
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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DESTRUCTION & CONSTRUCTION

God's eternal purpose concerning the New Testament saints is that they might be built up as the city of God, called New Jerusalem, where the holy Mount Zion is situated. In order for this great plan of God to be fulfilled, Christ offered Himself to the Father on the cross of Calvary. Through His death at Calvary, the Lord Jesus Christ defeated Satan and all his wicked works. The Spirit-baptized children of God should now claim this victory of Jesus over the enemy in their personal lives. Before we can be built up as the holy city of God, the Spirit of God must destroy the evil natures of the fallen man from our lives. Unless the destruction of the Adamic nature takes place in our lives, the construction of the divine nature of Christ cannot be accomplished. In this study we will consider four evil natures from which we must be fully delivered to be built up as the holy Jerusalem: the celestial city.

“See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant” (Jer 1:10). Jeremiah the prophet was commissioned by God for a very challenging task. He was appointed over

the nations and kingdoms to root out, to pull down, to destroy and to throw down. The “nations and kingdoms” here represent evil natures that may reside in man and must be defeated and pulled down. Even as God authorized Jeremiah to bring judgment upon the wicked nations and kingdoms, God the Father gave power and authority to Christ to destroy the works of the devil. *“He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil”* (1Jn 3:8).

To Root Out

The term **root out** can speak of uprooting bitterness out of our lives. *“Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any **root of bitterness** springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled”* (Heb 12:15). Here bitterness is compared to a root. Generally, trees have their roots hidden under the earth. Similarly, the spirit of bitterness can be hidden in the heart of man. Unless we are fully delivered from this bitter spirit, we will not be able to enjoy the sweetness of Jesus Christ. Our life will only bring forth a bitter savor.

How do we know whether we have the spirit of bitterness hidden in our hearts? A person who has bitter-

ness will not be able to enjoy lasting peace. His heart will be easily troubled. Also, a person harboring bitterness in the heart will be a trouble maker. His deeds and speech will be unedifying and defiling.

How do we receive deliverance from the spirit of bitterness? Since bitterness is the serpent's (Satan's) root, we must allow the Holy Spirit to lay the ax to the root of it. *"Rejoice not thou, whole Palestina, because the rod of him that smote thee is broken: for out of the **serpent's root** shall come forth a cockatrice, and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent"* (Isa 14:29). As the Spirit of God takes control of our hearts, the love of God will be planted there. The root of bitterness will be uprooted and replaced by the root of God's love. *"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, **being rooted and grounded in love**, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God"* (Eph 3:17-19). A heart that is filled with the love of God through the anointing of the Holy Spirit can easily forgive the mistakes and offenses of others. Forgiveness brings deliverance. *"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away*

*from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, **forgiving one another**, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you"* (Eph 4:31-32).

To Pull Down

To **pull down** or cast down speaks of casting down wicked imaginations. *"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the **pulling down** of strong holds; **casting down** imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ"* (2Cor 10:4-5). Satan wants to corrupt our minds against God. Imaginations go beyond the thought realm. With the help of God, we must bring down every proud and lofty imagination which rises up within our heart against the knowledge of the word of God. The Psalmist earnestly cried, *"Let the words of my mouth, and the **meditation of my heart**, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my Strength, and my Redeemer"* (Psa 19:14). We must take the sin of corrupt imaginations very seriously. In the days of Noah the thoughts and imaginations of the people were wicked, which resulted in the judgment by the flood. *"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil*

continually” (Gen 6:5). Let us read and meditate upon the scriptures daily that our mind and heart may be filled with heavenly thoughts. May the precious blood of Jesus Christ cleanse and keep our mind always pure.

To Destroy

To **destroy** signifies the destruction of the works of the flesh. King Saul was charged by the word of the Lord to utterly destroy the Amalekites. The Amalekites typify the wrong deeds of the body. *“Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and **utterly destroy** all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass”* (1Sam 15:2-3). God has anointed us that we through the power of the Holy Ghost should mortify (put to death) the lust of the flesh. *“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do **mortify** the deeds of the body, ye shall live”* (Rom 8:13). There is a continual warfare being waged between the flesh and the Spirit. *“This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would”* (Gal 5:16-17).

Although the battle between the flesh and the Spirit seems to be long and severe, eventually the Spirit of God will fully prevail in our lives. Hallelujah! *“Now there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker”* (2Sam 3:1). Here the house of Saul speaks of those who walk in the flesh and the house of David represents those who walk in the Spirit. The good news is that David grew stronger and stronger and Saul grew weaker and weaker. The saints of God who are fully led by the Spirit of God will overcome the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. These overcomers will be found as the New Jerusalem of God in eternity.

To Throw Down

To **throw down** means to overthrow worldliness in the church. Worldliness is all that is influenced by Satan, who is known as the god of this world (2Cor 4:4). And because of this, the “whole world lieth in wickedness” (1Jn 5:19). It is evil, sinful, deceptive and in darkness, opposing vehemently and hating everything relating to godliness; and its ways lead to destruction. In John 17:14 Jesus said, *“the world hath hated them (the children of God), because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”*

Jesus made a distinct line of demarcation between those who are of the world, and those who follow Him in the ways of godliness. For a child of God, that line must be as far away as possible from the world and its affections, leaving no room for any kind of compromise. Jesus said, *“I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you”* (Jn 15:19).

We read in 2 Kings 9:30-33 that the wicked woman Jezebel was **thrown down** from the palace by some eunuchs. Here Jezebel is a type of worldliness. The palace of the king is the church. In the church, there also can be worldliness. Eunuchs were the ones who threw down Jezebel. True consecrated servants of God can throw worldliness out of the church. More worldliness is seen in the church now than ever before. Therefore we need more spiritual eunuchs to throw worldliness out of the house of God. *“And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she painted her face, and tired her head, and looked out at a window. And as Jehu entered in at the gate, she said, ‘Had Zimri peace, who slew his master?’ And he lifted up his face to the window, and said, ‘Who is on my side? who?’ And there looked out to him two or three eunuchs. And he said, ‘Throw her down.’ So they threw her down: and some of her blood was*

sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses: and he trode her under foot” (2Kn 9:30-33).

In the light of the above explained scriptural truth, it is inevitable and indispensable that we be fully delivered from bitterness, wicked imaginations, works of the flesh, and worldliness: that we might be built up as Zion and New Jerusalem. The Lord Jesus Christ overcame Satan, the world, the flesh, death and hell. By His grace we too can live an overcoming life.

To Build & To Plant

Only after the destruction of the various wrong spirits in our lives can we be **built up** as the eternal habitation of God and **be planted** as the trees of righteousness. The Lord Jesus said, *“I will build My church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”* (Mat 16:18). To accomplish this great plan of God, Christ was laid as the chief corner stone of the church in Zion and the holy apostles and prophets are the foundation. *“And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in Whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in Whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit”* (Eph 2:20-22). *“Therefore thus saith the Lord God, ‘Behold, I lay in*

Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste” (Isa 26:18). The Spirit-baptized children of God are the lively (living) stones of the New Testament church. *“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ”* (1Pet 2:5).

The Lord Jesus Christ promised His disciples that He would prepare a place for them in heaven. This “place” is the holy Jerusalem, the eternal city of God whose capital is the holy Mount Zion. *“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 14:2-3). *“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”* (Rev 21:9-10). Once the city of God has been prepared, Christ will appear in His glory. *“When the Lord shall **build up** Zion, He shall appear in His glory”* (Psa 102:16).

May the good Lord continue His work of grace in all of our lives, making us ready for the rapture. Let us allow

the Spirit of God to destroy all the hidden and unfruitful works of darkness from our lives. Our God is able and faithful to complete the work which He began in us. Let us look up, for our redemption draweth nigh. *“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. **Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it”*** (1Thes 5:23-24). ◻

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“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” (Rev 14:2).

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 on Zion (Psa 15:1; 24:3). In our last study we saw how having the “Father’s name written in their foreheads” may speak to us of the attitude of those in eternal Zion to do the complete will of God. We also considered reasons why some Christians may fail to accomplish God’s perfect will in their lives.

Who’s Speaking?

In the above verse of Revelation 14:2, we can learn more glorious things about those with Christ on eternal Mount Zion. The voices that the writer heard apparently refer **both** to Christ and also to the voices of the 144,000 who are with Him. These “voices” help us to understand that these 144,000

servants of God, who shared in His sufferings in this world, will also share in all of the eternal blessings of Christ, including the authority to reign with Jesus on Zion. They will also share with Christ in the highest joys of that eternal Mount Zion referred to in scripture as “the joy of the whole earth” (Psa 48:2).

In our scripture passage we first see a voice of **“many waters.”** The prophet Ezekiel had a vision of God, and heard God’s voice “like a noise of many waters” (Eze 43:2). John heard the voice of the resurrected Jesus “as the sound of many waters” (Rev 1:15). “Many waters” may speak to us of a few things. Firstly, in the Word of God, we often find “waters” referring to trials and tribulations that we encounter in the Christian life. (Some other references that support this are: Psa 42:7; 93:3-4; 124:1-5; Lam 3:54; Jonah 2:5.) David said that God took him and drew him “out of **many waters**” (Psa 18:16). David was a man of God who knew afflictions and hard trials in life, but he found God to be a mighty Savior throughout them all. Psalm 18 reveals the great testimony of that man of God.

Pathway of Many Waters

Those destined for great glory and blessings in eternity must be willing to pass through the hard trials found in that pathway. “We must **through much tribulation** enter into

the Kingdom of God” (Ac 14:22). Through it all, we have the unfailing promise of God to be with us and to shield us. “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee” (Isa 43:2). It is the love of Jesus and faith in God that enable us to go through the manifold hardships of life, not in defeat, but victoriously! **“Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it”** (SS 8:7). Not only do the 144,000 go through many painful experiences for Jesus, but they also come out victorious during these trials by maintaining a heart of prayer and praise to God throughout (Phil 3:1; 4:4; Rom 8:35-39). The Apostle Paul was able to say, “I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation” (2Cor 7:4). Dear reader, we learn from Jesus and from the testimony of those on eternal Zion, that as we maintain a heart of faith in God’s love and praise Him during the hardships of this life, our reward will be very great in heaven. Also, we will be a source of blessing to others both now and in eternity. May our confession, even in the darkest midnight of life’s trials, be as King David who said: “I will bless the Lord at **all times**: His praise shall **continually** be in my mouth” (Psa 34:1).

Waters, His Blessings

It is to be noted that “waters” in the scriptures may also refer to the **blessings of God**. “He leadeth me beside the **still**

waters. He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake” (Psa 23:2-3). Without water the crops would not grow, the animals would perish, and man would cease to be. Water was and is absolutely vital to life, and those lands with springs or rivers would be blessed of God. In eternity a unique river will flow from the throne of God in Zion. In this world you cannot find a river coming out of a solid object. But that unique eternal river shows us that **God Himself is the true source of all eternal blessings!** The Psalmist prophesied of this glorious eternal river: “There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High” (Psa 46:4). Its fulfillment is seen in the last chapter of the Bible, in that beautiful New Jerusalem: “And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb” (Rev 22:1). This river of life is an ever-flowing stream of the presence, blessings, and knowledge of God that will pervade eternity.

Waters, His Word

Water is also seen in scripture as a symbol of the **Word of God**. (See Deut 32:1-2; Is 55:10-1; Jn 4:10-14; 1Cor 3:6.) On earth these 144,000 servants were ordained and chosen by God Himself to be with Him and to be sent forth to preach His words (Mk 3:13-14). Isaiah prophesied that those on Zion

reveal God and His “good tidings” (Isa 40:9). In the coming Millennial reign of Christ, all nations of the earth will come up to earthly Zion to hear the words of God (Isa 2:1-5; Mic 4:1-3). At that time “**living waters**” will emanate from earthly Jerusalem (Zech 14:8). Similarly, in eternity the “nations of the saved” will receive guidance, light, and instruction from Mount Zion and New Jerusalem (Rev 21:23-24). All of God’s eternal purposes, plans, and instructions will flow like a river from the God Who will reside in Zion: “**For out of Zion shall go forth the law**” (Isa 2:3). Just as on earth these servants brought “good tidings,” so they will also share in instructing the other redeemed throughout eternity (Isa 52:7-8; 2Cor 4:1-6; Rev 22:3-4). As the 144,000 are seen standing with Christ on Mount Zion, they will have the greatest closeness to God and knowledge of God throughout eternity. In that way these 144,000 are eternally a blessing to all of the other redeemed. “The Lord shall **bless thee out of Zion**: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life” (Psa 128:5). That is why their voices are also heard “as the voice of many waters.”

John also said in Revelation 14:2 that he heard a voice “**as the voice of a great thunder.**” Here again we see another characteristic common to both God and to the 144,000 with Him on Mount Zion. God Himself testified to Job that His voice is like thunder: “Hast thou an arm like God? Or canst

thou thunder with a voice like Him?” (Job 40:9). Elihu said of God, “God thundereth marvellously with His voice; great things doeth He, which we cannot comprehend” (Job 37:5). (For other references see also Job 26:14; Psa 29:3-4; 77:18; 104:7; Jn 12:28-29.) The voice like great thunder speaks to us of **God’s omnipotence**. Near the end of the Book of Revelation we are told of one thing that these majestic voices say: “And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the **Lord God omnipotent reigneth**” (Rev 19:6).

Power of His Voice

Heaven will be the realm in which the exceeding greatness of God’s power, love, and glory will be revealed in all its fullness. From the beginning of time God’s power has been manifested through His Word. He **spoke** all creation into existence (Heb 11:3; 2Pet 3:5), and all things created are even now held together by the **word of His power** (Heb 1:3). While in this world, Jesus manifested God’s power through His spoken word: “**for His word was with power**” (Lk 4:32). Jesus **spoke a word** and the raging seas became calm (Mk 4:39). He **spoke a word** and the sick were healed (Psa 107:20; Mat 8:8). When **Jesus spoke** the evil spirits obeyed, and departed from the oppressed (Lk 4:36). At **His voice** the dead were raised to

life again (Jn 11:43). Also, through **hearing His voice**, the lost are brought into salvation and eternal life (Jn 5:24). What beauty, power, and life-giving truths are revealed through His glorious voice!

Here in this world, the Holy Spirit-filled church has tasted of “the powers of the world to come” (Heb 6:5). The things which God has prepared for the saints above are beyond our finite imagination and comprehension (1Cor 2:9). Perhaps in eternity the redeemed may simply speak, and in so doing, bring forth new creations! It is evident through His faithful written word that God intends to give awesome authority and power to the saints, and especially to those 144,000 with Him on Mount Zion.

Rewards of The Bride

The 144,000 will be a subset of the bridal group of Christians who are caught up at the rapture. The rewards of the bride are two-fold: “And she [the Church] brought forth a man child [the overcomers], who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up [raptured] unto God, and to His throne” (Rev 12:5). So these **two great rewards are (1) God Himself, and (2) His throne**. Those in this raptured group will have the closest intimacy in eternity to Jesus, being His bride. Being caught up to His throne, means they will also share power with Christ over the eternal kingdom.

Heaven will be a vast government of the saved with great activities and service to God throughout eternity. However, the highest authority will be given to the 144,000 standing with Christ on Mount Zion. As the prophet Micah said “**the first dominion**” (or highest eternal governmental positions) will be given to the 144,000 with Christ on Zion (Mic 4:8). This is why their voices also, like God Himself, are heard as **voices of great thunder**. It is curious to note that even in this world, some of these disciples were called by Jesus as “sons of thunder” (Mk 3:17). They drank of Jesus’ cup of sufferings and self-denial in order to serve Him in this world, but in eternity, they will enjoy the bliss of His presence and the right to reign with Him on His throne of power and authority. (See also Mat 24:45-47; Lk 22:28-30.) What a marvelous God! What a glorious unspeakable inheritance! May God soon prepare the complete 144,000 for Mount Zion and then appear in His glory (Psa 102:16)! Maranatha! □

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The workmanship of His hands

THE DARTING DRAGONFLY

According to popular mythology, the old name of the dragonfly was “the devil’s needle” and even its current name suggests that it is a diabolical invention. Nevertheless, the dragonfly is none of the devil’s design but is in fact a glorious flying wonder of our Creator God. Its flight abilities of darting, hovering and even flying backwards is a marvel to be seen.

The dragonfly is a kind of insect belonging to the order Odonata. It is characterized by large multifaceted eyes, two pairs of strong transparent wings, and an elongated body. Dragonflies are similar to damselflies, but the adults can be differentiated by the fact that the wings of most dragonflies are held away from, and perpendicular to, the body when at rest. Even though dragonflies possess six legs like any other insect, they are incapable of walking.

Dragonflies are valuable predators that eat mosquitoes along with other small insects like flies, bees, ants

and butterflies. They are usually found around lakes, ponds, streams and wetlands because their larvae, known as “nymphs,” are aquatic.

Dragonflies belong to the order Odonata. This is a scientific name derived from the words “tooth-jawed.” The entomologist (insect scientist), Johann Christian Fabricius, who named them, studied the dragonflies’ mouths rather than wing characteristics in order to distinguish the different species. Only now are their wings also studied as well to classify dragonflies.

For most species of dragonflies the life cycle takes place over the course of at least one year. Eggs are deposited directly into aquatic plants or dropped into water. Many species overwinter as larva or nymphs in ponds and marshes—emerging later in the spring as adults. Some spend from two to six years in the larval stage. When the nymph is ready to change or metamorphose into an adult, it climbs out of the water onto a plant. Here it sheds its skin and emerges as an adult dragonfly.

Adults can live for up to two months. Dragonflies are found in many different types of habitats. Small ponds and marshes tend to be the most productive and contain a wide variety of dragonflies. However, some dragonflies

prefer specific types of wetlands and bodies of water. A few are only found in streams. They can even take advantage of temporary ponds that dry up over the course of the summer.

There are about 5,000 different species of dragonflies, found all over the world (except Antarctica). Around 450 of the species can be found in the United States and about 80 in British Columbia.


Dragonflies specialize in different kinds of hunting techniques. The larval stage is characterized by three basic strategies. Some stalk their prey in vegetation (climbers). Others lie in the mud and debris at the bottom of a pond waiting for prey (sprawlers). One species burrows itself completely in the mud (burrower). While the prey of the larvae are mostly other aquatic insects, some of the larger nymphs attack tadpoles and small fish.

The adult dragonfly is a formidable hunting insect. Incredibly agile, it uses the basket formed by its legs to catch insects on the fly. It eats mainly mosquitoes, midges and other small flying insects. Since it can only perceive its prey at fairly close range, it needs to be truly agile—which brings us to its flying ability. There are nine distinct types of flight which dragonflies excel in. Neural flight, as well

as cargo, patrol, menacing, mating, commuter, wave, hover and backwards flight. The inventor of the helicopter, Igor Sikorsky, got his ideas from dragonfly observations. The four adjustable rotor blades of a helicopter are modeled on the insect's four wings. These wings, which move independently of each other, allow the dragonfly to maneuver in ways which other insects cannot even dream about. They also put the helicopter to shame. This insect is far more nimble, quick and silent than the stealthiest of copters. The dragonfly is also much more subtle than most other insects. A bee flaps its wings about 300 times per second, but a dragonfly flaps its wings at only about 30 beats per second. Despite this rather casual approach to flight, the insect is able to live most of its life off the wing. In fact, it is perhaps the fastest of flying insects with a top recorded speed of 25 mph (40 km/h).

A dragonfly's eyes have about 30,000 lenses, enabling them to see in every direction (a 360 degree field of vision), but they don't see details of their surroundings very well. Although 80% of their brain is devoted to sight, dragonflies are not able to register detail well. A human eye on the other hand, has only one lens and sees better than a dragonfly, but only to the front and side. Nevertheless,

the eye of the dragonfly can receive sight information about 200 times faster than the human eye. This means that things that move so fast as to be a blur to us are seen in slow motion to a dragonfly.

With its large head which is almost covered in eye, its long tail, four long wings and darting movements, the dragonfly may well seem as something out of a science fiction movie. The truth is that it is yet another wonder of God's astonishing world. If we just take some time to behold the little things in life, we will be able to see God's mighty hand in all of creation. 

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Sleeping Peacefully

There was once a challenge for artists in a certain community, a contest in which the painters were asked to submit a painting that represented peace. Out of the many entries, there was one that spectators were sure would win. It depicted a beautiful pastoral scene: a rolling green meadow, complimented by colorful flowers, backed by a deep blue sky with little puffy white clouds, and a boy walking through the field with a fishing pole. To the surprise of most, that entry only took second place. First place went to a painting that portrayed a storm! The sky was dark and angry, the ocean was slamming into the cliffs, and lightning was flashing across the sky. At first look the spectators said, “What does this have to do with peace?” Then they looked again...

On that second look they saw a cleft in the rock of the cliff and a mother bird with her babies all nestled under her wings, and they were sleeping. Now that’s peace! Not the absence of the storm, but peace in the middle of the storm. Maybe the kind of peace you need right now?



Behind the doors of our own homes, we assume we are safe from predators, con artists, and other criminals wishing us harm. But the proliferation of personal computers and the growth of the Internet have invited these unpleasant types right into our bedrooms. A con man can start to manipulate us online in various crafty ways. A terrorist can recruit new members and raise money over the Internet. Identity thieves can gather personal information and exploit it for criminal purposes.

More than all of these temporal evils, the devil also wants to eternally defile our minds and hearts. “Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion” (Mic 4:11). We would never let the enemy knowingly into our homes, but he is getting in through the Internet. The Internet is not evil of itself: it has the potential to be very useful and beneficial. However, it can also be extremely dangerous and defiling. Over 20% of everything on the web today is pornography. It is said that America spends more money

on pornography in its various forms, than it does on sports, movies, music, and other forms of entertainment, COMBINED! The most visited websites are pornographic in nature. But the problem is not restricted to only non-Christians. Many Christian families in America now have the triple x-rated store right in their homes.

According to recent polls by Christian ministries, more than half of professing Christians “use pornography” *regularly*. Fathers are spending more time in cyberspace than with their families. Marriages are failing and fathers are molesting their daughters. Young sons are finding their way on the web and practicing on their sisters. Many are racing toward hell on fiber optic cables!

Many young people (and even some older ones) do not realize that the power of pornography is a devastating force coming from the very pit of hell. Once you allow yourself to watch porn, you begin to lose all your normal moral feelings, even towards your own sister, mother or daughter. “Who *being past feeling* have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness” (Eph 4:19). Addiction to porn results in a loss of one’s normal emotions or feelings; instead, lust can pollute your being in a thorough way. Finally you find yourself corrupt to the core and a mental wreck.

Jesus said, “The light of the body is the eye...but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness” (Mat 6:22-23). Here Jesus says, in essence, if your eyes are corrupt, *you* are corrupt; if your eyes are evil, *you* are evil—and your life will be full of darkness. Our own eyes can be the gates of hell: Samson’s fate warns us in this regard. He lusted with his eyes, and ended up being bound and having his eyes put out. Your eyes are connected to your heart and mind (thoughts—Pro 15:30; Job 31:1). When the eyes are defiled, the heart and mind are also defiled.

Jesus said, “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery’: but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Mat 5:27-28). This is a serious warning to all those who indulge in pornography. If one lustful look just for one moment is adultery in the sight of God, how much more when one deliberately and continuously looks on women/men in their most abominable form of appearance, behaving in the worst immoral way, for much longer periods of time! It is committing sins of immorality repeatedly and allowing another demon or unclean spirit to attack or enter each time. For example, the Gadarene demoniac appears to have been a grossly immoral man, sleeping

naked among the dead: he had acquired legions of demons through his perversions (Mk 5:1-9). The one who frequents pornographic sites may have given room to many demons or unclean spirits to attack or even possess him. Peter says such have “eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin” (2Pet 2:14).

The death of such a person will be horrible: all the demons that attack them will torment them in the worst possible way simultaneously. “O death, where is thy sting?...the sting of death is sin” (1Cor 15:55-56). When a person dies, the sins he had committed will sting and torment him, and that torment will continue all eternity. The way to avoid this is repentance, to renounce his sins while he still lives.

Dear reader, if you have given room to pornography (through the Internet, or any other means): please don’t give up, there is hope! Please consult a mature servant of God and share your problems without hiding anything. Also, take time to repent and renounce every sin you have committed from the depths of your heart. The blood of Jesus can wash you and the Lord can command purity of heart and mind. You can be sure if Jesus tarries, at the time of your death, no demons with stings will attack you, but Jesus and His angels will minister to you with peace

and grace. Make a sincere covenant as Job did: “I made a covenant with my eyes” (Job 31:1).

This article will conclude with some practical steps to follow in order to curb uncleanness from entering the house through the Internet. But what is most in need of filtering is our heart. Some preliminary steps to overcome all sexual vices are given below.

1. Give the first place of loyalty and love to God:

Let Him be your King, Lord, Master and Father. Don't let sex take that place. Sex is not your master, but only a servant. If God becomes your Master, He makes you the master over sex. “*A son honoreth his father, and a servant his master. If then I be a Father, where is Mine honor? and if I be a Master, where is My fear? saith the Lord...*” (Mal 1:6). “*I have set the Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved*” (Psa 16:8). “*And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might*” (Deut 6:5). “*He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me*” (Mat 10:37).

2. Take time to study the greatness of God and praise Him:

Praise Him for what He has done for you and what He has promised to do for you in His word. Determine to fill

your mind and heart with the word of God. This decisive step dethrones sex from your imaginations and desires, bringing peace and order in your body. “*Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations and their foolish heart was darkened...wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves*” (Rom 1:21-24). “*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). “*Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy word*” (Psa 119:9). “*Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust*” (2Pet 1:4).

3. Be honest with yourself:

Find out where your weakness lies and where it gains strength to overpower you. (Perhaps the means is an unclean person, or an object, or things you read, see, or listen to.) Decide to put it away by the strength and grace which God is sure to grant you, if you are determined to get delivered. “*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*” (Phil 4:13). “*Notwithstanding, the Lord*

stood with me, and strengthened me....And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me..." (2Tim 4:17-18). "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust;...He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me" (Psa 18:2,17). "Ye put off concerning the former conversation [past life and behavior] the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind" (Eph 4:22-23).

4. Be filled with the Holy Spirit:

Get accustomed to His fellowship, power, presence, guidance and comfort. He is a Person Who wants to lead you into all truth. He fights for you and delivers you from the onslaughts of the enemy. He gives you power to resist and to subdue him. Read Romans chapter 8 frequently and meditate on it to know the power of the Holy Spirit. "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him" (Isa 59:19). "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph 6:10-11). "This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Gal 5:16). "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from

the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you....For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Rom 8:11,13).

5. Learn to cry out to God in prayer:

Cry to God as the saints of old till He comes down to deliver you. Pour out your heart like King David, as you hear him cry in the book of Psalms. **One aspect of manifesting faith in God is to pray effectually and continually for complete deliverance.** "When I cry unto Thee, then shall my enemies turn back: this I know: for God is for me" (Psa 56:9). "Now know I that the Lord saveth His anointed; then He will hear him from His holy heaven with the saving strength of His right hand" (Psa 20:6). "I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears....This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.... The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles" (Psa 34:4,6,17).

6. Serve Him with all your heart:

Jesus needs you because you are a member of His body. His church and His servants need your ministry. When we consecrate ourselves to serve Christ, we are raised by the power of the Holy Spirit from the carnal plane to the spiritual plane. The Holy Spirit overpowers all the carnal

desires and makes us zealous for His kingdom. Wherefore we make efforts to gain souls for Christ; filled with His love, we will be able to work for His kingdom in the midst of any kind of hardship. *“And it came to pass afterward, that He went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve [who forsook their all] were with Him. And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene,...and many others, which ministered unto Him of their substance”* (Lk 8:1-3). *“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth”* (Acts 1:3). *“And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria....Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word”* (Acts 8:1-4). *“...and there be eunuchs [rendered impotent of sexual power] which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake”* (Mat 19:12). (Jesus does not speak here of men who made themselves impotent medically or surgically, but of those who consecrated their legitimate sexual desires to a higher, creative work in the kingdom of God.) *“But he*

that is married careth for the things that are of the world; how he may please his wife. There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband” (1Cor 7:33-34).

The spiritual safeguards are the most important ones: yet we also want to offer practical ways in which we can guard our homes, families, and churches from the pervasive evils of the web.

1. The best way of protecting against the dangers of the web at home is not to have access to the Internet at all. Many do not actually NEED the Internet but just have it for the sake of CONVENIENCE. When you do need to use the Internet there are many places you can go to get access. Many public libraries have Internet access available for free. There are also many ‘cyber-cafes’ that allow customers to use their Internet service. However, in cases where you do need the Internet at home, you should take further precautions.

2. Place your computer in an open room with the monitor facing out so that any one can see what is being viewed on the Internet. However, you or your children may have laptops with wireless devices that enable them

to connect to the Internet from any room. In which case, the following suggestions may be helpful.

3. Install a web filter on all your computers including laptops. Many of them are free and a lot of them are inexpensive. Pornographers are very aggressive in their advertising. Sometimes inappropriate materials just pops up without warning or solicitation. That is why web-filters are necessary. The one with the most features is called Net Nanny and sells for about \$30. Some other ones are: SafeEyes, CyberSitter, WiseChoice.net, CyberPatrol, MaxProtect, Netmop, McAfee Parental Controls, FilterPak, Conntroll, and imView. Free ones are: K9 Web Protection, SafeFamilies, NetDog Internet Filter, and B-Gone.

4. Use off-site filtering. Although a web filter installed on your computer will help, they are not perfect and can sometimes be easily circumvented. New pornographic sites emerge every day on the Internet. Ask your Internet service provider about the web filters available and how to enable them. Sometimes you can do so right on your router/modem. There are also Christian Internet service providers like Agape Internet (which allows you to use the Internet only for email) and ChristianBroadband.com. A free service from OpenDNS.com will not only

provide filtering services, but will also protect you from fraudulent or 'phishing' sites that try to steal your financial information.

5. Everyone should be willing to be accountable. There are many programs that will keep track of the sites that are visited on your computer and send email reports to people that you choose. One such service is called accountable2you.com. Knowing that our actions are being recorded and reported can be a deterrent to online temptation. "Provide things honest in the sight of all men" (Rom 12:17).

Implementing physical and spiritual filters are significant steps toward maintaining the cleansing and holiness that God has given to us. A combination of all these methods is probably the best way to protect our families from this prevalent danger today. May God make us "wise unto salvation" (2Tim 3:15) and "wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil" (Rom 16:19). □

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The Fellowship Of The Unashamed

I'm part of the fellowship of the unashamed. I have Holy Spirit power. The die has been cast. I have stepped over the line. The decision has been made. I'm a disciple of His. I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still.

My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, my future is secure. I'm finished with low living, sight walking, small planning, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tamed visions, mundane talking, cheap living, and dwarfed goals.

I no longer need pre-eminence, prosperity, position, promotions, plaudits, or popularity. I don't have to be right, first, tops, recognized, praised, regarded, or rewarded. I now live by faith, lean on His presence, walk by patience, lift by prayer, and labor by power.

My face is set, my gait is fast, my goal is heaven, my road is narrow, my way rough, my companions few, my Guide reliable, my mission clear. I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, deluded or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of the adversary, negotiate at the table of the enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity.

I won't give up, shut up, let up, until I have stayed up, stored up, prayed up, paid up, preached up for the cause of Christ. I am a disciple of Jesus. I must go till He comes, give till I drop, preach till all know, and work till He stops me. And when He comes for His own, He will have no problems recognizing me—my banner will be clear!

Human Error

PART 4 — LIVING WITH FAILURE

In previous articles of this series on *Human Error*, we have touched on some of the plans and programs of Jesus that at first view seemed to go wrong. In this installment we will begin to concentrate more fully on the history of failure that seemed to follow Christ throughout His life on earth. From His birth in Bethlehem until His resurrection at Jerusalem the Savior was surrounded by and subject to error. At the time of His nativity there was no room for Him in the inn of Bethlehem. After His resurrection He was unrecognized by those who had just been following Him. Our Lord is and always was fully God but at a certain point in time and space He became fully human, yet without sin as man was originally created to be. This fact inspires and encourages us who have been born again to believe that we too can be like Him Who became like us (Gal 4:4-5). In spite of the Lord's faultlessness, He was willing to live and suffer in this faulty world in order to bring us to perfection. "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being

made perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation..." (Heb 5:8-9; 2:14-17).

Misunderstandings

Jesus was continually misinterpreted and misjudged. Those around Him, His family, friends, neighbors, religious and government leaders and even His own disciples, were often wrong about Him. However, His enemies, the devil and demons, seemed to recognize the Son of God and His mission more than His friends did. For His whole life Jesus bore misunderstandings and mistakes. Let us begin to consider this history of errors that Christ endured so that our faith will not fail when others fail us.

On The Wrong Path

Though conceived by the Holy Spirit to a virgin in Nazareth, Jesus was born in Bethlehem. This came about when the first Roman emperor, called Augustus, commanded the whole world to be taxed in their own hometowns. Though sometimes it may seem that tyrannical governments are in control, it is really God Who is directing His children's destinies. Long before there was a Roman Empire, the prophet had predicted that out of that little town of Bethlehem would come forth the Ruler that God had ordained before time began (Mic 5:2). Later, when wise men from the east came to find and worship the

King of the Jews, they went to the wrong town. Following human wisdom they went to the palace in Jerusalem, the place where one would expect to find Jewish royalty. The reigning king, the evil Herod, tried to use the wise men to bring about the destruction of the King of kings. But Jesus was no longer the newborn in a manger that had been heralded by angels from heaven to the humble and simple shepherds. Nor was He still an infant as when in the temple the Holy Spirit had revealed Him to the aged Simeon and Anna. This should be a warning to the truly wise. We must not trust in learning, science, magic, astrology or any other kind of knowledge to try to find Christ. That revelation cannot come from flesh and blood but only from heaven (Mat 16:17).

God's Unseen Hand

By the time the Magi found Him, Jesus was a young child living in a house in the city of David (Mat 2:11). Their mistake cost the lives of many innocents when the jealous Herod had all the young male children in Bethlehem killed. Yet all this error and evil was foreknown by God as recorded long before in prophecy: "Rachel weeping for her children...because they were not" (Jer 31:15). There was still another prophecy of the Scriptures fulfilled through the ignorance of the wise men. Jesus became an exile and

refugee after being carried into Egypt when God spoke to Joseph through dreams. Thus God's Son was called out of Egypt (Hos 11:1). Like King Herod, Satan will try to destroy the life of Christ in us and stop any new work God is doing in our lives. The child of God may also feel at times that he is powerless under the hand of oppressive authority, but it is really God's unseen hand that has been in control from before the beginning of history.

The only other incident recorded about our Lord's life before His baptism is found in the Gospel of Luke. At the age of twelve, still a minor in the eyes of His Jewish elders, Jesus was left behind in Jerusalem after the feast of Passover. Though His parents thought Him lost, even at this young age the Son of God knew where His real home was and what business He was meant to be about. He spent the time without worry, inquiring in the temple of God. Little did those elders and educated doctors around Him know that the real Passover was seated in their midst at that very moment. The experts who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and answers (Psa 119:99).

When Mary found Jesus, she too was astonished and told Him that she and His father had been seeking Him with sorrow. Jesus gently corrected her with a question that revealed He had not been lost but was at home the

whole time. Still His mother did not understand Him (Lk 2:50). Though wiser than His teachers and already beyond His family's ability to understand Him, Jesus returned to the little town of Nazareth in the backwater region of Galilee. He submitted and obeyed for an additional 18 years those who knew less than He did. Every Sabbath, the Word of God would attend the Synagogue and listen to others attempt to explain the word of God (Lk 4:16). At times we may feel misunderstood and unappreciated by those around us and that our time and talent is wasted in the place where God has placed us. But Jesus has left us an example. He spent those years doing what the young do best: growing! "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (Lk 2:52). Let us remember that for every year Jesus spent preaching the Gospel publicly, He spent ten privately at home. God can do big things with our lives in a small place and in a small time!

Recognizing Christ

The next mistake made by a relative of the Lord that is recorded in the Bible happened at Jesus' water baptism. John the Baptist, who was Jesus' cousin, did not want to baptize Him (Mat 3:14). He who had recognized the Lord by the Holy Spirit before both of them were born, now as an adult, had not recognized Him as the Messiah until he saw

the Holy Spirit descending and remaining upon Jesus (Lk 1:15,44; Jn 1:33). After recognizing the Lamb of God, John would rather have himself baptized by Jesus than to administer his baptism of repentance to the One Who had nothing to repent from. Jesus told John to baptize Him anyway and thus He left us another example to follow. Only after we have received new life through faith in Jesus Christ, being born again, do we take water baptism. It is not through the will of flesh or the will of man that we can know God but only through revelation from the Spirit of God. Even if someone had seen Jesus in person or had been one of His relatives, it is not the way to really know Him. It is only by becoming a new creation in Christ that we recognize and are truly related to Jesus the Son of God (2Cor 5:16-17).

True Family

Jesus testified that John was the greatest of those born of women but that now the least in the Kingdom of God is greater than he (Lk 7:28). Therefore it is all the more ironic and tragic that the Roman Church attempts to bring souls to God through the idol they have created called Mary the Mother of God. The abominable heresies perpetuated about Mary, the mother of Jesus' flesh, such as the Immaculate Conception, Perpetual Virginity, Assumption, etc., have caused millions of deceived members of the

Catholic church to spend more time praying to a dead woman (really a familiar spirit and not the mother of Jesus at all) than to the risen and living Son of God. The Lord in His foreknowledge has given ample warning against such error. In all the accounts of encounters between Mary and Jesus after He had started His ministry, Jesus never acknowledged Mary as His mother or answered any of her requests. When He turned water into wine for His first recorded miracle in the Gospels, He did it so that His disciples would believe in Him—not because His mother asked. When Mary and His brethren stood outside calling for Him while He was within preaching the Word of God, Jesus did not come outside or acknowledge their claim upon Him. Instead He recognized those who hear and obey the Word of God as His true family. When a woman proclaimed a special blessing on His mother, Jesus corrected her and said “blessed rather are those who hear the Word of God and keep it” (Lk 11:27-28). Even in His final moments on the cross he did not call Mary mother but “woman.” Surely Jesus loved and respected Mary and would have addressed her as mother while living in her home in Nazareth. However, when Jesus forsook all, it included His mother also. He did not allow the physical and family connection to take precedence over His call to

the cross. Truly Mary was blessed to carry Jesus in her womb and nurse and nurture Him as a child, but it is the spiritual and not a natural connection to Jesus Christ that saves. It is through the baptism of the Holy Spirit that we are connected with the Body of Christ. Mary along with her other children had to repent, believe in the crucified and risen Lord and then they too received the Holy Spirit in the upper room (Ac 1:14). Mankind would do well today to obey the last recorded words of Mary in the Bible which are, “whatsoever He saith unto you, do it” (Jn 2:5).

Christ In Our Hearts

From these examples taken from the earthly life of Jesus, we have learned that human families, governments and intellects will often fail us and can actually hinder the eternal work God is doing in us. Sometimes those closest to us in distance will be the furthest from us spiritually. It is an error to think we can get closer to Christ by going through His mother, visiting Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Rome or making pilgrimages to shrines full of dead bones. The believer is related to Christ spiritually, not physically or geographically. It is not at the manger or in the Garden Tomb where we get close to Christ, but in our hearts. □

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As Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, and John Wesley ministered to the English speaking people during the “Great Awakening,” a young man named David Brainerd sought out the native Indians of America, hoping to bring the gospel to them. He became more well known after his death when Jonathan Edwards published parts of his diary. These writings went on to inspire many Christians and missionaries to pour out their lives in the Lord’s service. People like William Carey, Samuel Marsden, and Henry Martyn were among those that were greatly influenced by the life of Brainerd and also gave their lives in missionary service. Although Brainerd lived a very short life and served the Lord for only a few years, his life and ministry continue to be an inspiration to many.

David Brainerd was born in Haddam, Connecticut on April 20, 1718. His parents were well-to-do and had a prominent role in the community and government. However, when David was nine his father died and five years later his mother died as well. Even though he went to live with his sister, he

felt alone throughout his teenage years. At the age of 21 he had a conversion experience and thereafter enrolled in Yale University.

Throughout his life, David suffered from various sicknesses and afflictions in his body. This continued while he was at Yale and he had to be sent home to recuperate at one time. On his return to university, the “Great Awakening” was spreading through the campus and David quickly joined in the movement.

A great tarnish in the life of Brainerd happened while he was at Yale. He was overheard making a wrong comment about one of the tutors at the university. He was asked to make a public apology but refused. He was therefore expelled from the university. Later he wrote a formal apology in hopes of being reinstated, but the university did not comply to his request. Because of this he did not obtain his degree from Yale.

This life-changing event in Brainerd’s life caused him to seek the Lord more for the will of God and God’s direction. Through these hard times Brainerd wrote: *“I hardly ever so longed to live for God and to be altogether devoted to Him; I wanted to wear out my life in His service and for His glory.”* As Brainerd sought the Lord in fasting and prayer, the Lord began to speak to him and Brainerd took up various posts of

ministry. Yet his burden was to share the gospel to those who had never heard it before. He said, *"I never, since I began to preach, could feel any freedom to enter into other men's labors and settle down in the ministry where the gospel was preached before."* Therefore, he set out to take the gospel to the native Indians. At that time he was sickly; many modern mission boards would probably reject a candidate like him today. During that time, there was almost no attempt made to reach these natives, as they were considered savages and some even argued that they did not have a soul. Yet the Lord opened the way for Brainerd to live with these people and to bring them the true light of God.

At the age of 24 he began his ministry among the Indians. The events chronicled in Brainerd's diary of these years would go on to be a great inspiration and blessing to thousands. He preached along the eastern coasts and traveled thousands of miles by horseback not considering his own health, but motivated by a zeal for lost souls.

He once heard of a terribly savage tribe of Indians living in the "Forks of Delaware" and decided to travel there to share the gospel. He saw the smoke of their campfires by sunset and decided to wait till the morning to approach them. However, the chief and a group of Indians determined to surprise Brainerd and kill him. As they came near to him, they noticed

him praying and crying out to God with a great burden for the salvation of those Indian souls. He wanted Christ and His great sacrifice on Calvary to be real to them. As the group looked on, they noticed a rattlesnake approach Brainerd ready to strike him. Then all of a sudden, the snake disappeared into the darkness. The Indians seeing this quickly went back to their camps in amazement, wondering what special powers this white man possessed. When Brainerd approached the camp the following morning, he was greeted with a warm welcome such as he never expected. The doors were wide open for him and he sat down with them and shared from Isaiah 53 about the love of God and Christ's sacrifice for them. At the end, many of them had eyes full of tears, and the same chief that set out to kill him the previous night now declared that Brainerd had brought "a wondrous sweet message." Like this, the Lord used Brainerd to bring the message of salvation to these native Indians.

Brainerd relied heavily on prayer and spent much time in intercession for the native Indians. He described many of these sessions of prayer in his diary: *"God enabled me to wrestle for numbers of souls, and I had much fervency in the sweet duty of intercession."* *"This morning I spent about two hours in secret duties and was enabled more than ordinarily to agonize for immortal souls. Though it was early in the morning and the sun*

scarcely shined at all, yet my body was quite wet with sweat..." "Spent much time in prayer in the woods and seemed raised above the things of this world..." "Was enabled to pray much, through the whole day..." "Spent this day in secret fasting, and prayer, from morning till night..." These are just a few examples that reveal the beautiful life of prayer that Brainerd had with the Lord. In his diary there are many accounts of miracles and God's provision during the few short years of Brainerd's ministry. His life with God is a great inspiration for what God can do when one man seeks Him wholeheartedly.

The Lord was with Brainerd, even in the difficulties and trials that came along with ministering to the unsaved and warlike Indians. After a few months of ministry, Brainerd was able to write in his diary: *"I have now baptized, in all, forty-seven persons of the Indians. Twenty-three adults and twenty-four children...through rich grace, none of them as yet have been left to disgrace their profession of Christianity by any scandalous or unbelieving behavior."* For tribal people accustomed to fighting and killing, this was a great victory!

David Brainerd continued to seek the lost and unreached native Indians despite his poor health. As his health continued to deteriorate, his zeal for the work of God continued to increase. Nothing could stop him from pressing forward. Near the end of his life he said, *"There is nothing in the world worth*

living for but doing good and finishing God's work, doing the work that Christ did. I see nothing else in the world that can yield any satisfaction besides living to God, pleasing Him, and doing His whole will." Brainerd died of tuberculosis at the age of twenty-nine after serving the Lord for a few short years. Yet, though dead, his life and testimony still speak and minister today. □

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The Cracked Pot

A water bearer had two large pots, each hung on the end of a pole which he carried across his shoulders. One of the pots had a crack in it; and while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water at the end of the long walk from the stream to the master's house, the cracked pot arrived only half full.

For two full years this went on daily, with the bearer delivering only one and a half pots full of water to his master's house. Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments, perfect to the end for which it was made. But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection and miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do. After two years of what it perceived to be a bitter failure, the cracked pot spoke to the water bearer one day by the stream.

"I am ashamed of myself, and I want to apologize to you."

"Why?" asked the bearer. "What are you ashamed of?"

"I have only been able, for these past two years, to deliver half my load because this crack on my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your master's house. Because of my flaws, you have to do all this work, and you don't get full value from your efforts," the pot said.

The water bearer felt sorry for the old cracked pot, and in his compassion he said, "As we return to the master's house, I want you to notice the beautiful flowers along the path."

Indeed, as they went up the hill, the old cracked pot took notice of the sun warming the beautiful flowers on the side of the path, and this cheered it some. But at the end of the trail, it still felt bad because it had leaked out half its load, and so again it apologized to the bearer for its failure.

The bearer said to the pot, "Did you notice that there were flowers only on your side of the path, but not on the other pot's side? That's because I have always known about your flaw, and I took advantage of it. I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walked back from the stream, you watered them. For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate my master's table. Without you being just the way you are, he would not have this beauty to grace his house."

Each of us have our own unique deficiencies and weaknesses. We're all cracked pots. However, if we will allow it, the Lord will perfect His strength in our weaknesses through His Spirit and use us for His glory. In God's great economy, nothing goes to waste. Christ has called the weak, foolish, base and people of no worldly value to grace His Father's eternal table.

So as we seek ways to minister together, and as God calls you to the tasks He has appointed for you, don't be afraid of your weaknesses. Acknowledge them and allow Him to take advantage of them, and then you too can be the cause of beauty in His pathway.

Go out boldly knowing that in our weakness we will find His strength made perfect (2Cor 12:9). *“But now, O Lord, Thou art our Father; we are the clay, and Thou our Potter; and we all are the work of Thy hand”* (Isa 64:8).

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