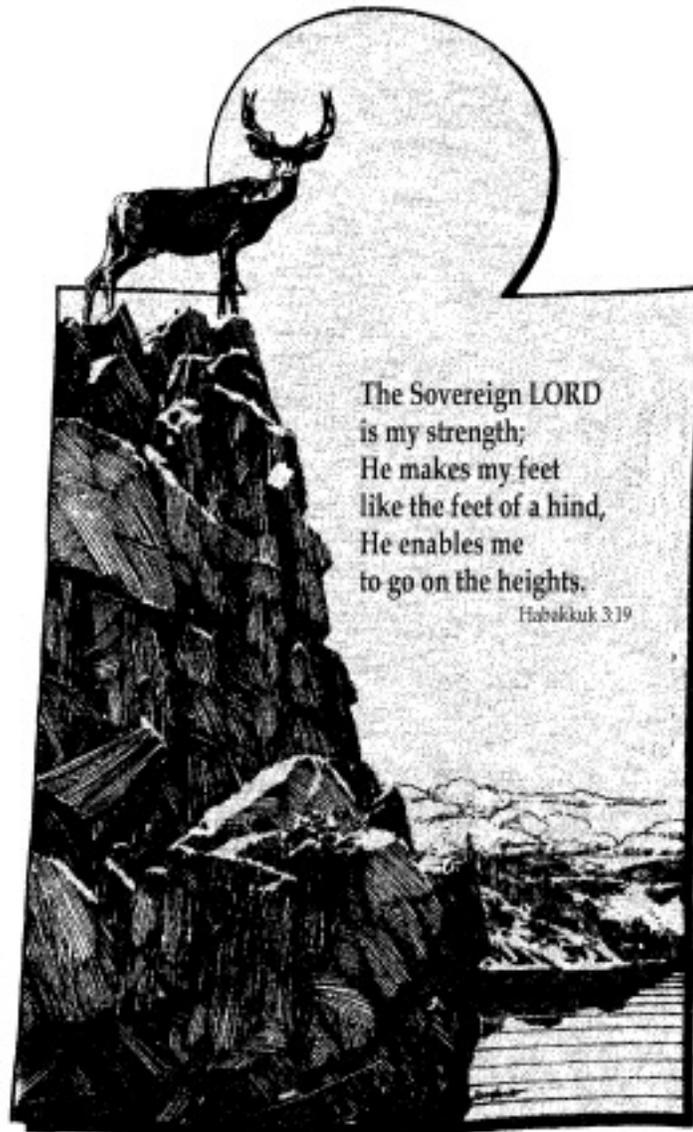


Going to the High Places

Chapter 18 *Hinds' Feet*



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Introduction

We arrive at a chapter full of wonderful surprises! Much-Afraid has been overwhelmed by the renewal and restoration she's found in her post-altar canyon setting. But her spirit is alive even more to the call of the Shepherd, and her yearning to be with Him overcomes any thought to remain apart from His presence. The high walls that would have deterred her before are now merely an obstacle to *confront* and *overcome*!

This is a time for you to reflect on the sovereign faithfulness of your Lord to allow the sorrows and suffering of your life to prepare you to serve Him in joy and peace regardless of your life situation. You're being groomed for service to represent Him down in the Valley from which you ascended seemingly long ago.

Chapter 18 *Hinds' Feet*

1. On the third day...; 2. Then it came again...

Those quiet dark hours just before sunrise can be the most refreshing moments of your day if you view them from the right perspective. It's too early for you to leap into your list of to-do's. No one else is up yet, so you can concentrate on welcoming your Lord into the new day He's awakened you to and seek His direction for it.

If anyone knew about communing with his Lord each morning, it was the man after God's own heart, David. Envision him in the silence of His tent intoning his Lord in trust: *"Give ear to my words, Lord, consider my inmost thoughts. Listen to my cry for help, my king and my God, for I pray to you. Lord, in the morning you will hear my voice; in the morning I lay my needs before you and wait expectantly"* (Psalm 5:1-3).

Sue: A few years ago I signed up to take part in a month-long, round-the-clock prayer vigil. My appointed hour was 3 AM, once a week. What a joy that sweet hour of prayer became! The first morning I wondered a little

if sixty minutes was going to be hard to fill with praying and listening. My only previous experience in focused, extended prayer had been at a chapel during a time before I'd even encountered Jesus. What stands out most from that session was how often I'd glanced at my watch to see if my time was up yet!

But this time was different — a delightful garden of praise sung in my heart, scripture promises prayed back to Him, petitions according to the prompting of His Spirit, thanksgiving for His faithfulness and unalterable character — sometimes that hour stretched into two!

Wee-hour sleepless periods no longer are cause for distress but opportunities to whisper into His ear and rest in His presence — and I don't think He minds if I drop off in drowsiness as a child secure in her Father's arms! Go to bed each night having put the day's responsibilities into the hands of the One Who can direct your path into just what He wants you to fulfill. Let tomorrow's concerns and cares, which are inevitable, be left in the realm of tomorrow (Matthew 6:34).

Much-Afraid has been eagerly anticipating a call from the Shepherd and not even the fortress-like walls of the canyon could keep her from responding.

- How do you respond when you find yourself awake while it's still night? Do you fret restlessly because you know you have a busy day ahead? Or, do you choose to make that time a special vigil as a love offering to your Shepherd?
- Do concerns and worries often fragment your sleep? What changes do you purpose to make so you can gratefully receive the gift of sleep with which our Shepherd sustains those who trust Him (Psalm 3:5)?

3. Then she stood straining every nerve...; 4. Much-Afraid did not hesitate one instant...; 5. In a moment or two...

If Much-Afraid had not been urgently and eagerly “straining every nerve” to find a way to respond to her Shepherd’s call, she might have missed the unexpected answer as it sprang up nearby.

Too often we become so tunnel-visioned in our expectation of a certain answer to a need that the pathway He reveals eludes us. Just because our Father responded in a particular way to a similar situation previously in our lives or in someone else’s does not guarantee He’ll answer the same way again. Keep alert for His hand of intervention that just might appear through a totally unfamiliar source!

Sue: I’d recently been wondering how to access an elderly couple who lived nearby. While my gifts of bread and knitted slippers had been received with thanks, there didn’t seem to be any interest as I shared the work of Jesus in our lives. So Mike and I kept praying for some sort of inroad.

One morning I was out watering when the wife ventured onto her back porch and called out to me. Her husband had just been hospitalized and they were having to relocate to an assisted living facility. I knew from the Spirit that now was His appointed time. I turned off the water and headed over. As she poured out her grief and uncertainty, I hugged her and directed her attention to our Father. She listened carefully and expressed a desire to deepen her trust in Him. I was able to pray with her, and to gently exhort her to keep calling upon Him in trust in Jesus.

The next day I was able to visit her again to build on our previous time together and found her very open and eager to listen. The door had been opened by our Lord but I had to be willing to walk through it as His instrument!

Three weeks after the couple moved away her husband died. I don’t know how God may have used my encounter with her...

Much-Afraid spotted the familiar hart and hind and remembered that they had earlier guided her on the safe path despite the apparent danger. Note that the male hart led the way, closely followed by the female hind. God’s order for the family accords with this same pattern! He intends for the husband to search out and pursue His intended pathway so that his wife can boldly follow the guidance he’s received and share with him whatever God has shown her as well.

Neither the deer nor Much-Afraid hesitates or is distracted from their purpose. Much-Afraid is fearful no longer — her heart has been transformed! Her focus is singleminded and she’s determined to obey. Confident that she is being guided according to His plan, she follows precisely in the footsteps of the deer.

Isn’t that the essence of role-modeling — knowing that the ones you’re following are trustworthy, and that you are walking out the pattern of their example to fulfill the same noble purpose? The apostle Paul often exhorts those less mature in their walk to “*follow my example even as I follow the example of Christ*” (1 Corinthians 11:1).

Knowing the power of a positive role model, he also encourages young Timothy in his relationship with new followers of Jesus to “*set an example in your speech, behavior, love, trust and purity*” (1 Timothy 4:12). Someone is always watching you, fellow traveler. Be alert to model the One in whose steps you purport to walk!

Mike: Sue and I grieve over how few make themselves available to mentor and disciple those who are still babes in their relationship with Jesus. So often the only contact new believers have with other followers of Jesus is during scheduled services. But that format only portrays what happens “under the steeple” rather than the 24/7 privilege and responsibility of being in union with Jesus and with one another! When Jesus is confined to the context of a service or meeting, His heart’s desire to penetrate families, neighbor-

hoods and workplaces is never tapped or demonstrated.

Having frequently relocated, we know how it feels to not always have extended spiritual family readily accessible. But our Lord faithfully continues to work in us to be changed, and brings about those loadbearing relationships in very creative ways. Out of the love He has instilled in us, we are able to come alongside the ones He gives us to model His handiwork in our lives. Isn't this interconnectedness the fulfillment of Paul's encouragement to the Corinthian Christians?

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God" (2 Corinthians 1:3,4).

Our Father delights when His children depend on Him in trust and remain at peace in all circumstances. When our dependence on Him is so habitual that we role model it for others, we enact the strongest testimony that evidences He is our *Abba*, "Daddy."

- Everything the world needs to see of Jesus in us flows from the same trusting dependence on our Father that Jesus had. Does this describe you?
- Who in your life can *you* mentor to help along in their pathway as a role model and a friend? If you've gotten this far in your journey, you're ready!

6. She gave one last flying spring...; 7. "At last," he said...; 8. Still she could not speak...

There stands the Shepherd, "strong and grand and glorious", awaiting you! This be-robed figure mirrors the majestic image worshiped by the exiled apostle John in the first chapter of Revelation. His welcome to both the elderly man and the awestruck young woman is equally gracious and welcoming.

The Shepherd was backlit by the glowing rosy tones of the sun rising in the east. So often scripture references the direction of the east in mentioning matters of God: the Temple of the presence of God's glory faced east; in Ezekiel's vision, the glory of God approached from the east; Jesus will return in glory on the Mount of Olives, which is directly to the east of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

This is encouragement for us each morning to rise up daily with thanksgiving. Each new dawn signifies that He has extended our lives for another day. And, as His Word confirms, "*joy comes in the morning*", perhaps because His mercies are new every morning (Lamentations 3:22,23)!

With so many reasons to cling to hope in His faithfulness, why would you want to continue in your old Much-Afraid identity? Sadly, it's all too easy to drift back into your old behavioral patterns and attitudes. That's why it's vital that you journey in true fellowship with those who are determined to "**walk uprightly**" by staying repentant by His grace and pressing on in His steps.

Our Lord did not intend that keeping a clean slate of uprightness be a burdensome chore. Listen to John's description of turning away from sin to walk afresh in cleansed fellowship with our Lord: "*If we claim not to have sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we acknowledge our sins, then, since he is trustworthy and just, he will **forgive them and purify us from all wrongdoing***" (1 John 1:8,9).

Fellowship with our Father and His Son Jesus is renewed as we confess and repent of our sins. Sin can become habitual if enter-

tained, and a gateway to demonic servitude. Heed the apostle's strong warning to those who are walking the pilgrim path:

*Children [that's us!], don't let anyone deceive you — it is the person that **keeps on doing what is right** who is righteous, just as God is righteous. The person who **keeps on sinning** is from the Adversary... Here is how one can **distinguish clearly** between God's children and those of the Adversary: everyone who does **not continue doing what is right** is **not from God**" (1 John 3:7,8a,10).*

There is indeed a very clear connection between your walk of obedient trust and your union with Jesus. Your actions evidence the truthfulness of your words. It's those who walk together in union with Jesus who enjoy true fellowship.

Because of her profound transformation, the name *Much-Afraid* no longer reflects the traveler's identity. Her new title, Grace and Glory, bespeaks the character of her Shepherd. In the heavenlies, we too who walk in step with the Spirit, responding only to His voice, are transformed into a new identity.

That new identity has nothing in common with who we were when we heeded the disparaging voices in the Valley of our Strongholds! Now the Spirit has free access to continue His transforming work to conform our character into increasing Christ-likeness. As we shall see, our hearts will need to respond to our Shepherd's call to become burdened by what is on His heart.

- On a scale of 1 to 10, how eagerly do you greet each new sunrise as a gift from Him, and as one day closer to seeing Jesus' face?
- As you reflect on how our Lord has transformed you thus far, what new name might best match your growing identity in Him?

9. Then he went on...; 10. Grace and Glory spoke for the first time...; 11. "No flower of love?"...; 12. At his word she laid bare her heart...; 13. Grace and Glory gave a little gasp...; 14. "Why, I planted it there myself"...

Absolutely astonished, Grace and Glory discovers that all she had yearned for but had thought lost had been quietly germinating and blossoming in her heart! Have you ever experienced a supposed loss of something precious, only to later have it returned? Even in the material realm we get excited if a misplaced treasure suddenly reappears. That's natural, just as the parables of the lost sheep and mislaid coin confirm. But to have something brought to life that you thought was irreparably destroyed... that's **super-natural!**

All along, that tiny thorn-shaped seed planted in Much-Afraid's heart way back in the Valley of Humiliation had been patiently abiding, awaiting the necessary heart condition for it to take root and grow. Her journey's trials had not been in vain. They had provided fertile preparation for her to *want* her natural human love to be uprooted.

The day that you responded to the Holy Spirit's wooing and purposed in your heart to turn from sin so that you could receive forgiveness and be in union with Jesus, your heart was penetrated by the Father's seed (see 1 John 3:9). The plant which has sprouted from that seed has produced the sweet fragrance of His life in you.

Isn't that blossoming our Lord's desire for each one He leads from the Valley to the Mountains of Transformation? Our Father is faithful to lead us in triumph in Christ so that He "*manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. For we are a fragrance of Christ to God*" (2 Corinthians 2:16).

Those who are responsive to the Spirit inhale that fragrance with joy. But those who are determined to revel in their sin find that aroma of life in Jesus repulsive. You aren't responsible for people's response to

His fragrance. You just need to be that clay vessel available to exude it!

- How are you able to detect the “aroma of Christ” in people you encounter?
- When has the aroma of Christ in you brought joy to those “who are being saved”? What was the reaction to you of those who were perishing in their sin?

15. “Then, my Lord”...; 16. “Do you remember, Grace and Glory”...; 17. That was the natural human love...; 18. “You tore it out”...; 19. He bowed his head...

Has it been a struggle for you to forsake your perceived right to experience human love the way *you* want it — reciprocated and appreciated? The longer you take to put that longing on the altar, the slower your character transformation will be. Our Lord yearns to uproot those tentacles so that *your* joy will be complete in *His* joy! (See 1 John 15:10,11.) Then His Kingdom love can penetrate those corners and crevices of your heart to change your attitudes and motivations and hopes.

During the process of your sanctification, the Holy Spirit removes the priority of human love and your proclivity to *depend* on it. Just as the Shepherd transformed Much-Afraid into Grace and Glory, you no longer *need* to love in the same manner you once did. You are no longer *dependent* on others to love you back. Instead, you can love regardless of the circumstances or response of the ones to whom you extend His love. And *this* is the love that Grace and Glory would need if she were to return to the Valley as the Shepherd’s representative.

No matter how honest and earnest your intent, no human striving can ever bring about lasting transformation of your character. Much-Afraid was powerless to root out

natural love by herself. And without the Priest’s intervention, neither can you! The Spirit of Jesus can expose all that you are willing to have rooted out so that He can replace it with the mind and heart and love of Christ.

Sue: One verse in particular reminds me of the tough-yet-tender aspects of our Lord’s character, penned by a man well-familiar with the *heart* of God: “*One thing God has spoken, two things have I heard: that You, O God, are strong, and that You, O God, are loving*” (Psalm 62:11,12a). That intertwining of such diverse character traits of our Lord — His might and His love, His righteousness and His mercy, His justice and His grace — reveal that only by *His intervention* can we be conformed to His image.

This heart transformation doesn’t come about easily. The Shepherd had to tear out by the roots — ouch! — the natural longings of Much-Afraid’s humanity in order for His *agape* love to take root and blossom. Those same hands that endured the meekness of supernatural restraint on the cross exercised a “grip of steel” in yanking out that which was hindering her growth in Him.

Half-hearted acquiescence to live as a “good Christian person” is never spoken of, much less lauded by our Lord. Only those whose hearts are steadfastly pursuing the pearl of great price will be able to perceive the Shepherd’s call to absolute yieldedness. How often Scripture intones utter dependence on the mercies of God’s hand:

“Create in me a pure heart”
(Psalm 51:10).

“Give me an undivided heart”
(Psalm 86:11).

And His glorious promise to Israel through the prophet Ezekiel, “*I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within*

you; and **I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances**" (36:24-27).

At this point the young woman recalls her despair when she thought the Shepherd had forsaken her back in her hour of greatest need. Can you recall a period of personal desolation when abject loneliness and grief convinced you He'd broken His word and you really were alone? Sue: Almost as if in a bad dream, I remember times of thrusting myself on my knees in anguish, crying out, "**WHERE ARE YOU???**" — when in reality, He was within me, grieving with me in my depth of agony.

Don't believe for a moment that the One Who has made you in His image doesn't know your pain! Camp on this: Whatsoever He has promised in His Word, He will accomplish! You are NEVER alone in Jesus! Circumstances and appearances and emotions may deceive you, but He *never* deceives His own!

And because our Shepherd sees the end as well as the beginning of your journey, He rejoices when you, His beloved sheep, respond to His love, His authority, His freedom and His boundaries. Could any of us *not* respond with the same humble joy as did Grace and Glory as she clutched those precious nail-scarred hands?

Perhaps it's been awhile since you've seen some of the people who knew you before you began your journey to the High Places of His transformation. Hopefully, if they encounter you now, they'll be amazed at the differences they perceive in your attitudes, motivation and actions. They may not be *comfortable* with the "new you" but they should at least notice you've changed!

And that transformation may give them reason to ask *why* you've changed. As the apostle Peter urges, "**Always be prepared to give the reason to anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have in you,**

with humility and fear, keeping your conscience clear" (1 Peter 3:15,16a). Peter adds, that you may be spoken against and abused for "*the good behavior flowing from your union in the Messiah*", but your consistency and faithfulness in Jesus may eventually put them to shame — and humble them to seek after the same Lord Who has so changed your life!

- Have you encountered any specific people from your past who have commented on or even noticed any change in you since you began your pilgrimage?
- Was there ever an episode in your life when you were so despairing that you thought that even Jesus had forsaken you? At what point did He reveal His steadfast presence?

20. "And now for the promise"...; 21. She took it out...

What is so touching about the revelation of the altered stones in Much-Afraid's purse is that it comes as such a surprise to her! The jewels had never figured into her journey as a "reward" for which she could work. The pebbles had become jewels as her *heart* had been transformed.

Each stone represented a painful life lesson of death to some aspect of self-will or expectation — a struggle each time during which the Shepherd's will had taken precedence over her own. Each tempest of the soul had swirled around her decision to yield. And what hope we too can derive from the fact that our own love-grounded obedience to our Lord is producing spiritual jewels of praise for His glory, even if we sometimes focus more on our own frail weaknesses than on the joy we're bringing to Him.

These “jewels” of His workmanship in us are well attested to by Paul in his prayer for the called-out ones in Ephesus:

*I pray that from the **treasures of his glory** he will **empower you with inner strength** by his Spirit, so that the Messiah may live in your hearts **through your trusting**. Also I pray that you will be **rooted and founded in love**, so that you, with all God's people, will be given **strength to grasp** the breadth, length, height and depth of the **Messiah's love, yes, to know it**, even though it is beyond all knowing, so that you will be **filled with all the fullness of God** (Ephesians 3:16-19).*

Our Father's riches surpass anything we could ever imagine because they have the power to change our innermost heart through His love at work in us. Being “*rooted and founded in love*” relates directly to the implanted seed of Kingdom love being lodged in our hearts.

When we truly grasp how great is His love in all its dimensions and realize that He intends for that love to be our own prime motivation rather than the facts which are in our minds, then we'll be truly “Spirit-filled”.

- How have you been able to show the exceeding love of Jesus toward someone for whom human love would seem almost impossible?

22. “O thou who wast afflicted”...; 23. First he picked out of her hand...; 24. At that moment Grace and Glory...

Let's revisit the testimony of transformation Mike had related earlier as recorded in *Demolishing Strongholds*. “As I read my Bible on the morning of November 29, 1989, one day before the prophesied date, I pondered Paul's prayer for the Ephesians (chapter three, verses 16-19, quoted in the previous section).

“As I sat there quietly in my recliner, I was convicted that the amount of the love of Jesus that I had ever felt, even after many years in ministry, was about the size of a decimal point. The love I had perceived had no depth, breadth, or width to it, and it certainly did not surpass my knowledge.

“Later that day I was playing golf with my close friend Casey. As we walked along the course, I shared with him my deep conviction from my reading in Ephesians that morning. I told him with determination, “**I'm not going on in ministry until I feel this height, depth, and breadth of the love of Jesus.**” He joined with me in prayer right where we stood.

“The next morning at 8:00 on November 30, 1989, I received a phone call from a pastor who lived about an hour away from us. In a somewhat irritated tone he began, ‘Mike, what's your problem? God woke me up at 4:00 this morning and told me to call you at 8:00 AM to tell you that He had heard your prayer.’ When I explained to him my prayer on the golf course the day before, we both sensed that this was the reason the Lord had awakened him earlier. I continued in my ministry, waiting for God to show me the next step.”

Now that the strongholds are gone I can tell you with confidence: You cannot share the love of God if you've never experienced it yourself! Grace and Glory had to take ownership of God's means of suffering in her life in order for her to experience the love He wanted to give her.

The *process* of Grace and Glory's transformation from “pebbles to jewels” is captured in Mike's story of the funnel from our book, *Restoring the Early Church*.

“Early one Sunday morning, hours before I was to speak at a morning worship service, the Lord woke me up. There in my mind's eye was a vision of a funnel. As I stared at the funnel I could hear in my spirit an explanation of its meaning. Sketching the funnel on my computer, I made an overhead transparency of it.

“When I finished sharing my message that morning, I put the funnel transparency on the overhead projector and explained it to the congregation. To my surprise, people left their seats and came forward to repent of their sins, convicted of having believed a gospel that did not include the *Lordship* of Christ in their lives.

“The following week I was asked to address a different congregation. The Holy Spirit prompted me, ‘Just tell them about the funnel.’ I again displayed the funnel. After I finished explaining its meaning, people again left their seats and came forward to repent. When the funnel image was presented on retreats, the explanation elicited the same response: *conviction and repentance.*”

The Funnel

Paul offers a profound promise from God that is linked to an explicit responsibility on our part:

If you acknowledge publicly with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and trust in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be delivered. For with the heart one goes on trusting and thus continues toward righteousness, while with the mouth one keeps on making public acknowledgement and thus continues toward deliverance” (Romans 10:9,10, JNT).

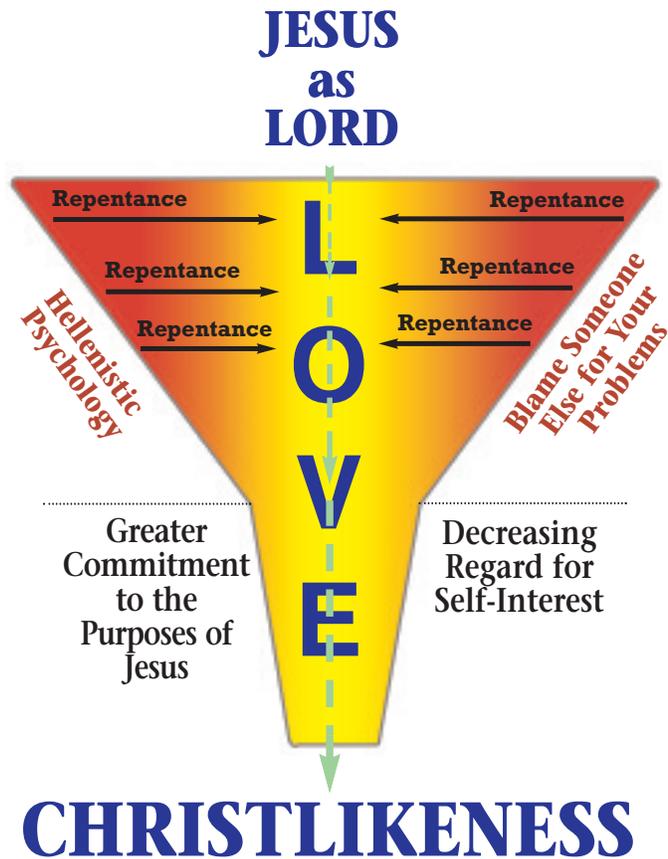
During the past few decades the Gospel has become “watered-down.” Many have come to Christ with the goal of “getting saved.” But salvation is the *by-product* of the biblical command to confess “*Jesus is Lord.*” The Lordship of Christ is your entry point into the funnel. Lordship implies a *rejection or yielding* of all that you are in your sin nature — all of your will, your rights, your possessions, your plans. You become His “disciple”. It is a conversion that demands that you *weigh the cost.*

Jesus sets the standard for the kind of relationship He calls for: “*If anyone comes to*

*me and does not **hate** [by comparison] his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters — yes, even his **own life** — he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not **carry his own cross** and **follow me** cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26,27). Discipleship entails total trust and selfless obedience to the Master.*

Like the pull of gravity, your *humility* to submit to the Lordship of Jesus draws you downward into the funnel as an invisible but constant force. The tug of His faithfulness does not let go of you. When you sin, His Spirit seeks you out and brings you to repentance through His kindness (see Romans 2:4). God pursues you to the point of your yielding so that your broken heart and spirit can once again enjoy the fullness of His presence as Lord.

As you pass into the stem of the funnel, the love of Jesus is so compelling that you don’t desire to think about yourself but *only to do His will.* Your personal discretion to choose what *you* want to do withers as you



continue to yield yourself as a bondservant to His will. God's goal for you as His child is to be *changed by His Spirit* into Christ-likeness in such a way that there truly is evidence of a "new creation."

If this resonates in your spirit, you can see from the funnel explanation that the popular but fallacious "getting saved" gospel consigns you to the sides of the funnel to deal with all your imperfections. Through the influx of reasoning and psychology into the church during past decades, *sins* that require repentance are now considered "problems."

No longer are believers held accountable to take personal responsibility for their own sins, which would bring them through repentance into the center of the funnel. Much of pastoral counseling now convinces people that they must *understand* their problems and find out *who is at fault* for their current condition.

Through the process of problem exploration, individuals may expand their awareness about their difficulties. At the same time, however, they develop an increasing unhappiness with God. Though they might not put it into words, in their hearts they neither trust Him to do what He promises in the Bible nor do they entrust themselves to Him as Lord of their lives. Thus many Christians live as if they have been "**victimized**" by both God and by others. They have not grasped a loving trust in a sovereign Lord.

A word of encouragement in your ongoing journey: If you will stay repentant and let the Holy Spirit draw you further down the funnel of your life to walk in willing yieldedness in His love, you'll discover that the stones of painful remembrance from your past are really precious jewels of Christ-like character being formed in you.

- If you've been honest with yourself on the journey this far, you can recognize the changes our Lord has already made. Do you? Do others?

- How can you help others who are close to you climb off the ledges of imperfections and excuses in their own "life funnel" so that they can move closer to the stem of love?

25. She marveled at the grace and love...; 26. "Hearken, O daughter, and consider"...; 27. At that Grace and Glory regarded...; 28. Now she was here and they were not...

Sue: I too marvel as I look back at my own life journey! So many potential dangers and foolish decisions that could have been disastrous were forestalled by His gracious Fatherly warning to return to His path. Perhaps you can recall with a shiver the situations in which your Shepherd directed you out of harm's way as He guarded you through those He sent to you, or kept you securely in His grip when your heart was aching. He didn't let you turn back! All those trials and challenges were preparation for this moment of your life.

At this point comes the first hint to Grace and Glory of the ultimate assignment to come now that she's in union with the Shepherd in the High Places. He tells her that she's "to go where I go, and to share my work in the valley below."

Grace and Glory is so caught up in her longing for her faithful traveling companions that she misses the significance of this statement. She's ascended to the High Places for a *purpose* — to share in the Shepherd's work back in the Valley in order to bring others into His Kingdom of love.

You may have been blessed along the way to find a few faithful friends who have been your companions during your seasons of suffering and sorrow. Some of these special ones may have been alongside just for a specific time in which you, like iron, sharpened one another for a new assignment that took you

in different directions. And that's all right! Our Father has multitudes of servants who fulfill His purposes in diverse ways among very diverse peoples.

Grace and Glory's heart appreciated the "help and gentleness and patience" that Sorrow and Suffering had so lovingly shown her all along the way. Our Father means for your past experiences to be used by you as instruments of hope for healing in someone else's life. He takes away the sting of those memories so you can help those in the Valley below find refuge and healing in Him.

If you have difficulty believing that, comfort yourself with Paul's confident promise "that He who **began** a good work in you will **perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus**" (Philippians 1:6).

- Whom did our Lord send alongside you as special companions when you were especially needy during your journey?
- What changes have occurred in your heart to equip you to be that special companion for someone else back in the Valley?

29. Two radiant, shining figures...; 30. "Who are you?"...; 31. Instead of answering they looked...; 32. "Why, you are Sorrow and Suffering."...; 33. They shook their heads...; 34. "Brought you here!"...

The two radiant figures in their dazzling array have undergone dramatic transformation as well. The love of Joy and Peace for their young charge has been a constant despite their awareness of her very real weaknesses. But what a difference when the sorrow and suffering in your life are recognized as instruments that have led to such joy and peace in your inner person!

You are still the "you" you were before the journey, but the transformation process

by which your character is being conformed to that of Jesus has made you a more radiant version of the person He always knew you'd become.

Note that Grace and Glory expresses astonishment that *she* was responsible for bringing about the transformation of Joy and Peace. If you think about it, would *you* have chosen Sorrow and Suffering to be the means by which you ascended to the High Places? None of us enjoys suffering, as the writer to the Hebrews makes clear: "*All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness*" (12:11). And the endurance that is molded into our hearts genuinely benefits us and enables us to share in His holiness (Hebrews 12:10).

- What situations or circumstances in your life that once caused you sorrow have you had to face again, now that your character has undergone transformation? Have you learned from the past?
- As Paul bemoans in Romans chapter 7, we'll always be faced with the possibility of doing what we don't want to do in our hearts because the demonic war against us won't cease until we reach eternity's shore. What arena of warfare is most likely to shake your peace and joy?

35. Again they shook their heads...; 36. Looking at one another again...; 37. With that they came up to her...

Transformed people start seeing the instruments of their sorrow and suffering in a different light. Grace and Glory had once shuddered at the presence of her companions. Now she's consumed with appreciation for "Joy" and "Peace." Let's anchor for now

that when *you* accept the suffering our Lord permits you, you are surrendering to His will: “Each time you accepted us and put your hands in ours we began to change.”

Think of the hope you can bring to others from your own pilgrimage testimony as you encounter them struggling with diverse trials. Had you turned back or walked away from our Father’s path, you never would have understood how *loving* was our Father’s intent to transform you so you could come into His presence.

No parent enjoys the pain his or her children must endure on the road to maturity. Neither does our Father take lightly our pain as our souls cast off their useless, filthy garments. But we have great joy ahead of us, as did our Example and Role Model Who endured the cross for the joy that lay ahead.

Traveler, your trials and temptations don’t end now that you’ve come to the High Places. But your *response* to them should be far different! Each time you embrace the trials the Shepherd allows is a step you take toward your own transformation. If you learn this lesson and allow it to seize your heart, the things you might cringe from can become opportunity for spiritual growth rather than obstacles to personal peace

Don’t be discouraged if those who are dear to you seem to resist your testimony or the changes the Shepherd has made in your life. Our Father yearns for *their* spirits to unite with His just as He has longed for and found yours! Continue to pray about ways to shine as a bright candle in His Kingdom, and be diligent in interceding for His penetration into their hearts so that their spiritual blinders can be removed. As long as there is breath in the body there is hope for the soul!

- When have you had to “cause pain” for the good of someone for whom you were responsible? How did that person respond? Did their anticipated reaction keep you from fully following through the way you needed to?
- Make a list of those for whom your heart is breaking in love and hope that they will seek the face of Jesus. Are you willing to be the instrument by which He reaches out to them if He opens the door for that to happen?