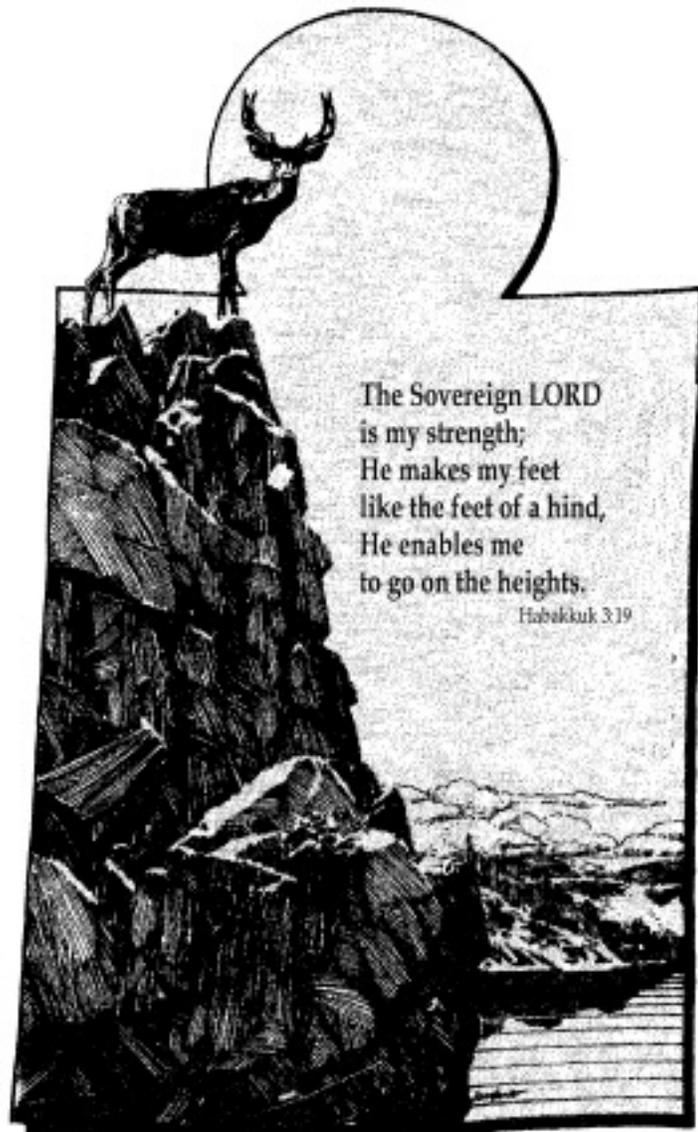


Going to the High Places

Chapter 17 *Healing Streams*



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Introduction

We are coming to closure on our journey to the High Places of fullness in Jesus. As we shall see in these four concluding chapters, arriving is wonderful! But even more important are the lessons we've learned in *how we got here*, and the burden we begin to feel for those we left back in the Valley of Their Strongholds.

The High Places are not some type of spiritual Nirvana, but an ongoing place of transformation in our life journey in which we are conformed more into the image of Jesus (Romans 8:28,29). As we reflect His loving concern for mankind, we are able to redemptively represent Him to others.

As you complete these final chapters with us, keep in mind three important guideposts:

1. *Lessons you've learned as a vital part of your testimony;*
2. *Ownership of your sufferings without blame or regret;*
3. *A growing burden to be used by our Lord to fulfill His purposes.*

Chapter 17 *Healing Streams*

1. When at last Much-Afraid awoke...; 2. The rocky cave...; 3. She and her two companions...

The radiant sunshine that evaporated the earlier mist revealed to Much-Afraid how glorious everything around her appeared. No longer ensnared by her old fleshly desires and hopes, she could fully appreciate without pain or regret her present reality. The "burial cloths" of her death to self, drenched with traditional spices, were a blanket of sweetness rather than a painful reminder of what was no longer a part of her inner being.

Mike: I can still remember the remarkable transformation that took place in me

after I renounced the stronghold of rejection. This is how it occurred:

I was alone, confronted by a startling sight in front of me. The vision appeared as an object that looked like a big black rock about five feet high and five feet wide. On it was written the word "DECEIT." I prayed, renouncing the spirit of deceit, and a veneer like an onion skin fell off the object. Underneath this veneer was the word "REJECTION."

I stared at that word, and God began to show me painful memories of my childhood — many of which I had forgotten. As I watched the scenes unfold, a growing sense of humiliation welled up inside me. Then the Holy Spirit revealed, "Those feelings of humiliation laid the foundation for the stronghold of rejection to be built in you. Now renounce that spirit's influence in your life." When I renounced the spirit of rejection in the name of Jesus, the black object disappeared. I was changed, but I was uncertain in what way.

The day after my vision and subsequent deliverance from the spirits of deceit and rejection, I participated in a very difficult meeting with a group of church leaders. Their denomination was in the process of introducing some very unbiblical teachings, and the men were yielding to the pressure. As I encouraged them to not give in but to uphold God's Word at all cost, they became antagonistic toward me. It was at that moment that I realized that **I loved them despite their reaction to me. I realized that without the spirit of rejection influencing me, I was able to love them, rather than to respond negatively to them.**

(from our book, *Demolishing Strongholds*)

Much-Afraid's experience in the rocky cave reminds us of what real fellowship in Jesus is like. Sharing what you've seen and heard Him do *unites hearts* in fellowship "with the Father and with His Son, Jesus the Messiah" (1 John 1:3). When you are together with others who are sold out to follow and serve Him no matter what the cost, your conversation and your testimony radiate His presence and His perspective.

- Are you completely free from the influence of all strongholds? Why not look at page 37 of *Demolishing Strongholds* and be sure.
- Are you in a place of complete repentance? Ask the Holy Spirit to penetrate your soul so that any hindrance to your availability for His use of your life can be exposed and cast down.

4. Rising quietly, she went outside...; 5. In the center of the canyon...; 6. One was perched on the altar..

How vibrant and teeming with life was the very scene of Much-Afraid's altar of death to natural love! Gone was the mist of fear of the unknown, giving way to beauty throbbing in all its diversity. The penetration of *light* revealed everything that had been there before her transformation, but now was she able to perceive it.

As you walk in freedom from your spiritual strongholds, obeying only your Shepherd's voice as He leads, you begin to understand Him more.

Our God is a *heart-changer*. It's not what you *do* in service for Him that really gives Him delight. It's the *love* He's able to produce in you that mirrors His character and impacts others so greatly.

His love in you is a light in your soul — your mind, will and emotions — that radiates with His power and passion. It's a heart circumcision accomplished *in union with Jesus* by "stripping away the old nature's control over the body" (Colossians 2:11).

As she thrills at the gushing cascades of water, Much-Afraid notices that her altar caps the source of waters that form the mighty waterfall. This altar source of water holds great significance for us travelers. The foundation to the Gospel that the early Church embraced is found in Jesus' procla-

mation in John 7:38,39, "*He who trusts in Me, as the Scripture [Old Testament] said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'* By this He spoke of **the Spirit**, whom those who trusted in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:38,39).

When you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, Jesus promises that streams of living water will flow from your innermost being. The source for that vital flow is the Holy Spirit. Streams connote something in motion, poured out to bring refreshment and life wherever that water passes. Water that doesn't flow is stagnant. It suffocates life and harbors decay, much like religious form that serves self and leads to destruction.

The Spirit's empowerment sets you in motion, motion that serves the interests of the King in His Kingdom. His stream brings life!

Mike: Many years ago Sue and I and several others were studying the passage in Ezekiel 47 about the water that flowed out of the Temple. As you recall, the stream grew into an ever deepening river. I asked the group, "If you encountered the river far away from the Temple, which way would you go, upstream or downstream?" Everyone replied "downstream".

I offered a different view for them to consider. "You should always go *upstream* to the source first!" Always go to the source because there you'll find the origin at its purest. In a few chapters Much-Afraid will be burdened with compassion for those in the Valley of Humiliation who once had hurt her. But before she can ever help them with pure motive, she needs the *transformation* that only the Source can give. Please don't lose sight of this in your own life!

Many years ago at our retreat center, there was a particular church leader who always resisted whenever I pointed out a "vertical view" on whatever we were discussing. You gain a "vertical view" when you pray to glean God's perspective on a matter. His perspective comes as you carefully seek out His wisdom, as enjoined by the prophet Haggai, rather than your own "horizontal "

rationale and reasoning.

For many years this leader would come to our center with the men from his congregation, always armed with the same resistant spirit. But one day he took me aside and confessed. God had given him a vivid dream. In the dream he and I were leading a group of people across a meadow toward a river. When we reached the river bank, he jumped in and told everyone else to follow him downstream. He said, “Mike, you stood on the bank and told everyone to jump into the river and go *upstream*. Everyone followed you in your upstream course.”

He continued, “I got out of the river and followed you along the banks. When you arrived at a waterfall, I figured you’d be stuck climbing it, and that I could beat you to the top.

“I discovered stairs carved into the rock and climbed them. When I reached the top I found the throne of God. He said to me, ‘Bill, what are you doing here, and how did you get here?’ I replied, ‘I wanted to get to the top of the waterfall.’ God admonished me, ‘You didn’t come the way I have prescribed. Look at the steps — you’ve muddied them. Now, go back down and clean them as you descend.’”

Bill added, “As I made my way down the rock stairs I looked over toward the waterfall. You were all holding hands and praying. Then I saw the Holy Spirit lift you up the falls.” As he finished recounting his dream, Bill turned to face me. “Mike, I want to ask your forgiveness. I see now that you’ve been teaching us to live *by the Spirit*, not by our own strengths.”

Your greatest perceived strengths can be your greatest hindrance in recognizing your dependence on *living water*. **Whatever you face, go to the Source of all strength, wisdom, comfort!**

- Would people describe you as a person of the Spirit? Do you flow day by day as a stream of the Spirit? Give an example of His transforming work in you.

- Perhaps you’re a person known for your biblical knowledge, but you’re operating without spiritual power. How would you describe yourself? Take the time to ask a few others...

7. For some time she stood looking...; 8. The first thing she did...

Do you ever experience in your heart a “leaping and thrilling of growing joy” and a “peace indescribably sweet”? Much-Afraid was glad to savor the full glory of the moment even though she was quite alone. She didn’t need others to get her “hyped” or “psyched”.

She had passed through a season of darkness and fear, yet now was in the present of fullness of joy. Even the tingle of icy water which might have previously caused her alarm or at least discomfort brought only refreshment.

Sue: One summer we were blessed with a visit to a remote dude ranch in northern Wyoming. The full impact of the joyous moment hit me as I galloped across the high prairie, encompassed by the grandeur of my Father’s creation! That sense of “perfect well-being” was a special gift, a memory of a mountain top treasure that occurred at one point in time but continues to bring joy as I relive it in my mind. And I can’t help but thank once again the One Who brought it all about!

Mike: Both Sue and I experienced in our backpacking days the breathtaking chill of a glacier-fed stream rippling over us on a hot day in the wilderness. The bone-chilling refreshment turns your skin red even as your spirit leaps inside you with gratefulness to be out there relishing His handiwork!

The next few chapters will find us joining Much-Afraid as she spends time on the High Places. It’s important that you don’t misun-

derstand the true nature of the Christian life. It's not always a mountain-top experience, nor does our Father design it to be.

Remember that you are engaged in a war, a war over the souls of mankind. **You won't always be in the battle, but you *are* always at war with a relentless demonic enemy** (Revelation 12:17). That enemy is always prowling about, searching for an opportunity to "kill, steal, and destroy" your relationship with God and with those dear to you. It is important that when you do have a mountain top season with God, savor it with all your might! But don't be distressed when it ends, because our Lord needs you for His purposes.

Mike: These choice gifts of refreshment are meant to renew your vigor to lovingly serve His purposes. They are times of what we call "**purposeful rests**." They're like the R & R — rest and recuperation — I had in between my times off Vietnam as a Navy pilot. Sue was even able to join me in the Philippines and Japan so we could celebrate together!

Your exuberant delight in these times mirrors your gratefulness in your relationship with the Shepherd. The apostle James exhorts followers of Jesus, "*Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises!*" (5:13). Find your "perfect well-being" by increasing your appreciation level for the insights of joy our Father does so faithfully give.

- When you're given a special opportunity to be delighted, how do you respond? How would anyone know that you relish the times of refreshment God gives you?
- Do you find it difficult to savor even the small moments of "R & R" our Father favors you with? Do nagging thoughts of responsibility rob you of full appreciation?

9. As she stood on the mossy bank...; 10. Then she remembered the healing streams...; 11. After that she began to wander...

Because she'd been so consumed with joy by the sights and sounds around her, Much-Afraid had not even noticed the transformation of her feet. She'd been so overwhelmed by the change in her heart that that which had been such an encompassing source of discomfort and shame to her earlier had lost its priority. But her grateful joy in her feet's healing encouraged her to trust the same Source for her disfigured face.

And follow through with trust she did! Can't you just envision Much-Afraid's child-like joy as she scampered around the canyon, munching fresh berries with care-free abandon? And can you also see in your mind's eye the absolute delight of our Father as she wholeheartedly thrilled in His handiwork without reservation?

All of her needs had been met by the Shepherd as she journeyed by His guidance to this strategic point in her life. She could reflect with thanksgiving on His faithfulness thus far, and rest confidently that He would never change.

We write in *Demolishing Strongholds* that **God created all of humanity with seven needs:**

- Dignity
- Authority
- Blessing & Provision
- Security
- Purpose & Meaning
- Freedom & Boundary
- Intimate Love & Companionship

One source of strongholds in our lives is a result of seeking to meet one or more of these needs *apart* from God's will for us. Yet these needs have been designed by Him to find fulfillment in righteous biblical ways.

Our life is a **pilgrimage** —
a journey during which changing circumstances *force us to adapt*.

Our ability to make those adaptations *in the power of the Holy Spirit* will determine the level of joy and peace we find in our relationship with God and with others.

Our victory of walking in the fullness of Christ will not be achieved until **we meet the needs God has created in us, in the manner that He prescribes**.

Mike: After the stronghold of rejection was gone I recognized that I had a deep need for dignity, security, and intimate love and companionship. I shared this awareness with Sue and our home fellowship. There were 47 years of deep ruts of old ways of thinking that needed to be filled within God's parameters. With the help of Sue and our extended spiritual family, I came to understand the dignity my Father always wanted me to experience. Along with dignity came relational security, and intimate love and companionship.

Experiencing the dignity of being His child has made all the difference of how I follow Jesus and bring glory to my Father.

- If you are rid of all demonic strongholds, how are the seven needs God has placed in you being met? Does one or more needs stand out as a void still needing to be filled?
- Is there someone close to you with whom you can share your need and feel confident that he or she will come alongside to help you meet that need in a righteous way?

12. Then she came to the lip...; 13. She did not think about the future...; 14. When at last the shadows lengthened...

A singular joy in serving our Lord's purpose is the loss of *self-will*. The stream of water never doubted its usefulness as gravity drew it down over the cliff. The combined drops became a torrent sounding out a tumult of joy as it swirled downward to refresh the land below.

All that our Father has been working in your life thus far has been preparing you to *serve His purposes* and bring *His restorative truth to others* — especially to those who are still far from the High Places of "inner quietness and contentment" in the Shepherd.

You can experience great peace by reflecting on your past if your trust in our Lord's sovereignty is full. While He could have forestalled painful circumstances, He allowed you to choose for yourself your own path, and to undergo the consequences that could deter you from repeating those mistakes. It's important to learn from Much-Afraid at this point and fully appreciate the present without regretting the past. You can take captive your thoughts as she did by not allowing "curiosity, loneliness and anticipation" to cloud her contentment.

Have you noticed that *contentment* seems to be such a rare commodity in the daily lives of so many followers of Jesus? Don't confuse contentment with complacency. As soon as you take for granted your relationship with Jesus, your family, or others in your life, your journey will stagnate. But when you're content, you cease striving and worrying and trying to force particular outcomes into existence.

The hope that we as His beloved followers have in Jesus is so sure that we need never question our future:

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

- Measure your “contentment quotient” at this moment. Do you tend to focus more on your tomorrows than on the opportunities of today?
- As you reflect on where He’s brought you thus far, do you fret over past failures? Are you agitated by hopes that have not yet been fulfilled?