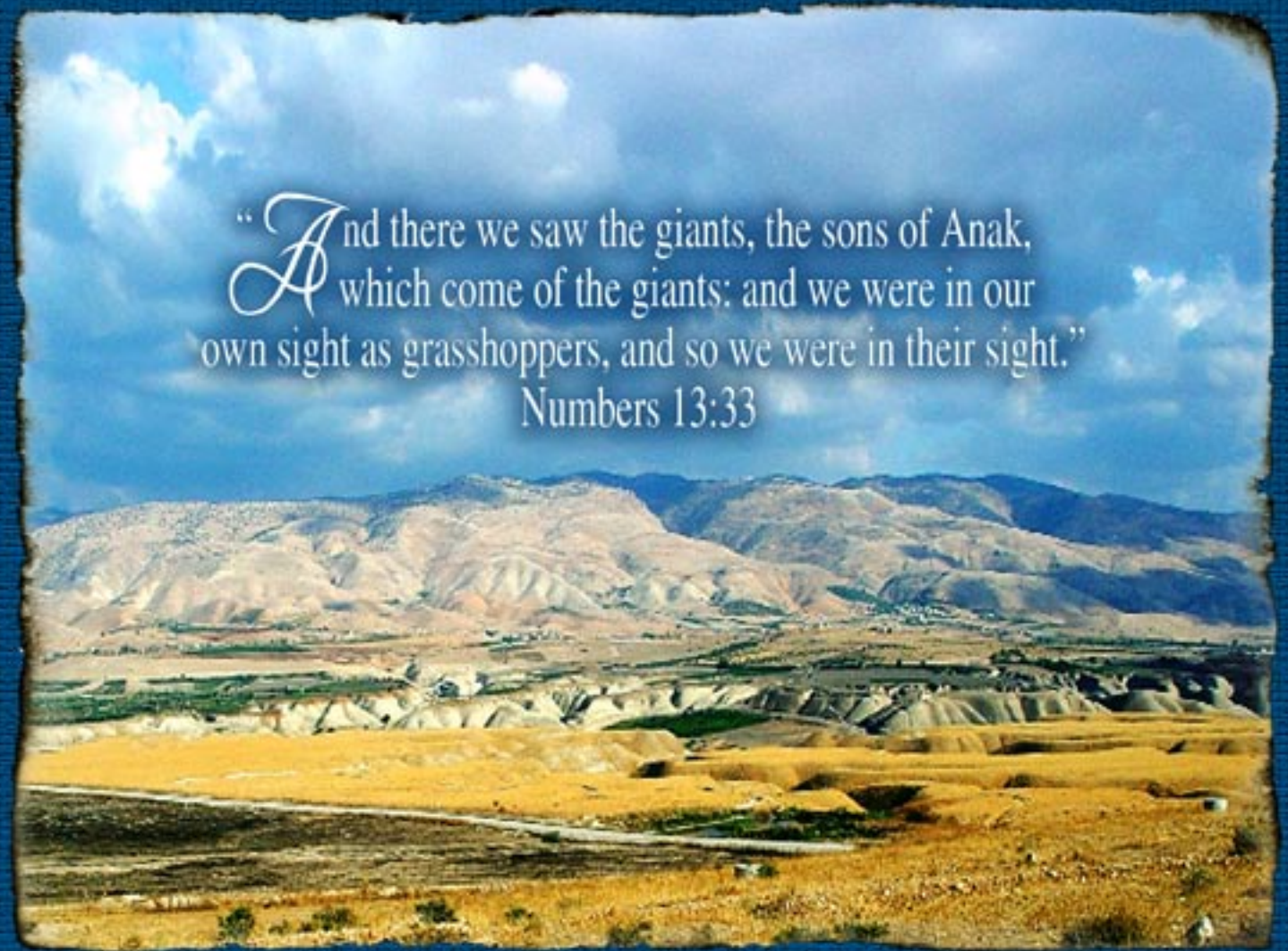


Rivers Of Living Water

“And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak,
which come of the giants: and we were in our
own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.”

Numbers 13:33



Grasshopper Christians
ONLY KNOW FAILURE



*"The grass withereth,
the flower fadeth:
but the word of our God
shall stand for ever."
ISAIAH 40:8*

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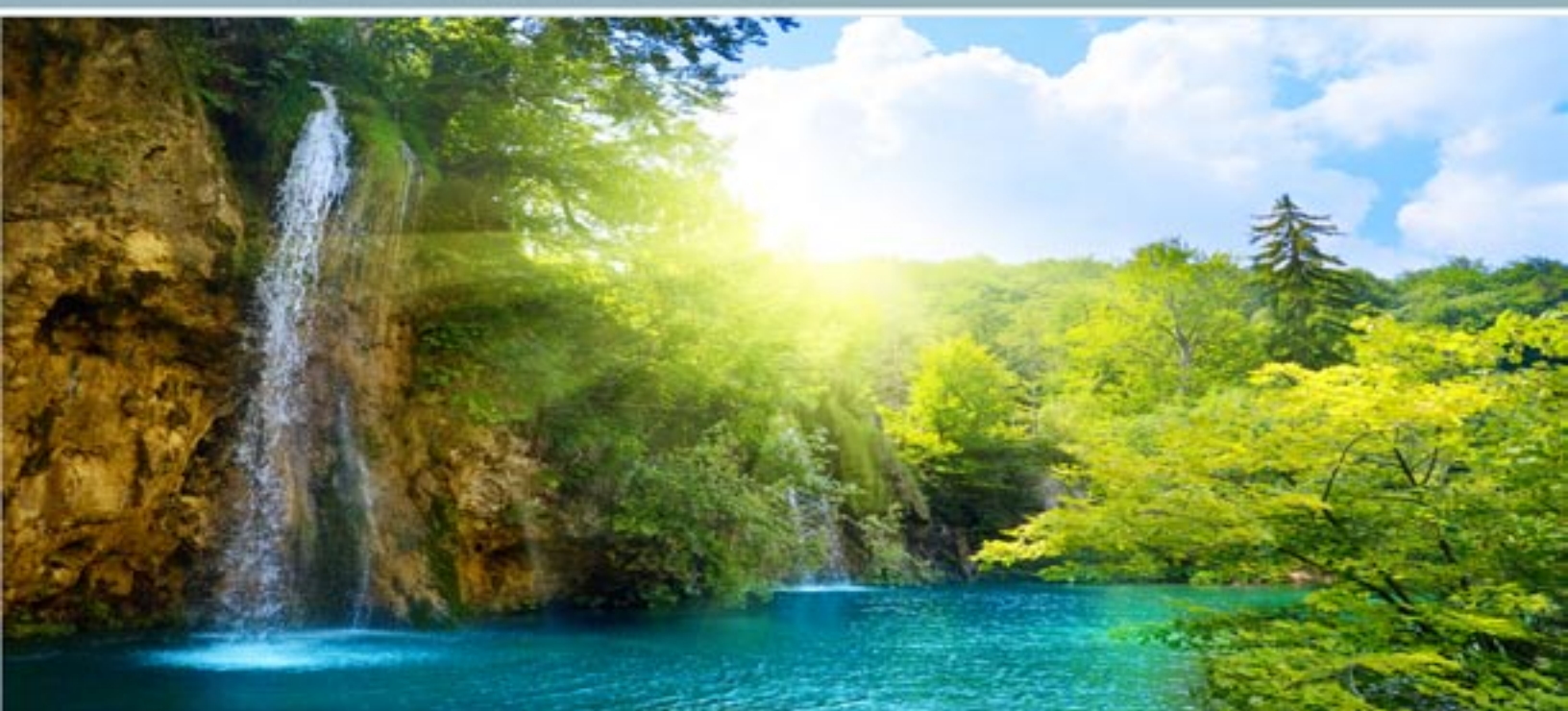
Streams In The Desert DEVOTIONAL

“We walk by faith, not by sight” - II Corinthians 5:7

THERE are heavenly notes which have power to break down walls of adamant and dissolve mountains of difficulty. The song of Paul and Silas burst the fetters of the Philippian gaol; the choir of Jehoshaphat put to flight the armies of the Ammonites, and the song of faith will disperse our adversaries and lift our sinking hearts into strength and victory. Beloved, is it the dark hour with us? the winter of barrenness and gloom? Oh, let us remember that it is God's chosen time for the education of faith and that He conceals beneath the surface, precious and untold harvests of unthought-of fruit! It will not be always winter, it will not be always night, and when the morning comes and spring spreads its verdant mantle over the barren fields then we shall be glad that we did not disappoint our Father in the hour of testing, but that faith had already claimed and seen in the distance the glad fruition which sight now beholds, with a rapture even less than the vision of naked faith.

Lord, help me to believe when I cannot see, and learn from my trials to trust Thee more.

~A.B. Simpson, Days Of Heaven Upon Earth





Grasshopper Christians ONLY KNOW FAILURE

Num. 13:1-3 "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them. And Moses by the commandment of the LORD sent them from the wilderness of Paran: all those men were heads of the children of Israel."

Num. 13:26-33 "And they went and came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and shewed them the fruit of the land. And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it. Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan. And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it. But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we. And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight."

Num. 14:1-4 "And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt? And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt."

Num. 14:15-16 "Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, Because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land which he swore unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness."

Num. 14:26-31 "And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me. Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the LORD, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you: Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me, Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun. But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised."

1. THE TWELVE SPIES.

Most of us are familiar with the story of the twelve spies. Moses had been trained and raised up by God to deliver Israel. Moses said to pharaoh, "Let my people go!" Under the divine leadership of God, he had led the children of Israel safely across the Red Sea to the other side.

He then led them through the wilderness and brought them to the borders of their inheritance. Now the command was given to them to go at once and possess the land that God had given them. But instead of going at once, they appointed a committee of twelve to go and spy out the land and to bring back a report. But like

many committees, when they returned and gave their report they did not all agree. Ten out of the twelve brought back the report that most of the church world today believes. Listen to what the ten said when they returned:

"We spied out the Promised Land and we discovered things that

God Himself did not know, it is filled with giants! I don't know what God was thinking when He told us to possess such a land. I think He overrated both His power and ours. I think we ought to give up on such a wild dream and let us go back to Egypt where we belong."

What a faith builder they brought back. It only filled the congregation with bitterness, disappointment, sobbing, and confusion. Only two out of the twelve believed what God said. Caleb stood up and said, "We have spied out the land and we found it is an exceedingly good land; I think we ought to go up at once and possess it, we are well able. The giants will be bread for us." Sad to say, but the two were the minority and the ten the majority, so they put away God's promise, until the last member of the majority had been buried.

This sad story is the story of a generation who threw away its chance. Forty years they wasted the promises of God. It tells of how a whole nation deliberately threw away the treasures God had for them. They toiled right up to the hour of their triumph and then threw it away. It is the story of how a generation stood face to face with God, who promised them their land of hopes, but instead of taking what He had given, they threw up their hands and gave up. This scenario has been repeated for centuries. What a tragedy for men to never claim their best, and not achieve their possibilities, or possess their possessions.

Never forget this; possessions must be possessed or they can never be ours. God Himself cannot give you what you do not want and will not take. These people would not take what was really theirs. They refused to achieve what God had for them. How many people do we know that through the years, in the natural and in the spiritual, had unbelievable gifts, talents, abilities that never used them to reach their full potential. They literally refused to possess their possessions. I'm sure there have been millions of poets that never sang a single song. I'm sure there have been millions of artists that never painted a single picture. I'm sure there have been millions of prophets that

never seen a vision.

THE PRODIGAL SON.

In *Luke 15:21-32*, we learn that the prodigal son had a brother who never left his father's house. He never went into the far country; he stayed at home and worked. Now the older brother was in the field as the story goes. He was out where the wheat was growing. He was out where all the hard work was being done in the hot sun. The eldest son went to his father and said, "*Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.*" Did you notice what he said? He is telling us that all these years of labor, have been absolutely fruitless years. He is telling us that even though he remained at home, even though he had lived in his father's house, he had never really got anything out of it. He is saying, "I have lived in the church five years, ten years, twenty years, and have never been blessed or helped, not one time. All he can do is talk about his brother's sins. What's he saying? I have heard of men speak of the joy of answered prayer, but I have never known that joy. I have heard them talk about the presence of Christ filling their heart, but I've never felt anything like that. Notice, the father's answer! "*Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.*" What is the father saying? He is telling his son that the only reason he hasn't received anything is his own fault. What could he have received? "Thou art ever with me." He could have had the constant presence of his father. "All that I have is thine." He could have enjoyed all the resources of his father. All that was wrong with him was, he would not claim what was his, even though he was a son, he lived as a slave. (And got mad when his brother repented and got saved.) He never drank the water of life freely. He never ate the bread of life that was in his own household. He refused to take what was his own.

This is what the Israelites failed to see for forty years. God had already given them the land, but they would not take it, but threw their chance away. Why?

I. THEY FAILED BECAUSE THEY HAD NO FAITH.

They were more in awe of the difficulties than they were of the presence and power of God. They saw the giants more clearly than they saw the Lord. This does not mean that a man of faith is to ignore or belittle the difficulties. Caleb and Joshua saw the giants just as clearly as the ten did. This is the difference, the ten saw the giants only, and in their presence they themselves looked like grasshoppers.

Caleb and Joshua saw the giants, but they saw God up against the giants, and that made their enemies look like grasshoppers. If we don't see God we either don't know Him or we're not looking for Him. The ten failed because of a lack of faith. They didn't believe what God had told them. If you believe nothing you will accomplish nothing. If you win mightily, you must believe mightily.

II. THEY HAD A LACK OF SELF-RESPECT.

They had no high and holy self-esteem. They were in their own eyes as grasshoppers. No wonder their enemies had this opinion of them. "We were in our own sight grasshoppers and so we were in their sight." If you're a disgrace to yourself, you won't have any trouble finding someone to agree with you. Treat the house of God with disrespect and if you have any friends they will no doubt join you in the disrespect. Disgrace the House of God and you will end up a disgrace to everyone you meet. I believe the church today needs a new baptism in self-respect. We need a new sense of just how important the House of God is. The place we call our church was important enough for Jesus Christ to purchase it with His own precious blood. It is important enough for Him to abide in it. When two or three gather in My Name, I'll be there. It is important enough for Him to build it in the midst of opposition. "I will build My church," He says, "And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." If we're truly Christians today, why should we hang our heads, don't whine about your church, we have nothing to be ashamed of. We're a part of the greatest

institution on this planet; we're the salt of the earth, the light of the world. We have the truth that sets men free. May God deliver us from being grasshopper Christians. The Lord will never be able to take this world with a bunch of Tiny Tim's tiptoeing through the tulips.

If we're too weak and cowardly to stand up for what we believe, if we find ourselves whining and in the face of our enemies, then let's not call our being a coward, humility. There's a lot of church going people that are too afraid to stand up and fight, so they flatter themselves that they are idle and useless because they are so humble. That is not humility. It is an absolute lack of holy self-esteem. It is the absolute opposite of the Christ life. If your faith is gone and you have no self-esteem, now's not the time to talk bitterness and disappointment, but it's time to repent.

III. THEY WERE NOT WILLING TO PAY THE PRICE OF SUCCESS.

They did not want to make any sacrifice. They did not want to fight. They wanted the land to be given to them without having to put out any effort or trouble in taking it. Yes, the land is ours, sure there's giants, sure there's hindrances, but God said it's mine, so why not fight until I possess what's mine. God Himself said, "I can not give a man anything if He will not take it." He has placed before us an open door, and no man can shut it. But we can refuse to enter in. God will never force anyone to walk through the door. Those people were not earnest enough to pay the price and there is absolutely no hope for a man if he is not in earnest. Everything is possible to an earnest man. Impossibilities literally begin to move when they see him coming. But the half-hearted individual nobody is afraid of him. The powers of darkness never worry in his presence. If we're going to win, were going to have to be willing to pay the price. God has no patience with the undecided. In all of my studies of the Bible, I find only one place where

our Lord is seen as being disgusted. He was not disgusted even with the most degraded of sinners. He said things like "neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more." We find God totally disgusted with a church group that was flattering themselves, they were in need of nothing, but He saw them as lukewarm, straddlers, unmoved, unresponsive and He said I'm about to vomit you out of My mouth. Only earnest men, who were willing to fight, won the promise land. These people were not earnest enough to possess their possessions. For this reason they missed their opportunity. For this reason they ceased to make progress. For this reason they wandered in a wilderness.

Multitudes are in this very condition today. How many of us are not going anywhere? I know we haven't



arrived, but are we traveling? Are we growing? How many are no closer to Canaan, no closer to the land of promise than the day they started out? I read a story about a woman pushing a baby carriage, when a lady just stopped to get a look at the baby and she couldn't believe her eyes as the baby's face looked like an older person. So she asked the woman in astonishment, "How old is the baby?" She said, "Thirty-five years old." It had never grown. It had never moved toward its Canaan and for that reason it was somebody's heartache.

LET US GO UP AT ONCE AND POSSESS IT.

May we arise, like Caleb and say, "Let us go up at once and possess it." We can do what God has called us to do. We can fulfill our mission on this earth. Let us rise up with a mighty faith. Let us prepare

our hearts with a high and holy self-esteem. Let us be gripped with a mighty earnestness that will make us rejoice no matter what the sacrifice. This is the only way to enter our Canaan and possess our possessions; there is no other way. How many times have we seen God blamed for someone not getting an answer or a miracle to their prayer? When all along the problem wasn't God, it was unbelief. No faith, no holy self-esteem, not willing to pay the price. From the prayer request to the manifestation, would be what I call paying the price.

God heard you the first day. He will allow the enemy to come and hinder the answer. The enemy wants us to cave in and lose faith, which will ultimately cost us not only our answer, but also our faith in God. The waiting is not supposed to destroy the child of God, but rather draw us closer to God and build our faith, and conform us to Christ's image. If we are not more like Christ after the trial, then the trial was in vain. When the victory and the breakthrough come, and the price has been paid, the enemy and anyone he can use will come to taunt us, and make us feel bad and attempt to steal our praise, and our testimony for what God has done. But this is where our enemies and those who have never paid the price for victory will whine and complain about your blessings. Had they of learned to win a victory on their own, they would be rejoicing with you.

Paying the price is not easy, but if you won't give up, when it is paid, you'll know it, God will know it, and your enemies will know it. You can rejoice and praise God and not let anyone or anything steal your testimony. The things in life you pay the most for are the things you cherish or protect the most. What is true in the natural is true in the spiritual. What it cost to get the victory is what it will cost to keep it. But what you learned, what you gained in paying the price is eternal. It's your testimony and don't you let some grasshopper Christian rob you of your inheritance.

God Bless You,
Pastor Duke Downs



The Heavenly Vision

BY PASTOR DAREN DOWNS

Ephesians 1:17-18

“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.”

John 16:16

“A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.”

Matthew 5:8

“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God”

I. THE HEAVENLY VISION.

In order to move onward to higher places and new discoveries, man has to see beyond where he is. Man must have a new vision, a new thought, in order to move beyond. This is a great problem knowing that man spiritually is born a slave, and if you have never known freedom it is difficult to desire it. Man tends to adapt to his conditions.

In the book of Ezra, as the foundation of the temple was being laid, those that remembered the former temple of Solomon wept. They remembered the former glory that had been lost, but there were many among them that were born in captivity. By the words of the elders Solomon's temple had been painted upon their minds.

In Babylon the children of Israel wept when they remembered Zion. But there were those that didn't remember Zion, they were born into Babylonian slavery. The difference is the difference between someone who has lost their sight and someone that was born blind. Rather having lost sight or never having it, God can solve either problem, and He does this as the great Originator of vision: “And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your

young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams” (Acts 2:17).

There is a remarkable connection here between the Holy Ghost and vision. Tongues is the initial physical evidence, but if you have really been filled with the Holy Ghost your eyes cannot help but open and you will see beyond where you are. Columbus made his discoveries a thousand times over in his heart long before his ship broke through the waters of the Atlantic. The mind of Columbus had already discovered the distant lands. He only needed to set sail to find them. There is a statue in Barcelona, Spain today of Columbus pointing across the seas. It marks the place where he returned from his first voyage and reported his findings to the King and Queen.

And God's people, who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness, shall be filled. The Holy Ghost will come and He will set the eyes of vision upward and beyond. We are told, “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.” And when the signs of the end are all around to “look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption

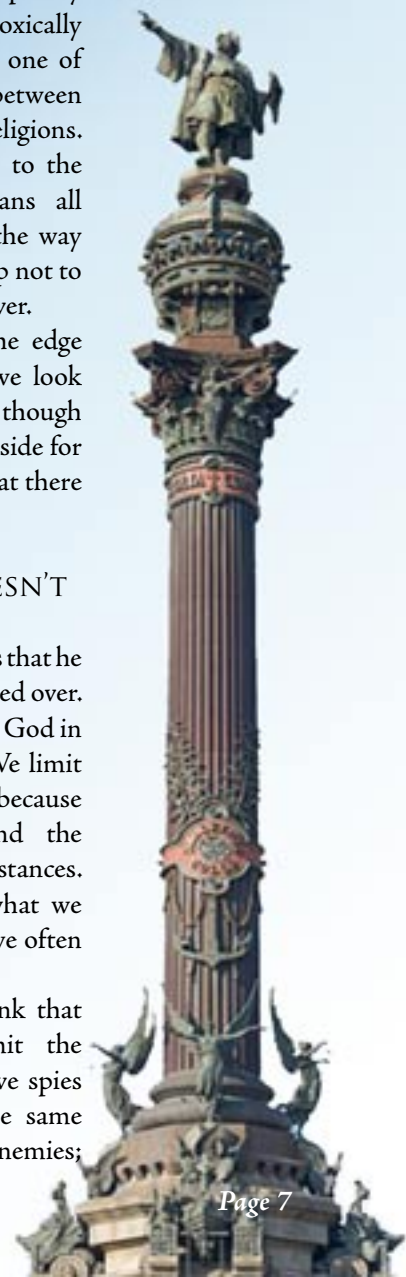
draweth nigh.” A longing heart for God will be completely satisfied and yet paradoxically long for more. This is one of the great differences between Christianity and other religions. God satisfies, He saves to the uttermost – that means all the way down and all the way through. He fills the cup not to the brim, but running over.


Standing on the edge of the things of God we look out across the oceans, though we cannot see the other side for its vastness, we know that there is more land out there.

II. CHANGE DOESN'T COME EASY.

The problem with man is that he becomes static and crusted over. We tend to want to hold God in the past experiences. We limit ourselves in this way, because we cannot see beyond the past or present circumstances. Naturally, we believe what we can see and touch and we often fear the unknown.

It seems strange to think that finite man could limit the infinite God. But twelve spies saw the same land, the same giants, and the same enemies;





only two of those spies seen beyond the circumstances and knew that God would be with them to conquer.

Breaking up old habits and thought patterns to make room for new ones isn't an easy thing to do. Though it was only eleven days journey to the land of promise, it took forty years to get the Egyptian mind out of the Israelites. For anyone to go anywhere in life or in growth of the spirit, there must be change – a metamorphosis.

We get caught up in the rut of religious life. We tragically learn how to do it. We go about all of the laws, and yet spiritually we may be cold and dead. We forget that the abundant life isn't in the doing or the keeping of the laws, it is found in abiding in the Lawgiver.

We like our religion brought down into a little box where we can see it, hold it, and appreciate it. Every once in awhile we take it out and look at it. Jesus shattered that little religious box when He stepped into ministry. The countless questionings of how, why, where, what to do; all of these are answered in the supernatural realm and life of the Holy Spirit.

We become fixed on something past, on the lower vision. Much of what is done in the church world today has nothing of the supernatural in it. It is totally devoid of anything supernatural, and thus can be practiced and kept in the natural – the flesh. Jesus dealt with this in a few instances in the scripture. Some fell in love with the incarnate Christ – a good thing indeed – but it was not the fullness of why He came. He didn't come to live forever in His own human body on this earth. That would last a little over thirty years. That was

a great part on the road to God's fullness, but one cannot stop there as some have, having nothing more than a crucifix.

Peter has to be rebuked, "Get thee behind me Satan." You are in My way [an offense and a hindrance and a snare to Me]; for you are minding what partakes not of the nature and quality of God, but of men. For you do not have a mind intent on promoting what God wills, but what pleases men [you are not on God's side, but that of men].

All of this because he could not see that the path of the Lord was going to go beyond his first revelation: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." But He will yet be the crucified Christ, the resurrected Christ, the risen Lord, the glorified Son and Advocate at the right hand of the Father. The shepherds came to find the Savior, but the wise men found the King. In time the disciples would come to know Him as Teacher. On the mount He was transfigured and His garments were brilliant light. Paul met Him in His power and authority on the road to Damascus. This world is going to soon know "the wrath of the Lamb."

Mary comes to His tomb and she doesn't recognize Him. "Where have they taken my Lord?" She is looking for a form, for the man that stood in front of her brother's tomb. Can we blame her? There's never been one like Him before. By her words we know that Mary was searching for the body of Christ. Her eyes had to be opened to the risen Lord, but then to the ascended Lord, but then to the indwelling Lord Jesus Christ by the Holy Ghost. The fact that Mary did not recognize Jesus at His tomb tells us that the resurrection was a whole lot more than just coming back to life.

Do not stop on this highway! "Stop grasping onto Me Mary, I haven't yet ascended to the Father." There is a better day than this one coming Mary. "Your sorrow will be turned into joy." I am coming to live in you by the Spirit and that is a whole lot closer than the grasp of your hands. You came here to take me to your home, but when I come back I will take you to your new home.

The two on the Emmaus Road are talking about Jesus, to Jesus; but they do not know Him. They are looking for the man that did all the miracles in their towns. They are looking for "Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people."

Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? Lk. 24:25-26

This is what Jesus was referring to when He said, "A little while and ye shall not see Me, and yet a little while and ye shall see Me." It is the difference between the Greek words *theorie* and *opsis*. One is a wonderment the other is a convincing and leads to faith. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth [with earnest gaze *theoria*] the linen clothes lie (Jn. 20:6).

Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed [took in the whole meaning of it, was convinced, *opsis*] (Jn. 20:8).

He believed that the body of the Lord had been taken.

Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more (2Cor.

5:16).

Have you halted the ongoing vision of Christ in your life? The lack of hunger for more of Him is evidence that vision has been lost. What a change in the life of the disciples after the ascension and the coming of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of Christ did more for the disciples in a few moments than three and a half years of His physical presence could do. How true the words of Jesus, "It is expedient for you that I go away."

III. THE EXPANDING VISION.

A lady in London heard the passage "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think..." came under such convicting power that she felt she could not rest until God had made it real to her. She knew that she had never received exceeding abundantly above all that she asked or thought, and she just went to her Father, and asked Him to make His word true to her, and told Him that she would never cease until this verse had become her actual experience. She waited upon God for many weeks, and when she came back she told her pastor that her prayer was answered, and God had revealed Himself to her in a manner far exceeding her highest thought. But she said that He had shown her that there was so much more yet for her to receive, that He had raised her thought as far above her blessing, as her blessing had been above her former thought.

God took her desire and blessed her beyond her expectations, but in that experience, God raised her thought and desire greater than her previous desire. And so He was leading her on from glory to glory, and as each new capacity was filled it was enlarged and filled again. Anyone who has vision by the Holy Ghost knows that the vision expands. Just as you come to where you think God is leading you, the road goes onward. The vision expands into far greater things. There are things you could not see at lower levels. You climb the mountain to what you believe to be the top, but as you pierce through the clouds you discover that what you thought was the peak was

only a steppingstone to one much higher and beyond. At this moment you can either sit down where you are (like most do) and say, "Well I've come as far as I want to come" or you can move on with God. God wants to raise us up higher and higher with Him.

The born again know and appreciate His death for them. Those that walk in newness of life know and appreciate the resurrection of Christ. Those that are filled with the Holy Ghost and are walking in the Spirit know the risen and enthroned Christ; they know the indwelling Christ. But there is yet more and more of Christ to know. Paul said, "That I may know Him in the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death" (Phil. 3:10). He raises us in order that we might see. Only the new man can present his body a living sacrifice.

IV. HOW GOD BREAKS UP THE FALLOW GROUND IN OUR LIVES.

The former vision of Christ was taken away from the disciples, but God never gives back to us less than what He gave us. If you haven't backslid, your loss is only making way for the more and greater blessing of God. God gives exceedingly and abundantly, more than we can ask or think.

God will allow us to enter into situations of perplexity. He is not the author of confusion, but He allows us to be brought into situations where only a new revelation of Christ can be the answer. You observed that Jesus was your healer, but when you were sick and He healed you, He became your healer. You observed righteousness and holiness in others and in those of the scriptures, but when your life changed, He became your righteousness. All of the attributes of Christ are to be revealed in and through your life. He has not come to give you things, He has come to be them in you and to make you truth.

I remember some years ago, in a prayer meeting, suddenly the Spirit of God came on me and I could not stand

upon me feet. I fell in the floor and cried out as I had never done before in my life. My vision was opened and I seen a harvest field. I could hear the voice of the Lord in the wind as it blew across the field. The grain was ripe and beginning to fall. He said to me, "Come and harvest. Come and harvest." I began to tell Him how busy I was and that I could do no more than now. But He kept calling, "Come and harvest." I said to the Lord, "I will go, but you have to lift up these hands." In the next moments God began to reveal faces to me of people all over the world that I had known. He said, "They are praying for you, and I hear them." He began to show me that I could not produce enough effort or energy to fulfill the will of God for my life. The only way was to trust Him to be my all-in-all. That if I would trust Him, He would send the laborers to lift up my feeble hands.

That day He became my El-Shaddai. That is my testimony. Everyone will have their own testimony of how the Lord became their El-Shaddai – their all-in-all. He wants it to be personal. He has a white stone for you specifically that no one else knows the name that is written upon it save the one that receiveth it.

After some years, I cannot say that my hands are so much stronger, but I can truly say that I have come to know like king Joash – His hands upon my hands guiding the bow, supplying the strength, taking the aim. Everything that we cannot do He comes as the power to be and to do, in us and through us. He is coming for those that are watching and waiting. There is a crown awaiting all those that love His appearing. If we are in a race then there is no time to fall back, we must ever move onward.

God Bless You,
Pastor Daren Downs

Bringing Hope To The Hopeless

BY PASTOR DAREN DOWNS

In 1994 we made our first trip into the nation of Armenia. We met with former students of the SOC and their pastors and were assigned to go out and evangelize with them. We were assigned to two young men Avodis and Artok.

We stayed at the home of brother Avodis. They served us with the best that they had and brother Avodis' mother came to wash our feet. She was a very dear woman of faith and recently went home to be with the Lord. Brother Avodis' father is still alive and it was he that stood outside his home weeping nearly 17 years ago, because he had prayed for 25 years for God to send missionaries to Armenia. He said, "Not only did God send them, but they stayed in my house."



Picture Above: Artok and Avodis 1994.

At that time we met sister Veronica who was the interpreter for the Armenian SOC. She was about 19 years of age. Little did we know of the great plans that God had for her life and the suffering that she would pass through to see those plans become a reality.



Picture Above: Avodis' Father

It has been nearly 17 years since we began this work and I recently returned from Armenia very pleased with the current results.



Picture Above: Avodis' Church.

Avodis and Artok began as evangelists but today are the pastors of the two main churches in Vanadzor and are pastoring over 3,000 people including the churches in the villages. Avodis is pastoring on the East side of Vanadzor in a building that the giving of the Lord's people provided. On Sunday I had the privilege of preaching at both churches. Artok pastors on the West side of the city in a new building that was constructed with the giving of many brethren here in America. They are still expanding into new areas and planting new churches in villages that didn't have one before.

In one of the new villages that we visited there was a woman who had been injured in her head from a machine. She was taken to Yerevan, but wasn't expected to survive the journey. When she arrived doctors refused to operate and gave her up for dead. The brethren prayed and asked Jesus to do the operation. God touched her! She wasn't supposed to live, but she is alive today. She met us at the door of the house when we arrived. She still has some complications, but we are believing the Lord for a complete recovery. People had been gathering in her home to pray for her and as a result there is now a church in her home in the village of Vartablur, near Stepanavan, Armenia.



Picture Above: Artok's Church.

Last year there was a great need for vehicles for the pastors to continue going out to the villages to minister. Your giving provided a new Ford van which is in great condition and seats about 15 people. The rest of the money given for vehicles helped to repair their existing vehicles and with a little more we will be able to purchase one more for brother Armen.



Picture Above: Van purchased.



Picture Above: Brother Armen.

Concerning House of Hope

I spent two days at the House of Hope where the ministry has doubled in the last few months. There are now about 78 in the elderly in the House of Hope.



Picture Above: The House Of Hope.



Picture Above: The elderly gentlemen abandoned by his children.

We found the House of Hope so full of life and joy. It was the best that I have ever seen it. What came to me was the verse in the Song of Solomon: – “My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away” (Song 2:10-13). It is like a big family. For many of them, they will never see another winter. They will be in heaven before the year is over.

An elder gentlemen was left in the hospital by his four children. They said, “We cannot take care of him anymore.” The hospital called the House of Hope asking if they could take him in, and that he hadn’t much longer to live. They said, “Of course.” When he was brought to the house he was offered a hot meal and he refused. He said, “I don’t want to eat, because if I go to the bathroom there is no one to help me clean up.” They told him, “Eat all that you want and you will be taken care of.” His feet were rotten from gangrene. He lived only three days at the House of Hope and passed away the day I arrived in Armenia. Since his children don’t want to bury him the House of Hope will take care of his funeral and burial.



Picture Above: A few of the elderly living in the House Of Hope.

their heart. To work at the home you must be able to handle the conditions of the elderly, you must be patient and loving, and you cannot shout at them.

Not all of the people that are working at the House of Hope were believers when they were hired, but some of them have come to know the Lord and others are really beginning to change as well. There is a real atmosphere of peace and love in the home.

Toward the end of last year we sponsored by faith 15 veterans from World War II to be placed in the home, not knowing if the finances would come in to keep them there. We are happy to report that all 15 of the veterans are in the House of Hope today. The Lord has provided. While I was visiting the man that represents the veterans to the government was also at the House of Hope. He played the accordion while they sang and danced.



Picture Above: Veteran's grouped.



Picture Above: Woman Veteran.

This woman is one of the decorated veterans that fought for almost 5 years in the Caucasus. She told me, “I fought for Stalin.” She was a machine gunner shooting at airplanes. When she came walking down the hall with all of her metals on, an old Russian woman in the House of Hope carrying her cane saw her. I heard the cane crack on the ground and turned to see the Russian woman saluting her.

There was also a Ukrainian woman in the home who was also in World War II. She was in communications and was captured and put into a German prison. It is a miracle that she survived.

Ripsik will be celebrating her 100th birthday at the House of Hope in May of this year. The celebrating of birthdays is something quite special. Many that have come to the House of Hope have been abandoned by family and feel as though their life has no value, and to take time to recognize their birthdays is a real blessing to them.

One morning we traveled less than a quarter mile from the House of Hope to visit a 76 year-old woman who is a candidate to be received into the home. She is living in the bottom floor of an apartment building in Vanadzor. The apartment has only one room, a tiny kitchen and a non-functioning toilet. Upon entering the first thing you notice is the smell. There is no running water and no electricity; and thus there is no heat. There was a fresh coat of snow on the ground outside from the previous night.

Sister Veronica and her brother Armen brought her some milk (which she loves more than anything else to eat) and also a meal and a piece of fruit. She was sitting in her bed talking with us, her mind is still sharp. We believe that she may have once been a journalist. She cannot remember when she took her last bath. The deplorable conditions were certainly the worst I had ever seen a human live in. I asked, “Does she have any children?” We have only heard, but do not know for sure that she has a son living in the United States. Men have come at times frightening her and stealing her pension. Veronica is offering her a place in the House of Hope. Heaven is open on the House of Hope, and the blessings of God are seen everywhere. Joy fills the house. The winter truly has ended in their lives and the new life of spring has come. What an honor to have a part in a ministry that is reaching some of the hardest to reach, the elderly. Everyone that comes into the home hears the gospel and to our knowledge, not one yet has been lost



Picture Above: House Of Hope Canidate.

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