

Can distract me from the unseen face of God, that hovers just behind the curtain of my mind.

Before my eyes is darkness, but in my soul the Shekinah shines brilliantly - and God speaks.

The faces and forms of loved ones that often fill my heart with affection toward each one -

Is not seen when I am on my face.

The beauty of their countenances, the smiles and the tears, the words and terms of endearment -

Is out of sight when I am on my face.

For when I am on my face it is my own Father, who I am listening to and His words overwhelm me.

Earth's temporary ties are loosened as I am made conscious of eternal truths of God's new covenant.

My opened ears take in the facts that these loved ones will be more loved - and differently;

The moral darkness of this world where we live – gives way to the light of heaven – and God speaks.

*The shadows and types expressive of Him who is holiness personified sitting before us on the table –
Is not seen when I am on my face.*

*The sweet strain of saving grace so precious and important especially when seen on the speaker's face
Is out of sight when I am on my face.*

*For as blessed as truth is when spoken clearly and succinctly; God Himself claims my full attention
When He speaks to the inner recesses of my soul, and my spirit rises to embrace His words of truth,
Given by the gracious Holy Spirit as He unfolds the warmth and power of words I have read.
The shades of meaning fade away as the light of God shines on my understanding – and God speaks.*

*The dark earth with the essence of life hidden in it, good seed and bad alike awaiting their time –
Is not seen when I am on my face.*

*The bursting of life and water flowing straight up, and the fascinating development of beauty –
Is out of sight when I am on my face.*

*For my occupation is with the Person, the Creator Himself – not His amazing works of creation.
The Maintainer and Upholder is the Source of all that my eyes can behold, and more – things unseen.
All of those visible evidences – as awesome as they are as proofs of divine purposes and Persons,
Become insignificant as the divine light they give shines directly into my emotions – and God speaks.*

“Father, the position seems to indicate the attitude of my heart. But Thou dost know I am sometimes “on my face” inside, when I am not with my face to the ground outside. When Thou dost speak to my soul in whatever position I am in or whatever the contortion of my face – please help me to listen without distraction, for my soul longs to hear Thy voice. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

GENESIS 18

BLESSING AND PRIVILEGES

I saw there in the high plain of Mamre where those great trees provided shelter and shade, Abraham watching three men come toward him through the shimmering heat of midday. This is the first time a Theophanes is seen in this historic journey of mankind. A divine visitation from God was not misunderstood by Abraham for he bowed himself before the Lord. When a personal visitation and manifestation comes from God, everything else comes to a halt and this time supersedes every activity, every plan, every thought - for God is here!

When there is a call from God, no other issue can interfere with that. There is absolutely no reason to have any confidence in the flesh when God comes to abide with us. It is one of the highest peaks in one's life when one is able to minister to the Lord. What an acme of all experiences it is to be able to prepare for, and set something before the Supreme Person of the universe. As I looked on this scene, I saw the One who owns the cattle on a thousand hills, who created everything by the word of His power - taking from the hand of His servant Abraham the proof of his hospitality. Standing by as a waiting servant, Abraham waits for his Lord to speak.

I began to think of my blessings and privileges as well. The Judge of all the earth has allowed me to speak to people in His name. He has allowed me to give from the bounty He gives me, and reckons it as a service from my hand. For His own reasons and purposes, He has placed in my area of responsibility the promotion and carrying out of eternal things. When I pray, He hears. When I preach, He listens to every word. When I give or take advice, He takes note of my response. How holy! How fearful in a good sense it is to be allowed into the presence of God!

As I listen through the scriptures to the divine communication from God to His friend, I am made aware that a divine visitation leads to service in divine things. Service for God leads to God revealing His plans, His mind and His will. Abraham heard God reaffirm His promise and was assured of its fulfillment even though Sarah laughed in her unbelief. I learned that even though I might assent to what God says, inward belief, or unbelief for that matter, is known by the Lord. When I am sure of the mind and will of God, He knows that.

Then in that afternoon conversation, Abraham hears a divine prophecy as the Lord tells His friend that judgment is coming on Sodom. They *looked* toward Sodom and Abraham heard from the Lord Himself what Sodom was like in the eyes of God. Then they turned and *went* toward Sodom and Abraham stepped out before the Lord as an intercessor. He learned that God knows and judges the moral conditions of men. He

also knew that God listens to our appeals on behalf of other people. Then he learned too, that the Lord will bring blessing on many because of a few. Human prayer can never outreach the divine provision God has for those who repent and/or are committed to righteousness.

From that scene on the high plain, I learned that intercession on behalf of others is really heard by God Himself. When an intercessor is confident in spirit and definite in his plea, God does take that into His consideration. When there is recognition of the Lord as being the Sovereign Judge of all the earth, it is a very humbling thing when we are aware that He knows my heart and motives as well as those for whom I am making intercession. Humility is not something that can be faked. Humble in tone of voice reflects genuine humility of spirit. When one's heart is moved to persevere in prayer and in spirit, there is no attempt to say one thing and mean another. Intercession involves confidence in God and nearness to God.

I learned perhaps better than before, how important it is to draw near in full assurance of faith after having faced my own need of cleansing and my own condition of soul before God. I in my spirit, watched the Lord go on to do His sovereign work, and it seemed like Abraham may have taken a few steps and looked over his shoulder for a moment or two before going to his place. No doubt in his heart there were thoughts of Lot and his family. He would wonder what their real standing was. I know God alone knows that for sure, but often the standing and the state are very different. At that time, it is hard to differentiate between a believer and an unbeliever.

I pray that these will be evident in me - even me!

*What should one pray for when making intercession?
Is it right to speak to God of our real expectation?
Should we articulate our wishes, our real heart's desire?
Knowing God Himself has motives that compared to ours are much higher?*

*I know my prayers do not manipulate God's mind.
The prayers I make on behalf of others more often changes mine.
There is no question at all concerning the decisions God makes.
He knows the final results of every action He chooses to take.*

*There is a certain fellowship we have with God when we pray,
That we can't get in any other activity or in any other way.
In prayer we are placing ourselves in a position to know God's will.
And the results of intercessory prayer may be continuing still.*

*Not every prayer of intercession is answered right away.
The answer may come down the road a way or in a future day.
Names of people that have been on our heart may come up at the judgment seat.
It could be there where some for whom we prayed, we will finally greet.*

*Prayer has a way of changing me to help me understand
The will of God and His way of working, enabling me to see His plan.
My plans for an answer only come from my personal frame of reference;
God's answer may be an act of forgiveness or of the passing of a sentence.*

*He is the Judge of all the earth, He knows exactly what is needed.
He is a God of mercy and grace, but when neither of these is heeded
He must punish sin, of that there is no doubt for sin left alone brings death.
The mercy of God is very notable as to its height and length and breadth.*

*God's fairness is unquestionable, even if there's only a few who commit to righteousness.
Because of those few He often waits, and through them continues to bless
Even those whose only reason to be alive is because of the few righteous ones.
But when repentance is not forthcoming, then judgment is bound to come.*

"Father God, in this community there are those who have prayed as intercessors night after night before the Gospel meetings. Hear their prayers, O Lord God, and for their sake and the glory of Thy Son, please bring some of those mentioned to Thee in prayer, to real repentance and real faith in Christ, In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 18:1. *"And the Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day."*

DIVINE VISITATION.

*He had heard His voice for often God spoke, to His friend on his journey's in life;
But this time was different, He had a word of promise, to give to His friend and his wife.
A son would be born - a miracle child; through him God's promise would come.
When God makes a promise that seems impossible to men - from God it is as good as done.*

*So, in the heat of that day, there was joy in the camp - God Himself came to visit with man.
There was fellowship there - a ministry to serve; serving God you give the best that you can.
One never forgets special days like that day, when good news God brings to your ears.
You appreciate the words and the fellowship there; but more - the message He bears.*

*Fellowship is important when God meets with His own, His truth He comes near us to give.
Sometimes it is hard to take it all in, when it affects the lives of our kith and our kin.
To communicate with men God often speaks plain, so no one mistakes what He means.
When an action He makes that affects many lives, there is a problem that He's clearly seen.*

*Abram knew where Lot chose to go - Sodom was not a good place to live.
He knew God was just - had experienced His grace - his intercession was founded on love.
The Judge of the earth would do right, but perhaps, there were some God was willing to spare.
As an intercessor he prayed, there would be those whose lives showed they his faith did share.*

*However, never expect God to overlook sin; its price must be paid to the full.
God didn't rush judgment; He gave time to repent so not all would go down to hell.
But there were so few that His way was to take, them out of that city so evil.
Abram's intercession and God's visitation, didn't change men's hearts so sinful.*

*May I never overlook, or take for granted, a word of warning from God.
His intention is change and repentance that's real impressed on my mind from His Word.
When His truth is ignored and His mercy is spurned, and men refuse to turn from sin's track;
Then expect God to visit, the day of grace is now done - from judgment there's no turning back.*

"O Holy God: this world I live in, and even in these cities, there seems to be such a Sodom-like attitude that I do not know how it can ever be turned around. May I never allow my service to be hindered by a fatalistic attitude, but to be motivated by the fact that these souls are going to exist forever either in heaven or in hell. May I have, by Thy grace, the commitment to keep on presenting Thy truth and being an intercessor for the few that will be saved. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 19

FRIENDSHIP WITH THE WORLD

From my vantage point of the future, I looked back over the ages and saw two men. Both of them were believers. Both came from the same place. Both came from the same family background. Both had experienced material blessing from a gracious God. Both were honorable in business. I saw them seated looking outward. Abraham sat in his tent door surrounded by the beauty of the high plain and great trees of Mamre in the place of separation, content to be where God wanted him to be. And he saw God coming to him, giving a message of great blessing, and another message of great warning. Lot too was seated, but at the gate of Sodom, a place of astonishing wickedness; a city totally given to evil. He is seated in the place of administration where decisions are made and judgments are passed. He is looking outward and sees two messengers coming, not with a message of blessing but a message of imminent judgment.

In my mind I followed the downward course of a "just" man who wanted to get ahead in the world. He left the place of separation to go "toward Sodom." Then in his quest, he and his family "dwelt in Sodom." Now he is seated "in the gate of Sodom," as a judge and an administrator. He had achieved status in an ungodly place

and strangely, seemed to be able to accommodate himself to the immorality all around him; even to the extent of offering his daughters to the evil intent of the ungodly denizens of that city. Friendship with the world is enmity against God, even among believers. The world will never change its character. The "cosmos" will never become the "ecclesia." Sadly, some who are a part of the church can go into the world and even prosper there materially, but they will fail miserably spiritually. There is a breakdown when a believer mixes with, and joins with the wicked in their sin. It is not possible to be a witness for God and be a judge involved in wickedness.

There is only one reasonable and possible way to deal with the world. "Get out." "Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord." Leave everything behind. "Escape to the mountain." There is not time to pack up and take anything at all from the wickedness of Sodom or the successful claims you have in the world. In the high plain of Beulah-land there is no place for the things of the world. The warning from God was personal, insistent and immediate. To linger is to die. To wait for others to change their minds is to die among them. It is an act of God's grace when one loses everything they gained from friendship with the world.

As I heard in my mind's ear, the things that were normal conversation in Sodom, it was no wonder to me that Lot's spirit was grieved day after day. Some things even a carnal believer cannot get used to. Words and actions have a way of joining forces in the mind of a believer. Even though he is away from God, he is still sensitive to the Holy Spirit within. When the Holy Spirit is grieved, so is the spirit of a true child of God. A greater problem than how things around me affect my spirit, is that when I would take a place in the world, I lose communion with the Lord. Lot was entirely out of touch with God. Because of that, there was inconsistency in his own life and he had no power to restrain the wickedness around him. He had come to the place where he was even willing to abandon his own daughters so he could be well-thought of, or at least accepted by the wicked men of Sodom.

There is no questioning the fact today, that inconsistency on my part in one or more areas of my life, will cost me my whole reputation and will bring dishonor on my family, my whole life's testimony and on the name of the Lord. Lot's life was a contradiction to his words. The sons-in-law thought he was joking with them when he gave them the warning of immediate judgment. To have gone along with them and their life-style, and now suddenly come with a warning of impending judgment was totally inconsistent with how they knew him and was unbelievable to them.

I wondered as I thought on that pitiful man, if there are inconsistencies in my life that will negate anything I say, that is of a warning nature to those around me. Am I able to be believed? Do my words seem like a joke to others? Is what I say contradictory to what I do? I must stop and consider this before the Lord and take stock of my own life and work.

In my mind I watched Lot hesitating, even though the messengers of God were right there. If it hadn't been for the faithful intercession of Abraham, I wonder if they would have left Lot right there? He lingered in fear and unbelief. Was this really going to happen today? Even with his hand in the hand of a heavenly messenger, he wanted to go to another city. He didn't want high ground living by faith. He wanted a city of man's work instead of the high mountain of faith. Even after judgment fell from the heavens with a roar, the one nearest to him died, longing after what she had left in the world. Right in the little city, the false professor died in mute testimony to a faithless believer. No wonder, in fear now, not faith, he flees and fades out of the picture of history as a man of failure, of lost testimony, of scorn, of disgrace, of disgust - even though he is testified to as a just man. A man of fairness in an unjust world is still a man who is known for his friendship with the world. And I learned a lesson.

Failure is near at hand, even for me!

*What could ever enter the mind of a believer?
How could one who tasted of the good things of God ever
Allow such a thing to happen to him, his wife and his children?
How could a powerful insidious force have such an appeal to him
That he would hardly in any way be differentiated
From those whose degradation and immoral tastes are never sated?
Where could such power come from that the flag of allegiance to God be furled?
And the testimony once had be lost? It is the power of the world!*

A system controlled by the demonic powers of darkness,

*Is always sending out its siren call to whoever harkens.
It is not always callous, searching youth that hears its call.
Those who have tasted of the good things of God can also fall
Into the trap of desire we think are unfulfilled -
And aren't aware of the danger until into the cesspool we are spilled.
Then it is too late to come out from among them unscathed.
Even the once strong believer smells of "the world" though bathed.*

*A sadness comes across my mind because of consequences.
Not only the failing saint is hurt, but on the unjust is a sentence
Passed leaving them without hope of any kind of reprieve.
They have been led astray by one in whom they believed.
Imagine the grief a father has to live with all of his days,
When he sees the result of his covetousness in those he raised
To be successful in the world, but now to the world's cause
They are addicted, but to the Heavenly Sovereign Lord, they are lost.*

*Not only they, but all who come behind from generations yet unborn,
There is no fear of God, no spiritual light, left finally abandoned and forlorn.
No hope is there until in later generations, there comes one single maid,
Who by virtue of another failing believer, makes a step of simple faith,
And God in mercy uses what was a failure and mistake,
To bring blessing to all mankind, for He can make
Even the wrongs and losses of one, and ultimately give some light,
That brings blessings to the world of lost men through one who does the right.*

"I praise Thee, O Lord God, for bringing light out of the darkness of moral night and ungodliness. When such a thing happens, we are called to confess that this is all of God alone. To Thee be all the glory. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 19:27-28. *"And Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the Lord: and he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace."*

BEFORE THE LORD.

*There he stands in solitary watch, where daily, he had stood his watch before.
The man who God Himself was willing to call, "friend;" alone he watches smoke ascend -
And wondering - waits to hear the word of hope from those for whom he made his intercession.
There's less than ten - I wonder if it's possible that six at least survived?*

*To stand one's place before the Lord, gives insights that at times can bring us pain.
Standing in such a place, we see, from God's view, multitudes of people wanting gain.
Gain, not just quiet satisfaction from simple things like peace and love and home -
But gain for gain itself - missing satisfaction for desires that never can be met - by gain.*

*He watches the smoke - remembering a young man following his steps of faith and commitment.
He remembers, with that black background - the day the now successful man - made fatal choice.
The choice for gain, led to watered valley, filled with sin-polluted men and women wanting gain.
The captivity, from which, by the sword, the older set the younger free - was a lesson lost.*

*Again, as smoky darkness covers the once-green valley, now aflame from end to end -
The watcher, smile-less and heartsick - sees and hears the evidence of morals long decayed.
And thinking about a just man - son of his brother, but like a son to him - is he saved or lost?
Can it be that one blessed and living close to heaven's door, gain so much, that all of real value will be lost?*

*There is no tangible result, that ever can be worth the loss of children and of wife -
Yes, life itself is not worth living, if that for which we love and yearn for - be lost for gain.
There never is, nor ever can be, an alleviation of remorse for efforts wasted on such trifles.*

I, a watcher, look in a mirror, and stop to evaluate the object of the efforts of my life – and I pray!

“O gracious God, I fear that what I have put the efforts of my life into, have the stamp of me instead of God. O what a loss it would be, if efforts put forth to further the kingdom of God, turn out to be self-efforts that secretly have been for self-glory. “Preserve me, O God, for in Thee do I put my trust. Amen.”

GENESIS 20

WEAK SPOT

As the history unfolded before my understanding, I saw Abraham move farther south with all his tribe of Hebrews. He was truly a stranger and pilgrim, a sojourner in the land God promised to him and his descendants for generations to come. There were those people living in that area he would have considered wicked and perhaps he viewed them as potential enemies. An area of Abraham's personality where he was particularly vulnerable, a weak spot you might say, had to do with his personal safety. He resorted to a trick he had used before in Egypt. He told a half-lie. The words were not actually untrue, but the way they were used and the perception of those to whom they were spoken, was that they meant something different.

Deliberately promoting a misconception is really a lie. The temptation to use again a deception that had worked before, is one we must stop using. The consequences of deception are never really good for anyone in the long run. There are certain temptations we may have allowed that are very difficult to resist. The pattern of lying when we suspect we are in danger, takes us away from the position of faith in God. That leaves us with only our own schemes that are bound to fail in some way. Some lessons have to be learned over and over again when those weak spots become habits. No matter how much we love the Lord, we are still vulnerable people who are liable to turn again to trusting in the flesh.

As I saw this scene from my place looking back, I could see God in His mercy, bringing things to a head on behalf of all who were involved. By stopping the ability to have children, Abimelech and his people were made aware that something was wrong. By Sarah being preserved from going into an adulterous situation, both Abraham and Sarah were able to keep their marriage bond intact. Abimelech's intentions were forestalled even though he felt he had acted with integrity. God very plainly controlled the whole situation caused by Abraham's weak spot, and preserved all of them from far greater sins.

I learned as I read this passage of historical truth that the flesh never changes. Even one who is not a novice in the life of faith, fails when there is a repeated sin. In this incident, the fear of man was greater than the promise of God that through Sarah would come the son of promise. The flesh may use different forms to take advantage of our weak spots. We must remember we can do nothing without God when we are living by faith. Even in our failures, God is acting on our behalf.

The rebuke of Abraham from the unbeliever was justified. He failed in faith. He had wronged his wife. He had wronged a man of the world. Abraham had done what many unbelievers would not do. In his act of duplicity, he tried to justify his actions by putting the blame on others around him.

I learned that when one thinks only of himself and bases his own actions on what he thinks, without knowing God's will, then our own personal weakness becomes very obvious. It is possible to lose one's testimony in a very short time. It is always hard to say, "I have sinned." "I have done wrong." To try to excuse myself for acting in the flesh is to fail in my life of faith.

This can happen to me - even me!

*I wonder do I know myself well enough to know my many weaknesses?
Are there weak spots in my personality that lead me to deceitfulness?
To stop and consider what I am really like takes some serious consideration;
Because I am sensible enough to know there are areas in my life that are hidden.*

*I may try to pretend I am above all those things other people try to do.
But I really know those same fleshly interests are within me too.
So, I must face the fact that even though God has made me a son -
I am not entirely free from the influence of the flesh until my life on earth is done.*

*The weak spot of duplicity can arise in me when there is danger I can sense.
There is a natural tendency to keep a tight fist on all my dollars and cents.*

*Often, I wonder what people think, do they really trust me?
Or are they cautious when I am around fearing what I might do or say?*

*As I have grown older, I have learned this much, the flesh in me has not changed.
The flesh still attempts to favor myself, some things I try to rearrange.
But I know in my heart it doesn't really matter what people think or do.
God knows what I am and what I am doing even before I am through.*

*It makes common sense, let alone spiritual sense for me to be open and honest.
There are times when I am tempted to sin, but I have from God this promise;
"I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," so by God's grace I continue to seek
To honor Him by my integrity in decisions and the actions I make.*

*It really is my desire to please the Lord, but I am still in this body of clay.
And I know that my weak spots will rise if I'm not careful about what I say.
I must rely on my Lord alone; I do not want to deceive other people.
The faith God gives as I spend time in His Word, will keep me from another sequel.*

"Lord God, my Father: remember Thy servant today and help me to keep a lid on my thoughts and a door on my lips that I will not sin against Thee, or say, or do, anything that would dishonor Thee. My soul cries out to Thee for the needed strength and wisdom to override these weak spots. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 20:11-12. *"And Abraham said, 'Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake. And yet indeed she is my sister; she is the daughter of my father; but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife.'"*

DECEPTION.

*It has happened again because of the fear of man – a half truth is easily spoken.
The scene seems so similar and the circumstances are the same – we can get used to sin.
Strangers who have no knowledge of our God, and for some reason we fear – not all the truth.
Why is such a matter so easily slipped into without a real thought – do we need approval?
Or are we getting used to deception?*

*It seems at the moment, the best way to go; it will smooth the way – human reasoning.
Then the words are out and there is no way to get them back into the mouth – part of it is true.
The end result seems to me to justify the means, so on the spur of the moment – spoken words.
The effect doesn't seem to have created a problem but rather a solution – maybe it's alright.
The subtlety of deception.*

*At first there is a sense of unease inside and one wonders at one's self – why did I say that?
Then there seems to be barrier between the soul and God in prayer – God knows.
The heart and mind are moved to correct the wrong but one waits to see – the smile is gone.
Finally, confession to God and forsaking of the sin of half truth – and relief comes.
The cure for deception.*

*But all does not seem bright in an instant for deception leaves residue – guilt takes awhile to go.
Prayer is that of a person pronounced free because of the mercy given – grace becomes real.
Light slowly fills the soul again and one finds the fellowship hindered, back – but it takes time.
The embarrassment of facing my benevolent Father is real, but inside – I am so glad.
He heard from me confession of deception.*

*Father knows how best to heal the problems deception may have created – He is all-knowing.
His honor is important to the wayward son and the attitude of carelessness is gone – fellowship.
Words of healing come from the Father's book and correction is real – thank God for grace.
Joy comes again and the lesson hopefully is learned and won't have to be again – I am His child.
But deception waits for another day.*

"Father, I am afraid this problem arises in me far too often. Please give me a sensitivity to the circumstances around which deception flourishes. Help me be prepared ahead of time not to flatter or in any way try to deceive either for good or bad reasons. I know deception is wrong and I confess this sin in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 21

THE HEIR

It happened! Just the way the Lord had promised! The promised heir was born and laughter was in the home. I saw as I looked over the past, that everything was done according to God's will and God's word. The birth of the heir was a true type of the One who would come "in the fullness of time" - when God would send His own Son into the world as a miracle child. Sarah could laugh with joy and all who heard her could laugh with her. And I am reminded of an important truth: what God says will happen, is as good as done, even though years may pass before it is accomplished.

There is an interesting effect upon all those that are watching as bystanders when God steps in with power and promise and things start to happen according to His will and timetable. Some will rejoice at the obvious working of God in the lives of others. They will be caused to praise the Lord for His goodness and His wonderful works to the children of men. Other people though, will mock and make comments of derision when God's hand is opened and the changes in a new life are taking place. Even when the Lord was born, there were those who greatly rejoiced and others who wanted to kill Him, even as a child.

I learned from those past events that in this day, there will be those who rejoice over people being born again into the family of God, and others will mock the new birth, reject an obvious work of God, and be antagonistic against those who God saves by His grace. They do not want to see genuine conversions because it exposes the sin and unbelief of their own lives. We are objects of God's sovereign grace. When one walks in the Spirit and another person walks in the flesh, there is conflict and that difference will remain.

I saw the bondwoman and her son, Ishmael, leave Abraham's tent and head out into the wilderness. Abraham was grieved because that son was the son of his flesh. The character of the flesh will always want to exalt self and will seek to put down what is of the Spirit of God. The flesh will indulge itself in a worldly fashion. It may take the form of religious ritual or even legality. When the flesh is refused, it will mean we must exercise self-denial and there will probably be some suffering, but it will ultimately bring blessing in the choices we make. Consequences come from both good and bad decisions.

The great blessing of the birth of the son of promise and the heir of all that was Abraham's, does not remove the difficulties and problems caused by fleshly choices. I hope I learned from watching the struggle of this ancient family, to give the Lord Jesus Christ His true place in my affections and life. I wonder even now, what will be the outcome of my descendants. Will there be the joy of the promises of God being fulfilled? Will there be suffering that comes from following the desires of the flesh and mind?

In my mind, I watched two tribal leaders come together for a frank discussion focusing on how they would deal with each other in the future. Abimelech had rightly reproved Abraham in the past. Now he acknowledges God is with Abraham. There is weight behind the testimony of one who walks by faith, even though we fail from time to time. To refuse the lusts of the flesh and to be willing to separate from the world and its ways has a lasting impact on those who observe our life. People will usually think the same of us even though they recognize our differences. The world and its people admit that God is with His people. They will even appreciate some of what we stand for and some of what we refuse. But the world will still try to bring us under its control by taking away the "wells" of spiritual refreshment. There may be times when they are not content just to let us go along in the ways of righteousness and truth, but will seek to turn us away and into compromising situations. We may have to reprove those who oppose and try to hinder our life for the Lord. When that happens, it is wise to reprove with the spirit of grace and kindness. It must have convicted Abimelech when he was given a substantial gift from Abraham. I may not have seven ewe lambs and oxen to give, but I can give some extra time and attention to those who have sought to trip me up.

And there may be something they will take from even me!

*The frailty of age gave way to God-imparted strength,
As a son was born promised long before, but now at length
He came from God Himself, supernaturally born of God,
A foreshadowing, a type of the only unique Son who would come into the world.*

But then, as now, when supernatural events take place,

*There are people who welcome the joy, others have a different face -
Because they feel slighted, skeptical and ill-disposed
Toward the one who has come by grace alone, who God Himself chose.*

*So, walking away from the life of blessing lived by faith,
Go those who are of the flesh, and with the life of flesh only keep pace.
The work of God in lives like theirs leaves them feeling ill at ease -
There is only one way; faith must separate from the flesh of these.*

*At first that act of separation may leave us sad -
Because the flesh got used to all the things it one time had.
But to co-exist with the God-life and the world-life can't be done.
Two cannot walk together unless they can agree as one.*

*To watch the sons of the flesh walk away at first is hard.
We have been used to self-centered living when the flesh is lord.
Even though flesh has been put into the place of death -
There will come temptations and pressures to us from the flesh.*

*Another smooth-talking force nearby is the world.
In self-righteous smugness, it had once an accusation unfurled
That was dealt with and forsaken quite some time ago -
But the world will not hesitate to let us know.*

*To accommodate to the world is no small thing.
Into a bargaining session, the world will bring
Suggestions that the problem between us is our fault,
And we must make sure the world gets all it wants.*

*There is a necessity of those who live by faith, to reprove the world.
The world loudly proclaims its innocence with protesting words.
The only way to deal with this is for each to go their own way,
And when the world invites you to come, you just turn away.*

*The time may come when an overture of grace is fine.
It never is out of season for us to lost souls to be kind.
Possibly the result will be that some from the world will leave,
And in personal faith in the Lord, come to get what you already have.*

"Lord God, may I always remember there are enemies that oppose those who know Thee and want to serve Thee. Please give us the wisdom and will to not give place to the devil, not yield to the temptations of the flesh, and to not turn aside into the world. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 21:2. *"For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him."*

A SON.

*A son to be – not a normal one, but born of promise long delayed –
But now – the time will soon be here when that which makes life rich and full of meaning
Will be presented – fresh from God, who made the promise and that promise was believed.
Anticipation heightens as the ancient, age'd wait, knowing who and what they would be seeing.*

*The son of promise came – bringing with him sounds of joy and sighs of gratitude
To God, who made the promise of a nation, through which men and women of all nations
Will be blessed – and all the ones of faith will sons and daughters be – by new nature endu'ed.
The God who promised then, still promises today, those who are heirs of God's salvation.*

With words made clear, to minds of those who are willing to act in faith upon a Higher Will –

*God's ways and purposes for us become the cause and course of this life we live by faith.
Courses uncertain and plans without dimensions, now sensible become, as we, God's mind fulfills.
The light of understanding is heightened, and useful labor, gladdens hands of those God saves by grace.*

*When that son came, the journey long in traveling seemed but a short march to one who waited long.
From then till death, though never paved nor smooth the path of faith he walked with God –
He now had evidence walking along with growing steps, watched and measured daily by faith strong.
So whether son, or city without foundation – he knew the future promised was secured – he had God's word.*

*We may never fully understand the "whys" and "wherefores" of this life we live from day to day.
We really don't have to know them, because we know Him, whose promises are "Yea and Amen."
It is enough for me to take each faith-step with the calm assurance that the One to whom I pray
Will do whatever is the best for me and His glory – and I will plainly know when home in heaven.*

"Father, the promise you made to Abraham was certainly more than could ever be explained by wordy men. I too, have experienced the joy and blessing of promise Thou hast made and kept. It is not easily to convince people the value of simple things of life as well as the profound and points of interest in Thy heart as well as mine. Thanks for being so understanding of my limitations. Amen."

GENESIS 22

THE OFFERING

I watched in my mind a small group of men traveling from the south, heading northward toward a specific place God had in His mind, that would be suitable for the greatest act of faith the world would ever know. A foreshadowing of a future world-changing event was going to happen there. No one had been tested before in the life of faith like was to happen there. For three days Abraham must have been reviewing his whole life with God, while walking beside him was his unsuspecting son. Abraham had acted in faith before. God had proved faithful in every case. Could he trust God to do what had not happened before? Can God raise the dead? There was no precedent to follow. Would God raise the dead? The promise of seed through Isaac was made by God Himself. Would God raise Isaac from the dead? Now faith, his faith, was given the supreme test. After three day's journeys, Abraham was confident that God was the true God. He could trust Him to give life back to the son He gave life to in the first place. Abraham has faced the supreme test, and was willing to act according to faith, not according to reason.

The actual act of obedience is a result of faith that has already acted contrary to a father's love, to nature, to human laws, even to the law of God. There was no dragging of the feet, no second guessing, no signs of indecision. "God will provide Himself a lamb," were not idle words. He was giving God what He asked for and was giving it as an act of worship. To give what one loves most to God, is what true worship is all about. To watch the father and son, just the two of them alone, on top of Moriah, setting stones one on top of the other, in obedience and faith in God alone - is to watch the acme of worship.

To see a strong, young son submit himself to be bound by his aged father, indicates that both knew what was about to happen. The father was going to give God his son. The son was going to yield himself to his father's will. The first mention of love in the Bible is significant in that the father's love for his son did not take the place of his reverential fear of God. He was able to rise above the immediate normal fear a man has, and trust completely in the word and promises of God. The obedience of the youngest son to his father is a wonderful type of the perfect submission of the Greater Son to the Greater Father, when He said in obedience, "Not my will, but Thine be done." The knife (death) and the fire (judgment) are in the hands of the father. The communion between them as they climbed that mountain, built that altar and then when the son was laid on that altar looking into his father's eyes, is a testimony to the submission of them both to the will of God. Truly, he was "led as a lamb to the slaughter."

As that heart-stopping scene unfolded to my mind, I wondered at such faith on both the part of the father and the son. Abraham must have in some way, passed on to Isaac the reality of his trust in God. What would I do if put to such a test of faith? The measure of my faith experiences is very small compared to that man's faith. And yet, he was a mere, mortal man too. He had his failings, but when the test of true faith came, he did not falter or turn aside. No wonder he is called the "father of the faithful."

Watching in my mind and emotions, I stood in my place of observation and watched the flame envelop the ram that took Isaac's place, and saw that burnt offering go up to the Lord God. Father and son would have stood there together watching the same thing God saw. The son may have been experiencing the emotion

of one seeing a substitute dying in the place where he once lay. The father in an attitude of heart-felt worship to the Lord he had come to trust without question would have watched God accepting his sacrifice the same as if it had been his son. And then the Lord spoke again to assure His friend of the promises he had claimed, even when the knife was in his hand. "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."

The returning journey from the place where he had been called to go and offer his son, must have been a journey of joy and fellowship. Perhaps during that three-day journey home, the father would have taken time to review all the path of his life of faith for the benefit of his son. The high spots and low spots of life are often the times we learn most about ourselves and our God.

Our human failings keep us from pride and self-satisfaction. In those times we experience God in a very humbling way, learning that God's strength is made perfect in our weakness. His grace is truly sufficient to meet every need. In the high places, like the mountain of Moriah, we are taught to never take credit for what God alone can do. Worship is real when that which is most dear to us is taken away and all we have left to us is God.

As I turned from that place of holy ground and looked for the shoes I had taken from my feet, I wondered at the emotions and the faith in me. I needed to go to the place of worship and remembrance to consider the Father, "Who spared not His own Son," and the Son of God, "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." And I also wondered if I could ever casually look at the sacrifice of Christ, or would it always be as overcoming to me as it is at this moment.

He loved me and gave Himself - for even me!

*What is it about this place that makes it so singular?
It is not just that the ground is higher here - perhaps a bit irregular -
But it has to do with who is here - myself, the Father and the Son.
We meet here on this holy ground and hearts and minds are blended as one.*

*For here in this place God reveals to me His thoughts - His mind.
And I am here because God bids me come that here He might find
If there are things that I treasure more than His holy mind and will.
And the Son of God is there to hear my voice answer Him, "Lovest Thou Me still?"*

*I find myself by this altar of burnt sacrifice in a state of holy fear and trembling.
There are lines of scripture, hymns of worship, and I am here remembering -
God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself -
All that finds its way to this place is worth more than the world's wealth.*

*There is love here at this altar, not only God's love for me, but mine for Him.
And worship is not complicated here looking for a time and a way to begin.
The evidence of grace is real to me, for I find myself here.
Mercy and truth are both evident too, for God Himself is near.*

*There is no prescribed formula to maintain, obedience is the key.
To many who would wonder what I am doing, there isn't much to see.
For what is happening in this high spot is based on simple faith.
The dimension of worship does not depend on the time or place.*

*God is here and He has commanded me to come and meet Him, and so I do.
I do not have to wait for some emotional experience to tell me when I'm through.
He is my Lord, He knows what I mean, what I say and what I have to give.
And from the fullness of the storehouse of grace, He gives me what is His.*

"O Lord, this hilltop may not be called Jehovah-jireh by people around, but to me this is the place where Thou hast provided me with some of the high spiritual experiences of my life. Many would not likely see even an altar here, but I do, and I treasure every thought, and every opportunity to give what I love to Thee in worship. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 22:2. *“And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.”*

ONE OF THE MOUNTAINS.

*Men and women strain and stretch, training relentlessly to make themselves fit – to climb a mountain.
Deep breaths, lungs forced to enlarge to contain the priceless commodity available to all – rarified air.
Leg muscles growing larger and more flexible to take sure steps in places seldom trod – high ground.
Heart beating stronger and stronger under pressure to work in climates where God dwells – mountains.*

*Seven high mountains – one on each continent, silently challenge men to feats unknown – the peaks.
Cost is no consideration, for fame and pride beckon with outstretched hands – it’s worth the effort.
Risks of life and health loom ahead and bodies lie strewn and frozen – unburied – and are passed by.
This is important because it all depends on me – my mind, my heart, my soul, my self – I did it.*

*Overlooked and often efforts of mind and heart and soul are scorned – mountains of God’s choice.
But to those of faith and love and hope, they are “the place;” – God said and life plans are changed.
On those high points of air permeated with the presence of the Most High God – acts of faith.
Not watched or reported by those who live for the sensational, but watched by angels – and God.*

*With feet that followed hard after God, placed with sure steps of divine approval – they climb the mountain.
Not self-exalted in any way, but the faith-walk of those who believe God knows best – going together.
Burdens borne but not for survival, rather burdens borne, for obedience has its costs – fire and wood.
The peak is gained, but built higher yet by human hands: stone on stone reaches God’s heart – an altar.*

*Lower than the high peaks of man’s attention are the high mountain where man meets God – with love.
The greatest gift to give is that which reaches deepest in the soul of hopes and dreams – and promises.
In faith based on intimacy and knowledge, a hand rises, laden with death and resurrection – a knife.
Death to self, and tender hearted – he acts with confidence, full trust – he has lived on higher ground.*

*One dare not hesitate on peaks of mountains where the air is pure but sparse – there’s more than one.
Moriah’s peak brought the voice of God to one whose faith was tested to the full – the promise stands.
On Sinai’s blazing heights the voice of righteousness and law sounded loud – and men trembled.
On Calvary’s brow no voice resounded from the highest heaven, is God dead? – No! God speaks – “FINISHED!”*

*The mountains of God’s choice, where from time to time He meets with man are filled – celestial air.
We’re able on the table-lands of Beulah to see for miles around and know above the sin – there’s God.
He bids us live and work and love and worship and learn on the mountains of His choosing – as sons.
Promise, righteousness, forgiveness and views of coming glory we see on the mountains of God – and look for COMING
GLORY!*

“O Father God, the times and places of meeting seem to be more precious with each passing day. I may be getting sentimental, but I really do not want to go down off this mountain. I would like to stay here where the relief of confession is still strong; where the joy of communion can be deeply breathed; where eternal reality is not just a “meeting-word” but clarifies all that is going on in the shadows down below. On this holy ground I worship Thee with joy and a full heart. Amen.”

GENESIS 23

RESPECT

As the history of the Hebrews continues to unfold like a scroll or time-line before me, age catches up with Abraham and Sarah. Isaac is in his late 30's and Sarah died at 127 years of age. As a true stranger and pilgrim, Abraham had never claimed land for himself as a permanent possession. He was focused on "a city that hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." Even though the land on which he walked was promised to him and his descendants, he had made no permanent home, preferring rather to live in tents. So, when Sarah died, he had no burying place for her body.

With dignity and respect suitable to the time and place, he asks for some property to buy for a place to bury Sarah. The interchange between Abraham and those who lived there, followed the course of business by means of polite bargaining that was common at that time and place. It was obvious to me as I listened to the

conversation through the Word of God, that people often do not mean what they say. What is the right way to deal in business with those around us?

Abraham in a respectful manner and tone of voice, clearly stated his desire and intention. He knew what he needed and he knew what he wanted. A precise request cannot be misunderstood. When that is made plain to those with whom you deal, then an answer of either "Yes" or "No" is the only way they can truly respond. The business life of a believer is often the most impacting testimony of personal faith one can give. A person can loose in one deceptive interchange in business, all that he or she has built up in a lifetime of Christian witness.

But what should one do when an outrageous price is asked for an item or property he desires to buy? Should we say, "No, thank you" and walk away? Should we swallow hard, and pay the exorbitant price without the bargaining process that is expected? Is there a protocol that is demanded of those who live by faith, that we should follow when making any transaction? It seems to me that if one is limited to only one choice, then be prepared to pay the asking price. If the deal can be taken or left, good stewardship would determine if I would pay the price or walk away from it.

It seemed to me that Abraham was looking down through the years and generations to come, and he did not want anyone at any time in the future laying claim to, or using his personal burying place. It must have been a startling moment to Ephron and all that watched this bargaining transaction between him and Abraham, when Abraham did not try to bargain at all. He counted out the money asked for right in front of everyone, and paid the full outrageous price. That would have been talked about for a long time all over that area and for years to come. There would be no question at all as to whom the burying cave and the field and trees around it belonged to. They saw themselves the transaction being completed. The sons of Heth saw the money change hands without any question. Ephron had his money. He might have even been embarrassed at the extravagant amount of money he received. Abraham had the field of Machpelah and the cave in it to bury his dead wife, and his name and honor would have been testified to by everyone there.

Respect is not something that can be demanded. It has to be earned. It can be gained by integrity and lost in a moment of covetousness. The value of respect is worth much more than the mere money of an exchange. It has to come from a person's character. That which is within a person of an honorable nature is what personal testimony is made of. Testimony is not based on words. Deeds have an important part to play in establishing one's reputation and credibility.

The respect Abraham had for his wife of over 100 years was also obvious when he buried her body. As befitting a prince who is burying a princess (Sarah), he would have ensured that everyone would know the honor in which he held his wife. There was no quick and casual way to get the funeral over with and get on with his life. Not only did Abraham own the cave for burying, but he owned the field of Machpelah and all the trees in the field and the trees around the field. Everyone in the city and country around knew there was a mighty prince who now owned that property. They also knew that mighty prince held the memory of his wife in highest esteem. They would know and tell the generations to follow of the great man who lived in tents, who was very rich in herds and flocks, who counted out before all of the onlookers, a great ridiculous sum of silver for a piece of land.

As I thought of that scene God choose to leave on the pages of the history of His people, I learned there are two specific areas of life where respect becomes obvious to all. One is in the way I do business. I can gain or lose my reputation built over a lifetime, in one afternoon if I do not show proper respect for those I am dealing with, no matter what they might do, fairly or unfairly, to me.

I also was reminded that people watch and can see how I treat my wife. If I treat her with dignity and respect through my whole life, and even in her death, there is a reflection placed in a good light on the God in whom I trust. The negative can also be true. If I disrespect my wife, people will have a poor impression of my Lord. Some things can be lost and never regained. Respect is one of those things.

People have a right to respect from even me!

*What is a bargain anyway? How can this be determined?
Is it based on the exchange of money - on what the rate of return is?
Or is there more to a transaction than what is favorable to me?
How can respect in business be maintained; how can it be done righteously?*

There are some basic guidelines that don't change with the passing of time.

*In every culture and generation, there are the interests of others beside mine.
To be faithful in stewardship for the Lord, means what I am dealing with is His.
So, I cannot be careless and unconcerned how I apply myself to this.*

*I need to remember that covetousness has a whole lot of different faces.
It is important that I recognize how things are done in various places.
What may be acceptable business in one place, may not be in another.
Wisdom is needed to prepare myself lest I in some way offend my brother.*

*The Lord said to give Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.
That comment He made indicates to me, there are answers for me in His Word.
So, I will not try to get unreasonable profits whenever I make a sale.
And when I buy it would be wrong for me to quibble over every small detail.*

*I should make sure the one I am dealing with knows I am not being unfair.
Whether it be in buying or selling, in building or making repairs -
It is important that I make sure others know the God I represent -
Is not allowing me to scheme and cheat, by trying to get every cent.*

*Perhaps even more important than in business, is respect when it is seen at home.
Whether it be during the rush in the morning, or when the day is done -
My children as well as the people around should know I respect my wife.
She is of more value than anything, she is more important than my life.*

*I have never had to bury a wife like Abraham did long ago.
But if or when that time comes, I will want everyone to know -
I held her in highest respect in her life, and likewise now in her death -
That respect for her and her memory will remain as long as I have breath.*

"Father, I want my family and all who know me, to be able to bear testimony to my respect for Thee, for those who are close to me by nature's ties, as well as those with whom I do business. I pray Thee to keep me from covetousness, carelessness and callousness. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 23:4. "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight."

A BURYING PLACE.

*In tents of a seasoned traveler, the prince goes on his way,
He is a pilgrim and a stranger who lives from day to day.
Looking for a city, whose Builder and Maker is God;
He is prepared to travel further, when he gets from God, the word.
He knows the journey's long, and lives accordingly.
Though he has great riches, he holds them easily.
He knows they can be lost, if God wants to take from him,
Anything that would hinder, or would make the prince to sin.*

*All he needs from earth is a place to bury dead.
He needs no earthly pleasures from men to make him glad.
His goal is not the grave; it is a temporary stopping place;
For the person to await the day when they see the Savior's face.
All he needs from worldly men is a temporary piece of ground;
Where he can place his loved ones until the trumpet sounds.
Respect and personal dignity we owe to those we love;
We have many blessed memories, but place the body in the grave.*

*As a stranger in this land, may I keep my tent pegs short;
Ready at a moment's notice to pack up and make a start
To whatever place God leads me, whether on earth or heaven above.*

*May I never lose sight of the fact, God gave me what I have.
This world is not my home, though my calling still is here;
So, may I keep eyes on the goal – life's reasons remain clear.
This is a training time for me to learn in thought and deed;
I must follow in His footsteps and to His Word give heed*

*I need to bury anything that ties my affections down
To things around that look so nice but need hiding in the ground.
From time to time we lay away those whose memories are so dear,
We can't take them along with us; we must go on and leave them here.
But those things that claim attention, with so much noise and glitter;
Need to be buried out of sight – the results are very bitter.
I have a place already bought for them to lay my body in;
But what I'll be so glad about – I've finally buried sin.*

“Lord God, my God: every buried body is noted by Thy omnipresent eyes – and also every sinful deed and word that needs to be buried. May I never let the putrefying scent of unburied selfishness, self-ambition or pride cross the nostrils of my family, friends, or those needing Thy salvation. May I always keep buried anything that would dishonor Thee or hinder the furtherance of Thy Kingdom. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

GENESIS 24

I STAND HERE

It seems only natural that the aged man of faith would seek to secure the future progeny of his son. My mind's eye watched the patriarch and his old, faithful servant discuss the signs of the times in that place, and the low standards that people lived by there. There was no question about it: his son needed a wife who could be trusted to have the fear of God about her and be able to understand the value of the promises of God.

The servant had learned from his master that God does answer prayer. God can be counted on to give answers in peace. God is more interested in the lives of His people than we could ever be. God wants people of faith to live with people of faith and teach faith-principles to those of following generations. It was important to Abraham to obey God not only by being in the place of God's choosing himself, but in the choosing of a person as a bride for his son. Our obedience is not only going to affect ourselves but also those around us and those who will come after us.

The servant of Abraham had learned from his master the value of prayer to God. He had also learned to trust God for guidance in the commission he was given. To my mind, as I watched the servant praying within sight of the well, and heard him commit the task he was responsible for to the Lord, it was impressed on me that there are family members, friends and people who know me who watch what I do, listen to how I pray, learn about faith - or the lack of it - from me. I asked myself, "Is it necessary to ask God in prayer for things that defy the normal course of life, to determine if that is God's will? Or is it also evidence of God's answer when I ask for common-place answers in a specific way and time?" It seems to me that Abraham's servant prayed in faith for something that wasn't out of the ordinary, but he wanted evidence of the kind of person the young woman would be. Would she offer water to his camels? That was the work of a servant and that was a large task.

Inner beauty cannot always be easily seen. It takes something beyond a conversation to really see what a person is like inside. Hospitality, compassion and common sense are described by the actions of a person more than merely the words they say. To see people as God sees them, we have to look past physical beauty to see what is in their heart.

Kindness, if it is within, will show itself unsolicited when the opportunity arises to benefit a person. Kind acts to an observer, are the silent testimony to the reality of a Christian's witness, who is "zealous of good works." How would patience show its characteristics to on-lookers? When a task is large and, to a degree, daunting, the person of patience will give attention to it without complaints or demands from others. Patience bends itself to the work and continues until the difficulty is past and the work is finished. To see evidence of inner joy and peace, I would watch for facial expressions and body-language as one goes about the work in which they are engaged. There doesn't always have to be a song sung to give evidence of joy. The motions that come across a face and the gestures of one's hands can reveal to the watcher the evidence of what is inside.

The servant stood by the well and learned all he had to know about Rebekah from the answers of God and the actions of the young woman. The demonstration of her inner spirit was clearly seen as she remained at the task of drawing water for the "camels also." The spirit of a true help-meet and real servant will cause them to do more than the minimum for the benefit of others who need our help.

The purpose and goal of the servant's journey was obviously reached as he stood by the well and, in essence, stood before the Lord there and experienced the answer to his prayer - the identification of his master's son's future wife. It would have strengthened his own personal faith to follow the path of obedience to such a clear answer. When those times come and it is obvious to us that God has given us what we prayed for, our first response should be thanksgiving to God for His goodness to us and praise for His grace and guidance. When God chooses to work through us to the benefit of others, it is one of the reasons for which He saved us in the first place. When we know it is God working in us "to will and to do of His good pleasure;" that makes our Christian life of faith what it should be and we experience the significance of our calling.

As I watched in my mind that faithful, aged servant identify Isaac as, "my master," I could, to a certain degree, enter into his satisfaction and pleasure in "standing by the well," and seeing God work His will.

There is a quiet satisfaction when God can use even me!

*The principles of service haven't changed through the years.
The servant is responsible to the Master whose name he bears.
When the Master has a task, He has called for us to do -
He has the right to expect we will see that work through
To its purpose and completion to the Master's satisfaction -
In trusting us with a work, He has the right to expect our action
In every activity to be directed in some way to that stated goal -
Not leaving it partially completed, but done to the full.*

*Not only is there satisfaction from the Master, but the servant too
Appreciates the work the Master has trusted him to do.
And to be able to trust God to use the servant's own hands,
Or his personal intelligence to fulfill His Lord's demands
Brings a joy to the soul of any faithful servant
That cannot be stifled, for from his Master he has learnt
To trust the same God the man of faith obviously knows
And the servant finds delight when God's faithfulness to him He shows.*

*I may not know all at once the outcome of every God-given task;
And it is not up to me to question His leading or to ask
For some explanation as to why I am here doing this -
Because the objective in the work is not mine, but it is His.
He who has plans for each one, works them according to His will -
And my obligation is in the work I am called to, just to simply fulfill
The instructions He gives me without question or complaint -
And in the carrying out of the work, to press on and not to faint.*

*To "stand by the well" and watch God bring things to pass -
Assures me that what He wants me to do, He will be with me in to the last
Effort that is needed to bring the purposed work to an end.
I may not ever know all the reasons He chose me to send.
But as long as I know I am in his will; He will prosper the way -
And when I see the final outcome perhaps in some future day -
I will bow to the earth and will give Him all the worship and the praise
For the glory it will bring to Him throughout the eternal days.*

"I have been able occasionally Father, to see evidence of Thy leading me in ways that are unmistakable. The joy and satisfaction I have been able to get for myself when I stand and see the evidence of Thy answers causes me to praise Thee.

May I be able to stand by and see some of the answers here in this place that I have been praying for, for more than 50 years. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 24:27. *"And he said, 'Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: I being in the way, the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren.'"*

THE WAY THE LORD LED ME.

*In no way is it inconsequential, insignificant nor does it allow for the least amount of indifference –
Affected by the promises and dreams of the past that changed the course of life or lives –
The ground over which we walk is sanctified only to the extent that those passing footsteps are by faith
Unqualified by wordy explanations men think need to be made for understanding – it is simple:
THE LORD LED ME.*

*Animals leaving high ground seeking shelter in the treed forests and needing food for survival –
Others seeking dark holes to settle in for a winter's sleep, lay fat flesh down and slowly breathe –
Birds full of the nectar of thousands of flowers and newly born butterflies change direction –
And amaze frail, mortal, silly men with the unspoken words of the fulfilled purpose of creation –
THE LORD LED ME.*

*And a man-servant, noble in his simplicity of obedience to a master that knows best, quietly prays –
His commitment to one he serves out of love is both refreshing and enlightening – uncomplicated –
No brilliant flashes of insight from unknown sources, No, just a bowed head and worshiping heart –
And he knows without a doubt; it is unmistakably clear, I need look no further, let's get on with it –
THE LORD LED ME.*

*Looking back with a humility that finds its source in God, not self; "This is really what God wants."
For assurance to a doubting self about the course of life as yet unseen and unknown and unexperienced
For the timing and blessing of work started and uncompleted, yet laboring on with confidence –
For sharing life: all the joys, sorrows and blessing of united in mind, heart, soul and labor with another
THE LORD LED ME.*

*Not all the skies were bright with promise; not all the labors filled with success; not always joyful –
The causes and circumstances of tension, grief, sorrow beyond words – and "white-hair" problems –
Rejections, disappointments, failures self-imposed too many times, a "stranger to my brethren" –
And yet with all of that, the deep settled peace of knowing without a shadow of doubt –
THE LORD LED ME.*

*What joy it will be in the time when this servant brings the chosen bride – the ones the Father wanted
And the word goes out "The camels are coming", and the bride alights with anticipation –
The Bridegroom lifts up His eyes and see the object of the love He chooses to have and give –
And in the background the servant watches with deep joy – maybe this servant – and says in his heart
THE LORD LED ME.*

*"O Master-God, it is my delight to believe I am still in the way Thou hast led me. I never want to stray from this path –
this course made by prayer and tears and unmistakable answers in peace. I am afraid lest some foolish attraction, sidetrack
me and make all that Thou hast desired through Thy servant to bring dishonor on Thee, my Lord. Burn a sensitive
conscience onto this willful soul of mine. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."*

GENESIS 25

THE TWINS

In my observation of the patriarch Abraham, I could see he never deviated from God's instruction that Isaac was the son of the promise through whom blessing would come to all the earth. There were other sons but he provided for them and sent them to the east, away from the promised son, Isaac. By the time Abraham was buried, all over the Middle East he had descendants who were going to be a problem to the Jews down through the centuries - and they still are. "Jealousy is as cruel as the grave."

After Ishmael and Isaac buried their father, Abraham in the same cave as Sarah, they went their separate ways. Isaac had inherited everything that was his father's - except he had no children. Ishmael had many. Isaac had learned the value of prayer and he had learned by his earnest prayers for children, that prayer deepens our insight into what we really need. He knew the promise of God would come through a son he did not have as yet, so he prayed in faith. When his prayers were answered after twenty years, Rebekah could feel the struggle of the twins before they were born. The Lord explained to her in prophetic insight the struggles that would come in the future from these twins, including the fact that the older one would serve the younger.

Twenty years after Isaac and Rebekah were married, the twins were born, with Jacob, the second one born, hanging on to the heel of Esau, the firstborn.

Isaac wasn't an aggressive man, but seemed to be the quiet type who minded his own business. His wife, Rebekah, though was different. She was the "take-charge" kind of person who had ambition for her youngest son. Isaac liked to avoid confrontation. I did learn from watching this family, that even though one has great patience, we cannot always avoid confrontation. There are times when we should stand up for what is right in spite of who we might offend. Also, when a person plays favorites, you are promoting conflict even though you thought you could avoid it. Family conflicts will come if the father and mother are not committed equally to all of their children. If we have children who are very different in personality, it is up to the parents to adapt to those differences and maintain a balance between them, or there will be conflicts between siblings in the future.

Isaac seemed to be an acquiescent type of person who yielded without resistance to his father at the time of the sacrifice on Mount Moriah, and accepted with gladness the wife chosen for him without any question. He had learned in his own way, how to let God guide him and lead him. He knew that through his seed would come the blessing of God to many, so he was willing to let God's will go ahead of his own and he would follow as God would lead him.

When there are obvious differences in children, there is not really anything much we can do to change that. But we can recognize and help each one to use what God gave to full advantage. It is not wise when a father is partial to one personality and the mother to the different personality, or to let those preferences be known to the children. We have the responsibility to teach our children how to get along together and how to blend their distinctive personalities into family harmony. A divided family is a grief to all. Parents must not show partiality to individual children.

When one is headstrong like Esau appeared to be, he needs to be tempered by the pressures of a father's strong hand, rather than allow him to go unchecked. When another one is quiet, subtle and sly, he needs to be taught to be more open in order to accommodate to the family dynamic as a whole. When one is hot-headed and the other is cold and calculating, there will be trouble ahead unless parental pressure is applied when they are young to bring those two different temperaments into line.

The first open example of the conflict between Jacob and Esau came when each was following his own inclination as far as living was concerned. Jacob must have liked to cook and Esau to explore and spend time in the country. It is possible for us to overlook the value of our spiritual blessings for some quick get-rich scheme or some instant gratification without considering the long-lasting effect of a quick decision. Carelessly spoken words or quick reactions to a situation, may leave us ruined for life as far as God's things are concerned.

When there is a first impulse to get something we want, and we go for it; at first, we may feel gratified and very satisfied. Short-term satisfaction can lead to long-term regret. We may actually get what we want and may even feel powerful because we got it, but the later consequences we will have to live with, often to our life-long remorse.

The wise person will weigh up a matter and determine to keep their perspective, even though the momentary gratification seems so attractive. The wrong push of a button, the wrong turn of a dial, the wrong opening of a door can lead one to lose everything that is of value in a mere moment of time. Getting past the initial pressure-filled moment of temptation is the most difficult part of overcoming sin.

I must keep control of my mind or I may fall, even me!

*When grace is needed grace is there for me to reach out and take.
In times of pressure and temptation each decision I make*

*Has a lasting effect on me that may not ever go away.
So, it is wisdom that I take time to consider what I do and say.*

*For I am not immune to temptation as long as I am in this flesh.
It is possible for me to fall in a moment and be entwined in Satan's mesh.
I am aware of some of my failings and what can make me fall.
But there are temptations that may come on me that I have never heard of at all.*

*I am not sure what I could have done different as I look back in time.
The vows of God were on me, the decisions in life were not all mine.
I have thought a lot about my children and if I was to them fair.
They probably learned a lot of things from others because I wasn't always there.*

*It seems to me hard to accept what we know is best when it is too late
To change things that are already done because I did not want to wait
To think of the consequences and the effect they would have on others.
What kind of advice can I pass on that would be a help to new fathers?*

*I would say take time to pray a lot even though you must be away.
Listen well to your children as to what they do, or do not say.
Watch them to see their strengths, and be aware of their weaknesses too.
The molding of their decision-making process is often up to you.*

*Be sure they know what is important and what not to pay attention to.
Help them to understand the satisfaction when they finally see a project through.
Give them opportunities to apply themselves to meaningful labor.
Let them see the value of lending a hand to a friend and neighbor.*

*Give them praise when praise is due, they know what is right and wrong.
Lend them your strength when they are weak, let them alone when they are strong.
Don't criticize them too much, but do not settle for a job half done.
Be ready to give well-deserved praise even when they are out on their own.*

"Father, I know my children are grown and I don't have the right to dictate anything to our grandchildren. But I also know grandparents do have some influence. So please help me to be to these young people what I should be as a guide and example. And not only for these of our own flesh, but for any we can influence to walk in Thy ways. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 25:33. "...he sold his birthright to Jacob." Genesis 27:34. "...he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry." Genesis 37:28. "...and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver." Genesis 42:21. "...we are verily guilty concerning our brother."

CONSEQUENCES.

- Hunger, hasty words, differences, actions that cannot be retrieved.
- Wrong values, temporary satisfaction, restlessness, short temper, living only for today, self-centeredness.
- Incompatibility, in-law problems, long absences, tension, dissatisfaction.
- Trembling, fearful words, missed blessing, loud crying, bitterness, seeking for what was lost, anger, hatred, murder in the heart.
- Life-long strife, half-hearted reconciliation, strangers in a sense, no room for both brothers, mountain living, enmity for generations to come.

Poor, lost Esau – he made a bad sale!

- Jealousy, envy, personality clashes, anger, murder in the hearts, tragedy alleviated – just barely.
- Covetousness, deceit, lies, mourning, years of absence, famine, fear of death.
- Pressure to survive, hunger increasing, danger of death, distant hope, uncertainty, finally action, desperation, consciences awakened.
- Miles, heat, weariness, rough words, accusations, challenges, charges laid, fear, prison, consciences screaming, turning against each other, separation.

- Serious fear of reprisal, stomachs churning, knees weak, hopeless again, humiliation total.
- Repentance, confession, honesty finally, nothing left but truth, loud weeping, a voice, total silent fear, grief deeper than ever before.
- Forgiveness, kiss of kindness, tears of repentance and joy, voices raised in fellowship long lost, commands, instruction, obedience, light hearts, light steps, miles speeding by, restoration.
- Life begins again, joy deep and satisfying, provision abundant, family unity, a happy father.

Joseph's family all together – a bad sale, but God meant it for good!

"I have learned, Father God, that everything has consequences. In a way, Esau didn't realize the lasting consequences of that bad sale. He probably thought it was inconsequential. I need to carefully look at each action I take lest there be some serious significance I might have overlooked. Those brothers must've had a lot of bad years to live with their conscience. They knew they had made a bad sale and had to live with it burning in their hearts. What relief they must've felt when finally, they confessed their sin! I need and ask for, Thy help to keep sensitive to every action I make. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 26

WELLS

As I watched the peace-loving man, Isaac, I was caused to greatly admire how a man of patience and good will conducts himself when pressured and tormented. Famine comes on us from time to time in the normal course of the seasons of life. It could have been that Isaac was making preparations to do the same as Abraham had done years before. But the Lord revealed His will to Isaac and without any questioning of the Lord, Isaac obeyed God. Not every action that seems the most reasonable to us is the one God would have us take. At times it is more difficult to stay put, than to flee the course of events that falls on us.

Even so, in that testing time, Isaac resorted to the same pattern before the present Abimelech of Gerar as Abraham did before the Pharaoh of Egypt. Actually, Isaac went a step farther than his father did. Abraham called Sarah his sister, and she was, in that she was a half-sister. Isaac used the same words in regard to Rebekah, even though she was his cousin. The "half-lie" of Abraham, became a "full-lie" of Isaac. It is not uncommon for each succeeding generation to go a step farther away from the path of righteousness than the one before them. Watching that scene in the life of Isaac made me to stop and consider what values I have left my children. The everyday life I have lived before them has probably helped them to shape their own values and course in life. I hope the everyday life I have lived before them had a positive effect and the example and model will help them live for the Lord. I am thankful for the examples lived before me. I wonder what the final outcome of the choices my family is making will be.

I noticed as I read the account of Isaac in Gerar, that God blessed him for his willingness to stay where he was instead of going to Egypt. The world's way may seem attractive and reasonable, but the will of God always takes precedence in every action, even if there is potential conflict around us.

In that dry land the wells of water were more precious to them than anything else for one who has herds and flocks to feed and water. Without water the animals would die. To plug up the wells of water a man dug would be an act of war. Each well had a name to identify it as to ownership and as a place of meeting a fundamental need. There was more than enough to provide for all. Jealousy for Isaac's material wealth provoked them to resentful actions by filling up his wells with earth and taking the initiative leading to conflict so they could take what he owned. Three times he had new wells dug. The first two times he moved rather than enter into conflict. He chose to keep the peace rather than fight back, and in the end his patience was rewarded and he was respected by those around.

I thought about that potentially war-like scene and stopped to consider events that have occurred to me and ones that may come yet in the future. Am I determined to claim and demand my rights? Would I be willing to walk away from what I have worked hard to accomplish? When there is conflict that is waiting to break out because of jealousy or other conflicting issues - will I stand and fight, or seek to reach out in peace? Some times I think I must draw a line and say, "No further! This is where this must stop!" On other occasions there are alternatives that present themselves but will cost me time, effort and money - and yet I must walk away and pay the cost of loss.

I know God can work things out in the most difficult of circumstances, and there are times when His way is the least attractive to me. I must keep before me the conscious thought that, one way or another, God's influence and control over my life is what is important; not my own sense of what is fair or any accomplishments I may seek to claim.

I must reach out in love - even me!

*What's with the shovels, every time I see you, you have one in your hand?
Surely there's room for everyone here, all around us there is empty land.
You seem to spend more time digging wells than attending to the sheep -
Yes, I know they need water, more than grass now, and the water is deep.*

*So, I must keep digging, it takes more time to get water than feed.
Grass and fodder regenerates themselves, renewed by nature's own seed.
But to get water to maintain life, one has to take time to dig.
Sometimes the water seems to flow itself, but other times the flow is not big.*

*But the fact remains, the water is there, and someone has to make the effort
To bring to the surface what is hidden, to find the water is a separate
Work to be done that's out of sight, and one will generally be alone,
Because down in the well there is dirt to move before the water will come.*

*When the water starts to flow into the well, then one can climb back to the surface,
And start to give out the life-sustaining water you found for that very purpose.
The sheep and the lambs need water and food, that is the laborers job.
The digging of wells for the water of life won't be noticed by anyone but God.*

*The laborer knows when the thirst is quenched results will then be seen.
We don't know the final outcome of digging; we just know what would've been -
A dying flock and dying herds, because no one was willing to take the time
To keep on digging way out of sight until life-giving water they find.*

"Father, may I keep at this kind of labor even though I know many think it is a waste of time. Help me to be faithful in seeking Thy will and Word. And Father, I would be so grateful if we could see some life-giving results now to bless Thy people, save sinners and glorify Thee in this place. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 26:18. "And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father called them."

DIG AGAIN.

*Basic necessity demanded hard labor for man and beast alike to survive
There is no simple way to get that for which the body and soul craves –
In order for the life-giving flow to meet the need so great, a cost must be paid.
Water flows deep below but effort must be made to quench the thirst that returns.
Again, and again the sound of life-giving water is heard from the darkness –
And again, and again the need is met as those who serve, draw from the well - for others.*

*The ancient "friend of God" knew the need was great and didn't stop –
Until the water found was poured out, he could not rest for life is in that water.
From place to place, wherever divine guidance led, he dug and dug again –
A watching son, saw the places and heard the names until - impressed on a young mind,
When his time came; when responsibility had passed to him, he knew where to dig again.
Nearby enemies had done their deeds of fundamental challenge – but he knew where to dig again.*

*Our fathers taught us: the respect and honor deserved must be given in sincerity regardless –
Even though the changing times seem to negate the value of a spoken word – dig again.
When others' handshake may be steeped with deceit – you are your father's son – dig again.
Shifty eyes may seem to imply that words and actions are not the same – you must dig again.
The names and places have not changed there is a well of springing water to find – dig again.
Strife may come from characterless "others" – they may live by darkened minds – you dig again.*

The altar and the well go good together; one for God alone and one for man to share –

*The one giving to God His rightful due and pleasure; the other to refresh the man that gives.
Whether one is on his knees in worship and in thoughtful praise, or drawing from the well to drink –
There will be that which seeks to hinder; to fill the well with earth that stops the life-flow fast.
Dig again – remove all useless clutter; the water's there – you know the place and name.
Dig and dig again – the Lord makes room for you to bear for Him much fruit – dig again.*

"I know Thy wells are full of water, O God: there are so many who are not satisfied with water, they only want wine, or worse. The mix of water and earth make mud or muddy water at the best. I want that springing, clear, flowing water of everlasting life that satisfies and never runs dry. Give me the shovel of thirst for Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 27

DECEIT

God allowed me to look inside the home of Isaac and Rebekah through the eyes of the written word. And as I watched, I could see choices that bring the consequences of long-lasting negative actions. One son loved to roam the country and married two women who did not fit in the life of a family of faith. In spite of the grief those two unbelievers brought to Isaac and Rebekah, Esau was still their son - and was also the favorite of Isaac. Jacob, on the other hand was the favorite son of his mother.

There are times in family life when crisis times arise and the hidden differences are exposed. What we pass on to our children may have consequences we would never have foreseen. The expectations that we have perhaps unwittingly promoted, can bring conflict. It is important, I learned, to not leave unsaid things that should have been taught throughout the life of our family. At the same time, some things are better left unsaid. There will come a time when it will be too late for a father to be an instructor. When that time comes, all we can do is pray a lot.

Esau expected to get the blessing of the firstborn even though he had despised it earlier in his life. He had not learned that God is "The silent Listener to every conversation." On the other hand, Rebekah remembered the promise that the elder would serve the younger. She knew the promised blessings would come through Jacob. Even so, she did not act in faith, but set about to manipulate what God had already promised. I learned that when we put our hand to try and bring about what God has promised, I will only produce difficulties and troubles that will last a long time because of my willful interference.

As I followed that scene from my watchful place in the word, I saw the actions of the flesh reproduce the sound, smell, touch and taste of a person who had lost only one of his senses - sight. When a person loses one of his qualities of discernment, there can be very serious consequences that follow. I may not think one event in life is all that important compared to all the days of living and laboring. But there are more people involved in my life than just me. The quiet subtlety of deceit doesn't do its work overnight. It has a tendency to trap us and then stays with us to degrade our character. It can also be passed on inadvertently at first, but then we may see it in those who follow our example and begin to model their own life of deceit after ours. Jacob's hesitation wasn't so much in regard to deceit he was involved in, as the danger of getting caught. Deceit was already a factor in his life. To stop in the middle of an action of deceit may bring us humiliation and hurt, but there is also a freedom of honesty recovered that makes the confession and forsaking of sin a real blessing to us.

Jacob got what he wanted through the deceit, but he lost a lot too. His brother wanted to kill him. He never saw his mother again. He was to be deceived himself by his uncle, and his family lived with strife and practiced deceit themselves. His brother formed a nation that was against him then and still is against Israel today. He lived in a far country for years before he could claim what was his.

The loss of Esau's birthright was really Esau's fault, but the steps of getting it by interference with God's plans had lasting consequences. If we are not careful, we too can overlook the blessings we have now, and let our minds dwell on what we don't have. The practice of counting blessings and not letting our minds be stayed on the deceitful subjects the flesh promotes, will keep us away from a lot of wasted effort and lost years. God has His plans for us. It is possible for us to be found in the will of God. We do not have to resort to the actions of deceit to find our fulfillment in life. The consequences of deceit just won't go away. Even though the place we live and the people around us leave much to be desired, it is important that I do not resort to deceit as a means of escaping the difficulties I face. Our character is usually formed under the pressures of the wrong that is going on around us. We are constantly feeding on information and events in life that produce certain effects, that in turn form the basis of character. The outcome of that in times of stress is when we know what is really of value to me.

Deceit is always ready to work its havoc on even me!

*Why is he prowling around in those distant places?
The urgency evident on his and on other faces
Indicates something serious is going on in that family.
By watching and learning the outcome of deceit we can see.*

*One might think it makes no difference as long as the outcome is right.
People involved may nod and smile, and everyone seems so polite.
But when deceit is working its way in the mind, soon it will come out in the open.
And what long has been covered and denied, no longer is holpened.*

*Deceit finds its source in the enemy of God; he was a deceiver from the beginning.
And he has an agenda to bring people down; it sometimes seems like he is winning.
He will use anything he can, appealing to our senses one and all.
If possible, he will use words from the Bible to try and make people fall.*

*There are times when we think things are happening too slow.
In order to get our own way, too far into deceit we will go -
To bring about in our time what we want to be done.
And if we are not careful, God will leave us alone.*

*When the last act of deceit has been done and failed -
Then we look back and see all that sinful deceit has entailed.
There may be the loss of integrity, of family trust and of friends.
We will grieve the rest of our life over deceit's awful ends.*

*Far better to go back to living the life God gave us by faith.
And when the pressures come to act, just to rely on God's grace.
He has a way designed by Him alone to bring the right things to pass.
And when the burdens bear us down, them on Him we will them cast.*

*The principles God stated still hold now to be very true -
"What a man sows he reaps," applies to both me and you.
Deceit reaps deceit, and as time passes it gets more.
And the things that once were small, are much larger now than before.*

*What deceit said we would gain, brought great losses to us.
/Many who once would've been friends, no longer will trust
The words and actions because our deceit let them down.
Now instead of being near us, that friendship is gone.*

*When either deceit or anger comes, it is important to remember,
Our choice is to not act deceitfully nor let any kind of anger
Claim our feelings, but recognize the danger for what it is;
And pray to God for strength and help to bring us out of all of this.*

"O Lord God, there are times when it is apparent that the enemy is seeking to control the affairs of my life. I am asking Thee today for the wisdom to discern the dangers around before they claim a hold on me. May I be yielded to the Holy Spirit and have His power and strength to deal with, and overcome, the evils that threaten to bring me down. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 27:2 "And he said, 'Behold now, I know not the day of my death:'"

THE DAY OF MY DEATH.

I've watched, and walked behind and carried those who never knew

*The day had come, when days of sowing and of reaping were all through;
And the calendar of life's events had reached that special time and place –
Where all will come to – and for the last time – I look upon the face
Of him or her with whom our life was shared – although we both could tell
It soon would end; we would walk our separate paths – to heaven or to hell.*

*It's far too late to think the years unfold endlessly in front of us – when suddenly,
The day has come which we had thought was only for the old – unexpectedly
The last tick of my life's clock has faded from my ears, and I move instantly on –
On to what I know God has been preparing for me – and now I'm at my "long home."
Faces familiar I have lived with, shine with smiles and tears unseen by my open eyes.
Others passed and gone – their bodies laid nearby where soon my body lies.*

*Words of remembrance, sad smiles of incidents now recalled in the quiet room –
Prayers are murmured, maybe even a lovely hymn to lift the latent gloom –
This day arrived, perhaps expected but unwelcomed, because the process feared
Has intervened, and the last life-step has been taken – but look! The lines are cleared!
Those life-lines marked upon the face, of experiences spoken and some remain untold –
Are gone, as sight so used to earth now looks on purest Light – and heaven unfolds.*

*The fears and questions that hide within the background of my brain and mind –
Are gone, as answers from the One who gives and takes life back with heart so kind
Opens to my astounded gaze features heretofore not even dreamed of or experienced.
Instead of looking back with fondness to earth's days and claims – I look entranced
Ahead, and see the glories sung about and preached – now like a child's bliss –
There they are before me, and millions that I missed because of flesh – what a glory- this!*

*While loved ones plan the way to best present a proper Gospel truth to those who come,
I am blissfully unaware of all that fuss as I am getting settled and appreciating my real home.
This is where I belong, this is my Father's house – these millions of redeemed my sisters and my brothers –
These are the ones I knew and many more unknown until this moment – I thought of them as "others."
But here, this day, I've moved – and glad I am, for the joys I have anticipated bring such delight –
I now know what pleasure is, with darkness gone forever from my eyes; I live in unsullied light!*

"Heavenly Father, there are thoughts pouring through my mind like a torrent of delight as I think of heaven and being at home with Thee. I am afraid some of my musings are imaginations that may be baseless in some ways. But much that fills my heart with joy is based on the solid rock of Thy word. If this is the day of my death – I am ready. Ready to praise and worship like I really want to. Amen."

GENESIS 28

A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP

In the unfolding history of God's dealing with this family, I saw Rebekah, the mother, make plans to bring some peace to a tense family relationship. Isaac could only hear what was happening around him, so when his beloved wife suggested a way to preserve the life of her youngest son and at the same time restore some order to a home disturbed by two unbelieving daughters in law, Isaac took the responsibility of sending Jacob away to find a suitable wife. Esau knew his two wives didn't fit in the family, so he married a cousin hoping to please his parents.

Once things get out of order in a family, it is not long before they pass the point of no return. Inappropriate behavior, self-will and favoritism have a way of dividing a family. When things become divisive among family members, it is time for things to change. The journey of Jacob for the 400 miles to Haran, would have effectively stopped the threat of violence and on-going anger from Esau. The tense peace that would follow, would give Isaac and Rebekah some relief.

The thrust of the family history now follows the life of the youngest son, Jacob. Through him God was going to bless the nations and send the Promised One to bring men back to God. But every person who is accepted by God must have a personal relationship with God. One cannot live spiritually on the faith of a famous grandfather or a father. It is fine to hear wonderful stories of faith and blessing from our forbearers.

That has to do with how God dealt in grace and mercy with them and we can learn from those accounts. There comes a time, however, when each person has to become part of the story of God and man him self.

The past is past. Now you are making your own decisions and traveling your own course through life. The God of your fathers wants to be your God too. He has left the evidence of the personal relationship He had with those before us, to be a testimony to you. Interestingly, God does not deal with everyone in the same way. God met with Abraham in a distant country where it was obvious there was no fear of God or interest in the spiritual life of the nation. God repeated on several occasions his promise of blessing to others. The Lord dealt with Isaac during a time of famine when survival was the concern, and Isaac obeyed God's will. He too was given the promise of the blessing of God.

Now one night, about 60 miles from home, Jacob lay down to sleep in his flight from the anger of his brother. When God appeared to him at Luz, he never forgot it. There he met the Lord. There he saw the glory of God. There he saw the link that God has with people on earth. There he learned "There is a way back to God from the dark paths of sin." To meet God is to know God. To know God is to have the gift of eternal life. To have received eternal life as a gift from God is the beginning of a personal relationship with Him that lasts forever. Every event and choice in life from then on affects that relationship. Obedience and faith bring meaning and satisfaction to the relationship. Self-will and ignoring the will of God makes that relationship a source of embarrassment and discontent. Relationships that work best are built on mutual recognition, mutual trust, mutual goals and a friendliness between the parties involved. The idea of independence and the maintaining of a personal relationship with God runs contrary to the facts. I can't have a relationship with another person and still do my own will regardless of theirs.

I saw in my mind that Jacob had formed that relationship with God, and it changed his whole outlook on himself, his life, and his future. Now, instead of God not being in his thoughts, God is always there. He was no longer a passive observer of the faith of his fathers - he was a participant in the life of faith himself. Now God was real to him personally. He knew God had met with him at Luz, so to him from then on, it was called Bethel, the house of God. He had been to the house of God and had become acquainted with God there.

Jacob took action to show proof of the forming of that personal relationship. He erected a pillar of the stones he had used as a pillow and made a vow there. He made a pledge of his future to God because of that experience. Any personal relationship follows a similar pattern. When one meets God, they know Him. They may not have an experience like anyone else because it is personal. But they have been in contact with God and life no longer can be lived independently and for only self-interest. I know about this because I have experienced this. Life begins anew when we meet God for the first time. From then on it takes the upward course of a personal relationship with God, rather than a downward course of a personal relationship with sinful people like ourselves.

God knows me and I know Him - even me!

*When one is awakened by the Spirit of God, and faces a personal encounter
With the God of the universe who wants to be personally found in the center
Of your life and the future yet unknown, that is a special time.
Because the Lord God Himself has made you an object of His mercy and grace divine.*

*To be stopped on the road of self-will and independence to listen to God's own voice -
Makes the events of that moment in life all important, it is then we make a choice
That changes our life and destiny too, and the consequences we will live with forever.
It is not a time of decision we can put off, really, it is now or never.*

*Whether one's head is on a pillow of stone or on one filled with down,
Isn't really the issue involved at such a time, it is really whose leadership I own.
If I intend to keep control of my life in my own sin-polluted hands,
Then all I can expect as a result of living is to do the best I can.*

*And I know the best is not good enough to live by or even die by.
The best I can do leaves me short of God's glory, and still I would wonder why
I am here, where I am going, and what is my real purpose in life.
There would never be given the answers I seek, and I would still be a child of the night.*

*When in the course of life, one stops, perhaps unexpectedly to think,
Then we find God is waiting with promises ready to you to bring.
He wants you to trust and believe that He wants the best for you.
The purpose of meeting Him, is for a relationship to be formed, and to it you will be true.*

*To know God is to love Him, to love Him is to care for things that are close to His heart.
It is often surprising how quick this relationship comes; we remember when it actually starts.
Because life is different when we know the Lord, and His truth has entered our being.
Our faith and hope are in Him alone, we know Him even without Him seeing.*

*The evidence is there of a relationship thus made; we see God in everything around.
We recognize His voice when we read His Word, and when our thoughts are full of the silent sounds
Of God speaking in the soul, to lead and to guide, and the Holy Spirit shows the way
To conduct life in fellowship with the God of relationships who guides us every day.*

*It is not some light-weight experience we can take or leave with the God we came to know.
The personal relationship has many facets in a believer's life to show
That there is reality there, old things pass away, a new creation then begins
To show itself by attitudes and actions as we live life in fellowship with Him.*

"Father, I thank Thee for not getting too impatient with me when I have taken things into my own hands - and have failed. I thank Thee for maintaining this personal relationship with this feeble human child. I pray others listening to the Gospel being preached would seek this same thing from Thee today. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 28:17. "And he was afraid, and said, 'How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.'"

THE GATE OF HEAVEN.

*Unusual in time and place and form to that which is common-place living –
But needed rest makes necessary the stop for one who is not sure –
Not sure of the day and days that lie before, and fearful of the days that lie behind;
And in the hardness of that night's repose – God's speaks.*

*When God speaks, our thoughts and minds rise higher far to places never been –
Concepts of approach to God go way beyond the limits of our own experience –
For who can conceive of earth as only a footstool, yet it is – just a place for God's foot,
And the foot of a ladder for messengers to walk on – bringing hope from God through heaven's gate.*

*More – bringing truth unknown and taking evidence of service done or still undone;
The steps of servants, celestial never hesitate to walk to and from the gate of heaven.
The One who speaks above the gate makes plain – all things on earth are known to Him,
His interests, purposes and divine decrees, lie within and without the gate of heaven.*

*The lessons learned full well on those hard pillows, bearing thoughts of guilt and grace;
Joy and sorrow; prayers and praises forming a mixture of emotions and intentions –
Are far beyond the ordinary, not dreams caused by too much food or fearful actions of the recent past,
No, these are thoughts expressed from an understanding Father-Master who speaks from heaven's gate.*

*Times there are when questions, fears and actions wait for clarification from the One above the gate.
There is no comfortable repose until the answers clearly enter into my restless mind – and then –
What only moments past had caused such consternation – now, there are answers of peace –
And the darkness flees before the brightness of God's revealed will to me – at heaven's gate.*

*The crisis is passed, and that "certain place," now has become a "Bethel" unto me –
Spirit-oil has set apart that time and place, forever unforgettable as the place where the ladder's foot
Bringing messengers with messages from heaven to me, made it possible for me to send mine back –
That blessed way of access making communion with God a certainty – through the gate of heaven.*

"O Lord my God: the promises Thou hast made, the assurances Thou hast given, are proof to me that the gate of heaven is open now. The reservations of my earth-bound mind, so prone to human decision making, keep me at times from appreciating the awesomeness of the place where God dwells. I thank Thee for the "House of God" and voice that speaks from above the gate of heaven. Amen."

GENESIS 29

MOVE THE STONE

I saw in my mind, a solitary figure walking miles each day, alone with only survival and distant hopes to give him incentive. Actually, there was more, much more, because he now had a promise from God as to his future. The motivation for Jacob to reach Padan-Aram had all the promises of God to keep him moving towards that distant unknown goal. How would he know when he reached the undescribed destination? Faith really does work in the unfolding of life's events. A well in a field with sheep all around did not seem a likely place to find a wife and for faith to claim the promises of God. The gathered men seemed bound by tradition and fear of each other - until Rachel came!

We may not know from day to day what lies beyond the next sunrise. When we know the will of God has led us to this particular place for this particular time, then we can be assured that God will give us further directions as He guides our steps and going each day. Some things may seem so common, so ordinary, that we overlook what God can do with common ordinary people, doing common ordinary things on a common ordinary day.

When Rachel came there was no question in Jacob's mind. He had found what he came for. He had no dowry with him like his father's servant had who came to that place before him. But he did show initiative and a great stone covering the well was not going to hinder his actions, tradition or not. He took action; he did what needed to be done. He made himself known. Moving the stone may not seem like much to us from this distant time, but to those whose lives followed a set pattern, even in daily living, it would have been a startling awareness that this man is different. He is able to go forward without fear and in confidence. He knows why he is here. He knows what is before him. He has all the actions of a man on a mission. These things are all true of those who trust God and live by faith in Him. All the side issues in the world around us do not need to turn us aside from the way we know the Lord has led us.

Apparently for the first time in his life, Jacob had a goal and to reach that goal he had to work. Love is a great motivator. The important goals and desires in life are worth working for. The problems in life may not be solved in a short time. Patience and faithful continuance are the keys to dealing with disappointments and deceptive people. The deceiver, Jacob, was now made to see what it is like to be deceived. In his anger and, what was to him injustice, he found out he could do nothing about it. He learned a lesson everyone should - our sin has a way of coming back to attack us.

What did he do and what should we do when we find out we have been deceived by someone we trusted? Revenge doesn't solve the problem; it just deepens the mistrust and makes lasting enemies. Even though we may have been deceived into a bad bargain, we still need to follow through and fulfill our part of the bargain. In everything we do we need to think about what is at stake and what are the alternatives we have to reach the goal before us. It is always wise to take time to look at any issue through God's eyes and see the results from His perspective.

Even in the years of work to attain his goal, Jacob was blessed with the birth of children. As children were born to Leah, he developed a change in character. Now there was an awareness of others beside himself. Now there were children being born who would look to him for leadership and parental guidance. During the years of his labor for Laban, Jacob was gradually learning how to honor God in unfavorable circumstances. He was learning the blessings of love. He was learning that every action has a consequence. He was learning that others have a right to expect him to meet their needs. He was learning also that fathers have no longer the right to live only for themselves. There are things we forfeit when we become parents.

As I followed in my mind the history of this family through whom blessing would eventually come to me, I was made to consider the effects of my decisions on my wife and my children. I realize others too, will be affected by what I do, so my seemingly personal decisions are not personal at all. How greatly I need God's guidance and direction in the course of everyday life, let alone the big decisions I make.

*There are obstacles we have to face in the normal course of life.
It may not just be the moving of a stone that initiates some strife.
The culture differences, national differences, personality differences too,*

*Can create blocks in the path of life hindering what I'm called to do.
But when I know God has led me to a specific place and time -
Then I can deal with the obstacles, they are involved in God's will not just in mine.
It is up to me to have clearly defined the goals I want to reach.
And I can trust the Lord to guide me when it is His will I really seek,*

*To remove the great stone of prejudice is not always understood
By those who have already decided what should be done, and never should
Depending on what people's nationality is, or their race or creed.
The great stone of prejudice will never be moved if to them I pay much heed.
By God's grace I must be able and willing to see everyone through God's eyes.
That will keep me from pride and prejudice, or else pare me down to size.
I need to consider if I allow the stone of prejudice to stumble me -
Others won't listen to what I say to them, they will believe only what they see.*

*The great stone of materialism rises up right in front of my path.
It is possible to be successful and get a lot more than what I have.
After all, say some, isn't that what most people now measure personal success by -
The number of things you can gather around you, or the things you are able to buy
Are often the measure of what is important but I know it is a great stone -
That blocks the real success in life; what really counts when I am gone
Won't be the amount of money, but the example of faith I have left behind.
In the words I said and the things I did, is where the most joy my family will find.*

*The great stone of rejection has to be removed before people understand grace.
Often that huge barrier just stays in the road, blocking the path of faith.
How to move that stone is a puzzle to me because usually I don't know the cause.
But I can't allow my objective to be changed, even though rejection sometimes gives me pause.
Thus far the best thing I know I can do is try to win people to me -
And then perhaps the Lord who I serve, the rejecter will begin to see
Is not going to ruin their life or their home, He will make them brand new.
And when that great stone is removed from them, a whole new creation comes into view.*

"Lord God, my Father, I am here before Thee today with a great desire to see some of these coming to these meetings saved by Thy grace. I really don't know the obstacles that are keeping them from Christ. I only know they need Thee and seem so unhappy and lost. May Thy saving power be manifest here at this time is my earnest prayer. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 29:9. *"And while he yet spake with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep: for she kept them."*

RACHEL CAME.

*He walked for miles – days and weeks passed by, as with plodding steps he journeys –
Promises from God still ringing clear and true, "I am with thee... will keep thee... will not leave thee."
And then at a fundamental place where all must come that each may live – he sees Love before him.
Not floating above the ground as some ethereal vision; not perfumed with spices too costly to bear;
But in a servant's role and robe, feet planted firmly on the ground – each step and voice sound guiding
Those who followed, to the place of life-giving water – and consequently, blessing to many.*

*They were only sheep – they did not know the beauty of her face and form – they knew her voice.
A voice that spoke and they would follow, having learned to trust the timbre of her tones –
It may be warning sounds to gather scattered sheep to safety from danger she alone discerned –
It may be gentle tones in the middle of a stormy day or night, to calm the fearful charge she had –
It may be the cheerful words of leading to the pastures green – or to get water from the well –
But Love is in action – meeting needs, fulfilling responsibilities, planning for the greater good.*

*Rachel came – entrusted with the care of father's living, and keeping that which blessed the many.
Rachel came – her beauty greater far than that which attracts only longing looks from greedy men.*

*Rachel came – the role in life she was given, she took without bitterness – and “kept the sheep.”
Rachel came – hospitable and interested, appreciative of the help given to assist her.
Rachel came – and knowing who the one who looked upon her with loving eyes – ran to father.
Rachel came – and told the tidings of a stranger from a far and distant place – who looked with love.*

*I came one day, and found my “Rachel” serving – serving God and sheep – one and the same;
For serving that which Father has entrusted to one’s care, is serving Him who owns the cattle on
A thousand hills – and sheep in valley pastures or on high slopes of mountains far and distant.
Though beautiful in face and form, her inward beauty sounds through interested voice – and speaks.
Approachable and willing to run and tell of her heavenly “Jacob” to those who need the living water.
And I loved her – and said to her Father, “I will serve Thee...”, two of us together – “Rachel and me.”*

*Face and form change as years pass by, giving way to inner beauty more and more displayed –
Watching eyes and listening ears still hear the voice of my Rachel – speaking peace to troubled souls;
Guiding generations newly born into directions that are not normal – but are right and safe.
She speaks to her gender in the flock, and takes the time to speak of things not right for men to speak,
Her caring gaze and simple touch on the arm of the strong young men, causes them to say, “Thank you
For caring, and showing and reminding me of things I did not know, and things I did not do.”*

*My Rachel came to me, but first to God, her Master – clear that her obligation was eternal first.
But Father God knew best, that two of us together could better do appropriately what He desired.
The truth is there for all to see – when the one I love speaks, there are those who listen with respect.
It’s true; each of us is different and yet the same – different in roles to fill, but each with work to do.
Like the ancient two God brought together at the well – so two of us join to accomplish His will –
Not ours but His who knows where the sheep find food and water – at the well where Rachel came.*

“I recognize, heavenly Father, that much Linda does, I could never do. It wouldn’t be right, and moreover, she is qualified to accomplish the unique role and work You gave to her. I think I am clear as to what my responsibilities are and she is actively involved in hers. Together seems to be the best way possible to labor in caring for sheep and seeking out those who still are lost. Please keep me in a state of mind that appreciates and promotes what she is doing for Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

GENESIS 30

GOD REMEMBERED

The story continues to unfold in Pada-aram with the family of Jacob growing rapidly. It seems the birth of each new son creates a growing tension between Jacob's two wives. One was very fertile and had seemed to bare children easily. The other was the one especially loved by Jacob but was barren. It was interesting to me to notice that God was interested, and involved, in the affairs of that family. He compensated Leah, being the wife most unattractive to Jacob, by giving her four sons one right after the other. Rachel, the wife Jacob loved, was without children. The love of her husband wasn't enough for her. She seemed to think God had forgotten her so she took matters into her own hands following the example of Sarah many years before. Just because something is legal, doesn't necessarily make it right. The maidservants of both women were given to Jacob and he had sons by them. But the rivalry continued until Joseph was born to Rachel. God remembered Rachel.

I learned by watching that scene, through the Word of God, that God is no respecter of persons. He doesn't have favorites. Patience to wait for God to act is not always easy. We have a natural desire to have things done our way and in our time. The learning process is not able to be based on our demands or to meet our schedules. When God is given our will so we work within His will, things work out best. When patience is lacking in parents, there usually comes anger, resentment and jealousy not too far behind. It is hard to wait for God's time, and trusting Him when nothing seems to be happening is very difficult. But it is harder in the long run, to have to live with the consequences of taking matters into our own hands. God does not forget His people. When the temptation comes to think that way, we need to review the promises of God and wait in faith for Him to act in His own time and way.

God also remembered the faithful labors of Jacob. He had promised Jacob that He would bless him and bring him again into his own country. By the provision of God, Jacob's herds were increased. It is true Jacob selected certain strong animals of a certain type and color and bred them to bring the results that would

favor his promised wages. There was no doubt that Laban was still an idol worshipper and claimed that through divination he had learned that God increased his wealth because of Jacob.

There is never a time when believers are allowed to turn to divination. Our God is the only true God, and those who serve Him do not need any testimony of any kind from the false gods of the world. The blessing of God sometimes does come on unbelievers because of their association with a child of God. In family settings the unbelievers are sanctified by the believers in the household. God in His grace sets people apart for blessing even if they may never accept that blessing for themselves. Material prosperity today is not necessarily a sign of the blessing of God as it was in those ancient times. Survival was dependent upon material possessions, and when more than was needed was given, it was a sign of wealth and the goodness of God that leads people to repentance.

I am conscious of the fact that God remembers us in our family dynamics. He is able to guide us into a quiet and peaceable life with godliness and honesty the key part of making our family life what it should be. I believe "them that honor Me, I will honor," still holds true today. It is also true that God can give what He wants and take away what He wants. It is His prerogative to do for us as He chooses. If a person has prospered because of his skill in his chosen field, he owes God his gratitude. There is always a reason behind God's activities on our behalf. It is very unwise for me to take anything God does for granted - whether it is to prosper me, or to remove anything that promotes some trust in falsehood from me.

*A child crying in the night, afraid, thinking he's alone - God remembers.
A woman grieves thinking no one cares for what she's done - God remembers.
Of this we can be sure when everyone else forgets
When we wonder if there is any way out of it
Or when lying in a bed of pain and, O so sick,
God remembers.*

*On a far distant shore seeking to work for the Lord -
God remembers.
Clinging desperately to the promises in the Word -
God remembers.
One might wonder if it's "out of sight, out of mind"
Looking around for some assurance to find -
Wondering if we are only wasting our time -
God remembers.*

*When finances are low and we are considering a move -
God remembers.
When we are about to lose everything, we have -
God remembers.
We turn here and there seeking to find some relief
Everyone else is looking for the job we seek,
And one's soul is being tested for faith or unbelief
God remembers.*

*When the children were small, we had such joy -
God remembers.
We were able even to afford to get them a special toy -
God remembers.
But now things are different, they seem to rebel
They won't listen to the things I am trying to tell
I don't know whether they believe now in heaven or hell
God remembers.*

*I am getting older and now am often alone -
God remembers.
It soon will be time for me to go to a rest home -
God remembers.
God knows my mind isn't as sharp as it was*

*The children don't come unless there's a serious cause
It seems like my whole existence has been put on "pause"
God remembers.*

"Father God, remember please that new widow and give her some comfort. Remember please that man and his family who came to listen to the Gospel for the first time and please remember those who have heard it a thousand times, and save them for Thy glory. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 30:27. "And Laban said unto him, 'I pray thee, if I have found favor in thine eyes, tarry: for I have learned by experience that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake.'"

I HAVE LEARNED BY EXPERIENCE.

*I know it is important to learn God's truth, and ways He has dealt with others,
Those who are older and have traveled life's roads – they can be my teachers.
Things I learn from experienced folks, may keep me back from danger,
Like, "Stay away from fire;" "Don't talk back;" "Never take candy from strangers."
But now I am older and others come by, to talk over the life I have lived.
From the Bible I teach what I learned from Him who is willing advice to give;
"Give and it shall be given unto you;" "Seek and ye shall find;"
"Knock and it shall be opened unto you" – and God's Gospel will give sight to the blind.*

*Some things we know, we've "been there – done that," we've gone and now we are back,
To pass on to others things we have learned that they might not stray from the track,
Seems only right, but there's a problem to this – most are polite but don't want to listen.
People don't like things taught too specific; they want to search out what is hidden.
The best we can do is give guidelines in general, and assure them we really care;
When they need our help, feel free to come, and rest assured – they're remembered in prayer.
Then we step back; watch and be quiet, and see God at work in their lives.
Would you believe! They are doing alright! Their success is a real surprise.*

*I have learned by experience – don't talk too much, too many words will come back to bite.
I have learned by experience – work in the day, you can accomplish much more in the light.
I have learned by experience – do not "go it alone", I am not really as smart as I think.
I have learned by experience – don't go close to what's wrong, stay far away from sin's brink,
I have learned by experience – I can't do it all, others can do many things much better than me.
I have learned by experience – take a second good look, for not all "gifts" offered really are free.
I have learned by experience – my God can be trusted, never once has He ever let me down.
I have learned by experience – when I live life by faith, all He asks me to do will get done.*

*I have learned by experience – those that I teach, are more convinced by the things that they see.
I have learned by experience – they are more willing to act, on what they see truly modeled by me.
I have learned by experience – children choose to love, if they see real love between me and my wife.
I have learned by experience – families will serve God, if they see compassion lived out in my life.
I have learned by experience – I generally sleep well, if anything wrong is made right.
I have learned by experience – if sleep escapes me, my Lord gives me songs in the night.
I have learned by experience – God wants to save souls, but I must sow seed and water with tears.
I have learned by experience – as one of God's sons, it is great honor the name "Christian" to bear.*

"Father, I thank Thee today for the divine Teacher, the Holy Spirit. May I never take His instructions for granted and may I always be willing to act on He teaches me. The scriptures of truth give understanding, and the experiences Thou hast sent my way have given me some practical knowledge of how best to serve Thee. Thanks for these many lessons. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 31

THE GOD OF BETHEL

Over a period of twenty years a lot of changes can take place in family units, especially if one prospers more than others. It was time for Jacob to move on and he knew it. God confirmed it to him unmistakably. The

name Jacob gave to Luz was Bethel, and that was the name God referred to it as. Whenever covenants are made with God, there is great moral and spiritual weight behind that covenant. There is no question that God takes seriously all that He does for us and through us. We should never treat any part of our life as if we can arbitrarily act on our own. God confirmed to Jacob the action he wanted to take. How he went about carrying out that action and the move back to Canaan was his choice. Intelligent decision making in the fear of God can be ratified by God.

The conflict building up over those twenty years came to a head when jealousy got a foothold. That led to an unhappy confrontation between Laban, his sons and Jacob when they finally met. When one is treated unfairly, to reply in an unfair way does not settle any conflict. It is far better "to rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." There will inevitably be unfair treatment of one kind or another through the years of our lives. The person of faith who acts wisely will not allow that to hinder their trust in God and His grace and goodness. The God of Bethel knows what is going on in my life and He can bring to pass whatever is in the current of His plans for me.

I noticed in watching the activities of Jacob that he made it a habit to do more than what was expected of him. Even after pay cuts, he continued to give what was expected and ultimately that attitude paid off. Doing more than what is expected of a person pleases God who wants to bless those who choose to live by faith. Those for whom you work will recognize what kind of employee you are and often it means advancement to a better position. We also are always in the process of establishing our reputation and doing more than what is expected of you, or when treated unfairly establishes your reputation and enhances it. Others may even be motivated themselves by the example you set. Experience in how to deal with issues and people takes time, and the knowledge as how to address them comes from the difficulties we have had to pass through in life. God knows that and allows these "hard to take" times to come upon us that we might be stronger in faith and, hopefully, more able to lead and guide our own family and others who are watching our actions.

As I listened to the dialogue between Laban and Jacob, I got the definite impression that Jacob had learned more about God during these times of stress and frustration than he had known before. He was able to testify to the fact that he knew God was with him and he had developed a spiritual maturity he didn't have before. When He declared to his father-in-law his confidence was in God, it changed the whole atmosphere of confrontation into one of appeasement, agreement and conciliation. They may not have parted as friends, but they weren't enemies and had come to a settled conclusion of the issues that had divided them. I may never be able to work with certain people because of differing views on some things. It may not be wise for me to impose myself in the area of work they are or were engaged in. Even if I am invited to participate in that work, I must be careful to not allow myself to hinder their work or cause any problem to them, but I must also not compromise what I believe is essential for me. However, I do not have to have a schism between us or maintain a barrier that hinders our joy and effectiveness for God.

A very interesting spiritual development took place there on Mount Gilead. Jacob took an oath in the name of the Lord, with God Himself as the third-party witness. There was a sacrifice made as a testimony to the important decision made there, to be separate. The ones committed to the ways of the world and the ones committed to the ways of God have to recognize these two things don't mix. Those who live by faith in God, have to stay on the side we are called to, by God. The pillar raised there would remind Jacob of what he had left and to not return there again. The experiences in Padan-aram are past and done. Believers are "in the world, but are not of the world." I need to be reminded from time to time to stay on my side of the pillar to maintain my own witness to those who know me. If I were to go back to the other side, it would have serious negative effects on those who came from there because of my previous testimony.

*There are choices to be made; decisions acted on -
Actions that no longer can be delayed.
The time has come, and soon it will be gone -
If left unattended everyone involved will be dismayed.
I must go away from that which is unjust and wrong -
My whole life and testimony are at stake.
Children and other observers expect me to be strong -
Because they are all affected by the choices that I make.*

*The ranting and ravings of those who disagree -
Are used to try and reverse my decision.
But I must consider this is not only about me -
This is a God-appointed spiritual division.*

*There is an uncleanness when the little gods of this world
Try to compare themselves to the God of Bethel who I serve.
When that pressure comes, the flag of allegiance is unfurled -
And I leave them all behind at Mizpeh's final curve.*

*There is no point in looking back, Bethel is before -
Waiting for you and your family -
To meet with the God of Bethel once more -
For there they too will see
The reason you came in the first place
And found there prosperity and love;
Every animal and child are a testimony of the grace
Of the God of Bethel who from His bounty gave.*

*I have never slept upon a stone pillow -
I have never seen a ladder up to heaven.
But the experiences with God I've had are not shallow -
For many promises to me He has given.
The God of the House of God is a real Person to me -
When He speaks to me, I hear Him through His Word.
Then as I read and obey, His presence seems to me
The way it should be when I yield to Christ as Lord.*

"Father, my mind is a bit slow this morning, but my heart still is filled, although I can't seem to get it into words. By Thy grace, look upon Thy weak servant and leave me not alone. I feel a special need for my faith to be strengthened. Linda has been sick two weeks out of the last four. People are attending the Gospel meetings but are not yet saved, and I am not sure if they want to be. The believers are being strengthened and that is a great blessing. Be glorified, O God, in any of this that is useful for Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 31:48-49. *"And Laban said, 'This heap is a witness between me and thee this day.' Therefore, was the name of it called Galeed; and Mizpah; for he said, 'The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another.'"*

FAMILY CONFLICTS.

*What is behind those lines on the sand, and quick words that rise to become walls?
The blood in the veins comes from the same source; we had all our life the same call.
We have shared many years, the same standards of life and eaten often from the same table;
We learned many lessons from the same people, and act upon them when we are able.
Why then the issues that arise unexpected – what prompts the conflicts that rise?
Is there some secret agenda hidden within; some form of jealousy we prize?
Generally, "No", it is just the fact that each member of a family is different;
So as our directions change year by year, each life becomes more divergent.*

*Our goals are different, and our interests too – they are as diverse as each form and each face.
Our roles in life are distinct from each other – God has given unique pathways to trace.
Conflicts don't come from the differences we have – that's normal, to not be like one another.
The problems arise when I try to impose my work and my ways on my brother.
If I understand this – God has given His gifts to be used in the best possible way;
Then I will not allow conflict to arise when my brother, chooses to differ from what I might say.
It is always right for me to stop and consider events from another's point of view.
Potential conflict is stopped right away, when respect for his choices I show.*

*Take time to consider, I am not always right – there is much more to each issue to know;
What is behind the words or the actions I see, may be made by his Lord thus to grow.
In families we share the same father and mother, characteristics from them come to me;
My brothers and sisters, though we have the same genes, have differences that others can see.
It would be wrong for me to insist, that my way is the only one that is right;
I may be slow, another one fast – one quiet and thoughtful and another one very bright.
It would be wisdom for me to never speak quick – and not to always to act in my haste;*

For most conflicts won't start, and if started end soon – when we look forward, not back to the past.

“O patient Father God: when there are these unfortunate incidents that keep arising up in the lives of Thy children – please help us to remember our pedigree. We all bear some characteristics of our Father. Help us to see what is good and right, and avoid anything that will cause conflict in the family. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

GENESIS 32

I AM NOT WORTHY

There are times in the course of life when our thoughts about God, others and ourselves are clarified like to the focus of a light's beam. I saw in my journey following Jacob as he and his tribe neared the ford where they would cross the Jabok River, evidence that God had further dealings with Jacob to conduct. Two silent messengers, obviously heavenly beings, met him and made Jacob realize God was here, and so he stopped. When God brings us to a stop on our journey through life, there is good reason to believe He has something of unique importance to deal with us about. In this life of faith, Jacob now started to be a genuine practitioner of faith.

He took the initiative of approaching the True God he could not see, to claim a promise that he had been given a number of years before. Now he was able to see all that God had done for him and acknowledged with a grateful heart, all the blessings that had come to him in the last twenty years. He had crossed Jabok before, going the other way with nothing but a staff in his hand. Now he was returning with a double portion of what most would ever get in a lifetime. He divided his possessions that God had blessed him with, into two separate groups with far enough distance between them that if one was taken, the other group could escape and survive. Jacob was showing that he could take responsibility for what God had given him.

Whenever God is approached with an honest heart of appreciation, the words, "I am not worthy," are on the lips and in the heart of the supplicant. It is of God's mercies we are not consumed. In Him we live and move and have our being. Our breath is in His hand. Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world. How merciful God is to us, and as we come to Him with thankful hearts, immediately we feel our own unworthiness, for God alone is worthy of all. Divine benevolence is not something we can demand or deserve. It comes from the Lord God who has all power and all dominion and all authority over all men, kingdoms and nations - and He had chosen to bless me, and meet with me, and allow me to petition Him in confidence. He is faithful that promised!

I considered as I watched Jacob and his servants select animals from the herds and separated them into groups - How would I approach a brother I had deceived? What would I do to impress him with the fact I have changed? That things are different? That I want to make "things" right? The Proverbs say, "A man's gift maketh room for him." Jacob prepared a gift that had the potential of making Esau a very rich man. He presented the gift in a way that showed he really meant what he was asking for. It also showed exceeding generosity. As he prepared these groups of animals, he would doubtless have been made aware of all God had done for him since he passed that way going in the other direction. He would have felt, "I am not worthy." Instead of priding himself on what he had, he did not set his heart upon his riches, but on the God of Abraham and Isaac he met first at Luz.

As he stood at that ford and watched the present go across the Jabok River in groups, and then stood in the dark of night and watched his family cross in front of him, a hand held him fast and would not let him follow them. God was not done with him personally yet even though he resisted. When he finally surrendered at dawn, and the pain of his hip out of joint must have been excruciating, yet he knew this was one of those moments of a lifetime that mean more than twenty years of normal living. Those moments are worth more than relief from pain, more than being successful, worth more than family obligations. When one is alone with God, nothing else really matters. Everything else is of far lesser significance. When one gets things right with God, everything else will follow in proper order.

Now Jacob heard a most astounding comment on his life and a commendation - "Thou hast power with God." A man, a frail deceitful man, had changed and now has influence with God and man. He struggled, he worked, he gained and he gave. All of his life now had a focus - he was a prince of God, and heir of God's promises and blessings. We may not understand the hardships and losses in life and why they were allowed to happen to us. We may not understand all the blessings we have received and why they were given to us. But these experiences, events, and issues of life that we have been called to pass through, are given to us by God to make us into the kind of person He wants us to be. As such, we can serve Him, not out of duty, but out of love and appreciation for being allowed into the family of God.

There may be lasting negative effects we have to live with because of God's dealings with us. These are lasting, daily reminders of who we are and who we serve. May I never forget the lessons learned at Jabok because I too have my obvious "limp" that I have to live with. It is not going away but it serves as a daily reminder of God's dealings with me and the privileges and responsibilities I have to Him.

*That man there with a limp, I wonder what happened to him?
Was he in an accident, a war or did he fall?
I won't try to explain to a child what happened but I can begin
To tell him how to respond to God when He calls.
For when God chooses to set His heart on a person -
He has to do some serious work on the old nature.
The Sovereign God doesn't stop teaching us after the first lesson -
He is not making over the old man; He has made them a new creation.*

*When a person finally admits, "I am not worthy, " to God,
Then the Holy Spirit can bring about regeneration.
And when one who is saved says, "I am not worthy," after reading the Word -
The Divine Persons join together in our sanctification.
When a testimony is given in public, "I am not worthy," people may stop to listen -
They may sense reality and stop to attend to what you say to them
When they can see the tears in your eyes that really glisten
And will think to themselves, "All that he is saying means a lot to him."*

*So, child, that limp means sometime in the past your father had a meeting with God.
And God had some things to say to him He didn't want him to forget.
Your father may not be able to explain things well or put them into sensible words,
But because he has scars or limps in pain, he really does not regret
The time God thought it was necessary to make sure he didn't forget in life
That he had responsibilities in life that go way beyond making a living,
That affected a lot of other people beside grandchildren, children and wife -
And he limps along waving his arms to people trying to show them the way to heaven.*

*Maybe this is not the best way to explain things, but I have certain limitations.
This limp and these scars that offend some people came from God to me.
I know I am not able to do what needs to be done and meet all expectations.
But maybe this limp and these scars from God's hand will help you in some way to see.
I am in some ways the same as you, but my experiences with God are different.
I've met with God down by the banks of my own Jabok River -
You will have your opportunity to wrestle or flee, dealing with God is no small incident.
But of this I am sure, if you don't let God go, He will change your life forever.*

"Father, I came to this place with what I could carry in one hand. Now I am leaving here with children and grandchildren, both spiritual and natural. I have seen Thee and my life is preserved. How holy is this place! Amen."

GENESIS 32:1-2. *"And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, 'This is God's host (camp):' and he called the name of that place Mahanaim (two camps)."*

GOD'S CAMP.

*What happens in a place like this where God's host meets with a man?
Is there clashing drums and trumpet sounds, and shouts that fill the air?
Usually, though to me not strange, in crisis times they come,
To strengthen me though still unseen, they assure me God is there.*

*Ahead of me are fearful times when issues I must face;
I may not know what's best to do, the tasks are very great.
God graciously sends me His host; their presence in this place -
Confirm without a doubt to me, this course I'm on is right.*

*Not all the host of God that comes, are angels each unseen;
For often in the camp of God, there are those He sends along,
Who at first glance, I overlook because I know they're men.
Men and angels both are used by God, lest what I do is wrong.*

*By the subtle nuances of my mind, I cannot act alone.
Much of what I chose to do as I approach these crisis times –
Is clarified – made crystal clear – by those right here at home;
For they too are part of God's camp, through them God's wisdom shines.*

*I do make choices day by day, like he of the ancient past.
Like him, I wonder – what camp is this – who is already here?
Is there room for me in this place – this for which my lot is cast?
To my joy, I find two camps are one; God's life is mine to share.*

“O God of the pilgrim, these camping places, these stopping spots are very special to me. I have never been able to get over the influence and power evident when Thou art already in the place before I get there. To open my eyes and recognize God's host is camped here and know that I can be here too is such a great joy. I praise Thee and honor Thee for such expressions of Thy condescending grace. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

GENESIS 33

THE PASSING OF TIME

There comes a hairy man with four hundred men around him. It looks like a serious confrontation is about to take place. Why the show of might on Esau's part? Coming towards him is a present of animals stretched out on the road - this is the present of a wealthy man: droves of cattle, camels, goats, sheep and donkeys. Why this show of wealth on the part of Jacob? Probably on the part of Esau, he wanted to intimidate the brother he wanted to kill the last time they saw each other and to let him know he could kill him now. Perhaps on Jacob's part, the gift was a bribe to appease Esau, but also it indicated the blessing of God was upon him. Such evidence of material wealth was uncommon and way beyond what was normal even in those days when blessing was measured in material things. As these two groups came together, the intention of the present was already noted and had done its work in the bitter heart of Esau. With the passing of time there was a change of heart on the part of both brothers. The bitterness was gone from the one. The subtlety and deception were gone from the other.

All situations in life cannot be dealt with quickly. Some very important things take time. Time allows for serious reflection. Time gives a larger perspective of a matter. Time removes the heat of passion and enables us to think in terms of choices and consequences. Time may not remove the problem but directs us to find a sensible conclusion. Time that passes gives one opportunity to consider the ramifications of the actions one takes, particularly as to how it affects others beside me.

Wisely Jacob approached his brother for this first-time meeting as one would approach a king. In this way he was making himself subservient, no doubt hoping to dispel any thoughts Esau might still have of revenge. Respect for others is never out of date. To give an equal, due respect above and beyond what is expected, is never a wasted exercise. It does not have to smack of false humility if you look upon your brother or sister as God sees them. It is a mistake if we measure a person's worth against what we feel is our worth, because usually we way overestimate ourselves, rather than see ourselves as others see us.

Whatever was Jacob's intention, it worked. Esau greeted him with a big hug and tears. The passing of time allowed the bitter wounds to heal. The passing of time gave perspective to their lives and to the value of their relationship that had been broken by deceit on the one hand, and murderous anger on the other. God is often able to do far more for us after we have done what is right, then when we laid our own plans in the first place. Often the blessings that follow have never been anticipated. God gives us ample opportunity to act in wisdom in the fear of the Lord towards another person and may bring results beyond what is natural. What started out as something appropriate, ended up as something supernatural with the stamp of God upon it. With the passing of time we have more of a tendency to look on earthly things with spiritual eyesight.

Gifts are often given to win support, to win approval or even as a bribe. Gifts given from the heart to simply let another person know they are valued and loved, is the highest form of giving. When a gift is given as a sign of affection it is often one that is kept in an obvious place as a reminder of the giver. Many refrigerator

doors are covered with childish drawings to remind mothers and grandmothers of a child who wants to show his or her affection and love in the best way they can.

There are generally gifts exchanged when heads of state meet, as a sign of hope and solidarity. Usually those gifts reflect a person's occupation, nationality or the known interests of the one about to receive the gift. Esau, a herdsman, would have recognized the value of the gift he received from Jacob. Whenever we start to reflect on the gift of God and the many accompanying gifts associated with eternal life, it does renew a spirit of appreciation in the Person who gave us the gift. We experience its blessing constantly. That is how one experiences the quality of life that the gift of eternal life has given us. Constantly we are aware of this new life we have. This is one of the many proofs of reality that a person has accepted Christ as their own, personal Savior. The passing of time enhances the gift to the one who receives it. It seems, and is, more valuable each passing day. Each time an animal of Esau's herd dropped her young, he would be reminded because of the peculiar color and size of the animal, that this is the fruit of my brother's labor and the proof of his love for me.

Jacob had learned a good lesson in Padan-aram: don't live too close to your family. When there are two different sets of values, two different beliefs when it comes to God and His Word, two different degrees of commitment to the Bible, two different goals in life - it is impossible to live close together. These matters will come up. We may be able to physically live near without any serious problems. But when it comes to matters of the soul and spirit, these differences are too deep within us to compromise or ignore permanently. They are bound to surface, and each will try to justify his position and persuade the other that he is wrong and needs to change to the other's point of view. Wisely, Jacob had learned and he and Esau kept their distance though they were comparatively close until Isaac died.

*There is an interesting thing about the passing of time -
As it goes by, it seems like clearer light shines
On issues and events that, when they actually took place
Seemed to be indelibly printed on each person's face.*

*But the passing of time allows for a clearer perspective.
It goes beyond the passion of the moment and verbal invective
That took place at the first, but now has been allowed to fade.
And most people involved don't even remember what was said.*

*The passing of time also gives opportunity for serious reflection.
And on the part of believers makes real their sanctification.
We realize the things that divide people are of the flesh,
The passing of time enables us to concentrate on the things that are best.*

*The passing of time is not only to correct wrongs, but it does give light
That shines more and more to the perfect day where there is no night.
It lifts our eyes above the things that are temporary and passing,
And focuses our attention on the things that are everlasting.*

*The passing of time turns children into adults;
And sometime we are embarrassed by our childhood faults.
Now we can begin to understand things we didn't know,
And as time passes our growth in maturity begins to show.*

*The passing of time makes the aging process obvious.
And things we once fought for, now are superfluous.
We know with the passing of time how short our time is,
And we realize what God has allowed us to have was, and is always His.*

*The passing of time will stop in the not too far distance.
When there is one eternal day, there will be no resistance
To the work of God in us that was developed in a life of faith.
And through God's people then, He will show the exceeding riches of His grace.*

"I know Father, I have learned a lot of Thee and myself in the passing of years. The time seems to have flown by and I have missed a lot of days of lessons. But I am still learning, and I thank Thee for still teaching me Thy Ways, Thy Word and Thy Will. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 33:14. "Let my lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant: and I will lead on softly, according as the cattle that goeth before me and the children be able to endure, until I come unto my lord unto Seir."

LEAD ON SOFTLY.

Can this be the same man who left here years ago?

Maturity has its' blessings – and takes its' toll –

An obvious limp makes moves deliberate –

Awareness of the limitations of others –

Words now sweet with compassion –

Cautious optimism –

Respect –

He is learning to "lead on softly."

His servants, his extended family, his children, his wife –

Watching intently, listening for inconsistencies; falsehood –

Consideration made obvious by providing shelter –

Cattle find their own stalls; a new home for the family –

Servants, children, wife finally have a bed –

Conscious of his leadership responsibilities-

Consideration –

He has learned to "lead on softly."

I have learned – and am learning still, as the years pass –

Others watch and listen; they learn what is rightly modeled –

My halting steps and scars – deformities and shortcomings –

Testify, teach, give assurance – I know what I am talking about –

I do not have to shout, make demands, insist –

My Lord has led me this way – now I lead others –

Carefully –

I am learning to "lead on softly."

"Father, I am thinking of the experiences Thou hast enabled me to go through, and I am grateful that through them, I learn. But please keep me from the arrogance of being demanding. Keep me from insisting that others agree with me. Help this frail, mortal man to recognize my shortcomings and limitations. May my look be tender, my words spoken with grace, my compassion genuine, my touch sympathetic – always. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 34

OUT OF CONTROL FAMILIES

Following the history of this family through whom God was going to bless the world, I saw the pressure applied on them to be like the world around them. The only daughter, Dinah, wanted friends around the area and found herself the object of a young man's unwanted attention. The young man, who was used to getting what he wanted, took her. Then beyond that, he demanded that she be his wife. When passion controls a person they often go into areas of mind and life where they are controlled by impulse rather than reason. It is our responsibility as those who are older to teach, caution and warn those who are younger of the consequences of their choices and actions. There are expectations that many have now, even as the young man in this dark saga of Jacob's family, who think they are entitled to what they want and their parents should give it to them.

The dark side of this whole episode shows clearly the nature of those who here have lived unrestricted lives. The avenging brothers of Dinah felt they were justified in their murderous rampage. That arrogant, "We are better than them" attitude had consequences not only at the time the revenge took place, but even in generations to come. Separation from the sins of those around us is justified. When that is dropped in the interest of being like the world; "Out of control" events often follow. Sexual sin is of itself devastating because it has far-reaching and long-lasting consequences. An out of control mind leads to out of control passions. Out of control passions lead to out of control actions. Out of control actions lead to out of control consequences. Out of control consequences lead to out of control destinies.

The whole problem of entitlement leads to out of control people who have expectations beyond what is reasonable. For some reason there are those whose intention is to get whatever they can at the expense of others. Ultimately lying is followed by stealing, and in this case, it led to murder.

We never have the right to take what doesn't belong to us of whatever nature it is. The responsibility of this dark event lies on the shoulders of many. Shechem was guilty of the rape that took place. His father, Hamor was responsible for not having instilled respect for others in his son and attempting to cover over the act, although both of these men tried to do what was right after the fact.

Dinah should not have gone out on her own to connect with those who had different values. Her brothers were wrong to lie, deceive and murder in acts of violent revenge. Jacob must have been late in impressing his sons with what was the right way to deal with wrongs. All the things they stole in what they consider was righteous anger was not in any way justified or right. There is never anything that can be justified when we take into our hands that which God says is His. "Vengeance is mine. I will repay saith the Lord."

*It may seem like a common matter in the eyes of many.
An out of control mind has a tendency to fall for any
Attraction or lust that has an appeal to our flesh.
The consequences of one wrong, leads to many following in a rush.*

*Everything around us has been planned so we will be dissatisfied.
Whether it is the lust of the flesh, the pride of life or the lust of the eyes.
Each is designed by the powers of darkness to bring us ultimately down.
For many who fall under those influences, they will God's truth disown.*

*When the mind gets out of control, often the words are out of control next.
Casual words spoken suggestively can lead to casual sex,
Casual sex then leads to full-blown passion that in this case led to rape.
And it all starts out with the first downward step one allows himself to take.*

*Out of control passions, lead to out of control children.
Out of control children to families who have no honor in them.
When parents are dishonored by the children, then they dishonor laws -
And the punishment that follows comes with legitimate cause.*

*We cannot control every instinct in our young, not even all their actions.
But we can let our disapproval be known and our dissatisfaction.
Disapproval has a certain impact as we stop to review
And consider the results when the questionable event is through.*

*When we take or allow actions that are out of control -
More than the body is affected, it also affects the soul.
When tempted to take revenge because adverse things did happen -
Stop to consider all the consequences before taking reprisal or action.*

"O Lord God, preserve me I pray from taking matters into my own hands when difficulties arise. I know the temptation to retaliate is often there but I pray for grace to accept the fact that I do not have the right for revenge. I do rest in Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 34:11. "And Shechem said unto her father and unto her brethren, 'Let me find grace in your eyes, and what ye shall say unto me I will give.'"

WATCH OUT.

Covetous? – Yes!
Was he victimized? – No!

Lustful? – Yes!
Excusable? – No!

Love at first sight? – Yes!

Does that mean one is trustworthy? – No!

Self-centered and evil? – Yes!

Is it culturally okay? – No!

Everybody does it? – Yes!

So, I can do it too? – No!

Normal to most? – Yes!

Innocent because ignorant? – No!

Honorable to his family? – Yes!

Passion under control? – No!

Can we come to some agreement? – Yes!

Does that mean compromise is right? – No!

Can we overlook differences? – Yes!

Are differences inconsequential? – No!

Is sin devastating? – Yes!

Can its consequences be avoided? – No!

"Father God, may I be reminded that sin is always wrong. Even though there are those that have no understanding of Thee, they are never justified in doing what is wrong. Every sin has its consequences that can never be avoided. I never want to think things don't matter. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 35

IDOLS AND EARRINGS

Observing the movement of Jacob and his family, I was made very conscious of the fact that God took very seriously His first meeting with Jacob at Bethel. Everything between God and Jacob started at that place. When a person first meets God, that personal relationship begins on a very basic premise - "Now one knows God."

"This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God. and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." (Jesus' prayer. Jn.17:3)

But time has passed. God has been blessing Jacob for over twenty years. He has learned the fear of God and much more of who God is and what He does. He has learned much about himself also. No longer is there a place for good-luck charms that people had as little idols to look to in when in fear or looking for favors. The earrings as evidence of self-interest or some sign of what is important in one's life, do not have a place when one is in the presence of God. "Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart." At Bethel, the house of God, the objective is to do and be what pleases God; what is acceptable to Him as we worship and remember Him. Anything that would be a distraction to me or anyone else in our relationship with God, should be put away. Other people may never say a word to us, but our attitude toward God has an effect upon those who watch us as we pass by to give God His due.

I learned from watching that large number of people gather at Bethel, that what happens between God and me, affects many others. They may not be as impacted by being at Bethel as I am, or even in the same way, but they will see what the impact of meeting with God has on me. No longer is Jacob known as the man as the "supplanter " or deceiver. He is now known by God as "A prince with God." His life and being has a different focus now. Now he had a desire to stay close to God and be with God in the good parts and disappointments of life. Life is not going to be problem-free. But now instead of drawing back, we must go forward with God. Difficulties are an inevitable part of human life, but God allows them to come to us as opportunities for growth and development. We need to have times of trouble in order to prevail over them and experience God in our lives.

I saw Jacob set up a pillar of testimony to mark the place where God talked with him. As that pile of stones was raised higher and higher, the family would look on and know that something very important had happened to Jacob there. Then when the pure anointing olive oil was poured down over that pillar, they would know this place would be forever important to Jacob. I cannot expect my family and others to

experience what I have in my dealings with God. It would be wrong for me to try and get them to duplicate my experiences. However, when the time may come, and they ask questions of me regarding my life and my hopes and my reasons for doing what I do, I will then have the opportunity to tell them what happened. Perhaps in their lives they too may find a place called "Bethel" where everything changes and we don't care what those around may think or say.

As I observed the funeral of Rachel, I thought of a beautiful woman who died young and seemed so disappointed during much of her life. She was the object of her husband's love but seemed to want much more. Maybe her problem had to do with the idols she hid in the camel's furniture. There are those who never seem to separate themselves to Christ alone and keep hidden objects as a hopeful source of comfort seeking to find meaning in objects of gold or silver, or in the things the world around considers important. There is never any lasting satisfaction in lifeless or tangible things. Our life and hope have to be in that which is living. The living God, the Living Water, the Living Bread, The Living Word, the Living Hope. Without those living things there is no real meaning to our existence - no real lasting purpose to the passing years.

I watched from my place in history and saw a man, Reuben, going into his father's wife. It reminded me of another man who did the same thing in Corinth. At the time there didn't seem to be a whole lot of concern about it, but in both cases the future revealed the consequences of such actions. Reuben lost his place of leadership and the double portion that would have been his. The Corinthian man was put away from among God's people until he learned the evil of such action and there was genuine repentance of that terrible sin. There is a principle that affects all of our actions in life - "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Isaac lived to see Jacob and his family return. He would have seen the way God was going to fulfill His promise before he died. For all the quietness of his personality and patience he demonstrated in life, he could see the hand of God in the unfolding events of his family and would have been able to find rest in his soul in the promises of God.

The twin brothers were able at least to accomplish one thing together in their lives. They came together to bury their father. How strange life can sometimes be when people act on their own without God. The whole purpose of life seems to be missed and about the only thing that can be done when two are out of fellowship, is to bury our dead.

*It is not uncommon for simple things to keep us from life's real meaning.
Everyone around us does what they want, that is common practice to most human beings.
But when one is a child of God, and is walking this road of life by faith,
Then that which is to be our adorning is our actions and words of grace.*

*Anything that has a tendency to lift man up to a place of eminence,
Is to be buried and left alone, that in all things Christ has preeminence.
The life of a child in the family is to be a reflection of our heavenly Father.
All those material evidences of success and "good luck," we should never with them bother.*

*Our calling is much higher, the place we belong is at Bethel to meet with God.
There God has the place of our affection and attention, His name is the One we laud.
At the house of God, we learn about God Himself and also, we learn His truth.
There everything is viewed in holy light and everything is seen in its true worth.*

*There is no doubt when we go to that place our feet are walking on holy ground.
What really is lasting and important stands out, we get a proper perspective of what's around.
At the house of God, God is not some vague idea or someone who is from days of old -
But is recognized as the Source of our life; our breath in His hands He holds.*

*At the house of our God our pillar we raise as to our God we testify.
He is real in our lives, we owe our allegiance to Him, we take our stand at His side.
Others may not understand, or even care, but to us who believe He is supreme.
We live in Him, our life is "hid" with Christ in Him, in Him we have our very being.*

*When the children ask, "What is this high pillar for?" we are able to say -
"This is where we meet with God and worship Him. To us, this is a special day.
For God met with me a long time ago, and now we meet on a regular basis.*

Here our hearts are joined and entwined with His - this is one of life's holiest places."

*We bring our offerings to Bethel and pour them out before the Lord.
He establishes the testimony and we dare not act in just any way, but according to His Word.
The Holy Spirit like pure oil pours forth and makes what we do acceptable to Him.
By God's grace we will end our journey at Bethel, where our life of faith did begin.*

"O Holy God, the God of all grace and mercy: may I never stray from the lessons and fellowship learned at Bethel - Thy house. My hope and prayer are to be at Bethel in my spirit when the Lord comes or I die. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 35:3. *"And let us arise, and go up to Bethel: and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went."*

UP TO BETHEL.

*In this world there comes each day, things that demand attention.
Home-life brings great joy to me, for it reaches to my heart.
Business calls me to attend it, and its claims have great attraction.
Its power over me is, it takes too much time to finish what I start.*

*Neither of these is wrong in itself, in fact each can be very good –
If I control the both of them so that neither can take over –
The time I set aside each day to pray and read God's Word.
More than that – I can't let them stop me from going up to Bethel.*

*The house of God won't synchronize with all the works I do.
If I only try to fit it in between all the other things –
The time-consuming ones will always add a demand or two –
And Bethel is neglected and I miss all the joy it brings.*

*Each claim on me calls with loud voice – from work to education;
"I need more time, God's house can wait, this opportunity is passing."
If I'm not careful, I'll decide based on the situation –
And Bethel, for me waits, but is not able to give its blessing.*

*The "valley things:" take a good look, are they really so necessary?
Bethel waits up on God's hill – I really need to go there.
God meets with us when up there we go, and in God's presence tarry.
By going up to Bethel, sweet fellowship we share.*

"Father, I am going up to Thy house in a short time to hear what Thou hast to say to me. In the time spent at Bethel, speak to my heart and make me willing to receive the Word that is presented. I know the spiritual food to be given is essential to my spiritual well-being. I am anticipating what Thou art going to say through Thy servant – at Bethel. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 36

TIME TO SEPARATE

In the unfolding events of the promise God gave to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, it was plain to see that there was not room for the two branches of Isaac's family to be together. Huge herds of cattle, large groups of herdsmen and the large families of Esau and Jacob made it necessary for them to be in different countries. Edom, with its mountains and desert, and riches in natural resources appealed to Esau and he went to the east. Jacob remained in the land promised to Abraham.

I learned there comes a time when it is necessary for separations to take place. Family ties are strong, but there are other things of higher importance to be considered. The will of God must never be ignored. To some it doesn't make that much difference. They believe what is personally advantageous or what appeals to me is reason enough to make a move. They may say that God opened the way because it was an easy move. Others may want to be where they feel most comfortable and will base a decision on the "comfort

factor." But to me, of far greater importance is the promise of God, and even though there may be difficulties, and at times defeats, that is what decides my moves. The degree of comfort I have because of the place I am, does not give me the guidance I need. There will always come some discomfort farther along in any course we travel. Some start to move, and keep moving, because of feelings they have, rather than the facts of scripture and God's revealed will.

When the time comes to separate there doesn't need to be a lot of fanfare and harsh words spoken. It was plain to see that Jacob and Esau had to separate. The evidence wasn't obscure. The action just had to be taken. There is no doubt that a feeling of loss may be there when some make a move away from what they once held to be true. But agreement is necessary for the people of God to live together harmoniously. We can ask God's blessing on each other and to a certain degree, enjoy fellowship still. But in the steps of obedience and faith, there is a difference.

I learned that there are certain family ties that cannot and should not be broken. There are the ties of nature to which we have an on-going obligation. There does come a separation when the things that appeal to the soul are quite different. This may be caused by the unavoidable generation gaps that arise. There are different social standards each succeeding generation adapts to. The generation before will find it unacceptable to make the changes the following generations accept as normal.

There is also the possibility of separation along spiritual lines often based on opinions or interpretations of scripture. Opinions may change. Traditions that form around opinions are helpful if they are consistent with the teaching of the Word of God. If they are not, then those traditions should be abandoned. A sense of honor and dignity linked with the holiness of God is often a point of difference. One side may believe there should be physical evidence of respect and reverence. The other may think that is something that is known only to God and the physical appearance is only a form.

So, it will happen. Separations will come. The God of all grace who has promised honor to those who honor Him, is the only One who can discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. I know He knows mine, and to a degree I do too. I truly want to please Him and will not seek change for change's sake, but for the glory of God if and when that is made obvious.

*I watch them go, and see them turn onto a different road.
And I turn back to where I dwell with tear-dimmed eyes and a heavy load -
Not because I fear for their destiny, that I believe is truly secure -
But for the inevitable changes that will come, and what they will have to endure.*

*We walked together in harmony for awhile, held together by shared experiences.
It seemed so good, so helpful to me - but I came to learn they thought it was only appearances
That held us to the path our fathers taught us and led to pastures green.
But then I came to understand there were differences of opinion to me unknown and unseen.*

*And the time came when for some unknown reason, one difficulty or another -
The separation took place, the "herds" were too crowded, the space oppressive to a brother.
An action was taken that has to be lived by, from here there is no turning back -
As they travel away seeking for something more to fill the void they lack,*

*And I remain with diminishing "herds" and scant supply,
In the place God promised me fellowship, now it is Him and I
And a few others, who believe the same holds true now as when before
This pasture land was newly-promised land full of God's richest store.*

*To many it seems a failing place where there is not much action or activity.
But they are looking on now from without, the warmth and meaning they can't see.
The dignity, the grace, the practices in this promised place we hold dear -
Cannot be sensed or felt by those who separated and are no longer near.*

*The noise, the beating of the drums, the Afric sounds and tendencies -
I can sense and hear from afar from where we meet in simplicity.
Our praises come from hearts that edify our self and the others
Who are there in the quiet place of prayer and we worship as sisters and brothers.*

"Father, I am trying not to be unnecessarily judgmental in relation to those I know who have chosen to separate from us. I just want to maintain and enjoy this fellowship with Thee that is so warming to my soul and in its quiet way, effective in its lasting strength. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 36:7. *"For their riches were more than that they might dwell together; and the land wherein they were strangers could not bear them because of their cattle."*

MONEY PROBLEMS.

*Twins who looked different – easy to tell them apart – one smooth and the other hairy.
Twins who acted differently – one adventurous, a hunter who didn't like restrictions.
The other twin – subtle, underhanded – not unwilling to participate in deception.
How can these men in the same family be so deeply antagonistic toward each other?*

*The extreme division that has gone on for years, has been partially bridged.
Finally – after years of separation, they meet with half-hearted acceptance.
They came together as dutiful sons should, to bury their father.
Can they finally "bury the hatchet" and live together in peace?*

*One worked hard for years and built a fortune with dubious means.
The other inherited great amounts of family property and had need of nothing.
They don't need each other to survive or to raise their quality of life.
Is it possible to finally live together in peace and contentment?*

*Even though the estrangement of the past seems to have been dealt with.
Even though the passing of years has brought new wisdom to each.
Even though the increase of wealth has made each comfortably rich.
A new complication has arisen between them that divides them again.*

*The very things that they had worked hard for and had made them rich
Divides them – there is not room for the two of them to live in the same place.
Their riches divide them – let the riches go? Not likely – one goes away.
They remain separated and enemies – forever.*

*The increase of riches can draw the heart away that is set upon them.
It can dull our spiritual vision and lead down the dark road of self-sufficiency.
It tempts us to sacrifice our integrity as it seeks to claim first priority
Our dependence on God becomes less and less as the lure of riches controls us.*

"O Holy God, may I learn from those brothers of old the dangers of accumulating temporal goods. I fear that I am getting too many things around me that claim my time and attention. If it will bring a greater glory to Thee, give me the wisdom to down-size. Not just the home we live in but all the things that would keep me away from the fellowship of walking in the light as He is in the light. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 37

TWENTY PIECES OF SILVER

As my mind followed the family of Jacob that was growing into a full-fledged tribe recognized by other tribes around, I noticed that Jacob stayed to live in the land where his father Isaac was a stranger. Now he was recognized as one of the permanent tribal leaders of that area. The possession of large flocks and herds made it necessary for Jacob's sons and herdsmen to go farther a field to find suitable feed for the animals they owned. The "stranger and pilgrim" character of those who belong to God can soon be lost when we set our hearts upon success and material gain. When we start to measure the worth of a person by their possessions, then we have lost the identity we had as citizens of another kingdom. To be separated unto God is not just some ethereal claim but is a position to be lived in day by day.

The entrance of Joseph into the forefront of the on-going saga of Jacob and his sons, introduces probably the best type in the Old Testament of the Son of God who came "in the fullness of time." The garment of royalty and beauty that he wore would have made it clear to all of the other sons as well as the people around, that Joseph had a special place in the heart of his father and in the future of them all. His prophetic

words and dreams, his obedience to his father, his awareness of evil in others - all made him to be an object of jealousy and hatred by others in the family. There are times when we must speak out in spite of what people may say or think. Evil and sin must be faced. If it is left unheeded, that "little leaven will leaven the whole lump." When prophecies are given as warnings of future judgment, we cannot expect people to like, or even agree with, the truth of Bible prophecies if they do not even read the Bible. We do not have the right to remain silent, because as watchmen on a wall looking out for a city, we must give warnings in advance. Hopefully, some will pay attention and prepare for the future.

Many who hear the message of the Gospel, will reject the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only Redeemer and they will have to come to Him and bow before Him. He alone is Lord and they will bow before Him gladly or sadly. The conspiracy against the Lord Jesus is gaining momentum in this nation in every quarter. In the executive branch of our government there is compromise made with non-Christian leaders on the basis of not wanting to offend those of Islam or other religions who are outspoken enemies of our nation. In the legislative branch of our government, there is a determination to separate "church and state" claiming that is what the founding fathers intended. Ofcourse it is plain that what the founding fathers had in mind was that there would not be a national "state church" such as was in England. In the judicial branch of our government, there are more and more challenges being laid against Christians and Christianity in the courts. Atheism and other religions seem to be making a concerted effort to keep Christianity from spreading. In families, schools and businesses people are turning away from the fundamentals of law and faith that formed the foundation of this nation. For "twenty pieces of silver," truth is being sold.

When Joseph was totally rejected by his brothers and the pieces of silver stained their way into the consciences of those jealous men, there was a whole new time and way of God's dealings with the tribe of Israel. To reject Joseph, even though he was despised, was to reject God. To reject Jesus is to reject God. The brothers thought they were rid of the sharp thorns of truth in their midst. But they didn't realize until they had acted out their rejection that there is the burning of conscience and guilt that cannot be taken away by twenty pieces of silver.

It is true in our day that "Our Lord is now rejected, and by the world disowned." But there is still the pricking of conscience when people turn their backs on righteousness, truth and God. Those who were closest to the Source of Life and Truth by being sanctified by believing parents, spouses or siblings, strive to remove the claims of God on them by sometimes going farther into sin than would ever be expected. Some have made huge financial successes of themselves, but their personal lives are in shambles. Others watch their own children go farther into sin than they have and they must wonder at the losses incurred by "twenty pieces of silver."

In Egypt, unknown by his brethren, God was using His chosen vessel to work out His will. With intelligence and integrity intact, Joseph went into servitude in a worldly and sophisticated society. He would have to learn a new language and cultivate a new culture. His spiritual training and background would be put to the test. It is not unexpected when those who have been brought up to measure worth by higher standards than pieces of silver, to stand out among a godless society as people that can be trusted. God does not abandon His own people when they are in difficult circumstances.

*How dark and despairing to measure one's worth
In terms of silver or gold.
That denigrates a person's value and truth
To some trivial trinket to hold
In the hand of some bitter person or persons
Who has not considered what God says -
One of the things Christ taught was a plain lesson-
One person is worth more than the world.*

*There may be perceived reason to hold in contempt
One who is different than me.
But that would never justify an attempt
That I their downfall would see.
They may not see things as I see them -
They have a different point of view.
It is wrong for me to try to place some blame -
I must always falsehood eschew.*

*I cannot see things clearly as yet -
My eyes are hindered by my flesh.
There are some events in life I cannot 'get.'
But through them God is able to bless
Many more than me for He sees ahead -
The future is like the present to Him.
It is up to me to be Holy Spirit led -
And trust Him to be honored in them.*

*I may find myself often misunderstood,
But that shouldn't be surprising to me.
When Jesus was here many never knew Him as Lord -
They couldn't conceive nor see
How God could be found in flesh as a man -
They thought God would come as a conquering king -
The truth that the Lord Jesus was the great I AM -
They wouldn't allow their thoughts to bring.*

*Like Joseph of old, who was despised and rejected -
The Lord Jesus is despised still.
Many today who know of Him have neglected
To honor Him and will continue to until
The Lord is revealed to the world as Savior -
The One that was sold for money.
When that time comes there will be a changed behavior -
But of real fruit, they will not have any.*

*Joseph was hated, so was the Lord,
He was despised, Jesus was too.
Joseph was rejected, so was the Living Word -
The results at the time no one knew.
Both were sold for silver, the price of a slave -
Both were sent by God into the world.
Both gave their lives that others might have
Salvation more precious than silver and gold.*

"Father, I pray today that I will never lose sight of the cost it meant to Thee to give Thy Son for me. May I never in any way do anything that would lessen the value that Thou dost see in Thy Son. The cost of redemption can never be compared with money or any other thing. The precious blood of Christ stands alone as something that is beyond comparison. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 37:3. "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children: because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colors."

LOVED... HATED.

*Loved because he was a reminder of all that Jacob's life could have been –
Loved because Rachel, his mother was a very special wife to him –
But there was more to that young man, than to the eyes could be seen.
There was integrity and good character that in the other sons was dim.*

*Who knows why one is favored with a personality that endears?
His brothers had a bitterness that grew stronger with passing years.
Their anger had an object because of the many-colored coat he wears –
And jealousy "more cruel" than the grave raises its ugly head and appears.*

*Jealousy turns to hatred when it is allowed to continue unchecked.
Jealousy has caused lost friendships, and many homes have been wrecked.
Soon only bitter words are spoken and arguments then ensue –*

Distance between brothers becomes so great, and wounds that cannot heal.

*Nothing one can do or say will change a mind set without God.
No matter what Joseph said or did they "hated him yet the more."
Envy is added to jealousy as ten brothers looked down through the years.
If Joseph became the leader of them, that would be the worst of all their fears.*

*A father's love cannot overcome such deep-seated and dark enmity.
God Himself loves sinners but does not demand they be free.
The darkness of sin must be repented of before God saves a guilty soul.
Then the bonds of jealousy, hatred and envy leave, and the sinner is made whole.*

*The brothers conspired to murder him – the deepest hatred of all.
Then sold him instead for money – how low can grown men fall!
Twenty pieces of silver for a son who became a slave,
Was a type of Another Son, thirty pieces of silver they gave.*

*Could ever such crimes be forgiven, and could restoration ever occur?
Deliberate deception of their father, could trust ever be restored?
God in mercy is willing to pardon those who rejected His Son,
And in grace His call to repentance and faith is available to everyone.*

"O God, the types of Christ seen in the life of Joseph are certainly remarkable. A unique son of his father, loved of his father and hated by his brethren. Deliberately rejected, despised by his own people. Surely this was a plan by Thee to make known to people of all ages Thy thoughts about Thine own Son. Amen."

GENESIS 38

WHERE IS INTEGRITY?

In this tribal journey, I saw two sons of Jacob. One was committed to righteousness and integrity, though he was far away from all who knew him. The other with lack of integrity acted immorally by going into a woman to satisfy his own lust. Judah's lack of integrity led to strife in the family and deception. Joseph's integrity, even though he was rejected by his own family, led to blessing for them all. To live before God in every aspect of our life and in every place is the essence of integrity. The things that are accepted by an immoral society do not make that action acceptable. There are placed within every person, laws of common decency and righteous living. These are put there by God when He made man in His own image. It is our choice and responsibility to live according to the laws written on the heart as well as the written laws imposed by men.

Stepping outside the bounds of integrity opened Judah to blame from those around him. The childless widow would have no real respect for the father of her twin sons conceived when he went in to her. Those of her family would have cause to question his integrity when he demanded her to be burned. The community around would know of Judah's faithlessness and lack of honor and self-discipline. He himself would always be reminded of his lack of integrity and righteousness. The two sons would have to live with the story of their conception being known by all who lived there. The written history of incest will be known world-wide because of a self-centered man who was only thinking of himself and the ungodly craving of his nature.

There are lessons to be learned by all who read this account of a dark, immoral time. Sin cannot be hidden forever. Consequences follow actions of whatever kind they may be. There is a price to be paid for sin that cannot be settled by wishful thinking. There are on-going results that go from one generation to the next when one acts without integrity. By God's grace, the nations of earth have been blessed when Christ came, born of the tribe of Judah and known as the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

I was thoughtful as I turned from that scene in the history of Israel, and I wondered at the consequences yet to come because of some act I might have done. And I prayed for my children and grandchildren - that they would be people of integrity no matter what others may do or what might be acceptable in the society in which they live.

*To some it may not seem so bad because others all around will do it.
The accepted practices of an ungodly society, doesn't mean I shouldn't eschew it.
God's intentions are made quite clear, they are written on tables of the heart.*

The person of integrity lives before God, even when they are far apart.

*A young man of seventeen, has committed himself to live his life for God.
He governs his actions and his thoughts by what he knows will please his Lord.
His name is honored, his memory is revered, his life has been a blessing to others.
Because of the integrity of his choices, he was able to bless his father and brothers.*

*Another in the same family made a choice too, but his was for self-satisfaction.
All that he thought of was himself, he never considered the consequences of his action.
But payday always comes and what we sow we will always reap.
Because of the lack of integrity of one, many others will be caused to weep.*

*That is why we teach children when they are young; there is a standard to life.
When that course is followed, all who are involved will be kept from serious trouble and strife.
To do what is right when others do wrong, is a test of integrity.
The consequences may be difficult at this time, but will pay off in eternity.*

*If one chooses to ignore what they have been taught is right,
And they turn to do things the world's way and what is pleasing in their sight.
Then they can expect in a time to come, their sin will catch up to them.
And they will find unmistakably, there are bad consequences that follow sin.*

*A lesson to learn that will stand you in good stead is live with integrity.
It won't always be an easy road to travel when God is the only One that sees
What it costs to do what is right when everyone else around does what is wrong.
But you will know that in spite of your weakness, God is able to make you strong.*

"Father, there are temptations that abound around my grandchildren. I fear that some of them may way too attracted to what they know is wrong and will try to justify their actions. Preserve them, O God, from themselves and from others who live without integrity in this ungodly age. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

GENESIS 38:1, 16. *"And it came to pass at that time, that Judah went down from his brethren, and turned in to a certain Adullamite whose name was Hirah."*

TURNED IN.

Judah, don't you see – one wrong thing leads to another.
You "went down" and ended up with a Canaanite.
Think man! Remember the lessons passed on to you from the older ones.
It won't work! Mark my words – it won't work!

You were born with high expectations.
Your "looked down on" mother – wanting acceptance –
Named you, "PRAISE" (Judah) - with joy in her heart.
What great hope she had, "Now I will praise the Lord!"

You took a big step down when you suggested selling Joseph.
Perhaps you wanted to spare his life, but why not send him home?
You own brother for twenty pieces of silver -!?
Surely there is no way you can justify that.

Your sons were certainly no credit to you.
Remember – the Lord God is concerned about families –
And – sons are looking to their own father for a model.
I know, yours wasn't all that great – but he's changed.

But Judah, you dummy! Don't you have better sense!?
You have grown up, haven't you? Looking for a harlot?
What were you thinking? You are not stupid! Feelings aren't gravity.
You can deal with feelings by God's strength – and common sense.

Now you are in a real pickle – your sons' wife!! Sheesh!!

You will be known for ever for introducing incest into the biblical record.

I am thankful I know "The rest of the story."

David, Solomon, the Lord Jesus Christ – from your line in spite of you.

"Holy God, warnings like this is always a reminder of how close a downfall can be. Often it happens when least expected. Different situations in life bring different kinds of stumbling stones. I pray I will always have the light of Thy truth in my heart and hand to keep me from falling. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 39

IN FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

The journey was long and the miles would seem to pass by slowly as Joseph went farther and farther away from his family. But for one who was used to being in fellowship with God, there would have been inner peace and comfort of soul knowing the Lord was with him. Instead of being sold as a slave to work in the fields until he died, he was sold to a man of wealth. Even there, Joseph paid attention to the small details that makes a person invaluable to those for whom he labors. I was made conscious again of the fact that God knows where we are at all times and in the circumstances that surround us. In everything we do, we are to "do it as unto the Lord and not unto man knowing that from the Lord, we will receive the reward, for we serve the Lord Christ." Fellowship with the Lord can be experienced in every part of our life when we are conscious of His presence.

I saw from my viewpoint that even in opulent surroundings where everything seems so favorable, the enemy of God's people is laying a snare to capture the soul. It is not uncommon for sexual temptation to be the downfall of a young person. The attempts to seduce Joseph that were made by Potiphar's wife, did not stop after the first and second attempt. Joseph realized the great sin in giving in to the temptation would not only be against his master or his master's wife - nor even against himself. It would be a sin against the Lord. An act of disobedience against God would break fellowship with God. We must always be vigilant in our life of faith. We must never let anything come into our life that would break the fellowship we have when the Lord is with us. It is not something to be surprised about when the one for whom a man of faith works, finds he is prospering and being blessed because of a Christian worker who works for him - but does his work as to the Lord.

When a person can be trusted in the small things, it won't be very long before they are given greater responsibility. The testing time will always come because the enemy of our soul wants to build us up for a time, that he might bring greater dishonor on the name of the Lord when he seeks to make a believer fall. But a truth to be remembered by a person of faith in any compromising situation is - "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world."

As I watched the young man Joseph in the house of Potiphar, and his behavior after being falsely accused, deliberately maligned, and condemned on the spot - I wondered at which person the anger of Potiphar was kindled. He certainly would have known his wife. When he personally took Joseph to the prison, perhaps there was a sense of guilt and the anger may have been against both his wife and himself. An interesting observation is that Joseph had nothing at all to say. How like the Lord Jesus he was. "When He was reviled, He reviled not again. When He suffered, He threatened not..." I learned that when a person is committed to fellowship with God, there may be times when it is best to be silent rather than seek self-defense. When there are two versions of an incident, if one person is going to lie, usually that is the one who will be the victor in the confrontation. When a person is satisfied to take the wrong and leave a matter with the Lord, He can work it out in His own time and way. It is folly for a young person to expect the deception of an older person to work out in his favor. What we can do is commit the whole matter to the Lord and trust Him without hesitation. Fellowship with the world is enmity against God. And fellowship with God will separate you from the world.

Even in the prison, a most unlikely place for Christian witness, God is able to do for us, way beyond what we could ever think or ask for. I am not sure of all that needs to be done to make a prison to function right, but even in that place the Lord was able to use His young servant who remained in fellowship with the Lord. The evidence is in - God can, and does, work on behalf of those who trust Him, and commit themselves to integrity and a daily, personal to the Lord and His grace.

*It is not easy to be alone in a far and distant place.
It is not easy to be a teenager who can't see one familiar face.
It is not easy to stand for God and keep your integrity.*

It is not easy to live each day with such uncertainty.

*It is not easy to have a job and do all as unto the Lord.
It is not easy to resist temptation without a nod or word.
It is not easy to do what you know is right when it is so easy to do wrong.
It is not easy to avoid the action when the appeal is so strong.*

*It is not easy to run away from evil when no one is there to see.
It is not easy to face the beauty of seduction and immediately flee.
It is not easy to have in your grasp something you must let go.
It is not easy to run from what you want, and to temptation say "No."*

*But life was not promised to be easy, in fact it may be hard.
But when one is conscious of fellowship with God, we have the strength of the Lord.
And within us the Holy Spirit works in ways we cannot see.
I know when I yield myself to Him, He wants the best for me.*

*There will be temptations in this life, from temptations we can't escape.
But we don't need to yield to temptation in the decisions that we make.
We do need to draw near to God, and then He draws near to you.
He will give you the needed moral strength, and show you what to do.*

*Fellowship with God isn't based on a whole lot of knowledge.
And fellowship with God is not just some course you were taught in college.
Fellowship with God means you want to share your life with Him.
And that fellowship with God is the way to escape from sin.*

"Father God, I thank Thee for the fellowship with Thee that I enjoy and appreciate beyond words. Father, there are some young people I know who make professions of salvation but they are not in fellowship with Thee. Preserve them, O Lord God, and in some way turn them from this dark course they are going on, to walk in the light that will give them fellowship with Thee - and safety. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 39:21. *"But the Lord was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison."*

THE LORD WAS WITH JOSEPH.

THE LORD WAS WITH JOSEPH

Circumstances were difficult for the teenager who was rejected.

Family life for him was all he ever knew.

*Now in a far-off place feeling lonely and dejected –
He was assured God was there His presence He showed.*

Alone? In the pit – in the caravan – in slavery in Egypt –

No! The Lord was with him

In every place: in the pit, in the prison, in the palace

*In every situation: in danger of being killed, moral sin, being forgotten
In every decision: telling dreams, fleeing from a woman, keeping his integrity*

THE LORD MADE ALL HE DID TO PROSPER

The officer of Pharaoh knew a good buy when he saw it -

A young man in his strength with an intelligent looking face.

Soon he found his ability was more than a normal fit –

And entrusted him with all, into his hands full stewardship placed.

Helpless? In the slave market – in Potiphar's house – in prison –

No! The Lord made all he did to prosper

In the house of the Egyptian: Joseph found grace in his sight, full credibility

In the place of temptation: he fled; the Lord brought him to the safety of the prison

In the prison: given full responsibility of operations, he prospered

THE LORD SHOWED HIM MERCY

*A false accusation from a temptress who wanted to sin –
Landed him in a prison as the years began to pass him by.
Even there the jailor turned over to Joseph everything –
Knowing his star prisoner was a man of integrity.*

*Abandoned? Away from family – away from country – in a foreign land
No! The Lord showed him mercy... the blessing of the Lord was upon him
A prosperous man: his labor, even as a slave turned to profit
A goodly person: his character continued to develop – godly, even in adversity
A well-favored person: even his looks were a reflection of his God, God was there.*

“I have learned Father God, that in youth all the way to old age; Thou art there to bless, prosper and use even me in foreign lands. Sometimes I wonder Father, if I should move again to a place removed from family and familiarity with the people to make a new start in Thy work, Perhaps I am too old for that now. I am not alone, helpless or abandoned for Thou art with me. I thank Thee in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

GENESIS 40

INTERPRETATIONS BELONG TO GOD

I watched the young man, Joseph, far away from home and from other believers, in an unfair and very limited place. But instead of focusing attention on himself, he was aware of the plight of others. The situation he was in didn't turn him into a sour and ungrateful person. He was still a caring person conscious of the fact that for whatever reason, God had placed him there. God is not limited to working His will when circumstances are favorable. When the peace of God rules in our hearts and we find reasons to be thankful, then God can use us to bless others. In whatever place or situation, we may be found, we will find there are opportunities to serve others as is becoming to peculiar people who are zealous of good works. Whether old or young, bond or free, loveable or unlovable, there are people around who need us. We may not know what to say or do at any given moment, but the Lord knows and interpretations belong to Him.

The butler and the baker in this prison narrative must have been suspected of serious wrong-doing. Even more concerning to them though, was the God-sent dreams in the night that they could not forget. There are reasons for God to send unforgettable dreams. He wants to get people to listen to Him. He wants to impress them with some important lesson and give them instructions. Ultimately, God's main purpose is to turn people away from their own wrong and dangerous plans and humble them down so He can show them the right way. God doesn't want any to perish or lose his life by the attacks of Satan against him. God is the Giver of Life and holds its keys in His hands. I learned that no matter who you are, God does not let one go unwarned to hell.

It is wise for one to honestly look at himself and determine what God is trying to say to me and teach me when these unusual events occur. To keep quiet or ignore the ways and words of God, leads one down the wrong road. Not only your life, but your soul will be lost.

The baker held back from telling Joseph his dream until he knew how the butler's dream would be interpreted. He wanted assurance the interpretation would be favorable to him. When one is not willing to be forthright and face the issues that have brought him or her into adverse circumstances, then we have to face the consequences of our own self-deception. Far too often people try to adapt their lives to what they consider is the way of success of others. When things don't work out the way they had hoped, they look for someone to blame - and often that is God. But interpretations belong to God. We have to learn from Him what is the right way for me, not copy others expecting the same results.

As I watched in my mind that early morning prison scene, I was struck with the fact that Joseph did not focus everyone's attention on him, but on God. He gave a clear interpretation of each dream. Each one knew that the answer to their question was in God only. Yet, as many do in events which God allows to happen, they overlooked Joseph's words about God and focused their attention on themselves only. The interpretations of the dreams came true. One lived and one died. The event just faded into the hazy past. The butler forgot the whole thing and it just became an incident in life that he didn't want to remember. It is well for us to allow our minds to dwell on the "hole of the pit from whence we have been digged" from time to time. Times of failure can be the times when we learn most about ourselves, and most about God. It is important that we actually

learn the lessons God wants to teach us - not just hear sermons that move us briefly and then we forget. A sermon may only be words to us. A message is information to be received and hopefully acted upon. Messages may come to us in many different ways. Dreams, visions - even strong pain so we cannot rest or sleep may accompany a message so it is impressed on our mind and heart.

I wondered why the butler forgot Joseph so quickly. He may have only considered him a fellow-prisoner, or a prison slave from a foreign land and an insignificant tribe. But God has His timing and plans to fulfill. It is well for me to keep in my mind that interpretations belong to God. He will work His will in His own time, and His own way. It is my responsibility to keep doing what I am doing for Him in a righteous and honorable way. Our times are in His hands.

*In the early morning watches, often we will learn
Things that will stand us in good stead.
Our minds are clear from rest and from selfishness we turn,
To consider what we will do in the day ahead.
How interesting it is when someone we call upon,
Has passed a night of doubt and sometimes fear.
We are able to pass on a word from God to them before we're done,
And what we said was what they needed to hear.*

*Those words of comfort and cheer didn't come to us by chance,
They were instilled in us when we were alone with God.
And our meeting with the needy person wasn't happenstance,
It was planned and carried out by the will of the Lord.
In order to give something out, we have to take something in,
Our minds and hearts are like cisterns to fill with water.
When it is the water of God's Word, that is where we begin,
As we speak to the hurting person of things that really matter.*

*God is able to use a clean vessel in ways very unexpected,
When we have listened to His voice before we speak,
If for some reason we have ignored His Word or it neglected,
Then we won't have anything to give to those who anxiously seek,
Interpretation does belong to God -
He knows everything that should be said.
He is able to fill our hearts with His Word,
And the Holy Spirit then applies what we read.*

*So, when the opportunity arises before us,
To speak to someone else a word in season;
The things we have learned gives them a sense of trust -
They know when we say something there is a reason.
God can and will use a ready and willing person,
To come alongside to meet a worried one's need.
They will pay attention as the Word is given them,
When the one giving help, to God gives earnest heed.*

"O Lord God who knows the hearts of all mankind and can speak in ways we cannot. Help Thy servants today to give the right interpretation of Thy will to those we are going to meet with and talk tonight. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 40:2. *"And Pharaoh was wroth against two of his officers, against the chief of the butlers, and against the chief of the bakers."*

TWO MEN.

*Two men of authority out of favor with the king -
Put in a prison ward not knowing what would happen.
Joseph, though in prison knew that God knows everything
But at first didn't know the reason their faces were saddened.*

*Both the butler and the baker were equal in their woe –
Both knew in some way he had offended their dreaded lord.
Uncertain of their outcome – sad because they didn't know –
Whether they would be freed or die there in the ward.*

*Both men were suffering under the king's displeasure –
Both men were saddened, troubled by a dream.
Both very concerned as they looked into the future –
Joseph was discerning as he guarded and served them.*

*A dream that is sent by God is a message to awaken –
He speaks once or twice in visions in the night.
God is not limited; He arranges steps to be taken –
Bringing the desired results whether we're in the wrong or in the right.*

*One of the two died, judgment on the baker fell –
He tried to copy the other man to get a good prediction.
Whatever crime he committed spelled for him death's knell,
Sin covered and not repented of will bring sure retribution.*

*The other man found grace in the eyes of his earthly king.
The butler was restored to the office he once held.
It is by grace alone; our heavenly Joseph did bring –
The salvation that we needed to save our souls from hell.*

"O God, there is not doubt in my mind that You arrange things for people to be in certain places at certain times. It certainly was in Joseph's day, and I am sure it is the same today. We had the assurance that we were supposed to be here at this time. The reason is still unknown to me. I pray that we will have been some benefit to the Lord's people here. As we begin these meetings in the Gospel, I pray that there will be some move of Thyself on the unbelievers that will attend. This would give confidence that we are in the right place for now. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 41

AN ANSWER OF PEACE

Thirteen years has past since Joseph was sold as a slave by his brothers for twenty pieces of silver. During the years spent in Potiphar's house and the years in prison, Joseph never allowed himself to forget the Lord his God. We have no record of words of bitterness. He was able to maintain his integrity and his fellowship with, and hope in, God. The last two years in prison were perhaps years of boring obscurity. But even though the years of his strength and vitality were passing by, his relationship with God did not waver. How like the Lord Jesus he was, for the Lord too labored and lived in obscurity until He was "about thirty years old." There may be more years of our life spent in preparation than in doing great and wonderful works. Time is not a big concern of the God of eternity. Far more important is the readiness of His servant to be able to do the work for which he is called. There is the necessity of training time before God can entrust us with a work that will be done for His glory and not the self-glory of the servant.

Freshly shaven and well-clothed, this man in the prime of his life, stood clear-eyed and humble before the Pharaoh of Egypt and said, "God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." How positive! How clearly stated! How full of assurance and trust in his God were those simple words! "God shall give... God hath shewed... it is established by God... God will shortly bring it to pass!" There was no apologetic mumbling. There was no dissembling of any kind. There was no question as to who was behind the dreams, the interpretation of dreams, and the events that were to follow. Even the Pharaoh had to testify that the Spirit of God was behind all of these things that were taking place and were yet to take place. The evidence of God working in a person's life cannot be hid. There is something about a clear-eyed person with simple and precise words, who stands dressed in a dignified way with respect for himself and others, that makes his message easy to be believed. Experiences we have in private with God have a way of preparing us for needed public activity.

Years of seeming uselessness and inactivity can be used to deepen our knowledge of God. Our fellowship with Him is not made real when we are busily tearing around doing what we think we should do. Time in a mundane job and in what seems like a prison-house can be the most important times in a person's life. God

can change everything in one day and will use a prepared person to change in one hour the course of a nation. All it took to start a whole chain of events was one man to say, "I remember..." and all God had been planning for, begins to happen. If one is anxious, frustrated, wanting to get going - just wait. God will give an answer of peace. When that time comes, let the peace of God rule, and be the umpire of your heart and be thankful.

The future of our life may be very obscure to us as it was to Joseph. But in less than one day, all of the uncertainty, unfairness and long years of waiting, became clear to him. Now he knew why God had led him this way. Now he knew what God was going to do. Now he knew his role to fill in God's great design of things. Now he could move forward in his life for God as a prepared person for a prepared work. He had proved God, and God had proven him. When a person goes through times of difficulty with patience and faith in God, we can expect God to do with us and through us, a work that cannot be ignored or discounted. When God shows His answers of peace we can move forward without fear. We may not know the outcome of an event or a work we are engaged in, but when we know God brought us here to do this, we can be quietly confident in the outcome of a matter.

The knowledge of how to solve the great problem of coming famine, the exaltation of Joseph from slavery for ten or eleven years and from prison for two or three years, to leadership, did not move Joseph to arrogance and pride. He knew God had given answers in peace. When he looked at Pharaoh's ring on his finger, the gold chain about his neck, the chariot to ride in, he knew and remembered that God had done this. His wife and sons would have been reminders of the goodness of God and the answers of peace that he had been waiting for so long.

In the course of our lives we may wonder at the way things are going and question what is happening to us. But when a believer is confident that God has led us to this place and at this time, then we can quietly and confidently apply ourselves to the work at hand, and trust God alone for the work that lies ahead. When the time comes that we feel useless and want to go home, we must remember that God has His own timetable for us. Even though we may not have control over our health, finances and place of dwelling and even everyday living, we can be assured that God is working to will and do what is His good pleasure. We rest there knowing that God will give answers in peace.

*It is not uncommon to be agitated at the slowly passing of time.
When one is young and full of vigor, we have hills and mountains to climb.
We want to get on with our life and work, we see a lot to be done.
Nevertheless, it is not up to us, answers in peace come from God alone.*

*When events unfold and things start to happen, and training is finally over;
It is important for us to be open and honest, never seek to dissemble or cover
Things that need to be faced, whether they be bad or good.
Answers in peace that come from God, make things easily understood.*

*In the mundane unfolding of year after year when nothing exciting happens.
We need to remember God brought me this way, my will to His is shaping.
Then we can choose to apply ourselves to habits in life that will help us grow.
And the answers in peace from God that come, will through our contentment show.*

*As we get older in years and we are unable to do all the things that once we did,
We find ourselves getting closer to home, and our life in Christ is now hid.
What better place could we be then here where we are conscious of daily grace
Being shown to us in the uncertainty of age as God gives us answers of peace.*

*When health starts to fail and there are no medicines that give miraculous cures.
Then what we are in our spirit and soul is the part of us that really endures.
The body is weak, the eyes grow dim, we are lame and it is hard to hear.
But God gives answers of peace to spirit and soul so the weakness of body we bear.*

*Whether one is young, middle-aged or old, we should wait for the answers to come.
God has committed Himself to us, now it is our privilege to look to Him alone,
For the answers of peace that help us rest in an attitude of confidence.
He has His plans for us all through our lives that He will fulfill before He takes us hence.*

"Father God, I am sure there are things Thou would have me do yet. I recognize there are limitations to the work we are able to do because of increasing years. I am not sure why I have not been able to be involved in seeing more people saved lately. These young men and women we are trying to help do need encouragement. If we are to spend the remainder of our lives serving, helping and mentoring younger people, then please give us an understanding of how to do this and a venue so we can know how to do this best - and for Thy glory alone. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 41:39. *"And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art:"*

DISCREET AND WISE.

DISCREET

At thirty years, in his prime, a young man for God
"It is not in me," understanding God is working, molding, preparing
A man fit for use, to bear the yoke, for years to come
Caring for a nation is not easy
But it is right that God placed him there for that time
After prison, after slavery, after rejection
He is now ready to save a people, a nation, a world.

A worried king, a discreet young man who knows his God
"It is not in me – God hath shewed"
God shall give an answer of peace
God hath established the future events
God will bring it to pass soon
A young discreet man God can use
A man who knows his limitations – and God's infinite power.

WISE

Not his own skill but the Spirit of God has worked in him
Authority is given to those who learn from God
Trusted people are known by careful and wise words
They rule – they have earned the right to decide an issue
The words of a wise man are not many but full of meaning
The Spirit of God gives them what must be said
And how and when and to whom it is said – WISDOM.

Not overcome with pride even though the ring of office is on his hand
A wise man – does not flaunt his position or over-bear – maintains dignity
The clothes, the chain, the chariot – only trappings of position
Not of pride or ostentation to a young man still humble
People bowing, adulation not withstanding – he maintains integrity
Seeing beyond today and tomorrow – God given vision – and plans
A discreet and wise man is fruitful – not bitter – not gloating – but ready for God to use.

"For such men as Joseph, I pray, O Father, that they will be raised up and with discretion and wisdom, be willing to be used for Thee. The young men that will be with us soon – I am praying that I will be able to impart some of this to them and they will be able to make discretion and wisdom an overpowering benefit in their lives. Prepare me Father, to prepare them. Make us all understand that all wisdom comes from Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 42

REPENTANCE?

I looked across the Middle East from my historical vantage point, and saw the good years had passed and the famine had spread from Egypt to Canaan. There was no question as to whether the need was there. There were no grain crops to be harvested. In the ancient world grain was the only food that could be stored. It was the important staple of life and even survival, for without it, nations could fall. The blessings of God to us are given for a reason. "The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance." But most will not recognize God in the good times. It is to most people a time to accumulate wealth and enjoy life. Many will not prepare for, or even anticipate, the danger and difficulties that will come.

When the goodness of God doesn't reach the heart and conscience of men, then God may send the famine, pestilence and acts of nature to make people realize how dependent they are on God. Joseph had made

Egypt ready for the hungry times because of the guidance of God and his fellowship with God. Others around did not prepare. God has His people world-wide giving warnings today of dark times of tribulation ahead that is referred to as "the time of Jacob's trouble." But very few listen; or repent and prepare for what is ahead. They feel sorry for what happens and look for someone to blame, but few ever come to real repentance or acknowledge their own sin and responsibility for all that happened.

The hunger in Jacob's family didn't bring about the repentance that was needed for forgiveness. The journey to Egypt and accusation made against them didn't bring repentance. It was the threat of death that first awakened their consciences to put into words the guilt that still dwelt in each one of them. Finally, they articulated, at least to each other, the guilt they felt. But to admit to guilt is not all that is involved in genuine repentance. When one is caught in wrong-doing and feels sorry he was caught, is not repentance. When one admits he is wrong because of an act, even verbalizing guilt is not all that is involved in repentance. There are consequences to our actions that we will have to face. But even that is not what repentance is.

Fear came on Joseph's brothers when they saw the money in their sacks of grain. Now, even though they were far from Egypt and Joseph, with food to eat, there was a deep-seated fear. They were learning the biblical principle, "Be sure your sin will find you out." They had now no difficulty of talking about the problem, but they still didn't confess to and admit their guilt as to the cause of the problem. Sin has to be faced. Sin has to be confessed. Sin has consequences that cannot be avoided. When looking for someone or something to place blame on when hard times come, start first with a thorough examination of one's self. Don't start with others. I am responsible for "me." I cannot point at others until I consider "the beam in my own eye." Where have I failed? What have I done? What have I left undone? What were the real motives behind my actions?

Sometimes we may think things we did twenty years before don't matter. But God does "require that which is past." When made aware of our wrongdoing, it is our responsibility to make it right if possible. The awareness of the problem, the admission of guilt to each other, the pricking of conscience, the fear that was experienced still was not what was involved in true repentance in Joseph's brothers. Confession of, and forsaking of sin is what is needed in repentance. One's confession lifts the mind to think like God thinks. God knows the reasons behind the confession and the heart work involved. Confession of wrong to a person is part of what is needed, but confession to God is the essential act that leads to forgiveness. When that is done there is no need to dwell on a sense of guilt that may arise from time to time. God knows the reason behind the action and it has been faced and dealt with. There is no virtue or value in going back over what has been dealt with before God.

In the case of Joseph's brothers, they had not admitted to their father the action they had taken against Joseph. To admit to fellow-conspirators their guilt was not real repentance. To have fear is not real repentance. Man looks only on the outward appearance. Joseph could hear their words to each other, but sensed there was only guilt - not repentance. God holds back judgment today because He wants repentance to be real so He can bless men. God extends His arm of goodness that men might express their unworthiness and be brought to repentance. The great increase of disastrous events awakens people but as yet there hasn't been any evidence of real repentance. May God have mercy on us yet that repentance may be real.

*It may not seem like much to some, but to the awakened soul
Repentance has to take place before one can be really whole.
There has to be the facing of wrong and do what is needed to set right
Anything that separates the soul from God that one may walk in the light.*

*Grace from God is a wondrous thing when sin has been confessed.
Relief from the pangs of guilt is lifted and one is no longer distressed.
There is fellowship with God that is restored and He can truly use
The one who has been recovered to Him, and who doesn't His grace abuse.*

*Then faith comes into action and with grateful heart we trust
That God means what He says when He tells us He forgives us.
There is then no reason to go back and relive the guilt of the past.
When God forgives His child, it is a forgiveness that lasts.*

*Our heavenly "Joseph" is always there, ready to hear our cry.
He knows what we really mean, or what we are trying to get by.*

*It is well for me to remember He knows the thoughts and intents of my heart.
Confession of sin has to be real and from that sin we stay apart.*

*The results of faith in God's Word, leads one to live in freedom.
The words that are written give assurance if only we will truly heed them.
To go back over and over again something dealt with long ago,
Is detrimental to one's fellowship because it implies there's doubt in the soul.*

*Joseph's brothers started, but their repentance was not complete.
They could admit guilt to themselves but to Joseph they didn't repeat.
They had to continue on longer with a conscience awakened but not free.
Reviewing what is real repentance is an important lesson to me.*

*I rest in the Word of God, what God has said I have done.
There is no need to feel guilty, the consequences are forever gone.
The Word of God is plain, our sins are cast into the depths of the sea.
There is no reason to doubt God, He has always been faithful to me.*

*To God I give my praise and worship, He has saved and kept me by grace.
As I review His faithfulness, there is His path of forgiveness I trace.
I have failed Him in many ways, He has never failed me in one.
I honor Him here today, and give Him glory for all He has done.*

"Gracious Father, to review Thy ways of grace to me has made me appreciate more than ever the extent of Thy salvation which has been given to me. May I never doubt Thee or Thy Word. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 42:21. *"And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us."*

VERILY GUILTY.

It is there – inside – deep seated – implacable
Unrelenting – awaiting every opportunity to appear –
GUILT!

At the most inopportune times – in the middle of levity
When there is reason for joy and happiness – unexpectedly
GUILT!

When things go wrong – when times are bad – when there is uncertainty –
Looking for a reason for the sadness and the loss –
GUILT!

A new baby face arises in the family unit – there is rejoicing and gladness –
A doting mother and proud father look – grandparents too – and there –
GUILT!

An anguished face looks up from the pit – pleading for you not to do this –
A young, fine looking boy, nearly a man – cries as you sneer and sell him –
GUILT!

In your mind you can see in the distance your brother – looking back –
Deep sadness on his young face – your share, two pieces of silver – and have –
GUILT!

Daily activities – routine living – passing years – fading memories – some silver
But in the mind – coming back again when times start getting worse –
GUILT!

Hungry children – empty storehouses – dry hot days – famine in the land –
Questions – Does God know? – Does God care? – Why has this happened?
GUILT!

A long journey – a foreign country and language – plenty of food here
A serious official – implacable – unreadable – unreasonable and yet the feeling of
GUILT!

Detained – disbelieved and accused – jailed – this is because of our brother –
Why after all these years are 10 brothers so disconcerted?
GUILT!

"O Holy God, how awful are the consequences of sin – especially when we can see, at least a little, of how they look in Thy eyes. May I never allow sin to go unconfessed and ignored. Give me the understanding and way to deal with anything that might cause ongoing guilt. I want to have a free concourse with Thee always. I praise Thee for dealing with my sin through the Lord Jesus' death on the cross. I am thankful that it is possible to live in harmony with Thee and others – guilt free. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 43

THEN CAME JOSEPH

As time passed the staple foods that sustained life were depleted in the family of Jacob, and I could see from my place in the history of God's grace, the gathering of Jacob and his sons. But not everything can be purchased with money. If we look at our life as the people of the world do, we put a dollar value on everything. People of faith who have experienced the grace of God being shown to them, and have responded in gratitude to God Himself, see way beyond that. How much is a brother worth to me? Judah, for all his failures, was willing to accept full responsibility for Benjamin. He had convinced his brothers to sell Joseph. He had joined in the lie to his father about Joseph's fate. Now he was willing to die that that others might live. God can bring about changes in a person that no one else ever could.

There was still access to some specialty items that could be used as a gift. "A man's gift maketh room for him." Each one has been given access to unique things that opens doors and often the hearts of people. We have natural talents that come to us by nature. When a person becomes a child of God, gifts are given to that person by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit that we might be a benefit to others. We may not know when such gifts are needed, but God does. We can trust Him to use what He has given us in ways that are appropriate.

To return to the place of strange events must have made the ten brothers fearful. Joseph looking out would have seen them nervously standing before his steward and then being led in their fear to the house of Joseph. Even their double money and attempts at honesty seemed to bring greater concern. There are times in life when we cannot understand what is happening to us or why it is happening. For those who only live for the moment or only think in terms of human logic and understanding, this is a fearful thing because it defies what we have been taught to expect. To people of faith who have learned to trust God in all circumstances of life, we can rest assured that what we do not understand, God does. He allows and arranges things in His own way to work out His own will. When those times come, all we need to do is rest in faith and let the Holy Spirit guide and direct us through the uncharted water of our life.

I saw that everything changed when Joseph came home. When Joseph came, all eyes were on him. When Joseph came, everything else was stopped to listen to what he had to say. Joseph was the one all were looking to as their savior. He was the one who held their life or death in his control. When our Lord Jesus Christ came, He was despised and rejected of men. When He came to His own, His own received Him not. There was no acknowledgement of Him as Lord. But Jesus is going to come even as Joseph came to his brothers. He knows all about each of us and can set us in the order that will please Him.

When Joseph saw the young man he only knew as a child, he was moved to tears. This was his true brother. The blessings our Lord has shown to the whole body of Christ, the Church, will be enjoyed as each one appreciates what God has done for them. He knows the order, the place, each one holds in the kingdom of God. The one who was least esteemed in the eyes of his brothers, and perhaps was the weakest because of his youth, was the one Joseph yearned over. Benjamin was a late-comer in the family and small in the eyes of others, but he was the one Joseph blessed with the most from his table. All were rejoicing but Joseph was watching to see if the jealousy was still there. I don't know exactly how God views the whole body of Christ. Those who seem to be strong or of full age may not be the ones God can bless the most. He has "chosen the weak things of earth to confound the mighty." His strength "is made perfect in weakness." The outward appearance of success and usefulness may be very different in God's eyes. All will be made manifest when Christ comes. There is a time of reckoning when every idle word, every unspoken thought and motive will be seen for what it truly is. When Joseph came there was no question as to who was in control now. There was no careless attitude even though there was joy.

When the Lord Jesus Christ is revealed, everything will be seen as it really is. There will be no covering up as if we think God doesn't know all about us. In one way, there will be fear when all is brought into the light of His holiness and seen for what it really is. In another way there will be the relief that comes when we have nothing to hide and yet know we have been freely and fully forgiven. What fellowship! What joy and gladness we will experience with Him! What praise and worship will we be able to give when we are unhindered by our deceitful nature!

*What hope we have, O God of grace,
As we think of that coming day -
When we will Thy ways with us retrace,
And learn how Thou didst lead the way
To places we hadn't stopped to think
Were in our life ordained by Thee -
Or ever know how close to the brink,
Of total failure sin had caused me to be.*

*What joy we have, O God of love,
When we gather in Jesus' name.
There we can recall all that we have
Because of the fact Christ came
To prepare for us a bountiful supply
Of the grace and the mercy, we need.
And here we learn on Him to rely,
As we to His will give our heed.*

*What faith we have, O God of mercy,
Because we have come to know
There is abundance in Thee, mercy is plenty,
That Thy forgiveness we can show
By commitment to Thee, to Thy gracious Word,
And submission to Thy will.
Thou art full of mercy, O Jesus, Lord,
And my cup of need Thou dost fill.*

*It is not my right to make demands,
O Lord God, Thou art indeed supreme.
But in Thy fullness, Thou hast filled my hands
With more than all my hopes and dreams.
When our heavenly "Joseph" comes who is Lord alone,
May my life be in tune with Thine.
May every act of service be done
According to Thy holy will, not mine.*

"O Lord God, the awareness of Thy greatness and holiness makes me to bow this morning in reverence and holy fear. To be able to address Thee at all is way beyond my right except to appeal to Thee for mercy. And yet I have been given this new nature from Thee that makes it seem right to say, 'Abba Father.' So with a sense of being in a very holy place I bow my head and heart to worship Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 43:15. "And the men took that present, and they took double money in their hand, and Benjamin; and rose up and went down to Egypt, and stood before Joseph."

STOOD BEFORE JOSEPH.

*They stood there in silence, not a word did they say -
The governor looked at them, then turned his face away.
Quietly to his servant said, "Take these men to my home,
Wait there with them 'till it is convenient for me to come."*

Waiting there in fear and wondering what would happen -

*Ten very worried men with their youngest brother Benjamin
Sat at Joseph's table in a line that matched their ages –
Marveling if they were in the presence of one of Egypt's sages.*

*God Almighty is a God of mercy as Jacob told his sons.
Now Joseph speaks of a God of grace to his brother Benjamin.
Twenty years had passed since he had looked upon his brother.
Emotion had its way with him weeping alone in his chamber.*

*Recovery to the Lord when sin has come in between –
Is not some casual comment or making light of any sin.
The reality of repentance is not some simple words –
It is turning away from sin with sorrow, acknowledging guilt before the Lord.*

*The process of full recovery demands honesty on my part.
Making sure there's no hypocrisy – true confession is from the heart.
Returning to the Lord is not a casual stroll to His throne –
It means I admit full responsibility and appeal to His grace alone.*

*I may put on an act of nonchalance or even merriment –
But in the case of true repentance – the body, mind and heart are bent.
There is no substitution when called to stand before the Lord.
By His mercy and His grace alone, I am able to be restored.*

"Father of mercy, God of all grace: with gratitude I thank Thee for making it possible for one who has failed to be restored to Thee. Overcome any reluctance I might have to make full confession of guilt, sin and failure. When standing before Thee with a heart that is empty of pride and in great need of mercy, I am made conscious of the work of on-going grace. I am so relieved by the words "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." I thank Thee in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 44

GOD HATH FOUND OUT

Watching those men loading their animals with bags of food and starting on that homeward journey, I wondered if after they got out of sight of Joseph's house, they didn't start giving each other "High fives!" "We got away with it! Benjamin is here. Simeon is here. We are all here - except one and we are on our way home!" There may be times when God has worked to bring us out of our difficulty and we breathe a sigh of relief that we got away with it. But it is well for us to remember that "All things are naked and open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." Nothing escapes God's attention.

Careless words were spoken when the steward stopped them. "Let him die" - "We will be my lord's bondmen;" such arrogant self-assurance has to be dealt with once and for all. From their own mouths they condemned themselves. It is not uncommon for people to try to cover guilt with words that have not been thoughtfully considered. Hasty speech is usually the words of a self-centered person. "Let thy words be few" is a good proverb to consider when challenged or in the presence of those who are given to a lot of talk. Generally, after people have had their say about a matter, they will realize someone hasn't said anything, and they will wonder why. I must remember that God hears every conversation and every idle word will have to be given account of.

Now for the first time, the reality and danger of the situation of the eleven brothers finally hit home. They had said themselves that Benjamin must die. They had condemned themselves to be slaves. No longer will subterfuge be acceptable. No longer can they fake their way before others. No longer is deceit possible. No longer can they ignore God with pious platitudes they had used before. They now knew that nothing was hid from God although they had deceived themselves for many years.

We may think a matter has been covered well, but God knows and we know. It is no small thing to try to deceive God. To convince one's self that guilt can be forever concealed is self-deception. The conscience will not allow it. Memory will not allow it. Our nature cannot be killed or things blanked out as if they never happened. God has arranged things so that no longer could Judah avoid the responsibility he had volunteered for. He had sold one brother into slavery. Now he offered to become a slave to save another

younger brother. There was a real change in Judah. Now he was concerned about his father in a real way. Now he realized the extent of his commitment. There are times when we need to be silent. There are also times when we must speak up. When truth, righteousness, integrity, honesty and purity are at stake, we dare not remain mute. A strong voice and courage are needed when these matters are in jeopardy. A clear explanation of events and the issues involved often have to be made plain. As Judah reviewed the whole matter before Joseph, he could now see there was a genuine change in him. There was honest and open communication. Even when it came to speaking of Joseph to Joseph, he did not know what had been the outcome of their jealous action. Most slaves would have been dead by this time from overwork.

There may be times in our lives when we have to take action to protect the innocent. We should never underestimate the value of a young person to the Lord. To cast a stumbling block before a young believer is to meddle with one God has set His love upon. We want, yes, we need, young people to rise and lead their generation in the ways of the Lord. It is not right to insist that those who are older should not have to pay the price to preserve those who are younger for God and His glory. If there is a price to pay, pay it. If there is a burden to bear, shoulder it. If there is a doctrine to pass on, stand up and articulate it. We need the "I" with us. We cannot compromise a matter but we can pay the cost on behalf of others. God knows. God has found us out. God expects us to do what is right no matter what others do. So, volunteer to take the rap. Go ahead and pay the price. God has already found us out. Now do what is right.

*Who would have thought a change was wrought in just a moment of time.
But the events challenged those involved because of what they did find.
God has His ways of bringing to pass the apex of an incident.
And when one is finally found out in sin, it is not a real coincidence.*

*To live openly before the Lord is really what God intends.
He is not wanting to have to deal with what we think is hidden sin.
Nothing ever takes God by surprise, the one who is startled is me.
When I face guilt before God's throne, the slave is then set free.*

*We may have thought God didn't really care or it was of minor concern.
Because the years passed and we didn't bare the rod of justice and no one else has learned
The truth of the matter, so we think it's dead and buried until God starts to move.
And then unjudged sin is faced, and God His justice proves.*

*He knew all the time what we thought He'd just found out; God had witnessed the act.
It may not be something like selling your brother, but this is an unmistakable fact.
God is involved because His name is known and you are in His family.
It is in your best interest to yield to His will as He brings you into maturity.*

*When God starts to move to bring things about, change can happen in a day.
What is done at the rising of the sun, can be undone by one word we say.
A man on his knees no longer tries to please himself as he gets through to God.
He longs for and desires, his heart aspires to experience the forgiveness of the Lord.*

*If there is blame to bear don't look for someone else to share, deal with it once for all.
God is near and He does hear the voice of the one who on Him calls.
He gives answers in peace because of His grace, and we rise to go on with Him.
The lesson to learn is to bitterness and sin spurn, and your joy will be full again.*

"Father God, I know everything about me is known to Thee. There are even things I don't know about myself that You know. I take great comfort in knowing the blessing of forgiveness and the assurance of fellowship with Thee. In Thee alone do I rest and trust knowing I have nothing that I can hide from Thee. I thank Thee and praise Thee in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 44:16. *"And Judah said, 'what shall we say unto my lord? What shall we speak? Or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants: behold, we are my lord's servants, both we, and he also with whom the cup is found.'"*

FINALLY, REALITY.

Partial reality – a degree of sincerity – still hiding sin, hoping it will not be known.

After all this time – Who knows? The wounds are now healed – Scars only left

We are on our way with all we wanted – we got away with it again –
Actually – we had a good time – and what good food!
Hopefully this famine will soon be over and we can get back to normal.
We got Simeon back and Benjamin is still with us – we made it.

God's way of settling accounts is extraordinary! Totally different!
He knows already the fullness of the matter. All sin is against Him.
There are no shortcuts. God is concerned with the recovery of the person.
Men are concerned with the event – superficiality!
God intends humility and full recovery to Himself.
Man intends to remain standing, and justify himself.
Careless words from still arrogant men – “Let him die!”
“We will all be your slaves!” Self-conceited – self-centered
Until – all the money is back again – and, the governor's cup is found!
Finally, reality: clothes torn – gut wrenching fear.
Down on their faces – prostrate – guilt overwhelming – confusion.
Finally, reality: public confession of an omniscient God.

Judah came near – assuming his responsibility – he was not noted for that.
Not avoiding the issue – the full story is out – except for one matter.
Finally, reality: no longer, “Come let us sell him!”
Now – take me instead of my brother. Free him – bind me.
No longer trying to deceive his father –
Now – caring for his brother – his father – willing to give himself.

“O God, reality is so hard to come by when I am trying to get away with something. Move by Thy Holy Spirit upon my spirit when something is wrong – when something I am doing is inappropriate – when arrogance raises it head in me and I try to justify what I know is wrong. You have been so patient with me in so many ways and in so many incidents and failures. I am thankful for the wide extent of Thy grace. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

GENESIS 45

HE SAW THE WAGONS

The scene was very touching as I watched Joseph reveal himself to his terrified brothers. Now not only are they back before the governor, but they find out he is the one they rejected, threw in a pit, sold for twenty pieces of silver, was made a slave and was imprisoned. How true is the fact that our God is a Sovereign God! He is not limited by human thought nor dictated to by human plans. He who knows all is able to fulfill His plans in ways we could never think of. Joseph had already understood God had sent him before his brothers to preserve their lives. He knew the promises of God to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - and that there was a future for the tribe of Israel. It is very satisfying to be able to look back and see God's ways with us and how He has been willing to use us in bringing to completion some work He has given us.

The impact on the generations following these twelve sons would be made because they would learn the story of how God brought blessing out of despair. God brought plenty in a time of famine. God brought good out of what seemed bad! We may not know at the moment, the results of labor and unappreciated effort. But God can use what we think is insignificant and unknown to fulfill a purpose beyond what we could think would be possible. When finally, things become clear to us as to what God has been doing through us, it is appropriate that the children and grandchildren know what was behind all the unexplained events of our lives. As a father, I can greatly appreciate what I see God doing through my children. It may not be what I had expected and may be very different from God's ways with us, but I can praise God for using them to bring blessing to others and glory to God.

The plans that unfolded before the family of Jacob were so different and far removed from what was expected, that Jacob could not grasp the reality of what he was hearing. The eleven brothers had heard the voice of Joseph and through their terror at being exposed in his presence, could hear words of forgiveness and blessing to them in spite of their great sin. There are times when our failures seem so great, we think that we are finished and are on the scrap-heap of God forever. Then we are made to remember through some word from God in the scripture, or some word ministered to us by someone else, that God can use our very weakness to bring us to understand the fullness of His strength.

I learned a lesson even from the Pharaoh of Egypt, that "the stuff" we think is important can be all left behind us. What is really important in this life is people. The great joy of being reunited with those long missed, the

wonder of seeing the changes in those long missed; the wonder of seeing the changes in those we knew long ago can be momentary. When the time is taken to communicate in a heart to heart way, is when the wonder of reunion is really grasped. "The stuff" of a lifetime that we gather and think so much of can all be lost in a very short time. The relationship we have with others can be nurtured and can develop and grow. The fellowship of reunion and communion feeds our souls and strengthens our walk. The joy that remains is the joy we get from one another in the family of God.

Some things that happen to us are hard to believe. When one has lived for years with the grief of an untimely death like Jacob did, that is not something one can ever fully recover from. Others who look on or are even personally involved in a lesser way, will not be able to fully understand what you are going through day after day. The lost potential, the youthful exuberance, the brightness that seemed to be in the personality are all only faded memories that will never go away.

When the eleven brothers returned to Jacob and their families with the news that Joseph was alive, it would have stirred the whole tribe to hope. Jacob could not believe the news. He had been grieving over his loss for years - until he saw the wagons. That was proof that his son was alive in another country. The wagons would have been of a different kind. They would have the evidence on them of all the fullness of his son Joseph as governor of Egypt. I do not know very much about heaven. But I know my Lord Jesus Christ is there because from time to time I can "see the wagons." I listen to the words, the songs, the prayers, the preaching of those I knew before God saved them and the proof is there - they have seen Joseph. I see a young person come toward me with the Bible open to a particular verse that has given them the light of salvation, and I know - he has seen Joseph. I watch young people in the prime of their lives, use their intelligence, their education, their learning and their abilities - go to the harvest field of the Lord and I say, "It is enough; Jesus is alive - and I will go and see Him whom having not seen - I love."

*They are all standing out there before the gate.
Those wagons are there so I will no longer wait
To leave my stuff and go to where He is.
The bounty on those wagons is totally His.*

*There is one filled with peace that calms the soul.
That peace can make a broken heart become whole.
Peace when it starts seems like a very small river'
But its flow enlarges and goes on forever.*

*Another has joy in it that comes from within.
A joy that comes from the knowledge of forgiven sin.
Now that joy becomes greater because I know the Giver.
And the joy of the Lord, it too goes on forever.*

*Meaningful living fills another wagon that is there.
Now I can understand more of why I am here.
From the One who sent the wagons comes a great commission.
And each day passes in some way I can please Him.*

*In another wagon there is abundant life.
That kind of living rises way above strife.
There is a quality to life that defies description,
But each event has some meaning as we rise to meet them.*

*From His fullness have we received,
I know and trust Him in whom I have believed.
I may not know all about Him but I am sure -
These evidences of Him will make me to endure.*

"Father, I praise Thee this morning for all the fullness that has come to me from Thy gracious hands. I know Jesus is alive. I know that all provision has been made for my every need. I have tasted and seen that the Lord is good. I thank Thee in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 45:5. *“Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.”*

GOD DID SEND ME.

Finally, the attitude Joseph had sought,
He believed was really there in his brethren.
Judah’s appeal and willingness to give,
Made Joseph to think these men had changed.
Twelve brothers in the room as Joseph stood,
There making himself known to them.

Years had passed, now together again
Marveling at what God had arranged.
“I am Joseph,” he said – they were terrified –
The one they sold had not died.
“Come near to me... I am Joseph, your brother...
God Himself has sent me hither.”
In fear they came closer – and he to them –
Then tears flowed and their savior cried.
“I will nourish thee... go get your families –
When you come back, bring my father.”

When the ten men heard, they were terrified,
Thinking their lives were about to end.
After what they had done and so many years passed,
It was hard to believe Joseph lived.
In love and grace, he who was scorned and sold,
Now made it plain they were forgiven.
God who is over all had cared for him,
Now God had arranged that it was he who could give.

After all these years - barriers were down,
The skies were cleared, they were finally freed.
They wept and they talked – Joseph sent them away
To bring back all belonging to them.
Back to their families, to their father they went,
Joseph supplied – all they could need.
United at last, father and son – a family made whole –
God still honors those who honor Him.

When the Spirit of God revealed Christ to me,
It was a lot like when Joseph was revealed to them.
Both joy and sorrow when from sin I was free
Relief and forgiveness all seemed to blend.
Between me and God the barriers were down
And Jesus was as real as when He died on the tree.
Adopted as a son, no longer one condemned
Now I am a real member of God’s family.

“O God, when such a time as that was, the joy and reconciliation must have brought joy to Thee. No doubt when a sinner such as I came to Christ, or any one for whom Thou hast been arranging for their salvation, there was joy in heaven. It would bring great delight to me too Father, if this were a time when this island was visited with Thy saving power and souls were truly convicted of sin; their repentance was real; and they would turn to the Lord Jesus for salvation. I pray for this now, and I praise Thee that I am able to speak for Thee to those who will attend tonight. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

GENESIS 46

ISRAEL TOOK HIS JOURNEY

It was plain to me that there was both anticipation and fear when the tribe of Israel started the journey to Egypt. From Hebron to Beersheba wasn't a problem to Israel. But the fear of the journey and of going to a strange land, brought them to stop while Israel sought his God. A double call from God, was very assuring to Jacob. Now he was sure God was with him and now he was sure the tribe of Israel would return again to the

land God promised. Fear can paralyze one as we look into the unknown. A strange land, strange people and a strange language can cause us to question God's leading. Jacob may have remembered what happened to Abraham in Egypt. Whenever God directs us to make a move, we must go ahead and do what is made plain to us. To hesitate or refuse to go is to doubt God's ability to care for us.

It is possible to settle down in comfort and forget why we are in the world in the first place. To make our decisions and act on what we feel is to our advantage, isn't necessarily assurance of God's guidance. He may lead us into difficult places and difficult circumstances. That does not mean God has forsaken us. It means He can trust us to do a necessary work. There are times when it is more difficult to serve God in favorable places and circumstances in life, than when there is adversity. It is my responsibility to be in touch with God so He can direct my going. "Burning bridges behind us" is never an easy thing to do. To have to walk away from a place God has used one is very hard. I must remember the actions I take will not only affect me, but my children and their children behind them. It is very hard not to second guess decisions made in the past, in the light of the present. I may have to go back over decision-making times to be assured that God led me here.

Once the assurance was given by God to Jacob, he was ready to resume the journey. Israel, the prince with God, was following the leading of the Lord. However, the leading of God did not lead them to be assimilated into the culture of Egypt. They were to dwell alone even though surrounded by all the strangeness of the Egyptian world. The world I live in has its prejudices too, against those who are following God. To be in the world but not of the world, means that I do not fit in the worldly culture around me. It is strange to the world to hear the words of hymns being sung. They are generally moved by the sound of the music more than the message. The quiet thoughtful singing that edifies both the singer and hearer makes them uncomfortable enough to either scorn or tune out those that give themselves to praise. Thoughtful messages that make one search the scriptures are not well received. People want answers but they don't want to assume the responsibility of personally getting those answers from God Himself. So instead they will read what someone else says about the scriptures or listen to another's person's opinion about them, rather than take the time to listen to the voice of God through the Word of God themselves. That is the Egyptian way. Find the seer, the sages or the magicians that make things look dramatic and you can feel the emotion of the moment. That is so much easier than "Buying the truth and selling it not."

Israel journeyed to Egypt it is true, but the object of his greatest interest wasn't Egypt, or Pharaoh or even the land of Goshen where he was going to live - but it was Joseph, his son! Long years had passed and he had all those years he had thought Joseph was dead. He had only memories of a special son wearing the princely coat of many colors. Now here embracing him with tears, words of affection and protection - was Joseph. Now Israel could see clearly the future was secure. The whole purpose of God could be seen now. Now there was clarity when before there was obscurity. Now, in His own time and way, God let them see what could not have been seen in any other way.

There have been, and probably still will be, times when we wonder why this has happened. What is behind this disappointment? Why has God allowed this to come upon us? All of the events in life have a purpose behind them as far God is concerned. It may be that when we take matters into our own hands without acting or waiting in faith, that God will let our mistakes and failures run their course until we surrender our will to His. Of this one thing I am sure - the life of faith of a child of God and the life of one living for the world's success, are incompatible. They cannot mix. We either serve God or mammon. We either live for the eternal future or for the present world. There is no way to combine the two. If God be God, then follow Him. Even in the land of Egypt, the journey of Israel brought him and his family to a place of separation. It was from that place of separation they were promised by God they would return to the promised land as a great unique nation - with their identity still intact.

*It may not seem like much to some to be different from those around.
But when one is in the family of God we listen to a different sound.
The voice of God is not always in thunder or in fire so dramatic.
The still, small voice of God may be heard, and the quietness is more emphatic.*

*When God calls a person and you know He means you as the object of His intention.
Never ignore that call because something important is coming as He seeks your full attention.
He may have a work for you to do that is very different from what you are doing.
Or He may be trying to get you to turn from your course and where you are presently going.*

Give God the credit for having the right to tell you what to do or be.

*He has the big picture of your existence in view, He wants to get you ready for eternity.
God knows the world has attractions that appeal but will someday bring you down.
But if you allow God to do His will through you, you will gladly His sovereignty own.*

*It may be down the road a way, maybe even twenty years or more -
That you will find out why things happened this way and what God has in store
For you and yours if you yield your will and ways in life to Him.
He can make you understand why these things happened, and life begins again.*

*To start a new life in a new place after many years have rolled their course -
Is not easy to do unless we realize that God's will is at the source.
Then the wise person will say, "Let God's will be done. Here am I send me."
The results of such surrender will often help us understand what life was meant to be.*

*The place God leads you to, the work you do, may challenge all preconceived notions.
And as we make changes that are uncomfortable to us it will affect our emotions.
We will find ourselves getting child-like again, not someone with all the answers.
God will be the center of our daily walk, doing what He wants, our spirit enhances.*

*But we will be able to rest in peace, knowing God has placed on me His hands.
And wherever He will lead me, and whatever He chooses, to me it will be Beulah-land.
There on the high ground of spiritual life, even though Egyptian attractions are there -
The assurance is given, God has made His will known, and He is the One who sent me here.*

"Heavenly Father, even though I live in this wilderness, I find it a great pleasure to know I am in the place to which Thou didst send me. I bow to Thy will. And I thank Thee for allowing me to be here. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 46:2. *"And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, 'Jacob, Jacob.' And he said, 'Here am I.'"*

VISIONS.

*Quietness surrounds me, calming the spirit to listen.
Darkness covers distractions in black so the mind can hear.
Night sounds of quiet breezes – night animal sounds – things God controls –
Between awake and sleep I quietly lie thinking and praying.*

*Waiting in case God has something to say to me
In the part of the mind where experiences are stored.
God puts together a mosaic of bits and pieces –
Usually things from the past giving me present understanding.*

*Occasionally a strong impression, created in pictures and words –
Give some information or instruction as my thoughts are focused.
Things thought insignificant become seriously important –
As the sun begins to rise, new plans emerge and the day is different.*

*Jacob received a double call – what he heard was important.
Even though he was "going down" to Egypt, God promised His presence there.
The future was made clear, not the length of time – he would see Joseph.
A great nation would be made there, so Jacob knew generations would pass.*

*When God chooses to make things known at night, it is important.
When God chooses to speak to me, night or day, I must listen intently.
When God chooses to make His will known through His Word, I must act on it.
When God chooses to reveal some truth, His will, it is a great privilege to hear Him.*

"Father, I find real comfort and assurance when You enlighten me as to what to do, where to go, or what to say. To know that there are ways to hear Your voice in the depths of my soul gives me motivation to hear You in the morning and also in the night. Thank you for speaking to me even when I am slow to hear and slow to act. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 47

JOSEPH NOURISHED HIS FATHER

As I followed the tribe of Israel into Egypt from my place in the future, it was very easy now to see the guiding hand of God in arranging for Israel and his family to live separated lives even in Egypt. As Jacob stood before Pharaoh there was respect shown by both men - the old man to the ruler and the ruler to the old man. Because Jacob was a man of faith, he was able to go further than Pharaoh. He could bless him, and in that way established his authority even as a separated person. When one is challenged as to who they are and what they believe, it is always appropriate to be open and plain so there is no question in anyone's mind as to where you stand. There may be some half-hearted attempts to get you to change, and occasionally some mocking or snide comments about you not fitting in, but that is to be expected when one lives a separated life. Living by faith is an unknown practice to those in the world who think they are in full control of things. When we bless people in the name of the Lord, and love is able to be seen as evidence of the work of God in and through us, people usually have nothing more to say. They know where you stand.

The provision Joseph arranged for his father and all the tribe of Israel in times of famine was exactly what they needed and what God had intended. The plans God made came to pass and they all could see the great blessing of Joseph being brought into that position in Egypt. God has left us in this world to testify to Him and His grace and mercy. We are not in the position to see our Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh at this present time but the nourishment He provides for us is evident on every hand. People sometimes marvel at the way God continually supplies our needs. They wonder at how we can live as we do. But to explain what it means to live by faith is almost like speaking to a wall. It doesn't fit the preconceived notions of a successful life. People in the world often spend and don't realize what they are doing. A cup of coffee here. An expensive meal there. An hour of pleasure and fun that has to be paid for, and nothing to show for it. All of these things are part of the costly way the world nourishes its own. When our nourishment comes from the Lord Himself, it is first spiritual nourishment and then physical, and for both we give God thanks and glory.

The famine in the land brought the people of Egypt to the place where they owned nothing - not even themselves. The 20 percent tax then applied to everyone and it was understood by all concerned, that for the provisions they expected from their government, from then on, they would be paying that cost. Taxation was not an unfair thing. For the favors they got, they had to pay for in one way or another. It was of great interest to me that Joseph moved people from being scattered all over the land to dwell in cities. I see that same thing happening today. Where one time people lived independently, and could claim what they had as their own. Now the population has moved from being rural to being city-dwellers. In that way governments of various kinds control the lives of people. But even though Israel was in Egypt, they dwelled alone and were able to prosper, grow and multiply. As the time of famine passed, the tribe of Israel was blessed even though they were in a foreign land. There has always been a uniqueness about the people of God.

When God is given His portion and what is due Him of what He has blessed us with, He makes full provision for us. When we recognize that every good and perfect gift is from above, from our God who preserves and protects us, then we understand the measure of our obligation to Him. We could not survive one day without Him. We could not live or move without Him. In times of famine, He nourishes us - whether it be a famine of bread or a famine of hearing the Word of the Lord. The people of God who live before Him in righteousness and in the fear of God, are those God can bless. The riches of His grace; the fullness of His provision; the blessings of His love are all showered upon those He has left in this world to bear testimony to Him. Our lives have meaning and there is a purpose to every daily event when God has His way with us and through us. What a wonder it is to have our "Joseph" (Jesus) who nourishes us!

*Unusual as it may seem to be living in a foreign land;
Even here it is God who provides every need from His own hand.
From His fullness have we received and for needed grace, there is grace.
The Lord who supplies our need from His storehouse, meets them in every place.*

*The work of God that has called us to do what we do and where -
Can be blessed by God Himself, His presence is felt even there.
The nourishment of soul and body comes from His supply.*

He gives us more than we deserve from what we cannot buy.

*When the life we live is hid with Christ in God, then we really know
It is God alone who has brought us here, we trust Him to clearly show
What His mind and will is for us when we seem so unproductive.
And the worldly system around appeals with invitations so seductive.*

*Sometimes the only thing we can do is wait for God to reveal His will.
And it is one of His ways to teach us to know Him; trust and just be still.
In His own time and way, He arranges to meet our every need.
We do not have to yield to the world's way of covetousness and greed.*

*The God who nourished His own people in famine times in the past -
Is the same God who works His will today in ways that are bound to last.
If I get jumpy and try to do what I think should be done and I run ahead -
Then I will miss out on that divine nourishment by which people of faith are fed.*

*By the grace of God, I will wait His time, and fill mine by learning of Him.
I can take His yoke upon me, that I might learn just how and when
He intends for me in His name to reach out to nourish others.
For Christian love and good works to all identifies us as Christian brothers.*

"Lord God who supplies the need of nations: I bow in humility before Thee knowing that my questioning is usually self-centered. Please teach me to wait and watch and work under the control of divine guidance. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 47:3. "And Pharaoh said unto his brethren, 'What is your occupation?' And they said unto Pharaoh, 'Thy servants are shepherds, both we, and also our fathers.'"

OCCUPATION.

*From deep within the center of my being comes the occupation of my spirit;
The Spirit of God bears witness there and even now reveals and convicts.
We find communion on common ground as He guides me in my worship -
He brings to mind the hidden truths that promote sweet fellowship.*

*My mind is often occupied on things from God's Word I have read.
There is danger there if I am not careful for my mind can be misled.
It wanders easily unless I deliberately control what I allow me to think.
It responds to things I hear and see and is attacked fast as my eye can blink.*

*Though a body is only flesh and bone and the parts to protect me inside
It can quickly get too occupied with trivial things leaving the important things to slide.
The occupation of spirit and mind, controls what the body can do -
It is incumbent on me to control those two that through the body show.*

*All around me daily social relationships are there to claim my sole occupation.
By deliberate choices I must limit my attachments or it will achieve domination.
It is easy to know but hard to do what is right and acceptable to God -
So, my commitment to this occupation has to be guided by studying His Word.*

*The occupation of my soul, the total "me" who dwells in this body of flesh -
Is directed by the other parts under the Spirit's control who knows what for me is best.
Lest I take anything for granted I must feed my soul on the bread which is from above -
Then my occupation, the daily living of my life, will be governed by God's divine love.*

*The senses of my body, the emotions of my soul, the actions that from them are seen -
Come from the inner occupation of my spirit and mind that enable them to govern
All the contacts I have with the world around, making me aware of what's right or wrong,*

By the strength provided by God who guides me, this weak vessel can be made strong.

"Like Jacob, O God, I need Thee as I "go down" into this world in which I live. I am not able to keep a full rein on my spirit, mind, social relationships, body or soul— unless Thou art in full control. May I never grieve or quench the Divine Spirit. May I never take my Lord and Savior for granted and may I ever keep in close touch with Thee, my Father. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 48

GOD MY SHEPHERD

I saw Jacob lying on his bed. For fifteen years after the famine, he and his family were able to pursue their lives as shepherds in Goshen without fear. Joseph was still the governor. From seventy persons in the family, the number was rapidly increasing. From people who were in danger of losing everything because of the famine, they now were prospering and the future seemed bright. God had truly been a Shepherd to Jacob. He could see clearly his dependence was on God alone, not on his scheming and dishonesty. It is a good thing when we stop to count our blessings and we see where it all came from. When we finally realize that God is our Shepherd and we trust in His provision and care - then we stop trying to grab everything for ourselves.

Lying on his death-bed, Jacob could see things clearly. He recalled to Joseph the promise of God when He appeared to him at Bethel (Luz). He recognized God was the Almighty God and everything that he had was from the hand of God his Shepherd. Now instead of Joseph being added to his family again, he claimed Joseph's two sons as his own. They each had a portion in Jacob's family so Joseph got a double portion. It is a comfort to know when things seem dark, God is still for us. "If God be for us, who can be against us." Neither Jacob or Joseph knew at first the reason they were apart for years - Jacob thinking Joseph was dead, and Joseph wondering if Jacob was alive. Above all of the tears and disappointments, God was guiding them as a shepherd guides and leads the sheep of his pasture. Now the two young sons are brought before Israel, the prince with God. Now as God's man, he brings these two, born in a far country from an Egyptian mother, raised in a different culture, into the place of blessing among God's people. When they took their place among the tribe of Israel is not clear, but it probably happened after Joseph died.

When God sets His hand upon one and chooses them to fulfill His plans, He goes deeper than we can. He goes deeper than appearances or whether one is older or younger. He goes deeper than the traditions we may have thought were so important that it offended us when they were deviated from. He goes deeper than a person's position or occupation. He can use the person least expected, the less obvious choice by our standards and use them to carry out the plans He made. Often the "weak things" are used to "confound the mighty." The qualifications we expect of ourselves or that others expect of us do not thwart God's plans. He can make one whose appearance is not attractive to be a mighty spokesman for Him. He can use one with a bad temper to learn divine wisdom and be able to shepherd His sheep. He can use one who may be of a phlegmatic nature to open doors for God's glory. Don't count others out because they don't meet your expectations. And don't count yourself out even if you think you are a failure or are unable to do what you think you should. God is able to take a laborer sent into the harvest and make of that person one to suit His purposes and who will not take glory to himself.

As I saw in my mind's eye those three generations together, I thought of the wonders of God's grace. An old man now on his death-bed started out his life as a conniving scheming deceptive young man who was totally self-centered. But God was a Shepherd to him all through his life and through him blessings still flow today. The middle-aged man, a noble leader among the nation, began as a pampered favorite son, with a coat of many colors given as a sign of his father's expectation of future leadership. Now it has come true, but by way of rejection from jealous brothers who sold him as a slave; by way of slavery and the sinful enticement of a worldly woman; by way of years spent in prison - falsely accused and condemned. Through it all to the throne of Egypt, God led him as a Shepherd. Now two young sons, starting out, find themselves part of the tribe of Israel, not Egyptians. Our lives as people of faith may lead us to places we never intended to go. They may be led by God into a work we had never planned for. The results of our lives may be so different from what we first thought, that we hardly recognize ourselves. But with God the Lord as our Shepherd, the pastures will ultimately be green and the water good, even though He may have to lead us through dry deserts at times.

*Shepherding people is similar at times to work of shepherding sheep.
There are enemies around who want to claim their lives, but the shepherd is there to keep
Them from harm and danger that lurks all around; the world is not a safe place.
But the Great Shepherd of the sheep is there to feed and protect them by His wisdom and His grace.*

*There are times when the sheep seem to get out of hand, they are likely off their feed.
The shepherd is there to watch them each day and he knows what they really need.
Good healthy feed is not always as tasty as some of the noxious weeds around.
But the Good Shepherd is there and moves the sheep to where good pasture is to be found.*

*To live among sheep may not be the nicest place for a shepherd to continually dwell.
There may be the sounds of a lot of complaining, and of course there is the smell.
In spite of all that, the potential is there for the sheep to produce a good return.
So the Chief Shepherd is there to calm them and guide so the sheep His voice will learn.*

*Through the years of living there is getting and giving, the Shepherd is there to guide.
Sometimes there is opposition and challenge and we find no place to hide.
The Shepherd knows how to step in and remove hindrances to His plan.
He has at His disposal powers that are His, none of which are given to man.*

*When the subtly of temptation plays its music, it has a different tone.
It may not seem so bad at all, but the Shepherd has one of His own.
When the two try to mix there are discordant notes that fix our ear upon which one is right.
The Shepherd's tone is the one to follow for those who walk by faith not sight.*

*There come times of stormy weather in this journey of life when we need a place of shelter.
Voices call out loudly, "Come to this place," and before long everything is helter-skelter.
Then the voice of the Shepherd comes loud and strong, "This is the way; walk ye in it."
And the fear and uncertainty are no longer there, and calm comes in less than a minute.*

*The Shepherd of our life isn't a shepherd of strife, He leads in a way most serene.
Where we are today is much different then if left alone where we would have been.
Looking back, I can see where He has led me through dangerous places in peace.
I didn't know all the pitfalls, the marshy ground; He has brought me here by His grace.*

"Gracious God my Father, I praise and worship Thee this morning as I look back and see the way Thou hast guided me until now. There is no doubt I would have made a total mess of life if You were not my Shepherd. I thank Thee in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 48:16. *"The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads: and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."*

BLESS THE LADS.

*Fading slowly away from earth, they gather – and watch –
Seeing the difference upon his countenance and his face is toward the future.
They know his pilgrimage is almost over – he is weak and weary –
But some things remain to be done – last words to be said.*

*Joseph has heard and comes with his two sons – he is glad –
He gathers his strength and sits upon his bed to speak,
No trivialities now – life's book is written these are the last words of the last chapter.
"God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz... and blessed me."*

*"The One who redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads."
Joseph, you are now two tribes – these are numbered with the sons.
The younger will be greater than the older –
Both will become great among the nations.*

*"God will be with you, and bring you again into the land..."
A grandfather's words have weight to them –
The wisdom of age and experience count – use your words wisely –*

They will be remembered – and weighed – and acted upon.

*I too, a grandfather say; “Bless the lads” – I have three to impart truth to.
Douglas, you have been a blessing to others by learning to not always speak.
When you speak, generally you have some thing of worth to say.
Understand the value of weighing words with care before using them.*

*Gregory, you have a natural ability to learn and a desire to know more.
Focus your learning and intelligence on worthwhile things – not trivialities.
Direct your enthusiasm by godly control – you are going to be a leader.
Lead by example and wisdom, not by demands or the arrogance of position.*

*Campbell, you are a person people will always love – and you know it.
You are a manipulator by personality, and that can be useful if used properly.
Learn from the Lord Jesus how He talked with people, how He used his personality.
He loved them and made sure He was focused on their well being – and salvation.*

“Father, please bless these lads. They are all different and each in their own way is very endearing to people – not only their grandfather. Give them light in their souls and light others at their fire. Pour upon them empowerment by the Holy Spirit to fill to the top the work Thou hast for them. Let them learn well and use their potential for things that are lasting and good. Use them in the work of Thy kingdom so that the efforts of their lives will be eternal in value and will be for the glory of God. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

GENESIS 49

HE BLESSED THEM

They came from their different places of abode leaving their work, for the time had come for Jacob to die. The twelve sons and their father are together for the last time. The blessing that would confer a sense of well-being and perhaps prosperity on each one was about to be given. As I saw those men stand before their father, I wondered what their attitude towards his words would be. Our past does affect our future. Our attitude affects our actions. Tomorrow's blessings will be affected by our actions of today. And by tomorrow the actions of today will be part of my history which will be part of what shapes my future. In the same way the decisions and consequent actions of those men provided the basis for their blessing. The things I avoid or choose will determine my course in the future.

Some of the men heard in the presence of their brothers the negative consequences of their actions. They may have felt at the time that no one knew what they did. Or perhaps they thought their actions were justified. Whatever the reason they did what they did, it affected them and the future of those around them. A morally weak person who sneaks about or else whines about all the things that are against him, doesn't have a whole lot to recommend him to others. People of a bitter spirit and dark cruel disposition and who act with cruelty towards others, cannot expect to be blessed themselves. Violence produces violence and they will be avoided by those who want to live in peace. At the same time although one may have failed in so many ways, God does recognize the fact that when one changes their attitude and that change is real, that person can become an especially positive force among his people. Another may have a quiet and reflective personality and the blessing he receives will enable him to make his living in a way that is suitable to him, and at the same time be a comfort to others of a similar personality.

A man may have a nature that wants to, and is able to, work unceasingly. Every waking hour he feels the need to be bearing a burden or doing hard work that others may want to avoid. He will be successful and will feel good about what he has done. There is another type of person who is strict, law-abiding and without a sense of humor, who abides studiously by every law, and watches to see that others do too. He has a tendency to be critical and legalistic to a fault. Another may want to be everybody's friend. He trusts people he doesn't know and will find himself robbed by them, but will not leave them alone and will be a continual bother to those who did him wrong. Some people have Epicurean tastes and like to think of themselves as high society. They may live above their means but appearances are important to them. They have a desire to impress people hoping that it will open doors for them to be truly looked up to. When one is self-absorbed, they may be a beautiful person occupied with themselves and their looks to the extent they have very little to offer others that is profitable in any way.

Then there is a person who knows who they are, why they are here and who does not let adversity turn him away from his faith in God. He has difficulties and struggles in life that seem unfair, but he draws near to

God because of these obstacles. The battles that he has to pass through make him stronger in faith and mighty in the things of God. Other people are blessed by him and because of him. But he may have a spoiled brother who is never satisfied. Nothing pleases him. He never has enough. He was spoiled as a child and is spoiled as an adult. The predictions of his future are bleak because he will be perpetually unhappy and so will those who are around him.

I was made aware of the fact that God knows every person and personality. He knows all about the past, the present and the future. The lesson that most stands out to me is that a person has the ability within them to change for the better, and God recognizes that desire to change.

As Jacob finished his blessing of his sons, I wondered how each of them felt as they left his presence. Would they have changed because of what they heard about themselves? Would they have gone home happy or sad? Would they have taken seriously what the old man said? I could review in my mind those I know and some take my counsel seriously. Others reject it or laugh behind my back at the things I have said thinking I am naive and old-fashioned. May the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - and my God too, help them to honor Him.

*It is not always easy to be told the truth -
Because the truth may have a tendency to hurt.
But when something is said that is truly worth
My listening and heeding, that is a start
To learning a lesson or lessons in life
That will ultimately stand me in good stead.
Truth has unique character and that is light,
And that light will show me the way ahead.*

*I may not like what I hear about me,
But I am wise if I lend a good ear -
To what someone else is able to see -
And is willing to tell me where
Some changes are in order that I
Can be more effective in my calling.
Such a friend is able to tell my why
And how I can be kept by God from falling.*

*It is a real blessing when God, someone uses
To awaken my conscience and will -
To learn of God Himself and what He chooses
To produce other blessings still.
For our lives are not to be lived for self alone,
But for other's benefit and God's glory.
When the review is given in a sentence when I am done,
I wonder how God will sum up my life's story.*

*Everything that I do from day to day,
Has an effect for good or for bad;
All the things I write and the things I say -
Are indicative of the things I have had
To use for the Lord that He can bless -
That the work of His kingdom may be furthered.
It is my desire that some people might confess
That in some way I have them nurtured.*

"All knowing God, there is sort of a fear and trepidation in me as I think of the day of review that is coming. My concern for today is that all might not be wood, hay or stubble, but that there will be some gold, silver and precious stones come from Thy servant. May these meditations and the ones through the rest of this day, be something You can bless. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GENESIS 49:1-2. *“And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, ‘Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days. Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father.’”*

DISCLOSURE.

*They gathered together a divergent group
Of men although they were brothers.
Each came to hear Jacob’s final words,
Before he was gathered to his fathers.*

*As their father began to speak to them –
Things they had thought would never see exposure
Were pointed out – these would affect their lives –
Hidden things were given full disclosure.*

*Some heard good things and others heard bad –
Our life is made up of decisions.
Actions made in haste in a moment’s time -
Can follow us even after serious confessions.*

*A whole life can pass without sins being known –
But of this you can be very sure –
There is a day both for saved and lost –
When before the Lord there is full disclosure.*

*For those who are saved we will give account –
Of the life for the Lord we live here.
For those who stand before the Great White Throne –
Disclosure will bring them great fear.*

*It is my desire to live each day –
Aware of the all-seeing eyes of God.
Then when the Lord comes to take us away –
I will not be ashamed to look at my Lord.*

“O Holy God, looking ahead to the day when all the hidden things will be brought into light, I am aware of the need of Thy grace to be manifest to me each day. I am thankful for Thy saving grace and for grace to live each hour for Thee. I know if left to myself I would fail in every way. How I praise Thee for disclosing to me early in life my need of the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord. Now I do thank Thee for His present work as Mediator and High Priest on my behalf. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

GENESIS 50

THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN

At the beginning of this book there was the satisfaction God had as He created all things by the word of His power and set everything in order. At the end of the book of Genesis we see the wages of sin which is death and the tears that accompany death and the body of a loved one in a coffin. I took note of the difference between the power and plans of God from those of men. He has prepared a place for man to dwell where he might enjoy fellowship with God. Now at the end of Genesis the last enemy death, has a place in the ground where the body of even a prince with God must be placed out of sight. How sad are the consequences of sin. The great multitude of those that accompanied the body of Jacob, indicated the respect the nation of Egypt still had for Joseph. But even though the form is there and is still holding the semblance of the one who lived in that body, sin still had its claims and the mourning was for the person who left the body - the consequences of sin.

In the cave of Machpelah there was the bones of those who had gone before - Sarah, Abraham, Isaac and now Jacob. The embalmed body lay with the bones of the others as only a sign of respect for the Egyptians who thought their dead needed a body in the next world. It is true that we owe respect to the passing of those who lived among us. The embalming of bodies has nothing to do with the life of the departed ones.

Sometimes a period of grieving is needed by those who lose loved ones to the consequences of sin. The opening up of our feelings may take some time before we can really move on with our life among the living.

Joseph understood the value of trust. He had built the reputation of one who could be trusted over the years of his leadership in Egypt. It was therefore right for him to promise to return after burying his father in his own homeland. It is right for us to build a similar reputation of trust in the world today even though we don't do the same things the majority of people do. Our word should be our bond. Our work should be as good as we can possibly do. Our ways should be reliable rather than inconsistent. Our worship should be in spirit and in truth - not just something to be seen by those looking on. It takes time to build trust. We have opportunities that come to us to build trust even in the smallest things of life.

I noticed as I watched the sons of Jacob gather, that there was still a degree of deception as they now wondered what Joseph would do since Jacob had died. They used Jacob's supposed words, which could not be verified, to try to be assured of their safety. The openness and honesty which they had once, seemed to be lacking when they came together after Jacob's burial. The grace of Joseph seemed to be in doubt as far as they were concerned. But Joseph had forgiven them. Now he had to reassure them that he meant what he said. He offers to care for them and their children. His forgiveness was not half-hearted. It was complete forgiveness. God is willing to forgive us. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." We accept God's forgiveness by faith and He who forgives empowers us to not go and do the same things again. By faith we appreciate His forgiveness, and by faith we live in fellowship with God. Joseph had learned by the experiences of life that God can bring good out of evil. God can overrule the evil intentions to bring the results He intended.

Joseph had no doubt that God would bring the tribe of Israel back to their promised land. He had trusted God during his lifetime and now he was trusting God in his death-time. He knew God would keep His promises so instructed them to bring his body to be buried with his forbearers. Faith grows and is strengthened by exercise. We become more confident in God as the years pass and as we keep learning from Him. When God promises help in the day of trouble, He gives it. When God says He will never leave or forsake us, we can experience His presence with us. When God says He will honor those who honor Him, He does just that. When we have our confidence in God and His faithfulness to us, there may be those who come after us who will set their hope in God.

I learned on my journey through Genesis that men and women who walked in God's ways, experienced God's blessing. Even though they failed at times in their lives, God was with them. Where did they get the courage and incentive to live by faith? They knew God was with them in spite of their failures. I know that God does what He promised to do. I have no question that "God is, and He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." I will not doubt Him even though there are times when I have questions as to why things happen. There are issues in my life even now that I see no answer to, but by God's grace, I will trust Him and not be afraid.

*They stood alone, those people of faith, among the history of men.
There are lessons we learn today because of things that happened to them.
We may never know until after we die, the effect we have had on the living.
God knows, and that is all that really counts, perhaps we'll understand more in heaven.*

*Jacob died, then all of his sons and many generations that followed after.
Even today his seed is blessing the world even though the majority are scattered.
Through that family a nation was born that is identifiable to this day.
This world has hope because from Judah's tribe came Him who is the Way.*

*From obscure beginnings there has come to be a group that causes the world to tremble.
People get worried when Jews from many nations to Israel begin to assemble.
They are gathering because a promise was made of a land to be their own.
Israel is the place where the patriarch's seed want to make their home.*

*So from time to time and from many places they come to Israel in spite of the danger.
Even though they lived in other countries, they were always considered a stranger.
The years spent in Egypt were certainly many, but they didn't intend to stay.
Even now they talk with hope of a time when from God they will no longer stray.*

*Sin has a way of working, with the purpose of making people strangers to God.
Most Israelis today don't spend time searching the New Testament of the Word.
They base their hopes of a future upon the promise of God to make Israel a nation;
Not realizing that God has a plan to fulfill, that brings meaning to each situation.*

*From the first of Genesis to the end there is truth for living a life of faith.
Almost every situation in life is able in this first book to be traced.
The good and the bad is addressed that we who read it might know -
What brings blessings from God, and how our faith is able to show.*

*There are many people who try to discredit this book as only a fable -
Not realizing that reading it through, God from these pages is able
To give us warnings and guidance and prepare us for what we meet
On this road of life we are traveling, and the goals we are called on to seek,*

***"O Lord God, the journey through Genesis has served once again as a challenge to me to see if I am really walking by faith.
The unknown often causes questions and even doubts until we review again the way things began. Thank You, O God, for
giving us this book. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."***

GENESIS 50:9. *"And they went up with him both chariots and horsemen: and it was a very great company."*

GIVE HONOR.

*He wasn't a perfect man, this man called Israel -
He schemed and plotted yet God loved him in spite of all.
His years passed in turmoil at home and abroad -
Yet he always remembered his God had called.*

*Honor was given him at the time of his death -
The man was named by God "A prince."
When such a one dies, we remember his best -
And "Israel" has been respected since.*

*It is appropriate to give honor to those,
Whom God has adopted, and called His own.
He had dealt with them in life, we must not suppose
He has restrictions when he calls each one home.*

*Go over the life of the one who has passed -
Look for those places of victory.
Let us all respect those things that last
When the last chapter is written of their story.*

*God welcomes those who belong to Him -
We should honor our dead entering their "long home."
Grace has worked and failures dim
When we go back over all they have done.*

***"Father God, some of Thy choice people have recently been called home to be with Thee, their journey here over. I am
thinking of an older sister who was a simple woman with struggles though life, but was faithful to Thee and the assembly
she was a part of. A brother, close to my age, who was well known and a leader among God's people is gone now. I honor
them both before Thee here and thank Thee for memories I have had of them through the years. In the name of the Lord
Jesus Christ, Amen."***

