



Psalms 78:2-4

I will open my mouth in a parable, I will utter dark sayings of old... We will not conceal them.

Parables Bookshelf - Series 1.12.1

This issue of PARABLES BOOKSHELF introduces the series *Living Epistles*.

I have often been encouraged by reading of the lives of men and women who placed their hope and trust in God. In an hour when faith is glaringly absent among most of the church, I have often sought encouragement in reading about the lives of Christians who lived at other times, and in other places.

When I speak of the church lacking faith, I am not speaking of the belief that Christ's death and resurrection has delivered them from sin, though most do not understand what Christ

actually purchased for them. Rather, I am speaking about a daily, practical faith that is able to hear God speak to them, to follow where He leads, and rest in His care.

Most Christians know very little of a practical faith. When they are sick they run to the doctor. When they have a financial need they run to the bank. There is a habit of turning to the world and the arm of the flesh for every event of life.

Where are the saints who will first turn to God in a time of need or decision? Where are those who will unreservedly cast their lives

into Yahweh's hands when He directs them to trust them in some matter?

This is the type of faith that is needed so desperately today. The world will only recognize our faith as it is demonstrated in the practical matters of daily living. The world will judge us by our lives. They are not moved by our confession.

Are there any pressing needs in your life at this time? What are you doing about them that any lost man would not do? Are you seeking a worldly solution, or are you looking to God?

Food for Thought

"Faith is not a storm cellar to which men and women can flee for refuge from the storms of life. It is, instead, an inner force that gives them the strength to face those storms and their consequences with serenity of spirit."

Sam J. Ervin, Jr.

"When God comes down, He removes the immovable difficulties. When God comes down, the impossible becomes reality. God moves on behalf of the one who waits." - Anonymous

Scripture Memory

Luke 17:6

And the Lord said, "If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea'; and it would obey you."

Parables Newsletter

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Living Epistles

Living Epistles - Part One

The days ahead will test the faith of God's people. Only a remnant will be willing to follow wherever Yahweh would lead them, casting their entire lives over into His care. This "little flock" will be tested as they look to God for protection, shelter, food, health, and every other necessary thing.

I have found that reading the testimonies of other saints who have followed God into difficulties and found Him faithful does much to bolster my faith. I began reading such testimonies in my late teens and early twenties, and I am certain that the seed that was planted bore fruit to my benefit when years later I found God calling me to follow Him in ways that to me seemed extraordinary.

I want to share with you the witness of some saints of God who looked to their Father for very practical matters, as well as very pressing needs. May their testimonies strengthen your faith that you might be willing to cast all your cares upon God, knowing with full assurance that He cares for you.

Watchman Nee



Watchman Nee was seventeen years old when he became a Christian. He was a citizen of mainland China, and the year of his salvation was 1920. He began writing and teaching almost immediately. For about thirty years he served freely as a minister to the Chinese church, and he made trips abroad, visiting with believers in England and elsewhere. In 1952 he was imprisoned by the Communist government of China because of his Christian beliefs and teaching, and he remained in prison until his death in 1972.

The following testimony is taken from the book *Watchman Nee* as written by Witness Lee.

LIVING BY FAITH

From the very beginning, Watchman Nee realized fully that he should live by faith, not only for his living, but also for the Lord's work. Thus he learned to trust in the Lord for all his needs. This forced him to pray much, to consecrate himself to the Lord absolutely, to thoroughly deal with the Lord, and to obey the Lord in everything. In order to trust God in a living and practical way, he needed to keep his conscience free of offense. He would often say that a hole in our conscience would cause our faith to leak out.

Living by faith kept him in the Lord's will. When living and working by our own means, we do not need to be restricted and limited by the Lord's will. We can do whatever we like, whenever we like, without needing to seek the Lord's will or to wait for His guidance. But to live by faith requires us to be restricted to the Lord's will; otherwise, when we pray in faith He will not answer. He will never support us and supply our need in anything we are doing according to our own preference. Through living by faith, Watchman Nee was preserved from being distracted by the outward appearance of the work. What he cared for was the Lord's will, not a booming work. His desire was to live by a faith that God would honor. He knew

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that if he performed any work which was not done in life and according to God's will, God would never respond to his faith. For this reason, both his personal life and his work were continually under restriction.

Down through the years, he continually exercised himself to live such a life of faith. In China he pioneered such a life. He became a strong example for all his close associates who had been called by the Lord to live and work for Him by faith...

WATCHMAN NEE'S PERSONAL TESTIMONY
GIVEN AT KULANGSU, FUKIEN,
OCTOBER 20, 1936

Matters concerning Money

The matter of money can be either a small or a big problem. When I began to serve the Lord, I was somewhat anxious about the question of my livelihood. Had I been a preacher in a denomination, I would have been on a large monthly salary. But since I was to walk in the Lord's way, I would only rely upon Him to support me; I could not depend upon a monthly salary. In the years 1921 and 1922, very few preachers in China lived in sole reliance on the Lord. It was difficult to find even two or three; the great majority lived on salary. At that time many preachers were not bold enough to devote their entire time to serving the Lord; they felt that if they were not receiving a regular salary, they would not know how to face a situation in which they had nothing to live on. I also had such thoughts. In China today [1936] there are approximately fifty brothers and sisters in fellowship with us who live by relying solely on the Lord. Such a situation is more common now than it was in 1922. Brothers and sisters in various places today also care for the workers more than before. I think that after ten years or so, brothers and sisters will show even greater concern for the need of the servants of the Lord. But

it was not very common ten years ago.

Declaring to My Parents My Desire to Live by Faith

I have pointed out in a previous testimony that after I was saved I continued to study in school and at the same time work for the Lord. One evening I spoke with my father concerning the matter of receiving financial assistance. I said, "After praying for several days, I feel that I must tell you that I will no longer spend your money. I appreciate that you have spent so much on me in accord with your sense of fatherly responsibility. But you will expect me to earn money in the future and support you in return, and I must tell you beforehand that since I am going to be a preacher, I will not be able to repay you in the future nor pay you interest. Even though I have not completed my studies, I wish to learn to depend solely upon God."

The matter of money can be either a small or a big problem.

When I said this, my father thought I was joking. However, from then on, when my mother would occasionally give me five or ten dollars, she would write on the envelope: "To Brother Nee To-sheng." She was not giving me money as a mother.

After I had expressed myself thus to my father, the devil came to tempt me by saying, "Such an act is very dangerous. Suppose one day you are unable to maintain your living and you again approach your father for money. Won't that be disgraceful? You have spoken to your father too soon; you should have waited until there was more progress in your work, until many people had been saved and you had many friends, before you began to live a life of faith." But thank the Lord, ever since I expressed my decision to discontinue receiving my father's support, I have

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never asked him for money.

Looking to God for Sustenance while Working

To the best of my knowledge, Sister Dora Yu was the only preacher at that time who did not receive a salary and who depended wholly upon God for her living. She was my spiritual elder sister, and

*If you cannot live by
faith, you cannot
work for Me.*

we knew each other very well. She had many friends, Chinese and foreign, and the field of her work was very wide since she preached everywhere. But my condi-

tion was just the opposite; few cared for me, so I found it rather difficult. Yet when I looked to the Lord, He said to me, "If you cannot live by faith, you cannot work for Me." I knew that I needed living work and living faith to serve a living God.

When once I found that there was only about ten dollars in my wallet, which before long would be fully spent, I suddenly recalled the widow of Zarephath, who had only a handful of meal in the barrel and a little oil in the cruse (1 Kings 17:12). There were not two handfuls of meal. I did not know by what means God sustained her, but I knew He had the means.

In 1921 two co-workers and I went to a place in Fukien province to preach, intending to go from there to another place. In my pocket were only four dollars, an insufficient amount for three bus tickets. But, thank the Lord, a brother gave us three tickets.

Again, at Kulangsu, in the south of Fukien province, my money was stolen from my pocket, so that I had no traveling expenses to return home. We were then staying in someone's house and preached once a day in a small chapel. We fin-

ished and were ready to leave. My two co-workers had money to return home, but mine had been stolen. (At that time each of us was spending his own money.) They made the decision to leave on the following day. When I heard this I was embarrassed, but I was not willing to borrow money from them. That evening I prayed to God, beseeching Him to provide the needed money for traveling expenses. Nobody knew this. That afternoon some people had come to speak with me about the Word, but I was in no mood to do so. At that time the devil came to tempt me and shake my faith, but I was firm in believing that God would not let me down.

I was then merely a youth, just embarking on serving the Lord by faith; I had not yet learned the lesson of living by faith. I continued praying to God that evening, thinking that perhaps I had done something wrong. The devil said, "You could ask the co-workers to buy your ticket, then repay them when you reach the provincial capital." I did not accept this suggestion and continued looking to God. When the time came for us to leave, there was still no money in hand. I packed my luggage as usual and hired a rickshaw. At that moment, I recalled the story of a brother who had no train ticket when the train was about to leave, but at that very instant, God ordered someone to give him a ticket.

We were all ready and boarded the rickshaws, of which there were three. I took the last one. When the rickshaw had been pulled about forty yards, an old man in a long gown came from behind shouting, "Mr. Nee, please stop!" I ordered the rickshaw boy to halt. After handing me a parcel of food as well as an envelope, the old man departed. I was then so grateful for God's arrangement that my eyes were filled with tears. When I opened the envelope, I found four dollars inside, just sufficient for a bus ticket. The devil kept speaking to me, "Don't you see how dangerous it is?" I replied, "I was indeed a little anxious about it, but it is by no means dangerous, for God has supplied my need in time." After arriving in

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Amoy, another brother gave me a return ticket.

In 1923 Brother Weigh Kwang-hsi invited me to preach in Kien-ou in the north of Fukien province. I had only about fifteen dollars in my pocket, one-third of the traveling expenses. I decided to leave on Friday evening and continued my prayer on Wednesday and Thursday. The money, however, did not come in. I prayed again Friday morning. Not only was no money forthcoming, but also I had a feeling within that I should give five dollars to a certain co-worker. I recalled the Lord's words: "Give, and it will be given to you." I had not been a money lover, but on that day I really loved money and found it extremely difficult to give. I prayed to the Lord again, "O Lord, if You really want me to give away five dollars, I will," but I was still rather unwilling inwardly. I was deceived by Satan into thinking that after praying I would not have to give away the five dollars. That was the only time in my life that I shed tears over money. Eventually, I obeyed the Lord and gave the five dollars to that co-worker. After the money was given, I was filled with heavenly joy. When the co-worker asked why I gave him the money, I said, "You need not ask; you will know later."

Friday evening I prepared to begin my journey. I said to God, "Fifteen dollars was already insufficient, and You wanted me to give away five dollars. Won't the sum be even more inadequate? Now I don't know how to pray." I made up my mind to go first to Shui-Kow by steamer and then to Kien-ou by a small wooden boat. I spent only a little for the journey to Shui-Kow. As the steamer was about to arrive, I felt that if I would not pray according to my own concept, the result would be much better. So I said to the Lord, "I do not know how to pray; please do it for me." I added, "If You will not give me the money, please provide a boat for me with a little fare."

When I arrived in Shui-Kow, many boatmen came to solicit business. One asked only seven

dollars for my passage. This price was beyond expectation; the usual fare was several times more. I asked the boatman why his price was so low, and he replied, "This boat is hired by the magistrate, but I am allowed to take one passenger only for the space at the stern, so I do not care how much the fare is. But you have to provide your own food." Originally, I had fifteen dollars in my pocket. After giving five dollars to a co-worker and spending a few dimes for the journey by steamer, seven dollars for the small wooden boat, and a dollar or so for food, there was still a dollar thirty left when I reached Kien-ou. Thank the Lord! Praise Him that His ordering is always good.

After I completed my work at Kien-ou and was ready to return to Foochow, the problem arose again: I did not have sufficient funds for traveling expenses to return. I had decided to leave on the following Monday, so I continued praying until Saturday. This time I had a feeling of certainty in my heart, recalling that before I left Foochow, God had asked me to give five dollars to a co-worker, which I then begrudged giving. At that time I read Luke 6:38: "Give, and it will be given to you," and I laid hold of this sentence. I said to God, "Since You have said this, I beseech You to provide me with the necessary money for traveling expenses according to Your promise."

*Give, and it will be
given to you.*

On Sunday evening a British pastor, Mr. Philips, a true brother, assuredly saved and loving the Lord, asked Brother Weigh and me to dinner. At dinner Mr. Philips told me that he and his church had received great help through my messages, and they offered to be responsible for my traveling expenses both ways. I replied that there was already someone who had accepted this responsibility, meaning God. Then he said, "When you get back to Foochow, I will give you *The Dynamic of*

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Service written by Mr. Paget Wilkes, a gospel messenger greatly used by the Lord in Japan." I soon felt that I had missed a great opportunity; what I needed then was money for traveling expenses, not a book. I somewhat regretted that I had not accepted his offer.

After dinner Brother Weigh and I returned home together. I had refused Mr. Philips's offer for my traveling expenses so that I might look solely to God for help; nevertheless, there was joy and

The less money I have in my hand, the more God will give.

peace in my heart. Brother Weigh was unaware of my financial situation. I had a slight thought of borrowing money from him for my expenses and then reim-

bursing him when I returned to Foochow, but God would not allow me to divulge this matter to him. I was under full conviction that God in heaven is forever dependable, and I wished to see how He was going to provide for me.

When I left the following day, I had only a few dollars in my pocket. Many brothers and sisters came to see me off, and some carried my luggage. While walking I prayed, "Lord, surely You wouldn't bring me here without taking me back." Half-way to the wharf, Mr. Philips sent someone with a letter. The letter read, "Though someone else has assumed the responsibility for your traveling expenses, I feel that I should have a share in your work here. Would it be possible for me, an aged brother, to have such a share? Please be good enough to accept this small sum for this purpose." After reading the letter, I felt I should accept the money, and I did. It was not only sufficient for my return expenses to Foochow, but also for printing one issue of *The Present Testimony*.

Upon my return to Foochow, the wife of the co-worker who received the five dollars said to me, "I have the feeling that when you left you did not

have enough money yourself. Why did you suddenly give five dollars to my husband?" I then asked her what had occurred in connection with the five dollars, and she replied, "We had only one dollar left in the house on Wednesday, and that had been spent by Friday. On Friday we prayed all day. Afterwards my husband felt that he should go for a walk, and then he met you, and you gave him five dollars. The five dollars lasted us through five days; then God provided for us from another source." At this point she continued with tears, "If you had not given us the five dollars on that day, we would have suffered hunger. It does not matter that we suffer hunger, but what about God's promise?" Her testimony filled me with joy. The Lord had worked through me to supply their need with the five dollars. The Word of the Lord is indeed faithful: "Give, and it will be given to you."

This is the lesson I have learned in my life. I have now experienced that the less money I have in my hand, the more God will give. This is a difficult path to follow. Many people may feel that they are able to live the life of faith; but when the trial comes, they are in fear. Unless you can believe in the real and living God, I do not advise you to take this path. I can bear testimony today that God is the One who gives. To be sustained by means of ravens as Elijah was at his time is still possible today. I am going to mention something to you which you may find difficult to believe. It has been my experience that God's supply arrives when I have spent my last dollar.

I have had fourteen years of experience. In each experience God wanted to get the glory for Himself. God has supplied all my needs and has not failed me once. Those who used to give do not do so now. There is a constant change of offerers; one lot of people replaces another. All this does not matter, for God in the highest is a living God. He never changes! I say this today for your benefit. I must say this that you may go straight forward in the path of living a life of faith. There are ten to twenty more cases like these that I have

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already related to you...

Looking to God for Sustenance for the Publication Work

Some people would never enter a meeting place to listen to the gospel. For this reason, in 1922 I began printing gospel tracts. The gospel must be delivered to them. After writing the tracts, I began praying and asking for provision for the printing and distribution expenses. God said to me, "If you wish Me to answer your prayer, you must first rid yourself of all hindrances."

On the following Sunday, I preached on the theme, "Removal of All Hindrances." At that very time many people were criticizing the wife of one of my co-workers, who was a sister among us. After the meeting she stood at the door. When I entered the meeting to deliver the message, I looked at her and inwardly criticized her, considering others' criticism of her to be true. When I left the meeting hall after delivering the message, I greeted her. Later, when I again supplicated God for printing expenses, saying that I had removed all hindrances, God said to me, "What is the message which you have delivered? You have criticized that sister; that is a hindrance to prayer, a hindrance which you ought to deal with. You must go to her and confess your guilt." I replied, "It is not necessary to confess to others sins that are in the mind." God answered, "Yes, that is right, but your condition is different."

Afterward, when I considered confessing to her and came face to face with the issue, I hesitated five times. Even though I wished to do it, I was concerned that she, who had always greatly admired me, would then despise me. I said to God, "If you order me to do anything else, I will do it, but I am unwilling to confess to her." I continued to ask God for the printing expenses, but He would not listen to my reasoning. Rather, He insisted on my confessing. The sixth time, through

the Lord's grace, I confessed to her. With tears we both confessed our faults and then forgave each other. We were filled with joy and thereafter loved each other all the more in the Lord.

Shortly after this, the postman delivered a letter containing fifteen U.S. dollars. The letter read, "I like to distribute gospel tracts and feel constrained to assist you in the matter of printing gospel tracts. Please accept my gift." As soon as all hindrances were removed, God answered my prayer. Thank the Lord! This was my first experience of God's answering my prayer in the matter of printing. We were then handing out more than a thousand tracts daily. Two or three million copies were printed and distributed annually to supply the churches in various places. In the few years after the publication work was begun, God always answered my prayers and supplied all our needs.

The Lord also wanted me to publish the magazine *The Present Testimony* and to give it out free of charge. At that time all spiritual periodicals throughout China were for sale; only what I published was free. The editing room where I wrote the manuscripts was a small cubicle. When the manuscripts were completed, they were sent to the press.

God always answered my prayers and supplied all our needs.

When there were no funds available, I would pray to God for His provision for printing. When I considered what I was doing, I laughed because the manuscripts were being sent to the press without the necessary funds.

As long as I live, I will never forget the time when I had no sooner finished laughing than there was a knock at the door. Upon opening the door, I saw a middle-aged woman who constantly came to the meetings, but to whom my heart was unusually cool. She was wealthy, but she loved

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money and treated a dime as a dollar. I wondered how she could possibly be the one who would give money for printing the magazine. Then I asked her why she had come. She replied, "About an hour ago I began feeling inwardly uneasy.

I have never solicited contributions from anyone.

When I prayed to God, He told me that I am not like a Christian, for I have never done well in the matter of offering, and that I love money too much. I asked Him

what He wanted me to do, and He said, "You should offer some money for the use of My work." Then she took out thirty silver dollars and placed them on the table, saying, "Spend it on whatever you feel the need is."

As I looked at the table, I saw two things, the manuscripts and the money. I thanked the Lord without thanking her. She left, and I went immediately to the printers to negotiate the printing. The money she had given was sufficient to print fourteen hundred copies of the magazine. Others gave money for the packing expenses and postage. Now about seven thousand copies of each issue are being printed. All the finances required are provided by God at the right time and in the way I have been relating. I have never solicited contributions from anyone. At times people have even begged me to accept money. In all of these matters I have been looking solely to Him...

In his *Narration of the Past*, given on December 4, 1932, he gave more personal testimonies concerning living by faith:

After we had been holding meetings for about a month, some young brothers among us felt that we should have a proper place to meet in the future. But since we were short of money, it was beyond our means to do so. I went to school to talk the matter over with several brothers, that is, with brothers Faithful Luk, Simon Meek, and Wang Tze, and we agreed that we should con-

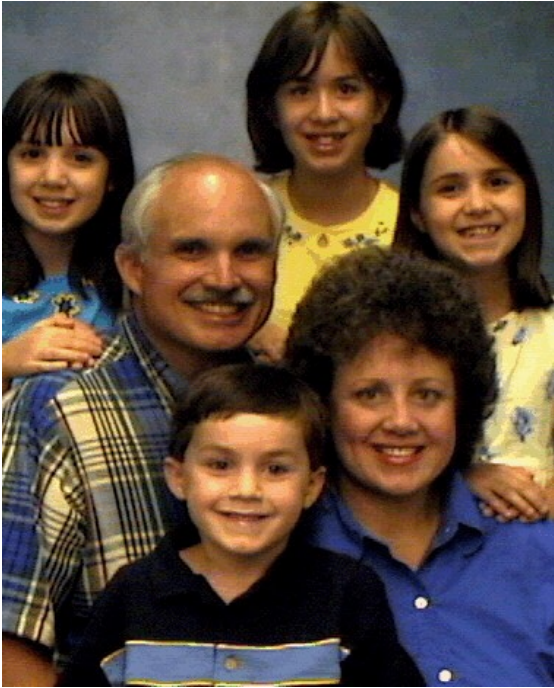
tinue our work among the students. Then for the first time I rented some premises, a place owned by a family named Ho, all the members of which had been saved. They agreed to rent the place to me for a monthly amount of only nine dollars. I then prayed with several brothers, asking God to supply the three months' rent which was needed in advance before we could move in.

Every Saturday I went to Ma-Kiang, Fukien, to listen to Miss Margaret Barber's preaching. This time when I saw her, she said, "Here is twenty-seven dollars, which a friend asked me to give you for your work." This sum was exactly sufficient for three months' rent at nine dollars per month—not too much and not too little. On my return, without hesitation, I paid the three months' rent in advance. Later, we prayed again, and the Lord provided again...

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Living Epistles - Part Two

Today's blog continues the series of testimonies of practical faith in a very present God. May your faith be encouraged as you read it.



Jose Alvarez Family

Jose Alvarez, his wife Mary, and their children live in Pena Blanca, New Mexico. God has been using them in ministry to the Native American Indian people in the United States. More recently Jose and Mary have been traveling to Africa to conduct ministry seminars on kingdom living, and on the role of apostles and prophets in laying a foundation for the church. They have a website where approximately 100 teachings are made freely available. There are also precious testimonies of the hospitality they have been met with in Africa, and the humble and loving care they have received from many of our brothers and sisters in Christ there.

The following testimony was obtained from the website of Jose Alvarez. Jose and Mary Alvarez are the authors of it.

The Alvarez Family Testimony

In 1992 our family of six lived a very comfortable and blessed existence. We owned a "paid off", cherry wood furnished, condominium in Miami, Florida. Jose had a successful career with the second largest Hispanic television network in the world, and our finances were virtually secured due to family wealth.

Our cars were paid in full, our credit cards were always at a zero balance, and we had many wonderful Christian friends. It seems like the "perfect American dream"?

Mary and I, however, were incredibly frustrated. Christianity as we knew it, had become ritualistic, disappointing, and boring. For many years we had run off in a tizzy to Sunday church to hear what seemed to be the same messages. There was the uneventful, weekly cell group and the occasional "guilt driven" outreach to the lost. All of this within an "anxiety driven" city that had a deaf ear and little time for the things of God.

"Lord", Mary and I would cry in desperation, "Is this what Christianity is all about"? "God, where is the book of Acts, where are the miracles"?

The Lord answered us in His usual uncanny style. "If you want to live in the supernatural you must trust and give in the supernatural." Through a series of events and confirmations that transpired over a number of months, the Lord challenged us with two scriptures.

"When Jesus heard this, He said to him,"One

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thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come follow Me." " Luke 18:23

"And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life." Matthew 19:29

The Lord Jesus asked us to give away, our home, and embark with Him on a journey of faith. After hundreds of hours of prayer, Mary and I felt prompted to telephone Christian friends of ours who also had four children (they now have seven), and offer them the condominium. In a "tear filled" meeting we told them that the condo would become theirs when the Lord would bring to us this "hundredfold return" on our giving.

Jose would shake and tremble in "his closet" as he prayed...

Months later, the Lord hit us with a bombshell that left us numb and broken. "Giving the condo away, conditional upon money coming in, is not faith. You haven't given away anything, Jose." We knew that money or no money, God was asking us to legally give away our home and move out. Jose would shake and tremble in "his closet" as he prayed about what the Lord was requiring of them.

We went to our pastor with whom we had been in continuous dialogue about the situation with the home. We will never forget how God spoke through him. With simple words of wisdom he told us: "Whatever is in your hearts to do, do."

Days later we went with our friends to a lawyer and executed a "Quit Claim Deed", legally giving away the condo, and the furniture to them and

agreeing on a date on which we would vacate.

The dreaded day came and the Lord had brought nothing. We only had credit cards and were forced to use them, very much against our will. The fifty eight boxes of personal belongings were placed in storage. We loaded our van with the six of us and nine duffle bags and were sent out by our church. As Abraham did, we went out without knowing where we were going.

Jesus first led us to the great revival in Pensacola, Florida, at the Brownsville Assembly of God. There, we met some precious folks from Tuscaloosa, Alabama who invited us to visit with them at their church where another revival was taking place. We remember the preacher, getting up right into our faces, screaming and prophesying "give it away, give it all away!"

During Jose's prayer time in the motel, God spoke to him two words, "New Mexico." We felt that this was the Lord's final destination and continued to travel west on I-20.

In Longview, Texas, while Jose was in prayer, the Lord narrowed down His vocabulary to one word, "pueblo." To us, pueblo means a little town. We took out the atlas of New Mexico and were floored to find almost twenty places that had the name pueblo within it. Later on, we were to find out, that these were the nineteen Pueblo Indian Nations of New Mexico. The Lord prompted us to go to Santo Domingo Pueblo which sits smack between Albuquerque and Santa Fe on I-25.

On May 3, 1997, we drove into Albuquerque and the next day went up north to Santo Domingo Pueblo, having no idea what we would encounter. A little dusty and empty village, filled with adobe homes, met us. When we got out of our van, our eyes spotted a precious little Native American lady selling jewelry. As we greeted her, a light-

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ning bolt from the heavens shot up and down through our souls and our eyes were marvelously opened. A supernatural heavenly love for Native Americans pierced our hearts, and in one split second we knew that we, as white people, were called to serve them in the gospel. It was "love at first sight!" We can honestly tell you that until that very moment Mary and Jose had never had an inkling of a burden for Native American people!

We were to find out from this tiny lady that "white people" cannot live in the pueblos. As a matter of fact, some of the Pueblo Nations have a 'sundown law" in which all white people must vacate from the village at the setting of the sun. She pointed out to us Pena Blanca a town of 500 people, set between two Pueblo nations, where "white people" could live.

We had booked a motel in Albuquerque for a one week stay. Every day we would travel back and forth from there to Pena Blanca in an attempt to find a vacancy in residence, but nothing opened up to us. The credit cards were quickly being depleted and we only had ten dollars cash in our pockets. The day before the motel reservation was completed, an efficiency opened up. We packed our van and checked out of the motel as Jose grumbled under his breath to the Lord, "you know that we only have ten dollars, we will look like fools trying to rent something!" The Lord told Jose, "be quiet and move on!"

We were shown a clean and unfurnished efficiency by the landlady whom would later become a precious friend. We knew that the Lord wanted us to take it, but were at a loss of what to do. Stammering and stuttering, Jose and Mary huddled together as the landlady looked on. Knowing nothing of our financial dilemma she interjected, "you can move in today and pay me next week."

That night, we settled into our new one bedroom

residence that had a shadeless lamp, a torn up sofa, and Wal-Mart blankets as its furniture.

The next day being Sunday, we went to visit a church in Santa Fe whose pastor and congregation we had met the week before at a restaurant. Picking us out in a crowd of five hundred, the pastor asked us to come forward and share the testimony of how the Lord brought us from Miami, Florida, to New Mexico. As we sat down after our speech he said, "The Lord just told me to take up an offering for these folks." This pastor knew nothing of our finances. Over seven hundred dollars came in and we were able to pay for our first month of rent and deposit.

The day before the motel reservation was completed, an efficiency opened up.

A week later, through the hands of a few Christians that live in Pena Blanca, our efficiency was completely furnished down to a TV set, kitchenware, and furniture. Once again, we had never asked.

We must now tell you about four notable miracles that the Lord performed while we all slept together those two years in the living room of the efficiency.

This first one we lovingly call "the one diaper miracle." We had four dollars in our pockets, and our son Timmy was still in diapers at that time. We had one diaper left for him, the credit cards were maxed out, there was no food, the rent payment was two weeks behind, and the auto insurance was to be cancelled the next day. Jose was down on his knees in the tiny storage room which had been made into his office. His prayer was, "Lord, remember that Timmy has one diaper left." Mary, meanwhile, had gone out to get bread, peanut butter and jelly, as well as check the mail. Jose was still on his knees when she

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burst through the front door waiving a check for \$10,000.00! One of her aunts had sadly, and very unexpectedly, passed away. Her nephews and nieces had been designated as inheritors of her will. All credit cards were immediately paid off, as well the auto insurance and two months worth of rent!

On another occasion we had totally ran out of money and food. Mary woke up with a confident feeling that the Lord would provide lunch even

*My friends, we cannot
out give the Lord!*

though we only possessed flour and oil, just as the little widow in the Biblical narrative of Elijah the prophet. Having cooked unsavory pancakes, she stepped

out through the front door to feed our dogs. Lo and behold, the grass was littered with unopened cans of food, a huge can of peanut butter, and a bag of beans. All of them were slobbered over with the dogs' saliva. It was an Elijah raven miracle. This time, however, the ravens were the dogs. They had brought us the food!

A third miracle had to do with dirty laundry! Our efficiency had no washing machine or dryer. Mary would take the laundry to Cochiti Pueblo, where the Lord gave her a chance to build relationships with our pueblo neighbors. Once again, we had no money and nineteen loads of laundry filling up the bedroom. Precious friends of ours from Santo Domingo pueblo, have two little girls which on numerous occasions they would drop off to play with our kids. This time they insisted on giving us twenty dollars for baby sitting. We came to realize that this was the Lord providing us with laundry money.

Grabbing our nineteen bags we went to church that Sunday, planning to afterwards go and do the laundry. During the service, Jose felt prompted to get the family and leave from church. As we walked out the front door, a pa-

rishioner that we had never met, beckoned to our oldest daughter with his finger and said, "come here little girl." Jose, as any father would do, froze in his tracks, shocked at what could be going on. Alexandria, slowly walked back to this man. He proceeded to pull out twenty dollars and gave it to her. The laundry and detergent cost \$37.00! This man had been a sent angel of the Lord.

Our beloved parents do not share or understand all of our views concerning Christianity. They had been hurt by what the Lord called us to do. We are happy to report that God has fully restored all of our relationships. Mary's parents in 1998 gave each of their three children a substantial amount of money. In their eyes, they felt that we could not be trusted with money because we would give it away. They chose to set up a trust fund for us. We cannot touch the money, but the funds are available to us. Through the trust, we purchased a brand new five bedroom, three bathroom manufactured home that is almost twice the size of what we gave away. We also have purchased over an acre of land, of which we had none in Miami. Likewise, the trust purchased a brand new van. It always pays the insurance on the home, van, the property taxes, and the repairs on the van and home. Though nothing legally belongs to us, the fact is that we cannot take anything with us when we go to meet the Lord and be with Him. God told us that our one time act of forsaking all, has guaranteed us a life time provision of finances from His hands. My friends, we cannot out give the Lord!

In conclusion, we would like to share the following. The American church needs to know that the Lord Jesus performs, and is ready to perform great miracles within it. What happened to us seems the account of some foreign missionary. All of this occurred in the U.S.A. within the last five years. We, the American church, don't see this because we are stuck in the gospel of complacency, comfort, prosperity, and blessings, instead of simple devotion and obedience to the Lord Je-

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sus.

Part of our commission was to come head on against the gods of money and comfort by doing the opposite and giving all away. Our testimony, which is simply one amongst numerous others, is one of encouragement and exhortation to the church of Jesus Christ. In many western countries such as ours, the church has become more of a system and less of a church. When the Lord gave to Moses the pattern of the Ark of the Covenant which symbolizes His presence, there was a pot of manna within it, which speaks of God's provision. Except on the Sabbath, on which the house of Israel was commanded to gather manna for two days, on every other day, any quota of manna that exceeded the daily amount allotted by the Lord rotted away. In Matthew chapter ten, and the apostolic commission, these men of God were sent out without a provision of gold or silver. In part, this is why they saw the power of God. The church must turn around from the carnal doctrine of prosperity and comfort, to the one of whole hearted and uncompromising obedience to the Lord. There, we shall see the unfailing pot of manna and the power of signs and wonders as we learn to lean upon nothing else but the voice of the Lord.

The honor and privilege that God has given us in enjoying numerous relationships with Christians and non Christians from the Pueblo, Lakota, Navajo, and Apache Nations, to name a few, as white people, is without expression. In the last six hundred years, in the name of Jesus Christ, much injustice and hurt has been done to the Native American. These people have welcomed and loved our family. We have had Bible studies where our family were the only white faces.

We will never forget when the Lord allowed us to preach in a church in Ganado, Arizona, in the heart of the Navajo Nation. As Jose waited to be called up, the Lord broke him by showing him the preciousness, dignity, and beauty of each person

in that congregation. He told Jose, "you must ask these people to forgive you, all white people, and your ancestors, for all the harm that you caused to them. Jose, got up with tears in his eyes and asked for forgiveness. The service stopped, numerous people from their seats replied, "we forgive you brother and sister." Two hundred people crowded around us. We embraced with them. We wept, they wept. A hand made bolo tie and a necklace were placed around our necks.

Our two years living in one room allowed us to identify with the Navajo people who live in circular one bedroom hogans. Our experience with forsaking all allowed us to identify with believers in the Pueblo Nations, who on occasions, have all property confiscated from them, and are expelled from living within the pueblo upon their profession of faith in Jesus Christ. One is not fit to minister to a group of people until he or she has been able to identify with them at least on some points.

We have been shocked at the amazing imbalance of finances between Native and non Native ministries within the USA. We have had the honor of serving two of the foremost Christian Native American leaders alive today. Both of these people are used internationally, around the world; one of them with key government leaders.

One is not fit to minister to a group of people until he or she has been able to identify with them...

Until very recently, these ministers did not have a secretary or even an office space of their own! They have no salaries. One of the two, finances her ministry from savings that she had when she was Grand Chief over two Native nations.

We realize that there is a void of knowledge in the United States concerning Native ministries because there are no funds for these ministries to

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go public through media channels. I guess, our little part is to inform and also to invite you, our beloved non Native brothers and sisters to Native American missions which are white unto the harvest, even as we speak. There is a mighty revival being birthed in the Navajo Nation at this moment.

God bless you all,

The Alvarez family

We need to be feeding upon those things that build up the spirit of man.

Living Epistles - Part Three

Maurice Reuben

In a day when it is often hard to find living examples of faith close to home, men and women that we can interact with personally, I have found that the biographies of these lights of God's Kingdom can often provide the encouragement that I very much need. I have been blessed to read quite a number of excellent books on the lives of men and women who have followed God in exceptional ways. Among them is the book *Rees Howells - Intercessor* authored by Norman Grubb.

I believe that such books will be of great value in coming days as Christians turn away from the television and other forms of entertainment and begin looking for that which edifies. We will truly

need to be feeding upon those things that build up the spirit of man that we might have the strength to overcome in the midst of difficult days.

In the book *Rees Howells - Intercessor* there is a testimony of a young Jewish man who lived in Pittsburgh in the early 1900s. The man's name was Maurice Reuben, and it was while listening to this man give his testimony that Rees Howells saw his great need of the Savior, and came to understand the cross that all disciples must bear.

This testimony is important as it reveals that there are distinctions among the walk of various Christians. Some have come to confess Christ has Savior, but they have not counted the cost of taking Him as Lord of their lives. Many profess belief in Christ for the forgiveness of sins, but they have not themselves forsaken all and taken up the cross to follow Him. Oftentimes it is those who profess Christ as Savior, but who do not accept the cost of discipleship, who become the greatest persecutors of those who have accepted the cost. This truth is brought out in the following testimony as recorded in the book *Rees Howells - Intercessor*.

Meeting the Risen LORD

Rees had not been long in his new home when he heard that a converted Jew, Maurice Reuben from Pittsburgh, had come to the city for a series of meetings. The first night that he went to hear him, Reuben told the story of his conversion and how the Holy Spirit had revealed Calvary to him. "I had heard preaching on Calvary scores of times before and believed it," said Rees, "but I had never seen Calvary before that night..."

Maurice Reuben told how he belonged to a wealthy family and had the best the world could give him, and how he lived to make money. He

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was a manager of Solomon and Reuben, one of the largest stores in Pittsburgh. But the life of one of his buyers used to put him under deep conviction, until one day he said to him, "You must have been born happy." "Yes," replied the buyer, "in my second birth. I accepted the Lord Jesus Christ and was born of God. In my first birth I was no happier than you!"

Reuben was so moved by the testimony that he bought a New Testament, and there he was impressed with the fact that all those who followed Jesus were Jews: John the Baptist pointing Him out as the Lamb of God; Peter, James and John, the chief disciples... Then he came to the story of the rich young ruler. It was a dramatic moment - a rich Jew of the twentieth century and under conviction, reading of the Savior's dealings with a rich Jew of the first century! The way that Reuben saw it was that if Jesus had told that young man to sell all to inherit eternal life, how could he, Reuben, inherit the same gift, unless on the same condition? It was his supreme test. It was his supreme test. If he became a disciple, he knew that he stood to lose all. But it was too late to go back; he had seen it, and he must follow. As Reuben said those words, Rees echoed them in his own heart; it was too late also for him to go back.

Reuben faced it fairly and squarely and counted the cost. His wife might leave him, his brother might put him out of the business, and not a single Jew follow him, but he had made up his mind; if he lost everything, he meant to do it.

Then one day on the way to the store, Reuben heard a voice repeating to him the words of John 14:6: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." The truth flashed upon him - he accepted Christ and entered into life at that moment. He then told his brother and others. According to his father's will he was to forfeit every penny of he changed his religion, but his brother offered to give him 70,000 pounds - his share of the business - if he

would cross the U.S.A. and retire in Montana. But Reuben replied, "I have had the light in Pittsburgh, and I am going to witness in Pittsburgh."

Late that Saturday night detectives came and took him to the police station. On Monday two doctors visited his cell and asked him about the voice he had heard. "Do they question my sanity?" he thought.

Two hours later warders came from the asylum and took him to a room where there were twenty-nine mentally deranged people. The bitterness of his position overcame him. He had victory in the lock-up, but this seemed more than he could bear. He fell on his knees by his bed and poured out his heart to the Lord. He did not know how long he was there, but he seemed to lose himself, and a vision of Calvary appeared to him. He witnessed every stage of the crucifixion. He forgot his own sufferings in the sufferings of the Savior, and as he gazed upon the cross, the Master said to him, "And must I bear the cross alone, and all the world go free?" From a broken heart Reuben answered, "No. There's a cross for everyone, and there's a cross for me."

"There's a cross for everyone, and there's a cross for me."

From that hour he was a new man. Instead of complaining at being in the asylum, he began to pray for the other twenty-nine, and to the Savior he said, "Let me suffer for You. Whatever You allow me to go through, I will never complain again."

Two weeks later, Reuben's brother came to see him, and reproached him for his folly in getting himself into such a place. "Why don't you be wise" he said. "Get out of here and go to Montana." "Does that offer still stand? Then it is not a medical condition, but something else that is

Living Epistles

keeping me here!” said Reuben with all the keenness of his logical mind.

Some Christian friends he was in touch with caused inquiries to be set on foot. In six weeks his release was procured. It became a court case, and the test was on “the voice.”

The judge called the doctor and asked why this man had been certified as insane. “Because he heard a voice,” said the doctor. “Didn’t the apostle Paul hear a voice?” countered the judge, who was a Christian man. “This is a disgrace to the American flag,” and he told Reuben to prosecute anyone who had anything to do with it.

“I shall never prosecute anyone,” answered Reuben, “but I will do one thing - I will pray for them.” He crossed the court and offered his hand to his brother, but he turned his back on him. He went to his wife, but she did the same. But what a victory he had in his own soul!

Maurice rented a small room in Chicago, where he lived alone with the Lord and won many converts, though for two years he hardly had a square meal. A year later his wife came to hear him in a camp meeting and was converted, and for the first time he saw his little boy who had been born after his wife had left him. She was willing to make her home with him again, if only he would earn a living as other Christians did. His heart went out to his little boy, and this test was even greater than the first. Her request seemed so reasonable, but he knew that the Lord had called him from the world into this life of faith. He pleaded with the Lord, but the only reply he received was “Back to Egypt!”

It was enough, and once more Reuben embraced the cross. He went to see his wife and child off; it was a costly experience; but as the train steamed out of the station it seemed that God poured the joy of heaven into his soul. He literally danced on the platform. He did not see his wife again for another three years. Then, in another camp meeting, she too had a revelation of the cross. As a result of this she testified that, whereas before as a believer she had not been willing to share the sacrificial life of her husband, if it would be for God’s glory she would now be willing to beg her bread from door to door. They were reunited and she became a wonderful co-worker in his ministry.

One thing that had hindered Rees Howells from coming through before was that while people said they were born again, he could not see that their lives were better than his. How then could he be convinced that they had something he had not? But he sometimes said to the Lord, “If I ever see a person who is living the sermon on the mount, I will give in.” Before Reuben came to the end of the story, the Lord said to Rees, “Is this your man?”

What followed in that little Methodist chapel Rees Howells tells in his own words: “As Maurice Reuben brought those sacred scenes before us, I too saw the cross. It seemed as if I spent ages at the Savior’s feet, and I wept and wept. I felt as if He had just died for me. I lost myself. I had been living in the fear of death, and I saw Him taking that death for me. My parents loved me very much and, up to that time, to me there were no people like them, but they never suffered death for me. He did it. His love for me, as compared with theirs, was as high as the heavens above the earth, and He won my love - every bit of it...”

[End Excerpt]

People of God, there are multitudes today who are professing their belief in Christ as the Savior of mankind. There are few who are following in His footsteps, taking up the cross that has been

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appointed for them. According to Christ's words, such confessors are not disciples, for to be a disciple one must be led of the Spirit in all things as Christ was. To be a disciple one must accept the suffering appointed to all those who are members of Christ's body.

Luke 14:26-28

"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple."

The cost for Maurice Reuben was very real. He found out in the early 1900s that there is still a cost to following Christ. There is a cost today as well. Will you accept the cost? Must Christ alone suffer while all the world goes free?

Do you have faith to suffer?

May you be blessed with peace and understanding in these days.

*To be a disciple one
must accept
suffering...*

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PARABLES PRECEPT— What's in a Name?

HELLO
my name is

Esau

Esau was Jacob's twin brother. He was also known by another name, which is Edom.

Genesis 25:30-31

Esau said to Jacob, "Please let me have a swallow of that red stuff there, for I am famished." Therefore his name was called Edom.

Edom means "ruddy," which we have seen means reddish, or

flushed with blood. The name Edom comes from the same root word as Adam. The similarity is easy to see even when the names are translated into English.

Esau was rejected by God. He sold his birthright for a bowl of stew, "The red stuff." He was very hungry after being out hunting, and was willing to trade his birthright to his brother Jacob to satisfy his stomach for a moment.

The Bible uses Esau as an example of that which God despises.

Hebrews 12:16

See to it... that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal.

I find it interesting that Esau was given a name similar to Adam. In effect he was satisfied with being an Adamic man. He had no desire to rise above his fallen condition. He was satisfied with being a slave to his appetites, even knowing that he was throwing away a future inheritance.

Many men do the same today. They live for what they can get today, not caring about what they are forfeiting in the process. Many men prefer temporal satisfaction to an imperishable inheritance as sons of God. They choose to remain sons of the first Adam, when God is calling them to be sons of the Last Adam, which is Christ.