



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 1.7.4

This issue of PARABLES BOOKSHELF contains chapters 12-16 of the book *Evidence of Things Unseen*.

We have been looking at how the numbers 1,3, and 7 are all expressions of God's nature. God is the Author of both the Bible and all creation and has imbued both of them with these numbers in very significant ways.

God is the creator of life and He has stamped the number seven in significant ways upon the life He has created.

There are seven Greek words that describe the various stages of life.

1. Infancy (paidion)

2. Childhood (pais)

3. Youth (meirakion)

4. Adolescence (neaniskos)

5. Manhood (aner)

6. Decline (presbutes)

7. Senility (geron)

The gestation period, which is the length of pregnancy, for many animals is in days which are multiples of seven.

The mouse is 21 (3x7) days.

The hare and rat, 28 (4x7) days.

The cat, 56 (8x7) days.

The dog, 63 (9x7) days.

The lion, 98 (14x7)

days.

The sheep, 147 (21x7) days.

Man, 280 (40x7) days.

We see some further significance in the days of the week. The earth was created in six days and on the seventh day God rested from His work of creation. The basis of our week of seven days derives from this fact.

Christ arose after three days and three nights in the grave. He arose on the first day of the week, the day after the Sabbath.

This is one more example of the number 1,3 and 7 in God's design.

Food for Thought

"Restlessness and impatience change nothing except our peace and joy. Peace does not dwell in outward things, but in the heart prepared to wait trustfully and quietly on Him who has all things safely in His hands."

Elisabeth Elliot

Scripture Memory

Psalms 119:105

Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.

Parables Newsletter

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Evidence of Things Unseen

Follow Your Dreams

Once Yahweh begins to lead us into the land of our inheritance, the road leads ever onward. We must go from faith to faith, ever trusting the Lord for a further victory until all the enemies are driven out and we are dwelling securely in the land of promise. Though God may give us a time of respite, He will not allow us to sit upon our lees for long. He declares “Woe to those who are at ease in Zion.” God did not allow us to become too comfortable in the land we had already taken possession of, the land of Yahweh Rophe, before He began calling us to go in and possess the next portion of our inheritance. The next area in which God wanted to prove Himself to us was the area of financial provision.

I had been working at the Houston Healthcare Complex in Warner Robins, Georgia for fourteen years. I had worked my way into a very good position, which was a dream job for me. I had been fascinated by

From my youth on up I have wanted to be a minister...

computers since the early 1980's, and I had for some time wanted a job working with PC's. God provided this job for me by having a position created where none had existed before. I had been hesitant to take

the job, for as much as I desired to work with PC's, I was intimidated by the demands and responsibilities of such a position. The Spirit led me to take the job, however, and after I had been in it for some time the Spirit spoke to me.

I had arrived early at work this day and was sitting at my desk. I heard the voice of the Spirit ask me, “You really wanted to work with PC's, didn't you?” I replied, “Yes Lord, I did.” The Spirit continued, “Although you were worried about your ability to handle this job, I have made you adequate in every situation, haven't I?” I answered “Yes”, for this was certainly true. On numerous occasions when some PC problem had stumped me, I would be led of the Spirit to do a certain thing and the problem would be corrected. This made me look very good and competent in the eyes of others, but it was actually God solving the problem, and not me.

The Spirit then asked me, “As much as you wanted to work with PC's, this really has not been your greatest desire, has it?” I paused for a moment and thought, then I answered, “No Lord. From my youth on up I have wanted to be a minister, but I have felt even more inadequate for that calling than for the job I am doing now.” The Spirit then said, “This job has merely been preparation for a higher calling. I wanted to show you that when I call you to do something, I will be your adequacy, giving you what you need to stand in every situation.” The Spirit ended the conversation by speaking to me two things that were not found in Scripture, but coming from the Spirit they became truth in my heart. The first thing was a slogan that was popular at the time which states, “Do not let your fears keep you from your dreams.” The second was an ancient oriental proverb, “The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step.”

The conversation then ended, and I was left to my thoughts. I had already been ordained as a minister, and was serving the body of Christ on a part-time basis. I was still going out to the church building and praying regularly, and I was preaching and teaching when I was given opportunities. Yet I had never given myself to ministry full-time, and this is what I understood the Spirit to be speaking about.

Over the next weeks I began to experience a restlessness within me regarding my current job. What had been a dream job was beginning to seem less appealing to me. At the same time I began to experience a greater yearning to enter into ministry to the body of Christ in a fuller way than I had known. God was once more leading me by changing my desires. He was working within me “both to will and to do, His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13).

As I was making the rounds of my job in the weeks that followed, I found the Lord ordering my steps to bring me into conversations with people about the topic of pursuing our dreams. I was reminded of a saying by Henry David Thoreau that I had heard years earlier while still in my pre-High School days. Thoreau said, “The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.”

I believe I was only in the seventh or eighth grade

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when I heard this quotation, but I understood the heart of it immediately. Many men have a dream in their heart. Perhaps one man dreams of being an artist, another man a writer. Another man may dream of being a great architect, or an explorer. Yet these same men look at the risks, and the chance of failing to attain to their dream, so they choose another course that seems less risky, but which is also lacking the fulfillment they could have known. A man may take a factory job, or a bank position, or something similar, yet day by day there is inside of them a quiet desperation caused by their dream lying dormant and unfulfilled.

It is true that many men's dreams are selfish, but God also places dreams in the hearts of His children. We see David being anointed by the prophet Samuel when he was still a youth, and being told that he would be king one day. We see Joseph being given dreams of ruling and reigning when he was also a youth. Both of these men were to know many long years of trials, rejection, and suffering before they were to see the dreams realized. Yet after a very long journey that began with a single step, they both saw their dreams come true.

Each time I had this conversation with a person at work the desire within me to pursue the dream of my heart grew stronger. I realized that I did not want to spend my life working on computers. I wanted to be a minister of God. Despite my feelings of inadequacy, and in spite of my fears, I wanted to pursue this calling that God had set before me.

I began to sense that God would soon call me out from working at the Houston Healthcare Complex, and this would be the beginning of a new phase in my life. In my naivete I thought God would have my calling recognized by man, and that some wonderful opportunity to minister among the body of Christ would soon open up to me. I did not understand that I was only at the beginning of the journey, and that the goal lay many years ahead of me.

God did call me out from my job, and the training for ministry began in earnest. At the same time God was calling me to enter into the land of Yahweh Yireh - Yahweh my provider. He called me out from wage

earning that I should trust Him for all of our provision. He confirmed this to me in ways that were remarkable.

As I was considering leaving my employer and stepping out in faith, I walked through the kitchen in our home and I glanced over at the little flip calendar located near the sink. The Scripture for the day was Exodus 14:14, and it said, "The LORD will fight for you while you keep silent."

I was at first struck by the double occurrence of the number fourteen. I had been at my employer for fourteen years, and I was reminded of Joseph interpreting Pharaoh's dreams. Joseph said that Pharaoh's dreams were repeated to indicate that what was being revealed was settled before God, and it would quickly come to pass. Later I was made aware of the significance of the book this Scripture was found in. Exodus means "going out, or forth," and God was calling me to journey out from my present job and to begin a new experience.

I shared with my wife what the Lord was speaking to me, but she was filled with terror. Although we had already been called to steps of faith and had seen God's faithfulness, each new leading from God was calling us to deeper and deeper waters. At this time it had been nine months since we had canceled our health insurance, and God had proven Himself by healing me from diabetes and keeping us all in good health. It had also been about fifteen months since we had canceled SSI benefits on Josiah, and he had not broken another bone. I had been able to persuade Tony to willingly follow in these past steps of faith, but I could not move her on this matter of trusting God for our finances.

*I shared with my wife,
but she was filled with
terror...*

I knew there would be great difficulty if I followed God down this path, so I asked Him for further confirmation of His will. The Holy Spirit spoke to me again while I was at home and told me to look up the first occurrence of the word "fourteen" in Scripture. I

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sat down at my Bible program and did a search on this word. My Bible program lists each occurrence in order and gives a snippet from each verse where the word is found. The very first Scripture in which fourteen is found is Genesis 31:41, and this is what I saw, “I have worked for you fourteen years.”

I was shouting when I got up from my chair, for I knew the Lord was telling me that I was to leave my employer, and I was excited about pursuing the greater dream the Lord had placed in my heart. I decided to check the first

The number fourteen is used by God to denote transition...

occurrence of this number in the New Testament as well, and I found it in the very first chapter of Matthew.

Matthew 1:17

So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations.

I saw in this that the number fourteen is used by God to denote transition, for each of these occurrences marked a definite transition point in God’s dealings with His chosen people. A transition was coming in my life as well, and God had been preparing my heart for it ever since the morning He spoke to me at work. I was convinced in my heart that this was what I was to do, and I expressed this to Tony, but she was not moved. She became very emotional, and then threatening, and indicated that she would not go along with me in this step of faith.

God had been preparing the hearts of the ministers at Living Faith to follow Him wherever He would lead, and had been speaking much about trusting Him for health and provision. One of the elders had met Charles and Nancy Newbold from Tennessee, and had invited them to the church. The Newbolds told this elder about a couple they knew who lived near them. This couple is Bob and Peggy Hughey. The Hugheys had been living a life of complete trust in God for all of their provision for a couple decades,

and God had taken them all around the world to minister. They had a biographical book out about their experiences titled “A Lifestyle of Light.”

The Newbolds invited this elder they had first met, and Richard, to come up and visit with them, and while they were in Tennessee they introduced them to the Hugheys. Richard came back excited about what he had heard concerning the experiences of the Hughey’s, and he brought each one of the ministers at Living Faith a copy of their book. I was tremendously encouraged and challenged in reading about their lives, and I was equally excited that the other ministers were beginning to talk about trusting God for real practical things in their own lives.

One day Richard shared with me about a time a few years earlier when he had been led by God to take his wife and two sons to Colorado. God said He would take care of them, and they went without any money on hand, needing to see God come through for them immediately. They stayed in Colorado for four months, and God would not allow Richard to work. Richard was a bundle of fears, yet God had taken care of them faithfully and at the end of four months he brought them back to Georgia. Richard and I talked about the great challenges of such a walk of faith, but also the rich benefits of a greater fellowship and intimacy with God as the desperation of the circumstances would drive the individual to press into the presence of God daily.

With all of this preparation God had been doing in our midst, I had hoped that the other ministers would be supportive when I shared with them what God was leading me to do. They had been witnesses of Josiah’s healing, and they had seen God take care of our family’s health, even healing me of diabetes, when I had been led to cancel our health insurance. What God was requiring now was just one more step in this process of leading us forward into greater realms of faith. The church was even named Living Faith, so I had hopes that the ministers would understand what God was doing.

I should have realized that one man’s faith does not translate over to another man unless they also have a desire and a willingness to walk in faith. During one

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of our ministers' meetings, I shared how God had confirmed His leading to me, and I informed them that I was going to leave my employment in the computer field and trust God for our provision. As a minister there was much precedence for this, and Paul even devoted the majority of I Corinthians chapter 9 to this topic.

I asked my wife before we went to the meeting what she was going to share, and she told me that the Lord had spoken to her, telling her she was not to say anything. After I shared, the elders and their wives asked Tony what she thought about the matter. Tony changed her mind about being silent. She became very emotional and expressed all of her fears and said she did not agree with this thing I was doing. The elders and their wives, moved by Tony's emotions and fears, then expressed their opinion to me that I should not do this thing since my wife did not agree with me. They told me that I was prohibited by God from taking such a step if my wife was not in agreement.

It is not my desire to get into a discussion of headship, and the governmental order of God, in this book, for I have already addressed these topics at length in other writings. If any should have a desire to read further on this topic I would refer them to the book "Sarah's Children", which can be read, or downloaded freely, from the Heart4God website (<http://heart4god.8k.com>). It is necessary, however, to mention the struggle that was present in our home that further things which will be shared should be understood.

Tony truly had not heard God speak that her husband was in error, nor had the Spirit told her that she was to resist my leadership and advocate that we go another way. In fact, God had spoken something to her that was quite the opposite. A few months prior to these events a couple from another town attended a Sunday morning gathering of saints at Living Faith, and it was known that the woman was a prophetess. Toward the end of the meeting Richard asked this woman, whose name is Judith, if she had a word for the body. She responded affirmatively, but added that the word was for the leadership and she would like to share with the ministers after the service ended.

When the ministers had gathered together, and a couple of their wives, Judith said that the Lord had given her a message for the ministers, and then added that it was specifically for one of us. She pointed straight at me, and said "God says promotion is coming to you." I was stunned to have been so singled out among the ministers, and I wondered what the word might mean. I did not know Judith, having only seen her once or twice before, and never having fellowshipped with her or her husband.

My wife was not present when Judith spoke this word, but after a few minutes I noticed that Judith had found my wife and it was apparent she wanted to speak something to us. Tony and I stood shoulder to shoulder facing Judith, and Judith then spoke to Tony saying, "God says you are to get behind your husband." Judith then began praying for Tony and she prayed against a spirit of divorce.

Tony and I had struggled some over our previous steps of faith, and on the last one, when it was known that I was diabetic and God was pressing me to cast myself over into His hands to trust Him for healing, Tony had threatened to divorce me if I went through with canceling our insurance, but it did not seem to me that she was very serious about her threat. I appreciated the prophetic word spoken to Tony, and the prayer, very much, and later when things were to get very difficult in our home I was much consoled that God had already sent His messenger and declared His will.

*Fear is a terrible
taskmaster...*

Fear is a terrible taskmaster, and I had endured much torment from fear during my life, and I would experience more. I could empathize with others who were also being terrorized by this demonic spirit. The Scriptures command men to live with their wives in an understanding way, knowing that they are weaker vessels (I Peter 3:7), and one of the ways in which they are weaker is in their susceptibility to fear. The verse preceding the one just mentioned speaks the following:

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I Peter 3:6

Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right ***without being frightened by any fear.***

Fear was the real issue that Tony was dealing with. She had not received a word from God saying that I was to continue working as a PC manager, nor had she heard His voice saying I was not to pursue full-time ministry. She was merely being terrorized by her fears, and this fear was evident every time she spoke.

The anger of my brother's in Christ also began to burn against me...

God instructed me to be patient and gentle with my wife, but at the same time He would not allow me to bow to the pressure she was using to try to manipulate my actions. In my obedience to God I was led

to be as hard as adamant, yet in my conduct with my wife I was instructed to manifest much patience, mercy and forgiveness. The journey had begun, and I was not to allow my fears, or the fears of others, to keep me from the dreams God had set before me.

The Struggle Continues

When Judith had prophesied to me, while I was standing in the midst of my fellow ministers, she had no idea that my first name was Joseph. Everyone at Living Faith knew me by my middle name, which was Bradley, and most simply called me Brad. It was to be a few months later, when God called me to leave the computer profession and enter into ministry full-time, that the Holy Spirit would speak to me and tell me to begin using my first name, for the Spirit testified that the name was significant.

The son of Jacob who bore this same name was told that promotion was coming to him, and this was also made known to his brothers. His brothers' response was not positive, and they eventually rejected him, casting him out from their midst and selling him into a foreign land as a slave. I have only understood the similarities to Joseph's path and my own in hindsight, for when Judith spoke this word of prophecy I was still enjoying a measure of fellowship with my brothers in Christ at Living Faith. When God told me

He was calling me to full-time ministry I anticipated a greater role opening up among this fellowship. This thought was increased by something Richard had shared with me. He had told me that he believed God would soon have him step aside from his role as head pastor of this church, and he believed God was preparing me to step into the role he would vacate.

Things began to get more rocky in my relationship with Richard and the other ministers as God continued to press our family forward into a greater walk of faith that we might inherit the good land before us. The other ministers were given many tests themselves, but they were shrinking back, rather than going forward. Each time this happened a greater rift occurred between us. It came to the point that Richard was accusing me of being prideful and arrogant for believing I was hearing from God concerning specific steps of faith, when he and the other ministers disagreed.

This is a common reaction when one person is willing to face the giants in his/her life, while those around them are not willing, due to the fear and unbelief in their hearts. The Spirit has ministered to me much truth from the life experiences of David. When David was willing to face Goliath, his elder brother Eliab, who had been hiding behind the rocks with the rest of the Israelite army, accused David of arrogance and misbehavior. The true reason for Eliab's accusations of his younger brother was that David had not succumbed to the same fear that was in his heart, nor did David view such fear to be the proper response.

I Samuel 17:28

Now Eliab his oldest brother heard when [David] spoke to the men; and Eliab's anger burned against David and he said, "Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your insolence and the wickedness of your heart; for you have come down in order to see the battle."

The anger of my brother's in Christ also began to burn against me when I demonstrated a willingness to face the Goliath that stood before us. I was willing to go fight this giant, and I proved it by following God obediently when He told me to leave my employer

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and trust Him for the provision of our family. The reaction was burning anger from my brothers.

A couple months after I had left my employer the ministers called for a meeting to discuss my situation, and they had in mind to defrock me, and cast me out from their midst if I would not change my course. The Holy Spirit had spoken to me some days earlier and had indicated that a separation was coming. The Spirit said that I was not to initiate the separation, but that I was not to resist it when it came. I spent many hours every day in prayer, for I was in much anguish at the rejection I was already sensing from my brothers.

On the day of the meeting I went to a place alone and I prayed fervently to God. I asked Him to give me an opportunity to share with them one more time about the necessity to follow Christ in faith wherever He would lead us. I asked God to guard my lips and keep me from saying anything He would not have me to speak. God answered my every request.

The meeting began by Richard asking me whether I was going to continue on my course, or whether I had changed my mind. He then gave me liberty to speak, and for about thirty minutes I shared from the depths of my heart concerning what I saw God doing among the body at Living Faith, and in our own family, in leading us into a walk of faith. I spoke of the obstacles to be overcome, and of the spirits of fear and unbelief that were hindering the body from going forward. I also spoke of a Jezebel spirit that was seeking to overturn the governmental order of God that is described in the words, “Christ is the head of man, and man is the head of woman, and God is the head of Christ.”

I was only interrupted one time when the wife of one of the ministers got up from her seat and stood in front of me and said, “You think your words are prophetic, but I tell you they are pathetic!” She hurled these words at me with great venom and then sat down again. In all of this I was given great grace to speak plainly and with an exceptional calmness, then the meeting was turned over for the other ministers to have a time to speak.

Richard said he considered my words to be “a bunch of crap”, and he then asked the other elders, one by one, to express their thoughts. All concluded that I was wrong and that they could no longer walk with me in ministry. I sat for about an hour as I was stoned by my brothers, and God gave me grace to sit silently and bear it all. Some of the reactions were angry and violent. One man told me three times that he could care less whether I died, that he was only concerned for my family.

Such a reaction was not unlike that which Joseph received from his brothers, for they too acted as though they could care less whether he died, and some expressed a desire to kill him. Yet, I find hope in the rest of Joseph’s story, for eventually Joseph’s brothers’ hearts were changed and they expressed sorrow for the evil things they had done. A day came when they were reconciled to Joseph, and it is my hope that I will also see such a day.

After this meeting I was reminded of the Sunday morning some months before when I was singled out among these same men and told that promotion was coming to me. I did not know that I would first have to experience rejection and demotion, and a removal from fellowship among the saints that had once been so precious to me. I did not know I would have to go a similar path as the son of Jacob, but God in His wisdom knows the best course to prepare all those whom He calls.

It was in much grief that I left this fellowship of believers. I had much hope when God brought us there that the saints at Living Faith would succeed where the last church had failed. The name Living Faith seemed to hold out much promise. After the ministers turned away from a path of faith, and had subsequently cast me out from their midst, I thought of the name of this church and the Spirit reminded me of a verse from Revelation:

*I asked God to guard
my lips...*

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Revelation 3:1

He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, says this: "I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead."

Within a couple years from the time I was put out of my place of ministry, Living Faith underwent further decline. This church had at one time during our period among them about 150 people in attendance, but after I departed it declined to the point where some Sundays would find only fifteen or twenty people in attendance. The ministers also had a falling out with one another and two of them left, leaving only Richard and one other man to minister to a dwindling fellowship.

I thought my faith would be met with a perfect provision on God's part...

There are many histories recorded in the Old Testament that bear great resemblance to the experiences we have known at the two churches spoken of in this book. We can read in the Scriptures of many people who were brought to a test of faith, and they failed the test, turning back from a course of obedience. The result was always decline, bondage, judgment upon carnal decisions and actions, and a removal of the cup of blessing that God had desired to pour out upon an individual, or people. It is one more evidence of the unconscious reality that people walk in today that they can witness similar situations being lived out in this hour, and they do not discern that there is a reason that such things occur. They do not perceive God's hand when that which began with great promise ends in dead works and an absence of spiritual life.

I was not at the end of the painful experiences I would have to go through as God both disciplined me for my covetousness, and prepared me to be used as a vessel of honor in His household. He desired to release a greater anointing for ministry in my life, but He would first have to purge, purify and refine the instrument of His choosing.

A Cutter of Grass

I did not yet understand many of the ways in which God works when He leads people into their possession. A lot of the things I am sharing with you I learned in hindsight as I looked back and meditated upon what God had done.

I understood the requirement for faith to be manifested before God's provision would be seen, but one of God's ways that I had not yet discerned was that, when He takes a people into the land, He will also remove all idolatry from their midst. I have shared about my struggles with covetousness, and the repeated disobedience that I had engaged in. God would have to break off this root of idolatry in my life in order to bring me into the land.

I did not fully appreciate this fact, and it caused me to have some false expectations regarding what God would do for us. I thought my faith would be met with a perfect provision on God's part, and indeed it was, but God's perfect provision was not anything close to what I had anticipated. When I left my employer to pursue full-time ministry I had a lot of debt. Just before embarking upon a life of trust in God's financial provision for us I had been offered a new job that paid significantly more than I had been making. I was given a raise of about \$15,000 a year.

As I viewed this windfall, I acted once more in disobedience. My wife had been wanting a van for some time, and although I should have known clearly at this time that it was not God's will for me to incur more debt, I justified this purchase as I had done earlier ones. The justification was somewhat different this time, for I truly had no interest in buying a van. It was purchased to appease my wife who had not been very pleased with me in recent months. I used a quotation from Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth as the basis for my justification. Paul said:

I Corinthians 7:32-34

But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he

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may please his wife, and his interests are divided.

I reasoned that I was not unmarried, so I had to give thought to pleasing my wife as well as pleasing the Lord. This is actually a right understanding of Paul's words, but my application was all wrong. Husbands are to give thought to their wives, and they are to be willing to subjugate their own wants and desires in order that they might bless their wives. I reasoned that I did not really want a van, nor did I want any more debt, but I did want to please my wife. My action was in this way cast as being very unselfish, and even sacrificial, but God was not fooled.

The apostle Paul never intended to convey to men that they should disobey God in order to please their wives. Yes, men were to lay aside their own personal preferences in matters in which they had received no command from the Lord. They were to give consideration to their wives in a multitude of ways, but they should never use a desire to please their wife as a reason to disobey God. It was not God's will that I should take on more debt. This was a fact He had made known to me very well in prior days. God did not buy into my justification, and this was the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back. I had now crossed a line where God would have to chastise me severely. God would make sure that this van, which I bought in 1999, was the last item I would ever purchase on credit.

It was in March of 2000 that I was cast out from my place of ministry among the body by my fellow ministers. The months leading up to this time were very painful and tumultuous and I felt a need of getting away for a period of time that I might hear from the Lord. I had just written the book "The Remnant Bride" and had felt led of the Lord to create the Heart4God website to share teachings with the body of Christ. I had no source of income other than God, and I wanted to hear from Him regarding what He would do in our lives. I was casting around for direction, and had even thought of joining a ministry in another state. I took my family to Mississippi for a week to visit with my sister's family, and while there I found a place apart and I sought to know God's mind.

My sister lives in a rural area of Mississippi, and di-

rectly across the street from the front of her house is a large field. Day by day I would sit in a chair on her front porch with a notebook and pen and my Bible, and I would wait upon God to speak to me. I was ready to write down whatever He spoke, and I was not disappointed. I filled up many pages while I was there.

Some months earlier I had watched the movie "Forrest Gump," and I was struck by a particular scene in the film. Having made a fortune in shrimp-ing and through investments, Forrest returned to his hometown and he began mowing grass for the town for free. He just rode around all day on his riding mower cutting grass. I have long enjoyed cutting grass, whether with a push mower, or a riding mower, for I have found it to be a time when I can focus upon the Lord and what He is speaking to me. At the time I watched this movie my life was filled with conflict at home and at the church, and I looked at Forrest spending his days mowing grass and I envied him. I wished that I could get away from all of the turmoil and just mow grass all day long while communing with the Lord. This was the most appealing scene to me in the entire movie.

When I arrived at my sister's house I noticed that the field across the street had been planted in grass, for the owner intended to start a sod farm. As I sat on the porch each day I would watch the owner mow the grass with his tractor, and I was caught up in the peacefulness of this occupation. One day I spoke to the Lord and said, "I wish you would give me a job like this one of cutting grass, where I could forget my troubles and simply ride around and commune with you each day." The Lord responded by saying, "I have indeed called you to a ministry of cutting grass, for all flesh is as grass. Yet those whom I use in this ministry must first allow Me to cut the grass in their own lives."

"I have indeed called you to a ministry of cutting grass..."

These words came to me very clearly, and I wrote them down in my notebook. I then looked in my Bible for the Scripture that speaks of all flesh being as

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grass. I found the following verses:

Isaiah 40:6-7

A voice says, "Call out." Then he answered, "What shall I call out?" All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of Yahweh blows upon it; surely the people are grass.

I understood the Lord to be telling me that He was calling me to a ministry of removing the flesh from people's lives, but that I would only be fit for such an occupation by first allowing the Lord to deliver me from the bondage to the flesh that was present in my life. This thought was both pleasing and disturbing to me. I wanted to be used of God as a minister

I did not look forward to the process I would have to go through to be prepared.

to His people, but I did not look forward to the process I would have to go through to be prepared.

Later that day when my brother-in-law arrived home I asked him how large the field was across the street. He said he was unsure, but it was either 60 or 66 acres. This was a further confirmation of what the Spirit had spoken to me, for the number six represents the flesh man throughout Scripture. Here was a field before me representing fleshly people, and God had told me He would one day call me to a ministry of cutting the flesh away from mankind.

There is much Scriptural precedence for such a calling. Perhaps the clearest type of such a ministry is the practice of circumcision, which is a cutting away of the flesh of the foreskin. The circumcision of a male is attended by much pain and discomfort that lasts for days. Similarly, when man's carnal nature is dealt with by God, there is pain that accompanies its removal. There is a passage of Scripture from the Old Testament that is full of insight relating to this matter.

Joshua 5:3-5

So Joshua made himself flint knives and circumcised

the sons of Israel at Gibeath-haaraloth. This is the reason why Joshua circumcised them: all the people who came out of Egypt who were males, all the men of war, died in the wilderness along the way after they came out of Egypt. For all the people who came out were circumcised, but all the people who were born in the wilderness along the way as they came out of Egypt had not been circumcised.

As mentioned in an earlier chapter, Joshua is a type of Yahshua. Joshua was not born in the wilderness, but was one of the two men who were still living at this time who had been brought out of Egypt. This too points to Christ, for of Him we read:

Matthew 2:13-15

An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise and take the Child and His mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him." And he arose and took the Child and His mother by night, and departed for Egypt; and was there until the death of Herod, that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, "Out of Egypt did I call My Son."

Joshua was called out of Egypt, and he was circumcised in Egypt. Egypt stands as a type of the world. Christ also was called out of Egypt, and in the greater type for which Egypt stands, the Son of God learned obedience and His flesh was broken and nailed to a cross. This brings to mind the words of the apostle Paul:

Galatians 5:24

Now those who belong to Christ Yahshua have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Immediately after Joshua had led the Israelites through the Jordan River and into the land of promise, God commanded him to stop and circumcise all the males. This is a picture of the work of Christ in removing the flesh from all those who would enter into the inheritance set before them. As an awesome confirmation of this work that was to begin in my own life, I had just crossed over the Jourdan River,

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which is about ten miles from my sister's house in Mississippi. When we went by a sign announcing the name of this river I was impressed by the Spirit that it was significant. Later I understood that God had just brought me across the Jordan and now I was also to allow Him to cut away my flesh.

We read further of this ministry of Joshua:

Joshua 5:8-9

Now when they had finished circumcising all the nation, they remained in their places in the camp until they were healed. Then Yahweh said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you."

The ministry of the removal of flesh is actually one of great blessing, for it removes the reproach of Egypt (the world) from the children of God. Those who perform this ministry must be prepared even as Joshua was. They must first have the flesh removed from their own lives, and then like Joshua they must spend time in wilderness places where their hearts are tested and they learn to trust in God.

When God calls a person to a ministry of cutting grass, they must be prepared to have their own lawn mowed. Even after God spoke to me about this calling upon my life, I did not appreciate all that I would have to go through to be prepared. Much pain was ahead, and there would be times where I could do nothing aside from surrendering to the knife in God's hands and then waiting before Him for healing to come. We cannot bear this removal of the flesh all at once, so God works on us measure by measure. He knows exactly what each one of His children can bear, and He is committed to doing a thorough work in each of them.

A Perfect Provision

When I left the Houston Healthcare Complex in October of 1999 after fourteen years of service, I was able to cash out my accrued vacation time, and the money from this carried us for a couple months. An annual gift from family, and then a tax refund, came in right

on time and carried us through about April of 2000. We were still carrying all of our debt, and making payments each month as I had when I was still employed. I had expected that God would be pleased with our obedience in following Him in this step of faith and that He would either manifest some provision to pay off all of our debts, or He would give us what we needed to continue paying all our bills month by month. God had other plans, however.

Yahweh was always faithful to provide for us the necessities of life. We always had food, clothing and a roof over our heads, but He felt no obligation to pay for all the things I had purchased through debt and disobedience. As part of my own flesh cutting experience, He was going to break me of this stronghold of covetousness and then lead me and my family into a fresh beginning where we would walk contentedly, thanking Him for whatever He chose to provide for us. The financial death that Charles Newbold had prophesied some months earlier was to come quickly.

I continued spending my days praying, writing new articles and answering correspondence. Finances became tight and our bills began to get behind. I was very concerned about this, and I could not understand why the Lord was not manifesting His provision, for I felt bound in my spirit to not seek any employment. I was absolutely convinced that had I done so I would have been in great disobedience to the will of God and would be walking in unbelief. Our bills for the van and the house became one month late, and then two months late, and then three months late.

We cannot bear this removal of the flesh all at once...

Despite my complete inability to pay these large bills, God would send us support in small amounts to pay our utilities and to purchase some gas and groceries, though these things were tight as well. We were not able to be as extravagant as we once were in our shopping, and we became bargain shoppers. We only had one occasion when we had to forego buying meat for a week, or more. We had been accustomed to eating meat daily, with most every meal, and during this time Tony and the kids began voicing how much they

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were missing it.

I was reminded of God's testing of Israel in the wilderness. He let them suffer hunger and thirst on occasions to test their hearts. He fed them with manna for forty years, and the Israelites, who were accustomed to a much more varied diet in Egypt, began grumbling about missing the melons, leeks, onions, garlic, and fish that had once been a part of their diet. Although God's provision for them was perfect, and just what they needed to break off their bondage to the appetites of the flesh, they did not appreciate what God provided. They grumbled and murmured against God. The Scriptures state:

Numbers 11:1, 4-6

Now the people became like those who complain of adversity in the hearing of Yahweh... The rabble who were among them had greedy desires; and also the sons of Israel wept again and said, "Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the fish which we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic, but now our appetite is gone. There is nothing at all to look at except this manna."

If it were not so tragic, I could almost laugh at the description given here. The Holy Spirit inspired

Their complaint was that they missed the produce and meat of Egypt.

Moses to write that the people began to complain like those who were suffering adversity. Where was the adversity? Their existence was truly remarkable. They had just been delivered from

Egypt, having seen the greatest nation and the greatest army on earth made a mockery of by Yahweh. They had crossed through the Red Sea on dry land, and God had then performed a great miracle by making the skies rain food for them every night. These were a blessed people who were experiencing things that had never been witnessed by any other people from the beginning of time.

Where was their adversity? Their complaint was that they missed the produce and meat of Egypt. Though they had come out of their slavery to the Egyptians,

they were still slaves to their flesh and its appetites. God was not pleased with their grumbling, so he spoke to Moses:

Numbers 11:18-20

"Say to the people, "Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall eat meat; for you have wept in the ears of Yahweh, saying, "Oh that someone would give us meat to eat! For we were well-off in Egypt." Therefore Yahweh will give you meat and you shall eat. You shall eat, not one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days, but a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you; because you have rejected Yahweh who is among you and have wept before Him, saying, "Why did we ever leave Egypt?"""

This scene was in my mind when we had gone some days without meat, and I was not about to begin murmuring in the same fashion. We actually experienced a few days when all we had in the house was a bag of grits and some butter. For those who have not eaten grits, I suspect that their texture is not far from that of manna. For us, it was Southern manna, and I could imagine God watching me to see if I would also complain about this provision. You could not have coerced me to say a negative word about what we were eating, for I knew what came next for the Israelites.

Numbers 11:31-33

Now there went forth a wind from Yahweh and it brought quail from the sea, and let them fall beside the camp, about a day's journey on this side and a day's journey on the other side, all around the camp and about two cubits deep on the surface of the ground. The people spent all day and all night and all the next day, and gathered the quail (he who gathered least gathered ten homers) and they spread them out for themselves all around the camp. While the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the anger of Yahweh was kindled against the people, and Yahweh struck the people with a very severe plague.

I gathered my family together and I told them that we needed to rejoice over the grits God had provided for us, for they were hearty and filling. In truth, every

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member of my family enjoyed eating grits, and would often request them. The complaint arose because they did not have anything else, and the flesh craves a variety of rich delicacies. I reminded my family of the Israelites, and I encouraged them to be thankful to God for what we had.

It wasn't long before God honored our attitude of thankfulness. We had not told anyone of our situation, when a man I had worked with at the hospital called us and said that he had a freezer full of deer meat he needed to get rid of. He asked if we would like the meat. Not only does my family enjoy deer meat, but it is perhaps our favorite type of meat. This man and his wife brought over a huge cooler full of deer steaks, deer roast, deer sausage, and ground deer meat and they completely filled up a freezer we kept at the back of our house. We ate off of that meat for weeks, and it was absolutely delicious. I made some deer jerky out of one of the roasts that my children still talk about to this day.

There was no doubt in my mind that God was testing us as He had done the Israelites, and I was determined to pass the tests brought to us. We saw many incredible provisions at this time, and were becoming accustomed to seeing the hand of God moving on our behalf, yet I was still unable to pay my major bills. I had much dread in my heart about what God should make me walk through, and I cried out often for His hand of provision. But like David when he cried out for the life of his son to be spared after his sin with Bathsheba, God would not relent of His judgment and correction. A day came in September of 2000 when we were all in the house doing various things when the power was cut off. I knew the city had cut off the electricity because I had been unable to pay the power bill.

My wife and kids came into the room and asked what we should do. I told my wife to call our friends' Randy and Barbara Barnes and see if they could go stay with them for a while, for they had previously made such an offer. Tony called, and they were invited to come on out, though I decided to stay at home with our two dogs. This arrangement would give me time alone to pray and seek God's face.

Despite our predicament, I was observing signs of God's working in my life in so many ways that it was hard to doubt that we were walking according to the path God had set before us. When I had begun going through tests of faith, and was being buffeted by fear, anxiety and worry, I considered that my greatest enemy was fear. I was reminded of the account of Yahshua and His disciples crossing the Sea of Galilee in a boat when a fierce storm came up. We are told that Yahshua was sleeping on a cushion in the boat while the disciples were becoming more and more alarmed. Things looked so desperate to them that they thought they would sink and surely perish, so they woke up the Lord and said, "Do you not care that we are perishing?" Yahshua was not alarmed at all, but spoke to the wind and the sea to be calm and it was immediately calm. He then chided the disciples for their unbelief.

It wasn't long before God honored our attitude of thankfulness.

I was captivated by this true story, and I told the Lord that I wanted to have the kind of peace that Yahshua had, for if I had peace then I could go through any circumstance and it would not trouble me. When I prayed these words to God, He answered me clearly and said, "I can give you this peace, but I will have to take you through some storms to get you there."

The date that our power was cut off I was home alone, except for our two dogs, and I slept in a recliner in our front room next to the door so that I could get a breeze from outside. September in Georgia is often very hot, and it was so at this time. That night a terrific thunder storm came up, and it was perhaps the worst one I had ever witnessed up till then. We had a very wide covered front porch that extended out about ten feet from the front of the house, but the wind blew so hard that rain was coming into the front room where I was sitting. Lightning was striking furiously all around, and a tree right across the road split in two due to the wind and fell into the road, blocking traffic.

The storm was horrendous, and it matched the storm that was raging in my soul, for I had many fears and

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worries about what might lie ahead of us, and I had been tossed about all day. The next day was a Saturday and the mail brought a notice of foreclosure on our house, and another letter stating that our van was to be repossessed. In my spirit it was dawning upon me that God was not going to deliver me from this discipline as I had hoped, but that I was going to receive a more severe correction this time around for going into debt. It appeared that God was going to strip us of all those things I had gained through disobedience, but at the same time He was providing everything we needed to live.

I stayed home alone for a week, and I was riding my bicycle to the library to keep up with my correspondence and to ask some people to pray for my family and I. I was not driving our car because I did not have the money to pay the insurance. God put it in my heart to have a yard sale to begin selling some of our possessions, but I did not even have enough money to buy some posterboard and a marker to hang up a yard sale sign. A check came in the mail for fifteen dollars, and I knew the Lord wanted me to use this to buy these materials. I then had a yard sale and took in about a thousand dollars.

My wife and children called from the Barnes' and said that everyone wanted me to come out and that we could put the dogs in a pen, so I went to join them. While there I talked to my wife about our options, and I told her that there was a ministry in a nearby state that I wanted to check out to see if God would

open a door for us to join them. I had spoken of this before, and it was much on my mind, so we took our children to my sister's in Mississippi, and Tony and I borrowed their pop-up tent trailer and headed to North Carolina. It

rained the entire way, and we never saw sunshine. We rented a campsite for a week, but after three days we knew definitely that God was not leading us to join this ministry. There was not even a hint of opening, and I had no witness in my spirit that we were to be there. The campground manager generously refunded our money for the unused days.

The Spirit spoke one thing to me before we left North Carolina. He said, "I want you to go home and get your finances in order." He then told me I was going to have to declare bankruptcy to do so. We picked up our children in Mississippi and the next day we returned to Georgia. As we crossed into Georgia the sun came out for the first time in five days. I knew we were back where God wanted us to be, and I set about doing that which God had instructed me to do.

A Fresh Start

We arrived back in Georgia and returned to stay with our friends, the Barnes family. I told Tony what the Lord had spoken to me about getting our finances in order, but she was terrified about the prospect of declaring bankruptcy. I told her we were shortly going to be forced into it anyways, by our creditors, and I was certain this was what the Lord had directed me to do.

We made an appointment to see a bankruptcy attorney, and on the drive there I told Tony that the Spirit had spoken to me that morning and told me that I was to pack up our possessions, for we were going to be moving. Tony was incredulous upon hearing this remark and suggested that what I needed to be doing was finding a job. She knew we did not even have the money to rent a place, and she asked me where we were going to move to. I told her that I did not know, but I had heard the Spirit tell me to pack and I was going to begin packing the next day.

I was reminded of a story the prophet Jeff Burke had shared some years earlier. The Lord spoke to Jeff and told him He was going to show him what it was like to live as possessing all things, though owning nothing. A short time later Jeff received a phone call from a friend who had just built a new house on a lake. As soon as the house was built his friend learned that he was to be transferred out of the country for a year by his employer, and he asked Jeff if he and his family would like to live there for a year at no cost. I told Tony that if God could provide a house for them in such a remarkable manner that He could do so for us as well.

*We made an appointment
to see a bankruptcy
attorney...*

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We arrived at the attorney's office, and we learned some things about bankruptcy I had never heard before. The right to declare bankruptcy had been written into the laws of the United States as a right for all citizens, and it was partially a response to the debtors' prisons that had existed in Europe. One form of Bankruptcy is Chapter 7, and it is commonly referred to as "Fresh Start". God had told me that He was going to give us a fresh start, so this was a great confirmation to me. We would give our house and van back to the creditors, and all of our outstanding debts would be made null and void.

I wondered about the Biblical precedence for such an action, and the Spirit reminded me of the law of Jubilee in Scripture. Every fiftieth year all land was to return to its original owners, all countrymen who had sold themselves as slaves were to be set free, and all debts forgiven (Leviticus 25). This was a remarkable law that God had ordained for Israel that had no precedence in any of the other nations. The year of Jubilee was called a year of release, and every form of bondage that an Israelite could be subject to was to be canceled in this fiftieth year. Around this time, we went with our friends the Barnes' to visit a church they attended, and I noticed a large banner across one wall that proclaimed that it was the year of Jubilee. The Spirit was proving that it would be one for us.

After paying the lawyer the entire fee for the bankruptcy proceeding, we were told that we would be assigned a date to show up in bankruptcy court, and they would notify us of the date. We headed back to our friends' house, and I told Tony once more that I was going to begin packing the next day as God had told me to do.

That evening Tony went out with Barbara, and everyone else scattered in different directions, leaving me home alone. I used the time to pray. I was confessing to the Lord that I had done what He had instructed me to do by filing for bankruptcy, and that I was going to begin packing in the morning, even though I had no money to rent a place, and I did not know where I would go. I asked God to reveal to me where we were to go. As I was praying the phone rang. I did not answer the phone because it was not my house, but I listened as a lady we knew, who had once attended Living Faith, left a message for Tony and I on

the answering machine. She said that she had a vacant house that she owned in Macon, Georgia, and that she had felt led of the Lord to offer for us to stay there free for the next month and a half. She added that if we wanted to stay longer she would charge us rent of \$500 a month.

There was a leaping in my spirit when I heard this message, for I KNEW God had just answered the cry of my heart. Here was a home in Macon, Georgia, the same city in which the bankruptcy court was located, and we were being offered six weeks of free rent. We were to find out shortly that our court date would fall just before the end of this six weeks.

When everyone returned home I told them about the phone call, and Randy agreed that this was the provision of the Lord for us. Tony, however, did not want to even consider moving there, for she had heard that the home was in a bad neighborhood. I convinced her to go with me to take a look at the home. Even though I did not have the money to be choosy, I had prayed specifically about the place God would take us. I had asked God to provide us a home that had bedrooms for each of the children, and a fenced yard to let the dogs out in. This house had both, and it was very tidy and attractive.

When we were looking over the home, Tony asked me to speak to her outside. She told me that she would not move there because of the neighborhood. I reminded her of how God had provided it at the moment I asked Him to reveal where we were to move, but she continued saying she would not move there. I told her that we had no other options, for there were no other homes being offered to us, and she still said she would not move there. I tried to console her by telling her that God would not have provided it unless He wanted us to be there, and that He would take care of us, but her fear was tremendous. Randy also sought to encourage her.

I was not thrilled about moving to this house either, but I knew it was God's will, and this comforted me. One of the reasons for my lack of joy was a sign I saw as we approached the neighborhood this home was located in. We had to go down a street in Macon

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called Vineville, and just before the road we were to turn onto there was a road sign pointing to the very road we had to go down to get to the house. The sign said "Payne City". In my spirit I knew immediately that this was more than just a coincidental road sign, but that we were about to endure a time of pain. I had a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach, but I knew we had to follow where the Lord was leading.

When we approached the house for the very first time I noticed the house number was 3456. As I looked at these numbers the Spirit said, "Here I will set your household in order." The street the house was located on was called Kingsbury, and as I meditated on this the Spirit told me that He was going to bury some things here that had been strongholds in our lives for a long time, and we would never walk in those things again.

I suppose some reading of these things may never have experienced the Spirit speaking to them through such means, and some may even see these things as silly, or the fruit of an overactive imagination. The Spirit bore witness to these things, however, and everything He spoke to me was to come true. It was to be a time of much pain. Our household would be set in order, and God would bury some things here, such as my covetous inclinations which led me to incur debt, and we would never walk in these things again. God is an omnipotent Father, and it did not tax Him in the least to set all of these signs of His working before me. If Christ could tell Peter to cast a hook into the sea to catch a fish with a coin in its mouth to pay the temple tax, then He had no trouble ordering the circumstances of my life in similarly incredible fashion.

God knew the difficulty of what I was about to walk through, and I needed much assurance that I was in His will. While in Payne City I would be tempted to bail out of the walk of faith God had called me to, and to go seek a job just to relieve the pressure I was under. The Lord performed one more action to keep me from doing so.

On the day of our move I rented a truck and the Barnes family helped us load up all of our possessions in Fort Valley and move us to Macon. I do not remember doing anything to injure myself, but as the day

wore on I began experiencing more and more pain in my hip and left leg. This pain was to remain with me during our entire stay in Payne City, and it reached a point that I could only walk by leaning on a cane. This kept me from abandoning the walk of faith God had called me to by going out and seeking employment, but it also provided another message from the Father.

During the time we were at this home, the Georgia National Fair was held in a nearby town, and I wanted to take my children, for they enjoyed the fair immensely. I prayed and asked God if He would provide the means for me to take my children, and not much later their grandfather gave them money for tickets and for the rides. My hip was so painful at this time that I had to rent a wheelchair at the fair and let Tony and our children push me around.

We went through one building where exhibitors and various businesses had booths set up. One of the booths belonged to a local chiropractor, and I felt led to ask them about my condition. Upon hearing the symptoms they said that I was suffering from sciatica, which is an inflammation of the sciatic nerve. They gave me a brochure that described what I was experiencing exactly.

Later, when I was back at our house I began to study the sciatic nerve to see what it represented in Scripture. I learned that this nerve is the same one the Jews identify as the sinew the angel touched in the hip of Jacob when Jacob wrestled with God. Jacob refused to let go of the angel until he received a blessing, and I was also experiencing a time of great wrestling.

The struggle was tremendous for me, for I was dealing with Tony's daily threats of divorcing me and taking my children with her. Some family members were also encouraging her to divorce me. In the eyes of many Christians, including the men I formerly ministered with, I stood condemned, having been numbered among the transgressors. My agony over all these things was great. Despite all these pressures, I clung desperately to God and would not abandon the struggle, for I felt with a certainty that if I did so I would forfeit the blessing of God. This thought alone kept me on the cross God had called me to endure.

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I read further about Jacob's own wrestling with God, and the following is recorded:

Genesis 32:31-32

Now the sun rose upon [Jacob] just as he crossed over Penuel, and he was limping on his thigh. Therefore, to this day the sons of Israel do not eat the sinew of the hip which is on the socket of the thigh, because he touched the socket of Jacob's thigh in the sinew of the hip.

Jacob leaned on his staff from that day forward. What is pictured here is God breaking the natural strength of a man. The staff is a type of Christ, and when Jacob's natural strength was touched he was forced to lean on God. So, too, God was seeking to break the natural strength in my life. He sought to deliver me from my tendency to accomplish things through human scheming and carnal means. He wanted me to lean upon Him entirely.

Thus far in this book I have shared how God has spoken to me through the lives of Joseph, David and Jacob. He has shown me definite parallels in my own walk and experiences, and those of these men. This should not strike any as unusual, for the lives of the Old Testament saints are recorded for us as examples. God will lead His elect through circumstances that bear striking similarity to those who have gone before. As Solomon testified:

Ecclesiastes 1:9

That which has been is that which will be, and that which has been done is that which will be done. So there is nothing new under the sun.

The histories recorded in Scripture serve to provide encouragement and understanding to those who know God's dealings in their lives. I have many times received strength, and stood firm in the midst of some trial, as I have reflected on God's dealing with men who have gone before me. I am most grateful for these examples, for the lives of these men continue to witness to this day.

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PARABLES PRECEPT— The Bible

BIBLE STUDY



GET INTO THE WORD!

Did you know the original King James Bible included 15 books that are no longer found in KJV Bibles today? These books were held in a section by themselves, apart from the Old Testament and New Testament. This section was titled “Apocrypha.”

The word apocrypha is derived from the Greek language, and

means “hidden,” or “obscure.” They were labeled this because they were books of unknown authorship.

Martin Luther in 1534 is credited with separating these books of doubtful, or unknown origin, into a section by themselves. The Luther Bible moved these books to a section titled Apocrypha.

Martin Luther was a Catholic Monk before taking his stand against the church which some attribute to be the beginning of the Protestant Reformation.

Part of the Reformation included the reformation of the Scriptures. The apocryphal books were included in the Bibles of the Catholic Church, and still are to this day. However, the reformers de-

termined that these books were not to be considered Scripture. For a time the Protestant Bibles kept them in a section by themselves, as did the original King James Bible of 1611. Eventually, however, they were dropped from the Bibles used by most Protestants altogether.

The books found in the KJV apocrypha have the following names:

I and II Esdras; Tobit; Judith; The Rest of Esther; Wisdom; Ecclesiasticus; Baruch; The Epistle of Jeremy; Song of the Three Children; Story of Susanna; The Idol Bel and the Dragon; Prayer of Manasses; I and II Maccabees.

Having read them, I would have to agree with the reformers that they do not belong in the Bible.