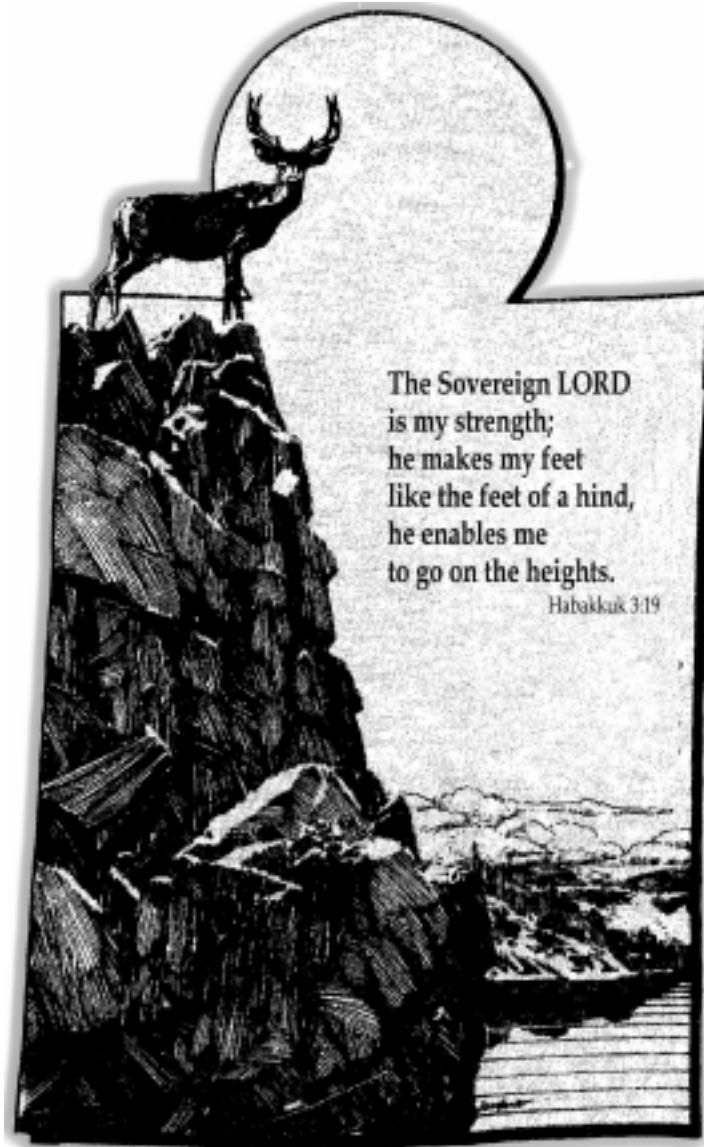


Going to the High Places

Chapter 19 High Places



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Introduction

As you have suspected for quite some time, your journey to the High Places in which you've been transformed hasn't been intended as a one-shot "spiritual high" for your life. Our Lord hasn't called His sheep to stay huddled in a fold, mystically immersed in His ethereal presence!

He has been preparing you to *serve His purposes*: to bring light into the world's darkness, and to walk in His steps so joyfully at peace amid the world's woes that they take notice! Just as His heart poured out the love that drew you to Him on the High Places, that same heart yearns for all the lost — those who have yet to respond to His wooing — to be in union with Him.

This chapter clarifies the lessons you've been learning all along and reveals just how necessary they were, especially the painful ones, to develop your "hinds feet".

Chapter 19 High Places

1. Grace and Glory with her handmaidens Joy and Peace...

Don't be overwhelmed by all that the Shepherd has been revealing to you as you've been undergoing transformation into His character! Our journey is step by step, built on that which He's shown you along the way.

Yet each new day will present opportunity to test the solidity of your determination to press on. Be assured that our God *tests your heart* and takes pleasure when He finds you walking in integrity (1 Chronicles 29:17). Each step of the way He opens up your understanding only to the extent that you are able to grasp at that time.

The full counsel of God takes a lifetime to incorporate into your heart and your character. Your privilege and responsibility is to *apply* each revealed truth and insight — and make sure that you don't slack off in your diligence to stand firm in previously learned lessons!

As long as you purpose to seek after the Person and ways of Jesus, He'll make sure you have the chance to exercise that longing. Once again we find that great worshipper, David, breaking into passionate exhortation over that which pleases God. The king's instructions to his successor, Solomon, reflect a lifetime of seeking after his Lord: "**Know the God of your father. Serve Him wholeheartedly and with desire in your being; for the Lord searches all hearts and understands all the inclinations of people's thoughts**" (1 Chronicles 28:9a).

This verse is packed with intensity of purpose. Eagerly hungering to know God more and more translates into serving Him with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. From a Hebraic worldview, to *know* God means that you *trust and obey* Him.

Our Father isn't looking for rote activity. If you put in your token hour of Bible reading and murmur a few prayer requests, are you really following through "wholeheartedly and with desire in your being"? If not, cry out to Him! He'd love to deepen your relationship with Him if you are willing to walk in His steps to bring that about!

Don't just wallow in resignation or guilt. As David notes, your motivations and inclinations are evident to God — and He hasn't given up on you! Thrust off any half-hearted religious practices performed out of habit or guilty conscience. They reflect spiritual laziness and ungratefulness.

Grace and Glory's eagerness to explore His Kingdom is a wonderful role model for all of us! Those "new and lovely discoveries" fed her thirst to deepen her understanding and preparation for the assignment to come. And the quest to *experience* and to *share* the love of Jesus is the motivation He's refining in you.

- Are you excited each morning about the opportunity to glean rich treasure from your appointment with Him in His Word and in prayer?

- Are you willing to keep track in a journal of the “new and lovely discoveries” that He shows you during these times?

2. Even these High Places...; 3. The first thing...

Keep in mind this wonderful thought: All that you’re learning to apply now is just a foretaste of the glorious *highest* High Places to come when you see the King face to face! But that fact should not diminish in the least the reality of His *here and now* purpose for your life.

Are you familiar with the “tapestry metaphor” of your life? If you flip over a lovely woven wall hanging, you’ll see a mass of tangles, loose threads and chaotic colors in which there is no discernible pattern. So often in our own griefs and struggles and anxieties, all we can perceive is a tangled mass of wrong choices, ugly reactions and unrelenting frustration. But our perceptions are limited and shortsighted. Our snarled and tangled lives can often look to us like the back side of a messed up tapestry!

But that’s just the view from our worldly perspective. That is horizontal, disregarding the view that our Father has from HIS side of the tapestry. Grace and Glory has acquired a “new viewpoint” from her transformation process. Things that for so long had seemed puzzling and mysterious, like a tapestry’s back side, have become clear.

When you grow confident in the changes the Shepherd is making in you, you begin to appreciate the beautiful image of *His* perspective of you. All those threads of pain and uncertainty, as well as those shining seams of trust and obedience on your part, are joined with the gold of His Spirit to create a “new creation” you that’s His glorious child!

Our Father has always recognized the beauty of Jesus’ work in you long before it came to pass. That’s because in His omniscience He understood both the “you” who

had yet to journey, and the “you” who are now representing union with His Son!

- Using the tapestry metaphor, which “knots and dangling threads” of painful experiences can you now see were so vital in shaping the lovely image of you that now is so pleasing to our Father’s eye?

- Are you now more inclined or less inclined to question why unpleasant circumstances and situations happen in your life?

4. It was now perfectly evident to them...; 5. She never tired of looking...

Lest we allow any weeds of self-righteousness to curl around our feet, take to heart Grace and Glory’s observation: Even in Jesus we are “looking out on a tiny corner of the whole.” He’s done such a remarkable transformation in your life in order to prepare you to *serve His purposes!*

Growing in union with Jesus means that we grow in identity with that which burdens His heart. Paul points us in the direction of running the race well in Galatians 5:6, “*For in Christ Jesus ... the only thing that counts is our trusting faithfulness expressing itself through love.*”

God isn’t asking you to strive in legalistic works to qualify yourself to bear His burden for the lost. He wants you to be yielded and available to His Spirit to work *in* and *through* you to bring His goal about!

Love expresses itself as you *put it into action*. The nuggets you discover in His Word are fired by His Spirit as you apply them to your life situation. Your Bible is your life manual, but your *power* comes from Him as you put into practice the marching orders He impresses onto your spirit.

You are His conduit, His angled pipe through which He pours out evidence of His

reality *through you* onto others. And what keeps those conduit valves open is your heart motivation to *follow through* on that which He makes known to you.

Be as determined as the faithful apostle Paul, *compelled* by the love of Christ so that you no longer live for yourself but for Him Who died and rose again on your behalf! Paul reminds us *“that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that **they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him** who died and rose again on their behalf”* (2 Corinthians 5:14,15).

When you return to the Valley from which He drew you out, how will you respond to even the most hurtful people you encounter? *Identify with His viewpoint.* (See 2 Corinthians 5:16). No longer regard them from the worldly viewpoint of their appearance, their past, their messed up families. Look past their prison to see *their Kingdom potential.* You were once counted as one of them in your own slavery to sin. Now you are a beloved bondservant of the King. Can you serve with His love?

- Who comes to mind as someone you’re still inclined to view from a “horizontal” worldly viewpoint rather than from the “vertical” perspective of Jesus?
- Which particular “dogmatic statements” that once colored your religious thinking have been altered by your transformation in the High Places? Are you more able now to respond graciously rather than belligerently to people who are still mired in their own dogmatic stances?

6. She began to understand...; 7, She perceived that no one...

If you have gone through this study and remained unchanged in your yieldedness to

serve our Lord by carrying out His commands to you, then you’ve been a “hearer only”. How many purported followers of Jesus ignore the apostle’s warning to be a *doer* of the Word, a disciple who *knows* what pleases our Lord and ventures forth to *fulfill it*?

Grace and Glory has grasped that “truth cannot be understood from books alone” — nor by teaching tapes or sermons nor seminars. **Truth becomes real to you when it impacts your life to change that which needs to be changed.**

The Hellenists from the second century onward argued about the nature of theological truth, engaging in councils that hammered out doctrines and organizational formats to make sure their proclamations were enforced. But few of those prescribed pronouncements stirred the hearts of men and women to *love and serve* from Spirit-empowered hearts.

When you were on the “wrong side of the grave on the mountain”, you may have been plodding along one of two trails: additively reading and listening to everything “spiritual” you could get your hands on that could tell you how to be a “better Christian.” Or, you may have just been resignedly going through religious motion, wishing things could change but unable or unwilling to do anything about it.

That’s what you died to on the mountain! And our Father’s compassion can stir you to remember with sorrow the same chains that shackle the people back in the Valley. Rather than isolating yourself with tapes and music and books, He enjoins you to come alongside those whose perspectives are cemented to the horizontal. Enter the fray with His loving power!

You may be longing to leap ever higher on the magnificent slopes of knowing more and more about the Shepherd’s ways. But remember: From the Hebraic perspective of Jesus, to *hear* truth means to *obey* what you heard! Trust and obedience go hand in hand as the key components of growing in Christlike love. When you love the Lord as Lord, you obey Him wholeheartedly. The

apostle whom Jesus especially loved is adamant on this point:

The way we can be sure we know him is if we are obeying his commands. Anyone who says, "I know him," but doesn't obey his commands is a liar — the truth is not in him. But if someone does what he says, then truly love for God has been brought to its goal in him. This is how we are sure that we are united with him. A person who claims to be continuing in union with him ought to conduct his life the way he did (1 John 2:3-6).

The way you use your "hinds feet" to carry out His purposes demonstrates your faithfulness to the "small part of His glorious whole" that He's revealed to you.

- Did you use to fall into one of the two categories mentioned earlier — addicted to spiritual books/tapes/seminars, or haphazardly negligent in your spiritual pursuit? How would you talk with someone close to you who is mired in either swamp?
- Describe how you put into use today that which our Lord showed you from prayer or from His Word. How did your testimony or action strengthen or encourage or comfort a brother or sister in Jesus, or a not-yet believer?

8. Paradoxical as it may seem...; 9. So graciously did he adapt himself...

If you had been blind all your life and then were suddenly healed, you'd be overwhelmed by all that assailed your eyes! Think of how hard it would be to focus in on just one thing when so many diverse colors and shapes and textures were competing for your visual attention.

You'd also need some hands-on guidance

with your new ability. You'd have no idea of the distance of anything beyond your reach. All of your previous experience had measured space by touch. You'd have no means of reckoning the speed of an oncoming car or its distance from you because your visual perspective has not yet been trained to teach you that. You might even walk off the edge of a cliff if not restrained by a sighted companion because depth would have no meaning for you as yet.

Just as the Shepherd needed to train Grace and Glory to use her hinds' feet, we need to put our love and obedience muscles to the test. When we put into practice the insights and character changes He's been transforming within, we discover that these "applications of Kingdom love" embolden us to take greater leaps of faith. As Grace and Glory followed in the Shepherd's steps, she enjoyed the "unbroken communion" that deepens as you stretch your trust by applying it in your every day life.

To revert to our former analogy of the funnel: the more you slide with Jesus down the funnel stem of love, the more immediate and satisfying will be your enactment of His perspective and motivation. And, the quicker you will be to repent when you do miss the mark of His ways and heart.

Did you notice the Shepherd's example as a *role model* in His training process? He never put Grace and Glory or her companions in danger, but He did make sure that they were challenged to tackle greater "leaps of faith" as they became more adept. Crags that would have immobilized Much-Afraid in the past were easily traversed by Grace and Glory.

The Father heart of God shines through here as the ideal model for parents. Sue: When our son was almost 5, we were given a small two-wheeler on which he could learn to ride. I spent countless afternoons by his side, holding tightly to the seat at first, then loosening up as his balance improved. One morning while I was out, Mikey approached his dad and asked if he could ride his bike. His dad told him to put on his helmet and

get the bike out of the garage. Then he told him to go riding! Mikey hesitated, then jumped on and sped down the street unassisted! When I got home, I asked, “Where’s Mikey?” He gestured down the street. “He’s riding his bike.” “But, “ I gasped, “he doesn’t know how to bike alone!” Mike answered, “Tell *him* that!”

This dad understood what the Shepherd had known about Grace and Glory — a beloved child can trust his or her parent’s judgment about their abilities!

Another lesson jumps out as Grace and Glory leaps after the Shepherd. He always *restrains* Himself so that she and her companions are never left behind. He never disparages their “newly acquired capacity” or complains that they are not trying harder.

That’s an insightful warning for us as we return to the Valley and encounter those who are either just beginning their pilgrimage or are only somewhat along in their journey.

Kingdom love never blows its own horn of ability. Neither does it coerce or manipulate responses from unprepared hearts. Be sensitive to each person, and pray for discernment to recognize what it is our Lord wants you to do as you invest yourself in another.

The person who loses sight of his mentor’s model is likely to step off the path and get lost in distractions. Remember, you were once a Much-Afraid too. Jesus wouldn’t intimidate or discourage those who are struggling — nor should you!

- Describe some new skill that you learned from another person. What was the attitude and interaction like of the person who was teaching you? For example, did your teacher’s approach pattern the encouragement, strengthening and challenge of the Shepherd with Grace and Glory?
- How patient and encouraging are you when you teach others? Have you ever just given

up trying to help someone acquire a new skill? What did you learn about yourself during your instruction stint?

10. For Grace and Glory ...; 11. On one of these occasions...

The Shepherd had met the greatest needs of Grace and Glory’s life. He had showered her with the *dignity* of a new heart in Him. He had lovingly directed her as the legitimate spiritual *authority* in her life. All throughout her journey He had covered her with evidence of His *blessing and provision*. He had encouraged her *freedom* to explore the *boundaries* of His Kingdom. He had provided her with *relational security* with her beloved companions. She had been energized with the *intimate love and companionship* that is allegorized by the Song of Solomon. And He is about to reveal to her His plan to fulfill her need for *purpose and meaning* in life.

These seven needs were given by God to our first parents in the Garden of Eden. They are the very same needs that we all have. We can fulfill them by obedient trust in the One Who has shown us how to live through His Spirit and by His Word. Or, we can choose the siren call of the world, our fleshly desires, and demonic temptation, and suffer the consequences of those decisions. (Our book *Demolishing Strongholds* expands on this concept. It’s a free download at our website.)

Before Grace and Glory could head back down into the Valley to serve others in the Shepherd’s name, she had to expand her horizons beyond her own self-fulfillment. As joyful as it was to frolic in her ever-expanding ability to leap, she needed to be directed back to *His mission* for her hinds’ feet transformation.

To help her see beyond her own objectives, the Shepherd exposed her to “some of the vistas to be seen from the new viewpoint.” Jesus had buoyed His disciples that

His Father is glorified when they bear much fruit (John 15:8). Reflect for a moment on the new vistas He may be bringing before you as ways to bring glory to our Father.

In light of your particular spiritual gifting, He may be preparing some lonely children who would love to join you for snacks and homework help after school so they don't have to prowl the streets or go to a house that's empty until their parent(s) come home from work. Maybe you could gather together some other followers of Jesus to write letters of encouragement to Christian prisoners in persecuted lands. The Shepherd may be calling you to help a garrulous older neighbor see her need for repentance in order to be reconciled with her estranged children.

Ask our Shepherd how you can be His servant among others He puts in your pathway. You may just be the answer they need to one of their own seven God-given needs!

- What "new vistas" of opportunity to bear much fruit for our Father's glory has the Shepherd been stirring in your heart?
- Which of the seven needs that the Shepherd has met in Grace and Glory's life during her journey are most urgently awaiting fulfillment in your life? Who is He revealing to you as a person He might use to help meet these needs?

12. "Grace and Glory," he answered, "do you think you understand now how I was able to make your feet like hinds' feet and set you on these High Places?"...; 13. "Think back over the journey you made," he replied, "and tell me what lessons you learned on the way."

This is a key culmination point for you, Traveler. It's critical preparation for you if

you are to bear the Lord's burden of heart for those back down in the Valley.

- Take some paper and all the time you need to write out your own reply to the queries the Shepherd gives to Grace and Glory. Share in the greatest detail possible how He has changed you. Write it as a letter to your Lord. [Please don't go further until you've done this. You'll gain much if you pause to write now!]

14. She was silent for a while...; 15. Then their journey along the shores of Loneliness...; 16. She recalled the descent down into the Valley of Loss...

Grace and Glory has recollected with vivid detail each step of her journey, some heartbreaking and some "rapturous". Yet she doesn't allow herself to become entangled with regret. This is important for you to keep in mind as you reflect on your own journey. You can use each shovelful of what you *should have done* back then to bury yourself in worldly sorrow. Or, you can learn from those painful experiences and purpose to walk God's pathway and help others learn from your testimonies.

Grace and Glory's memories filled her silent thoughts with *wonder and thanks* — the *only* acceptable response for her loving Father's intervention in her life! She never categorizes her past choices and experiences into "plus" or "minus" columns according to whether they were good or bad. That's because she knew that all those *parts* encompassed the *whole* of her journey. Had she missed any one of those steps, her preparation to serve her Shepherd would have fallen short.

What a mercy of God that Grace and Glory could not have imagined at the outset "what lay ahead of her and the things which she would be called upon to pass through." If *you* had foreseen the suffering and storms and losses that would assail you on your life journey in Jesus, you would probably have strayed off the path long ago yourself!

But praise be to God Who holds you in His grip and directs your steps, catching you when you fall. That awareness brings new appreciation that “underneath are the everlasting arms”! (Deuteronomy 33:27).

- Grace and Glory’s reflections of each step of her journey has produced not one shred of regret. Are you able to learn from her example and articulate to others why you aren’t wallowing in guilt over your past sins and painful choices?
- Ask the Spirit to begin to reveal to you those particular people close to you who need to stop looking back over their shoulder so they can press on, cleansed and prepared to serve His purposes. (See Luke 9:62).

17. At last she put her hand on his...; 18. He nodded without speaking...; 19. The third thing that I learned...; 20. A very lovely smile broke out on his face...

You would do well to appropriate in your own heart the four lessons that Grace and Glory gleaned from her journey of transformation. In fact, you could probably recite many more lessons than these! But walk in the truth of these four and you’ll maintain your determination to *live for Christ* in a way that brings hope to others.

Insert *your own name* into each of these lessons and see if they represent what you have learned along the way.

1. I, _____, learned that I must **accept with joy** all that **you allowed to happen** to me on the way and **everything** to which the path led me.

Don’t be too quick to skip over this one. It’s foundational to all the rest! If you’re still stung by regret and pain, then you haven’t fully yielded to our Lord’s *right* as your Potter to shape and mold you any way He

chooses. The scars on your heart are no surprise to Him. He allowed each and every trial and sorrow so that you would draw closer to Him in fully yielded, loving trust. Take Peter’s words to heart: “*Dear friends, don’t regard as strange the fiery ordeal occurring among you **to test you**, as if something extraordinary were happening to you. Rather, to the extent that you share the **fellowship of the Messiah’s sufferings**, rejoice; so that you will **rejoice even more** when his *Sh’khinah* is revealed*” (1 Peter 4:12,13).

Your life will probably not be any easier or less strewn with obstacles now that you’ve learned how free you can be in Jesus. But, your *response* to the impediments and challenges you face should be far different! Paul’s encouragement to the Roman followers of Jesus will become an ever-growing reality as you Accept-with-Joy our Shepherd’s plans and purposes for you, your family and those traveling with you in loadbearing relationships:

*Through [Jesus] and on the ground of our trust, we have gained access to this grace in which we stand; so let us **boast about the hope** of experiencing God’s glory. But not only that, let us also **boast in our troubles**; because we know that **trouble produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope; and this hope does not let us down, because God’s love for us has **already been poured out** in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us**” (Romans 5:2-5).*

2. I, _____, learned that I **must bear** all that others were **allowed to do against me** and **to forgive** with **no trace of bitterness**.

There is a huge difference between the “self-pity of victimization” and the *redemptive purposes* of our Father to bring good out of the evil committed against you. Many people *voice* that they’ve forgiven those who have pained them, but *live* as if imprisoned by their past.

Jesus warned His disciples to keep looking ahead and not be caught looking back at what they've forsaken for His Kingdom's sake. You have the opportunity now to plant fresh seed in straight furrows as long as you're not more concerned with what *was* rather than what *is* and *is to come*.

It's not enough, from our Lord's perspective, to just ignore the painful sting that certain memories evoke. "Bearing-with-Love" receives power to *bring good* out of evil circumstances. That's pro-active!

Holy Spirit power propels you into "positive territory" to bring about the loving action and attitude that *blesses* those who have persecuted you. Because your response in Him is so *super-natural*, you may gain the hearing of the very ones who despised and hurt you earlier!

Bearing with LOVE bears no resemblance to "Bearing with *Resignation*." From a Hebraic perspective, love is evidenced through *action* that emanates from a clean heart. Words that are not backed up by outflow ring hollow. The love that serves the King by serving others is the redemptive proof of a fully healed heart.

3. I, _____, learned that our Lord never regarded me as I **actually was**. He saw me as I **would be** when He had done what He had promised.

Have you ever regarded yourself as 'lame and weak and crooked and cowardly'? Maybe instead you just thought you were "somewhat needy" and wanted merely to make some adjustments to your faith walk. The church at Laodicea hadn't understood how drastic was their need for transformation. In fact, they didn't think they had any spiritual problems at all!

But our Lord loved them so much that He *rebuked* them so they would *turn from their sins*. By repenting, they could take hold of the sure hope of winning the victory and sitting with Him on His throne (Revelation 3:21). And He loves *you* so much that He will do whatever is necessary for *your* spiritual "wrinkles and blemishes" to be smoothed

away. He sees you from eyes that are unclouded by sin or regret. Your beauty lies in your yieldedness of love in Him.

Grace and Glory wanted so much to "regard others in the same way" that He had regarded her — with the same compassion, love and graciousness that recognized her wonderful Kingdom potential. Don't get discouraged by the stubborn resistance of those back in the Valley who are clinging to their prison bars of complacency and religion. *You* were there once, and the Shepherd graciously wooed *you* to come to the High Places!

Don't lose sight of how you once were. Then you'll be able through His Spirit to extend the same compassion as you walk uprightly in the midst of those who are so spiritually needy. Remember that *His standards* don't change; only *lives* are changed!

4. I, _____, learned that **every** circumstance in life, no matter how crooked and distorted and ugly it **appears** to be, if it is **reacted to in love and forgiveness and obedience to Your will** can be **transformed**.

This lesson, observes Grace and Glory, was part of the first one she learned. However, there is a difference here. The primary focus in the first lesson was on her (and your) heart transformation in response to her personal suffering and struggles. This final lesson moves from yourself to the impact your life has *on others*. In other words, your love-in-action and unmerited forgiveness can change the lives of other people!

Sue: I am so stirred when I read the testimonies of our persecuted, suffering brothers and sisters in other lands who are able in Jesus to *love* their tormentors! Richard Wurmbrand shared a story from his 14 years of torture and confinement in Romanian dungeons for having remained true to Jesus.

A small boy ventured into the office of a prison warden. In the child's hand was a lovely flower. The child explained that his own mother, a Christian, had died in that prison, and that today was her birthday. Since he couldn't gift her, he told the war-

den that he'd like him to give the flower to his wife as a present in honor of his mom. The warden was greatly impacted by the child's pure heart of forgiveness and love of Jesus that radiated from him. Not long after, the man himself became a follower of Jesus.

The warden understood full well the consequences of that decision, for he related his story firsthand among his fellow prison cellmates.

That young boy was walking in the powerful truth expressed by an apostle who understood suffering: *"So let those who are suffering according to God's will entrust themselves to a faithful Creator by continuing to do what is good"* (1 Peter 4:19).

Your transformation really can make a difference in other people's lives. And your intercession on their behalf stirs our Father to release the events and encounters in their lives that will give them spiritual eyes and ears to recognize His call to them.

Hold on to what you've received! **Take the hurtful situations that you will inevitably face and make them redemptive.** Purpose now to bless those who insult you and persecute you for following the Shepherd with loving, obedient trust.

Be alert and clear-minded for opportunities. And don't lose the ground that you've already gained on your pilgrimage!

- So many lessons to remember and learn from! How would you evaluate your own appropriation of these four life purpose lessons? In what areas do you still need to yield for His work to be deepened in you?
- What changes do you need to make in your attitude and response to those He has put in your life who are still mired in stagnant religious complacency?

21. Therefore I begin to think...; 22. At last he spoke...

Reread Grace and Glory's summary of her journey to the High Places. She reiterates the purpose of our transformation process: to make an eternal difference by overcoming evil with good:

My Lord, You *purposely* allow us to be brought into contact with the bad and evil things that *you want changed*. Perhaps that is the very reason why we are here in this world, where sin and sorrow and suffering and evil abound, so that we *may let you teach us* so to react to them, that out of them we can create lovely qualities to *live forever*. That is the only really satisfactory way of dealing with evil, *not simply binding it* so that it cannot work harm, but whenever possible *overcoming it with good*.

Darkness speeds inexorably on into greater darkness. But with what hope the apostle Paul proclaims the power of your transformed life to change that darkness into light! *"Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may be blameless and pure children of God, without defect in the midst of a twisted and perverted generation, among whom you shine like stars in the sky, as you hold on to the Word of Life"* (Philippians 2:14-16a).

If Paul thought things were twisted and perverted then, surely his words are all the more applicable now! But the command still holds true for followers of Jesus to hold onto and to live out the Word of Life.

The world, the flesh and the devil are not going to give up warring against your hunger to walk in Jesus. But don't give in! Make no allowances for any of these arenas of darkness. *"The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil"* (1 John 3:8). Shouldn't his followers be living for His cause as well?

A word of caution as you return to the Valley. Don't hang out only with those who

are alongside you in your journey of obedient trust in Jesus. **You've been redeemed and cleansed for a purpose — to intersect evil with His good so that these people can be changed too!** You are a tool in the Carpenter's hands,

- planing away rough edges that crop up in your own life so that you can speak from a pure heart;
- sawing off things in your life that could hinder your testimony of His transformation power;
- hammering His ways into your own life so that others can see what uprightness looks like in everyday actions and attitudes;
- routing flawless edges of His beauty and grace by going the extra mile to meet the needs of others.

Heed the Shepherd's counsel to Grace and Glory. Her *yieldedness* to learn each lesson enabled *Him* to change her. You aren't on this life pilgrimage so you can check off each lesson and character change like a to-do list. Yieldedness comes from your *heart*, and then shows up in your *responses*.

Keep your "first love" intact and growing — then you'll continue to "leap and run" in His Spirit.

- How often do you interact in more than just a casual way with those who are still enmeshed in the world's values? How can you be light to them without preaching at them?
- In what ways can you interact with those who are still "of the world" without either being like them or judgmental of them? How might either of these traps ensnare you?

23. So remember this...; 24. "Accept and bear and obey the law of Love"...; 25. Off he went...

"As long as you are *willing* to be Acceptance-with-Joy and Bearing-in-Love", said the Shepherd... Your willingness to choose the Shepherd's path of continuing transformation is your protection against once more becoming "spiritually crippled."

It's also your *will* that keeps you available to serve Him by working amid the vast neediness of the world — one by one, person by person. You may not change society, but you can touch individual lives deeply and permanently as He works through you. And that is the fruit that lasts on Jesus.

His Law of Love at work in you is life-giving and refreshing, a stream of pure flowing water. The Song of Moses vividly recounts the Lord as our Source of living water to those who thirst for His presence:

*"Hear, oh heavens, as I speak! Listen, earth, to the words from my mouth! May my teaching **fall like rain**. May my speech **condense like dew**, like **light rain on blades of grass**, or **showers on growing plants**. For I will proclaim the name of ADONAI. Come, **declare the greatness of our God!**"*

Parents, especially, or anyone who has a place of loving influence in a child's life, this passage is speaking directly to you! Just as the heavens release the showers and the earth responds with growth, so too your proclamations of our Lord's greatness will till the fertile soil of that growing child's heart. Don't miss those opportunities for the law of Love to be made real to the least of these!

One last exhortation emanates from the loving Shepherd. *Accept* that what He specifies all throughout Scripture has sprung from His heart and purposes. *Bear* the cost that following Him will entail. *Obey* that which fulfills His love each day with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. As the Shepherd assures Grace and Glory, "This is the lovely and perfect law of the whole universe." The world has yet to see this love wholly put into action, and the Creator waits...

- To whom have you spouted a deluge of Bible knowledge but failed to shower with life-giving, truth-founded testimony of His love at work in and through you?

- Your responsibility and privilege in living the Law of Love is to accept, to bear, and to obey. Are you walking these out with joy and peace, or with some other response?