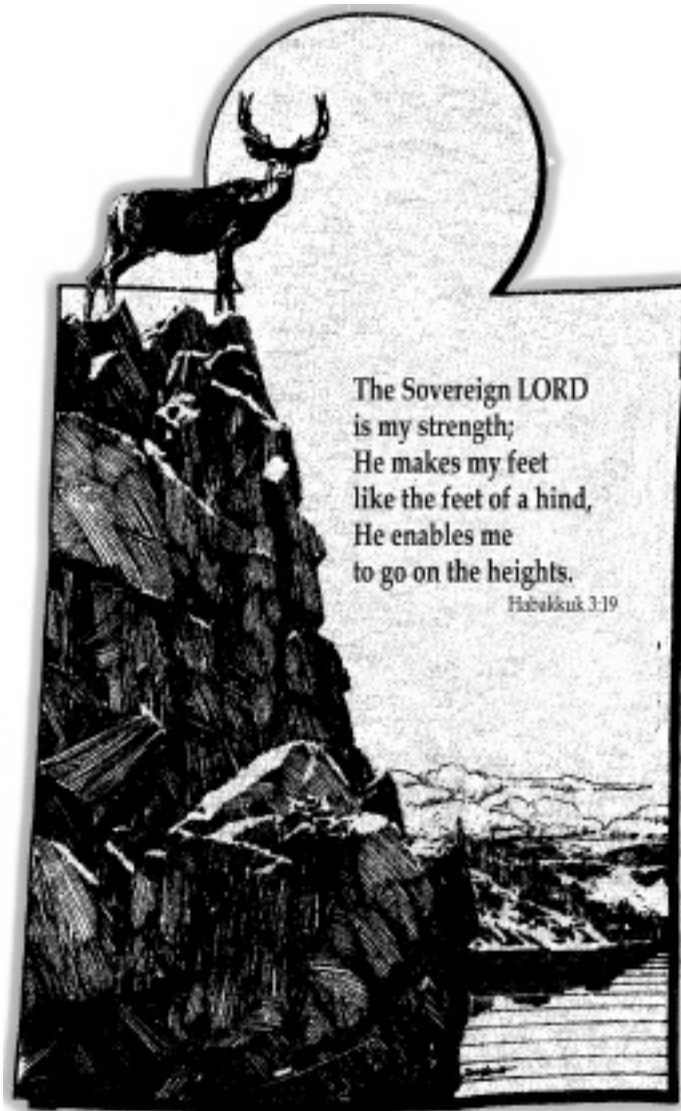


Going to the High Places

21. Reviewing The Pilgrimage To Hinds' Feet



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Introduction

Recently we've been encouraging Christians we meet to prayerfully read (or reread) *Hinds' Feet On High Places* in order to understand their need to view their lives as a *pilgrimage of sanctification*. In our discussions with them we realized that we've been dramatically changed ourselves during the ten years since we wrote the 20 lessons of our study guide for the book, "Going To The High Places" (free at our website). So we thought we'd share with you some of the insights we've gained.

We first became aware of Hannah Hurnard's allegory in 1977 and are convinced it's a prophetic book describing the life-transforming pilgrimage everyone must go through *if* they're to experience the *love of Jesus* and to live with Him as *LORD of their lives*. Our Shepherd may use different circumstances and events in His followers' lives, but the *character qualities* He wants to develop within them are all the same.

As we wrote in our Hebraic Article, *The Gospel of the Covenant Is the Pilgrimage to Salvation*, the first followers of our Lord Jesus understood the authentic Gospel to be a pilgrimage to their salvation for followers of Jesus who by His grace endure to the end. The concept of *journey and pilgrimage* is deeply embedded within the Hebraic mind and throughout the Scriptures as well. Abraham, the father of all who follow our Lord Jesus (Romans 4:16; Galatians 3:7), was himself a nomad. His faith and obedience are a foundational pattern for the Hebraic Restoration.

All who follow Jesus as their Lord are called to live as strangers here on earth (Hebrews 11:13-16; 1Peter 1:17,21). We are still journeying toward our eternal home. Enroute our Lord desires through His indwelling Spirit to mold our charac-

ter to be like His. That ongoing process is *sanctification*. Yet sadly, so many in western Christendom have no awareness of the biblical concept of pilgrimage. And in this age of easy believism and the lie of universal salvation for all "good people" no matter what their religion, our Lord's unconditional requirement that we be transformed into His likeness has been silenced.

The truth from our Lord's perspective is that the moment you were born again, the Shepherd found you as with Much-Afraid in *Hinds' Feet*, in the Valley of your Strongholds imprisoned by rejection, bitterness, fear and insecurity, or whatever. But that isn't where our Lord and Shepherd wants you to *remain*. He changes His followers as they yield to His Spirit's work in them!

"Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory because we are being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, Who is the Spirit" (2Corinthians 3:17,18).

Hinds' Feet On High Places describes the key Christ-like character changes we each must go through in our pilgrimage of sanctification. Again, the events each of us face during our life journey may be different, but the *Christ-like character qualities* we must each acquire are the same. This is why we can mutually support each other on our journey out of our particular "Valleys."

As with Much-Afraid who is progressively transformed *during* her pilgrimage to the High Places, we too need to fasten ourselves around our Lord's plan for our own pilgrimage of being progressively changed into His character. If you haven't done so recently we encourage you and

those close to you in the faith to reread *Hinds' Feet On High Places* again. Why?

1. If you've been to the High Places even once and have experienced the *love* of our Lord for you, you must overhaul your previous perceptions (your toxic memories) of the past events and hurts you've undergone. If these aren't changed based on the love of Jesus that you're experiencing, you're imprisoned by your *past view* of people and events from the Valley of your Strongholds. [For more on toxic memories and how they are healed see: Lifebyte 73. *Stop Toxic Thoughts—Replace Toxic Memories*; The Way of the Lord, Lessons 33 & 34, *The Lordship of Jesus: Mutually Becoming More Like Him*; Teaching E-mail 72. *Do You Need A Booster?*].

If you've been to the "High Places" and have experienced the love of your Lord in and through you, you also need to ask His Spirit within to show you how He used various people and events in your life to help you become more like Jesus. Again, if you don't allow His Spirit to revamp your toxic memories, you'll hold resentment and bitterness toward the very people He used in His transformation process. You'll also limit the Lordship of Jesus in your life, fearing what He may tell you to do next.

2. If you've never left the Valley of your Strongholds, or have fallen back into its old ways and patterns of response, you need to review what's at stake if you stay there. Neither sanctification nor salvation is found in the Valley, even if everyone you know is locked there in spiritual bondage with you!

Your journey and its purpose are wonderfully captured in Hebrews 13:20,21:

"May the God of peace, Who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing His will, and may He work in us what is pleasing to Him, through

Jesus Christ, to Whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Hebrews 13:20,21).

Our Hebraic Article, *The Gospel of the Covenant Is the Pilgrimage to [Your] Salvation*, is difficult to wrap yourself around if you can't feel the importance of *pilgrimage* and your need to be *transformed*. The Shepherd's exhortation to Much-Afraid to follow Him to the High Places must be embraced by all who belong to Him. Neither salvation nor becoming more like Him is found in the Valley of your Strongholds.

Consider the pattern of your life journey from the Shepherd's viewpoint:

1. Leaving the Valley of your Strongholds may be compared to the deliverance you receive through the Name of Jesus. Your trust in His Name alone as you renounce the unclean spirits frees you from demonic agitation and influence in your mind, will and emotions.
2. The journey from the Valley of your Strongholds to the High Places and the regeneration that takes place in your soul (your mind, will and emotions) along the way is *your transformation* from the toxic memories which the demons produced into Christ-like character qualities out of which you think, speak, and act.
3. As with Much-Afraid, "Sorrow" and "Suffering" are your close companions along the way. They are the people who care enough about you to confront your demonically-induced toxic memories. These un-Christ-like motives have most likely been with you a long time, wrapped like tentacles around your identity. If you're like most people, you get defensive when someone confronts you about your toxic memories and motives because they've been such a part of you.
But in order to take on the love of your Lord and emanate from that vantage point, you'll need to suffer the loss of the identity

you had while in the Valley of your Strongholds. You'll need others who care enough to 'sorrow' and 'suffer' with you as your unChrist-like motivations are confronted by them. And, only Jesus can heal these!

A warning to consider:

Over the years thousands have been freed of demonic strongholds as they've used our workbook *Demolishing Strongholds*. But many have continued to maintain the same relational commitment to people who refuse to be free themselves. For example, we cited in our workbook that when we passed out the *List of Strongholds* within a congregation, almost everyone there was plagued by the *same prevalent strongholds*. When the freed tried to continue fellowshiping with those who refused to be free, the freed eventually found themselves ensnared by the same demonic strongholds all over again.

Rather than leaving the Valley behind, those who became free just *moved around* the Valley of their Strongholds. And when they tried to help others in the Valley, they were like a prisoner who's gained freedom from his cell but not from the prison. Many ministries today in Christendom parallel that image—people still imprisoned talk through the bars to people within cells. Please realize this: Unless you're transformed *outside* the Valley of your Strongholds, you'll never truly be free. And because of that, your life and testimonies offer no real hope to others!

“One who puts on his armor should not boast like one who takes it off”
(1Kings 20:11).

An essential point is made in this verse, one that separates the **opinionated**—those who live in the Valley and have yet to fight the battles—from the **convicted**—those who've pressed on in

obedient trust and made the journey to the High Places. It has to do with the experience that's gained through paying the cost of sanctification. On her journey to the High Places, each leg of the pathway for Much-Afraid was chosen by the Shepherd. But she had to overcome her own *sin nature and rationale* in order to keep going. Because she chose to trust the Shepherd and follow His directives, an internal transformation took place through each difficulty she experienced.

In Chapter 19, “High Places,” Much-Afraid has been transformed into Grace and Glory. She realizes something few in the Valley of their Strongholds can grasp:

“...truth cannot be understood from books alone or by any written words, but only by personal growth and development in understanding, and that things written even in the Book of Books can be astonishingly misunderstood while one still lives on the low levels of spiritual experience...”

Personal growth and ongoing development to become more like the Shepherd can only come when a person has chosen to leave the “Valley of Who They Were” and to pay whatever the cost *until they love* with their Lord's heart motive. The fruit: they will unreservedly serve Him because of that love.

In our June 4, 2014 Prophetic Insight, *Do You Live in La La Land?*, we discussed the difference between being *convicted* and being *opinionated*. We'd like to review that with a small adaptation focused on the journey to the High Places.

The difference between **opinion** and **conviction** is this: with *conviction* you've willingly paid the cost, whether relationally or materially or in ongoing death to self, to become what the Shepherd wants to make of you. On your pilgrimage out of the Valley of

your Strongholds the Shepherd has tested you, solidifying your conviction. By the time you arrive at the Pyramid [see Chapter 6, “Detour through the Desert”], you’re beginning to understand that the Shepherd intends to *change your character*—your heartfelt motives to be like His own.

“I bring My people into Egypt that they, too, may be threshed and ground into finest powder and may become bread corn for the use of others... no one threshes it forever; only until the bruised and broken grain is ready for its highest use.”

It’s *after* you’ve been on the Potter’s wheel or have had the dross removed or have been ground into the finest flour that, like the little flower outside the Pyramid, you too can proclaim with conviction, **“Behold me! My name is Acceptance-with-Joy.”** You joyously embrace all that your Lord allowed to happen to you along the way and everything to which the path led you! Rather than trying to evade those refining experiences you lay down your will on the altar and say, “Behold me! I am Acceptance-with-Joy.”

You can be sure that the path and events in your life which the Lord has chosen in order to change you are *not* going to be like anyone else’s. But *your specific journey* is the one He knows is exactly what you need to become like Him:

“Always go forward along the path of obedience as far as you know it until I intervene, even if it seems to be leading you where you fear I could never mean you to go.”

Sad to say, most preaching and teaching is **man-contrived, palatable-to-the-self-will opinions**. It’s “Valley talk!” The words have cost the speaker nothing to say them, and the listener only develops *opinions* in hearing them. Therefore peo-

ple remain comfortable and unchallenged in the Valley of their Strongholds.

The preacher or teacher has *never been tested*. What they share emanates from their head knowledge rather than being sifted through the *love of Jesus*, which comes through sanctification. If you belong to Jesus as LORD then you need *transformation*, not the complacency of hearing Valley talk. Take the Shepherd’s words to heart:

“Whenever you are willing to obey Me, and to follow the path of My choice, you will always be able to hear and recognize My voice, and when you hear it you must always obey. Remember also that it is always safe to obey My voice, even if it seems to call you to paths which look impossible or even crazy.”

Bearing-the-Cost— Having A Forgiving Heart

“For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins” (Matthew 6:14,15).

On her journey to the High Places Much-Afraid encountered another flower, “Bearing-the-Cost,” also known as “Forgiveness.” Our Shepherd knows that people will hurt you, let you down, and betray you. He also knows who they are and what they did to you. BUT we who want to experience *the love* of our Lord Jesus must bear all that He allowed others to do to us and *to forgive* with no trace of bitterness. It’s then that we can become “Bearing-with-Love” and receive our Lord’s power to change the pain of past wrongs into wonderful testimonies of deliverance and transformation.

You must become like Joseph, who'd been betrayed by his brothers but could see how God used his suffering: "*You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives*" (Genesis 50:20). For each of us our Lord has a grander plan for our past hurts than our toxic memories can ever let us perceive.

As did Much-Afraid, each of us who earnestly desires to experience our Lord's love must come to a depth of humility in which we hold NO record of wrongs against anyone. In His sovereignty and foreknowledge our Lord knew the hurts you'd receive at the hands of others. But when you refuse to forgive them and replace your past bitterness with blessing them (Luke 6:28), you cut off all further progress on your journey of transformation. In fact, if you don't Bear-the-Cost and forgive from your heart, you will return to the Valley of your Strongholds.

Let's see what life is like for those who *don't* forgive and instead choose to remain in or return to the Valley. They abound within Christendom today:

Many avoid any responsibility to forgive from their heart by using the mantra, "I was *abused.*" The word "abused" removes any sense of need to forgive. It also closes any door of inquiry as to any wrong that individual did themselves especially within a marriage, *and* conceals a lot of other information that most Christians refuse to probe into.

If you do ask the "abused" person how many of his or her Christian family, friends and/or congregation prayed and/or fasted with them over their situation, you're either confronted with silence or with an uncomfortable response of "none."

We've puzzled over why the "abused"

person and those who could have helped never fervently sought the Lord for His perspective and remedy. We've come to realize that most Christians don't ask that question because once the "I was abused" buzzword is used, all other investigation ceases. Keep this in mind whenever you're only hearing one side of the story: "*The first to present his case seems right, till another comes forward and questions him*" (Proverbs 18:17).

A lesson to draw from this: Don't let the "abused" person share gory details. We're warned, "*The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a man's inmost parts*" (Proverbs 26:22). Gossip, as with slander, lets someone share one-sided negative information about another who isn't present. *You* sin by listening.

All too often as we've tried to help the "abused" see their need to *forgive and bless* their offender, it's like trying to stop a freight train. They've repeated their tale of woe to so many Christians that they believe their own version too much to allow themselves to change. And compounding their bondage in the Valley are clergy. For example, if you ask most clergy about the divorces in their congregation, you'll find that *none of these leaders* counseled a couple with marital discord to ask the entire faith community to pray and fast on their behalf. Only people who've been to the High Places have the confidence to call upon the Shepherd for deliverance and healing.

One more time:

If you've been to the High Places and can feel the love of our Lord in you and yet are carrying past hurts by what others have done in the past, you need to alter your toxic memories by *forgiving* those who initiated their formation and *praying* for God's blessing on them. This is especially true concerning ei-

ther or both of your parents. You must recognize *how sovereign* He has been in allowing ALL your past hurts so that He might Father you in His mercy and love in Christ. The pain of your toxic memories can begin to heal when you understand how *out of His vast love* He was using painful situations to transform you to be more like His Son.

“Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved” (Matthew 24:12,13).

“You have persevered and have endured hardships for My Name, and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love” (Revelation 2:3,4).

We hope that you'll press on in the Lord until you Bear-His-Love toward everyone. His Love is nothing like human love. In the ever-increasing darkness that's encroaching on this nation, you're going to need all the Love our Lord can impart to you. That's why you must get yourself to the High Places at least one or more times while you still have opportunity.

Acceptance-with-Joy and *Bearing-the-Cost* need to be your heart motive so that by His grace you truly are *Bearing-with-Love*.

Keep this in mind as you help one another both during and after the journey: If you've experienced the love of Jesus and it has motivated your grateful service to Him, don't let your love grow cold. Now more than ever we need to hold tight to the undergirding hands of Jesus and mutually encourage each other to not respond with self-preservational obligatory “cold” love. ***“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 3:13).

“If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me” (Luke 9:23).

Hinds' Feet On High Places also reveals a pivotal pattern in becoming a vessel fit for loving service to our Lord Jesus:

You must appraise and own the cost of the choices you make in life, especially if you choose to follow Jesus as LORD of your life. It's those painful choices you make, those which are usually opposite what your *sin nature* and *rationale* would tell you, that powerfully and effectively encourage others to make the journey to the High Places.

With each choice you make, whenever you overcome your human resistance, our Lord gives you the grace to press onward. That experience of obedient trust gives you a resounding testimony about Him and His faithfulness whenever anyone calls on Him. And be sure to let yourself set aside any and all sense of failure or regret over shortcomings you've had along the way on your journey. Because of His foreknowledge about you and His full forgiveness as you confess and repent, you can never fail your Lord.

“Don't you know that I never think of you as you are now but as you will be when I have brought you to the Kingdom of Love and washed you from all the stains and defilements of the journey? If I come along behind you and notice that you are finding the way especially difficult, and are suffering slips and falls, it only makes Me think of what you will be like when you are with Me...on the High Places.”

All that you may have had under your control was whether you made the journey harder on yourself by even listening to the voices of your sin nature and rationale. With our Lord's empowered

Love, don't allow yourself to *judge others* by who they are or were. Rather, envision them through what our Lord can change them into. Don't ever consider another person to be harder for our Lord to reach than you were!

“For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard”
(Acts 4:20).

When you've been the High Places you've learned to:

- Call upon your LORD more readily!
- Trust your LORD more completely!
- Love your LORD more deeply!
- Serve your Lord unreservedly!

Remember that before Much-Afraid became Grace and Glory she was driven by a “longing to be loved.” When she became Grace and Glory on the High Places, a wonderful thing happened for her, something each of us who belongs to our Lord must also undergo:

“Longing-to-be-loved... That was the natural human love which I tore out from your heart... so that the real Love could grow there alone and fill your whole heart.”

If you've been to even the lowest of the High Places once, you have your Lord's Love to want to help those in the Valley. With your new Love-based freedom you can now help those in prison! The desire to want to help them at all costs is how you truly know you've been changed. Grace and Glory describes the way those who've been *convicted and changed* by their pilgrimage to the High Places are vastly different than those who have *only opinions* in the Valley:

“I have noticed that when people are brought into sorrow and suffering, or loss, or humiliation, or grief, or into some place of great need, they sometimes become ready

to know the Shepherd and to seek His help... Their very misery and loneliness and sorrow will make them more willing to listen to news of Your grace and Your desire to help them... We will go to them and speak to them to show what You have done for us and what You are willing and able to do for them.”

Yet those who've been to the High Places and can *love without being loved in return* MUST tell others of what our Lord Jesus can do for them, even if they find themselves misunderstood!

Telling others what our Lord Jesus has done to transform you gives people more hope than all the verses you can spout at them. Many of the people who never left the Valley can readily quote the Bible. But those who've been to the High Places have accepted-with-joy and borne-the-cost of their ongoing sanctification. Their words hold out hope for others because they *bear-them-with-Love*.

When you've been “down into Egypt” at least once and endured the grinding stones, the potter's wheel, and the furnace, you know deep within yourself that with that acceptance a gulf has opened between you and your *past* life and your *past* self. It's a gulf that can never be closed because *His* Love is now *your* Love. Others need what you have!

From the heights we leap and flow
To the valleys down below,
Sweetest urge and sweetest will.
To go lower, lower still.