



September 2002

***Christ bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for (His, not self) righteousness – by whose stripes you were (not will be) healed (1 Peter 2:24).***

Joy continues to heal slowly but surely. There is still a small hole (about the size of a dime) in her incision on her back that has not closed and is still draining. The tissue in that area has been subjected to several surgeries in her lifetime and is not in the best shape for quick healing. She is still on intravenous antibiotics and, as a result, stays sort of run down. Results from Joy's weekly blood tests continue to indicate the staph is under control. We have also sent new x-rays of Joy's back to Dr. Bradford in San Francisco for his review. We will go to San Francisco some time after her incision fully heals for him to more specifically assess the results of the back surgery independent of the infection.

Joy and I are continuing to learn that God never heals for healing sakes...He always heals for His sake...to reveal the reality of His precious life. We are learning that a focus only on physical healing is just that – a focus on physical healing, which tempts us with the lie that we are not complete. Such a focus can take our focus off of the cross of Christ where we have been made complete through our identification with Christ. *"For in Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; AND YOU ARE COMPLETE IN HIM" (Colossians 2:9-10).*

It is through the cross I see God's unconditional, redemptive love for me and Joy. As we are growing in our focus on this truth, we are growing in "seeing" that Joy is already completely healed in the truest sense! Therefore, we are free to trust God to use Joy's physical condition for His glory and for her greatest good! Joy can (and does) minister the life of Christ now through whatever physical healing God provides...she doesn't have to wait until her body is healed to our preconceived standards of what "healing" is. This doesn't mean that we no longer covet your prayers for Joy's physical healing, for through the miracle of prayer, Christ is revealed, and it is His presence that perfectly heals.

Joy is even free to be discouraged! To try not to be discouraged takes the focus off of the cross and TRUSTING Christ and puts the focus on her and her TRYING not to be discouraged. Paul was severely discouraged many times. *"We were burdened beyond strength...we despaired even of life" (2 Corinthians 1:8)!* Yet he knew the truth of Christ's life in Him and, therefore, he was able to also proclaim, *"Now thanks be to God who always leads us to triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of Christ in every place" (2 Corinthians 2:14)...including Joy's confinement at home!*

Below is a tremendous and beautiful article that matches my heart so much at this time. I hope it ministers to your heart, too.

## BEAUTIFUL WOUNDS

Reprinted by permission from *He Restores My Soul: A 40 Day Journey Toward Personal Renewal* by Jennifer Kennedy Dean.

***We can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God (2 Corinthians 1:4).***

Out of our brokenness comes the powerful overflow of His Life -- the God of All Comfort comforts others through us (2 Corinthians 1:3). The very comfort we have received becomes the comfort with which we minister to others. What He has poured into us, He also pours out through us to those in our world.

Jesus' physical crucifixion is the death into which we enter. And His resurrection is the resurrection that is manifested in us. When Jesus was physically resurrected, all that was from earth -- the limiting, earthbound body He lived in for a time -- was left behind. Resurrection separated eternal from temporal. The body of His resurrection was perfect and eternal. It is the very body in which He ascended from earth to take His place at the right hand of the Father. This perfect, resurrection body retained its scars.

How often either our pride, or our mistaken sense that we need to present a perfect front to those in our care, cause us to think of our wounds and our scars as something to hide. Something ugly. Something demeaning. Something that lessens our value. But look at Jesus. Look what Jesus thought of His wounds. "Here, Thomas. Look at My wounds. Touch My scars. These are the proof of resurrection. I bear the marks of death, but I am alive!" Jesus knew His wounds were beautiful.

Thomas said, *"Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it" (John 20:25).* My friend, there are those who are saying to you and to me, "Unless I see your wounds, I will not believe it. Unless I see your scars, I cannot trust your message of hope and resurrection."

By nature, I am a private person. I love to discuss thoughts and ideas, but I have a hard time sharing feelings and experiences. Some years ago, God showed me that this flesh-pattern in me needed to go to the cross. I had to face the fact that it was my flesh that disliked the feeling of being exposed and vulnerable. "Jennifer," He seemed to say to me. "I am not asking you to tell your story. I am asking you to tell My story in its Jennifer-edition. You are not your own." I must admit to you that still when God calls on me to share something that is intensely personal to me, it is excruciating. It is still a crucifixion. Even this is hard for me to write. But never has God required me to submit myself to this crucifixion that I did not experience the resurrection -- God's work in my life overflows in comfort and encouragement and power to someone else. *"Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me" (2 Corinthians 12: 9).* [Note from Gregg: Each month when I send out this newsletter, I experience a death to self-protection, i.e., "What are people going to think of me?"]

At the places where I am broken, the power of Christ is authenticated in me. Where I have submitted myself to the crucifixion, the power of the resurrection is put on display. I can say, "Look at my wounds. Touch my scars. I have death-wounds, but I am alive." I can wear my wounds without shame. They tell a resurrection story.

**On the back is a testimony of a prisoner who experienced the healing power of the cross!**

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## PRISONER SET FREE

*“And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free...  
therefore, if the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed” (John 8:32, 36).*

I shared the following Scriptures with men at a chapel service at Henderson County Correctional Center: *Romans 1:17, Romans 3:21-22, Philippians 3:9, Romans 4:3, Romans 5:17, 1 Corinthians 1:30, Jeremiah 23:6, Galatians 2:21, and 1 John 2:29.* These verses reveal “righteousness” as a gift of Christ Himself, and as not being based on man’s behavior. One of the men, John, confessed his struggles with outbursts of anger and profanity, and how he saw the need to do better and to be a better witness. It appeared that John was convicted. But I began to see it was really condemnation disguised as conviction. For John was discouraged with who he was. He believed righteousness comes from “doing right things,” so he saw himself as an angry and profane person.

Condemnation tempts us to believe the lie that we are unacceptable and incites us to do better. Condemnation takes our focus off of the cross where Christ took upon Himself all our condemnation and through which we become new righteous creations. True conviction leads us to believe the truth that we are totally acceptable apart from our good efforts to do better. True conviction focuses us on the cross. *“The Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Romans 8:16),* not that we are sinners.

I could have advised John to repent. I used to think that “repent” meant “to turn from sin.” If that’s the case, then John was “repenting” like crazy without any freedom from his sins. Such attempts make “repentance” man’s work, as opposed to God’s miraculous work. I was led to remain steadfast in God’s grace to share the message of the cross. And we all witnessed John begin to “see” his acceptance apart from his past profane outbursts and apart from his present efforts to do better. I believe he “saw” the living Christ!

Did John ever really repent? Yes! But not in order to get right with God, but as a fruit of BELIEVING the Life in him who reveals righteousness through the cross! I am beginning to see that repentance is a miracle of God in revealing to a person that he has the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). Repentance, then, is God’s miraculous call on a person to reason (re-think) according to his new mind regarding how righteousness is attained (as a gift of God) and maintained (as a gift of God). “Re-pent” literally means to “re-think” the truth by God’s grace.

There is an eternal difference between trying to be righteous (trying to do right things) and knowing Jesus Himself as your righteousness. The issue is not whether or not you do good or bad things, the issue is whether or not you are one with righteousness Himself – Jesus.

John walked me to the gate after chapel with such a thankful heart. The words from him as we departed were so kind, and not at all profane. I believe Jesus (the Truth) Himself set John free to express the very life of Jesus that moment. *“The fruit of the Spirit is...kindness” (Galatians 5:22).*

### GRACE NOTE

If it sounds like grace takes sin too lightly, always remember that it is only grace that actually takes sin seriously because only grace sees that it takes all of Christ, and only Christ, through the cross to deal with sin.  
There is nothing we can contribute to the finished work of Christ in dealing with sin.

To celebrate the one-year anniversary of our little ministry office,  
Joy and I will be hosting an Open House  
at the Simpsonville “cottage” office

Friday evening October 25<sup>th</sup> 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm

Anyone and everyone is welcome to drop by.

Christ Life Ministries will also be hosting a GraceLife Conference  
in the Simpsonville office

Friday evening November 1<sup>st</sup> 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm and

continuing all day Saturday November 2<sup>nd</sup> 9:00am to 5:00 pm

*I would love to share more with you in person any time.*