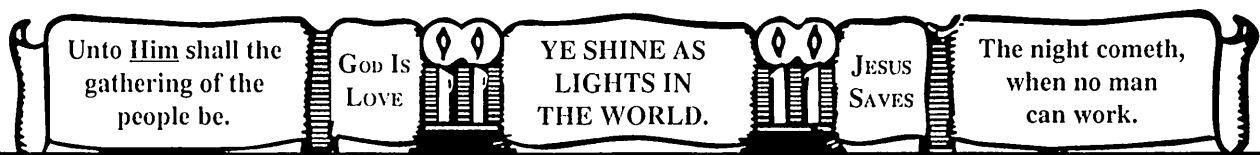


# FAITH AND VICTORY

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## Church of God Servant



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### “Jesus Christ the Same Yesterday, and Today, and Forever!”

By Bro. Curtis Williams

Dear Bro. Willie, Sis Neta, and to all the wonderful family of God, greetings in the precious name of Jesus our Savior. I truly have much to thank the Lord for today and He is surely worthy of all our praise and thanksgiving. I also want to thank each one that has so faithfully carried the burden for us through this past year and a half. We truly appreciate it and we have been very humbled by all the love and support that we have received. It especially touched our hearts to see the love and the burden that the young people carried for us during this battle. We will be forever indebted to God and to His people for the love shown to us.

Last night as I was lying on my bed I was thinking about thanksgiving and the thought came to me so clearly “God does not need to ‘inspire us’ to thank the Lord, because He is worthy of all our praise and it is our ‘duty’ to praise Him.” The Lord reminded me of what the enemy did to steal my testimony several years ago and I realized that this was what Satan wanted to do again. I decided to share both

testimonies now to the glory of God, and in hopes that it will also be a help to others to recognize his tactics. If he can keep us silent it helps add credibility to what he is trying to convince people in our world today, “that God is not working miracles anymore, or at least not like He once did” but praise God “*He is the same yesterday, today, and forever!*”

Several years ago while I was at the Guthrie Assembly meeting, at the old campgrounds in town, I was helping to wash dishes in the kitchen. The dishwater had been mixed with Clorox and I did not realize that the chemical reaction of the Clorox and soap was poisonous to breath, if breathed for an extended period of time. The sink was low and I had to bend low over it to reach the bottom so I had breathed quite a bit of the fumes before the afternoon was over. By the next day my throat was beginning to be extremely sore and we left for home thinking I may be getting the flu or something. Within days my uvula began to swell until it would nearly block my throat. To make a long story short it continued to get worse and soon began to look very serious.

As I was praying one day the Lord brought the part of scripture to my mind that says “*as your faith is so be it unto you*” and the Lord inspired me that if I could have the faith to believe, He would heal me. Bro. Don McIntosh was our pastor at that time and he came by to have prayer for me, and the Lord instantly gave

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me a healing touch. We were rejoicing and thanking God for what He had done and soon everyone began to leave so we could get some rest, as we had not had much for some time. However, I was young and did not recognize the tactics of the enemy. Shortly after we started to settle down for the night the symptoms began to come back again. Since we knew everyone was tired we didn't want to bother anyone and did not call for prayer, but by morning the symptoms were worse than before. The Lord helped me to see later on that the devil had stolen our victory, but at the time it was hard for my faith to take hold again. I realized that I needed a greater faith than I had at the time and so I began to ask people to pray for the Lord to increase my faith.

Eventually my condition got to the point that I would have to lay my head sideways in order to breathe, and then my jaw began to lock. My wife realized that things were getting very serious and since our pastor was away she called and asked some other ministers to come and agree in prayer for me. Bro. Gordon Humphrey, Bro. Charles Lowe, Sis. Theresa Gains and Sis. Eva Hardeman, along with several other Saints, came and had prayer for me. After they prayed I still did not feel any different physically but my faith was inspired and I began to try to thank God for answering prayer, with my jaw still locked. As I began to thank the Lord the Saints began to sing and praise God, and the Lord released my jaw, and if I remember right He also took all the swelling away at that time. I continued to praise God for what He had done but as I was very weak at this time I felt I needed to rest some and so I asked the Saints not to leave until I had rested. They did not understand why I asked that but agreed to stay. Later I explained that I wanted to make sure that I was strong enough to resist the enemy before they left. After I rested some they prayed once again and asked the Lord to strengthen me, and to help me to know how to resist the enemy if he tried to bring the symptoms back again. From that point I do not recall having any more problems with the swelling or with my jaw locking again.

At Monark that year I tried to thank the Lord for what He had done and the Saints for their prayers for me. I intended to write my testimony later and send it in to the *Faith & Victory* but the enemy convinced me that if I did that people would think I was "just boasting about my faith

in God" because of how the Lord had inspired me with the scripture "*as your faith is so be it unto you.*" I knew that it was not "my faith" or anything that I had done and that it was God that had given me the inspiration of faith, but I still allowed the enemy to convince me to put off writing my testimony because I did not want to take any credit for what God had done. By the time I realized that it was only the enemy's tactic to keep me silent it was several years later and I felt it was too late to write it then. The enemy knew I was very sensitive about wanting to make sure that God got all the credit, and he used that sensitivity to effectively rob God of the praise that He was due.

All of this came to my mind as I lay in bed last night, and I was determined not to allow the enemy to hinder me a single day longer, so I began to write this not long after I arose this morning. I am convinced that if Satan cannot hinder us from trusting God, to begin with, he will try to hinder us from sharing what God has done for us in any way that he can, because he does not want others to know or God to get the glory He is due.

As many of you know, I began to experience a series of heart attacks that started in September of 2009 and continued until November of that year. All together I had somewhere around seven or eight attacks, three of which the doctor (that came out to our house to examine me for my job) said were "major myocardial infarctions" and all of which he told me, "could have checked you out of here." He came back to examine me on two other occasions and on one of those visits he told me, "you know we really should be talking about what a nice fellow you *were*," because, as he told us, I should not have been around to talk about it. But God, in His great love and mercy, and in answer to all the prayers that went up in my behalf, saw fit to permit me to stay here a little longer.

But before I continue on I feel it would be good to give a little background on my condition that led up to the attacks. I had been experiencing problems for about eight or nine years prior to this, but had not said much about it to anyone except to my family and my pastor. I felt like this condition was different than anything else I had experienced, and that God wanted me to trust Him to take care of it. I felt inspired that as long as I was able to carry the burden for my condition that God wanted me to do so, and that when it got to the point that I could no longer

carry it He would let others carry the burden for me. I only relate this because I feel it is important that we move according to the way God inspires us or it will give the enemy room to hinder our faith. God knew my heart and He knew that my greatest desire was to draw closer to Him and to have a deeper relationship with Him than I have ever had before, in order to be a better witness for Him. There were many times that I did not feel like traveling several miles to hold a service/meeting, and yet He always provided the strength or help that I needed just in time. There were different times when it would be time to get up to preach and the pain would be so strong, and my eyesight so blurred, that I did not see how I could do it. But without fail, by the time I got into the pulpit and opened my Bible it would begin to clear up.

I want to make it clear that God does not lead the same way in every battle—for me, or for others. It is important that we follow His leadings in each and every battle or it will hinder our faith and His ability to work as He desires. The enemy will do his best to get us to do differently, because he knows it will leave us confused and discouraged, and God many times gets the blame. In the sickness I described that happened several years ago the Lord inspired me to have faith to believe and He instantly gave me a touch, and I could relate many other times like this that God has performed instant healings for our family. But with this condition God was preparing me for a different test of faith. I had been praying for some time for the Lord to help me to be a better witness for Him in my community and on my job. Little did I know how He was going to answer that prayer, or what all He had in mind, but I believe He inspired me to pray that way.

After I had the first attack I didn't know if God intended to take me on or heal me. For that first week when I asked the Lord about it I could not get anything except that it was like I was looking down a long tube that had a Tee at the end. It seemed like it could go either way, and that God was waiting on something before He decided which way it would go. On Thursday of that week our pastor Bro. James Bell and Bro. Charles Lowe came to anoint and pray for me. I had been very low all week and was having pain and difficulty breathing when they came. But as they started visiting with me it began to feel like a breath of fresh air had come into the room. When they anointed me and had prayer my faith

felt inspired and I felt definitely that God had heard prayer. I still had the discomfort and pain but I began to ask the Lord if He wanted me to get up by faith and claim my healing. The Lord let me know it was not time for that yet, but I told them that I felt like the Lord had heard prayer. I also felt like the Lord had witnessed, through the brethren, that God wanted me to be a witness for Him through this. I began to improve and I thought that it would be just a matter of time before I would be up and about, but I had no idea how much was ahead of me at that time; I thank God for His wisdom. By Saturday I was looking forward to being able to sit up in the chair beside my bed in another day or two, but before I could even begin to try something like that I took a sudden turn for the worse and had another attack on Monday.

After this I would experience a number of attacks over the weeks ahead and each one seemed to take me lower and lower. After one attack my body went into shock and it seemed like I could feel the life draining out of my body. But God was faithful and heard the cries of His children and He brought me through once again. Over and over the Lord would answer prayer in ways that it was unmistakable to us that He was on the scene.

Prior to my body going into shock, I was having other complications which had triggered another attack. The pains were just like one of the real bad attacks I had before, and I knew my heart could not handle what I was going through. It came to me to ask them to pray that God would hold my heart in His hands until this had all passed. They did and the attack stopped almost as quickly as it had started, and while my body trembled all night long from what it had gone through, I did not have the after pains like I always had after my attacks until later that next evening when everything else in my body began to subside. Only then did the pains gradually start to come back and I felt certain that God had held my heart in His hands during that time because He knew I could not handle it.

One time I was having an attack and was very nauseated and could not get comfortable. I was in a regular bed at the time and could not rise up because the strain was too much for my heart, but the feeling of being nauseated was made worse by lying back. Bro. James, my father-in-law, my mother and others came in and had special prayer and the Lord instantly

(Continued on page eight.)

# FAITH AND VICTORY 12 PAGE HOLINESS MONTHLY



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This publication teaches salvation from all sin, sanctification for believers, unity and oneness for which Jesus prayed as recorded in John 17:21, and manifested by the apostles and believers after Pentecost. By God's grace we teach, preach, and practice the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ-the same gospel that Peter, John, and Paul preached, taught, and practiced, including divine healing for the body. James 5:14-15.

Its motto: Have faith in God. Its object: The glory of God and the salvation of men; the restoration and promulgation of the whole truth to the people in this "evening time" as it was in the morning Church of the first century; the unification of all true believers in one body by the love of God. Its standard: Separation from sin and entire devotion to the service and will of God. Its characteristics: No discipline but the Bible, no bond of union but the love of God, and no test of fellowship but the indwelling Spirit of Christ.

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A separate Missionary Fund is maintained in order to relay missionary funds from our readers to the support of home and foreign missionaries and evangelists.

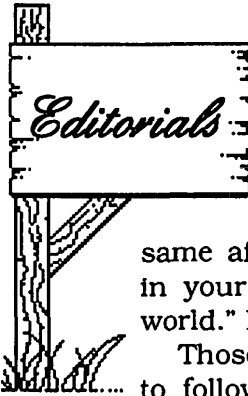
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"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." I Peter 5:8-9.

Those who purpose in their heart to follow the Lord in the way of righteousness soon learn that they have an adversary who is determined to obstruct their progress. This adversary has been busy opposing the Lord's people since the beginning of time. However, sometimes the trials we face as Christians seem so new and strange that we are given to conclude (by the same enemy) that no one else has ever faced such a trial. The purpose of these suggestions are to cause the besieged soul to feel isolated and helpless in the midst of the struggle and to give up following the Lord.

John Bunyan illustrated some of the methods of the enemy in *Pilgrim's Progress* that are good for the child of God to keep in mind, for we face the same enemy and it is beneficial to be reminded from time to time of his tactics.

"But now, in this valley of Humiliation, poor Christian was hard put to it; for he had gone but a little way before he espied a foul fiend coming over the field to meet him: his name is Apollyon. Then did Christian begin to be afraid, and to cast in his mind whether to go back, or to stand his ground. But he considered again, that he had no armor for his back, and therefore thought that to turn the back to him might give him greater advantage with ease to pierce him with his darts; therefore he resolved to venture and stand his ground: for, thought he, had I no more in mine eye than the saving of my life, it would be the best way to stand.

So he went on, and Apollyon met him. Now the monster was hideous to behold: he was clothed with scales like a fish, and they are his pride; he had wings like a dragon, and feet like a bear, and out of his belly came fire and smoke; and his mouth was as the mouth of a lion. When he was come up to Christian, he beheld him with a disdainful countenance, and thus began to question him.

*Apol.* Whence came you, and whither are you bound?

*Chr.* I am come from the city of Destruction, which is the place of all evil, and I am going to the city of Zion.

*Apol.* By this I perceive thou art one of my subjects; for all that country is mine, and I am the prince and god of it. How is it, then, that thou hast run away from thy king? Were it not that I hope thou mayest do me more service, I would strike thee now at one blow to the ground.

*Chr.* I was, indeed, born in your dominions, but your service was hard, and your wages such as a man could not live on; for the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23), therefore, when I was come to years, I did, as other considerate persons do, look out if perhaps I might mend myself.

*Apol.* There is no prince that will thus lightly lose his subjects, neither will I as yet lose thee; but since thou complainest of thy service and wages, be content to go back, and what our country will afford I do here promise to give thee.

*Chr.* But I have let myself to another, even to the King of princes; and how can I with fairness go back with thee?

*Apol.* Thou hast done in this according to the proverb, "changed a bad for a worse;" but it is ordinary for those that have professed themselves his servants, after a while to give him the slip, and return again to me. Do thou so too, and all shall be well.

*Chr.* I have given him my faith, and sworn my allegiance to him; how then can I go back from this, and not be hanged as a traitor.

*Apol.* Thou didst the same by me, and yet I am willing to pass by all, if now thou wilt yet turn again and go back.

*Chr.* What I promised thee was in my non-age: and besides, I count that the Prince, under whose banner I now stand, is able to absolve me, yea, and to pardon also what I did as to my compliance with thee. And besides, O thou destroying Apollyon, to speak truth, I like his service, his wages, his servants, his government, his company, and country, better than thine; therefore leave off to persuade me farther: I am his servant, and I will follow him.

*Apol.* Consider again, when thou art in cool blood, what thou art like to meet with in the way that thou goest. Thou knowest that for the most part his servants come to an ill end, because they are transgressors against me and my ways. How many of them have been put to shameful deaths! And besides, thou countest his service better than mine; whereas he never yet came

from the place where he is, to deliver any that served him out of their enemies' hands: but as for me, how many times, as all the world very well knows, have I delivered, either by power or fraud, those that have faithfully served me, from him and his, though taken by them! And so will I deliver thee.

*Chr.* His forbearing at present to deliver them, is on purpose to try their love, whether they will cleave to him to the end: and as for the ill end thou sayest they come to, that is most glorious in their account. For, for present deliverance, they do not much expect it; for they stay for their glory; and then they shall have it, when their Prince comes in his and the glory of the angels.

*Apol.* Thou hast already been unfaithful in thy service to him; and how dost thou think to receive wages of him?

*Chr.* Wherein, O Apollyon, have I been unfaithful to him?

*Apol.* Thou didst faint at first setting out, when thou wast almost choked in the gulf of Despond. Thou didst attempt wrong ways to be rid of thy burden, whereas thou shouldst have stayed till thy Prince had taken it off. Thou didst sinfully sleep, and lose thy choice things. Thou wast almost persuaded also to go back at the sight of the lions. And when thou talkest of thy journey, and of what thou hast seen and heard, thou art inwardly desirous of vainglory in all that thou sayest or doest.

*Chr.* All this is true, and much more which thou hast left out; but the Prince whom I serve and honor is merciful, and ready to forgive. But besides, these infirmities possessed me in thy country, for there I sucked them in, and I have groaned under them, been sorry for them, and have obtained pardon of my Prince.

*Apol.* Then Apollyon broke out into a grievous rage, saying, I am an enemy to this Prince; I hate his person, his laws, and people: I am come out on purpose to withstand thee.

*Chr.* Apollyon, beware what you do, for I am in the King's highway, the way of holiness; therefore take heed to yourself.

*Apol.* Then Apollyon straddled quite over the whole breadth of the way, and said, I am void of fear in this matter. Prepare thyself to die; for I swear by my infernal den, that thou shalt go no farther: here will I spill thy soul. And with that he threw a flaming dart at his breast; but Christian had a shield in his hand, with which

he caught it, and so prevented the danger of that.

Then did Christian draw, for he saw it was time to bestir him; and Apollyon as fast made at him, throwing darts as thick as hail; by the which, notwithstanding all that Christian could do to avoid it, Apollyon wounded him in his head, his hand, and foot. This made Christian give a little back: Apollyon, therefore, followed his work amain, and Christian again took courage, and resisted as manfully as he could. This sore combat lasted for above half a day, even till Christian was almost quite spent: for you must know, that Christian, by reason of his wounds, must needs grow weaker and weaker.

Then Apollyon, espying his opportunity, began to gather up close to Christian, and wrestling with him, gave him a dreadful fall; and with that Christian's sword flew out of his hand. Then said Apollyon, I am sure of thee now: and with that he had almost pressed him to death, so that Christian began to despair of life. But, as God would have it, while Apollyon was fetching his last blow, thereby to make a full end of this good man, Christian nimbly reached out his hand for his sword, and caught it, saying, Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise (Micah 7:8), and with that gave him a deadly thrust, which made him give back, as one that had received his mortal wound. Christian perceiving that, made at him again, saying, Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us (Rom. 8:37). And with that Apollyon spread forth his dragon wings, and sped him away, that Christian saw him no more (James 4:7).

In this combat no man can imagine, unless he had seen and heard, as I did, what yelling and hideous roaring Apollyon made all the time of the fight; he spake like a dragon: and on the other side, what sighs and groans burst from Christian's heart. I never saw him all the while give so much as one pleasant look, till he perceived he had wounded Apollyon with his two-edged sword; then, indeed, he did smile, and look upward! But it was the dreadfulest sight that ever I saw.

So when the battle was over, Christian said, I will here give thanks to him that hath delivered me out of the mouth of the lion, to him that did help me against Apollyon. And so he did...."

While there are many things one could speak of concerning this illustration, notice the multiple ways Apollyon approached Christian. Just

the approach and visage of Apollyon was terrifying. The enemy often causes our problems to seem like a terrible thing approaching us. Their appearance melts the heart with fear and causes one to believe that there is no way to escape the clutches of their dreadful consequences.

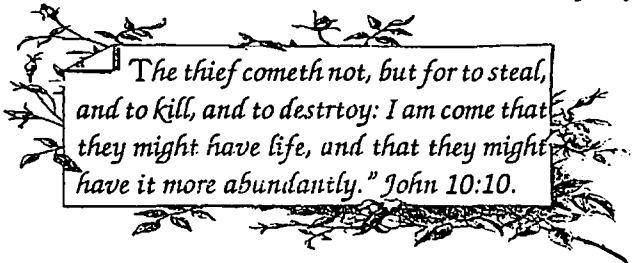
Then Appollyon looked disdainfully at Christian. Have you ever had a disdainful look given to you that just caused your spirit to wither? The look says, you are worthless, you are a reproach, you have no business here. May God help us to have something in our heart that can not be stolen by a withering look.

Then he began to question him. Oh the questions that can torture one's mind when they truly want to do right. The enemy seems to be a master at presenting them. The questions are designed to cause your faith in God to waiver, to distrust your experience of salvation and to lose sight of your hope of glory. They are even designed to make one discontent with the things God has provided for them and to look around at others and see how much better off they are while we struggle to make ends meet—all are given with the intent to cause one to turn away from the Lord.

It may be that the battle becomes even hotter and the stinging darts of the enemy pierce us, causing various injuries to our person. But in the midst of all these things let us continue to resist the devil and call on the Lord for help in our weakness. He has given us many promises that will sustain us in these times of trial if we will only claim them by faith.

As we hold out for God's way, He will soon come to our rescue and give us deliverance. For the Lord is good, His mercy is great toward His children and it will endure forever. (Read Psalm 136.) After we patiently endure we will soon be rejoicing in a great victory. The terror of the previous night's struggles will be dispelled by the dawning light of a more glorious day. May each troubled soul be encouraged to draw closer to God and be assured that all will turn out well for them as they continue to do His righteous will.

—Bro. Willie E. Murphey



## PRAYER REQUESTS

OK—Please pray for Bro. Mancil Doolittle. On the evening of January 22 he suffered a very serious stroke. Updates on his condition are being posted at: [www.mancilupdates.blogspot.com](http://www.mancilupdates.blogspot.com)

NC—Sis. Grace Wingler is in urgent need of prayer. She has been sick for about four weeks and is getting weaker. Her husband called, tearfully asking for prayer.

—Bro. Clarence Campbell

MT—Bro. Tom Arkinson needs prayer for a stomach infection. He is asking the Lord for a healthy digestive system.

KY—Pray for Sis. Keresa Chatman, she is suffering with a bad knee and high blood pressure. —Sis. Kay Griffith

## Standing Prayer Requests

Sis. Agnes Burleson  
 Bro. Gary Burleson  
 Sis. Gladys Cashio  
 Sis. Helen Carson  
 Sis. Genevieve Carver  
 Sis. Elizabeth Corteway  
 Sis. Waneta Creel  
 Bro. Terry Dawson Sr.  
 Sis. Guy Domin  
 Sis. Dorall Forbes  
 Bro. Dan Gellenbeck  
 Bro. Troy Gentry  
 Jaden Howard  
 Sis. Patsy Jordon  
 Sis. Earnestine Jordon  
 Sis. Karoline Kessler  
 Bro. Mark and Sis. Darlene Knight  
 Sis. Virginia Myers  
 Sis. Elsie M. Offerman  
 Sis. Melba Powell  
 Sis. Sharon Quave  
 Bro. Vernon Robinson  
 Sis. Ruth Shehee  
 Sis. Cheryl Smith  
 Bro. Michael Smith  
 Bro. Edward and Sis. Gloria Taylor  
 Sis. Imogene Taylor  
 The Mitch Taylor family  
 Sis. Norma Tiller  
 Bro. Delmar Wilkins  
 Bro. Curtis Williams  
 Sis. Jan Wood

## MEETING NOTICES

Oklahoma State (Guthrie)—May 27-June 5  
 Miami, FL (Camp Meeting)—March 13-20

## MEETING NOTICES

### MIAMI, FL, CAMP MEETING

The Saints in Miami, FL will be having a camp meeting beginning March 13 and continuing through March 20. Services will be nightly at 7:30 with two services on Sunday. The schedule of day services will be announced at the meeting. All are welcome.

For more information call Bro. Charles Clay at (305) 804-8504, Bro. Ken Baxter at (786) 554-8833 or Bro. Rodney Edwards at (305) 258-4925. The chapel is located at 235 NW 47th St, Miami, FL.

## SPECIAL NOTICES

CA—To reach the family of Pastor Travis Johnson, you may send condolences to P.O. Box 290861, Phelan, CA 92329, only.

—Sis. Alice Johnson  
 Pastorx2@hotmail.com

LA—Dear Saints of The Church of God: We would like to thank each of you for the outpouring of love and support shown through all the cards, letters, emails and phone calls. We have not been able to answer all, but want you to know our hearts have been deeply touched by your support and prayers. God allows His people to experience a variety of circumstances in life to draw them closer to Himself. The song "How Firm a Foundation," (Evening Light Songs #37), has such beautiful words. Verse 4 speaks the desire of our Lord "The flame shall not harm thee; I only design, Thy dross to consume and thy gold to refine." Praise God for His unbounded love, which He has shown throughout this ordeal. It has brought many changes, and God has blessed with daily strength and courage beyond expectation. Words fail to describe the blessings He has bestowed and the humbling experience of His presence. He is the fountain of **ALL** that is good. Please continue to remember us in your prayers as we wait on Him for complete healing with victory and direction.

God Bless,

—Bro. Michael and Sis. Tammy Williamson

## **“Jesus Christ the same Yesterday, and Today, and Forever.”**

(Continued from page three.)

took the pain away and I was able to be propped up in bed. My faith was inspired and I asked them to go to prayer again and ask the Lord to take away the nauseated feeling, which they did, and almost immediately the Lord took that away as well and I went off to sleep for a few minutes.

One day I was very weary, as the enemy had been fighting me hard because I was so weak, and Bro. James stopped by at just that time and had prayer and it was such a blessing because I knew the Lord had sent him at just the right time. Another time it was pretty late and I knew it was too late to expect anyone to be coming by. The enemy was working hard because he knew I was so weak and tired and was dreading the night. But just at that time Bro James came, and while he was apologizing for stopping so late, I felt like the Lord had delayed him from coming earlier because He knew right when I needed the reinforcements.

When Bro. James couldn't be there the Lord sent other ministers from other congregations by at just the right time, and it was always a blessing to see how the Lord's timing is so perfect. One time in particular I was real weak, which was when the enemy always attacked the hardest because he knew I did not have much strength to resist him, and if I remember right it was a week night because I did not expect anyone to come at that time. Just as I was getting weary from resisting the enemy, and dreading the night, in walked Bro. Dan and Sis. Cheryl Doolittle to have prayer with me. I believe this was also one of the times that they brought some young people with them to sing for me.

Another time after I had an attack, Bro. Gordon was passing through town the next day and felt inspired to come by and have prayer for me. He came in and prayed a simple quiet prayer and then left, as he knew I was very weak and could not talk much. After he left, the thought came to me, I do not have the hurting or tenderness in my chest or left arm that I had before. The enemy immediately said, "it will come back once you try to move any," but it didn't and I knew God had miraculously taken it all away. There was no doubt in my mind that God had done this because after every attack I would have pain and tenderness in my chest and left arm for several days. Even when the

pain would let up my chest would still be tender to the touch because of all the attacks. But a couple days or so after this incident the doctor came out to the house to examine me for my work and he was able to press on my chest in a way I could never have endured before. Once again God's timing was perfect!

But lest anyone read this—who is going through a severe trial—and think it was all victory after victory and wonder why they are experiencing dark times and accusations of the enemy, I want to relate some of the ways the enemy worked to try to discourage and hinder my faith in God through this trial. During my attacks I was so weak all I could do was try to hold on by faith to what God had given me, and I had to let others fight the battle for my healing. I felt like God had witnessed that He wanted me to be a witness for Him through this, but He had not told me if He would heal me or not. The enemy tried his best to hinder my faith, with accusations of things I had already made right years ago, or things that I could not do anything about, with doubts and fears, and with the accusation that God was not hearing my prayers. Even though God would answer prayer in miraculous ways it seemed like I could not get anything else from the Lord besides the inspiration He had given me early on. It felt at times like the Lord had given me a little to hold on to and then pulled back and left me alone. During some of my weakest times I could not feel anything of the presence of God, and the enemy would try his best to convince me that something was wrong and that God had forsaken me. But I knew deep down that God loved me and that I loved Him too much to turn loose. I realize now that the things that God used to prepare me for this battle were the things that helped me to hold on, even when it felt like that God Himself was not hearing my cry. I began to understand and appreciate the cry of my Savior more than I ever could have before, when He cried, "*My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me?*" And I would take courage because even though I could not feel anything at the time, I knew that God had not forsaken His only begotten Son at a time like that.

Later, I read an article that said something like, "the ultimate test of our faith is when we are allowed to be tried severely and it appears that God Himself has failed or forsaken us." I was so thankful that my love for God was strong enough that it did not allow the enemy to



destroy my faith in Him. Dear ones God loved us even when we did not love Him and when His love is perfected within us it will enable us to do the same, when it *appears* that He has turned His back on us, but within ourselves we cannot do it. This is why Christ was able to go to the point in Gethsemane where He could say, *“even so Father, not my will but thy will be done.”* It is why Job was able to say, *“Though He slay me yet will I trust Him.”* because this kind of love only comes from God Himself.

One day as I was praying I told the Lord, “Lord I trust your wisdom” and He spoke to me so clearly and said, *“You can also trust my power and my grace.”* It was a real blessing to me at the time, and since that time the Lord has helped me to understand more clearly than ever before that we can trust His wisdom, His power and His grace for “whatever” we need. God does not need to “take us out” of this life, or out of any trial, or circumstance that we may be going through in order to preserve us, because His grace and His power is sufficient to keep us *right in the midst* of the furnace. Praise God! He is truly the same today as He was in the days of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego!

I began to pray “Lord, I want this deep personal relationship with you, whatever it takes, and I am willing to stay in this battle until you can give me all that you have for me in it.” Sometimes our flesh cries hard to be delivered from the furnace, but that is where the Lord met the three Hebrews in the “midst of the furnace” and we desperately need His presence in our lives.

After the Lord permitted the enemy to try my faith for some time, and I had searched my heart and tried to make sure that there was nothing in the way, I came to the place where I told the Lord, “Lord you know my heart and my desire, I have put my life into your hands. Search me, and if there is anything in my life, please reveal it to me and I will do my best to take care of it, otherwise I do not know of anything else to do but trust in the precious blood of Christ and that is what I mean to do.”

I will never be able to adequately describe the experience that I had one night as the Lord met me in such a tender way and let me know that He had claimed me. He let me know, *“I have claimed you for my own,”* and the scripture came to my mind *“heirs and joint heirs with Christ”* and as I thought of the many scriptures telling of God’s love for His Son, I thought, Lord

I am not worthy to be called a son and be an heir with Christ. And God helped me to see, in a more personal way than I have ever seen before, how there is “*nothing*” that “*I*” could do to be “*worthy*” to be called a son. But how that the precious blood of Christ purchased that for me, and now I have been adopted as a son, and have become *an heir and joint heir with Christ!* Then God began to open my mind to what it meant to be an heir to all that Heaven had to offer, and what was available to His children. May God help us to never forget what we have the privilege of and access to!

Even though I have read about these things all my life, talked about them, preached about them, and felt like I understood them, I have never had God reveal them to me in such a personal way as He did in this trial. It was like He allowed satan to try me first until the only thing I could stand on was my Love for God and my faith in Him, and He allowed even that to be tested to see if I would continue to love Him and trust Him even when it looked like He was not hearing my prayers. It has caused me to recognize more than ever before how much we need a “faith that will endure.” And dear ones our faith must be anchored in the precious blood of Christ because it is the only thing that will endure.

This trial has also confirmed in my mind how vitally important it is for us to maintain a clean and clear life before God. The way the enemy tried so hard to find something to accuse me of, during the time that God was silent, made me know how impossible it would have been to have faith if there had been something he could put his finger on in my life. This is why the saints have always taught the need of living clean, careful lives before the Lord, and others. If there is a spot in our life it will hinder our faith and the faith of others around us. The enemy knows this and that is why he brings the temptations, trials, hurts, disappointments and hard things in life, from the time we are born until we are old, to try to get us to do or say something that he can put his finger on and accuse us. If you do something and later repent and want to make it right he will fight it as hard as he can because he doesn’t want you to have a clear conscience before God and others. His purpose is *to steal, to kill, and to destroy*, but the thing he wants to destroy the most is your faith in God.

The scripture says *“Without faith it is impossible to please God, for we must believe that He*

is, and that He is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him." Another scripture says "faith which worketh by love." God's greatest desire is to bring us into a closer relationship with Him so that our faith and love can reach deeper depths than we have ever known or experienced before. He is not as concerned with the "physical results or outcome" as we are, because He knows it is temporary at best. But He is so interested in a closer relationship with us that He will do whatever it takes to achieve that end if at all possible.

We had been amazed at the number of people that had sent cards, called and sent word that they were praying for us and thinking of us during this trial. Many were from people that we did not even know, in our community and in other churches around the country. I remember one time lying in bed thinking about all the love that was being shown to us and thinking, "Lord, when you suffered and died you did not have anyone to stand with you, and here I have all these people praying for us and showing us so much love, I'm not worthy of this but you were." The Lord spoke to me so gently and said, "I know what it is like because I have been there," and I was made to know that it was because of His love that I was being shown so much love. It made me love the Lord even more than I had before and want to serve Him and be faithful to Him.

I believe that when God permits something to come our way it is for a purpose, and that purpose is generally either to *prove us*, *perfect us*, or to *prepare us*. And many times it is for all three. When God proves us it reveals the deepest needs of our soul, which allows Him to perfect us, and that prepares us for the things ahead. If the things ahead be greater trials, then they are only designed to bring greater depths in our relationship with God so that we may be able to fully encompass what Heaven has willed to us.

There is much more that I could relate but I will try to close after I relate one more series of events that happened during my sickness, as it just reinforced in my mind that God is able to take care of our every need.

When I first got down, I knew that after three days I would be required to go on short term disability (STD), per the benefits policy of our company. In order to do this you have to be in a doctor's care and you are also required to take the latest medical treatments as prescribed by the short term care provider. If you do not agree

to do this then you are disqualified for STD, and if you are unable to return to work then the only other option is to sever your employment with the company. I knew that I had some vacation time that would last for a few weeks and then the company would be under pressure to either get me to do something or to sever my employment. But God worked in such miraculous ways that it was amazing how it all worked out, not only to us, but to others in the company.

I was too weak during this time to even think much about it, but my wife and others were working with my boss to try to figure something out, as the company had agreed that they would continue to pay my STD if we could get a doctor to verify my condition. Everyone told them that we would not be able to get a doctor to come out to our home to do this because of liability concerns. However, I was in such poor condition they knew it was the only thing they could do as it was too dangerous to try to take me anywhere for a doctor to examine me. God answered prayer and they eventually found a doctor that was willing to come out to our home and examine me. This was certainly a miracle in itself, first for the Company to be willing to honor our convictions and second for a doctor to agree to work with us like he did.

Later when my six months of STD was about up they told me I would have to transfer to Long Term Disability (LTD) and since the LTD provider paid for all of that cost, my company's hands would be tied and I would be required to comply with the terms of the policy or sever my employment with the company. The week before my boss was scheduled to come out to meet with me, presumably to tell me they would need to terminate my employment, the devil tried extra hard to discourage me. He told me that I would not only lose my job but that I would never be strong enough to do anything and my wife would have to try to support us. He also told me that I would not be strong enough to minister again. (The enemy knew how I had prayed before I ever got down and had told the Lord many times that if He was through with me on my job and wanted me to go out and minister full time for Him to help me know, or to close that door, and I was willing to go. I had begun to think that the Lord might be answering that prayer and closing this door, the way things were going). The enemy was trying hard to make me feel like God had forsaken us and so he tried to make me feel like I would be totally helpless. However, Karen and I began to pray and to

consecrate to go all the way regardless of what it cost. And God came down and blessed us with such a peace that it was truly wonderful and we both felt that God had witnessed that He would take care of us. And as if that wasn't enough the Lord caused something to happen that confirmed His promise to us. That very next day, when Karen brought the mail in and opened it, there was a card with a check in it from someone that we would not have even thought about receiving it from. The Saints had been very good to check and see if we needed any help financially during this sickness but we had told them that God was taking care of all our needs and that we did not need anything. And even though God knew that we still did not have a financial need, He was showing us that He truly "*owned the cattle on a thousand hills*" and that He could provide for us from sources that we had no idea of. It was amazing to see the timing of the Lord and it just proved His love to us.

When my boss called he seemed very troubled about it all and was concerned about what would happen, but the Lord had given me a real peace about it and I tried to assure him that everything was in God's hands and that He would take care of us. I told him that I wanted him to be at peace with it as we were, and that the company had gone above and beyond what was required of them. I also told him that if God was through with me there then they did not want me to be there as I would only make a mess of things. I later expressed the same thing to our (human resource) person that called, and told him that I wanted them to feel free to do whatever they needed to. I explained that I had put my life into God's hands, and that included my job and livelihood, and that I was "*persuaded that He was able to keep that which I had committed unto Him.*"

God worked in such miraculous ways that we were all amazed. When my boss came out to talk to me he told me that they had decided that if I could work a few hours from home that they would allow me to do that, as long as I could get the doctor's permission. But if not, they would need to consider severing my employment. However, I was still too weak at that time to even get out of bed or do much at all, so I did not see how it was going to work out. My boss told me later that he went home that day feeling like I would never be back to work with the company. But God had something else in mind, as that weekend was the weekend that the Saints started

fasting and praying and the Lord began to strengthen me. In a few days I was strong enough that they could help me to walk into the living room, and soon I was able to sit up in a recliner and work a few hours a day from home.

When it was time for me to return to work part time in the office, I needed a doctor's release and I had to be examined by another doctor. This doctor told me that he could not give me a release without more extensive testing because it was, "obvious that I was still not well and that he was afraid that I would get to work and not make it." He was very kind but concerned for my welfare, and after explaining the seriousness of my condition to me, he told me he could not give me the release but that I was welcome to get a second opinion. I told him that I did not need to do that as I felt quite certain he was very qualified and that while I appreciated his concern for me, I would not be having the work done. I explained my convictions to him and told him that I would let my work know that I would not be able to return to work and that they could begin the termination process, since their agreement with me was that if I could not return by a certain date that we would sever my employment. When he heard that and saw that I was serious about my convictions he told me that he would not expect me to lower my convictions and began to look for a way to try to help me. He finally asked me if I would be willing to undergo a stress test that would not be invasive. I told him I would try to do what I could within my convictions as I did not want him or the company to suffer any liability for my personal convictions. When he explained that it would just be walking on a treadmill I agreed to do it as long as they agreed not try to get me to do something more, if anything bad happened during the test. He agreed and said if I could pass the test he would give me a release, and so we scheduled the test.

Up to this time I had been walking with a cane and could only walk for short stretches before needing to sit down, as I would be very tired and weak and would start to have problems in my chest and pressure in my head. I knew that it would be a miracle if I could pass the test and the enemy tried to convince me that I would not even survive the test. Once again the Saints went to prayer and on the day that I went to do the test I felt stronger than I had felt up to that time. I explained to the nurses that I had been very low for several months and that I might need to stop if things began to get bad,

and they assured me that they could stop it at any time. They started slow and it seemed that the Lord strengthened me as I went. I was not only able to go the full length of time but a little extra time as well. The nurses were amazed at how well I did and acknowledged that it was certainly a miracle for me to be able to do that well. They did need to have me lay down for a little while afterwards, to try to get my heart to slow down some before they took the monitors off of me, but other than that they said my test was perfect. The doctor was true to his word and gave me a release to return to work with no restrictions. Once again God had worked a miracle to open a door that I thought would surely be closed, because without this release I would not have been allowed to return to work.

When I sent word to my boss he was very happy to hear the good news and said, "it is certainly a miracle and God deserves all the glory for it." Since that time I have been able to witness to several people at work and in the community, and several have told me that it has, "strengthened their faith in God just to see what He had done for me." Others have said things like, "now I can truly say I have witnessed

a miracle in my lifetime." I have been amazed at the number of people that were touched by this trial and also by the deep hunger I have sensed in people all around us to see God work in a miraculous way. It has made me to know that there is still a hunger deep within the soul of man to see God work in people's lives and to know that He is real. It has also made me realize how important it is for God's people to be willing to allow Him to use them—as He did the Three Hebrews, Daniel and others down through time—to feed that hunger in man to know that there is *a God that has all power in Heaven and in earth*. Our flesh will naturally draw back from suffering, but if God can use it to get help to one soul, surely it will be worth it all. He is truly worthy to be praised and to Him we give all honor and glory.

We are forever grateful to God for His wonderful love and mercies to us, and to His people for all the love and support we have been shown through this trial. Our prayer is that God will help us to be a faithful witness for Him as long as He sees fit to leave us here in this life.

In Christian love.

—Bro. Curtis and Sis. Karen Williams

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