



In this issue:

- Fathers and Sons p. 1
- A King With A Heart p. 2
- The Way of Escape p. 4
- The Undertow p. 6
- Turning Around p. 7

Fathers and Sons

“Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had known all the works of the Lord which He had done for Israel.” Joshua 24:31

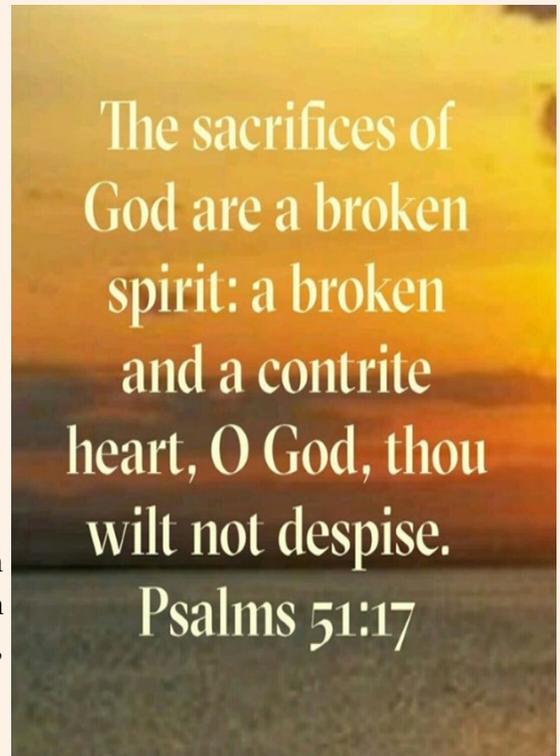
This statement concerning Joshua is a testament to his faithfulness and to his ability to pass along his faith and values to the succeeding generation. Wouldn't it be wonderful if the admonition of Paul in 1 Timothy 6:1-4 held true generation after generation? “Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ which is the first commandment with promise: ‘that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.’ And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”

I have been privileged over the years to know many fathers and sons who walked in the ways of the Lord. In the coming issues of *BC* I have asked some of them to share their articles with us. In this May/June issue we are featuring Richard Brannon and his son Marcus Brannon from Fresno, California. I have assigned topics, and these fathers and sons have agreed to write for us.

In the Jul/Aug issue we will hear from Ron Collins and his son Brian Collins from Sepulveda, California. Then in the Sep/Oct issue we will feature Edward Rouse and his son David Rouse from Hyderabad, Telangana, India. I was privileged to be in Hyderabad when David was born and was asked to give him his name.

I am looking forward to sharing these father and son articles with you. I am sure they will bless you in your walk with our Lord Jesus Christ.

lsg



A King With A Heart

“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight—that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge.” Psalm 51:1-4

It is a warm evening and a king that should have been at battle against their enemies is walking on the roof of his house. He sees a woman bathing and sends for her and commits adultery. Later she finds she is with child and sends words to the king. He forms a plan to call back her husband from the battlefield. He sends the soldier to stay with his wife but the soldier refuses. The king gets the soldier drunk and still he refuses to stay with his wife. The soldier is an honorable man and still refuses to spend time with his wife. His reasoning is that his men are deprived from being with their families so why should he be with his family. The king comes up with another plan and that is to have his commander take him close to the wall while fighting, and then to withdraw and leave him in front of the battle. The plan is successful, and the soldier is killed. The king takes the soldier’s wife into his household and a son is born. All seems well, until

That is when King David’s sin was exposed.

a prophet of God exposes the crime to the king by telling it in a story. The prophet said a man had a special little lamb kept in his house. When his lord was going to have company instead of taking a lamb from his flock for a feast, he took his servant’s lamb instead. The king was furious about this and wanted to know who would do such a thing. That is when King David’s sin was exposed. Na-

than proclaimed aloud what David had tried to keep secret. The sin of David with Bathsheba was now in the open. The punishment for King David was that the child born would die and in-fighting would always be in his household. Would it be interesting to be able to look into more of the story and how David felt about what happened? Well, we can. A small Psalm has been reserved for us by none other than the offending king himself.

David does not cover up his sin. He brings it up for all to see and hear.

Psalm Fifty-one gives us a look into the heart of David and the heading given to it refers to this story. There are some striking observations as we investigate this Psalm, which is a prayer and confession, by David. First, it is given to the Chief Musician. David does not cover up his sin. He brings it up for all to see and hear. Secondly, although King David is making his repentance publicly known, his Psalm is completely addressed to God. God is the one he has sinned against, although sinning against others as well. We also must understand that David was living under a different covenant than Christians. Some things have not changed under our testaments such as, God has always considered our faith and heart should be for him. David lived under a covenant that looked forward to the full sacrifice of Christ. He did not have those benefits we have, under our new Covenant and the blood of Christ. I took a bus to the Grants Pass Oregon Meeting years ago, and I was seated next to a Jewish man. We had some good conversations during the trip. I will always remember when I asked him how the Jewish people get rid of sins since there are no more sacrifices. His reply was they just hope so. I thought at the time, that did not seem very reassuring.

In this Psalm under consideration, David does not

cover up his sin. “For I acknowledge my transgressions, And My sin is always before me” (Psa. 51:3). Confession is always a good start for healing. James writes, “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (Jas. 5:16). And the Apostle John writes, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1Jn. 1:9). A wound is best healed by first cleaning it out before bandaging.

In this Psalm David also recognizes God as Judge, and David’s humility is reflected in his words such as in verse four, “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.” I have spent some time in courtrooms, and it is always a good idea to respect the office of the judge. King David had sinned against his nation, wife, family, Uriah, and who knows who else, but God who is judge of all and judges the secrets of the heart is the most important.

In David I see his contrition of heart working for the benefit of his restoration appeal.

In the second half of Psalms fifty-one, David makes his direct petitions to God known. He asks for a clean heart, joy, gladness, God’s Holy spirit, and deliverance. All of these are good and refreshing things when we make our own petitions made known to God. In verse seven David wants God to wash him so that he is “whiter than snow.” There is nothing whiter than the first falling of pure white snow in winter. If it is good snow, it covers and blankets over everything that is dirty or filthy. This figure of speech perfectly portrays the idea of being cleansed from past sins and given a new start. When the Apostle Paul retold his conversion to the Jerusalem mob, He said that Ananias told

him, “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Ac. 22:16 KJV).

Isaiah put it this way in Isa 1:18, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

Finally, King David in this Psalm explains that a sacrifice to God is a “broken and contrite heart.” He is not speaking of our body’s “blood pump” or physical heart, but the deep emotional part of us that feels in our thinking. It is where we experience great joy or sad grief. This heart of ours is where we feel emotions and sets us in motion. So, a broken heart, a joyful heart, sometimes we can feel it in our chest or stomach or bowels. Emotions, like a broken heart, joyful heart, heartwarming, and gut wrenching, are just a few ways we express what we are feeling. In David I see his contrition of heart working for the benefit of his restoration appeal. Humility or contrition should be our first step on the road to God’s forgiveness. Isaiah put it this way, in Isa. 57:15, “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”

For many of us, David is such a giant of an Old Testament example. We see from his life what dedication he had and weaknesses, how sin can be forgiven but consequences can remain. As I see it, he kept trying to do the right thing for God. It is right to put him in Hebrews the eleventh chapter with the other heroes of faith.

Richard Brannon

Fresno, CA

The Way of Escape

“Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” 1 Corinthians 10:12-13

It takes a long time to die on a cross. Of all the ways men have devised to kill one another, crucifixion is perhaps the most drawn-out. That’s what I must remind myself of when I’m tempted to sin, or in some way stumble. That old man I thought was dead has been revived with a sponge of water, or lifted up for another breath. We can make ourselves feel like failures when this happens. We consider ourselves unclean and wish to withdraw from our brothers and sisters. I say resist that impulse. There are many passages in the epistles that deal with temptation. If James did not think we would be tempted, he would not have warned us to “resist the devil.” If the devil did not “prowl about like a roaring lion” then Peter would not have warned us so. Temptation is universal, “but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” But what is that “way of escape?” We have all heard the old joke about the man who ignored hurricane warnings and rescue attempts because he was waiting for God to save him miraculously. If you have not, just Google it because I have a word count I’m trying to stay under. People get tripped up by 1 Corinthians 10.13, and wind up blaming God when they stumble. They ask, “Where was my promised escape?” The truth is it has a lot to do with preparation. Black widow spiders have this reputation of killing and eating their mates, but in fact most males have planned an escape route ahead of time and leave their mates hungry. In like manner, we should prepare our escape ahead of time so we can evade the devil when he tries to ensnare us. I present to you three methods by which you can shore up your spiritual defense: prayer, study, and associating yourself with the brethren.

James tells us in James 4.7-8, “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” Notice that James not only tells us to resist the devil, but he also tells us the best way to do it. Draw near to God. One way we do that is by having a dialogue with him. Earlier in chapter 4, James chides his readers for not asking for the things they need, or for asking for worldly things. We have all seen some movie in which a character in need says, “God grant me this one thing and I’ll never ask for anything again.” This, of course, totally misses the point of prayer. When Jesus instructs his disciples to pray “Give us this day our daily bread,” he is teaching that God wants us to come back tomorrow and ask him again. Likewise when he says, “and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,” he is teaching that the same God that cares for your needs can keep you from sin if you will lean on him. Pagans, and even some Christians, put a lot of stock in talismans. They believe that a cross or a rosary or a hand gesture can protect them from evil. Prayer is a true talisman to ward off the devil. A Christian who has a healthy prayer life and meditates on God’s will for them will have an easier time resisting the devil when he comes around.

They ask, “Where was my promised escape?” The truth is it has a lot to do with preparation.

And what did Jesus do when he was confronted by temptation? Bracelets of the 90’s asked all of us what Jesus would have done, but that requires more conjecture than I am comfortable with. What he did is recorded in Matthew 4. He countered every angle of the devil with Scripture. When Satan appealed to his physical hunger, Jesus responded that the needs of the body are secondary to the needs of the kingdom. Indeed, self-denial has the effect of sharpening our focus and determination. When Satan appealed to Jesus’ self-importance, his response demonstrates that he respected God’s will and timing. Satan’s final appeal seems the most foolish and perhaps demonstrates that he truly did not understand Jesus’ mission. When he offers all the kingdoms of the Earth in exchange for worship, Jesus acknowledges God

as the only sovereign, which to my mind calls into question if Satan was even able to deliver on his promise. The world is going to come at us with various temptations, and their arguments will invariably boil down to, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” If we are unfamiliar with the word, we may fall for the ensuing snare, but if we are prepared, like Jesus was, we will be less likely to give place to the lies of others, or lie to ourselves. Fire exits are generally lit and marked with a sign that says “Exit.” However, if you cannot read or understand English, you may not recognize the exit in an emergency. That sign may say “Broom Closet” for all you know. In this way the word, properly understood and handled, can be our way of escaping.

The world is going to come at us with various temptations, and their arguments will invariably boil down to, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’”

Our final way of escape is the church. There is a great deal of misunderstanding today on what the church is and how it relates to Christians. The relationship between the saved and the church is spelled out for us in Acts 2.47. “And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” So if you have been saved, you are part of the church. Maybe this imagined separation comes from our idea of “going to church,” i.e., attending worship. But the church has been set up for our benefit. Peter warns that the devil “walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5.8). And how does a lion hunt? Does she not seek the young, sick, or weak, or those who have somehow separated from the herd? Isolation from the body makes us more vulnerable to Satan’s attacks. But you can sit in the same dent in your pew every Sunday and still be isolated. We need to look to our brothers and sisters for support and use them as the resource that God intended, or be the resource God intended. I want to focus on the first half of 1 Corinthians 10.13. “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man.” Could this be Paul’s intended “way of escape?” If you have a weakness, there is somebody in the church with that same weakness. Whether it is greed or lust or a short temper or any number of ways in which we stumble, someone

else either has a better handle on it, or perhaps struggles even more than you do. Just as Jesus promised that his living water would become a fountain within us, we can look to our brethren as a way of escape with the goal of becoming someone else’s way of escape as we mature.

Marcus Brannon
Fresno, CA

Contrite ... is a word translated from the Latin, meaning crushed or pulverized. Now, modern people complain about that They do not wish their hearts to be pulverized and they do not feel they can sincerely say they are “miserable offenders” [as the English prayer books of that time said] I do not think whether we are ‘feeling’ miserable or not matters. I think [the prayer book] is using the word miserable in the old sense—meaning an object of pity. ...

C. S. Lewis

The Business of Heaven

The Undertow

Those who swim at the beach must be aware of the dangers of an undertow. Though the water may appear to be relatively gentle, there might be a strong current running beneath the surface. Unsuspecting swimmers can be caught in this and be pulled far from the beach. Many have perished at sea in such situations.

Matthew and Pamela Menz weren't at the beach a few days ago; they were driving on I-75 in Northern Michigan. A heavy snowstorm was in progress, and whiteout conditions prevented them from seeing the tractor-trailer truck ahead. They slammed into the back of the trailer, and their car was wedged underneath, locked in place.

The driver of the truck, however, was unaware of what happened and kept driving, pulling the Menz's car with it. This continued for about 16 miles before police were able to stop the truck. What could have been a disastrous ending was averted.

As I read that story I was reminded of a statement in Isaiah 64:6: "But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." The leaves in that statement, dried and detached from the tree which gave them life, are powerless to decide their destinations; they will go wherever the wind chooses to take them. The effect of the undertow is true spiritually, just as it is physically.

I wonder if this wasn't at least part of what happened to the prodigal son. This young man, at the center of one of Jesus' most famous parables, was raised in a good home. His father is portrayed as a man with a big heart and anxious to provide for the needs of his two sons. But the younger son grew restless and decided to "go swimming" in waters he had never before tested.

Jesus tells what happened: "And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living" (Luke 15:13). Shortly after his money was gone, a famine arose and the son was reduced to a job any Jew would find disgraceful - feeding pigs! To make matters worse, he was starving, "and no one gave him anything" (Luke 15:16).

The son got caught in the undertow of sin, and it pulled him where he never intended to go. I don't know who first said this, but it well describes the danger of wading in sin's waters: "Sin will take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you want to pay." The Bible calls this phenomenon "the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:13).

"Swim at your own risk" is posted by the waters of sin. A deadly undertow is present!

Timothy Hall "*LightGrams*"
January 15, 2015
Volume 19, Number 2

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

1 John 2:15-17

Turning Around

“You were made alive when you were dead in transgressions and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the children of disobedience. We also all once lived among them in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, for his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus for by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, that no one would boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared before that we would walk in them.”

Ephesians 2:1-10 (World English Bible)

One day our family packed up in the car for a day trip. There was a park a few hours from where we lived that we had not visited. Not being familiar with where we were going, we followed our GPS. After a while, I said to my wife, “This just doesn’t look right.” Following a road that seemingly headed nowhere, we ended up at a dead-end. The road just ended, and we were looking out at a pasture, which was not at all our intended destination. We had taken a wrong turn. After backtracking a few miles, we found the park road in the exact opposite direction than we had been heading. It’s never good to be heading in the wrong direction.

Paul, in the passage above, continues to describe the rich blessing we have in Christ. We were all heading in the wrong direction, walking in disobedience, following our desires. We were on a path opposed to God. However, in His rich mercy and love, God turns us around and makes us alive in Christ. He rescues us from heading in the wrong direction and ending up at a dead-end. He saves us so that we can travel the path He has set for us and, by doing so, we can bring Him glory.

Steve Ellis

Pasadena, TX

Seek the Lord while He may be found,

Call upon Him while He is near.

Let the wicked forsake his way,

And the unrighteous man his thoughts;

Let him return to the Lord,

And He will have mercy on him;

And to our God,

For He will abundantly pardon.

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts,

Nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord.

“For as the heavens are higher than the earth,

So are My ways higher than your ways,

And My thoughts than your thoughts.

Isaiah 55:6-9



Volume 44 - Number 3 - May/June 2025

BC is published every other month. Send all inquiries, address changes and subscriptions to the editor: L Scott Gage, PO Box 3425, Fayetteville, AR 72702-3425 Voice 479-521-6809

Email: Lsgage129@cs.com

www.basicchristianity.net