

MARRIAGE THROUGH THE CROSS

2 Corinthians 5:21

Because God is not bound by time, at one point of time He graciously allowed me to hear in my heart the following words from another point of time...from the wedding altar of the cross. Jesus, with all the love in the world, in a body wrenched deeply in pain, looked at me from His cross, a look that surely said to me:

"I, Jesus, take you Gregg, to be my bride...to have and to hold always. I promise to be one with you. Everything about you will become mine...your sins...your shame...your guilt...your fears...your self-righteousness...your impure thoughts...your emptiness...your doubts...your jealousies...your dead good works...your pride...your hurts. All mine."

Jesus then bowed His head and took His vow to a tomb.

I slowly bowed my head...and my heart and my knees...and said weakly, not fully understanding what I was saying:

"I, Gregg, take You Jesus, to be my Savior...my hope...my life."

When I raised my head I knew the tomb was empty...but my heart was full!

I slowly, but surely, stood up (over several years)...a trophy of God's grace...totally healed. One with the risen Christ! All that is His is now mine. His love...His hope...His peace...His humility...His joy...His patience...His righteousness...His joy...His genuineness...His very life. All mine.

My pilgrimage now is a wedding procession with Christ and His body throughout the earth! Christ in me...me in Christ. Heart to heart. I yearn to walk in His love and light. I hear the voice of our Father: "I have blessed you with all My blessings. I delight in you just as I delight in My Beloved Son. I have prepared a precious way for you" (*Ephesians 1:3, 6, 2:10*).

*Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ,
and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.*

2 Corinthians 2:14

A Trophy of God's Grace



July/August 2007

The Spirit of the Lord has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted. spoken by Jesus in LUKE 4:18

The themes of this newsletter are *marriage* and *healing*. This past year, I have had opportunities to minister through discipleship counseling sessions to 8 married couples in my one-room office in Simpsonville, SC and 2 married couples at the main office of *Christ Life Ministries* in Hendersonville, NC.

There have been some very difficult issues brought by both spouses into these marriages. The enemy tempts us to believe that these issues are proof of a flaw in the work of Christ in making a Christian whole to be free to relate to a spouse. However, I have witnessed God the Father prove the perfect work of the cross as His dear Son heals these marriages.

I have found that the marriage counseling material prepared by Anne Trippe is the best organization and presentation of the truths that God has placed on my heart. Anne is a precious marriage counselor at First Baptist Church Atlanta and is a member (along with *Christ Life Ministries*) of the *Association of Exchanged Life Ministries* (www.aelm.org). Her material entitled *Marriage: The Journey* focuses on being nurtured by the indwelling Christ living out His life in marriage. It explains how God transforms adversities into surrender as each spouse grows to respond to each other with the mind of Christ. You can check out these materials at www.marriagethejourney.com.

To my friends who are not married, the truths in this newsletter are for you, too. I hope all are captivated to read this newsletter, and are blessed!



My bride and Joy

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TOUCH OF THE MASTER'S HAND

Adrian Rogers wrote, "The world throws broken things away. God ONLY uses broken things." I love that. The words in red below are from Wayne Watson's song *Touch of the Master's Hand*, about an old, broken violin in which no one saw any value...until...until it was touched by a quiet, humble man whose loving heart and hands revealed the true value of the old violin. Are you broken? Is your marriage broken? Then you qualify...for a touch of the Master's hand.

Well it was battered and scarred,
 And the auctioneer felt it was hardly worth his while,
 To waste much time on the old violin but he held it up with a smile.
 "Well it sure ain't much, but it's all we got left, I guess we ought to sell it too.
 So who'll start the bid on this old violin? Just one more and we'll be through."

Not one person bid on this old violin and its bow...until...

Well the air was hot and the people stood around as the sun was setting low.
 From the back of the crowd a gray haired man
 Came forward and picked up the bow.
 He wiped the dust from the old violin, then he tightened up the strings..
 ...Then he played out a melody pure and sweet, sweeter than the angels sing!

And then the music stopped...
 ...and the auctioneer said, with a voice that was quiet and low,
 "Now who's going to bid on this old violin" and he held it up with the bow.

Now everyone cried out to buy the violin and bow!

And the people cried out "What made the change? We don't understand."
 Then the auctioneer stopped...and he said with a smile...
 "It was the touch...yes, it was the touch...it was the touch of the Master's hand."

Although this song was written to represent a broken individual, I also see a beautiful picture of a husband AND wife, as noted below. I have witnessed the truths from this picture minister deeply to several couples recently.

BOW	VIOLIN
Husband	Wife
Created by God (Genesis 2:7)	Hand-crafted by God (Genesis 2:22)
Rests in one hand of the Master	Rests in the other hand of the Master
Surrenders to Master's healing rosin	Desires to be tuned by the Master
Instrument of grace, <i>i.e.</i> , initiates love	Instrument of faith, <i>i.e.</i> , receives grace
Nurtures violin into Master's face	Trusts bow's nurturing touch
Desires to sanctify (highlight) the violin	Desires to submit to the bow
Expresses music in oneness with violin	Expresses music in oneness with bow

TIME HEALS?

"Time heals" is a common phrase in which many of us have sought comfort and hope. However, can time really heal? No. There is no life in time itself to truly heal. When we focus solely on time to heal, the best that can happen is the self-development of coping mechanisms. Such mechanisms only imitate healing. It is a healing from the outside-in, but never to the root of a hurt.

Only Christ heals the inner most root of hurts. And His healing continues as a transformation of His glory from the inner healing to the outer beauty of a person. It is a healing from the inside-out. A person with a beautiful countenance is a person who has been hurt but is experiencing a healing that can only come from the very presence and outshining of Christ.

A few years ago, my wife Joy had a deep physical wound from a back surgery staph infection. It took a year for the wound to heal from the inside-out. However, what appeared to be healing, only turned out to reveal the infection was still beneath the wound. So, the wound had to be reopened, which wounded me to the deepest part of my soul. It again took another year, and this time the wound truly healed from the inside-out! The hurt...the infection...all gone.

In conjunction with the touch of the Master's hand through the doctors, the key to Joy's healing was the presence of Christ. I recall a friend who visited and could not utter a word...she simply sat at Joy's bedside with quiet, profound tears streaming down her face...softly holding Joy's hand. It was the healing presence of Christ manifested through this friend. We have many friends like this.

There are now ugly scars in Joy's back. However, just like the emotional scars deep in our souls, we no longer have to wear our scars with shame. Jesus told Thomas to "Look at My scars. Touch My wounds. These are proof of resurrection. I bear the marks of death, yet I am alive!" Jesus knows His wounds are beautiful (*John 20:27-28*).

There are those who are looking for hope in us, and are saying, "Unless I can see your scars, I cannot trust your message of hope and resurrection."

With the life of Christ indwelling us, we have all the authority and all the love to say to others, "Look at my scars. I am not ashamed. I have death-wounds, yet I am alive. My wounds...they tell a resurrection story. I have true life to share with you, and I'm willing to bear your hurt with you."