



Psalms 78:2-4

I will open my mouth in a parable, I will utter dark sayings of old... We will not conceal them.

Parables Bookshelf - Series 1.7.1

This issue of PARABLES BOOKSHELF introduces the book *Evidence of Things Unseen*.

You will find in this book that much of the quality of any man's spiritual walk is related to his awareness of the presence of God in his life. It is truly impossible to live a life where God is not present. The Scriptures tell us:

Acts 17:27-28

He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being...

The Scriptures also testify:

Colossians 1:17

And He Himself existed

before all things, and in Him all things consist (cohere, are held together).

[Amplified Bible]

Scientists do not understand what holds together the very atoms of which all creation is fashioned. They know of no force that can explain the reason that the electrons orbiting around the nucleus of an atom are held in place.

The Scriptures tell us that it is God who holds all things together. If He were to cease holding His creation together for one moment it would all dissolve into chaos.

Despite the fact that Yahweh is ever present in our lives, and has testified that He even has the hairs on our head numbered, many Christians live as if God is inattentive to them.

When we walk in an awareness of His presence we will begin to live our lives very differently. We will see His hand in many places that others do not. We will not declare things to be "luck," but will rather speak of the presence of God in our lives.

God is not far from you at this moment. He is as close as your next breath.

Food for Thought

"I believe the Bible is the best gift God has ever given to man. All the good from the Savior of the world is communicated to us through this book."

Abraham Lincoln

"The Bible is worth all other books which have ever been printed."

Patrick Henry

Scripture Memory

II Timothy 3:16

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness...

Parables Newsletter

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Evidence of Things Unseen

Foreword

I first encountered Joseph Herrin in the fall of 2000. I had read something that he had written that someone had posted on a prophecy oriented website. The writing witnessed to my spirit so I looked up the Heart4God website (<http://www.heart4god.ws>). There I encountered the article entitled "The Lion, the Bear and Goliath."

All who enter into this life do so with fear and trembling...

We began correspondence concerning faith in the Lord's provision, the difficulty this places on our families, etc.. I was well into this walk, but did not understand it at the time.

Joseph wrote back to me with some greater details of his trials. I remember reading it out loud to my wife. One minute we were weeping, the next we were laughing as we recognized ourselves in some of the Lord's dealings with Joseph and his family.

I called Joseph on the telephone. The fact that he had just gone through some of what I was entering into, and was still walking ahead of me in it, was an enormous encouragement. Afterward my wife said, "How do we know they are not wackos?" I replied, "They ARE wackosso are we!" Soon thereafter I put my 20 year old business (which was every bit as much a son to me as Isaac was to Abraham, for I had no other children) on the altar, and released it to God to send fire down to consume it if He desired. He did so, but in a very merciful way, and He consumed my oxen with the wood from my plough.

I had read the accounts of George Muller at that time and had been blessed by a mature Christian mentor, who had and was leading a life of faith, but I still had trouble identifying with them. As many of you know, the enemy is always trying to cast doubt that this life of faith is all our vain imagination. "Who are you that God should speak to you... provide for you... care for you?" So I found Joseph's testimony to be enormously helpful, as I know it will be to many of you who will read it.

I think perhaps the greatest value of Joseph's testimony is that it is ongoing, with fear and trembling. All who enter into this life do so with fear and trembling, Moses included. Yet, when I read many of the books written about the saints, the authors tend to portray them as fearless and heroic, different than ourselves. I think this reveals more of the perspective of the biographer than the saint. Only the saint knows the inner struggle, and few have written of it.

One reason so little has been written of the inner struggle of those who embark upon a life of faith, is that after a time the remembrance of the struggle diminishes to the point it does not seem so frightening. The child has been born and the labor of childbirth is forgotten because of the joy for the fruit that is seen from it. For this reason, I find Joseph's testimony to be of great value. It is written in real time. The experiences are fresh. They are vivid, and they describe the experiences many others of us are also living in one form or another.

I should not leave this without saying "Do not be put off by some of Joseph's teaching which you may not agree with." I do not agree with all of Joseph's teaching. In some of it I think he may be in error. Others, I think he might be right, but I don't know. Much of it I do agree with, but all of these things are matters which have been disputed for centuries. There is much that I used to accept as truth that I have since learned was false. So I have learned to give these questionable matters up to the Lord. What is not disputable is that Joseph and his family love the Lord and are struggling to follow His lead into their inheritance. These other matters I consider secondary, and I trust that our Father, Who alone is our Teacher, will correct our understanding in His time.

Finally, I offer a word of caution that I have copied from the editor's preface to "The Inner Life" by Francois Fenelon. I think it is highly appropriate to this work:

And now, beloved reader, one word in conclusion,

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from the love of God to you. God has led you, in his Providence, to open this book that He may do you good. If through His infinite mercy you have had a personal experience of the matters herein written, your heart will be filled with thanksgiving and praise as you read. What hath God wrought! If not, you will find many things strange, and it would not be surprising if you should be ready to pronounce some untrue. But ah! beware of being wise in your own conceit! The Spirit of God that searcheth the deep things of God, alone can decide.

Do not distrust the reports of these spies whom God has sent before you into the promised land. It is a land flowing with milk and honey; true, the children of Anak are there, in whose sight we are but as grasshoppers, but they are bread for us. The Lord God, He it is that shall fight for us, and He will surely bring us into that exceeding good land.

The natural man receiveth not the things of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. If, then, you have not experienced the things that follow, think it not strange that they should seem foolish and false; in God's own time they shall be perceived, if you follow on to know.

If you will be advised by one who knows nothing, and who is least in the household of faith, you will deny nothing--reject nothing--despise nothing, lest haply you be found fighting against God: you will receive nothing but what is accompanied by the Amen of the Spirit of God in your heart; all else shall be as the idle wind.

Amen to that.

Glen Pickren

Introduction

A Christian brother has suggested that the many testimonies of God's miraculous intervention in my life, and that of my family, are perhaps one of the most valuable things I have shared, or could share, with the saints. Many others have written to relate to me how very encouraged they were in reading about some miracle of provision, or healing God has done on our behalf, for there seem to be few contemporary examples of those who have cast themselves wholly over into the care of God that they might consequently see Him do things which have no natural explanation.

As God is calling more and more saints into a walk of faith in various areas of their lives, such testimonies of God's faithfulness have great value in encouraging others along their own pilgrim way. Our own journey is far from over. In truth, I am confident that we are at the very beginning of those mighty and miraculous things we will see God do. Yet already we have such a legacy of His faithfulness to us that I could fill a book with these accounts. This is exactly what I intend to do here.

This is not an account of our own faithfulness, nor is it intended to lift me, or my family up in the eyes of others. On the contrary, I desire to show how God has chosen the weakest, most fearful and despised of His children, and by His great grace and unceasing love He has led us with the gentleness of a Father who has the deepest of compassion for His children who are all beset with many weaknesses and infirmities. This writer intends to magnify Yahweh God who alone is the source of faithfulness, as the prophet Isaiah wrote:

God has chosen the weakest, most fearful and despised of His children...

Isaiah 63:7-9

I shall make mention of the lovingkindness of Yahweh, the praises of Yahweh, according to all that Yahweh has granted us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which He has granted them according to His compassion and according

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to the abundance of His lovingkindness... So He became their Savior. In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; In His love and in His mercy He redeemed them, and He lifted them and carried them all the days of old.

The Psalmist also testified:

Psalms 89:1

I will sing of the mercies of Yahweh forever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations.

This is the happy intent of this author, to make known to all generations that God is faithful, and that even in this late hour He shows forth His mercy and His love in a myriad of ways to those who will put their trust in Him. May your faith be strengthened as you read, and may your hope

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in the God of all comfort be renewed by these testimonies.

Joseph Herrin

Beginnings of Faith

I do not think it is possible to begin a walk of faith until we come into a relationship with the Lord that to us is personal and intimate. It is one thing to confess Christ and believe the things the Scriptures testify of Him, but it is quite another thing to enjoy a measure of fellowship with Him. I had my first experiences in Christianity as a child growing up in Portland, Oregon. My parents both became Christians when I was a small child, and we began attending church where the man pastored who had witnessed to them of Christ.

The church I grew up in was a member of the Conservative Baptist denomination. Its teachings were

considered fundamental and evangelical, and I learned many things about God and about His Christ while attending Sunday School, children's church and the other meetings held there. At the age of ten I was baptized, having confessed faith in Jesus Christ as my Savior.

I have never doubted my conversion at this early age, and although I certainly had no breadth of understanding of Christ, I did understand and believe in certain specific things. I knew I was a sinner, and I knew that my sins had caused a separation between myself and God. I also understood that Christ was the Son of God, that He had led a sinless life and had died to pay the penalty of my sin. I believed that by trusting in His work of redemption that I could be saved and go to heaven one day when I died.

This is about the extent of what I understood at the age of ten, and from that time forward I learned other facts about Christ, about the Old Testament patriarchs, the children of Israel, God's law, and the lives of the disciples. What I did not learn about was a walk of intimacy with the Lord where He would speak to me personally and where I could commune with Him. I did not understand life in the Spirit at this time, but instead I was raised to try to walk out in my own power a modified Christian version of the Old Testament Law. This I found I could not do, and in my many defeats I was met with tremendous feelings of guilt and failure.

When I was fifteen my family moved to the coast of Georgia, and a couple years later we settled in Central Georgia. In my senior year in High School we began attending a Southern Baptist church of about 150 members. The pastor's name was Mac Goddard, and it was under his preaching that I first began hearing a message of salvation of faith by grace, rather than by works. Of course, I understood all along that Christ had died and risen again that I might be saved, and that it was my faith in His finished work that provided my initial salvation. But I had picked up the concept through the teachings I had been raised in that I had to do something to remain saved. I was led to think that I had to keep the church's version of the Law, and that failure to do so could result in my being sent to hell for eternity.

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Mac Goddard, through his consistent teaching of a message of grace, refuted these ideas and for the first time I was able to come to a place of rest where I did not worry about whether I was at that moment a child of God, or not. The message that God chose me, and that He did so on the basis of His own mercy, not on works which I had done, allowed me to attain to a measure of rest in my relationship with God that set the stage for future fellowship with Him.

It took me considerable time to make the transition from a Law mentality to a grace mentality, for a message of keeping the Law had been deeply ingrained in my mind, and many of the things I did as a young Christian I did because I had been taught that it was the Christian thing to do. I prayed because Christians were supposed to pray. I read the Bible because I was supposed to do so. I served in the church and supported its programs because I had been raised to believe that a true believer should do these things. In all of this I had little comprehension of what it meant to be Spirit led. I was merely being led by the external set of rules that had been delivered to me, which all good saints had to abide by.

I do not mean to indicate that all of my Christian service was a drudgery to me, for I was very zealous to do things for God and for the church. I was at church every time the doors were opened, and no one had to prod me to be there. I was active in some type of service almost all the time, even being made Sunday School superintendent of a church I was attending when I was only in my mid twenties. Because of my zeal I was advancing beyond many of my contemporaries, yet there were glaring deficiencies in my life.

Probably the greatest deficiency in my life was in my prayers. I hated prayer time. I prayed because I knew Christians were supposed to pray. I would intend to pray for an hour, and I was barely able to endure fifteen minutes. I would dispassionately go through my prayer list, and it would be exhausted, and so would I, after only five or ten minutes. I have often recounted to others that my prayer times were as dry as sawdust and that I had no sense of my words rising above the ceiling of whatever room I was in.

I cannot remember the exact time, but I believe I was about 23 years old, when I had an encounter that was to change my life. At the Southern Baptist church I was attending there was an elder by the name of Bill Martin. Bill is about twenty years my senior. It was at Bill's house that the young people of the church would congregate, for he and his wife June had a sincere love for others and they were very hospitable. Bill, in particular, really enjoyed engaging young men and women in conversations about spiritual matters, and provoking them to think about things that they may not have considered before.

Bill was not your typical church elder, being considered by the more traditional members of the church to be a bit of a wild man. Yet there was no doubting that he was serious about his relationship with God and that he was passionate about encouraging others to greater depths of spirituality. I found myself hanging out at his house a lot, and when I was around 23 years of age I even lived with he and his wife and daughter for a month.

Bill began telling me about his prayer life...

One day Bill and I went for a walk around a peach orchard that was located behind his house, and as we walked Bill shared some things with me that I really needed to hear. Bill began telling me about his prayer life, and I was both greatly challenged and encouraged by what I heard. I had been accustomed to formal, spiritual sounding prayers all my life, so I was amazed by what Bill shared with me.

Bill told me that he would pray to God often as he took walks, or during various times of day, and he began to relate to me the substance of his prayers. He said there was no sense in attempting to sound spiritual in God's presence, nor to present ourselves to God as better, or more noble, than we actually were, for God already knew what was in our hearts. He saw every aspect of our lives, and was able to judge the thoughts and intentions of our hearts.

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Bill went on to share with me how he would talk to God. He would tell God things like, “Lord you know when I saw that good looking woman today that I had lustful thoughts in my mind, and I don’t want to be a lustful man, so I ask You to forgive me and to deliver me from these thoughts.” Or he might say, “God you know that man at work provoked me today and I felt like punching him in the nose. I wanted to really hurt him Lord, but I know these thoughts are fleshly and not from You. I ask you to forgive me and deliver me.”

The frankness with which this elder brother in the Lord prayed, the lack of posturing and absence of

I asked God to change my heart and to place within me a desire to pray.

pretense, was both refreshing and revolutionary to me. I knew his method of praying was right, for we cannot hide anything from God, nor can we deceive Him. He knows our thoughts from

afar, and as I considered what I was hearing a thought began to grow in my mind. I had been attempting to hide from God the fact that I hated my times of prayer. I had never thought of confessing the fact to Him that I found prayer to be dry and lifeless, but as I considered it I understood that He already knew these things.

Some time later when I was by myself I prayed to God and I told Him very frankly how I felt concerning prayer. I confessed that I was only praying because I felt it was required of me, but that I found my times of prayer to be one of the least enjoyable events in my life, that I had no confidence my prayers were being heard, and that I did not want my times of prayer with the Father to remain this way. I asked God to change my heart and to place within me a desire to pray.

I cannot say that I had any great expectation that God would answer my prayer, for up until this time I had very little experience of praying with expectancy in my heart. I think perhaps that God did not require a great faith to attend my request at this time, for I was yet a babe in the area of faith, and all I knew to do was simply to make my request known and to leave the results in God’s hands.

God did answer my prayer, and He did so beyond my greatest expectations. It was not long after this that I began to find a hunger for prayer arising within me. I was given a key to the church building, which was located in a quiet spot out in the country, and I would go out on Friday or Saturday evenings when the church was empty and I would walk around the sanctuary and pray. I found God placing people upon my heart, attended by a yearning to intercede for them, and I found a great emotion welling up within me as I did so. No longer did I struggle to utter a sentence or two on behalf of a person, but an intense groaning would come forth at times and I often would weep and have tears streaming down my face as I prayed.

I suppose this type of praying went on for about ten years, and it became the highpoint of my week as I looked forward to my time alone with the Lord where I could pour my heart out before Him. Most of the other men I knew from work or church were spending their free time hunting, or fishing, or going out on the town, or pursuing some hobby. Yet I had no desire for these things. I wanted only to get alone with the Lord and enjoy His presence. Oftentimes I would look at my watch thinking I had been at the church about fifteen minutes, only to find that several hours had gone by.

How I delighted in these times. I would often walk among the rows of chairs and I would anoint each one and pray for the people whom I knew sat in the chairs week after week. Sometimes I would be filled with some message from God for the people and I would go to the front of the sanctuary where the pulpit was and I would preach to the empty chairs. Oftentimes the Spirit would fill my heart with a longing for a people to be raised up who would be a praise unto Him, and I would cry out fervently, often with shouting, that this people would come forth, as I prayed for the specific characteristics that the Spirit laid upon my heart for this people. At times I would simply sing words of praise and worship unto God.

How did my prayers change from a dry, lifeless time to something that became the greatest joy and longing of my heart? It was due to nothing I did. It cannot be attributed to my taking a course on effectual praying, or to my studying the prayers of

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Scripture, or any other such thing. It can only be attributed to a sovereign work of God as He answered the petition I had brought before Him, even when I had little expectation of an answer.

I have often heard of God taking away from a person some destructive appetite that they had long been enslaved to. I have heard testimonies given where a person, upon being born again, would have no more taste for alcohol, or drugs, or some other thing that had formerly enslaved them. It is little thought of, but God is sovereign even over our desires, and He is able to change them at will. Thus we read of God hardening some men's hearts so that they will not repent, and others He brings to repentance. The apostle Paul gives us an interesting insight into this matter.

Philippians 2:13

[Not in your own strength] for it is God Who is all the while effectually at work in you [energizing and creating in you the power and desire], both to will and to work for His good pleasure and satisfaction and delight.

(Amplified Bible)

This was really the beginning of faith in my life, for I had asked God to change my heart regarding prayer, and I saw Him do a work that I could not account for in any natural sense. I often looked back and marveled at what God had done, for as miserable as my times of prayer were formerly, He made them all the more a delight. What had seemed a barren wilderness, He transformed into a fruitful garden.

Part of the transformation that God wrought at this time was the birthing of communion and intimacy with Him. I had a real sense that God was with me, attending to my words, and searching my heart during my times of prayer. I no longer felt that my prayers were stopping at the ceiling, but I envisioned God with bended ear leaning over to hear what I was speaking to Him. I also began to hear things from Him in return. He would place some burden upon my heart and teach me how to pray for people. I began to experience prayer as a real two-way communication between myself and God.

This was a critical development because, in order for me to enter into the walk of faith that God would bring me into, I had to be able to discern His voice. A walk of faith is not a walk based upon principle, or upon systematic theology, or upon proper Scriptural exegesis. It is a walk of obedience where we hear God's voice and we obey.

Romans 10:17

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

Isaiah 30:21

Your ears will hear a word behind you, "This is the way, walk in it," whenever you turn to the right or to the left.

Hearing always precedes obedience. The verse above from Romans is literally rendered "So faith is *out of* hearing...." Faith arises out of hearing. If there is no hearing, there is no foundation for faith. Therefore, any man, woman, or child who would walk by faith must first have their ears attuned to the voice of God's Spirit. What a wonderful gift is the ability to hear God's voice to those who are willing to obey. Yet it is a curse to those who are not willing, but who are instead filled with disobedience and unbelief.

If you would also walk by faith, then you too must discern God's voice. If you have not been able to discern it, if your times of prayer and communication with God have also been dry and lifeless as my own once were, then why not confess it to God. He already knows anyway. Perhaps you have struggled to transform this area of your life yourself, but to no avail. Simply cast all over into God's hands and ask Him to do that which you have failed to accomplish. Oftentimes we have not, because we have not asked. Ask that your joy may be made full.

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Discerning God's Presence

In order to enter into a walk of faith that pleases God the saint must not only develop a personal fellowship with God, but they must come to discern His presence with them. While I was still in my twenties I preached a sermon that used the following quote by J. Oswald Chambers to describe the main theme of the message.

“The deadliest form of Pharisaism today is not hypocrisy, but unconscious reality.”

When I first read these words, I understood immediately what they meant. A great majority of Christians walk around oblivious to the presence of God in their lives. They look at the circumstances of their lives as mere coincidence and happenstance. They do not perceive the presence of God, and, because of this failure to perceive His presence, they respond to the events of their lives with human reasoning and carnal strength.

I have always loved the histories recorded for us in the Old Testament. The lives of David, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph and many others have been precious to me, for they are related in such a way that we cannot fail to discern that God ordered their every step, and that He was always present and working in their lives. When I would read about David and his anointing by Samuel, his victory over Goliath, and his initial acceptance into Saul's house, the evidence is clear that God was ordering his steps. When I read of Saul's jealousy and persecution of David, and David's many trials in wilderness places, it cannot be denied that God determined that he should endure these things. What is more, David recognized that God was present with him in all of his trials and victories.

At some point in my life the thought occurred to

me, “If God was so present in David's life, and in the life of the other persons whose histories are recorded for us, then why would I think that God is not just as present in my life and the lives of His born again children?” The Spirit brought a strong conviction to me that God was certainly just as present in my life as He was in the life of the son of Jesse. He was ordering my steps to the same degree that he ordered David's. The circumstances of my life were not mere coincidences, nor the work of chance, anymore than were the events in the life of King David.

Yet as I looked around me I could see that there were almost no Christians who shared this same mindset. They nearly all lived as if God was somewhere far removed from their lives. They were trapped in this deadliest form of Pharisaism that J. Oswald Chambers described as “unconscious reality.” God would be working right in front of them and they would not perceive His presence. The result was seen in lives that were devoid of faith, which were marked by unbelief and a reliance upon the ability of man to accomplish all things and to deliver from all trials. Like the Israelites in the wilderness, the saints seemed to cry out, “Is the LORD among us, or not?” The apparent answer was that they believed He was not among them.

This unbelief is expressed in a multitude of ways. When the saints would get sick they would run to the doctors and hospitals before they would consult with God. There was no waiting before Him to discern His will for them. By their actions they demonstrated that they believed man was more present and able to help them than God. When a pressing financial need would arise they would pull out the credit card, or go to the bank for a loan. They would not get on their knees before God and seek His provision for them in the matter. They preferred to lean upon the arm of flesh, for man was much more tangible to them than an unseen God. Even when man's solution led to financial bondage, many Christians preferred bondage to trusting a God they could not see.

Pages could be filled in detailing the vast number

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of ways in which men and women today demonstrate their unbelief in God's presence with them, but I would prefer to press on and to cite some examples from my early Christian life where God made His presence known. This I will now do.

In our second year of marriage, my wife became pregnant and we had much anticipation for the child that was to be born to us. From my teenage years on up I had been captivated by the thought of being a father. I suppose I was influenced by TV shows such as "The Walton's" where family life was depicted as being so rich, and the family bonds between generations so enduring. I thought of how marvelous it would be to have a large family one day, and I wondered what my children would look like, and what their voices would sound like.

When I learned that my wife was expecting I was filled with excitement, and we prepared a room in the house to be a nursery. I painted the walls in pastel colors, and some ladies from the church made curtains and matching wall decorations for the room. We set-up a crib and a changing table and all the things that go along with taking care of a baby.

My wife was doing fine throughout her pregnancy, and she had that glow of expectant motherhood about her. As the day approached for the baby to be delivered all things appeared normal. The due date arrived, but there were no signs of labor yet. We were told this was normal for first births, as they often came late. One week went by and then two, and finally the doctor said that, if the child was not born by three weeks after the due date, he would induce labor.

The day before Tony was to be admitted to the hospital to have the baby delivered she began experiencing some pains, and, not knowing if they were normal pains, she wanted to see the doctor. We arrived at the doctor's office right before they were to close and the doctor was evidently in a hurry to get home. He listened to the baby's heartbeat with a stethoscope and concluded that all was well. Since

Tony was already scheduled to be induced in the morning, he advised us to go home and come back to the hospital as previously planned. The doctor did not run any type of fetal stress tests, or check on the welfare of the baby in any other way.

That night was a difficult one for Tony as she continued to experience pains. Since this was her first pregnancy she did not know if these were the normal pains associated with labor, or not, and neither did I. Both of us passed a restless night, and early in the morning I took her to the hospital. I checked her in and she was then taken to the birthing suites while I filled out paperwork. When I had finished I went up to the maternity ward, and I found the department in a rush.

When the nurses had hooked my wife up to a fetal monitor they found the baby's heartbeat to be erratic and in distress. The medical staff immediately decided to perform an emergency C-section and they were wheeling my wife back into the operating room when I arrived. A short while later the doctor came out and told me that my son had died, and that my wife would be taken to a hospital room where she would most likely be kept for a week or longer.

It was all I could do to go to a phone and call a dear woman from our church and ask her to let the other church members know what had happened. I was able to see my son, and my wife held him for a moment. He was a beautiful baby, and I could see my features in him. We learned later that because he was so long past his due date that he had his first bowel movement while in utero and this material had gotten into his lungs and he had died.

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and my wife held him for
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Because my wife was recovering in the hospital, I attended our son's funeral without her. We had named our son Joshua Caleb Herrin. These were

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days of grief for me, and I had never wept so bitterly as I did at this time. My expectation of fatherhood, of seeing my son grow up and hearing his voice, was met with tremendous loss and sorrow.

Over the next six months my sorrow over our loss continued, though the sharp bitterness of the first pains were lessened. One evening I had come home from work and had gotten in the shower when the Spirit began speaking to me with a clarity that I had rarely experienced before. In fact, I only knew of one other time when I had discerned the voice of God so distinctly. The Spirit said, “I am going to restore your joy. I am going to give you a daughter and her name will be Kristin Noel.”

I hurried up and finished my shower so that I could go and tell my wife what God had spoken to me. I

The Spirit said, “I am going to restore your joy.”

told her that Kristin Noel sounded like a Christmas name. A few weeks later my wife discovered that she was once again pregnant, and the doctor determined that her due

date was right around Christmas. Kristin Noel Herrin was born on December 29th, 1987.

Now this was an amazing thing to me. My wife and I had discussed baby names before, and we thought that if we had a girl we would name her Hannah Joy. We had never discussed the names Kristin, or Noel. As I later found out, Kristin means “follower of Christ”, and Noel means “new life”. Kristin is now sixteen years old, and her entire life she has fulfilled that which God’s Spirit spoke to me. She has been a source of joy, and my delight in being her father, and in seeing her own relationship to Christ blossom into one where she also hears His voice, has been beyond measure.

One thing that this event in my life did was to affirm to me the presence and watchfulness of God in my life. It is God who opens and shuts the womb. It is God who orders my steps and who establishes the times and seasons of my life. While I may not

understand why God brings certain trials into our lives, I am confident that He is ever present and that He will turn even our sorrows into joy. I can be assured that His intentions toward His children are always good, and not evil, to give us a future and a hope.

As these events unfolded I had many opportunities to live in the reality of the spiritual realms all around us, or to walk in “unconscious reality”. We were told that we had an open and shut case against my wife’s doctor, that negligence could be proven and we could be awarded a substantial amount of money. Yet as I considered this I sensed the Spirit telling me that it was not the will of God that I pursue this matter in court. The Spirit bore witness that our own emotional healing would be delayed if we followed this carnal course, for by keeping the matter of our loss and the doctor’s negligence before us, both my wife and I would give room for a root of bitterness to take hold in our lives. God would have us to forgive the doctor, and by releasing him we would ourselves be released into the freedom of forgiveness and love.

Though the money we might have been awarded was a small temptation to me, I felt the Spirit bearing witness that we did not need the money, for God would be our provider if we would trust in Him. Also, I knew that ultimately it was not the doctor that ordered my steps, but it was God. At the funeral service for our son, one couple came up to me and shared a verse from Scripture that they said the Spirit had given them in relation to this situation. The Scripture states, “The firstborn male that opens the womb is holy unto God.”

The Spirit has borne witness with my spirit that God took my son directly from the womb to His presence, and that he is considered holy unto God. He was spared from ever having to walk in this sin filled world of heartaches and sorrows. He has not known the grief of falling short of God’s perfect will, of being overcome by sin and bringing shame to the name of Yahweh. Like Enoch who walked with God and was no more, for God took him, so my son was taken into the presence of all that is

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holy. We are all creations of God created for His pleasure, and it is only just and right that God should choose the life for each of His children that pleases Him the most. With this I am content.

Perhaps some who are reading this have been in similar situations. Maybe you have been in an automobile accident, or encountered some other loss or suffering. We all have an opportunity to see the hand of God in these things and to respond accordingly, or we can choose to live in unconscious reality. We can live as if we are on our own and that God is not present, nor is He in control of our circumstances. We can choose to pursue a carnal path of getting all that we can by any human means possible, and relying upon the institutions of man to be our defense and source of succor. Yet it is always best to rest in God, to hear from Him, and to believe and obey.

God is present in the tragedies and triumphs of your life. He is as close to you as He was to David in all of his life. “The steps of a man are ordered of the Lord” (Psalms 37:23). We must choose to believe that God is present in our lives. Only then can we respond to our circumstances in a manner that is acceptable and pleasing unto Him.

Let me share another occurrence in our early married life that also demonstrated powerfully the presence of God in ordering our footsteps. One year we received a tax refund of about \$600, and when it came we decided to go to a nearby Sam’s club and stock up on some groceries, for our pantry had become depleted. As we were driving up the Interstate toward the store I thought of another young couple in the church whom we were good friends with. They also had young children, and I knew that making ends meet was a struggle for them. I mentioned them to my wife and I suggested that we could get two grocery carts at Sam’s, and everything we bought for ourselves we could also buy for them. Since God had just blessed us with this money we could well afford it.

My wife was excited about this idea, and in great

agreement with me. So we proceeded to the store and ended up spending several hundred dollars on groceries. We swung by our friends’ house on our way home, and they came out to greet us. We told them that the Spirit had led us to buy them some groceries, and we opened up the trunk of

God is present in the tragedies and triumphs of your life.

our car to give them their portion. Upon hearing and seeing this, the wife of this couple began crying. She then told us that her husband had just lost his job and she had only moments before asked “How will we eat? What will we do for groceries?”

God had answered her concerns, and the question she had vocalized, so quickly that she could only weep. God was demonstrating to her that He was present in her life, and that of her family, and she need not act as if they were on their own and left to their own resources. It also spoke volumes to me. We left them their groceries and then had to hurry home to put up our items, and on the way I was amazed as I pondered how God had directed our steps, giving my wife and I both the desire and the ability to do this thing when we did not even know the circumstances occurring in the lives of our friends. The Scriptures state:

Philippians 2:13

It is God Who is all the while effectually at work in you [energizing and creating in you the power and desire], both to will and to work for His good pleasure and satisfaction and delight.

(Amplified Bible)

The apostle Paul is declaring here that God both gives us the desire to do His will, and the power to accomplish it. Oftentimes God will move us to do a thing and we will not even know that it is God leading us. We may merely have a desire arise in our spirit, and perhaps later the Lord will show us what it was He was doing, though many times I am convinced we do things and never know what God has

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done. We may speak a word to someone, and it is just what they needed to hear. They may be convicted, or encouraged, or consoled, or receive direction, and we are unaware of what just transpired within them.

It is necessary that those who would walk in faith should believe that God is ever present with them and that He is ordering their steps. I would be surprised if one out of a hundred Christians in this

Those who would walk in faith should believe that God is ever present with them...

hour have such a conception. There is such a mass of Christians who are walking by sight and reason, judging all matters in the same way that their lost neighbors

judge. They are leaning on the same arm of the flesh for all of their needs. They resort to the same carnal and worldly means to deal with the trials and tribulations that they encounter. In doing so they have succumbed to this deadly form of Pharisaism. By their actions they declare, "Is God even among us?"

"But the righteous man shall live by faith" and "apart from faith it is impossible to please God."

Seeing God's Hand in Discipline

Having read the previous chapter, you should be beginning to note that a large part of a walk of faith, and of seeing the supernatural presence of God in the lives of the saints, has to do with observation. We can either be oblivious to the presence of God in our lives, or we can be attuned to it. The book of II Kings relates an interesting account of one man who saw into the spiritual realms, and another who did not.

II Kings 6:15-17

Now when the attendant of the man of God had risen early and gone out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was circling the city. And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall

we do?" So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Then Elisha prayed and said, "O Yahweh, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." And Yahweh opened the servant's eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

Both Elisha and his servant were in the same situation, having the same resources of God available to them. Yet one man saw God's provision, and one did not. This is a picture of the lives of the saints today. God is present and willing to help all who call upon His name, yet only a few discern His presence. Most Christians have their eyes closed to the supernatural realm around them.

I believe the time is coming when Yahweh will open the eyes of many of His elect in the same way that is described here. No longer will they have to see through eyes of faith, believing things that their natural senses cannot detect, but they will have their eyes opened to see into spirit realms as clearly as they have been able to perceive things in natural realms. Yet I also believe that those who will have their eyes opened to perceive spiritual things in this way will first have proven themselves by trusting in things that their senses could not detect.

Elisha did not always have the spiritual sight that is described in this passage. He first spent a number of years "pouring water on the hands of Elijah". Elijah had this sight while Elisha served him, but Elisha had to believe first in things that his eyes could not see. Only after proving himself faithful in "walking by faith, not by sight" was he granted his request that he might receive a double portion of the spirit that rested upon Elijah. He too then received an open heaven and was able to see into spiritual realms. Thus we see the principle at work throughout both Old and New Testaments that "those who are faithful in little things, will be given greater things."

I am convinced that the reason many saints do not have any great witness of the supernatural working

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of God in their lives is simply due to unbelief. God is present in their lives, yet they choose not to recognize this presence. They may see some provision come in for a pressing need at the very moment that they desperately require an answer, yet they choose to interpret the event as chance and fortune. How often do the saints say, “I was sure lucky”, or “You were sure lucky”, when luck had nothing to do with it? Why not rather confess that God orders the steps of His children and causes His rain (blessings) to fall on the just and the unjust?

What I want to speak of in this chapter is recognizing God’s supernatural presence in the discipline we receive from His hands. This is an important matter, for it requires faith to recognize God’s hand of discipline even as it requires faith to recognize His presence to heal, or to manifest some much needed provision. In each of these things we must have eyes of faith to see into spirit realms in order to recognize God’s presence in our lives.

If you are a child of God then you have, and will again, experience the discipline of God. None are exempt, as Paul wrote:

Hebrews 12:8

But if you are without discipline, of which **all** have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

I suspect that I could have a conversation with a majority of Christians today and it would go something like this.

“Are you a child of God?”

“Oh, yes. I am most definitely a child of God!”

“Then tell me about God’s discipline in your life.”

“Um, well, I do not know what you mean. God’s

discipline? I believe that God loves me and that His Son suffered for my sins so that I would not have to.”

“So then, you cannot think of a time when God has disciplined you?”

“I don’t think God would do that to me. God loves me and wants to bless me. I have had some bad things happen to me, even some painful things, but I don’t think that was God.”

I have actually had conversations with saints that were very close to this. One wife of a pastor even rebuked me when I shared with her about God’s discipline in my life. She said firmly, “My God would not do that.” If she is a child of the same God that I am a child of, then the Scriptures do testify that He will indeed discipline all those who are His children, for “all have become partakers” of His discipline.

The problem is not that God disciplines some of His children, and not others. Rather, it is that many refuse to acknowledge the discipline for what it truly is. These are also walking in “unconscious reality,” and because they fail to recognize God’s discipline they do not respond to His correction. As Paul wrote to the Corinthian believers, “For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep” (I Corinthians 11:30). It is tragic that so many Christians experience the hand of God’s discipline upon them, but they refuse to recognize it. This results in God using more severe discipline, and even then many will not respond until God finally has to take their lives.

If you are a child of God then you will experience the discipline of God.

I have often been on the receiving end of God’s discipline, and at times this discipline has been most severe. If we read the words of the apostle we

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should expect that it would be so.

Hebrews 12:5-7

And have you [completely] forgotten the divine word of appeal and encouragement in which you are reasoned with and addressed as sons? My son, do not think lightly or scorn to submit to the correction and discipline of the Lord, nor lose courage and give up and faint when you are reproved or corrected by Him; for the Lord corrects and disciplines everyone whom He loves, and He punishes, even scourges, every son whom He accepts and welcomes to His heart and cherishes. You must submit to and endure [correction] for discipline; God is dealing with you as with sons. For what son is there whom his father does not [thus] train and correct and discipline?

(Amplified Bible)

I would like to relate to you a testimony from my life where I received a scourging from the Lord. This event was no less supernatural than His

When my wife and I were first married we both felt a conviction that we were to live debt free...

speaking to me and telling me that He was going to give me a daughter, and telling me what her name would be. It was no less a sovereign act of God than His Spirit lead-

ing us to buy groceries for a family when, unknown to us, the husband had just lost his job and his wife was just expressing her concern about where their provision would come from.

One of the areas of my life that I have struggled with is in the area of financial stewardship, and more specifically I would identify my struggle as being with covetousness. When my wife and I were first married we both felt a conviction that we were to live debt free, although we were not as clear as to whether a mortgage on a house was wrong. In all other matters besides a house we were committed to living within the means which we had and to not incur any debt.

We lived in such a manner for the first few years of our marriage, and we knew the blessing of God upon our provision. Even though we did not earn a lot of money, God seemed to always be providing for us in gracious ways. About the third year of our marriage my wife went through a pregnancy that resulted in the birth of our daughter. We had some medical bills associated with the birth that needed to be paid. We didn't have the money, although it wasn't a very large amount, and we decided to apply for a credit card in order to use it to pay these bills.

I must state that I knew in my heart this wasn't God's true provision for us. Rather than seeking Him and asking for His provision to be manifest, I decided to meet the need in my own way. A large part of my reasoning was that there were a couple of things I wanted to buy, and in addition to paying the medical bills, I could also use the credit card to get the things I wanted while not having to wait until I had the cash on hand.

We obtained the credit card and paid the medical bills. I then also purchased the things I was desiring. From this point forward, things changed in our finances and provision. We had formerly seen God's hand of intervention on a regular basis. Now it was as if God said, "Ok, if you want to handle your money according to your will, then I will remove My hand of protection and provision and leave you to your own resources and devices."

Over the next few years we accrued more and more debt. We ended up with several credit cards as well as a car loan and other debt. When things got difficult, we applied for a consolidation loan to reduce the burden of monthly payments, but then foolishly we kept the credit cards and used them again.

My wife was not working, having quit work when our daughter was born, and my income was very modest. Things reached a point where I was working two jobs, and sometimes three, and the bills were taking everything that I earned. We were living paycheck to paycheck, just barely keeping up

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with bill payments.

The pressure became so severe that I knew something had to change quickly. My wife and I began to discuss where we had gone wrong. We realized that we had been disobedient, and had turned aside from the path we were convicted was God's will for us. We determined that our only recourse was to repent and ask God for His mercy. My wife and I did this as we knelt down in our living room and prayed to God, confessing our sin and asking our heavenly Father to once again be the provision for our home. We estimated that it would take many years for us to climb out of debt, even in a best case scenario, but God in His mercy had other plans.

Not long after we prayed about this, I was at work one day and I had an accident on a freshly waxed floor where I fell down and broke my ankle and tore ligaments in my knee. The injury to my knee was very painful and required physical therapy. It also left me with an impairment in my knee. I did not know that being injured on the job made me eligible for a worker's compensation settlement, so I was surprised when I was told after my rehabilitation that I needed to be evaluated to determine what compensation I would receive. I ended up being awarded \$19,000 dollars, and this went a long way toward paying off our debt. Soon after this my wife had an aunt die and we received an additional sum of money that allowed us to pay off all of the remainder of our debt. In less than a year from the time we prayed and asked God to forgive us for our sinful spending habits and covetousness, and to invite Him to once more be our source of provision, we were completely debt free. This was miraculous, to say the least, and it was evidence of God's grace and mercy extended toward us.

After we were debt free God began to speak to me concerning my injury at work. God told me that He had broken my ankle and caused the injury to my knee that I might learn to walk more carefully in this area of my life. I was reminded of the Scripture from Hebrews that speaks of God's discipline. It specifically mentions God causing an injury to a person's limbs.

Hebrews 12:12-13

Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

God then began to show me parallels between the natural and spiritual applications of this discipline He had chosen for me.

After the injury I became very careful about walking on the floors at work (a hospital). I was always looking for wet spots and paying close attention to how I was walking, especially during the months I was on crutches. God told me that He wanted me to walk just as carefully in the area of financial stewardship. He wanted me to learn to live within my means and not be covetous.

This injury affected me in a way that I had never experienced before...

This injury affected me in a way that I had never experienced before, although I had known numerous injuries in my life. At times I would find myself walking down a hallway at work and I would begin replaying the accident in my mind. I would see myself setting my foot on the freshly waxed floor and falling. I would see myself lying on the floor unable to move my leg and foot. As this scene would be playing in my mind I would stop walking, and moments later I would realize I was standing still in the middle of a hallway. I would have to tell myself to move, and I would have to wrest my mind free from this image.

The Lord spoke to me about this. He said He wanted this injury to be a reminder to me to not transgress in this way again. The link between my injury and my disobedience in the area of coveting was clearly established, for the beginning of my getting out of debt was the result of the worker's compensation settlement I received from this injury. When I understood the purpose of God's discipline I did not mind the broken ankle and the torn ligaments in my knee. I began to praise God

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and to thank Him for His discipline. I confessed that He was righteous and just to discipline me in this manner. I had willfully transgressed in the area of financial stewardship by obtaining credit cards and walking in covetousness, and I could only agree that it was a just thing for God to discipline me in this way. I was reminded that God disciplines those whom He loves and counts as sons, and I knew all this was done out of love for me.

It is remarkable to think back about these events. I had disobeyed and as a result I had gotten in a real bind. I was working day and night to pay bills and I was barely staying afloat. In desperation my wife and I cried out to God. We confessed our sin and asked God to be our provider once more. In His mercy He answered our prayers, and along with His deliverance He sent me some much needed correction.

*I had willfully
transgressed in the area
of financial
stewardship ...*

There is no possibility of my denying the presence of God in my life in any of these events. I will not say that what happened to me was mere chance, or luck. It was the sovereign hand of God manifested in my life. He ordered my steps, and one fateful step resulted in some painful discipline.

God uses many such things in the lives of His children to get their attention and to lead them back to righteousness. We read already where Paul informed the saints at Corinth that many among them were weak and sick, and some had even died as a result of God's discipline for their sin. Not **all** physical infirmity is a result of sin, a fact that is easily proven through Scriptures. Yet the apostle informs us that **some** infirmities are God's discipline. In Hebrews he also uses language that speaks of a limb being made lame. My right leg was lame for a period of time as a result of God's discipline, so we see that God also uses bodily injuries to bring us needed correction. Paul also uses the word "scourges" to describe God's discipline, and by this we can understand that this discipline may be severe.

There are a myriad of ways in which God brings His discipline. He may cause us to suffer a financial setback. He may discipline us by allowing us to be fired from a job, or exposing some sin we had been trying to keep hidden. He may allow us to experience open shame. As Paul stated, "all discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful." Discipline is not supposed to be a pleasurable experience, "yet afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness."

If you are to begin experiencing the supernatural presence of God in your life, a good place to begin is to recognize His hand of discipline. Have you thought that all of the difficult experiences of your life were merely meaningless, chance occurrences to be endured? Consider for a moment those saints in Corinth. Some were weak, and others sick and some had even died. Do you suppose they all understood why they were weak and sick? Do you think they all perceived why they were dying? No! And I am sure there were some stubborn and carnal ones among them who still refused to acknowledge the hand of God's discipline upon them, even after receiving Paul's words, and that many more died.

Why was this true then, and why is it true today? It is largely due to unbelief. Though the saints may confess that God is all knowing and all powerful, though they may confess that He is omnipresent, even to judging the thoughts and intents of every man's heart, they often live as if God is somewhere far removed from them. Many live as if God was unaware of what just occurred in their life, and that they must inform Him of the matter lest He should not notice. When things happen in their lives many Christians fail to discern that it is God who has ordered their steps, and they rarely consider that God may have some purpose in allowing them to experience the things that come into their lives. This is the "unconscious reality" that J. Oswald Chambers referred to, and truly it is deadly, for many saints today also have perished in their blindness.

It is not so difficult to discern when God is disci-

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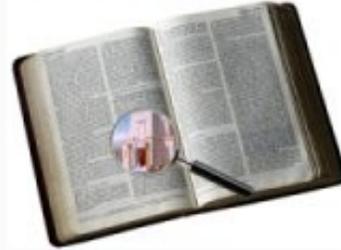
plining us, if we should merely develop the habit of listening to God. What Father is there who would discipline His children and not tell them why they were being disciplined? I am a father, and I have never disciplined my children without telling them why they were being corrected. It would serve no purpose to spank a child and not tell him why he was being paddled. God also knows this, and He will always tell us why we are being disciplined in order that we might correct our way and receive benefit from the sorrowful thing we are enduring.

It is an awesome thing to receive discipline from God. It is a testimony of His love for us, and a witness that He considers us to be His sons and daughters. When the Spirit revealed to me why I was disciplined, my response was one of thankfulness. I began confessing how right this discipline was. Wouldn't it be wonderful if our children would respond similarly when we had to correct them? To have a son or daughter say, "Mom/Dad, you were right. I sure needed that correction. Thank you for loving me enough to not abandon me to disobedience."

I wish my own story ended with this confession, but to my shame I returned once more to my sin of covetousness, and this led to God having to choose an even more painful correction the next time around. But that is a story reserved for later chapters.

*I began confessing how
right this discipline
was.*

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The earliest books of the Bible

whose dates and authorship can be determined with some confidence are the five books of Moses, often called the Pentateuch. These books are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

Scholars believe these books were written around the dates 1445 B.C. to 1405 B.C.. This would have been during the forty years that Moses was leading the people of Israel through the wilderness.

Some scholars believe the book of Job to be older than the books of Moses, but the authorship and dates for the book of Job are not known. The period of time in which the events of the book of Job occurred are generally be-

lieved to pre-date the history of Israel coming out of Egypt under the leadership of Moses.

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