
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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Table of Contents

(click on the title to go directly to the article)

Lost Sons And A Loving Father

Zion—Glorious Things Are Spoken Of Thee

Encounters With Jesus

Part 6 — He Prayed More Earnestly

The Workmanship Of His Hands

The frog: a relic of Evolution?

The Greatest

Part 2 — The Burning Baptist

Heroes Of Faith

The life and work of Amy Carmichael

A Gallon of Milk

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LOST SON AND A LOVING FATHER

Often referred to as “The Prodigal Son,” this parable relates the story of a son who gets lost outside the Father’s house and another son who loses the vision while within it—and a Father who desires that both would be restored. Jesus takes time to tell this parable as it is His nature to reveal the heavenly Father to us. We will consider this parable as a story of lost sons and a loving father.

“A certain man had two sons,” our story begins. This father apparently had worked hard to provide for his sons, as he was called upon later to divide his “living.” Now, they all worked hard together, including all the servants hired to assist. As far as the younger son could see, they were all working hard to make a living, but in the end, they weren’t *enjoying* life. Though the father provided all that was necessary for day to day living, the younger boy wanted more, and demanded that he be given his portion of the inheritance prematurely.

“Father, give me...,” his request begins. “Give me what belongs to me. I want all of my rights, all of my goods. I want everything that I’m supposed to get from you when you die... but I can’t wait for you to die, so give it to me now.” Speaking to the Father is what we call “prayer.” There are younger sons, Christians lacking maturity, who only pray these

“give me” prayers. Their relationship with God is based on what they can get from Him, not what they can give to Him—and they might easily serve the devil for better wages.

Share And Share Alike

This father knew his son could not handle such great responsibility, yet he obliged. When God answers our requests which are blatantly out of His will, that is cause for fear and not for rejoicing. This father’s response had an interesting twist: “*he divided unto them his living..*” The father gave the inheritance to *both* sons, and *each* was left to choose what to do with it.

Multiplied Choices

For those of us who know the story, we tend to think that the younger son absconded with the goods immediately, but the Bible says he left “not *many* days after...” In other words, he initially tried for some days to remain in his father’s house and enjoy his recently acquired wealth at the same time. Can you imagine what that was like? Like his older brother, he would work hard in the fields all day, but then come home to see all this money sitting in his bedroom. After a few days of this, he couldn’t see why he had to work so hard under all those rules when he had all that money. “*What am I doing here? This makes no sense to be living like this—I have to get out of here!*”

God has made our hearts such that they cannot contain both the world and Him. You cannot serve two masters; you

will either have God's kingdom or be the subject of the god of this world. Either your joy will be in your Father's house or you'll try a thousand joys somewhere else, trying to fill up that space. The younger son didn't realize what he had—until he lost it. He thought, *"People get to do this, people get to do that...and I'm stuck here with all these rules."* But he didn't realize the greatest joy in life was to serve this father who had his greatest good and long-term benefit in mind.

Self-imposed Freedom

Failing in his attempt to serve two masters, the younger son packed up everything: he had no intention of returning. He went to "a far country," where no one would know the home and the rules he had been brought up under, where no one would know that he had been brought up to live differently. No one would be able to throw it in his face, that this wasn't the way that his father raised him. He wanted to be free from all the labels of his father's house...and so he left.

All In Due Time

Now, it was written that *both* sons received their portions; so the question remains: how is it that the older son was able to handle having the wealth without leaving his father as well? We'll go momentarily to the end of the story for our answer, where the older son complains of all that the father was doing for the younger son who had returned. The father told the older son, *"All that I have is yours."* Had the older son

held onto his portion, the father would have said, "Son, you received your portion the same time as your brother: what are you complaining about?" Apparently, the older son knew that he wasn't ready to handle what was given to him by his father, so he made a choice to give it back. *"Father, I don't need this right now; my brother asked for it, but I don't need it. Father, you keep it and hold it for me and I'll enjoy this when you think I'm ready."* If the older son had held onto what was given to him, he would have headed down the same road that his brother traveled.

Independence Days

Yes, the younger brother's journey took him far from his father's house, where he anticipated enjoying the freedoms and pleasures that he had missed out on all his life. He had a riot of a time, for where there is money to spend, there will be "friends" to help spend it.

Young people often pine away for their 18th birthday (or 21st, or somewhere thereabouts), which is supposed to mark their year of jubilee. It's an important time, no doubt: but for making the right choices, not the wrong ones. At times one may want to be free from chores and curfews, from church policies and dress codes, etc. *"Free at last, free at last: thank God Almighty, I'm free at last!"* But what is true freedom, actually? Ask the drunkard, who once reveled that he was "free to drink," can he now be free *from*

drinking? The girl who was “free to have a boyfriend,” is she now free to enjoy life with her infant born out of wedlock? Those liberties only led to greater bondage. **True freedom is freedom to choose what is right.**

The Prodigal Son

The younger son set out to wholeheartedly enjoy life: yet the more he “enjoyed,” the more he felt he was killing something inside. There was a cheapness to these thrills, a hollow ring in the raucous laughter, a facade of mirth masking an increasingly disturbed soul. He frantically squandered his substance in a desperate attempt to stave off the void and emptiness that was encroaching upon him, as though spending more would somehow provide the cure. Incidentally, it is from this recklessly wasteful nature that we get the term “prodigal.” Prodigal doesn’t mean “lost,” but “extremely extravagant”: one who has been given a lot and just throws it away, for he does not know the value of what he has. What was this young man spending? The father divided unto them his *living*: he was frivolously spending away the very lifeblood of his father.

The young man would have started to realize the error of his ways, but by then, it was too late. He was bound by sin. It had its pleasure for a season, so he tried a little more, and a little more—and before he knew it, he couldn’t stop himself. In the end, sin didn’t even have its cheap thrill,

but he was bound to it. It is the sinner who chooses to sin: but once he or she has made that choice, sin will not let go. “*I didn’t mean to go that far, I never thought that I would make such a dumb mistake, I was just going to try it out*”—but it’s been years and you’re still bound to it.

*SIN will **take you**
farther than you intended to stray;
SIN will **keep you**
longer than you intended to stay;
SIN will **cost you**
more than you intended to pay.*

From Independence To The Pigs’ Pen

This young boy didn’t realize that all the pleasure he was looking for was right there in his father’s house. If you want wholeness, completeness and satisfaction, you can only find that in your Father’s house. You don’t need to take a long journey like this boy took. He wouldn’t work for his father—“*You people treat me like a slave in this house!*”—so he ended up working like a slave for someone else, living with pigs. He had chosen the wrong way to spend his money, and once it was gone, his “friends” were gone too.

There was a time when this younger son would have fiercely questioned anyone who questioned him: “*You think I don’t know how to spend money? You think I don’t know how to choose friends? You don’t think I can do anything, do you?!*”

He thought that he knew how to take care of himself; he thought that he knew what he was doing—and didn't need rules. *But when he left his father's house, every choice he made was a foolish one.* He chose the wrong friends—ones that would leave him. He chose the wrong ways to spend his money—he ended up with none. He chose the wrong person to join himself too—now pigs were eating better than he was. He had come to the place where he actually wanted to eat the filthy food of pigs. How had he fallen to this, from the father's house? Slowly, he was beginning to realize, that there are luxuries that money can never buy, like that of a father's constant love...

There's No Place Like Home

It was in this state of brokenness that he thought of his father again, and realized that the welfare of his father's servants was far better than his own. He confessed, *"I will arise..."* For the first time, since he had left home, he was acknowledging that he had fallen, and that there was a need to rise. That beginning of humility opened up a door of grace.

"...and go to my father..." Before, he was going to friends, harlots, pigs—anyone or anything but his father. Thank God that grace had started to work; and as he journeyed back home, he practiced his "prayer" which he would utter upon seeing his father.

A Sinner's Prayer

"Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be your son. Now—now I'm not asking for any rights or freedom. Now you can strip them all away, and make me a servant—but I just want to be under the covering of your house again. Before, I demanded rights and I didn't even know what to do with them. Make me a servant, a person without rights. You make the choices for me from now on. All I want is to be restored to a relationship to this house again. I know I can't be a son anymore, but could you at least make me a servant."

This boy was on his trek home again. His father would look more or less the same, but he—who had been dressed in the finest clothes when he left home—was now in tattered and soiled rags. He had been the picture of health, but now he was skinny and starving, and reeked with the smell of pigs. You can picture him dragging his feet, wondering what his reception would be like, while he rehearsed his speech in his head.

We'll ponder more on his speech later, but have you noticed the gem hidden here? He said he was no longer worthy to be called a son—yet he couldn't help but to begin his petition with "Father." Somehow, he knew there was a love for the lost son, a love that just might receive this vagrant home again.

Loved With Everlasting Love

Though it should have been the opposite, it was the father who saw and recognized the boy first, and came running towards him. His father grabbed him, kissed him, and didn't even let the boy finish his speech. He had heard the first word, *Father*, and that was all he wanted to hear. The father had been waiting for this day. Yes, he could have gone out to get the boy long before; he could have had one of his servants bring him back home. But if he had come without being broken, he would only start the same problems again. Now the brokenhearted could be healed and established in grace.

Perhaps even now you feel so far from God, like you don't know how to come back; you're wondering if God would forgive you, if He would still listen, even though you slammed the door in His face and ran out of His house. Beloved child of God, take one step toward Him and He will take a hundred steps toward you. *“Draw nigh unto God, and He will draw nigh to you.”*

Freely Given All Things

When this son had left home he had no needs, but demanded so much due to his greed. Now this son had returned with legitimate needs, but wanted only one thing: to be restored to the house again. The son had his priorities set straight in his prayer, realizing that all the wealth

he had before could not compare to the joy that being in his Father's house could bring him. Although the son asked for nothing material, the father knew his needs and began to command: *“Bring the best! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Bring shoes: put them on him. Put that ring on his hand. I want to clothe you, my son! Bring out the best!”* Come as you are and He will change you. The best apparel is in the Father's house: the robe of righteousness, the garment of salvation.

Rejoice With Me

Like the story of the lost sheep found, and the lost coin recovered, this story also has rejoicing; but unlike the other stories, it doesn't end with rejoicing. Instead, the story ends like the chapter began. Like the scribes and Pharisees who couldn't understand Jesus' joy in sinners who drew near in response to His word, there was a “righteous” person on the premises who wouldn't partake in the father's joy.

Don't Help: I'm Lost!

There was great rejoicing that day in the Father's house; everyone rejoiced—everyone but the older son. One lost son had returned, while the other son was lost on the compound. He was lost, though inside.

He came home tired from work, but then heard all of the commotion. For some reason, it was not in him to ask his father what was going on. Instead he asked one of the

servants and got news that the festivities were in honor of his reckless brother's return. The older brother fumed: *"Why should this rebel be celebrated? Let him be chastised, or at least sent to work!"* He was angry at the restoration of his brother—and still was unwilling to approach his father on the subject.

Lost And...

For the second time that day, the father went out looking for his missing son, this time the older one. As soon as the older boy saw his father, he began to speak about his long years of service in the father's house and the consecrations he had faithfully kept, but still upset with the father's riches of mercy and grace towards his brother.

"If I had to work this hard to maintain a position in this house, how can he just walk in without doing anything?" The older son forgot that position in the father's house is obtained by a relationship with the father, not by the things one does in the house. He trusted in the righteousness of what he was doing to earn him a place, and in the meantime was losing his relationship with the father.

"For all the years I served, I never broke a commandment...what about me? I've been so faithful, but you never gave me a celebration. This boy comes from living with harlots! He got to enjoy everything out there and he gets a ring, a robe, and shoes?" How did he know that his younger

brother was living with harlots? How did he know all about his brother's life before even meeting him? Apparently he had been listening to gossip about his brother and his heart had turned against him. He was poisoned by what he had heard, and now was unable to forgive.

"Don't just welcome him on the first day; let him work hard like I've been working. Let him know what it costs to be here." Indeed, what had it cost? *"Bring hither that fatted calf, and kill it!"* It wasn't what either boy had done, but the sacrifice of the father that had provided for both to be there. The fatted calf was killed for the whole house to enjoy, but the older son couldn't enjoy it because he was not ready to forgive.

There are some "older sons" who look at the younger generation or the restoration of a backslider and are upset at the forgiveness that is shown to them. You can be lost while in the house of God: you can miss out on blessings that were intended for everyone to enjoy. The "fatted calf" speaks of the fulness of Christ and you will be unable to partake of that if you are unable to forgive as you were forgiven.

Two sons were lost in this story: one outside the house, the other while inside. But the father loved them both. One boy began to walk towards the father and the father ran out to meet him. The other boy wouldn't walk to his father, so his father came to him.

Fulness Of Joy

“Son, *thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.*” Is there any greater joy than to be always in His presence? Though the older son was home, he was avoiding the father. He had the luxury of the father’s presence and love, but lost his appreciation for it. He was asking for a party in his honor, when he had the honor to be with the father all that time.

The older son was missing out on joy, because of his unwillingness to forgive his brother, though his father had already forgiven him. The Lord is calling you to be forgiven and to forgive in return. The same forgiveness that is extended to you, extend to your brother.

Lost And Found

In His Presence there is fullness of joy. There is nothing else that can fill the emptiness in your heart like Jesus; no human being will ever meet the needs of your hungering spirit. Do you feel as though your sins have made you unworthy to be a child of God? Are you unsure if you can still call Him “Father”?

“Kill the fatted calf!” cried the father. He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? It was not a fatted calf, but the very Son of God, Who was killed, that lost sons might be brought to His glorious kingdom. If the

Father was willing to pay such a high price to restore you, why should you doubt such love? Your Father is waiting at the door, looking for when you’ll come walking home. He’s longing to run to you. He’s longing to embrace you and bring you home.

So, whether you are the son that is lost outside the Father’s house or the son who’s lost inside, know that your Father is extending His loving Hand towards you today. No matter how lost you think you are, you’re not so lost that the Father’s love can’t find you. □

[Click to return to the Table of Contents](#)



“And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps. And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth” (Rev 14:2-3).

Voice Of Many Waters

In previous installments of our study of eternal Zion, we have seen that Mount Zion is the eternal dwelling place of God and the throne of His heavenly Kingdom. We are now seeking to answer the age-old question of **who** are the 144,000 that will be with God eternally in Zion. “Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in Thy holy hill?” (Psa 15:1; 24:3). In our last study, we looked at many beautiful things with regards to the “voices” of those with Christ on Mount Zion. Their voice like “many waters” speaks to us of those who passed through life’s trials in this world as they looked unto Jesus. We also saw how their words, like waters, are a blessing to others.

Waters are also compared to the Word of God, which these 144,000 servants of God both lived out in their own lives and also expounded to others (Acts 1:1; 1Tim 5:16; Jam 1:22). Their voice as the voice of a great thunder, positions these 144,000 at a special and high place of sharing God’s omnipotent power and authority in His everlasting kingdom (Mic 4:8).

We see also in our scripture reference that John heard “the voice of harpers harping with their harps.” This passage does not say the “music” of harpers, but their “voices.” Apparently this indicates to us that the 144,000 with Christ on Mount Zion were **both** singing **and** playing on these harps. This is apparently the fulfillment of the prophecy: “As well the **singers** as the **players** on instruments shall be there (in Zion): all my springs are in thee” (Psa 87:7). The Bible says that “glorious things are spoken” of Zion (Psa 87:3). One of the most glorious truths this singing and playing of harps brings to focus is the **unspeakable joy** of those 144,000 with Christ on Zion.

Joy Of The Harp

Generally when the Bible refers to singing and the playing of harps, it virtually always refers to a joyful experience. “Is any **merry**, let him **sing** psalms” (Jam 5:13). “Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my **exceeding joy**; yea, upon the **harp** will I praise thee, O God my God” (Psa 43:4; see also Gen 31:27; Job 21:12; Psa 71:22; 98:4-5). Playing the

harp and praising God were often seen together in olden times (Psa 33:2-3; 150:3). When David played with the harp, the evil spirit departed from troubled King Saul (1Sam 16:16,23). When there was sadness in Israel, harps were **not** played (Job 30:31; Psa 137:2). When God brought judgments upon Israel, Isaiah lamented that “**the joy of the harp**” had ceased (Isa 24:8).

Songs From Experience

What are the 144,000 singing about? We can readily assume that their songs are about God, His great works, and His graces granted to these 144,000 servants of God! Moses said of the Lord, “**the Lord** is my strength and **song**...” (Exo 15:2). “He hath put a **new song** in my mouth, even praise unto our God...” (Psa 40:3). “...thou shalt compass me about with **songs of deliverance**” (Psa 32:7). “I will **sing of the mercies** of the Lord for ever...” (Psa 89:1). “Therefore they shall come and **sing in the height of Zion**, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord...” (Jer 31:12).

The songs of the saints from various dispensations reflect their experiences with the Lord. In the Old Testament, the men of God would commit to verse their experiences. God commanded Moses to write a song for Israel (Deut 31:19,22). Also, it was the blessed duty of some Levites to write songs and to perform them on a variety of musical instruments (1Chr 15:22,27-28). These musicians were inspired and anointed of the Holy Spirit, as it is written that they “**prophesied** on their

harps, psalteries, and cymbals...” (1Chr 25:1-3). Just as a harp must be skillfully tuned to give a joyful sound, so these men of God must have been “**tuned in**” to God through the Holy Spirit! King David spoke forth a song when God delivered him from his enemies (2Sam 22:1). The very word of God itself became a song for the saints of old: “Thy **statutes** have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage” (Psa 119:54). “I will incline mine ear to a parable: I will open my dark saying upon the harp” (Psa 49:4). Of King Solomon it is written: “God gave (him) wisdom and understanding exceeding much...and his **songs were a thousand and five**” (1Kn 4:29-32).

Songs Of Joy

Perhaps the most persistent truth of the singing of songs, and the playing of harps, was the association of it with joyfulness. We know from the word of God that **all** of heaven will be a joyful place. As each is welcomed into their glorious eternal home, the Lord Himself will say unto them, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant...enter thou into the **joy of your Lord**” (Mat 25:21). “And God shall wipe away **all tears** from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Rev 21:4). We have seen that the rewards in heaven will differ depending on the specific place in eternity where each of the redeemed will dwell. It appears that the joy of those in the

New Jerusalem will excel the joy of those in the New Earth and the New Heaven. The scriptures tell us that Zion will eternally be the “**joy** of the whole (eternal New) Earth...the city of the great King” (Psa 48:2). Mount Zion will apparently always be filled with God’s praises, as it is written, that He inhabits “the praises of Israel” (Psa 22:3). “Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion” (Psa 65:1). It is also marvelous to note, that at least some of the angels from the very beginning were created with musical instruments apparently as parts of their very beings (Eze 28:13). It is likely that in eternity there will be glorious symphonic melodies played by these great and talented angels as the saints sing their songs of praise to our God!

The degree of joy of each in heaven will correspond to their closeness to God Himself! Those in the closest proximity to God in eternity will have the **greatest joy of all**. As the word of God clearly teaches, “Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in **Thy presence** is fullness of joy; at **Thy right hand** there are pleasures for evermore” (Psa 16:11). Those in eternal Zion, which is a part or a subset of those in the eternal New Jerusalem, are seen in scripture as being the closest to Jesus in eternity. They are seen standing with Christ on Mount Zion. This is the calling of the servants of God, both in this world and in eternity. “And He ordained twelve, that they should be **with Him**, and that He might send them forth to preach” (Mk 3:14). “If any man serve

Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, **there shall also My servant be...**” (Jn 12:26). “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given Me, be **with Me where I am**; that they may behold My glory...” (Jn 17:24).

The Song No Man Could Learn

The understanding that these 144,000 have the **highest joy** in eternity is also revealed to us in that it is written: “they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and **no man** could learn that song but the 144,000, which were redeemed from the earth” (Rev 14:3). Now this is very curious, given that for all of eternity anyone should be able to mimic or sing any song that is heard. Since no one else **could** learn it, this reveals to us that these 144,000 apparently experienced God’s graces in some ways unknown to the other redeemed. The joys of those in Zion will excel all others’ joy. As it is prophesied of old, “Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with **singing** unto Zion; and **everlasting joy** shall be upon their head: they shall obtain **gladness and joy**, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away” (Isa 51:11; also 35:10).

Songs In The Night

For those who trust in God, we can sing His praises by faith, even in the darkest hour. The Bible tells us that the Lord gives “songs in the **night**” (Job 35:10; Psa 42:8). The ministers of the New Testament age were joyful, even in their

sufferings for the Lord and by faith sang His praises even at **midnight**. “At midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God” (Acts 16:25). Paul also said, “I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation” (2Cor 7:4). May the blessed counsel of the Apostle Paul be fulfilled in our lives: “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Eph 5:19). “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Col 3:16). Dear reader, have the trials of life weighed down your heart, and taken away your joy and song? Look again to His love for you manifested at Calvary. He endured the cross “for the **joy set before Him**” (Heb 12:2), which is for you to be with Him for Eternity. Also, let us remember that in Christ’s hour of darkness, in the very night leading up to the cross of Calvary, we see that **He sang a hymn with His apostles** (Mk 14:26). What a magnificent, noble, and faithful Jesus we serve! Let us also remember the glorious and joyful place that He has gone to prepare for us in Jerusalem and Zion—where the most beautiful, inspirational, and joyful songs will eternally be heard. Let us now renew our song of praise to Him, even in the most difficult hour. Then it will be said of you, “He will **rejoice over thee** with joy...He will **joy over thee** with singing” (Zeph 3:17). Hallelujah! ◻

[Click to return to the Table of Contents](#)



Encounters WITH Jesus

Part 6 — He Prayed More Earnestly

In His time of greatest testing, Jesus prayed more earnestly. We read, *“and being in an agony He prayed more earnestly”* (Lk 22:44). Our Savior obviously received strength from above to face the cross. He was able to rise from prayer in victory and overcome. **In our lives there are situations that call for us to pray more earnestly.** When ordinary prayer is not sufficient enough to receive the answer from heaven that we need, we should pray more earnestly. We are in times now in which we need to pray more earnestly. We continually face challenges in our lives. Those whom we love and pray for face many challenges. We should pray more earnestly. **If we ask God for His grace to pray more earnestly He will indeed help us.** If we pray more earnestly we will likely see clear answers to our prayers.

We are in a spiritual battle and we don't have within ourselves the strength required to gain the victories we hope for. As we pray more earnestly, we will discover that God gives us those victories.

It is hard to imagine the intensity of Jesus' prayer in the garden. His sweat seems to have become like drops of blood falling down to the ground. It is generally thought that due to the tremendous amount of stress He was undergoing that His capillaries burst under the pressure and his blood began to ooze out through the pores of His skin. We have many things yet to learn about what it means to pray more earnestly.

The prophet Isaiah foretold of the Messiah: *“He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied”* (Isa 53:11). In making intercession for us, the transgressors, Jesus had great travail of soul. Of course this speaks of the cross, but also His travail in prayer prior to His crucifixion. **His earnest prayer in the garden strengthened Him to go to Calvary to bear our iniquities.** We shouldn't forget the immensity of what Jesus was called upon to do. Removing the sins of the world was a much greater task than moving a mountain—more than moving all the mountains in the world. Earnest prayer prepared Him for the task.

The situation that doesn't seem to change, the trial that seems to never end, the family member that doesn't seem to be able to yield his or her life to God—all these can give way to more earnest and more fervent prayer. The word of God says, *“Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob; which turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters”* (Psa 114:7-8). He can soften the hardest heart and fill it with blessings from above.

We don't want to ignore the significance of the angel appearing to Jesus as He was praying in the garden of Gethsemane. Luke tells us, *“and there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven,*

strengthening Him” (Lk 22:43). We must not forget that **God sends His holy angels to minister to us**. We are not alone in the fight. If we are on the Lord’s side, victory will surely come.

Let’s also remember that **Elijah prayed earnestly** and the heavens stopped sending rain. He prayed again and it began to rain. “*Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit*” (Jas 5:17-18). James also tells us that the **effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much** (Jas 5:16).

When Herod put Peter in prison intending to put him to death, the church prayed for him ceaselessly. God heard their prayer and brought him out of prison in a supernatural way. We read, “*Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him*” (Acts 12:5). An alternate reading in the margin is, “**instant and earnest prayer was made unto God for him.**”

Prayer that is earnest is also unceasing prayer. An angel came into Peter’s cell and rescued him. Peter’s chains fell off, the gate opened by the hand of God and Peter found himself a free man. All this was in answer to prayer.

Jesus taught us that we ought always to **pray and not to faint**. Even if the obstacles we face seem insurmountable, we should remember that God answers prayer. “*And He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; saying, there was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: and there was a widow in that city; and she came unto*

*him, saying, ‘Avenge me of mine adversary.’ And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, ‘Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.’ And the Lord said, ‘Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?’” (Lk 18:1-8). We see how the woman continued to come to the judge and plead with him. Finally she received what she so desperately needed. Jesus spoke these things to encourage us to **keep praying until the answer comes**. God is not an unjust judge. He is righteous. He **will** answer our cries.*

To encourage us a little more in this regard we can look at what Jesus said to His disciples when they asked Him to teach them to pray (Lk 11). Jesus spoke about the importunity of a man who came to his friend at midnight to ask for three loaves of bread. Although the friend would not get out of bed and open the door at first, because the man would not leave, he was compelled to get up and give him what he was asking for. If we keep asking, if we keep seeking, if we keep knocking, we **will** receive what we have need of according to the will of God. “*And He said unto them, which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?’ And he from within shall answer and say, ‘Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.’ I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him, because*

he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened” (Lk 11:5-10).

Jesus ends this teaching with a focus on receiving the Holy Spirit. He lets us know that our heavenly Father is ready and willing to give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him. *“If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”* (Lk 11:11-13).

For those who have yet to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, earnest prayer is the answer. The word of God through the prophet Zechariah says, *“Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain”* (Zech 10:1). **The type of asking we need to do is persistent asking.** In other words, keep knocking until the door is opened. Keep seeking until you find it.

God has the blessings. Who will rise up and lay hold upon them? The prophet Isaiah declared, *“And there is none that cal-leth upon Thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of Thee”* (Isa 64:7). Is that true concerning us today? He is a God who hides Himself (Isa 45:15). We need to be a people who will seek Him until we find Him. **“And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart”** (Jer 29:13). Again the prophet Hosea says, *“I will go and return to My place, till they acknowledge their offense, and seek My face: in their affliction they will*

seek Me early” (Hos 5:15). Again he says, *“Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: His going forth is prepared as the morning; and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth”* (Hos 6:3). Let us follow on to know the Lord.

He wants to send the former rain and the latter rain down upon us. Let us **pray more earnestly for a mighty outpouring of the Holy Ghost in these last days.** God promised through the prophet Joel that if His people would repent and seek God even with fasting and weeping that He would then pour out His Spirit upon all flesh. *“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions”* (Joel 2:28). Notice the word, **“afterward.”** It indicates that after God’s people have earnestly sought Him, He will pour out His Spirit.

When Peter quoted the prophet Joel on the Day of Pentecost, he said *“in the last days”* (Acts 2:17). Now more than ever, in these last days it is time to pray more earnestly. **“But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer”** (1Pet 4:7). □

[Click to return to the Table of Contents](#)



The workmanship of His hands

THE FROG: A RELIC OF EVOLUTION?

One belief within the theory of evolution is that there should be a progressive order of “perfection,” as the branches of evolutionary trees are followed through from the supposed primitive single cell to the more “superior” animals or plants of today. In evolutionary thinking, progression from the aquatic to the terrestrial environment is regarded as an advancement. This philosophy has resulted in a poor understanding of the physiology and ecology of several animal groups of which frogs and other amphibians are probably the most misunderstood.

From a standard first year biology textbook, the following slanderous comments are directed at the unfortunate creatures: “Although well adapted to a land environment in many ways, amphibians have retained several features from their ancient ancestors that have restricted most of them to a rather moist habitat and prevented them from fully enjoying the terrestrial environment.... Most amphibians are unable to prevent a large loss of body water through their skin when

on land.... Unlike those of reptiles, the structure of amphibian kidney tubules has not yet been modified for the re-absorption of a large volume of water from the urine during the process of urine formation.” (*Villee, Walker & Barnes (1973) General Zoology. W.B. Saunders Co, Philadelphia. pp 701-705.*)

Therefore, a result of the evolutionary approach is to regard amphibians as a poorly adapted group of animals—just a doomed relic of evolution. As one book put it, “today amphibians are as a tribe of animals, senile and soon to be extinct.”

One author stated that, “Undoubtedly the greatest physiological disadvantage which the amphibians have to overcome in hot, dry habitats is their permeable skin and the most valuable evolutionary novelty which they could invent to assist their survival there would be a more impermeable skin.... Amphibians seem to make the best of a bad situation and utilize their skin to collect water from damp surfaces.” (*Bentley, P.J. (1966) Adaptations of amphibians to arid environments. Science. 152:619-623.*)

In view of the enormous “handicaps” of the amphibians, a number of scientists have been intrigued by the presence of frogs in rather arid environments, even in the midst of deserts. Their studies have shown that, although desert frogs are rather poorly adapted to survive in artificial laboratory environments, they are “amazingly” well suited to

the subterranean environments in which they do live. During wet conditions, the skin absorbs water and the kidney processes dilute urine which is stored in the bladder. The bladder is a huge water tank, and consequently, a kidney which reabsorbs water in the tubules would defeat the purpose of filling the tank. Desert frogs spend most of their lives burrowed in soil in a dormant state. The permeable skin—far from being a detriment to terrestrial life—confers on them the unique ability to absorb soil water even when the soil is apparently quite dry. If the soil really does become too dry, they gather up their shed skins to form a protective cocoon and survive by reabsorbing bladder water.

Of course the majority of frogs are semi-aquatic or live in moist habitats, to which they are splendidly well designed. If such frogs have no intention of straying away from the pond, then why should they require a so called “new and improved” body structure? Nevertheless, even here, it has been noticed that some tree frogs in Africa and South America survive for months under rather extreme conditions. Studies have shown that these frogs can make their skins quite impermeable by wiping a lipid film over their bodies. They also excrete uric acid which can be excreted with very little water loss. Thus their control of water loss is akin to the desert reptiles.

There is much to be said about frog skin respiration, metabolic rates and energy storage, the variation in reproductive modes, etc., but the main point from the wealth of accumulating studies is that frogs are brilliantly, precisely and rationally designed for the habitats they occupy. This leads to an obvious projection towards a creation model of origins.

Of course an evolutionist reading this might claim that the fact that frogs are fast becoming extinct only proves that they are a “primitive” life form which has reached the end of its time on earth. Yes, they have suffered, having lost an estimated 170 species in the last 10 years alone, with another 1,900 in a threatened state. But why is this? Is the extinction really due to natural forces? Actually, pollution, global warming and habitat destruction from human development have been the major contributors in taking a serious toll on amphibian numbers. Evolutionary detractors have quickly argued back that the main destroyer of frog populations is a natural fungus for which the frogs have no defense. However, this fungus has come from African frogs which were exported to hospitals and universities around the world for medical research reasons. From this artificial, man-induced cause, frog extinctions are sky-rocketing.

All in all, left to themselves, frogs and other amphibians seem to cope very well. They are not the products of

blind chance. Nor are they evolutionary leftovers which have reached the end of their natural timeline on planet earth. Rather, they are another example of God's plan of design which is adapted for the place and life He has put them into.

As we have examined various creatures to show forth the wonderful creative powers of the Lord, let us also remember the crowning jewel of God's creation—man! Animals have been designed to live in the environment the Lord has placed them in. Man has physically been designed to live in this world, but our true home is in the heavens. Now our character must be “changed from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord” to make us ready for the eternal home in the heavens that He is preparing for us. We are seated with Christ in the heavenly places. Let us long for and desire the environment in the heavens which will be our habitat for all eternity! □

[Click to return to the Table of Contents](#)



THE GREATEST

PART 2 — THE BURNING BAPTIST

This study began with the fact, witnessed to by the Son of God, that John the Baptist is greater than or as great as any man ever born of woman (Mat 11:11). It is better to have a good testimony from God than to gain the whole world's approval. From the Lord's same statement about John we also discover that being the greatest human being does not even qualify one to be the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. Because John's greatness is so small when compared to the New Testament saints', some have overlooked the important lessons that can still be learned from him. In the previous study, we began to examine certain characteristics of John's life and ministry, starting with his anointing and humility. In this installment we will continue to investigate qualities connected with the first point: John's anointing. In particular, we will consider the zeal and clarity of John's witness. Hopefully we can then apply these lessons to our own lives in order to be that special kind of witness God wants us to be.

True Witnesses

The role of the witness is to testify or give evidence to a fact or truth. The New Testament Greek word for *witness* is

martyr. Today the word martyr is used exclusively to refer to one who gives witness through their death. Nevertheless, living martyrs for the Lord are still needed. The Scriptures state that when Jesus came into this world there were three witnesses in both heaven and on earth to the fact that He was the Son of God and Savior. At the mouth of two or three witnesses is a matter established (Deut 19:15). From heaven, the Trinity testifies to Jesus' divinity. On earth, He was borne witness to by His baptisms. *"For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one"* (1Jn 5:5-8). After taking water baptism from John, Jesus was the first to receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Yet after these two, the Lord said that He still had another baptism to go through (Lk 12:50). This was the baptism of blood accomplished through His passion and sufferings on the cross of Calvary. New Testament saints must experience and proclaim these same three testimonies in their own lives before they can become proper witnesses to the world. All must repent of their sins and be washed by the blood of Jesus and in the waters of baptism. They must also receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The risen

Lord told His disciples that John baptized with water but that they needed to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. Only then would they become the effective, equipped witnesses He wanted (Acts 1:5-8).

Testifying To The Truth

When Jesus spoke of things that testified to the truth of His mission and message, He cited His own mighty works or miracles and John the Baptist's witness. In this period of grace, Jesus has promised to be with us unto the end of the age and the ends of the earth, confirming the Gospel with signs and wonders following (Mk 16:20; Acts 4:30). But first we must testify to it if we expect Jesus to verify it. "John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true" (Jn 10:41). The Lord said, "Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth" (Jn 5:33). What did John confess? He said "I saw and bare record, that this is the Son of God...which taketh away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:34, 29). Do our lives proclaim the same to our generation? Jesus also declared that John "was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light" (Jn 5:35). This is our season! Are we burning and shining? The word *light* here in the King James Version can be more correctly translated as *torch* or *lamp*. Only Jesus is the true Light. John "was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light" (Jn 1:8-9). When there is no daylight men

see by lamplight or moonlight until the sunrise. As the moon waxes and wanes it is a faithful witness in heaven (Psa 89:37). It reflects the sun to the darkened earth below, proving that though unseen, the sun is still shining and dawn is coming. The vision of the woman standing on the moon in Revelation is a symbol of the spirit filled church that faithfully witnesses the glorious gospel and soon coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to those in spiritual darkness (Rev 12:1). The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy (Rev 19:10).

Greatest Of Prophets

Not only did Jesus mention that John was the greatest of men but He also said John was the greatest of prophets (Lk 7:28). This "greatest of prophets" was born to proclaim Jesus Christ, the coming Sunrise from on high. "*Thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord...to give knowledge of salvation...whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness*" (Lk 1:76-79). We too must shine forth the light of the Gospel to those that sit in darkness and the shadow of death (Phil 2:15). "*Ye are the light of the world...men light a candle...and it giveth light unto all...let your light so shine...that they may see...and glorify your Father which is in heaven*" (Mat 5:14-16).

Burning & Shining

The Lord did not say that John was a guttering or flickering flame, but a burning, blazing lamp. This speaks of the

zeal of his witness. He was on fire, His light was bright. Even though he was in the wilderness, people were drawn to John from all over Israel (Mat 3:5). There was fervor in his voice. This is the way we are when in first love. Jesus is very near and very real, like the One in the midst of the candlesticks and we burn for Him (Rev 2:1-5). How hot is our passion for our Savior and lost souls right now? Often, after some time, our ardor begins to cool and diminish. If we do not repent, the Lord will remove our cold and darkened lamp stands. There is a remedy for our coldness and dullness. It is not by our own might or power. The Holy Spirit will pour the anointing and love of God back into our hearts. In Zechariah, we see a picture of this in the two olive trees that keep pouring out oil into the seven golden lamps. The Book of Revelations reveals these trees as the two Great Tribulation witnesses, one of which may be Elijah (Zech 4:3; Rev 11:4). Right now there is a continual and abundant flow of anointing available from the Holy Spirit to keep us constantly burning brightly for God. This anointing makes us kings and priests like “Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness” (Rev 1:5-6). Let us be living lamps again, radiating a fiery witness to this generation.

Zeal With Knowledge

Jesus did not say that John was just a bright light, but that he was also a shining one. The Greek word used here

for *shine* means “to show or cause something to be visible.” Some lights can be so intense that instead of illuminating an object, they dazzle and blind the viewer. Zeal means “to have fervor, heat, ardor or enthusiasm” for something. Yet if our zeal is not balanced with insight there is a danger that we will give off more heat than light. Rather than bringing the lost to Christ we may stumble or scare them away. Our passion and zeal for God should consume us but not burn others up. Paul, when he was still called Saul, was exceedingly zealous for his faith. He and his whole nation had zeal for God, but it was zeal without knowledge. So they ended up fighting against the light (Acts 22:3; Rom 10:2; Phil 3:6). We must be zealous but not zealots. Many of those in error have been turned away from the truth by well meaning but unwise witnessing. We need to give out the Good News clearly as well as intensely. The god of this world, who masquerades as an angel of light, has already blinded the lost. We should not do the same. Our witness must be focused like a laser on the Lord and not glaring in the eyes of those around us. It is Jesus “whom we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ” (Col 1:28). Let us shine for our Savior!

About John, it was prophesied that he would go before the Lord to prepare His way. In ancient times it was often the custom for great kings to send out messengers ahead of

themselves to announce their coming and get things ready for their arrival. These heralds did not seek to make themselves known, but rather the one coming after them. Like John, our witness must be centered on Jesus and not on ourselves, our ministry or our denomination. “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus...” (2Cor 4:5). If we become proud or begin to promote anyone other than the Lord, we will be in danger of becoming like the fallen angel Lucifer. His name means “Light Bearer” and also is another name for the Day Star (Isa 14:12). This is the brightest star (really a planet) that appears in the morning sky just before dawn and portends the arrival of a new day. When Lucifer became lifted up and drew others to himself, he was thrown down to hell. The Lord’s last words in the Bible reveal that Jesus is the true Bright and Morning Star and leaves us with the hope that He is coming soon! (Rev 22:16,20; 2Pet 1:19).

Bold & Wise For Jesus

John the Baptist’s testimony about Jesus was, “that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water” (Jn 1:31). That which makes manifest is light. Let us shine the light of the glorious gospel of Christ with all wisdom. Not many of us New Testament saints, though called greater than John, witness as we should. We are not often as bold or as wise as we need to be. Yet we can always receive a new anointing and fire from the Holy Spirit and He will lead

us into all truth. Then the light of Christ within us will shine more and more until that perfect day when Jesus returns for His Bride. In that day, the joy of John, as well as all creation, will fully and finally be fulfilled (Jn 3:29; Rom 8:19). □

[Click to return to the Table of Contents](#)



“You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving.” That was the theme to the life of Amy Carmichael who gave so much of her life for those less fortunate than her. Inspired by other missionaries like Mary Slessor and David Livingston, Amy decided to leave the comforts of her home in Northern Ireland and respond to the call of God to bring the gospel of love to those who never experienced it.

Amy Wilson Carmichael was born on December 16, 1867 to a devout Presbyterian family in Ireland. She was the oldest of seven children and suffered from neuralgia: a disease of the nerves. This made it quite unlikely that she would be a missionary and she suffered many setbacks to this vision in life. At times she would have to be in bed for weeks because of the weakness in her body. Her friends thought that she was foolish when she decided to become a missionary and even predicted that she would be back home soon, unable to handle the hardships of missionary life. Yet, she continued to persevere with consistent determination to fulfill the word which the Lord had spoken to her.

Amy grew up in a God-fearing house and was taught to pray. Knowing that God answers prayers, she prayed that the Lord

would give her blue eyes instead of the brown ones she had. She was greatly disappointed when her prayer was not answered but later in life she would find out why (having brown eyes helped her in her missionary work in India). She would realize that when God says “no” it is because He has a greater purpose and plan that we might not understand at the present time. As she was growing up, Amy was considered to be a bit of a rebel, giving her parents a hard time. Since she grew up in a Christian environment, she thought that she was already a Christian. But one day an evangelist showed her the need for a personal commitment to Christ and that day she gave her heart to the Lord. From then onwards she began thinking of the needs of others more than her own and to be a servant to others became a passion in her life.

She was later sent off to boarding school to study, but had to return home before completing her education because her parents could no longer afford it. One day her mother took her out to buy a new dress but Amy refused because she realized her parents were not doing well financially. She went on to explain to her mom that Christ had given her a new purpose and goal in life so that clothes did not mean much to her as it once did. This was just the beginning to Amy’s sacrificial life of putting the needs of others before her own.

Amy started to have prayer groups and Bible studies for young girls. One group was called the “Shawlies” because they could not afford to wear hats to church and instead wore shawls. Amy’s heart went out to them even though others rejected them because of

their status in society. She was even looked down upon by others for reaching out to this poor group of people. She had to remember what the Lord did during His time on earth and how the gospel is given even to the poor and needy. The Lord blessed Amy's work with the Shawlies and eventually hundreds were gathering together for those meetings.

In 1887 Amy attended the Keswick Convention where she heard Hudson Taylor speak about missionary life and the gospel work going on in China through the China Inland Mission (CIM). That rekindled the desire she already had to go overseas and do missionary work. She sought the Lord about this matter and she heard the voice of God saying, "Go!" Being the eldest child she was still concerned for her mother who was now widowed. But her mother told her that the Lord had already spoken to her as well that she must let Amy go and do the will of God. Amy applied to be a missionary with the CIM and trained in London for some time. However, when the time came for her to leave for China, the board determined that because of her poor health she would be unfit for the perils of missionary life. This was a setback for Amy but she did not give up as she knew the Lord had called her to be a missionary.

Later Amy was able to get a placement with some missionaries in Japan and left her homeland in March of 1893. She always had a zeal to share the gospel and on this first missionary journey her first soul won was the captain of the ship! One day in Japan, Amy went out witnessing, but before she left she asked the Lord

to save one soul. The Lord answered that prayer and one soul was saved. However, because of her neuralgia she had to stay in bed for one month after that. The next time she went out she asked for two souls and sure enough, two souls were saved. Then she asked for four souls (which was more than some missionaries won in one year) and the Lord was faithful to save. Amy became sick again and had to stay in bed for almost two months this time. Yet the Lord continued to speak to her and comfort her. She then went on to ask for eight souls. Other missionaries started to look down upon her and tell her just to "pray for a blessing" and not the number of souls but Amy felt that it was the Lord that put that number on her heart. Thank God that day eight new souls gave their hearts to the Lord. But Amy's neuralgia continued to bother her and her doctor advised her to leave Japan for a country with a better climate. After being in Japan for only fifteen months, she traveled to Sri Lanka for a short time but then had to return to England.

Her missionary spirit would not keep her in England and she was then commissioned by the Zenana Mission Society to go to India. Once in India, she became aware of many young Indian girls who were offered by their parents to the temple as temple prostitutes. This became a great burden for Amy even though other Christians felt that Amy was exaggerating the situation. Amy discovered the truth and fought against it. This practice would later be banned in India. Much of her work was with these young girls and she founded an organization known as the Dohnavur Fellowship to help these girls. More than a thousand children would call this

place home as they were saved from the perils that would have been their future if it were not for Amy.

In 1931, Amy had a fall and was badly injured. This left her bedridden (but not useless) until the day of her death. She continued to direct the Dohnavur Fellowship and became a prolific writer, writing 35 books, including devotional and poetry books. She was once asked by a young lady who wanted to be a missionary what life was like. Amy replied, “***Missionary life is simply a chance to die.***” She realized that it was not about herself but living for Jesus and serving others. After arriving in India, Amy never returned to her homeland but served the Indian people for 56 years and went to be with the Lord in 1951. May we all have the same zeal that Amy had to “bear one another’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal 6:2). □

[Click to return to the Table of Contents](#)

A Gallon of Milk

A young man had been to a Wednesday night Bible study. The pastor had shared about listening to and obeying the Lord's voice. The young man couldn't help but wonder, "Does God still speak to people?" After the Bible study, he went out with some friends for coffee and they discussed the message. Several different ones talked about how God had led them in various ways.

It was about ten o'clock when the young man started driving home. Sitting in his car, he just began to pray, "God, if you still speak to people, speak to me. I will listen. I will do my best to obey." As he drove down the main street of his town, he had the strangest thought to stop and buy a gallon of milk. He shook his head and said out loud, "God, is that you?" He didn't get a reply and started on toward home. But again, the thought, "buy a gallon of milk." The young man thought about Samuel and how he didn't recognize the voice of God and how little Samuel ran to Eli. "Okay, God, in case that is you, I will buy the milk." It didn't seem like too hard a test of obedience. He could always use the milk. He stopped and purchased the gallon of milk.

As he passed Seventh Street, he again felt the urge, "Turn down that street." "This is crazy" he thought, and drove on past the intersection. Again, he felt that he should turn down Seventh Street. At the next intersection, he turned back. Half jokingly, he said out loud, "Okay, God, I will." He drove several blocks, when suddenly, he felt like he should stop. He pulled over to the curb and looked around. It wasn't the best but it wasn't the worst of neighborhoods either. The businesses were closed and most of the houses had their lights off—as though the neighborhood was already in bed.

Again, he sensed something, "Go and give the milk to the people in the house across the street." The young man looked at the house. It was dark and it looked like the people were either gone or they were already asleep. "Lord, this is insane. Those people are asleep and if I wake them up, they are going to be mad." Again, he felt like he should go and give the milk.

Finally, he opened the door, “Okay God, if this is you, I will go to the door and I will give them the milk. If you want me to look like a crazy person, okay. I want to be obedient. I guess that will count for something, but if they don’t answer right away, I am out of here.”

He walked across the street and rang the bell. He could hear some noise inside. A man’s voice yelled out, “Who is it? What do you want?” Then the door opened before the young man could get away. The man had a strange look on his face and he didn’t seem too happy to have some stranger standing on his doorstep. “What is it?” The young man thrust out the gallon of milk, “Here, I brought this for you.” The man took the milk and rushed down a hallway speaking loudly. Then from down the hall came a woman carrying the milk toward the kitchen. The man was following her holding a baby. The baby was crying. The man had tears streaming down his face. The man began speaking and half crying, “We were just praying. We had some big bills this month and we ran out of money. We didn’t have any milk for our baby. I was just praying and asking God to show me how to get some milk.” His wife in the kitchen yelled out, “I asked him to send an angel with some. Are you an angel?” The young man reached into his wallet and pulled out all the money he had on him and put it in the man’s hand. He turned and walked back toward his car as the tears streamed down his face. ***He knew that God still answers prayers.***

[Click to return to the Table of Contents](#)