

Going to the High Places

Chapter 9 *Great Precipice Injury*



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Introduction

As Paul penned to the Philippians, it's *good* to send reminders! Here's one for you. Our entire spiritual journey toward salvation is one of **transformation**. Our need to be transformed into increasing conformity to Jesus is often under-emphasized in man-centered Nicolaitanism. (We address this at our website under *Hebraic Articles*: "I Hate Nicolaitanism!"; "God's Clergy-less Kingdom").

Along the journey God's Word gives us non-optional principles to live by, •such as trusting Him, •forgiving others, and •living righteously. Just as vital, we come to depend more and more on the Holy Spirit for guidance, encouragement and power. Through the Spirit's faithful work in our lives, and our desire to abide in Jesus and follow Him, our knowledge *about* our Father becomes *truly knowing* Him.

The next two chapters of *Hinds' Feet* find Much-Afraid (and us) dealing with the daunting precipice. This area of personal challenge is like a mid-term exam for each of us. If you've been traveling along, putting into practice the different life principles our Lord requires, then these next two chapters will encourage you. The "impassible precipice" won't appear "impossible" at all.

But maybe you've been reading these chapter studies and done little with the faith lessons they are designed to teach. You may even now be facing a situation that seems impossible to change or overcome!

We didn't intend for this series to feed your intellect. We're using *Hinds' Feet On High Places* to emphasize the all-important sanctification part of our salvation pilgrimage — transformation into Christ-likeness.

In these next two chapters our Father wants to *transform* each of His children — transform us into greater conformity to the character of Jesus. We exhort you: Don't satisfy yourself with just reading along through each lesson. Make it a *way of life* that brings *maximum glory to our Father!*

Chapter 9 Great Precipice Injury

1. After that, for a little while...; 2. After a time...; 3. One day they suddenly...; 4. As the sun rose...; 5. Much-Afraid fell on her knees...

More times than we would choose, our lives are a continuous series of changing scenes and events. We're being painfully molded on the potter's wheel, or undergoing severe fires, or being ground into malleable powder.

But remember that earlier promise at the Pyramid, "*Grain isn't threshed forever.*" There are also times, when, from our earthly perspective, we're released into seasons of ease, "with a song in your heart." As delicious as these times seem to us, they can also be periods in which our trust in our Father and our dependence on Him is minimal.

This period of ease when you are serenely strolling through life's "fields and orchards and low hills of the country" is a time of subtle testing. When you don't seem to *need* absolute dependence on our Father for guidance and strength, you can become susceptible to **false expectation**. In other words, you dwell on particular outcomes that you desire and go for them, often without seeking God's confirmation.

When you're rolling in a groove of complacency, or when a long-sought goal is almost at hand, you are bait for deception's jaws. Some of the decisions you make when your trust and dependence on your Father are minimal can thrust you into an emotional or spiritual prison for a long time afterward.

It's not as though we're without testimonies of warning, though. Paul reminded the believers in Corinth to *learn* from those who had gone before them in the Older Testament: "*These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come*" (1 Corinthians 10:11).

This is why we encourage followers of Jesus to spend time in *both* Testaments. In

the Older Testament in particular you'll find abundant evidence of God's principles in dealing with His children. You'll also discover numerous examples of foolish decisions made by those who ignored or disobeyed God.

If you don't think danger confronts you as you approach a long-sought goal, consider what happened to the Israelites after they crossed the Jordan and were about to finally take possession of the Promised Land. Local Gibeonites approached the Israelites with a ruse devised to authenticate that they were from a distant tribe not under God's judgment of annihilation. The deceived Israelites, choosing to ignore their need for God's wisdom, made a treaty with them. As Joshua concedes, "*The men of Israel sampled their provisions but did not inquire of the Lord*" (Joshua 9:14).

Even if you've faithfully walked long, hard roads with our Lord, you may find yourself suddenly tempted. King David got himself in trouble during a time of leisure. Having sent his troops off to fight, "*David remained in Jerusalem. One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful...*" (2 Samuel 11:1,2). David ends up in an adulterous affair and murders Bathsheba's husband Uriah, one of his most loyal "mighty men".

Don't drop your guard when things seem to be going easy! And *especially* be careful of decisions you make when your path is "flat and comparatively smooth." Remember how important God's guidance and confirmation are if you yearn for His blessing in and through you.

- Are you in a time of relative ease at the moment? Is your spiritual guard higher or lower than it was during your last spiritual assault?
- Can you look back in your life and detect any decisions that later trapped you because

you didn't seek guidance and confirmation from God? Are you more prone to quickly "pray and go" rather than patiently "seek and wait"? Describe the consequences you've experienced from both approaches.

- When you've made a wrong decision that has trapped you, do you struggle to wiggle out of the problem, be it a painful situation or an ill-advised relationship? Or, did you repent, ask your Father for mercy, and take steps to rectify it?

As you read this anecdote, ask yourself, from God's perspective, "Is this how foolish I am when I complacently act on my own without seeking my Father's way?"

TRYING TO DO THE JOB ALONE

Dear Sir:

I am writing in response to your request for additional information. In block number 3 of the accident reporting form, I put "trying to do the job alone" as the cause of my accident. You said in your letter that I should explain more fully and I trust that the following details will be sufficient.

I am a bricklayer by trade. On the date of the accident, I was working alone on the roof of a new six story building. When I completed my work, I discovered that I had about 500 pounds of brick left over. Rather than carry the bricks down by hand, I decided to lower them in a barrel by using a pulley which fortunately was attached to the side of the building, at the sixth floor.

Securing the rope at ground level, I went up to the roof, swung the barrel out, and loaded the bricks into it. Then I went back to the ground and untied the rope, holding it tightly to insure a slow descent of the 500 pounds of brick. You will note in block number eleven of the accident report form that I weigh 135 pounds.

Due to my surprise' of being jerked off the ground so suddenly, I lost my presence of mind and forgot to let go of the rope. Needless to say I proceeded at a rather rapid rate up the side of the building.

In the vicinity of the third floor, I met the barrel coming down. This explains the fractured skull and broken collarbone. Slowed only slightly, I continued my rapid ascent, not stopping until the fingers of my right hand were two knuckles deep into the pulley. Fortunately by this time I had regained my presence of mind and was able to hold tightly to the rope in spite of my pain.

At approximately the same time, however, the barrel of brick hit the ground and the bottom fell out of the barrel. Devoid of the weight of the bricks, the barrel now weighs approximately fifty pounds. I refer you again to my weight in block number eleven. As you might imagine, I began a rapid descent down the side of the building.

In the vicinity of the third floor, I met the barrel coming up. This accounts for the two fractured ankles and the lacerations on my legs and lower body. The encounter with the barrel slowed me enough to lessen my injuries when I fell onto the pile of bricks and, fortunately, only three vertebrae were cracked.

I am sorry to report, however, that as I lay there on the bricks, in pain and unable to stand, and watching the empty barrel six stories above me, I again lost my presence of mind and-----I let go of the rope. The empty barrel weighed more than the rope so it came back down on me and broke both of my legs.

I hope I have furnished the information you require as how the accident occurred.

6. As they approached...; 7. Much-Afraid stood still and stared...

Much-Afraid had been overwhelmed by the glorious beauty of the sunlit mountains — so much so that the reality of their rugged steepness never entered her mind. By right-

ly focusing on the Creator of these cliffs, no anxiety could penetrate her worship. But the closer they drew to the majestic cliffs, the more formidable they seemed.

Our Father enjoys bringing His children to their own "impassible precipice." Not only does it give us a chance to find how much we trust Him, but our dire straits stir us to look back at all the other painful experiences He's taken us through to transform our character.

Our own steep slopes force us to face our deep need for Him. They also give us pause to embrace our past pain and the suffering He has faithfully taken us through so that we can become increasingly more like His Son Jesus.

The helpless situation Much-Afraid found herself in couldn't be spelled out any more clearly: "The cliffs completely blocked the way before her, yet the path ran right up to them, then stopped." You can almost see the smile on our Father's face when He gets you into a similar seemingly impossible position!

Then it becomes your choice. Do you choose to trust that He will make a way where there seems to be no way (as the song goes)? Or, do you "tremble and shake all over" in doubt and unbelief, fearful that you've come all this way and endured so much, yet now have to turn back from your own dream or goal?

Because our Father enjoys making the impossible possible, let me share a personal experience.

When I was released from my third tour off Vietnam, our ship was in Hong Kong. This last deployment had been emotionally devastating for me. Sue and I had been married 3 years, with more months spent apart than together.

After our ship's stay in Hong Kong I was to ride it back to the Philippines and catch a military flight from Clark Air Force Base back to the United States. Message traffic had informed us of a 50-day wait before I'd be able to fly out of Clark. *Fifty days...*! I felt I could do better on my own.

I was given permission to depart the ship in Hong Kong and begin “thumbing” my way across the Pacific. I located a destroyer that was heading immediately to the Philippines and caught a ride. By the next evening we arrived in Subic Bay, still 40 miles from Clark. As there were no flights scheduled to Clark, I checked into billeting. The next morning I walked down the flight line and came upon an Air Force medivac flight heading for Clark. They gave me a lift!

When I got to the Air Terminal at Clark, the sergeant at the counter told me it would indeed be 50 days before I could get out. As I walked dejectedly away from the counter, the sergeant called out to me. “Sir, I just found out there’s an unscheduled flight coming in from DaNang heading for Travis Air Force Base in California. There are 8 open seats and I don’t have time to find the personnel to fill them. Would you mind flying out in an hour?” [Even now I cry with joy as I write this!]

Sue had no idea I was coming home since she was aware of the 50-day delay. I thought, “I’ll call her when I get to Travis.” As I cleared customs at Travis, I was approached by 4 Air Force personnel. “We have a taxi that will take 5 of us to San Francisco Airport. Would you like to be the fifth? “Are you kidding?” I shouted.

Arriving at San Francisco Airport I heard the announcement: “Passengers with tickets for San Diego and military with travel vouchers report to gate __. At the gate the attendant looked me over and asked, “Coming back from ‘Nam?” I answered, “Two days ago I was in Hong Kong when I started thumbing my way home. My wife doesn’t even know I’m on my way.”

That wonderful woman took some information on how to reach Sue for me. And there stood my wife when I came through the gate in San Diego. MY FATHER IS AWESOME IN TIMES OF THE IMPOSSIBLE!!!

[Some time I’d love to tell you how our Father moved two typhoons out of the way so I could see Sue and our son Mike in Japan. That, too, was an “impassible wall” that only He could move!]

Keep this in the forefront of your heart as you encounter seemingly impossible circumstances: **Your trust and dependence on your Father is at stake!** Your Father enjoys seeing your trust in Him when He brings you to the shores of the “Red Sea; or to the Jordan River at flood stage. The Precipice is your place for a mid-journey evaluation of yourself to determine what you’ve been putting into practice thus far.

- Recall some “impassible walls” in your own life. How did you respond to them? How did our Lord make a way?

8. Just as this overwhelming realization...; 9. As the three stood watching...; 10. Then the hart would leap...

Picture this as Much-Afraid and her companions did. As they stood in front of the precipice, a hart (male deer) ascended the steep cliff, immediately followed by the female hind. This is a crucial visualization for married couples especially.

The ascent up that precipice was based on a lot of small, precise steps taken by the hart. Husbands, this analogy is comparable to God’s *rhema* for you — knowing His *specific will* for you and your family. It’s vital that we husbands have absolute confidence in the guidance that our Father has given us, and follow through in it as adeptly as that hart did on the trail.

Wives, make sure any inclination to challenge and question your husband’s insights isn’t emanating out of fear or distrust in our Lord’s sovereignty. Be an encourager, not a hindrance!

I’ve enjoyed over four decades of getting up early to spend time with our Lord in Bible study and intercession. During this time with Him He’s warned me of impending attacks on us or our ministry. Then I’ve told Sue about the warning I’ve been given. It’s at times like this that I’ve asked her to tuck in close in her spirit so I can guide and

shield us both.

The concept of *tucking Sue in* comes from my days of flying formation. When we would fly into difficult circumstances, the flight leader would order his wingman to pull in close. In an emergency situation there isn't time to go looking around for him!

That hart going up the precipice needed to know his hind was following immediately in his footsteps. It was nearly impossible for him to turn around to see what she was doing! "So the two of them leaped and sprang with perfect grace and assurance up the face of the precipice..." If you are married, you aren't going to get through the "impossible precipices" in your lives until you both come through it together — willingly.

"We live by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthian 5:7). Remind yourself that the challenging circumstances you face are revealing the depth of your own relationship with your Father. If you trust and depend on Him, He will give you wisdom to get beyond this precipice. And you can count on this: His wisdom is *always opposite* your own fleshly inclinations!

- Wives, are you free from worry about your children, about your family's finances, about whatever? What evidence would indicate that you *are* free?
- Can you, like the hind, follow your husband without hesitation, knowing without doubt that you have a caring Father Who is bigger than the both of you? What changes need to come about for this to happen?

11. Much-Afraid covered her face; 12. Oh, no! No!...

Terrified into immobility. Overcome by fear swirling in your mind of what *might*

happen. Have you ever been in that position? Maybe you can identify with our tremulous heroine's resistance to press on. Notice how she covers her ears and refuses to receive the confident encouragement of her companions.

So often Jesus addresses words of power and truth to those who "have ears to hear." Your imaginative presuppositions that fearfully eye your circumstances keep you from calling on the Spirit with a heart of trust. You can, at this point, choose to wallow in your fears, or to rejoice that your back is to the wall and only your Father's intervention will bring resolution!

Sue: Mike and I faced a precipice shortly after we moved to Massachusetts to attend seminary. Our home in California hadn't yet sold, and we'd recently purchased another one. Then came the day when both mortgages were due and we had about \$8 in the checking account.

Mike paced in worry, wondering if we'd somehow missed God's will. Meanwhile, I chuckled in delight: "Just think, we have to depend entirely on our Lord to do something!" I handed him a devotional article I'd just read that morning. It chronicled a young 18th century Naval officer and his wife as they sailed across the ocean. A fierce storm arose, and the wife shook in terror. The husband, however, prayed calmly. When she asked how he could stay calm when they were in such danger, he pulled out his sword and put it to her neck. "Are you afraid of me?" "No," she answered, "for I know in whose hand the sword is." "And I," he responded, "know in Whose hand the storm is."

Mike pondered this and prayed. The phone rang. Before I could answer it, the Holy Spirit told him that it was our realtor in California and our house had sold! The realtor also told us that the buyer wanted to move in right away and pay advance rent, which paid the mortgage of the house we were living in. Because the sold house was in escrow, we didn't have to pay that month's mortgage — and since the sale didn't close

until January (in a year in which we had little income), we ended up not having to pay any capital gains either! Impossible situation, you say? ***Mighty God, we respond!***

Sometimes it's vital that we consider our Father's perspective of us when we hesitate to press on during a difficult time. Think for a moment about the nature of the people our Lord chooses for His purposes. Mostly they are *exactly opposite* of the world's standards of those best able to scale impassable walls! No one could have believed that a young shepherd could slay a well-armed Philistine giant!

And the followers of Jesus weren't wise or mighty by the world's standards either. As Paul concurs, there isn't much to compliment in *any* of us except that we've put our trust in Jesus! The following humorous account portrays the kind of people our Lord chooses to join Him. Do you see yourself among them?

MEMORANDUM

TO: Jesus, Son of Joseph
Woodcrafter Carpenter Shop, Nazareth

FROM: Jordan Management Consultants, Jerusalem

Dear Sir:

Thank you for submitting the resumés of the twelve men you have picked for management positions in your new organization. All of them have now taken our battery of tests. We have not only run the results through our computer, but also arranged personal interviews for each of them with our psychologist and vocational aptitude consultant.

It is the staff opinion that most of your nominees are lacking in background, education and vocational aptitude for the type of enterprise you are undertaking. They do not have the team concept. We would recommend that you continue your search for persons of experience in managerial ability and proven capability.

Simon Peter is emotionally unstable and given to fits of temper. Andrew has absolutely no qualities of leadership. The two brothers, James and John, the

sons of Zebedee, place personal interest above company loyalty. Thomas demonstrates a questioning attitude that would tend to undermine morale.

We feel that it is our duty to tell you that Matthew has been blacklisted by the Greater Jerusalem Better Business Bureau. James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus definitely have radical leanings, and they both registered a high score on the manic-depressive scale.

One of the candidates, however, shows great potential. He is a man of ability and resourcefulness, meets people well, has a keen business mind and has contacts in high places. He is highly motivated, ambitious and responsible. We recommend Judas Iscariot as your controller and right-hand man. All of the other profiles are self-explanatory.

We wish you every success in your new venture.

Sincerely yours,

Jordan Management Consultants.

We can't emphasize enough how healthy it is during your pilgrimage to realize that our Lord's selection of you has *nothing* to do with your capabilities! This reality helps you be at peace in your circumstances, and to have a sense of humor about yourself. So enjoy more of your journey with a grateful heart for His presence!

- What strengths or qualities do you have that are, or would be, esteemed in the world's eyes? Has our Lord used these in particular ways? Which of these strengths has He transformed or allowed to die?
- What perceived personal weaknesses make you all the more dependent on our Lord for *His* strength and wisdom?

13. As she crouched...; 14. “Ha, ha!”...; 15. She opened her eyes in fresh terror...; 16. “I thought somehow”...

Every time you wait too long to trust and depend on your Father, those inner voices assail you. Count on it! The murmuring spiritual strongholds that once controlled and influenced you will sidle up to see if they can have at you again.

Craven Fear reminds Much-Afraid that “you are one of the Fearings.” He’s counting on her immobilizing dread to steer her back to her old fleshly identity, quite the opposite of her great value and inner beauty in the Shepherd’s sight.

How vulnerable each of us is when we pay greater heed to our fears than to the power of our loving Lord! Those voices will only get louder and more insistent if you don’t nip them right away. Take those thoughts captive and turn your mind toward the character of Jesus in His nobility, purity, justice and love, as Paul directed the Philippian believers.

Mike: The predominant stronghold that permeated my extended family for generations was rejection. Were you aware that different spiritual anointings and giftings attract demonic attention? Years ago a well-known Christian teacher stated that the demonic force that tries to hinder the prophetically gifted is rejection.

In Israel our Father gave us a “prophetic mission” to share His restoration message. During the decades we’ve shared the facets of the Hebraic Restoration, the books of Jeremiah and Lamentations have sustained us with encouragement to endure and to press on. We are sharing a message our Father gave us in advance of the **Dark Days of Chastisement** that are coming on this nation. Jeremiah prophesied under the same conditions of blatant sin and a complacent, self-centered religious system.

You may think that a synagogue is the Jewish version of the Gentile church — and maybe today there *is* similarity. But the synagogue got its start during the Babylonian captivity 586 years before Jesus’ incarnation.

Israelites who were earnest to know the Word of God went to the prophet’s house for understanding unto application. In this way, God’s Word and His ways became part of those who had “ears to hear” during their 70-year exile.

Their determined desire to *know God’s Word* so they could walk in it made all the difference in their gathering together. Sue and I recognize that today people gather congregationally for many different reasons. But some are consumed by a *love for the Lord* that compels them to press on in everything He desires of them. We are deeply encouraged if we can help such people! Others, however, are just looking to add to their store of knowledge. These we are just not able to assist effectively.

Over the years of sharing the Hebraic Restoration, I’ve often encountered severe demonic attacks that sometimes drive me to despair — the same kind by which Much-Afraid was paralyzed. The battlefield of despair is the point in which the demonic voices come back for a fresh attack. The voices with which I’m most often assailed are a variety of false accusations, each trying to deceive me that my Father has rejected me. I wrestle with all my strength in Jesus to take my thoughts captive and cry out to my Lord for help.

When victory comes, I’m then able to see how my Father uses these episodes to strengthen my trust and dependence on Him, and to increase my compassion and encouragement for others who come under attack.

- How about you? What goes on in your life that brings the attack of harping demonic voices? How do you deal with those assaults in your mind? Is your trust and dependence on your Father stronger or weaker afterward?
- What buttons get pushed that drive you into a spiral of despair, making you vulnerable to agitating thoughts?

17. "I won't go" ...; 18. "Well, you can take your choice" ...; 19. "Doesn't it give you" ...

Once you get started down the path of vain imagination, you'll find yourself more and more agitated by fear. Sue: I realize that visual images can implant themselves in my mind, only to pop up when I least need to remember them! That's why it's so important to monitor what you watch on TV or through other media, and even what you *read* if your mind is prone to put words into mental images. Those mind pictures can become fertile ground for the enemy to agitate you when you're weak.

Besides the voices that chip away at your trust in Jesus' love, your own imagination seems to be programmed to conceive the worst. Can't you just hear Craven Fear maliciously whispering, "Just imagine those ugly, knife-like rocks..." Keep in mind that Satan is the master of **illusion**. He uses demonic voices to agitate your own mind against you. But our God is the Lord of **dis-illusion**, exposing the lie behind the illusion. He reveals the illusions of deceptive imaginings and empowers you to focus on the Reality of Who He is in your life. He *shatters* illusions!

Jesus defines Himself as "**the way and the truth and the life**". (John 14:6). The Greek word for "truth" means "reality". In other words, our Lord is saying, "*I am the way and the only reality...*" We often get disappointed as God dis-illusions us by revealing reality from His perspective. The demonic illusions, even though they were false, were our deceived "reality". But Jesus is the real Reality in our lives, and He tolerates no illusions to compete with Him.

The illusions we lived under were part of our sinful, fleshly identity. Our Lord's sanctification process often makes us feel like we are being ripped apart as our deceptions and sins become *utterly sinful* to us (see Romans 7:13). We are being *transformed* from illusion to dis-illusion to Reality. Remember, following Jesus is a matter of *identity change*.

The process of this change is:

illusion > disillusion > Reality

- What deceiving illusions are you beset by, be it your perceived inability to walk away from a sinful attitude or behavior, or a wrongful relationship, or fear of the consequences if you follow through on your Shepherd's commands?

- What are you tolerating through your eyes or ears that can become an open invitation for demonic badgering?

20. "Much-Afraid", said the guides...; 21. She clung to them...; 22. Sorrow bent over...; 23. "If I call him"...

If you want to access the Reality of all the universe, you must call out His Name! Much-Afraid's companions understood this clearly, "...you know where your help lies. Call for help." As simple as their suggestion seems, it meets with the same reason for *not* calling out to God that many of us have: "I am so afraid that if I call him, he will tell me that I must go that way, that dreadful, dreadful way, and I can't."

Until the last 3 words, Much-Afraid's statement is absolutely true. If our Lord has planned the path for you, then He wants you to follow it. You may say, "...he will tell me to build an altar, and I can't. This time I can't."

Our Lord sees our "can'ts" as temporary "won'ts". But that's what makes our pilgrimage all the more interesting for Him. As I've repeated to many, "**You can do it the easy way or you can do it the hard way.**" [And if you've heard me say this, you're probably chuckling right now, "*It's far easier to obey Jesus than to struggle!*"]

Our Father knows how much your sin nature fights against your *spirit*, that is, your desire to live for Jesus. This battle will go on until you die. But each skirmish and subsequent victory is one of the "altar experiences" that dot your pilgrimage to salvation.

- When was the last time you could have kicked yourself for waiting so long to call on your Shepherd for help, for deliverance, or even just for wisdom?
- In what ways have you tried to find alternatives to what you knew He was calling you to do? What reasons and excuses did you use, only to feel that weight of conviction afterward?

24. Craven Fear laughed triumphantly...; 25. "Why, Much-Afraid" ...; 26. He sounded so cheery...

Sometimes you get forced by the extremity of your situation to fall before our Shepherd in tears and shame. In Much-Afraid's case, her faithful friend Suffering serves her well by pricking her with a knife. Much-Afraid is brought to her crisis point with no inner strength on which to rely.

Sue: For years I resisted our Father's call to walk in loving, obedient trust in Jesus. I was an active churchgoer and participant in many committees and programs. But to yield my life to His will? No way!!

Then our Father graciously left me to my own devices shortly after Mike sailed off on an eight-month deployment. Do you know what my greatest fear was about yielding my life to Jesus? That He'd send Mike and me off kicking and screaming to Africa to be missionaries! (Actually, we almost did go to Nigeria — willingly! — a few years later until He closed that door!) From my rebellious perspective, however, that was one wall that I didn't want to climb!

Mike: Before coming to Christ I was an avid poker player. To put poker in simple terms, the stakes are increased until everyone but the ultimate winner folds his hand and gives up. When I read the Bible for the first time, I was keenly aware that this God of Scripture is an excellent "poker player." He

keeps increasing the pressure until you call out to Him, reaffirming your trust and dependence on His love and faithfulness. And you can count on this: Our Father never bluffs!

You can help others in Jesus who are struggling with doubt or a resistant heart. God tells us through the writer to the Hebrew believers, "*See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness*" (Hebrews 3:12,13).

Not long ago I received a letter and a phone call from two men who have been helped by our writings. Our Father knew I needed some encouragement because it had been a difficult several months. At the end of the day I was reminded of Ebed-Melech, the Ethiopian official who came to Jeremiah's rescue. As we wrote earlier, the crusty prophet who more often than not was the bearer of tidings not well-received has been an inspiration to Sue and me to persevere in trust.

The resistance against his prophetic messages was fierce. Picture Jeremiah's plight. Cast into a dark, muddy cistern, the faithful old man was shivering and hungry.

But Ebed-Melech, a Cushite, an official in the royal palace, heard that they had put Jeremiah into the cistern. While the king was sitting in the Benjamin Gate, Ebed-Melech went out of the palace and said to him, "My lord the king, these men have acted wickedly in all they have done to Jeremiah the prophet. They have thrown him into a cistern, where he will starve to death when there is no longer any bread in the city." Then the king commanded Ebed-Melech the Cushite, "Take thirty men from here with you and lift Jeremiah the prophet out of the cistern before he dies" (Jeremiah 38:6-13).

Ebed-Melech's heart was so touched by the prophet's pain that he even thought to procure old rags as padding against the rope's harsh fibers! His courageous actions, at the

risk of his own life on behalf of the unpopular prophet, didn't go unnoticed in heaven. God blessed him for his kindness to Jeremiah:

*'Go and tell Ebed-Melech the Cushite, 'This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: I am about to fulfill My words against this city through disaster, not prosperity. At that time they will be fulfilled before your eyes. **But I will rescue you on that day, declares the Lord; you will not be handed over to those you fear. I will save you; you will not fall by the sword but will escape with your life, because you trust in Me, declares the Lord'** (Jeremiah 39:16-18).*

- Ebed-Melech was a faithful source of encouragement and help. Whom have *you* encouraged today?
- Much-Afraid may not have appreciated Suffering's stab of motivation, but "*faithful are the wounds of a friend*" (Proverbs 27:6). Whom do you know who may be giving way to sin's deceitfulness and could use your encouragement or "pointed intervention"? What are you going to do about it?

27. She sat up and looked at him...; 28. "It is the way...

The Shepherd arrived to a Much-Afraid tormented by shame at her cowardice. But she discovered that which so many who cry out to Him find: "The shame in her eyes met no answering reproach in his." You can trust that our God is a God of *character development*, not of reproach or shame. That we may feel shame is a result of the Fall [see *Demolishing Strongholds*]. Shame does not come from God.

The effects of the Fall are numerous, impacting each of us because of that original decision to choose sin:

How Adam's Fall into Sin Has Harmed Us (Genesis 3:1-4:7)

1. Harms Our Hearing from God (Genesis 3:1-3).
2. Harms Our Belief in God (Genesis 3:4,5).
3. Harms Our Desires (Genesis 3:6).
4. Harms Our Actions (Genesis 3:6).
5. Harms Our Relationships with Others (Genesis 3:6).

Further Effects of Adam's Fall

1. Shame (Condemnation) (Genesis 3:7).
2. Rationalization (Hiding from God) (Genesis 3:8,9).
3. Fear (Genesis 3:10).
4. Blame (Inability To Take Responsibility for One's Actions) (Genesis 3:11-13).
5. Curse Instead of Blessing (Genesis 3:16-19).
6. Rejection (Genesis 3:21-24).
7. Vulnerability to Satanic Attack (Genesis 4:6,7).

If you do not deal with the underlying strongholds that distort your relationship with God, you will *continue* to expose yourself to the effects of the Fall. Loving intimacy with the God of Holiness will seem out of reach until you humble yourself before Him and cast down whatever is blocking out rest and delight in Jesus.

- When were you last so pierced by shame in your perceived "failure before God" that you put off coming before Him?

- Much-Afraid kept her eyes on her disabilities that she feared would keep her from fulfilling His purposes for her. What perceived disabilities (emotional, physical, spiritual, circumstantial) do you feel will hold you back from trust-filled obedience in the challenges that face you?

29. "But Much-Afraid, what did I promise you...; 30. "Well," he answered cheerily...

Throughout the Bible our Father gives His children promises they can count on. His promises are one of the great sources of our hope! One noticeable promise of God that's being fulfilled in our midst is His restoration of the Israelites back to Israel. God is gathering them from all corners of the earth, as He promised in Jeremiah 23:3,8 and elsewhere.

Connected to His promise to the Jewish people to restore them to their Land is the going forth of the Hebraic Restoration. To Jew and Gentile alike, this restoration is the basis to the trust-filled life of Abraham, the father of all who put their trust in Jesus (Romans 4:16).

As you grow in knowledge and personal experience of God, His promises are all the more important to your hope. The apostle Peter lived in corrupt times that parallel our own. Yet note how he encourages us to walk in the obedient trust that is our means to escape the raging storm of evil.

*His divine power has given us everything we need for **life and godliness** through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness. Through these He has given us His **very great and precious promises**, so that through them you may **participate** in the divine nature and **escape the corruption** in the world caused by evil desires" (2 Peter 1:3,4; see also verses 5-11).*

Take each personal promise in the Bible and insert your name! For example, "[Your name] who trusts in Him will never be put to shame" (Romans 10:11). Remember, shame and fear of failure are only **demonic illusions**. Let your trust in our Father dis-illusion you!

Sue: I used to wonder as a young Christian just what was meant by "God's promises." Then He broke through with the astonishing realization the He is the same, yesterday, today and forever! Whatever He has told His followers that is within His nature to do for them, He is fully capable of

doing for me, too, according to His will and purpose for my life. Now *that* makes this pilgrimage exciting!

The path of your pilgrimage is the exact trail He has chosen for *you* so that you too can have hinds' feet and be able to leap upon the High Places. Other people's paths to develop hinds' feet are not *your* earmarked road, so don't compare your life to theirs. Comparison is always the slick path to self-pity.

- Are there some particular promises of God in His Word that bring you special comfort and peace and strength? List some of them and commit them to memory!
- Ask our Lord which people in your life could use a reminder of His promises. Purpose to share a promise of hope with the next needy person you encounter!

31. Much-Afraid trembled...; 32. The Shepherd was a very surprising person...

Mike: I have to be on special guard against voices of rejection. They frequently tempt me to feel like I'm always getting the "short end of the stick." Yet our Lord wanted to raise up a couple who could share a prophetic message for individuals and families all over this nation, and even abroad. But to prepare us, He had to bring us to the "back side of the desert, where the mountains are particularly steep and where there are no paths..." What better way to strengthen our resolve to trust Him no matter what!

The Hebraic Restoration is restoring the trust-filled walk of spiritual power and relational intimacy that have been lost for 1700 years. The majority of us who embrace it have been steeped in Hellenist Nicolaitan traditions that elevated a clergy class over the laity.

As we share the Hebraic foundations and fulfill the prophetic mission our Lord gave

Sue and me, we have been conscious to *not* erect a headquarters or establishment seat for this movement. We can share the facets of what made the earliest Church intimate and powerful, but each person or faith community must depend upon the Holy Spirit themselves in order to live out these truths. No one owes allegiance to us, but only to our Lord.

It may take several generations, even those who endure the **Dark Days of Chastisement**, before people begin to walk in the pattern of the earliest Church again. My concern is that we don't create "Gideon's Ephod" (Judges 8:22-27) and find people stumbling over a manmade tradition that God didn't want. Each person must discover for him/herself the covenant love relationship and true Spirit worship of our Lord Jesus!

- Before you can get up your own Precipice, you have to come to grips with every painful circumstance of your past and thank God for what He accomplished through it. Are there any events from your past that you find too painful to deal with? Talk it over with the Shepherd, and with your journey partner. Their view on your past experience can change your perspective from fearful avoidance to a badge of victory.

33. "You said, 'Now...; 34. The Shepherd laughed too...; 35. It was a really extraordinary scene...

To do the miraculous, the preposterous, is our Lord's wonderful way of expressing His love for us. But often, in order to do the preposterous. He has to get us to a place where nothing but His intervention can accomplish the task. Again, it isn't the change in your negative or impossible circumstances that gives Him delight. It's seeing *you* change! Turning jellyfish into mountain goats is what the sanctification portion of our pilgrimage to salvation is all about.

Who you once were, you can't go on being if you want to reach the High Places.

Think about the changes our Lord made in His disciples. After the burial of Jesus they were huddled behind locked doors, terrified that the unbelieving Jews who crucified Jesus would come after them next. But then..., "*Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!'*" (John 20:19). If that wasn't motivation to cast down fear, what would be?!

Let's move on to Peter and John after the Sanhedrin released them with orders to keep quiet about the risen Lord. Did they cower in silent fear? Here's what they proclaimed:

'Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable Your servants to speak Your word with great boldness. Stretch out Your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.' After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. **And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly** (Acts 4:29-31). Hallelujah!

When you take a determined stand for God and His Word, you can count on His miraculous backing. During Saul's reign the Israelites were in hiding because of the fearsome Philistines (see 1 Samuel 14). Saul's son Jonathan, however, refused to be overcome by fear. He exhorted his armor-bearer, "*Come, let's go over to the outpost of those uncircumcised fellows. Perhaps the Lord will act in our behalf. Nothing can hinder the Lord from saving, whether by many or by few*" (v.6).

Jonathan's determination brought about a rout! God got involved, and "*panic struck the whole army — those in the camp and field, and those in the outposts and raiding parties — and the ground shook. It was a panic sent by God*" (v.15). When you determine to abide in God and His Word as your basis of love-grounded obedient trust, you can anticipate that He's going to show Himself strong in your life!

You may find it helpful to review our Hebraic Article on our website, *The Gospel of the Covenant is the Pilgrimage to Salvation*, to get a solid grip on the journey to your eternal salvation. If you fully understand the goal of your pilgrimage and our Lord's means to get you there, you can overcome your complacency or resistance to press on.

The "unknown" regarding the issues of our salvation often stymies our pursuit and perseverance to the end. Spend some time discovering the nature of the path He has you on. Then thank Him for walking it with you!

"All men will hate you because of Me, but he who stands firm to the end will find salvation" (Matthew 10:22). The Shepherd didn't change Much-Afraid's circumstances. Neither did he transform her from jellyfish to mountain goat at the snap of his fingers. She was still at the bottom of the precipice, still having to ascend with her lame, twisted feet.

But where just a little while before had been despair, a *new perspective* was presented. This unexpected insight is the wisdom our Lord gives whenever you yield and ask for His help. And as we wrote earlier, His wisdom is the exact opposite of our own fleshly inclination. Say this to yourself, "My Lord's wisdom is the exact opposite of my own inclination!"

Trust in our Shepherd plays a big part in your willingness to follow Him. Sadly, the Israelites who fled to the shore of the Red Sea couldn't praise God until they were all the way across. Their *circumstances* had to change before they could trust Him and praise Him. And what was the sorry fruit of their distrust? Forty years of grumbling rebellion that left that generation dead in the desert.

Our Shepherd doesn't want that for you. Sanctification has nothing to do with miraculous interventions that change your circumstances. Greater than parting the Red Sea or the Jordan River is the person whose heart can trust his Father and praise Him despite the circumstances! When you choose to trust and depend on your Lord, you bring

Him greater glory than any change in your circumstances could.

- What causes your joy level to go up or down? Are you basically a joyful person? A fearful person? A doubting person?
- How do adverse circumstances affect you? How do you respond to negative circumstances? Fret? Worry? Hit the fridge? Pray? Thank Him?

38. "Do you believe" ...; 39. Much-Afraid looked at him; 40. As she spoke, something lovely happened....

"Not my will, but Thy will be done." Isn't that what our Lord waits to hear from each of us? You will have many Gethsemanes in your life if you choose to faithfully follow Jesus. No, you may never shed any blood for His sake, but you *will* wrestle against your sin nature and against tormenting demonic voices in order to embrace the cup He offers you.

One of the growing experiences that happens along your journey is the realization of how much your yieldedness pleases your Father. His delight in your obedient trust changes your earlier motivation of *why* you were willing to go any further. Your motive for starting the journey and the motive that enables you to continue often have little in common.

Initially your goal has to do with your own aspirations. By the time the journey ends, you understand the wonderful character and nature of your Lord more clearly. Your increased understanding of His love compels you to want to please Him more. Like Much-Afraid, that which once worried you now seems to melt into unimportance.

Think about the visual image of that glorious rainbow as it illuminated the zigzag path that Much-Afraid was to scale with her trusted companions. Many years ago Sue and I had the privilege of being “Sorrow” and “Suffering” in the life of a friend. This dear woman could not embrace the pain she had experienced in her past. She had carried old emotional baggage into her marriage that was bringing it to the brink of divorce.

Sue and I accompanied her on a long walk, one of us on each side of her as she poured out that old hurt. After the walk we knelt down and read aloud Chapter 16 of *Hinds’ Feet On High Places*, Grave on the Mountains. That was over 30 years ago, and through the healing that our Lord rendered, she and her husband are still happily married!

When that day was over, Sue and I felt like we’d been touched by a rainbow. Sorrow and suffering took on a wonderfully magnificent perspective as we witnessed a heart transformation by the Holy Spirit

- Rainbows are a sign that God keeps His promises. Can you recall any particular rainbows you’ve marveled at, and the circumstances that were going on at that point in your life?
- When have you been especially aware that our Father has brought a special friend or two by your side to represent His love and strength to you?

41. In the shining glory...; 42. Then she did that which only a short time before; 43. This she put in her purse...

If you are used by our Lord to help out a struggling brother or sister, know that their struggle is never over until self-will is placed on the altar and consumed. Anything short of the sacrifice of your will on His altar leaves

your old rebellious nature still in control.

Exercise discernment and ask our Lord to show you any vestiges of self-will still lurking in your heart. Unless you fully yield to His will rather than yours, you’ll be unprepared to overcome that challenging life precipice you’re facing. And your self-will and self-determination will rob your Father of the glory you *could* have given Him by exchanging your will for His.

Note that Much-Afraid doesn’t have to light the altar fire herself. As soon as she lays down her dread and her will on the altar, His fire consumed them. The stone of remembrance that was left was “larger and rougher-looking” than any of the previous stones because our will is such a formidable aspect of our lives to lay aside!

Sue: I admit I didn’t want to leave our rural home in Arizona and move back again to Colorado Springs! My anger and frustration so agitated me that Mike never knew when I was going to either erupt in unkind words or break down crying! Finally he told me, “You need to settle this with God!”

He was right. My will was battling my Father’s sovereign plan and disrupting the peace in our home. That will *had to go!* In brokenness I offered my will up to Him as a tattered, soiled sacrifice — and in His loving mercy, He accepted it and restored peace to my heart! Were my emotions immediately transformed into joyful exuberance? No, but the seed of joy was planted, and He gave me eyes to appreciate the home He’d prepared for us.

- Recall a recent “battle of wills” that you fought against someone significant in your life. Did you yield, compromise, or fight until you got your way?
- How would your home or workplace change if you chose to lay down your will *before* tension and apprehension arose?

44. Instead, he led her...; 45. I must tell you that this precipice...

The Shepherd makes Much-Afraid aware of the other mounts and precipices, none of which by their name sounds pleasant. Reviling, Hate, and Persecution — you can understand that other challenges are in store before the High Places are reached.

Rather than abhorrence that many more changes must be made in you, look at the upcoming precipices as places for you to unload unwanted baggage — baggage from your past that you don't have the strength to carry to the High Places. Nor should you want to. The higher you get, the lighter the load you'll want to carry to the top. As the Shepherd warned, the rest of your journey is going to be as steep or even steeper! Does that dismay you?

Sue: I may heartily dislike the change of relocation, but I sure do love the way our Lord opens up avenues of refreshment in the most unlikely places! Living amid almost 500,000 people could potentially leave solitude-loving me anxious. But our Father revealed to us wonderful hiking and biking trails only minutes from our home! These have been rainbow-lit paths to energize my heart in walking in His purposes and plans even here in the city!

- Okay, we are at the bottom of the precipice. Are you still carrying any baggage? Someone who hurt you? Unmet expectations? Betrayal? What will you do about it?

46. On the way here you have...; 47. When he had said this...; 48. Lastly, he put his hand...

Love is the crucial character quality for all else to be built upon in our lives. Anything we do without love is useless to our pilgrimage. The first step involved our will — accepting with joy the steadfast faithfulness of our Lord that supercedes all our circumstances.

Does that mean we'll avoid any or all injury or suffering as we walk With Jesus? No way! The Shepherd didn't whisk Much-Afraid and her companions up to the top of the precipice, and neither will He do that for you! But, neither will you be harmed *if* you "learn and steadfastly practice the second lesson in the Ascent of Love." Now He has your attention, right? Just what *is* this second lesson all about?

At this point the Shepherd is no longer laughing. He understands the solemnity of your determination to press on and bring Him pleasure. He recognizes before you will that there is injury in store for you if you persevere until the end. But how gentle and loving He is as He blesses you with His Spirit of comfort and grace — precious promises you can indeed rely on in your journey.

- Having progressed this far in your journey, how would you respond to those who say that Christians who are following Jesus won't suffer?
- What brings you the most comfort when you're in a severe trial? Prayer? Music? The Word? Companionship? Something else?

49. By this time the evening...; 50. With that he smiled...

How important it is to not become satisfied or complacent in your journey with the Shepherd. He warned Much-Afraid that her enemies would surely try to torment her *if she failed to move on* — and so will yours! But our Father's mercies are new every morning (Lamentations 3:22,23), and we need expectant, eager hearts to recognize and receive them!

Jesus admonishes us in Matthew 6:34 that each day has worries of its own, so don't fret or be anxious. Each day's trials *will*

come, but view them as opportunities to ensure that you are depending wholly on our Lord in trust-filled obedience. As the saying goes, you're not always fighting a battle but you're always in the war!

Perhaps, as with Much-Afraid, our Shepherd has provided you with a cave of refreshment for a period. Enjoy it! Times of refreshment, whether brief or extended, are given to replenish you for the next skirmish.

Be grateful, and don't waste this time worrying about what will happen next.

- When was the last time you enjoyed a "cave of refreshment", whether for a week or just an hour? What made it special? How did you feel afterward?