
Pilgrims Journal

“They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city.” (Heb 11:13–16)

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PURITY! PURITY! PURITY!

Our God is both holy and triune, qualities proclaimed by angelic worship: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord.” In this same image, He made man: holy in character, and tripartite in a being comprised of spirit, soul, and body. Man, through his disobedience to the revealed will of God, marred his holiness and alienated himself from the life of God. Nevertheless, in order that the eternal plan and purpose of God might be fulfilled concerning man, God sent His only begotten Son into this evil world, that fallen man may be redeemed from his sinfulness and restored to holiness. The Lord Jesus Christ, bearing the sin of the whole world upon Himself, died at Calvary. Today, when one comes to Christ with a penitent heart for his sins, the blood of Jesus cleanses him and he receives both pardon for sins and eternal salvation. Thus man who sold himself into the hands of the devil can now be redeemed and restored to God through the precious blood of Jesus Christ. *“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot” (1Pet 1:18-19).*

Holiness is one of the salient qualities of the character of God. It is that divine attribute which speaks primarily of

being totally separated from all that is unclean, common, and mundane. It speaks of that which is radiantly pure, beautiful, and glorious. Being Himself the quintessence of untarnishable holiness, God cannot sin; neither can He have any communion or fellowship with sin. No unclean person can approach Him. *“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14).*

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts (Isa 6:3). He is glorious in holiness (Exo 15:11). Holiness is His beauty (1Chr 16:29). He sits upon the throne of His holiness (Psa 47:8). He dwells in the mountain of His holiness (Psa 48:1). He speaks in holiness (Psa 60:6). His house is holy (Psa 93:5). All His works are holy (Psa 145:17).

New Birth

God has chosen us in Christ Jesus that we may be holy and blameless before Him in love. In order for us to be holy, first the Holy Spirit grants us conviction and repentance. As we genuinely repent for and confess all our action sins, the blood of Jesus Christ washes away our sins; and thus we are delivered from the dominion of sin. This is the first step of salvation. *“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Pro 28:13).* *“But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1Jn 1:7).*

Water Baptism

Although we are delivered from the dominion of sin at new birth, there dwells within us a sinful nature to commit sin. This is known as the nature of sin or the Adamic nature. To be set free from this inherently sinful nature, with traits like disobedience and rebellion, we must be dead and buried with Christ in water baptism. At water baptism, we die to our old habit of committing sin against God. *“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life”* (Rom 6:3-4).

“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God” (Rom 6:12-13). As we make a full surrender of every member of our body as instruments of righteousness to God in baptism, we enter into the second step of salvation, at which point we also **make an uncompromising covenant with God to live a holy life**. When a child of God makes a total surrender to do the whole will of God at the baptismal covenant, he receives the grace of God to practice purity. Hallelujah!

Baptism of the Holy Spirit

We have seen that at new birth, we are delivered from the dominion of sin, and at water baptism, we are freed from the inherent sinful nature. There is still one more deliverance needed before we can practice Christ-like purity in its fulness, and that is deliverance from self. Self is natural, carnal, and earthly. In order for us to totally break loose from a self-centered life, we need the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues. This is the third step of salvation to live holy lives. *“For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness”*: and for that purpose He has also given us the Holy Spirit (1Ths 4:7-8).

At the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we die to self, to our natural, carnal, earthly affections; and by the operation of the power of the Holy Ghost, we become one with the triune God, and partakers of His divine nature (Jn 14:20). The natural, carnal life is brought under control by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:5-6). National distinctions are eliminated (1Cor 12:13), earthly affections are mortified (Col 3:5; Rom 8:13), and our affections are set on things above, not on things on the earth (Col 3:1-2). This is the point at which we become a totally new creature: old things are passed away; all things are become new. *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new”* (2Cor 5:17).

Christ, The Pattern of Holiness

The Lord Jesus Christ lived a pure life while He was on the earth and instructed His followers to do the same. Being absolutely and infinitely holy in all that He is and in all that He does, He wants His people to be pure and holy. *“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God”* (Mat 5:8). *“But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, ‘Be ye holy; for I am holy’”* (1Pet 1:15-16). Christ practiced purity in His spirit, soul, and body.

Purity in Spirit

In 2 Corinthians 5:21 we read, *“For He hath made Him to be sin for us, **Who knew no sin**; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”* That Christ “knew no sin” means **the spirit of Christ was absolutely pure**. Sinful thoughts found no place in what He knew (in His mind). He was free of unforgiveness, bitterness and revenge. He was determined in His mind (which is the seat of one's spirit) to always do the perfect will of the Father. After having practiced purity in His spirit, finally Jesus commended His pure spirit to the holy Father. *“And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, ‘Father, into Thy hands I **commend My spirit**’: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost”* (Lk 23:46). The resurrection of Jesus was made possible because His spirit was holy. *“And declared to be the Son of God with*

*power, according to the **spirit of holiness**, by the resurrection from the dead”* (Rom 1:4).

Stephen, the first martyr of the New Testament period, is a good example for us all to follow. Although he was brutally and mercilessly stoned to death, his final words revealed that his spirit was pure. He was able, by the grace of God, to commit a holy spirit to Jesus at his departure. *“And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, ‘**Lord Jesus, receive my spirit**’”* (Ac 7:59). The New Testament saints who are getting ready for Mount Zion and New Jerusalem must practice and preserve the purity of their spirit.

Purity of Soul

The Apostle John through divine revelation tells us that there was no sin in Christ, that the sinful nature was absent in Christ's soul. *“And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and **in Him is no sin**”* (1Jn 3:5). Jesus preserved the purity of His heart. The heart being the residence of the soul, He never allowed bitterness, anger, and retaliation toward anyone to creep into His heart, lest His soul be defiled. Christ loved even His worst enemies. When we were His enemies, He loved us and gave Himself on the cross of Calvary for us. May the Lord grant us the grace to keep a pure heart that we may be preserved in the purity of our soul. *“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life”* (Pro 4:23).

Purity in Body

Even as the Lord Jesus Christ practiced and preserved the purity of His spirit and soul, He was careful to maintain the holiness of His body as well. God the Father and the Holy Spirit sanctified and prepared His body and sent Him into the world to do the perfect will of the Father using His body. *“Come ye near unto Me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now **the Lord GOD, and His Spirit, hath sent Me**”* (Isa 48:16). *“Say ye of Him, Whom the Father hath **sanctified, and sent into the world, ‘Thou blasphemest’; because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?**”* (Jn 10:36).

The Apostle Peter tells us that Christ did no sin with His body. Had Jesus committed any sin with His body, however insignificant it may have appeared, He would have been disqualified from being a sin offering for the whole world at Calvary. Praise God He kept the purity of His body till the very end. *“**Who (Jesus) did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth**”* (1Pet 2:22). *“Wherefore when He cometh into the world, He saith, ‘Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but **a body hast Thou prepared Me: in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure.**’ Then said I, ‘Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me,) to do Thy will, O God”* (Heb 10:5-7).

The Spirit-baptized people of God must be extremely careful to preserve the sanctity of their bodies from any unclean practices and immoral sins. Our body, which is the temple of the Holy Spirit, must not be defiled. We are to serve the Lord with pure bodies (1Cor 3:16-17; 6:19-20).

Sanctification, the Perfect Will of God

“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour” (1Ths 4:3-4). The vessel here signifies our spirit, soul, and body. **The entire sanctification of our spirit, soul, and body is the perfect will of the eternal Father concerning the New Testament saints.** Having perceived this will of God concerning the church, Paul earnestly prayed for it. *“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your **whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless** unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1Ths 5:23). Christ gave His life at Calvary for a glorious church (Eph 5:25-27).

As the hope of the coming of the Lord grows in our lives, we are, and can be, purified. *“And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure”* (1Jn 3:3). As we live a pure life, we will be able to see God. **“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.”**

“He Hath Purposed... That We Should Be Holy”

God is holy, holy, holy. He wants His Church to be holy and without blame before Him in love. **The purpose of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was not only to forgive the sins of the whole world, but also that each person might be presented holy and unblameable and un-reproveable in His sight** (Col 1:22). The Church that is to be caught up to His throne as His glorious Bride must be completely sanctified. God is cleansing the Church with His Word, Spirit and blood. As we fully yield ourselves to the Lord, He will completely sanctify our spirit, soul, and body, and finally make us ready for the soon coming of Jesus Christ. The work the Lord began in our lives will be completed by the immense grace and great faithfulness of God. *“Faithful is He that calleth you, Who also will do it”* (1Ths 5:24). **Let the beauty of holiness be our adornment.**

“Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God” (Rev 21:9-10). □

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Let not your HEART be troubled

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (Jn 14:1-3).

Although these are some of the most encouraging words ever spoken by Jesus, they are also the continuation of a conversation with Peter from the previous chapter—a conversation that began with very troubling words. Peter was being told by his beloved Lord and Master that he would deny Him! “Simon Peter said unto Him, ‘Lord, whither goest Thou?’ Jesus answered him, ‘Whither I go, thou canst not follow Me now; but thou shalt follow Me afterwards.’ Peter said unto Him, ‘Lord, why cannot I follow Thee now? I will lay down my life for Thy sake.’ Jesus answered him, ‘Wilt thou lay down thy life for My sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied Me thrice” (Jn 13:36-38).

The Hot Water Test

We often refer to Peter as the disciple who denied Jesus, and the focus definitely is on him in this passage. Peter is the only one of the disciples that the Bible records as having been approached by various people, each one asserting that he or she had seen him with Jesus. There is a saying, that a Christian is like a tea bag: his true flavor only comes out when placed in hot water. As Peter was plunged into this boiling situation, what was brewing inside came out. “Then began he to curse and swear, saying, ‘I know not the man!’ And immediately the cock crew” (Mat 26:75).

Poor Peter! The very thing he said he would *never* do, he had done, and that with great fervor! And Peter was not alone. All the disciples confidently declared that they would not deny Jesus (Mat 26:35), but then ended up doing the opposite: “all the disciples forsook Him, and fled” (Mat 26:56). Although they all sincerely wanted to follow their beloved Master faithfully to the end, they were not strong enough to stand. God permitted this test to show them their true state. In the same way, God will allow the “hot water” test in our lives—difficult situations that will let us know how weak we truly are. If we faint in the day of adversity, as Peter and the others did, we can know for a fact that our strength is small (Pro 24:10).

O How Sweet to Trust

As Jesus was speaking to Peter in Luke 22, He warned him that Satan would try to take away Peter's faith in the midst of the trial. "And the Lord said, 'Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat'" (22:31). The devil's plan was to destroy Peter, but God's plan was to change him. "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (22:32). Oh, how powerful are the intercessions of our great High Priest! That is why Jesus said, right after telling Peter he would deny Him, "Let not [Peter's] heart be troubled...believe in Me" (Jn 14:1). Though we see our own weaknesses, we can continue to trust in our God. In this situation, the Lord would take the most traumatic experience in Peter's life and turn it into something good. The Lord can do the same for us.

Troubled by a Weak Heart

One of life's most troubling experiences is facing our own weaknesses and failures. When Job saw the Lord, and realized his own wretchedness, his only response was, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:6). The prophet Isaiah had a similar reaction when he found himself in the presence of the holy God: "Woe is me! For I am undone!" (Isa 6:5). Although he had already been ministering to the people of God for some time, God had to bring him to the place of realizing his own "unholiness" as it were. When the Lord cleansed him,

and asked, "Who will go for us?" (Isa 6:8), Isaiah was willing to go, but was no longer trusting in his own strength or holiness. The Apostle Paul had a similar revelation about himself when he said, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Rom 7:18).

For Peter and the rest of the disciples, Jesus was gradually leading them to this same understanding. Knowing their weakness, He had exhorted them in the garden to watch and pray, so that they would not enter into temptation; and He stated the reason as being that "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Mat 26:41). However, they did not take heed to this exhortation to prayer, but instead they were found fleeing and denying. For Peter, when he realized what he had done, it was just too much for him to bear: "Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, 'Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice.' And he went out and wept bitterly" (Mat 26:75). He became a broken man, unable to live up to his own expectations—an utter failure.

Now consider this: Peter was utterly broken when he finally came face to face with this great failure, but Jesus—Who knew all along that Peter would deny Him—was not troubled at all about it! In fact, He assured Peter that he should not even let his heart be troubled either. Jesus had told him then, that though Peter didn't have the ability to give his life for Him at that time, later he would come to the place of literally bearing his own

cross: “thou canst not follow Me now, but thou *shalt* follow Me afterwards” (Jn 13:36).

The Truth Shall Set You Free

Our God is the One Who knows what we are made of. “For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that *we are dust*” (Psa 103:14). Yet He has made the way for us to become like Him. “He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory” (1Sam 2:8). For us to enter into this overcoming life and to eventually be able to inherit the throne of glory, we must first come to the realization that we are but dust.

One of the most difficult truths for us to understand is the truth about ourselves. Peter had such great aspirations for himself, to follow Jesus even unto death (“I will lay down my life for Thy sake”), but it was not until he was tested, that he realized that he did not possess that ability. Though he loved Jesus with all his heart, Peter had to first face the frailty of that heart, before the Lord could transform his life. We must also face our own weaknesses before He can change us, because only then will we realize our need to seek Him. “For without Me ye can do nothing” (Jn 15:5).

He Gives Power to the Faint

Looking at Elijah, we can see that he also was brought to the place of having to face his own weakness. This mighty prophet

of God who had been used to perform great feats of power was suddenly confronted with the reality of his own inability, and thus declared, “I am not better than my fathers” (1Kg 19:4). It is so easy for us to get used to the graces and gifts that God has given us, and forget that it is not our strength and ability, but His grace and goodness. When we get into that mode, we tend to think that we have finally “made it,” and have become “better than our fathers.” It is at this point that God must step in to show us our inadequacies—our utter failure without Him.

Having to recognize and admit our own frailties and failures is not always an easy thing. We often assume that Elijah fled and fell asleep under the juniper tree because he feared the wicked Jezebel’s threats of death. But could it be that his real discouragement came when he saw that he was running from a mere woman, unable to withstand her words? It was at this point that he received the revelation that he was no better than others, and he was not able to accept that. He laid down and went to sleep to forget his own failure, but God would not allow him to remain in that discouraged state. He made the man of God whom He had chosen realize his great need: “Arise and eat; because the journey is too great *for thee*” (1Kg 19:7).

God’s resources are without measure, and in His heavenly storehouse is found everything we need for life and godliness. Yet often we leave the supply untouched, simply because we do not realize what we lack. Elijah had to be brought to the stark realization of his own weakness before he could be directed to

his only Help—the Bread of Life, the Living Water. “And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God” (1Kg 19:8).

Newly Resurrected Hopes

Although Peter thought it was all over for him, his ministry was actually just beginning. A few days after Peter’s own failure, his Savior had risen; and to the women who had come to His empty tomb, an angel gave this message: “He is risen; He is not here....But go your way, tell His disciples *and Peter* that He goeth before you into Galilee: there ye shall see Him, as He said unto you” (Mk 16:6-7). Obviously Jesus had a special concern for Peter. He had already prayed for him that his faith would not fail, and now He would go after him to make sure of it. How true the promise: “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee” (Heb 13:5).

Now that Peter was broken, God could use him as He wanted. “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?” (Jn 21:16). When Jesus asked this for the third time, one version of the Bible states that Peter was sad Jesus had to ask three times: perhaps he felt he was asked for the three times he had denied Jesus. Peter responded the third time, “Lord, You know everything; You know that I love You!” (Jn 21:17). Before, Peter may have said with great zeal, “Of course I love You! How could You *think* otherwise?” But this time, realizing his own weakness, he

replied, “You know everything, Lord. Although I have failed You greatly, I do love You, Lord.”

I Will Receive You to Myself

Is this your state today, dear friend? Have you been caught in your own weaknesses and failures, thinking that you can no longer follow Him? Jesus has you right where He wants you, and today He is asking, “Do you love Me?” He has gone to prepare a place for those who love Him, who in the midst of their weaknesses cling to the One Who is able to finish the work in their lives. Therefore beloved, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me” (Jn 14:1). Let us serve Him out of love. As He allows us to see our own frailties, it should only cause us to draw closer, and to trust the One Who is coming to receive us unto Himself. Even as He prayed for Peter, He is praying for us that in the midst of the sifting, we will only trust Him more, become a strength to others, and be made ready for that great and glorious day. □

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As one of six children, I was brought up in South Carolina and attended the Methodist AME Church where both my father and grandfather served as deacons and Sunday School teachers. According to tradition, we were all expected to “join the church.” But I never did because I thought religion was only for older people. At the age of ten I began to rebel. Satan took advantage of me and for years I harbored feelings of unforgiveness against my family. My mom would often ask me what was wrong but my unwillingness to forgive made me treat them with indifference and like strangers.

Later, my heart became embittered by another problem—the Civil Rights Movement. I joined it to protest the racial inequalities of the time and the overt discrimination occurring throughout my city. In the struggle, I realized that education was the key to open closed doors. I excelled in high school and won a scholarship to study engineering.

University life meant new friends, moving away from home, and a new city. Desiring to be popular on campus, I joined various fraternities and social organizations, but lacked the strength to resist peer pressure. Eventually, I began to mingle with the wrong crowd and ended up drinking alcohol, using drugs and pursuing

other vain endeavors. The power of sin pulled me down, yet I was still able to achieve good grades and keep up a good but hypocritical appearance in front of my professors.

During the early 1970’s, America was involved in the Vietnam War. Many were drafted and sent to fight, but I did not want to go. In an effort to avoid the draft, I enrolled in the University’s ROTC (Reserved Officer Training Corps) program which obligated me to enter the army, but I would only have to serve as a commissioned officer after I finished my degree. Thank God, the war ended the very year I began active duty.

My expectations of life as a military officer were very positive. I looked forward to the hard work and strict discipline. Military life was in fact rewarding, but the power of sin once again pulled me in the wrong direction. My superiors thought I was an outstanding officer, but in actuality I was living a double life full of drugs and alcohol. After three years, I finally realized that I could not continue living as a hypocrite, and decided to resign from the army and return to college for a Master’s Degree.

Seeking to flee from my problems and a life of deprivation, I chose to leave America. Although I could not speak Spanish, I enrolled in the University of Puerto Rico. Reflecting back, I can see how God masterfully planned every detail of my life. I fled to Puerto Rico to escape my problems, but it was there that I found the problem solver, Jesus Christ.

While in Puerto Rico, I rarely called my family. I wanted to forget them and start a new life, yet my mother kept writing

to me. One day I received a shocking letter that broke my heart. She informed me of some very serious problems taking place back home in South Carolina. I became depressed and discouraged. As I sat there in the student cafeteria, surrounded by hundreds of students, I could not help but feel all alone. When I glanced across the room, I saw two young men moving from table to table speaking to the students. When they came to my table, they handed me a Gospel tract and asked me a simple question, "Are you saved?" Although I did not quite understand what it meant to be "saved," I answered, "Yes, I'm saved." They then asked, "How do you know?" And I responded, "well, I'm not too bad and I help other people." They realized I wasn't a true Christian because salvation is not attained by good works. Opening the Bible, they read Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." They told me that I was a sinner on my way to Hell, but that Jesus Christ died to save me. As they continued to share the good news, the love of God filled my soul and I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. I repented of all my sins and asked forgiveness from God. That day, in 1979, Jesus set me free from bitterness, unforgiveness, prejudice, alcoholism, drugs and a host of other bondages.

As a newborn Christian I needed help, so the two brothers who led me to Christ took me under their wings and taught me the Bible. At that time, I felt no necessity to attend church because I was very independent and did not want to become a church member. But God dealt with that independent spirit and

eventually someone invited me to the New Testament Church where I was water baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit.

Shortly after finishing my Master's Degree, God called me to forsake all and follow Him, but I refused. I had studied hard for many years and now I wanted to make some money. Since I didn't understand the ways of God, I behaved as the prophet Jonah and I fled Puerto Rico and ran away to Houston, Texas. But the same God in Puerto Rico was waiting for me in Texas. Upon arrival I discovered that my university qualifications and excellent military and civilian work experience could not help me get a job. Every door was closed. With no money and no job, I ended up living in the Houston Faith Home. God was in complete control.

While there, I was able to witness firsthand the beautiful life of faith, and the love the ministers had for the believers. I was very much drawn to that—but I still wanted to find a job. Six months later, the Lord granted the desire of my heart and provided me with a job. His purpose in having allowed me to live with the ministers had been accomplished. I acquired my own place and worked for a little while. The Lord once again spoke to me about serving Him. My heart was now ready to obey His voice and I realized my greatest desire was to be in the House of God. I resigned my job and joyfully returned to the Faith Home. In 1984, I was taken into the Consecrated Ministry.

The adversary opposed my decision and whispered his lies, "How will you live? You could be wealthy and give tithes to the church. What if you get sick?" He gave me many reasons why I

should not serve God, but my love for God was greater than all my doubts and fears.

Now that I have served God for some years, I can testify that He is greater than any mountain. He has supplied all my needs. My new family in Christ includes brethren from many nations, languages and colors united by the love of God. In times of sickness, the Lord has been my Healer. One Sunday morning as I shared the Word of God, I fell down paralyzed with pain all over my body. While the brethren carried me to a room, I claimed God's Word. Psalms 27 became my daily bread and hope for nearly two weeks as I lay unable to move because of the excruciating pain. Through the gift of discernment the cause of my affliction was revealed, and after much prayer on the part of the brethren, the Lord miraculously healed me. The adversary had tried to ruin me, but in this instance, as in every other, the Lord did not fail me but proved His faithfulness.

As an engineer I had hoped to design bridges and buildings. Now as a servant of God, I am helping to build the City of God. Yes, I am leading souls to Jesus Christ—Who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

*Pastor Thomas Leach
San Miguel, El Salvador*

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The workmanship of His hands

MARVELS OF THE SPIDER

Unexpectedly coming upon a huge spider scurrying along on its eight, overlong, bristly legs will usually provoke an immediate avoidance response, to say the least—like seeing a snake. Of course, such a reaction makes good sense—the bite of either could be dangerously poisonous.

However, without these tireless, insatiable hunters, we would be overrun by all sorts of other bugs and critters. It has been determined that an average acre of meadowland is home to around two million spiders. In all the world these heroic predators consume, year in and year out, on average an annual weight of insects equal to the combined weight of the world's population! As you can see, if all the spiders suddenly died out, we would be in very great trouble indeed!

God is the grand designer of all things, even these remarkably complex spiders. These eight-legged creatures should really cause more wonder than fear, more amazement than loathing. Consider for instance how long it takes a human infant to learn to coordinate walking on only two limbs without stumbling or falling. Then consider the spider's feat in coordinating *eight* limbs with such quick and efficient

motion—such perfect coordination that the legs never seem to stumble or trip over one another. Never assume, when it comes to legs, that more are generally better. Even today's best scientists, with the latest in computer and robotic technology, still cannot imitate the skill of the average spider, particularly its dexterous movements on flat ground.

This skill with movement becomes immeasurably greater when we consider that spiders do not generally inhabit flat ground. Rather most of their time is spent on fragile webs of their own making. With their God-given talent, they are able to maneuver skillfully and gracefully in the midst of a free hanging web made of incredibly thin threads. Maneuvering upon such a tenuous structure, the spider needs to be able to cope with all conceivable possibilities such as the fluttering in the breeze or even slipping and losing grip.

Walking and climbing are some of the least impressive tasks in the spider's masterful repertoire. In its hindquarters is an automated chemical factory with a fully equipped spinning-plant.

Spider silk is one of the strongest fibers in the world. It is similar in strength to Kevlar, the material from which bullet-proof vests are made. It is very elastic and researchers have now found that spider silk is also heat resistant to a surprising degree. They have seen that the silk strands can withstand temperatures from -60 to 150°C (-76 to 302°F). From the icy cold to the very hot, the strands could still be stretched by at

least 20% before breaking. Could such a material, with the ability to withstand such extreme temperatures, have come about by chance?

A common garden spider has six glands in its hindquarters by which it manufactures five different types of web-spinning fluid. Mixing various combinations of these fluids like an experienced chemist, the spider is able to make exactly the right construction material for the particular type of thread needed at that moment. The ability to vary this mixture is necessary because the highly tensioned threads that anchor and frame the web need to be thicker than the delicate capture-network and also proportionately much stronger and more resistant to breakage by stretching. The spokes and the spiral network threads, on the other hand, need to have more elastic 'give'—meaning they must have quite a different chemical make-up. Other special glands are used to make the incredibly sticky glue with which the spiral 'capture network' is finally coated.

Incidentally, this remarkable web fluid, which immediately hardens on contact with air, doesn't just come out of holes like a watering-can. Instead, it is pressed out of as many as 600 tiny tubes, each of which gives rise to an incredibly thin fiber. These ultra-thin fibers are not just pressed together, but are twisted together in the finished product for extra strength. Amazingly, this enigmatic 'spider satin' has both greater elasticity and greater strength than steel. Its thickness

varies from a hundredth to only a thousandth of a millimeter—you would have to weave about 200 ordinary strands of them together to reach the thickness of a human hair.

To make its web, the garden-spider has to manufacture 20 meters of thread and tie about a thousand knots during construction. The final product, so artistic and functional, nevertheless weighs barely half a milligram! (A milligram is 1000th of a gram or about 1/28,000th of an ounce.) Building a web is nothing short of engineering wizardry: first the anchoring of the framing cables, then the laying and tensioning of the spokes, the laying down of an auxiliary spiral from the centre to the outside, and finally the production of the sticky capture spiral. Furthermore, the web must be at a slight angle away from the vertical up and down. The spider only works from the underside, otherwise the slightest slip in the midst of the web would mean it would be caught in its own trap. All of this demonstrates masterful planning and design. This superb craftsmanship becomes even more remarkable when we consider that the spider does not have to learn any of the skills necessary for its amazing craft. Rather, all of its skills are present from the moment it leaves the egg.

Neither the combined knowledge nor all the cumulative years of experience of the world's greatest specialists in computer technology could construct a computer able to simulate the achievements of the common garden spider—let alone with the same degree of miniaturization. And the spider does

all this with only dead insects for both energy and raw building material!

Even if such an impossibility were achieved, such a spider-computer would require an extraordinarily complicated program in order to be able to operate. But programs, that is, coded information in stored and retrievable form, are known to us exclusively as the product of the mind. They presuppose a high degree of intelligence and “know-how.” Surely no reasonable person living in this computerized age of information technology would maintain that such things come about by chance or by themselves.

“For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse...” (Rom 1:20). Spiders are ingenious examples of God’s craftsmanship, designed by a Creator Who knew perfectly what He was doing. To Him all praise, glory, and honor are forever due. □

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The Acts of the Apostles—the sequel to Luke’s gospel—narrates the birth and growth of the early church. Here, many New Testament doctrines are first seen practically applied, before becoming doctrinally defined in the epistles that follow. In this series, we will be studying, from Luke’s Apostolic Journal, particularly the “*eats*” of the apostles: we will concentrate our study on the corporal activity of eating in order to better understand certain spiritual truths. Various incidents in the book of Acts will serve as starting points for each of these teachings.

Eats of the Apostates

We will not focus on the fleshly pleasures of food as is the present gourmet fashion and current epicurean climate. At one time, people ate to live but now it seems they live to eat. Even those who have given up all other fleshly lusts will not forsake the pleasures of the plate. Many who once served God exclusively now, in effect, *worship* their own bellies (Phil 3:19). One is reminded of the original sins of Sodom. These sins were not just limited to homosexuality

or gross immorality. No, it was also the sins of overeating, under-exercising, and of course, pride, that contributed to their downfall. They did not feed the poor and needy, only their own selfish selves (Eze 16:49).

It is often the case, that when people are poor and hungry they are grateful for anything they receive. But when things are abundant and easy, many forget God and become unthankful. Most of us say grace or give thanks before we eat, yet how many of us give thanks after we are full? Deuteronomy 8:10 instructs us, “When thou hast eaten and art full, *then* thou shalt bless the Lord thy God...” It is ironic today that in the richest countries so much of the population is overweight and suffering from poor health. People seem to be digging their graves with their spoons. So we can see that there are other kinds of famine, than just a lack of food. In these prosperous times there often is a dearth of gratitude and humility.

Eternal Cuisine

God has given us all things richly to enjoy (1Tim 6:17), yet natural food was made for the belly and the belly for natural food, and one day God will do away with both (1Cor 6:13). Nevertheless, the saved will still be eating in eternity. Meals will be served, shared and enjoyed even in heaven (Mat 8:11; 25:10; 26:29; Lk 12:37; 13:29; 22:30; Rev 2:7; 19:9). And although heavenly feasts and food will not be there

because of any physical necessity, they will however be there to fulfill God's original intentions for eating. So from the acts of eating in Acts we will learn some of the Lord's eternal principles and purposes.

Home For Dinner

From the beginning of the Book of Acts we find that Jesus showed Himself physically alive after His passion by many infallible proofs (Ac 1:3). A number of these demonstrations were simply that He ate and drank with the disciples (dead people do not eat). Let us examine some of these proofs.

Many versions translate the very next verse, when Jesus instructed His followers to wait for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, as taking place while they ate together (1:4 NIV). Luke also recounts in his gospel one of the first encounters of the risen Lord with His followers on the Emmaus road (Lk 24). As Jesus walked and talked with them, He pretended not to know what had just happened in Jerusalem. He also acted as if He would walk on without them. The two disciples forced Jesus to abide with them. Jesus then sat with them, took bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to them. At this point their eyes were opened and they recognized their Lord. Just three evenings earlier the disciples would have seen Jesus do the same thing at the Last Supper in the upper room.

We too can remember and recognize Jesus every time we break bread or take the Lord's Supper. Even when we

eat our regular, everyday meals, we can be reminded that something had to give up its life so that we can continue living. Christ is not present in the physical elements of communion, but He is there wherever two or three commune in His Name. The Lord is not in the communion cup or broken bread, but He is burning in the hearts of each member of the Body of Christ as he or she fellowships with Him (Lk 24:32; 1Cor 11:29). Each time we eat can be a communion.

You Are What You Eat

Real communion is sharing Christ amongst the members of the Body of Christ—like family and friends sharing and enjoying a meal together. Unfortunately, these days so many families fight and argue at the dinner table. Another sorrow in these modern times of instant and fast food is that many homes hardly ever eat together. Sometimes we forget that the Lord's Supper was instituted at a feast—the feast of Passover (Mat 26:17-29; 1Cor 5:8).

The early church originally served communion as part of what was then known as an *Agape* Meal (which means “love feast”; Jude 1:12; 2Pet 2:13). Later, when some selfishly ate and drank while others were left hungry, Paul told the Corinthians to first eat at home and then take the Lord's Supper (1Cor 11:34). Those unkind Christians were not recognizing the Body of Christ. It was not the communion bread and wine that they were offending against, but the brethren

they did not care for or share with. After Pentecost we see in the Book of Acts the disciples sharing communion weekly (Ac 2:42; 20:7) and daily eating together in joyful unity and expectation of their soon coming wedding feast (Ac 2:46-47).

Evidence of Things Unseen

After Jesus broke bread with them at Emmaus, the two rushed back to Jerusalem to inform the other disciples. They testified that they had recognized the Lord when He broke bread with them. While they were still talking, Jesus appeared in their midst. They just heard of His resurrection, yet they reacted with fear thinking Jesus was a ghost. Even after He asked them all to touch Him and feel that He truly had flesh and bones, they still would not believe. So Jesus then asked for food. They gave Him roasted fish and some honeycomb which He ate in front of them to prove that He had indeed been bodily raised from the grave.

Jesus came with a greeting of peace but they reacted with fear. We must be at peace with those whom we fellowship with, and not doubt they are members of the Body of Christ. Jesus has ascended into heaven, yet His body is still seen on earth today among and within His disciples (Eph 5:30). The church must be His flesh and bones shown to a fearful and unbelieving world. We must stand strong in the doctrine and the Word of God, yet also show love and compassion to those who do not yet know the truth. Our

message must be strong meat and also something sweet to a doubting and lost world.

Not Shepherds of Fish

We will look at one more occasion when the risen Lord shared food and proved His victory over death to the disciples (or one could say here, to the backsliders). Even after Jesus had appeared to the disciples at least twice, Peter returned to the career and location which he had originally forsaken to follow the Lord, and took six other disciples to “go a fishing” with him (Jn 21). Yet, as with all work that is done out of God’s will, their labor was in vain. They had toiled all night for nothing. Unrecognized again, Jesus appeared on shore asking if they had caught anything. When they answered in the negative, the Lord told them to cast their net to the right side. To their amazement, they pulled it back overloaded with fish. Jesus had given them what they desired, even more than they ever expected.

From this, the disciples would have been reminded of another wasted night of fishing. Then also Jesus had displayed His wisdom and power and had called those fishermen to catch men (Lk 5:5-10). On this latter occasion, they finally recognized their risen Lord and came to Him. It is such a touching testimony of the character of Christ to find that He had even taken the time and effort to cook breakfast. He did not scold or condemn, but invited them to eat

with Him. His care reconfirmed His love for them and He restored them to His service. Like Peter we are all called, called and recalled until we get it right. We are not called to feed our friends and family, our own and known. This is something that all men do. Let us feed the Lord's flock.

From these incidents we see some of God's eternal purposes in eating. It is not just for satisfying ourselves, but to share and show God's care to those He has called us to nourish and serve. In every meal we can be reminded of Jesus' love and sacrifice for us. His presence brings peace, joy, and true communion even if He is unseen. Just as He called Peter, Jesus also calls us to come and dine—and die—for Him (Jn 21:12,19). □

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PART 3 — MAINTAINING OUR FELLOWSHIP

A series of searching questions are put forth in an interesting Old Testament verse: “Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? Who hath gathered the wind in His fists? Who hath bound the waters in a garment? Who hath established all the ends of the earth? What is His name, and what is His Son’s name, if thou canst tell?” (Pro 30:4) This verse is such a clear revelation of God the Father and God the Son, Jesus Christ. The One Who has ascended and descended is Jesus (Jn 3:13). Jesus came down from heaven that we might have a blessed fellowship with His Father. That fellowship only became possible through His death on the cross which reconciled us to God. As the Apostle John said, “Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ” (1Jn 1:3). How awesome it is that we have been accepted in the Beloved (Eph 1:4-6).

Just as Jesus descended from heaven to die for our sins, He also *ascended* into heaven to send to us the promise of the Father, the gift of the Holy Ghost. Peter preached to the astounded onlookers on the Day of Pentecost: “Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of

the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear” (Ac 2:33). It is **through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, that we are given entrance into a totally new and deeper dimension of fellowship with God**. Jesus talked about this deeper fellowship, when He spoke of sending the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth. Of this He said, “At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you” (Jn 14:20). Through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we are in Him and He is in us. As Jesus promised, we have been granted entrance into a glorious and eternal fellowship with the Father and the Son. Actually, we exist for God the Father and we exist through Jesus Christ, the Son. Truly, we owe our lives to Him. “Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him” (1Cor 8:6 NAS).

Another interesting notion to point out is that **the Father has given us to the Son**: “And this is the Father’s will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day” (Jn 6:39). The very fact that we have come to the Son, Jesus Christ, is a gift from the Father. And now that we have been given to the Son, He will keep us and will raise us up when He returns. We are sanctified by God the Father and preserved in Jesus Christ (Jude 1). God has separated us unto Himself and placed us in the Son.

As long as we abide in the Son, we will be kept. When you board an airplane, you expect to reach your destination. As long as you remain on board, you will. If you decide to jump out of the plane en route, you place your fate in your own hands. The Apostle John wrote, “And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming” (1Jn 2:28). So, it is important to abide in Him—stay on board until you reach home.

God the Father sent His Son into the world, but He did not leave Him *alone* in the world. Although others could not see the Father, He was always with Jesus. Jesus testified to this by saying, “I am not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent Me” (Jn 8:16 NIV). Jesus continually did the things which pleased the Father and so the Father was always with Him. “And He that sent Me is with Me: the Father hath not left Me alone; for I do always those things that please Him” (Jn 8:29). **If we live as Jesus lived, the Father will always be with us too.** But, alas, *there are so many things that try to take our hearts, minds and lives away from God.*

When we lived in the world and away from God, we “walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Eph 2:2). We lived accord-

ing to the lusts of our flesh, fulfilled the desires of our fallen nature, and our minds were alienated from God. By our very nature we were children of wrath—and yet God delivered us! Praise be to God!

By God’s great mercy and grace, we have been reconciled to God through the death of His Son on the cross. Through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, God has raised us up to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. In reality, this is the love of the Father, which has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who has been given to us. Now, we should let nothing take our hearts, minds and lives away from the love of the Father.

*Jesus came down from heaven
that we might have a blessed
fellowship with His Father*

We are exhorted by the Apostle John, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever” (1Jn 2:15–17). ***It is the love of the world that will take us away from the Father.*** The Apostle James puts it this way: “Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (Jam 4:4). Jesus gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us from

this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father (Gal 1:4). *Should we make His death on the cross of no effect in our lives, by loving the world with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength?* Loving the things of the world takes us away from the life-giving fellowship with the Father. Remember, we are in the world but not of it.

We may feel that our trials, temptations, and sufferings make it difficult for us to love God. As one dear man of God always said, “It is easy to follow Jesus when you love God.” The reason we go through temptations, trials, and sufferings is to strengthen our love for God. They are not designed to destroy us, but rather to help us come closer to God. *Our love for the Father will be clearly demonstrated as we remain faithful to God in the midst of our trials, temptations and sufferings.* In the Song of Solomon we read, “Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it” (SS 8:7). Furthermore, love is as strong as death. The words in Song of Solomon 8:6 are typical of a church prayer: “Set me as a seal upon Thine heart, as a seal upon Thine arm: for love is strong as death.” We should pray to stay this close to God. When we are bound to God with cords of love, nothing can break us loose from Him.

We can see in the Apostle Paul’s experience that nothing could separate him from the love of God. He said, “For I am

persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8:35-39). **No matter what comes against us to break up our fellowship with God, we should cleave to the Lord, and not be overcome.**

God loves us, and we are called to love Him. Paul writes,

“Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of

*Let us seek to live a life of holiness
and purity and thereby maintain our
fellowship with the Father*

any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s people” (Eph 5:1-3 NIV). It goes without saying that sexual immorality, impurity, and greed, have destroyed many people. These things are the enemies of the souls of God’s children. As the Apostle Jude said, “Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life” (Jude 20).

Just as Jesus always did those things which He saw the Father doing, so likewise, the children of the devil do those things they see the devil doing. Jesus spoke clearly about this, “I speak that which I have seen with My Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father...ye do the deeds of

your father..ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do” (Jn 8:38-44). ***Our deeds reveal, or make known, who our father is.*** Paul exhorted the Corinthians, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” (2Cor 13:5).

In calling us to live a life of holiness, God says, “Wherefore come out from among them, and *be ye separate*, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; *and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you*, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (2Cor 6:17-18).

Separation is essential to maintaining our fellowship and relationship with our heavenly Father. God’s children are holy as He is holy. The Apostle Peter exhorts us, “As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance” (1Pet 1:14 NIV). “But like the Holy One Who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, ‘YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.’ And if you address as Father the One Who impartially judges according to each man’s work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth” (1Pet 1:15-17 NASB). *Let us seek to live a life of holiness and purity thereby maintaining our fellowship with the Father.* □

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His name has become a byword for faith throughout the world. In the early 1830's he embarked upon an extraordinary adventure. Disturbed by the faithlessness of the church in general, he longed to have something to point to as "*visible proof that our God and Father is the same Faithful Creator as He ever was.*" His life has become a beautiful testimony of what a faithful God can do with one man who completely trusts in Him. His name? George Muller.

George was born in 1805 in Prussia to a well-to-do family. Although he was being trained for the Lutheran ministry, his life was in no way a reflection of that. He was a thief, a drunkard, a liar, a swindler, and by the age of sixteen he found himself in prison. On the day his mother died, he was partying and getting drunk with his friends. He had tried many times to escape this degenerate lifestyle, but was unable to break free until the Lord got a hold of him. When he was twenty, a friend invited him to a house meeting where they had prayer, hymn singing, Bible reading and a message. Even though he was much more educated than some of the tradesmen in the meeting, he realized that he could not pray as eloquently as they could. That

night the Lord began a work of grace in Muller's heart as he surrendered his life to God.

Soon after, Muller decided to seek out lost souls for Christ by becoming a missionary. His father was not at all pleased with this decision and threatened to stop funding Muller's studies if he carried through with this. Yet Muller knew what God had called him to do and thus began his life of trusting in God for all his needs. He went back to college not knowing how to pay for his studies. One day he got on his knees and asked God to provide for him. Within the hour, a professor knocked on his door and offered him a paid tutoring job. This was the beginning of many thousands of prayers that Muller prayed and God answered.

After finishing his studies, he went to England to begin his missionary work. In those days, many churches had the practice of "renting pews." The wealthier people in the church would pay for better seats while the poor would remain in the more uncomfortable ones. Muller saw that this was against the Word of God and stopped this practice. He said, "*fear of offending those who pay their salary has kept many ministers from preaching the uncompromising Word of God.*" Therefore, he gave up his salary and chose to trust in God alone for all his needs. The Lord was marvelously faithful to him and Muller learned to trust God daily. Thus, God was preparing Muller for a greater work he had to do.

Earlier in life, Muller had been greatly influenced by a man named August Francke, who in 1696, founded an orphanage in Germany which became the largest enterprise for orphans in existence in the world. Francke had trusted and believed God for every provision. God thus inspired Muller to start his own orphanage and so he asked the Lord for a building, funds to support it, and godly people to operate it. In 1835, with two shillings (50 cents) in his pocket, he opened by faith his first of many orphanages. Muller would never make his needs known to the public but would always present them before the Lord. God was faithful and Muller never lacked anything.

Muller was totally surrendered to God, to fulfill His will and trust Him completely. He developed some principles that shaped the way his life, his ministry, and the orphanages were conducted. These principles had their root in the conviction that money entrusted to him was a divine stewardship, and that all money had to be received and spent in direct fellowship with God Himself. The following were his four principles:

1. *Not to receive a fixed salary because, aside from other dangers, it affords the danger of dependence on human sources of income rather than on the living God Himself.*

2. *Never to ask any human being for help no matter how great the need might be but only make one's needs known to God Who promised to care for His servants and to hear their prayers.*

3. *To take the command in Luke 12:33 ("Sell that ye have, and give alms...") literally, never save up money, but to spend what God has given on God's poor and on the work of His kingdom.*

4. *To take the command in Romans 13:8 ("Owe no man anything...") literally, and never to buy on credit, or be in debt, but to trust God to provide.*

It was not easy at first to live this way, but Muller found a beautiful peace and happiness that flowed from his total dependence on the living God.

There were many times that Muller did not know where the next meal would come from to feed the children. Once there was not even one penny in the orphanage fund to buy bread for the evening meal. At one o'clock Muller prayed with his staff for their daily bread and told them that they must wait and see how the Lord would see fit to meet their need. Muller went out for a walk, and just twenty yards away from the house, a Christian brother met him and gave him money for the orphans. Another day, there was no food to give the 300 children. Muller asked the housemother to take all the children to the dining room and have them sit at the tables. He prayed and thanked God for the food by faith and waited on the Lord. Within minutes a baker knocked on the door and said the Lord had asked him to bring bread in the morning for the orphans. Then another knock on the door revealed yet another provision: it was the milkman who said his cart had broken down in front of the orphanage. He asked if Muller could use some

free milk otherwise it would go spoiled. It was just enough for all 300 children! This was the way that the Lord honored the faith of George Muller and supplied every need for him and the orphanages. He once said, “I could buy a considerable amount of goods on credit, but the next time we were in need, I would turn to further credit instead of turning to the Lord.” For sixty years, day by day, he fed the orphans by faith; and neither he nor the orphans ever went hungry. Through his fatherly life and testimony thousands of orphans committed their lives to Christ.

In his lifetime, Muller built five large orphan houses and cared for more than 10,000 orphans. He inspired many others to start orphanages so that 50 years after his death at least 100,000 orphans were cared for in England alone. Without asking anyone for money, without incurring any debts, but with faith in God alone, Muller received and disbursed 1,500,000 British pounds (at current day prices that would be well over 75,000,000 pounds!)

At the age of seventy he embarked upon his lifelong dream of missionary work by traveling for the next 17 years to 42 different countries, covering 200,000 miles, and preaching an average of once a day to as many as 5000 people at a time! All of his expenses were met as answers to prayers of faith. From the end of his travels until his death at age 92, he preached in his church and continued in active service. George Muller is remembered as a man of great faith who literally took God at His word. Thousands and thousands of prayers

were answered not just for material needs but also for the spiritual development of the children. “*In the greatest difficulties, in the heaviest trials, in the deepest poverty and necessities, He has never failed me; but because I was enabled by His grace to trust Him, He has always appeared for my help.*” For the last 68 years of his ministry, George Muller never received a salary—a far greater weight of glory is reserved for him in heaven. ◻

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A young woman went to her mother and told her about her life and how things were so hard for her. She did not know how she was going to make it and wanted to just give up. She was tired of fighting and struggling. It seemed as though when one problem was solved, a new one arose. Her mother took her to the kitchen. She filled three pots with water and placed each on a high flame. Soon the pots came to a boil. In the first she placed carrots, in the second she placed eggs, and in the last one she placed some ground coffee beans. She let them sit and boil without saying a word. In about twenty minutes she turned off the burners. She fished the carrots out and placed them in a bowl. She pulled the eggs out and placed them in a bowl. Then she ladled the coffee out and placed it too in a bowl.

Turning to her daughter, she asked, “Tell me, what do you see?” “Carrots, eggs, and coffee,” she replied. Her mother brought her closer and asked her to feel the carrots. She did and noted that they were soft. The mother then asked the daughter to take an egg and break it. After

pulling off the shell, she observed the hard boiled egg. Finally, the mother asked the daughter to sip the coffee. The daughter smiled as she tasted its rich aroma. The daughter then asked, “What does it mean, mom?”

Her mother explained that each of these objects had faced the same adversity: boiling water, yet each reacted differently. The carrot went in strong, hard, and unrelenting. However, after being subjected to the boiling water, it softened and became weak. The egg had been fragile. Its thin outer shell had protected its liquid interior, but after sitting through the boiling water, its inside became hardened. The ground coffee beans were unique, however. After they were in the boiling water, they had changed the water.

“Which are you?” she asked her daughter. “When adversity knocks on your door, how do you respond? Are you a carrot, an egg, or a coffee bean?”

Think of this: which am I? Am I the carrot that seems strong, but when exposed to pain and adversity, do I wilt, soften and lose my strength? Am I the egg that starts with a malleable heart, but changes with the heat? Did I once have a fluid spirit, but after a death, a financial hardship or some other trial, have I become hardened and stiff? Does my shell look the same, but on the inside am I bitter and tough with a stiff spirit and a hardened heart? Or am I like the coffee bean? The bean actually changes the hot

water—the very circumstance that brings the pain. When the water gets hot, it releases its fragrance and flavor. If you are like the bean, when things are at their worst, you get better and change the situation around you. When the hour is the darkest and trials are their greatest, is the fragrance of Christ released from your life?

How do you handle adversity? Are you a carrot, an egg, or a coffee bean?

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