

Going to the High Places

Chapter 15 *The Floods*



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Introduction

In this chapter we discover the deepest and most significant truths of the journey thus far. *The Floods* presents a vibrant picture of the nature and cost of our sanctification — the process of being set apart in Jesus to be fully prepared for His plans and purposes.

The sanctification process is first of all very personal between you and your Lord. It is based on the strength of your trust-based love relationship with Him. The nature of His work in you has nothing to do with religious form and practice, and you can't evaluate your spiritual progress by comparing it to anyone else's.

As well, this chapter crystallizes the truth that our ability to grow in the character of Jesus requires each of us to take full ownership of our past trials and the suffering He has used to bring us into conformity to His nature.

The importance of an *individual's* path of sanctification is often lost in the crowd orientation of contemporary religious practice expressed corporately under a steeple. Our Lord died for each of us *personally*. His work in us is personal, not general. In the womb He knew each one of us as intimately as He knew the prophets Jeremiah and John.

Just as Jesus learned obedience through suffering (Hebrews 2:10), each of us who would follow Him must learn to accept the sufferings He has put in our path as instruments of refinement in His hands. Failure to willingly receive this makes us judges of His ways of character development.

We trust that as you go through this chapter, these concepts will all be made very real to you, so that you may proceed upward to the High Places in Jesus.

Chapter 15 *The Floods*

1. The path they followed...

Only our God is truly capable of keeping all of His promises. And His promises are not given lightly. It's important that in times of trial we recall the promises of which He's assured us in His Word. The apostle Paul

reminded the Philippians, "*For I am confident of this very thing, that He who **began** a good work in you will **perfect** it until the day of Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 1:6).

Our God gives promises so that we may have something tangible on which to anchor our hope when times of trial assail us. If you can't recall any of His promises at this point, or haven't made it your habit to drink daily from the fountain of His Word where you'll *find* these promises, then you'll discover that many of your trials are that much more painful to endure.

Because they had walked in mature trust for so much longer than had Much-Afraid, the companions were aware of what lay ahead for their stumbling charge. Yet they unfailingly exercised gentleness and tender care as they guided her along the mountain path.

If you have walked with Jesus for a while yourself, you may have forgotten what it was like to be a babe in Christ, full of desire to be with Him but awkward and unsure about how to walk in His steps. Don't give way to self-righteous pride or arrogant expectation that the weak or immature should unhesitatingly follow all that Scripture commands from the outset.

Recall how long it's taken *you* to press on in Jesus and follow through in what He tells you! Emulate Paul in his manner with the Thessalonian believers: "*We dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into His kingdom and glory*" (1 Thessalonians 1:11,12).

- How conscious are you of the truth that it is *God* at work in you to bring you into conformity to His Son Jesus? Or, are you more inclined that through your own choices, strength, and volition, *you* are changing yourself?
- Can you list at least three promises of God to you, both from Scripture and personal *rhema* that He's revealed to you to apply personally?

2. Toward evening they came...; 3. Once inside they noticed...

What do you think was the Shepherd's "secret mark" that the travelers had noticed on the cabin door? It certainly confirmed to them that they'd reached the refuge designated for their rest and refreshment!

Early followers of Jesus recognized their camouflaged gatherings through covert use of an "ichthus", a fish drawing symbolic of Jesus' miracles and His followers as fishers of men. (The Greek letters also stood for "Jesus Christ, God's Son.")

Many today display easily recognizable signs of Christianity such as bumper stickers and crosses. However, the sure sign that one is a follower of Jesus is the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Without Him, we can do nothing to either please God or to give Him glory. With Him, we are able to bear much fruit as we discern Father's will and carry it out.

The warm fire and refreshing repast indicated that the travelers had been expected. Are you ready at a moment's notice to welcome with warm heart the ones our Lord sends to your home? Your attitude says it all. Guests can feel either welcome or an intrusion, depending on your heart's response.

- When you encounter someone new, what signs indicate that you're encountering a fellow follower of Jesus?
- Would you describe your own brand of hospitality as obligatory or as welcoming? How do you demonstrate to your guests that their presence is more important to you than the meal you're providing?

4. How long she had slept...

You may not recognize sleeplessness as a divine appointment. Perhaps being awake during the night is more of an irritant or an indicator of worry on your part. But the

deep silence of the wee hours can be the perfect setting for uninterrupted conversation with our Father, a mini-vacation of spiritual refreshment as you respond to His Spirit.

Perhaps He'll respond with a song of praise in your heart, or place specific people before your mind's eye to intercede for, or remind you of promises answered and yet to be. At any rate, you have a response choice during wakeful periods. You can scramble through your medicine cabinet for sleep aids. You can grumble and toss. Or you can use that time to let your spirit catch up with His Spirit.

Much-Afraid discerned her marching orders from the Shepherd by heeding His voice, a voice to which she was well-accustomed. Think about that the next night you find yourself wide-eyed.

- Has it been part of your experience to be awakened to commune with our Lord? How do you normally respond to wakefulness at night?
- Are you willing to forsake sleep with an expectant heart when you're roused during the night?

5. "Much-Afraid," said the Voice...

Every one of us is born with the capacity for human love. The Newer Testament calls human love "filial", from the Greek *phileo*. That kind of love is the affection and friendship we share with one another, a companionable love that glues human relationships together.

But for followers of Jesus, His desire is that *agape* love replace human love as our reason to go on walking in Him. The only source of that sacrificial *agape* love is the Holy Spirit. When we live in that love, we begin to grow in spiritual fruit production: "*agape* love, joy, peace, patience, kindness,

goodness, faithfulness” (Galatians 5:22). The love that the Greatest Commandment calls for is this: “*You shall (agape) love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself*” (Luke 10:27). No part of you is exempt from the love that the Spirit prospers in those who press on in Jesus.

Your growth in *dependency on our Lord* and your growth in *agape love* are intricately connected in your pilgrimage. You can't grow in *agape* love unless you cultivate increasing dependency on our Lord.

For example, Jesus called His disciples His “friends”: “*Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you*” (John 15:13-15). As dear as friendship with our Lord is, it is incomplete without the *agape* love that puts obedient feet to our relationship with Him.

Peter progresses through this transition from filial-based friendship with our Lord into *agape* love in order to truly follow in His steps. After Jesus's resurrection we encounter this scene by the Sea of Galilee in John 21:15-17:

So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you (agape) love Me more than these?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love (phileo) You.” He said to him, “Tend My lambs.” He said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you (agape) love Me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love (phileo) You.” He said to him, “Shepherd My sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love (phileo) Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love (phileo)

You.” Jesus said to him, “Tend My sheep.

We know that Peter repented of his denial of Jesus after he heard the cock crow the third time. Now, at the lakeside, Jesus restores Peter and calls him to follow Jesus by adding *agape* love to his *filial* love. Our Lord knew it would take *agape* love in order for Peter to embrace the painful kind of death that the Master foretold.

All of us will encounter this same demand somewhere on our pilgrimage to salvation — to exchange our comfort zone of human companionship for the sacrificial heart of selfless servanthood that the Spirit matures. There is a place on the journey in which our human love falls short of the love our Lord requires. The type of love we're used to expressing pales in comparison to the vibrant, life-imparting love that reflects Jesus at work in us.

This is the crucial transition that Much-Afraid faces in this chapter. We can learn much from her choices, for they are the same ones each of us must make.

- Are you prepared to offer up as a Burnt Offering all your natural longings and desires as you trust that our Father knows what is best for your life? We realize this is a tough question, especially if you're not married and yearn for a life partner with whom to share the journey.

- Is there anyone in your life whom you love more than you love Jesus? Who?

6. Without waking the two beside her...

Anyone who leaves the Valley of their Strongholds must transition away from being *outcome-based*, that is, doing something to *gain* something. Any concern about where the journey is leading or how you will benefit from it only inhibits you from press-

ing on with confidence in the Shepherd. The journey calls for you to become **obedience-based**, that is, knowing what our Lord requires and doing it without hesitation or grumbling or fear.

When the Shepherd announces, “This is the appointed place,” Much-Afraid replies, “Yes, Lord, Behold me — I am thy handmaiden, I will do according to thy word.” *That* is an obedience-based answer. The apostle Peter continues his classroom lesson with the risen Lord in John 21:20-23:

*Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; the one who also had leaned back on His bosom at the supper and said, “Lord, who is the one who betrays You?” So Peter seeing him said to Jesus, “Lord, and **what about this man?**” Jesus said to him, “If I want him to remain until I come, **what is that to you?** You follow Me!” Therefore this saying went out among the brethren that that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but only, “If I want him to remain until I come, **what is that to you?**”*

Peter was well aware that the young apostle held a special place in Jesus’ heart, one that was reciprocated as evidenced by John’s Gospel narration. Learn from Peter: Don’t ever compare yourself to anyone else! Second, if you have truly died to concern about where our Lord is leading you, then in your inner being you can agree with Much-Afraid: “I will do according to thy word.”

- Do you frequently compare yourself to other Christians? If you do, does your comparison make you feel better or worse about your own spiritual maturity?
- Do you concentrate more on discerning what our Lord is commanding you, or on evaluating the outcome of where your obedience will lead you?

- Is one step enough for you to act on? Do you feel you need to justify your obedience when others question you about your journey?

7. **She did not lie down again...**

With a ready heart like the five wise virgins in Matthew 25:1-13, Much-Afraid stayed awake, prepared in spite of her fears to act when the time for obedience came. Those times when our Father is preparing you for His call to act can leave you exposed to temptations of slothfulness. But this is the time to be on guard. Close fellowship with others who are on the journey with you can be an important part of reminding yourself of that which you set out to do — to be transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

He is calling you to trust with absolute assurance that He is faithful to keep His promises, sovereign to orchestrate whatever is necessary for you to walk in His fullness, and loving enough to satisfy your longing with His presence.

There is a point on your journey when everything comes together. The Shepherd tells Much-Afraid, “Take now the promise that I gave you, and the natural love in your heart, and offer them for a burnt offering.” Whether it’s Much-Afraid, or Peter by the Sea of Galilee, or we who have left the Valley of our Strongholds, there comes a time when our human love and longing must cease to be our life’s priority.

Few ever accomplish this transformation because the heart tug to receive human love is so powerful. Only those who have prepared themselves with obedience-based motivation can put everything on the altar, trusting that our Lord is fully able to resurrect your dead hopes.

- Again, “Is *one step* sufficient enough for you to see and go forward? If not, what is holding you back?”

8. With the first glimmer of dawn...; 9. They rose immediately...

Sometimes it seems as though your life is so hectic and distracted that you're surrounded by clamor both inside and out. The waterfall ahead of Much-Afraid sounded thunderous but she did not shy away from it.

It's all too easy to get side-tracked from our Lord's best by giving in to the "next thing" that's struggling for your attention. Emergencies do happen, but trying to cram more into an already overloaded life leads to mental and emotional disintegration. Even physical destruction ensues from multi-tasking. Witness the phenomenal rise in car accidents due to distracted cell phone users.

Don't let the supposed urgent tyrannize you. Start your day in the calm, still presence of our Lord, even if you have to stay extra minutes in bed to avoid stirring a sharp-eared little one. If you're married, take a few minutes to pray and to determine together that day's priorities — and let go of the rest. If Jesus could confirm that each day has its own responsibilities and concerns, don't pile extra onto yourself.

The world system will try to tempt you away from recognizing the encounters that our Lord is setting before you for His purposes. Don't let that happen!

Finally, notice that before Much-Afraid and her companions set foot out the door, they took time for breakfast! You too need a nutritious start to fortify your body for the day ahead. If you expect your soul and spirit to be responsive to God, then feed the temple that houses them!

- What distractions gnaw at your sensitive irritation spots most often? What changes need to be made in your daily plan for your spirit to flourish rather than flounder?
- Do you neglect proper care of your body by poor exercise or eating habits? What changes

can you purpose to integrate into your life so that your whole testimony — body, soul, and spirit — reflect the character of Jesus growing you?

10. As the hours passed they continued to climb...; 11. They were running as though for their lives...

Our humanness would like to believe that as soon as we obey our Lord's commands and walk in His ways, everything will get better. Not necessarily so. Sometimes our lives get harder! As soon as Much-Afraid and her companions began to ascend the path the Shepherd had indicated, their way got steeper than ever before.

Mike: Sue and I are western transplants. In April of 2000 we conducted a 10-day seminar for the staff of an Indian mission school outside Phoenix. When we returned to Connecticut the mission's director invited us to move to their campus to consult with them about Hebraic principles and priorities.

We accepted his invitation and looked forward to being able to help the missionaries share the Hebraic foundations with the Native Americans. Two weeks later, as we closed the cargo door to the moving truck we'd rented, the director called. His invitation to us had been rescinded. "The missionaries here overruled me with a clause in our charter. They don't like your requirement that 'You can't minister to people whom you don't love.' They admit they don't even *like* the Indians they minister to, but consider that being *responsible teachers* is sufficient."

The director added, "Mike, I believe God is protecting you and Sue. I've submitted my resignation, and my wife and I are going to live among one of the tribes to share the Hebraic foundations with them." As we prayed standing next to the truck, Sue and I agreed that God indeed wanted us to move west. We sensed that God wanted us to stay with friends in Memphis and wait further direction, so we contacted people who

would intercede on our behalf.

When we arrived in Memphis we received three prophetic phone calls telling us that God wanted us to move to Flagstaff in northern Arizona. Two days later we drove into Flagstaff knowing no one. Months later, after our Lord had opened a door to work directly with Native Americans, our tribal friends told us, "If you'd gone to that mission, we we'd never have listened to you. Those people have destroyed so many of our children at their school."

One man in his 30's who had attended the mission school told me that he is the only male survivor of his graduating class. All the others had died from alcoholism, drug addiction and suicide. Evidently "responsible teaching without love" produced decidedly rotten fruit.

God delivered us as He has many times from getting involved with what we call "**entangling alliances**". These are relationships that would only taint the truths of what we were commanded to share, or would sidetrack us from fulfilling His purpose in or through us. You've probably encountered some of these alliances yourself during your journey to obey Jesus in love-grounded trust.

In the face of *total surrender*, the voices that would attempt to deter you flee. That must have been quite a sight for Much-Afraid: all her old nemeses — Fear, Bitterness, Resentment, Pride, and Self-Pity — scrambling away from perceived danger as she, in total obedience, kept on undeterred.

- Can you remember a time when God closed one door of apparent opportunity only to open a different one? How did you initially respond?
- Were you ever in a potentially dangerous situation in which you knew that our Lord was calling you to keep pressing on?

12. "What are we to do?" ...; 13. "No,"

said Much-Afraid ...; 14. Then the Voice spoke...

There was no way Much-Afraid was going to turn around. *Something* was compelling her to press forward. There comes a time on the journey when you find something deep inside compelling you. This is the same inner drive that Paul found, "*For the (agape) love of Christ compels us*" (2 Corinthians 5:14).

Mike: Both Sue and I found within ourselves this inner compulsion when we began to work among Native Americans. In their eyes, we as whites represented all that has ever hurt them. Wherever we traveled we received little or no facial affirmation through a smile. Because so many are ensnared by a stronghold of bitterness, they manifest a seething, begrudging attitude of passive aggression. Refusal to let you into their hearts or lives effectively blocks out your value as a human being.

But to our surprise we found we were madly in love with them no matter how they responded to us! Paul's words affirmed what our trust-based obedience had formed in us: "*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, what matters is trusting faithfulness expressing itself through (agape) love*" (Galatians 5:6).

Much-Afraid had matured greatly during the past few days of her journey. Her resolve was not based on either flighty expectation or unrealistic dreams. She had set her face like flint to press on in obedience no matter what.

Notice the *apparent* questioning of Sorrow and Suffering as they mention turning back. They already know the answer, but Much-Afraid needed to hear herself confirm the decision.

Jesus used a similar approach with His disciples in their encounters with the hungry crowds that had followed them to deserted areas around the Galilee. When He directed His men to feed them, they asked, "How?" He wanted them to realize that He alone is sufficient to meet every need of those who trust Him.

- Describe an incident in which you did turn back from the path on which the Lord was leading you. How did you feel at the time? Has the memory of that situation stirred any change in you?
- Are you able to look at every person, especially those who have hurt you, and see them as individuals whom Jesus loved from the cross? Can you as His follower have any less than the same love for them He had?

15. In the rocky wall beside them...; 16. Then the rains descended and floods came...

Fully trusting in our Shepherd seems pretty easy when our days are sunlit and tranquil. But what about when the gales of trial are whipping about you? If you choose to abide in trust in His faithful and powerful grip, the rains won't overcome you.

Your heart relationship with Jesus is seen most vividly when you're in the middle of everything falling apart around you. It's for good reason that our Lord is portrayed as a shepherd in both *Hinds' Feet* and in Psalm 23. Notice the wonderfully intimate interplay between the Shepherd and His sheep.

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows.

Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Because of the Shepherd's unchanging character and unfailing love, we need never give way to fear. Yet we can never experience true peace until we face something that would attempt to rob us of that peace, be it death or evil. The oil of our anointing comes right in the middle of what we could potentially fear.

It's when we have the possibility of fear that we find out what foundations our faith has been built upon. Frustration and fear are indicators that we are exercising a right God hasn't given us. Frustration and fear show us that we need to put something on the altar in order to have peace.

Much-Afraid and her companions have to stoop down to enter their cave of protection to experience serenity. As often as you choose to bow before our Lord on your knees to humbly share in His peaceful presence, you'll rest in the reality of His power to overcome your tumult.

Jesus offers us the parable of the wise and foolish builders in Matthew 7:24-27 to highlight this truth. The difference between the two builders is not what they *knew*, but what they trustingly put into *practice*.

It's often in the face of the temptation to lose our peace that our Lord will have us recount the cost of our journey, just as Much-Afraid is about to do.

- Are you in perfect peace or are you being plagued? If you have no peace, are you willing to place on God's altar whatever is robbing you?
- Reread Psalm 23, this time focusing on the Shepherd's role in your life. How does your perspective change as you shift from yourself to Him?

17. After they had been there...

Mike: When Sue and I arrived in Israel over 20 years ago I was mired in a deep pit of self-pity and despair. Our marriage had been drained through years of intense ministry. All that both of us could do was to place absolute trust in Jesus to heal us and to bring glory to Himself out of our needy lives.

I was constantly plagued by thoughts that God had always given me **“the short end of the stick”**. All I could recall was the hurt and betrayals of people over the years whom I had counted as close friends. It was on New Year’s Eve, 1993, that our host said to me, “Only you and the Holy Spirit can deal with this.” I wearily climbed the stairs to my bedroom to take up my issues with God. As soon as I closed the door it was as if He were waiting for me!

I knew immediately that He had been waiting for *years* for me to take up the sufferings and betrayals with Him, and to let go of my bitterness. I never said a word, but I underwent an altar experience in which I took ownership of all my past hurts, finally understanding that our Lord had been using these to develop His Son’s character in me.

By the time Sue came into the room I was changed. Even as I looked at her I was madly in love with her, but with an *agape* love I had never before experienced toward her. Since that time there have been other “memorial stones” we’ve picked up. These have become milestones in our sanctification process — reminders of something our Lord has changed in us.

- Do you have, as I once did, a secret grudge toward God that you are too fearful to bring before Him?
- Are you plagued by self-pity and bitterness toward others? If you are, take it up with God. He’s waiting for you!

18. She looked at the little pile in her lap...; 19. She put the stone back...

Much-Afraid is about to embark on a crucial step, the same one you need to take to truly be free to love with all the (*agape*) love the Holy Spirit would pour through you for others.

The willingness to endure suffering doesn’t come easily to any of us. Yet Jesus set the example for all who would walk in His steps: *“For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted”* (Hebrews 2:18). In essence, our Lord had to embrace suffering just as we must as an indispensable part of our Father’s plan: *“Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered”* (Hebrews 5:8).

Those painful situations from your past that you have not fully embraced are only going to hinder your usefulness to our Lord in the future. They will cause you to emotionally insure yourself against being fully obedient to Him, allowing yourself an emotional exit out of trusting Him during the tough times. Partial obedience is disobedience. Disobedience magnifies into rebellion and results in your failure to proceed on in your pilgrimage to the High Places.

Why is it important to recount our life journey and the crisis points in which we find our Shepherd to be so faithful? Your own “little pile of stones” can take the form of a personal journal or even your own insights and notes in the margin of your Bible. What is needful, though, is that you hold onto those proofs of His faithful work in you to so deeply alter your life.

As Much-Afraid recounted her first promise from the Shepherd, that of ultimately receiving strong hind’s feet, she also became aware of the *timing* factor. While she did not yet have them, she was at least that much closer to her objective to leap in the High Places!

Many of our spiritual ancestors, the Israelites, were eagerly awaiting their Redemption. And Paul encourages the Romans that their salvation is nearer now than when they first believed — and that was nearly 2000 years ago! Since our God cannot lie, His *process* of raising up sons and daughters must be high among His priorities, since we who trust are still waiting for Jesus' return. Yet the promise still stands, for all eternity.

- Recount when you have erected emotional walls to fend off any potential hurt.
- What will it take for you to tear down anything that hinders you from being vulnerable to the ones our Lord puts in your path to learn compassion and obedience?

20. Picking up the third stone...; 21. Taking the sixth...

Perhaps you've noticed the common denominator in each of the Shepherd's promises represented by Much-Afraid's stones of remembrance: hope. As Paul comfortingly relates to the Roman believers, "*Hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently*" (Romans 8:24b,25).

Each promise has to be encompassed by trust that the Speaker is truthful, and that His promises are true. Each promise is intently re-examined by Much-Afraid for veracity, and because of the nature of the Giver, each is held for safekeeping.

You may be finding yourself in the classroom depicted by these first stones: **perseverance, yieldedness, patient endurance, obedience**. The grinding apart of your pride and the burning away of your independence from your loving Lord is necessary if your testimony is to shine radiant before those

with whom you share. It's not enough in a pluralistic, anything-goes culture to be the bearer of just another "truth". Your words and your life need to represent the King of Kings in His love and His power. That's the kind of testimony that gets attention and perhaps draws some to reconsider their own lives.

Whether your words attract or repel, they should at the least *evoke a response!*

Mike: Our stay in Israel resulted in a dramatic life change. We had ostensibly gone to visit friends, and came back to the States with a prophetic message to restore our Father's children to the relationship He has always desired. He warned us there that not many would initially embrace that which He told us to share. But He also promised, "*When the Dark Days of Chastisement come on the United States, what you share will then bear fruit.*"

Rejection of the Hebraic foundations and verbal attacks against us have been the habitual pattern of our ministry. Many times all we could do is recount the promises our Lord has given us. One of these promises has found fulfillment many times over: "Share this message and I will provide for you." This He has done in the most marvelous and creative ways! Remembering His promises in times of deep distress has helped us climb out of despair into the light of grateful praise.

Next to our front door we've hung a plaque with this verse, "*Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?'*" Then I said, "*Here am I. Send me!*" (Isaiah 6:8). During our final days in Israel Sue and I went away on a two-day retreat for our Father to confirm what He wanted us to share back in the States.

I got up very early in the morning and went into a small chapel to pray. As I sat there surrounded by memories of past failures and shortcomings, I poured out my heart to our Lord. I felt totally unworthy to share the Hebraic foundations that He was restoring to His called-out ones.

The Holy Spirit directed me to a small

devotional book on the seat next to me. I opened it to the passage for that day; it was Isaiah 6:8. I knelt down and sobbed, "You do this to everyone you intend to use!" That plaque is a reminder from the Sender for the two of us to *keep on sharing*.

- How does our Lord help you get out of the pit of despair in your desperate hours?
- What particular lessons have you derived from the classrooms of perseverance, yield- edness, patient endurance, and obedience?

22. Then as she thought of his face...; 23. For a very long time...

The unalterable fact of *fulfillment* sur- rounds the promises of God in His Word. By now you realize that you can't allow circum- stances or fears to control your life decisions. Our Father's intervention is as powerful now as when He parted the Red Sea — and just as potent in overcoming seemingly impossible situations! He Who is well able to heal the most malignant cancer is just as capable of encompassing with profound serenity and peace the one whom He chooses to heal on the other side of eternity.

Sue: For years my very independent unbe- lieving father paid little heed to my testi- monies of our Lord's work in my life. He seemed to think that his self-sufficient life would go on as it had for years to come.

Then he developed a circulation problem and an oozing sore on his foot that kept him immobilized for over a year. During that time I returned to Connecticut to visit him, shar- ing as usual the work of my Lord and His offer of Lordship to those who humbly turn from their sins and come to Him for forgive- ness and reconciliation. This time he listened intently. "I guess I should think about that," he commented. Then he looked me in the

eye. "I really need to take action, don't I?" I agreed.

Four months later he ended his sojourn on earth. In prayer I asked my Lord for an indication that my dad had followed through. The phone rang. My sister related a story about my father a few weeks before his death. "Bill," said his doctor, "your sore seems to be healing. You're a lucky man!" "Luck nothing," replied my father, "it's God Who is healing me!"

Another phone call revealed that my notoriously stingy father had offered his grandson-in-law his new snowblower as a gift! And the morning of his memorial serv- ice, our Father highlighted for me Isaiah 58:8,9: "*Then your light will burst forth like the morning, your new skin will quickly grow over your wound...Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry, and He will say, "Here I am."*" In my spirit I knew that not only was my father's foot sore healed, but that he had indeed cried out and found healing in his spirit as well!

The moral of this tale: Keep on praying and keep on sharing. Our Lord is well able to bring about the events that will cause your loved on to encounter Him in a powerful way!

- How has our Lord made good out of a cir- cumstance in your life that seemed hopeless?
- Have you ever shared (or refrained from shar- ing) the Gospel with someone who died shortly thereafter? How did that person's passing impact you?

24. Then she dropped the icy-cold little pebble...; 25. Returning the tenth stone to the bag...

Mike: Following our months in Israel we arrived back in my mother's home in late March, 1994. On April 5th our spiritual father came to see us. Frank Murray had

been born in Jerusalem in 1908. His parents had gone there with many others, where some had died of disease. They had gone to intercede that God would restore the Israelites back to their land, fulfilling our Lord's promise to bring them back one last time. [See Chapter 13 of our book, *Restoring the Early Church*, for specific prophetic passages that pertain to restoration of the Jews to the Land.]

Sue and I had encountered only a few people in our lives who were as dedicated to our Lord as Frank was. We looked forward to his coming, often calling his visits "Jesus checks." Even before he arrived we'd find ourselves scrutinizing our devotion to our Lord to see if there were any areas of lukewarmness lurking. And when he left and hugged us, it was like getting a "well done" from God.

On this particular visit he conveyed a Spirit-prompted passage to encourage us in the ministry our Father had given us. Those two verses pretty well summed up our previous few years: *"Although the Lord has given you bread of privation and water of oppression, He, your Teacher, will no longer hide Himself, but your eyes will behold your Teacher. Your ears will hear a word behind you, 'This is the way, walk in it,' whenever you turn to the right or to the left"* (Isaiah 30:20,21).

The other passage that has so greatly strengthened us is Revelation 3:8: *"I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name."* Sometimes we have been so knocked down by the demonic assaults that have tried to hinder us from sharing this message that we've felt our faith is almost non-existent. But in the midst of all that battle we have not denied His Name or His Word. He truly has been all-sufficient!

That trust in our Lord has been tested often during the 20+ years that we've been sharing the Hebraic foundations. Habakkuk's words have been like an arrow pointing the way to the heart attitude we want to have:

Though the fig tree should not blossom
And there be no fruit on the vines,
Though the yield of the olive should fail
And the fields produce no food,
Though the flock should be cut off from the fold
And there be no cattle in the stalls,
**Yet I will exult in the LORD,
I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.**
(Habakkuk 3:17,18)

- Has our Lord called you to do something that is far beyond your own abilities to fulfill? What is it?
- What are the assaults you face as you keep on going? What encourages you to keep going?

26. Sorrow and her sister had been sitting silently...; 27. By this time, the rain had ceased...

Matthew 7:24-27 warns us in advance that our trust will be tested. Much-Afraid could have at any time tossed the whole pouch of stones out the cave entrance into the flooding water. But she chose to cling to her hope in the Shepherd through it all. By her decision her companions were able to rejoice in "relief and thankfulness". Her trust was indeed founded on the Rock!

We can tell you with confidence that one of the things that helps you during the time of testing is to take ownership of the stones of suffering you have gone through. See them as God's instruments in your sanctification. They are part of your priceless treasure, just as were the stones of remembrance in Much-Afraid's pouch. He's using them to conform you to the character of Jesus.

As the Lord has guided us in writing these study guide chapters, it hasn't been without painful self-examination! We've

had to wrestle with attitudes, confess irritation, and cry out to Him for help.

If we failed to respond to His prompting to “come clean”, we’d begin to insure ourselves against further hurt. In time our trust in the “Potter” to form us as He wills would wane. Once again Paul’s words penetrate below skin deep to the spiritual heart of the matter: “*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but [my trust] working through love*” (Galatians 5:6), and 1 Corinthians 13.

Every human being we meet deserves the same love of Jesus from us without any concern for our personal and emotional self-protection. We may get knocked down, but God through His Word and His promises strengthens us to stand in trust-based love again and again. In this way no icy hardness can form around our hearts as a barrier to hinder His love from pouring out.

- Have you embraced all of the painful sanctification stones from your past?
- Have you secretly insured yourself against any further hurt God may permit in your life? Are you emotionally guarded against further hurt by a spouse, children, close friends, anyone else?

28. From that place on...; 29. The higher they went, the more conscious she was that her strength was leaving her...

One truth is clear on our journey to salvation:

**The further along you travel,
the less you lean on your own strengths.**

It’s helpful to recall a basic principle of sanctification. Paul clearly understood this when he yielded to God’s will concerning the “thorn in his flesh”: “*And He has said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is*

perfected in weakness.’ Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Paul was accustomed to seeking his Lord and *hearing* from Him. That’s why, even if the message wasn’t one he might have hoped for, he could respond with a most glad heart. His God’s purposes were being fulfilled in and through his own frailties!

There are three steps to the process of sanctification, that is, God’s way of bringing us into conformity to the character of Jesus:

- **The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit;**
- **The Filling of the Holy Spirit;**
- **The Control of the Holy Spirit.**

1. **The Indwelling.** No transformation into Christ-likeness can occur without the indwelling Holy Spirit. We become indwelt when we embrace the true Gospel of the Covenant. Then our Father seals us with the Holy Spirit for the day of redemption. [For more on this, see *The Gospel of the Covenant is the Pilgrimage to Salvation* under Hebraic Articles on our website.]

2. **The Filling.** As we yield ourselves in obedience to the changes the Spirit desires to make in us, our soul, that is, our mind, will, and emotions, begins to be filled with His way of perceiving our lives. And with His filling comes His power.

3. **The Control.** As our soul becomes increasingly filled with the Spirit, our mind, will, and emotions come under His control. Our motivations and attitudes begin to respond as if the mind of Christ is ruling us. The more we come under the control of the Holy Spirit, the less we are like the world in motivation, attitude and response. In time, the world system doesn’t even know us.

Paul addresses the difference between spiritual life and natural man in 1 Corinthians 2:13,14:

Those things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.

But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

- Are you readily aware in your spiritual journey that it is our Lord Who is the “Refiner”, the “Potter”, and the “Baker”? There is no doubt that He intends to change you. How do you feel about this whole process?
- Summarize briefly the changes that the Spirit has made in you from your initial indwelling by the Spirit through to His control in your life. How has the nature of your relationship with others changed during this spiritual odyssey?

30. On the second day...; 31. Stooping down at the spring where it bubbled...; 32. There is a tree growing...; 33. Much-Afraid looked on the other side...; 34. Suffering stepped forward...

One aspect is often overlooked in the sanctification changes that the Holy Spirit makes in our Father’s children. We can look back and see the character changes He has made, but sometimes we don’t realize the greater dependency on Him that He has instilled in us. Dependency is connected to our increasing level of trust. And trust, along with our love, is what binds together our relationship with our Father.

Dependency shows that we understand how awesome, all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-loving our Father is. Sadly, for too many His method of suffering in order to accomplish His purpose leaves a bitter taste in their hearts. Far too many turn back in bitterness because they’ve erroneously been taught that everything ought

to go great for them after they put their trust in Jesus.

The truth is: Our Lord uses situations and people to *change* us. It’s far easier to pick up and embrace the stones of past situations in which we had to endure suffering than it is to embrace the *people* God has used, especially when betrayal may have been part of the suffering we endured. I can only repeat for you the precious counsel my friend gave me years ago: **“You can never walk in the fullness of Jesus, until you wash the feet of Judas.”**

The “Branch” that Much-Afraid cast into the bitter water represents Jesus. **NO ONE can heal the pain of past bitter experiences except Jesus — NO ONE!** It is only through forgiving those who hurt us that we can take ownership of that particular “sanctification stone.”

Only by crying out to Jesus for His power to heal our emotions can we truly be healed. All areas of our bitterness must come under control of the Holy Spirit if we are to find the freedom Jesus promises. That means no rationalization, no victimization, no blame, no denial.

Do you want to speed up the healing process? After you forgive from your heart the people who have hurt you, pray for our Lord to *bless* those individuals. Forgiveness only gets you back to zero out of “negative territory.” Blessing gets you into “positive territory.” The further you press on into positive territory through sincerely praying blessing for whoever hurt you, the harder it will be for you to be seduced back into that bitterness.

Note that the water Much-Afraid drinks doesn’t become sweet, only that the stinging, burning bitterness has gone. Your memories of past hurts will not become sweet to you, but the healing power of Jesus will *remove the sting* of them. The “curative properties” of forgiveness equip you to comfort others with the comfort you yourself have received from Him. (See 2 Corinthians 1:3-7)

- Have you applied the Branch of forgiveness and cried out to Jesus, praying blessing for those who have hurt you?
- List some tangible forms of blessing through which you can demonstrate that you've forgiven from your heart.

- In the next chapter a wonderful transformation occurs. Are you prepared to set aside human love and receive the love that only our Lord can give you? Before we get to the next chapter, is anything still hindering you?

35. After they had rested...

Much-Afraid's journey has not gotten easier per se. The path is even steeper than it had been, but her resolve to reach the appointed place and fulfill the Shepherd's command was strengthened.

So often in Scripture we see repeated the phrase, "on the third day." Not only did our Savior rise during that time frame, but all sorts of resolutions occurred throughout both testaments. Check out your concordance and marvel at the frequency!

Your own "third day" calls for you to keep pressing on with expectant urgency before your motivation and purpose get side-tracked. For the joy set before Him, Jesus pressed on to victory. Keep going!

You Must Turn **Bitterness** to Forgiveness and **Blessing**

The Biblical Mandate

I tell you who hear Me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you" (Luke 6:27,28).

Lord Jesus *commands* you to forgive from your heart without exception: to belong to Jesus *is* to forgive. Forgiveness gets you out of negative territory on the chart to '0.' Your emotional healing through Jesus occurs as you enter positive territory of Blessing through prayer for and good deeds toward the one who has hurt you. The further a forgiving person goes into positive territory, the less likely that bitterness will return.

