

INSPIRATION ministries
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But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. **1 Peter 2:9-10**

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF

INSPIRATION

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ministries

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Unifying the body of Christ in order to most glorify God and inspire others to accept the saving and satisfying love of Jesus Christ.

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Letter from the Director



We are all praying that as you head into this fall and winter season, you may be filled with the peace that surpasses all understanding which can only be found in a relationship with Jesus Christ. Even as we minister to folks daily that have confessed to hit rock-bottom, it's interesting to see how many still do not want to take the step to accept and trust Christ. Often the results include their definition of rock-bottom

looking like a walk in the park once they find themselves truly at the bottom of the pit. The Lord has been gracious to give us opportunities to share the Gospel in our DeKalb County community. We are humbled to be rejoicing with the angels as we saw a number of folks accept Jesus into their hearts during our Free Fall Fair outreach.

Every fall Auburn plays host to one of the biggest fairs in the state. Overnight the downtown turns into endless games, rides, and food vendors. It is pretty incredible to see the transformation. Fair workers from across the country show up Sunday to set up, and we have been welcoming them with open arms, a warm meal, and the message of salvation. This year we were blessed to feed 120 people, but the best part came from testimonies where decisions were made for Christ right there on the street. At the end of the day, one of the leaders, Jason Hendricks, told me that 10 souls were added to the Kingdom! Hallelujah! Thank you, Jesus! This outreach has become a staple around here for the past three years, and we are excited to have it on our calendar for next year already.

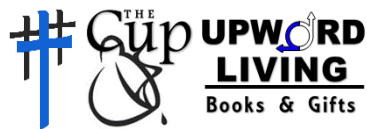
Speaking of getting ready for next year, we are thrilled to welcome back Carla Boggs to the Inspiration team as the Director of Operations. In 2015 we saw the Lord pour out His spirit and bring many people under our roof for ministry. Carla's focus will be women's ministry as well as helping grow Inspiration so that we can be more effective at reaching others for Christ. Also, with the Cupbearer Café and Upword Living Christian Bookstore both doing well, we have hired Alisha Getts to help manage and serve customers. It has been an awesome blessing to have the ability to expand the team with people that love Jesus. Our hope is that with the added support, we are able to be more flexible so that we can pray with and minister to those in whom the Lord brings.

This weekend I have the privilege of speaking at my home church, New Hope. It may be a new message for them, but a familiar one to me as I remind us to never forget the joy of our salvation. It is that remembrance that inspires me to point others to Jesus Christ just as others did for me. Just take minute to remember your salvation...the cost, Who paid it, and Who will keep you.

Inspired by a Savior willing to change us,

Andrew L. Foster

Inspiration Ministries, Director



Truth Talk

by Kirsten Foster, Inspiration Ministries

I was recently asked to be a part of a women's Bible study on Monday evenings by one of my closest friends, and for the first time in three years, I've been able to answer "YES!" In previous years, I was always on café duty on Monday evenings because Andy had men's prayer and Bible study. But now, with Alisha on board to cover Monday evenings, I'm able to drop my beautiful baby girl off at grandma's house (much to the dismay of Grandma... just kidding!), and head over to the Harvey house for some much-needed fellowship with other women. See, not only was I unable to attend a Monday evening outside the café for these past few years, but I was also surrounded by a bunch of dudes all the time, and I rarely got some "girl time" to be open and honest with God-fearing women like the ones I now find myself surrounded by. I say all that for two reasons: 1. God is faithful to bring workers! Andy and I knew the importance of both of us being able to be a part of our own separate groups, but it just worked out that he was able to do so, and I wasn't. And now, we have the help we need to enable us to have flexibility when it comes to family time and friends and work. 2. I've been reminded of some Biblical truths that I believe can be found beneficial to anyone reading this. These truths are true, not because I am a woman, or a mother, or a wife, but because I am a Christian. I am a child of the Most High God. I am loved. I have been accepted. I am complete in Him.

A question I have often asked myself is "what value do I bring to the table?" Like, why would God choose to use me when He could choose ANYONE else? Have you ever asked those questions? Well, the answer is simple! Because your value is found in Christ! So the fact that Christ lives in you is value enough to be used by God. 1 Corinthians 6:20 says "For you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." To not allow yourself to be used by God is like rejecting the work Christ did on the cross. The work that paid your debts and washed away your sin. Not only has God chosen you, but He has chosen you for success! John 15:16 says, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you." So God is choosing to use you because you have value and because with Him, He knows you can be successful in any endeavor you undertake in His name! The way you are able to be successful is because you are complete in Christ. Colossians 2:9-10 says, "For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority." So because Christ dwells within and is the ruler of your heart, there is no lack in you. You need nothing else. You need not seek any other person or thing to make you whole.

Soak in these truths, folks. May they inspire you to continue in the work God has called you to, whether you are behind the walls or on the outside. We have a mission field before us, and tools within us to be used by and for the glory of God. Get to work!

Conversion, Not Just Commitment

by Carla Boggs, Vulnerability Ministries

Where are you in your journey with Jesus? That's a loaded question, huh? But seriously, right now, in the stillness of your spirit be honest and answer the question—are you seeking His ways daily? Are you a Christian by association? (Meaning do you believe in God but haven't said to Jesus *please lead my life*.) Or are you somewhere in the middle? I'd venture to say most of us that claim to be Christians are somewhere in the middle.



Recently I was listening to a sermon and he said, "There are a lot of Christians who have made the commitment to Jesus, but have not converted to Christianity." I was struck by the word "converted." That's not really a word we hear much, at least not in my circles. In my circles we say things like "I love God, I just screw up a lot." Please know, I'm not suggesting in any fashion we are to be perfect, for we know that the only perfect Man was Jesus; what I AM suggesting is we ponder the question, have we moved beyond the powerful moment of saying "I'm a sinner, please forgive me"? Have we moved past that moment and into a lifestyle that shows a daily striving to grow (in our relationship with God) and become better (in our actions, words, thoughts)? Have we begun the hard work of BEING a Christian?

It seems recently a rise against Christianity has taken on life in new ways. We, Americans, have always known that in the other parts of the world Christians can't necessarily be "out loud" about their faith for fear of their life, but it's starting to happen in America as well. Killings are happening all because someone says "yes, I am a Christian." As I ponder the statement about conversion verses commitment I can't help but think about these attacks.

My friend, it doesn't matter where we are right now in life, it doesn't matter if we are behind the walls, in the school, at church, or walking the streets we are all coming face to face with the very real notion that our faith is tested. Maybe you'll never have your life literally threatened for being a Christian, maybe you will, but daily God is asking us a very real and very difficult question "Will you acknowledge Me?" In the casual conversation with your friend, will you be talking in a way that reflects your life belongs to God? In the line to get food, will you chime in when you know you shouldn't or will you stay silent out of honoring God? In the quiet of the night, when you reflect on your day, will you be able to say to God "I served YOU today"?

Be honest about where you are on your journey with Jesus; it's the only way to know where you're starting from. Be honest, then adjust accordingly. Do you want to be someone that says you're a Christian because you prayed a prayer or

because you've given up your old ways and converted to His ways? When someone asks if you're a Christian, what will you say?

I, for one, struggle to walk away from Old Carla but when the temptation rises I quickly remind myself that one day I will stand before God and I will have to give an account for every single one of my breaths and even though my sins are forgiven, my breaths still matter and He is still interested in what I'm doing with my life AFTER I made my commitment to Him. God wants total conversion and I want to be able to look my Father in the eye and hear Him say "Well done, good and faithful daughter."

*So fear the LORD and serve him wholeheartedly. Put away forever the idols your ancestors worshiped when they lived beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD alone. But if you refuse to serve the LORD, then **choose today whom you will serve**. Would you prefer the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates? Or will it be the gods of the Amorites in whose land you now live? But as for me and my family, we will serve the LORD. **Joshua 24:14-15***

What a Place!

by Errol Mumby

Have you ever dreamed of a place far away, where you can have all your heart's desires, and it would have nothing to do with material possessions? It would start with peace, which is contentment of spirit. This would lead to joy, which is described as peace dancing wrapped with compassion; it is caring for someone so deeply that their happiness or sadness also involves your emotions. It is activated by faith, which is being sure of what you can't see. It focuses on hope that the unseen is beneficial. You enjoy sharing because you're overflowing with kindness, and caring is natural because that's what you're supposed to do. Peace, hope, joy, dreams and compassion dwell together in faith. These you express to others and are held together by love. What a perfect place!

Some would call it heaven, some say it's not possible, yet some have experienced it for a brief moment. Is it an actual place or a state of mind? The Bible says this place will exist. Jesus says we can have this if we trust and our hearts are pure and confess it with our mouths. Parents experience this with their children. Man has a glimpse of this with his wife. I wonder if I will have an opportunity to share a piece of the unattainable; at least not by my strength. I would like to say that I'm a visionary, but I'm not the first to seek this place. Adam and Eve had the first chance in the garden. Will you join me in Eden? Anyone can go to this marvelous place. All it takes for you is belief. Do you?

I'm giving you an invitation. I'm welcoming you to the best offer possible. Please accept the same grace I was given for free. Maybe I would dare to die for you, but I know someone died for me. And that is how you access this place. Have you ever dreamed of such a place? I promise it can be yours; all you have to do is ask. "If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it. If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:14-15). "Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). All I can say is "What a Place!"

Survival with God's Help

by Thomas Reardon

Man's life is but a short period in time. He is born, he tries to survive the best way he can. Most times he is not too successful. It seems that he does things that he feels are the right things but they just seem to get him more mixed up. He feels that his way is the right way but he soon learns that he truly cannot make it on his own. He will look for help in many different places but none of these seem to be any better. He feels lost and that there must be a better way to survive in this place he knows as life. He feels only despair. He feels that life is not fair, that he deserves much more from it than he is receiving. He cries out for help and for the first time he calls out to God and asks why God has forsaken him. What he must realize is that God did not forsake him, but He has been there all the time just waiting for him to call upon Him for His blessed help.

God has given man a free will and therefore He will not interfere in his decision-making. As part of God's gift of free will, man must decide on his own to seek God's help. Then, and only then, will God interfere. It is beyond my comprehension why man, and that includes all mankind, seeks to handle any and all problems that come his way by himself. He starts out so sure of himself that there is no need for any outside help to solve whatever it is that he faces. After many attempts to do it on his own he soon learns that he needs help from a higher power. That power comes in the name of God. Mankind must first learn that life is filled with ups and downs and to get through it he must realize that in many cases he cannot do it on his own.

This is where God comes in. He is waiting for mankind to come to the realization that he truly needs God's help to get through the trials and tribulations that face him throughout this existence called life. Again I say that life is but a short period of time. Mankind must learn to live it in the best way that will please God and that is why he must call upon God for His help to get through it. No matter how hard it may seem, God is there to help him live life to its fullest. Mankind must also remember that there is a final reward for how he lives that life and that God will help him to live it no matter how bad it seems at times. That reward is life eternal in God's Kingdom.

So I tell you now that no matter how much pain and sorrow mankind will inevitably go through, he must remember that God is just waiting to hear his call for help. All of mankind are God's children and no father wants his children to suffer needlessly. When things seem hopeless, remember God is waiting to help you through it. Forget your pride and ask your Father who loves you for His help. He will never let you go through any trial or tribulation alone. Remember always that God loves you.

The Beckoned Way

by Don Chaffin

The Holy Spirit's call is a beckon to move,
seek the hunger to grow and the power to live,
with the openness to see our blindness is gone,
and open ears can hear, so what shall we profess?

Faith seeks a wisdom in a humility blessed,
hope is a stalwart, so courage can't rest,
the joy of no fears is the searching souls gain,
a place of no tears sheds the power of pain.

The beckoning call of the fullness of grace,
the depth of true mercy the soul can embrace,
the Holy Spirit's quest can speak to the soul,
the soul finds no rest until it is whole.

We must defeat battles of doubt and despair,
attitudes, distractions, and sorrows we share,
the frailty of life and the grief in one's shame,
all that is gone in the faith we can claim.

Sin and destruction? Or grace and reward?
Where is our honor? Who is our Lord?
Life's daily battles surround us each day,
so how shall we live? And Who leads our way?

I would never want to tell someone the lie that becoming a Christian makes life a pain-free experience. Life can be hard. But Jesus tells us in scripture that He has overcome the world.

Where we place our faith and courage determines how we will overcome life's sorrows and develop an attitude of trust. Trust is a humility issue that initiates a willingness to persevere in those hard times of life. In the matter of trust, we have to predetermine whether or not we're on our own or will rely on God and His provisions of grace and mercy to carry us through our battlefields of trial.

There is a wholeness that comes with having peace in our hearts when we aren't on our own as Christians. We can face whatever the future holds for us. We are loved if Christ is our Savior. We have the Holy Spirit as our Comforter and Advocate. We are blessed!

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13).

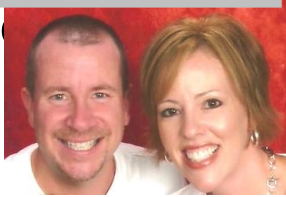
Breaking Down

Walls

When Family Bonds Shatter

by Dan Evans

Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. Colossians 3:17



I know family is a touchy subject for all of us to deal with from time to time, but no matter what, they are still our family. Some of us may have great support from family, while some may not hear at all from family, while others made it a point to burn any and all bridges to family while incarcerated. Regardless of where you're at in your relationship with your family, conflict must always be dealt with and some of us don't like dealing with it at all. Even if you have no contact with family on the outside, remember that as a believer and a follower of Jesus Christ, you have "family" on the inside with your brothers in Christ. And guess what? We have conflict with them, too! We are going to look at a family in the Bible that had some conflict going on and see how they dealt with it. Then we will look at some verses in Scripture on how we can deal with it when it comes up in our family, either inside the fences or outside.

In 2 Samuel 13, we see a story about the family of David. We read about Amnon and Tamar, brother and sister. The first three verses talk about Amnon's desire for his sister, but I want to focus on Amnon's friend, Jonadab. The Bible says he was a shrewd or crafty man. We see this word also in Genesis 3:1 where it talks about the serpent being cunning, in a bad sense. So, my question is this: who do you run to when it all goes down? Do you have a friend who will pray with you and give you sound, godly advice? Or do you have a friend like Jonadab who is "street smart" and thinks he knows the way to go? Be careful who your friends are, who you go to for advice; it could lead you into trouble.

In verses 11-22 we see what happened between Amnon and Tamar and how each family member handled it as they became aware of what happened. What do you do with conflict in your family? Are you like Absalom and say it's okay, let's keep this quiet, don't tell anyone, yet inside you are seething and scheming on how to get back at that family member? Or are you like King David who heard what happened and was angry, but did nothing about it because of who it was that did it. Amnon was the firstborn, so David didn't want to jeopardize his position as heir to the throne. It is always right to do the right thing no matter the circumstances! Do what is right, be courageous and be obedient! Why is it so difficult for believers to resolve family conflict? Absalom didn't even speak to Amnon, good or bad.

In verses 23-29 we see Absalom's revenge. For two full years, Absalom harbored this anger for his brother. How long have you been harboring your anger, hurt, jealousy? It's not a good thing. You cannot be passive like David when it comes to conflict; it must be taken care of immediately. As hard as it may be to go to that brother, you must not let those feelings linger and take root or Satan will have a field day with you and cause destruction within the family.

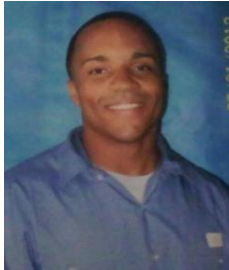
At the end of chapter 13 we see three more years have passed and then in chapter 14, verses 19-24, David allows Absalom to return, but Absalom is not allowed to see the king's face. Is that true reconciliation? No. And because it was not true reconciliation, it caused further damage. When you say you are sorry, be sure to mean it. When you tell someone they are forgiven, you better be true. If you're not sincere and honest in your reconciling, then it will only cause more damage to the relationship. What causes us not to truly reconcile with another? Pride. Look at Absalom. He had not truly repented, he just wanted acceptance. Where have we seen this before? Saul. To experience true reconciliation, we must be humble and repentant, honestly and sincerely. How do we foster reconciliation in our family conflicts? We must not get caught up in taking sides. Association brings on assimilation. You must take responsibility and not shift it to another. Complaining only quenches the spirit of reconciliation. Do not try to manipulate the situation or any family member. (2 Peter 2:18-19)

There are four things we can do to be sure we keep the bonds strong within our family or to reconnect the bonds that have been broken. We must truly have a desire for reconciliation and it begins with us. Our hearts must be right before we can go to our brother and expect things to be right. Here's the first thing: We can boldly confront wrongdoing with the goal of healing broken relationships resulting from it (Galatians 6:1-2; Ephesians 4:25). Secondly, we can resist nursing vengeful attitudes toward those who have wronged us, realizing such attitudes can lead to devastating, sinful actions (Proverbs 1:10; Ephesians 4:26-27). Thirdly, we can demonstrate spiritual maturity by working to create and/or take advantage of opportunities to foster reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:17-21). Lastly, we can further seek reconciliation in our families, both physical and spiritual, by carefully avoiding actions designed to gain advantage over or get back at other family members (Colossians 3:12-17).

I know life is hard being incarcerated and when you add in the struggle of being separated from family and loved ones, it creates even more struggles. Some may have been of our own doing, while others are not. Regardless of your situation, by having a heart and desire for reconciliation you create the first step in bringing any relationship back together. You must include God in this process for without Him, all efforts are in vain. That includes your relationships with those in blue. You already have so much you have to deal with, you don't need more conflict with the ones you live with day in and day out. What does that accomplish? Live each day submitted to the Lord and with a desire to live at peace with one another and I guarantee you, He will do wonders at bringing and keeping any relationship together. Romans 12:18.

Behind the Walls

The Ambassadors for Christ in Chains



Fall from Complacency!

by Anthony Ponds, ACC

Fall is approaching, the temperature will begin to drop and yet again another season will pass. Oh how God longs for us to enter into His provision, His presence, and His purpose. God is beckoning us to live in all that He has for us. Whether you're living a life so far from Him you could not imagine change or you've been sitting in a pew or a board for 30 years, He is beckoning us. Like a great master inviting us to a feast... He calls to us.

Can you remember or have you ever been in a place where you knew God was calling you? Maybe even now you're reflecting in your heart and you cannot deny His summoning. Like the parable of the great feast through his servants He's sending out invitations. At this point He reminds me of those countless faces I converse with about His call or those faces that sit in the pews of our churches and hear the pastors' call to service. The question is what will you do? Whether a Christian or an unbeliever, will you do as those in the parable and make excuses? Or, like the countless numbers of individuals who hear and know He's speaking to them, will you make the excuse, "I have bought a field and must inspect it, please excuse me." Or, "I now have a wife so I can't come." I asked myself as I ask you. Are we going to be so complacent in this world that the things of the body will be over the soul and the things of time over eternity? How about lawful things? Are we going to fix our eyes on things that are even unlawful, so much so to put such high-value on these things that they become fatal hindrances to the ministries God has set before us? What about pretending to be unable? I have a wife/Family or... I can't come. Will certain things be a crutch for us to say we just cannot do it? It's so necessary and vital that we must ask ourselves.

What is the alternative, to count the cost of discipleship and turn aside all else for the surpassing joy of being connected and endowed with power from Christ Jesus? A life that surpasses all that we could ever ask or think. What will you do?

Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself" (Luke 9:23-25).

Let us let it go... just let it go...

Testimony

by Stephen Fields

It begins in 2012. I was doing very well as an electrician for a company based in Lafayette. It was a steady job that I loved. Then one day my girlfriend of a year left me, and I felt defeated. I began letting sin come into my life. I was welcoming drugs and bad influences into my life to the point where I wasn't sleeping and it made me late for work. So I quit my job because I wanted to party all the time and play music on the guitar which I have been playing for almost 17 years now. I began drinking alcohol to excess and snorting pills of many names. I invited people to the apartment to party with me and listen to me sing and play the guitar. My drug addiction became a train waiting to crash and derail. I was doing so much that all I wanted to do was forget everything. I started lying, cheating, and stealing from my family and friends but I didn't care, I just wanted to be high. My family started looking away from me and I was broke so I took my starter checks and wrote amounts I needed on them and put a fake signature on them as if they were made out to me and I had money for my addiction. I was a loose cannon from then on out. Two days before I was finally arrested I saw my father and he said, "If you don't stop what you're doing you're going to be dead or in prison." I just left and now here I am three years later still trying to make it home. I was released for a brief time in 2014 but returned because I went right back into that old life of sin.

When I returned back to prison I prayed to God and asked "please God tell me what to do, what is my purpose in this life?" I received no answer, or so I thought, but God was answering my prayer by placing things in front of me.

My biggest joy in life is music. I love all types of music and I love writing and playing all types of music. I know that I wasn't doing what I love for God. I mean, He gave me the desire to play music for everyone, including Him.

I was sent here to Westville Correctional Facility in September 2014. The first day here I was scared and nervous from all the stories that I've heard of this prison. My first night I prayed that the Lord would walk with me and shield me from sin. Some of the tougher inmates were trying to intimidate me but I prayed. The next day I went to Rec and lo and behold there was an acoustic guitar. I picked it up and started playing. I was drawing a crowd and people started cheering and singing along. God was with me and He was helping me use my gift to bring joy and happiness to them.

Now I am involved with the Christian services and have been sober for almost a year. I have met some really wonderful people in this facility. I'm sure we all have stories that could be told. What I have written so far isn't even 25% of my story. I want to tell my story to the world because I feel the Lord flooding my spirit with happiness and love. I am surrounded by sin in this prison but I know God is my breastplate. I've been reading Psalms 107 recently and it tells us that God will break our chains and set us free. All we have to do is place our life and spirit into His hands. Praise the Lord!

A Christian Prisoner Point of View

by Michael Armstrong

Prison Christianity here in America is one of the hardest teachings to practice in human belief (faith) among religions. Behind these bars and razor wire there is a rule that governs the prison world. This rule has become the way of life to many who have become a permanent resident in prison. This rule has become the law of the land with no exceptions toward color, origin, or belief. This rule is life or death depending on the individual's character and understanding of this rule. This rule determines your well-being, your stability in prison and your concept of the prison world. This rule is you in D.O.C. This rule is "only the strong can survive."

Prison is the place designed and made to incarcerate those who have been found guilty in a court of law on charges which sentence enables a prison term. All individuals that are placed in prison are placed in prison for doing wrong or being found guilty in a court of law for wrongdoing. The first moment the inmate enters the prison system he/she quickly realizes a major part of his/her survival behind these bars and razor wire is to be hard and strong, not fragile and scared. This mentally developed characteristic becomes a shield to many and to some it becomes a default in character which causes the misconception of why they were sentenced to prison. It is a form of punishment instead of a form of correction. Once this misconception takes root and grows it develops into a sickness of hatred and bitterness in the inmate which poisons the inmates' soul as well as everyone around him/her that also misunderstands the concept of the department of corrections. Not only has the inmate learned to be hard and strong in order to survive, he/she has also become angry and bitter toward the justice system for imprisoning him/her to a prison term as a form of punishment for the crime he/her was found guilty of. Therefore, a majority of inmates choose not to correct themselves in areas which eventually got them incarcerated. Very few see long term deliverance from wrongdoing and learn even more ways of doing wrong once they are released from prison. My advice toward this growing deception of lies and bondage is simple. Find God! (See Deuteronomy 4:29,30.) Not only find Him, but seek Him with all your heart and soul and He will deliver you from all bondage which keeps you captive in mind, body and soul! Now please clearly understand me on finding God. There are many gods, but only one true God which I worship in spirit and in truth. (See John 4:23.) From this only true God comes the Son and Holy Spirit which makes up the Godhead. (See 1 John 5:7.) These three are One. Christianity evolves from Jesus Christ which is the second authority in the Godhead. Christian means to be Christ-like, meaning to follow Christ's teachings and example. This is where being a Christian in

prison conflicts with prison law. Both laws do not agree in view of how an inmate should live and think.

Prison law teaches only the strong can survive, to develop slick swag, always be on top and never the bottom, to hustle in whatever ways to maintain, to trust only in self gain, and demolish your enemies the first opportunity you receive. Christ Jesus teaches the opposite of prison law. He teaches us to be humble and obedient to the authority over us and to be kind to others regardless, even if they are not kind to us. Jesus teaches us to depend totally on Him and not on self or anything else. Jesus teaches us to share what we have and to pray for our enemies and treat them with love because Jesus died for us all. In the eyes of nonbelievers of Jesus Christ "we" believers of Jesus are as lambs to a hungry pack of wolves. Every day it is a mental and spiritual fight to stand your ground on your faith in Christ Jesus and follow His commandments around unbelievers who hate you because of Him. (See John 15:18-25.) Day after day, year after year, it never stops until Jesus comes back. Prison law says we are weak, Jesus' teaching says we are strong!

Beside everything going on around you and to you in prison there's still a major force in your life that has to be dealt with. That is "self" with all his dark secrets and sinful ways. Only God can help you with self. For self loves only him/herself and will not totally change if it doesn't benefit his sinful desires to do wrong. Find God, my friends, find God.

The conclusion of this revealed truth my friends and fellow believers in Christ Jesus is to remember "misery loves company" and without God in your life this prison will be a place of punishment instead of the place of correction. Thank you for reading this revealed truth. Stay strong in the faith and never forget the race is not won by the fastest or the strongest but the race is won by the ones who endure to the end (Hebrews 12:1-4).

T.G.I.F.

by William Robinson

So many have lust for silver and gold, long since the time of old considering not the destiny of their mortal souls...

"Where" in eternity it will surely someday reside - some going about living with blinded eyes. T.G.I.F.

When I didn't pray for myself, many known and unknown, cared enough to include me in their prayers. They'd stand in the gap trusting someday soon, long before it became too late, I'd betray my wayward ways and live as He would have me once He'd set me free. T.G.I.F.

Someone talked with Him about me in prayers and maybe in tears for a number of years as evidenced by folks noticing the blessed change in me. So thankful am I, I'm not the creature I used to be. Cast your eyes upon me, I, a living testimony for all to see. T.G.I.F.

I Thank God It's Forgiven, my time of sinful living.

Fairing the Storm

by Chris Shuler

Have you ever wondered why God would allow such misery in the world? One of the most asked questions in the Christian faith is, "Why does a loving God allow us to suffer so much?" It's evident when we watch the local news, people are suffering. It's evident when we watch the world news, people are suffering. It's evident when I look out of my cell into the day room, people are suffering.

There are many degrees of suffering. Some seem to suffer from depression, some from physical ailments, and others suffer from drug addiction. Then there are the men that suffer from the fear of fear, worried constantly of what others think about them or say about them. All these degrees of suffering will eventually lead to greater suffering. I know because I've suffered from all the above.

Isaiah 53:10 says, "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him. He put him to grief." Why would it please the Lord to put grief upon someone? No wonder so many people ask the famous question, "Why me, Lord?" so many times in their lives. This is a timeless misunderstanding that occurs when we set our gaze upon our circumstances and only glance to the Lord for answers.

The fact of the matter is, that many of the circumstances that cause grief are self-inflicted. I can honestly say I am in chains, but I cannot say that I am in chains because of Christ. I put myself in this present situation so the grief that results is my fault and not God's. We may want to believe, "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen and nobody knows my sorrows." It's easy to feel alone in the midst of a trial, however, Isaiah 53:4 says, "Surely he has born our grief and carried our sorrows." Even in the light of our deepest and darkest trials, it is hard to say that we truly know suffering. The loss of a loved one hurts deep, the frustration of struggles can become tiresome and make a man or woman crumble under the weight of the world. Whether our situation is unbearable or our circumstances uncontrollable we must remember, "He was oppressed and He was afflicted" (Isaiah 53:7).

In all reality, without grief and sorrow, we would never know what happiness and joy are. Jesus knew a suffering greater than any. He was despised by a people whom He created. He was rejected by a people whom He love. He was tortured by the very people He came to save. He knew the agony of being separated from God the Father. He knew this grief so that the world could know the joy of salvation. He knew grief for you and for me.

Isaiah 61:3 states that God will give us, "Beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." This doesn't mean that there is never going to be grief but that at the end of our grief, at the end of

our trials, there will be beauty, joy, and praise. Once we come through that unbearable situation or that uncontrollable circumstance we will be made stronger for it. Sunshine wouldn't be so appreciated if it were not for the rain. Warmth would not be so coveted if it were not for the cold. Thank God that He knows our every weakness, because in them He is seen strong.

Why does God allow so much misery into the world? I think the answer to that is so the world will come to know the joy of Jesus Christ. It is often through our misery that we find ourselves on our knees seeking God with our whole heart. It's in our misery that we find Him and sign our names in His precious blood and rise above our circumstances.

Christ will overcome in the midst of our troubles so that we become living testimonies of His power, love, and mercy. Living for Christ doesn't mean there won't be any adversity, but we will be delivered in the center of the adversity.

Remember, the rainbow comes after the storm.

We Fall Down

by Bryan Parks

As the song says, "We fall down and we get up." What powerful words these are. Do you find yourself falling? If you find yourself falling frequently, then fear not because you are growing. In the Wycliffe Bible commentary on Romans 8:35-36 it says: formidable obstacles cannot separate us from the life Christ extends to us. These obstacles are: affliction, distress, persecution, famine, lack of clothing, danger or sword.

So my brothers, let us rejoice, again I say rejoice. Falling down when we think we are doing all in our power, not His, is much like the man of great possessions. Matthew 19:16-22 says, "'Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?' And he said to him, 'Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments.' He said to him, 'Which ones?' And Jesus said, 'You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' The young man said to him, 'All these I have kept. What do I still lack?' Jesus said to him, 'If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.' When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions."

Brothers remember the "our power" part? The young man of wealth thought he was doing everything under his fleshly power, but the sacrifice of his worldly things was an area he could not handle because of his great possessions and the pride of accumulating them.

So, brethren, on let us be mindful of pride and through pride comes the fall.

Silver Words

by John Wayne Dorminy

We, as a people, have many different ways to communicate our ideas or feelings, whether by body language, facial expressions, or whatever. Of course the most common way is through speech. There seems to be many ways to get a point across, but do we always have a point to get across? Or are we sometimes just running words and phrases out of our mouths just for the sake of noise? Words have power, a powerful driven force all their own. We often seem to forget this fact or maybe some aren't even aware of the fact at all. A few kind words at the right time can lift the spirits of a person. They can help the process of a healing heart or a sick friend. They can convey a deep love or care of another person. Words can also hurt. Some words are so ugly they cause deep scars and a lasting pain in a person. Often it's to a person close to us. We are told to "let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers" (Ephesians 4:29).

What we say can have a lasting effect on the person or persons we are saying them to! Some hurtful words can last a lifetime. Has anyone ever said something to you that to this day still rings loud in your heart? I know I still remember a few! Some good and some not so good... we are told, through the Apostle Paul, to use our words to edify, or lift up, to educate a person. To give something of good use to that person. Let's look at it this way. If you have a gift for someone, how do you wish for them to receive it? And what kind of gift are you likely to give that person? Well, if you're anything like me you're most likely to shop around for a gift the person would not only appreciate but also something they can get some good use out of. After all, that's the whole point of a gift, right? That they will get some good use out of it and not just put it in the back of the closet to soon be forgotten.

Now, how about the words you use when speaking to a friend, family member, or even a stranger? What are you giving them when you speak to them? Why not think of the conversations we have with people as a chance to give some gift? The kinds of things people can use, like a helpful comment about a job well done, a compliment on an outfit or a new haircut. A simple kind word can change a person's day or life. In an instant that person's life can change for the better, or if the words aren't kind, for the worse. How many times in the past week have you had the chance to speak to someone, to say something helpful, to relay some wisdom or kindness? How many of you instead use that chance to hurt that person or just ramble on about some useless nonsense, gossip, or worse? Think of all the missed opportunities in the past month alone to change lives with the power of words! To give a gift. I remember a story I once heard. A visiting speaker for a youth program at a church in Texas had just finished a reading of Ephesians 4:29 to a group of children ranging from ages of seven to

around 12. After explaining the verse to them the speaker asked what they thought about it and how they might best describe the meaning of the verse to others. One child said to always say please and thank you. Most agree with these ideas. One little girl stood up and said that her words would be like a big beautiful silver box wrapped in a large fluffy red bow. When I heard that little girl's picture of how words should be given to each other I was amazed! What a simple yet profound picture it painted.

My friends, I agree 100% with that child. When speaking to others, our words should indeed be presented as a big silver box with a large red bow. Words should be a thing of beauty, something people will enjoy and look forward to hearing, not hurtful and useless things. So watch your words, choose them carefully. After all, who doesn't want inspiration? Don't waste a perfect chance to change a life for the better with the simple act of speech. History has been made for the better and for the worse by something as common and easy as a speech, by simple every day words. How will you use your words? I challenge you to use them for good, for comfort. Go ahead and lift someone up today! Anyone!! Who knows, you may just save a life today or win a soul. You might just change the world.

More Than a Cuss Word

by Byron Schardt

I'm in love with the Creator

That most cannot see,

He is precious to my heart

He's more than a cuss word to me.

When people use Jesus' name in vain

I now get upset and my heart feels the pain,
Because Jesus is love that died on the small "t"

If not for Him, you and I would never be

That's why He's more than a cuss word to me.

He gives mercy and grace through faith that is free,
It has so much power that the filth in my heart has to flee
That's why He's more than a cuss word to me.

People will hate me because Jesus is who I love

I can't help it, this is a gift from above

I love Him so much for what He paid on that tree,

This is why He's more than a cuss word to me.

One day Jesus will return and wipe every tear from my eye

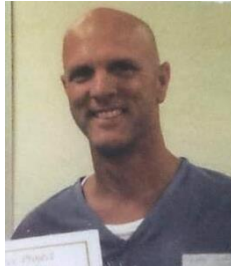
This will happen when He parts the sky.

It will be at this time everyone will see

Why He is more than a cuss word to me.

In His Spirit

by Dr. Chris Bachmann, ACC



We are taking an in-depth look at what could possibly be called the Greatest Promise God has ever made to those who have trusted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

The reason it's the greatest promise is because it affects every area of your Christian life. If you've been following along then you know that this promise is the promise of the Holy Spirit baptism. Have you repented and been baptized in water? If so, let me ask you this: have you been baptized with the Holy Spirit? If not, why not? I ask this question because your answer is the key between having just life (salvation) or the abundant life (the power of God) Jesus said He came to give you (John 10:10). Ask yourself this: Am I living and experiencing the victory and freedom from sin that I should be experiencing as a Christian? If not, then you need to seek God for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. And put this in your spirit, the baptism of the Holy Spirit is a promise to you! Do your own study, and ask the Holy Spirit to show you this promise is for you.

This promise is not just for a chosen few. No, it's for you, precious child of God! It's for you, Beloved!

This is not something new for the Church. The early Church expected all believers to receive it and saw to it that they got it. It was something the Apostles had that they wanted to impart to other believers. We see this in Acts chapter 8. Here we're told that the believers were being scattered because Saul (who later became the Apostle Paul) was making havoc of the Church (vs. 5). As a result, Phillip went to the city of Samaria to preach Christ to them (vs. 8). And the people gave heed to Phillip's preaching (vs. 6). And when they believed Phillip preaching the things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women (vs. 12).

Now would you say that these people, who gave heed to the preaching of the Kingdom of God; the name of Jesus Christ, and who were baptized, were saved? It's clear they were, because Phillip would not have allowed them to be baptized apart from believing in and receiving Jesus as their Savior (see Acts 8:26-38).

Now when the Apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John (vs. 14), who, when they had arrived there, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost, for He as of yet has not fallen upon any of them; for they were only

baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (vs. 14-16). A clear distinction is made here between being saved and being filled with the Spirit. The key word is upon them. The Holy Spirit was already in them as a result of believing and receiving the Word and being baptized. Now the Apostles wanted them to experience the power of God by being baptized in the Spirit by having Peter and John lay their hands on them, "Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Ghost" (vs. 17). So we see it was a subsequent event after they has been born again that the Apostles wanted the believers to receive and experience. Amazing, the very one who caused the spreading of the Gospel to Samaria, is the same one who also emphasized and saw to it that all believers received the Spirit baptism.

In Acts chapter 9, Saul has a personal encounter with the Risen Jesus (vs. 1-6), and as a result was born again. Then the Lord appeared to a certain disciple name Ananias in Damascus (vs. 10), and said, "Go to Judas' house where Saul is" (vs. 11). In verse 17 we find Ananias locating Saul, where he laid his hands on him that he might receive the Holy Ghost. Do you see the pattern? Here Jesus Himself instructed Ananias to lay hands on Brother Saul so that he could be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit!

It was such an awesome event for Saul that he, too, wanted everyone who received Christ as their Savior to receive the baptism of the Spirit. In Acts 19, Paul went to Ephesus where he found certain disciples. Upon meeting them, he asked, "Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed?" And they answered, we have not heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. Then Paul inquired about what baptism they had had (vs. 3). And they replied, "John's baptism" (vs. 4). Paul then explained that John baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying, "That they should believe on the One which should come after him, that is, Christ Jesus. When they heard this they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (vs. 5). Immediately Paul laid his hands on them and the Holy Ghost came on them and they spoke with tongues and prophesied (vs. 6).

The Apostle Paul understood that John's disciples could receive baptism in water, but only Christ's disciples could receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, thus, the inquiry of Paul. This also reveals that Paul was asking if they had been baptized in the Holy Spirit, for baptism was the subject. What baptism? Not water, because Paul did not ask about this kind of baptism. It was the Spirit baptism which John taught that Paul asked them about receiving. This proves that the Spirit baptism John promised all his disciples (Matthew 3:11; Luke 3:16; John 1:31-34) was really for all men/women, not just for the apostles.

Interesting, Paul comes across these believers and the first thing he wants to discuss with them is whether they have been baptized in the Holy Spirit.

What about you? Have you been baptized in the Holy Spirit? Have you experienced the Spirit's power? Do you want the abundant life Jesus promised? Then, seek God and ask Him to baptize you in His Spirit. Stay tuned!