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STRAIGHT STREET

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Life Is Not As It Seems

By

Kanji D Christian & the Trinity

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Advanced Praise for Straight Street



“**N**ext to the Bible, this is—by far—the best book I’ve ever read, and I’ve read every book ever published!”

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John Doe III, Chancellor of Research for Total Lifelong Inspiration

I could fill this book with the five star reviews I’ve received before its release, but I can only handle so much hype.



“He who speaks, should speak with the words of God.”

1 Peter 4:11

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Introduction



This is a spiritual action story set primarily along one road of a major U.S. city, Straight Street. Here we witness the everyday spiritual battles that are raging on earth right now. Seemingly simple interactions and casual conversations are filled with clashing forces of good and evil; supernatural elements that are utterly opposed, and are co-mingling morning, noon, and night, every single day. Those who look weak physically, can be powerhouses of spiritual might mentally; while those who are strong physically, are often feeble-minded spiritually.

Here, on Straight Street, we bounce between the physical life that is seen, and the spiritual life that is unseen; as well as, that hidden place of inner conflict over everyday decisions to do the right, or wrong things. We know what physical life looks like, but only those who live in the spiritual realm, know what *real* life truly looks like.

How does God see people; and, how does He teach us amidst our free-choice? What do the angels know, and how do the demons work? How would life look to those who see the unseen? And what wars rage within every person, at any given moment? Even when no one knows—no humans anyway.

Mundane life or action-packed adventure? Could our lives in this world be both at the same time? This is a story of the consequences of everyday decisions, seen and unseen; a story of free choice and its capacity for good and evil. Where the spiritual unseen is what life is ultimately about, for, **“the Way is narrow that leads to Life, and there are few who find it,”** while **“the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it.”**¹ Yet, at the same time, the two worlds co-exist and intermingle along which ever *way* one is on.

Soon we will meet the main cast of characters that live on Straight Street; and as we do, we learn more and more about the depth of the spiritual world and the entities that exist there. We find intense battles in the subconscious minds of even the most mild-mannered people. Some become masters over their carnal nature and some are mastered by it. We will experience head to head action between opposing forces in a variety of ways. As with life right now, there is fighting to the death, and fighting to *The Life*.²

Disciples of light will become masters of the spiritual martial arts of knowledge and Truth, and their victories will make them strong in the Lord and in the Spirit of His mighty power.³ They will gain blessings of protection, strength, and guidance that will see them refined like gold passing through the fire.⁴ These are those who grow into spiritual giants clad in impenetrable armor; and, with double-edged swords and lightning speed, they will wage war on the enemy.⁵

1 – Matthew 7:13-14

2 – John 14:6

3 – Ephesians 6:10

4 – 1 Peter 1:7

5 – Ephesians 6:11-17

While the enemy also trains its giants in the power of darkness through the evil art of deception, creating warmongers of wickedness that show no mercy and have no conscience left to be found. They are wicked spiritual forces that take over the lives of men and try to pull anyone and everyone down with them, into the pit.

Who will be able to stand? Who can fight? And who knows the rules of the game? Who will enter wisdom by the fear of God?⁶ And who will be defeated and remain blind, by the Devil and his greatest ally: the flesh?

6 – Psalm 111:10, Proverbs 9:10

Chapter 1

The War Rages



In the big city, Billy Mac walks down the busy sidewalk along Straight Street near downtown, and it's just another day. Billy Mac is thirty-four years old, 5'11", with a wiry build and shaggy brown hair that matches his eyes. He has a mostly clean shaven face, wearing simple blue-jeans, a Sum 41 t-shirt, and casual street shoes. On Billy's arm are a number of tattoos—basically boasting a life of wine, women, and song—and he has a couple of ear piercings with one eyebrow ring.

In a flash, we see the same scene through a different lens ~ the unseen spiritual realities of this place become visible as the same people and places pass in what appears, at first glance, to be an entirely different world. Most of the people don't look the same, the places don't feel the same, and some mysterious forms of living beings appear where there were none before. This is what the angels, both the holy and the wicked see. ~

A normal looking 5'7" businessman passing by talking on his cell phone ~ is now 6'3" and buff, with a slick all black (almost scaly looking) suit, with a dark but metallic red shirt and black tie, greasy hair, glowing red eyes, yellow

sulfurous breath, and what looks like a pitch-black balloon type sphere hovers unwaveringly above his head. The tarry blackness of the orb swirls about within, and though it seems like it might ooze out some of its dirty blackness, it never does. Above the orb follows a strange black cloud that seems to fluctuate in size and shape, radiating an indescribable sense of intense awareness. ~

A plain looking little old lady with her eyes down and straight ahead of her as she walks normally, which is, naturally quite hunched over ~ now, too, is significantly taller with perfect posture looking forward and seems to shine brightly in a silvery chain mail dress, with a shiny platinum shield on her purse that reflects her unusual light back at her. She has long hair of pure white, and her light seems to emanate from within her, while a great, blood-red colored orb maintains steadily above her head, and an oscillating, seemingly alive, translucent rainbow halo floats brightly above that. As she and the business man pass shoulder to shoulder, the dark cloud above his head bends around to the outside of the elderly woman's halo, giving way as if to avoid contact.

Some little children do not look so much different, yet they have little white balloons above them and nothing more. ~ A well lit liquor store with many colorful lights ~ is morphed into a shady and mysterious place engulfed in an odorless stagnant smoke, and what seems like eyes disappear when you try to focus into its murky darkness.

A glance upward in this spiritual realm reveals somewhat sparse layers of movement in the air above: unrecognizable blotches of light and dark traveling in all directions, at different speeds, even high above the tops of the skyscrapers. ~

Back in the physical world, Billy Mac notices someone drop their wallet. The moment in time slows and freezes as his eyes lock on to what he realizes makes for a quick moral decision.

~ Now we enter into his mind, to a scene in what might be considered the subconscious. This is the place of inner conflict where a man does his best to uphold his God given conscience against his own inherent sinful nature.⁷

The setting to this symbolic arena of inner conflict is inside a bank, where all of the other people are going about their business oblivious to the two nearly identical men in their midst.

The subject finds himself facing his *self* (his ego), only his other self is more sinister looking. This is his *flesh*: the embodiment of a selfish carnal nature that always wants what it wants regardless of anything or anyone else.⁸ Billy Mac's flesh is considerably taller and more muscular, and looks way better than his normal self. He's got a button-up shirt with the top buttons undone and the collar up, with some trendy jeans, while clean-shaven, and with product in his hair.

Billy's flesh tells him to pick the wallet up before someone else does and makes off with the score. Billy Mac hesitates and his natural nature quickly comes upon him and before he knows it, slaps him hard in the face—*SMACK!* “No one expects anyone to give this stuff back; this is the city, you better count it a blessing—you know you need it. Just grab it quick and no one will notice.”

Billy Mac jams his hands into the shoulders of his menacing counterpart, pushing him back out of his face and off balance. “No, it's wrong!”

His flesh immediately comes back with a fast right-cross to the jaw followed by a left to the chest, knocking Billy Mac down on his butt. “You know it's wrong! What do you know about that? This is a dog eat dog world, and you've been getting eaten ever since you moved out here—if you haven't

7 – Romans 2:15, Romans 5:12

8 – Galatians 5:19, Romans 7:18

noticed. So much for your big plans and great skills. You better take what you can get, when you can get it, or you're gonna be back at the plant selling weed to try to pay for a date. *If you can even get one!*" ~

In the light of day, Billy Mac looks at the person who dropped the wallet—who's rapidly departing the area—as the moment of decision is running out.

~ Back within his inner turmoil, his wickedness demands, "Get over there and pick it up before someone sees." Defeated, Billy Mac slowly lowers his eyes down to the clean, carpeted bank floor between his feet ~ and then he promptly picks the wallet up. He hastily looks around under furrowed brows to see if anyone is watching, then takes one glance toward the man who is now almost out of sight in the crowd. No one notices and his eyes fall as he stuffs the wallet in his pocket and quickly starts walking away to distance himself from the scene of the crime.

~ Back in Billy Mac's symbolic subconscious, his flesh smiles looking down on him, and grows in stature, looming over Billy. Whereas, Billy, sadly still on his butt amidst the random bank patrons who walk around him without a second thought, tends to his sore jaw and is downcast and diminished. ~

Meanwhile, a young pedestrian coming in the opposite direction, doesn't even notice Billy Mac (like everyone else on the busy sidewalk) nor the insecure look on his face, as he passes him striding along swiftly. The sights, smells, and sounds of the busy city street at mid-day bring a myriad of distractions to all the senses: bus air-brakes decompress with a hiss, horns honk and braking screeches tires on the pavement, the smell of Vietnamese food mingles with McDonald's on top of countless other smells, and voices of all volumes communicate near and far.

~ In the alternate reality of the unseen, Billy Mac is slightly smaller than he was before and the balloon above his head turns a shade darker of gray as he gets lost in the crowd.

~~~~~

Ricky is a late teen and seems to be on a mission. He quickly rushes past the slower people on the street as if he would run if he could. Ricky is just over 6'1" and skinny, with blue eyes and blonde hair that is a little longer than what would be defined as short. He has on light plaid shorts with a casual button-up earth-tone shirt, some Sketchers shoes, and some cheap sunglasses. Ricky's *i-phone* rings and he whips it out.

"Hello."

"Ricky, it's James, what's up man?"

"Oh hey James, I'm late to meet some new friends I made."

"What are you doing?"

Ricky hesitates a bit, and replies, "Well, I'm going to a Bible study."

"What, church on a Friday afternoon! Why don't you just come with me to meet the crew down at The Showcase, we're going to watch that new 3-D horror flick."

"Oh. Well, I already told these guys I'd meet them."

"Whatever. You've only known them for a little while, come-on, we've been friends forever. Plus, Sally's going to be there, and she was asking about you!"

"Really?" This stops Ricky in his tracks.

The bustle of normal pedestrians is nothing when compared to the compounded commotion of the spiritual realm ~ as the supernatural translation of the living souls flowing around Ricky pass in a semi-blur. The diversity of

size, stature, and appearance of the different people in their spiritual manifestation is almost alien. The contrast of a wide variety of bright colors amidst deep darkness is *much* more dramatic.

Though many people are more or less recognizable as themselves, others are extremely altered in a number of ways and look nothing like their physical counterparts. The overall size and shape of many people is often completely opposite to their physical normality, as well as their dress. The eyes of the greater majority of people are most eerie, within a range from being glossed over in a light-gray haze (as Ricky's are), through the spectrum of gray to pitch black; but some have a fear inspiring, strong glowing red. Only those few with the blood-red orbs have clear and sparkling eyes that are amplifications of their normal colors.

Ricky's steady orb is medium-sized and a bit off-white, somewhat like the children's.

From this state we enter deep into Ricky's cranium, to that place of confrontation with the flesh in the conflict of decision.

~ He is standing in a plain at the base of a long and high mountain. He's on the edge of a wide and winding road that forks off into a small, straight and narrow path heading toward the mountain. The wide road is filled with high pace movement, while the path is seldom traveled.

His completely self-centered counterpart is with him, wearing some slightly baggy Volcom shorts, a Monster Energy tank-top, DC shoes, Smith sunglasses, and with spiked hair—their build is very similar. He says, "Man, you've liked Sally forever, this could be your time: scary movie, 3-D, in a dark and close environment, she'll probably be hanging all over you! What a perfect opportunity. You're already late anyways, those Bible-thumpers will understand if you don't show—they're nice guys."

Ricky looks down to think about it for a moment, and then glances over along the path toward the mountain. He gradually looks up, his vision ascending higher and higher on the mountain until his eyes fix on the snowy peak gleaming in the bright sun so far away and above him.

“No, I’m going to keep this commitment. Besides, I was really intrigued by the conversations I’ve had with my new friends.”

Ricky’s flesh instantly spins down low with a sweeping kick to knock him off his feet; but in his quick reflexes, Ricky jumps up and back.

“You don’t want what’s best for me, you’re only worried about yourself!” Ricky asserts.

His cocky flesh chuckles and says, “Man, what are you talking about? You *are* me, I want what’s best for *us*. Now are you going to just toss aside our best friends and miss a long awaited opportunity with Sally because you want to try something different? It’s going to make you look weird you know.”

Ricky looks back upon the mountain and says, “I don’t care how I look, I need to do this.”

Ricky’s flesh is immediately upset and begins to get exceptionally mad, his face turning red; but before he can do or say anything, Ricky breaks into a sprint down the path toward the mountain. ~

Back in the physical reality, Ricky starts to pick up his pace again and quickly says, “Sorry James, but I’m already late and have to make up some time here. I’ll talk to you later.” Ricky hangs up the phone and starts to run along the sidewalk on the edge of Straight Street.

~ In the reality of the spiritual, Ricky speeds off swiftly amidst the almost indiscernible environment, and we notice his hovering sphere shining a fair bit brighter. The next time we see Ricky in the spiritual world, his spiritual-orb will be blood-red. ~



## Chapter 2

### Ears to Hear



**M**ike and Donna are Christians and have been married for three years. They live on the 18<sup>th</sup> floor of an apartment building just west of the center of Straight Street. Mike is twenty-seven, 5’10”, with nearly black hair, greenish eyes, and a medium-build. He and Donna both are fairly health-conscious and have done well exercising self-control over the stomach’s natural tendency toward overindulgence. Donna is over a year younger than Mike and she is one of the few women who is content maintaining long hair—hers is dark brown, as are her eyes. Donna is 5’8”, and as with Mike, is physically fit.

The sounds of the city constantly flow into their open window as they quietly tend to everyday needs in their apartment. Their place is quite tidy and organized, with sparse multi-colored artwork on the walls, and various words of wisdom from the Word of God framed about.<sup>9</sup>

The house phone rings and as Mike looks at the caller ID, he tells Donna, “It’s Jack, the guy from the gym.”

Inside a fairly new yellow Dodge Charger with black racing stripes down the side, Jack and his girlfriend Betty flow slowly with the traffic on Straight

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9 – Deuteronomy 6:9

Street downtown, not far from Mike and Donna’s apartment. Jack is a 5’9”, young stock-broker with dirty-blond hair and is in good shape; as is Betty, who has shoulder-blade length, light blond hair. Jack has just dialed Mike and is waiting for him to pick up.

Jack is an unbeliever who met Mike at the gym. Mike always uses his workouts and activities to try to meet people and evangelize. Mike is friendly and looks to be a friend to sinners, in order to show them God’s love, mercy and grace in Salvation through repentance and faith. Jack and Mike started playing racquetball together a number of months ago and so they’ve developed a relational foundation. Mike has breached the subject of sin and eternal consequences, but Jack always blows it off in a sort of subconscious attempt to not have to face judgment—whether from God or man. Jack’s dismissal of the subject is his way of trying to will it away, for himself and for his friend. Their time together has revealed to Mike that Jack is a pretty content worldling who indulges in the pleasures of sin the way most secular people do: partying on the weekend, and generally reveling in the wide ways of the world: self-centered purpose and pride, consumerism, casual blasphemy, inappropriate attention and comments on members of the opposite sex, et cetera.<sup>10</sup>

Through the phone inside of Jack’s creeping Charger, Mike answers, “Hello, Jack.”

“Mike, how’s it goin’ buddy?”

“Very well, thanks. How about you?”

“Great! Betty and I are driving to dinner and a show. Hey, we’ve been together for 2 years come Friday, do you and Donna want to join us for our anniversary party this weekend? Come on, it’ll be fun!”

---

10 – 1 John 2:15-17

Suddenly, we're slightly back in time to Mike and Donna's apartment. "It's Jack the guy from the gym," Mike tells Donna.

~ Mike and Donna's spiritual-indicators are blood-red and their eyes are clear and radiant. They both look more or less similar to their physical selves, only what looks like a glowing golden armor begins materializing around Mike's chest out of thin air. And a light that emanates from within him forms a shiny helmet around his head that seems to be made of solid gold. He picks up the phone, "Hello Jack."

And now, Jack's words are translated for Mike through the filter of Truth provided by the Holy Spirit.<sup>11</sup>

"Mike, how's it goin' buddy?"

"Very well, thanks. How are you?"

"Great! Betty and I are driving to dinner and a show. Hey, we've been living in lustful sin for 2 years come Friday, do you want to help us celebrate that sin in an environment of sin supporting rebels against God who will be happy to encourage us to continue living in sin, and will be indulging the flesh with feasting, drinking, coarse joking, and laughing in revelry, while causally blaspheming the God you serve, gossiping about the people you're commanded to love, lusting in sexual desire and envy, and generally increasing corruption into the dark hours of the night, in order to compensate for a workweek of what feels like neglected selfish pleasure? Come on, it'll be more than enough temptation and peer pressure to bring you around to accepting our way of life, even if only temporarily!"

"Oh. Well, you know, Jack, as Christians, Donna and I don't really condone unwed relationships that involve sexual interaction or living together; and, since we do our best to follow the narrow path of the Lord Jesus Christ, we

won't be indulging with you and your friends. Sorry, but if you'd like to talk about these issues with us, we'd be happy to spend some time discussing it." ~

Back in the Charger, Jack is momentarily stunned. He then turns his affection away, saying, "Oh. . .well. . .alright, I just thought I'd ask. I'll see you around then. Bye."

Betty can tell Jack's energy went totally sour and asks with concern what happened. Jack says, "He basically said that we are sinning in our relationship and that our party will be filled with sin and sinners. Like most 'holier than thou' Christians, he is on his high horse looking down and judging everyone else. Oh yeah, and he said they'd be happy to teach us how to live more morally correct lives. These Christians think they're so much better than everyone, what a turn off and let down. Oh well, I don't think I'll be playing racquetball with him anymore."

Back at the apartment, Donna consoles Mike as he says, "I didn't know what else to say? I didn't want to lead on that I thought any different and that it's acceptable."

Donna then reaffirms his actions by telling him how proud she is of his forthright speech, and quotes *The Pilgrim's Progress* about the value of speaking plainly: "You did well to talk so plainly to him as you did. There is but little of this faithful dealing with men now-a-days; for I wish that all men would deal with such as you have done; for then they should be made more conformable to religion, or the company of saints would be too hot for them."

They both know that the Lord accepts no little compromise for an enemy that works well in small increments. And though Jack may be lost as an acquaintance, their commitment to The Truth will hopefully come to be

known as one of standing firm on the convictions of God’s holy Truth, that has been given to us through His Word—the Holy Bible.<sup>12</sup>

Mike and Donna then decide to give it over to the Lord in prayer, “Oh Father Yehovah, Heavenly Lord of all, please take our words and actions for Your Kingdom and give them effectiveness. Let our stand for Your ways be a seed that grows in the hearts of men who need Your blessed Salvation. Thank You Father, for showing us Your ways, and helping us show others.<sup>13</sup> We know You are with us always, and we wish the same for everyone.<sup>14</sup> Please convict Jack and Betty of their sin, soften their hearts and open them to repenting and to putting their faith in Your Beloved Son Yeshua Messiah.<sup>15</sup> Amen.”

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12 – Ephesians 4:15

13 – Acts 26:18, 2 Corinthians 4:4, 1 Corinthians 2:14

14 – Matthew 28:20

15 – Acts 3:19 & 20:21

## Chapter 3

### With (or Without) Knowledge



**B**illy Mac’s score landed only \$28, which was just enough to buy some cigarettes, a bottle of booze, and some pop. The bottle served as an aid to help forget his most recent low of blatant theft, and it succeeded in drowning his conscience eventually.

~~~~~

C.S. Lewis once wrote, “The problem with trying to convince yourself that you are dumber than you are, is that you often succeed.” And so it is with the human conscience, the more you ignore and suppress it, the more difficult it becomes to hear it. Like batteries removed from a smoke detector, the alarm doesn’t go off when there’s a fire. *Conscience* literally means *with knowledge*: *con* means *with*, and *science* means *knowledge*; and when you live without a conscience, you are living without your God given knowledge of right and wrong.¹⁶

16 – Romans 2:15



After finishing the booze in his apartment, Billy Mac's loneliness is becoming apparent. He thinks about going to the bar in search of that ever allusive happy ending, instead of passing out home alone as a drunk now numbed to the fact that he's also a thief; but, does he really feel up for it?

~ Deep inside Billy's inebriated mind, he's not alone: he is in a big dark room, lying on a perfectly comfortable king sized bed with a pillow-top mattress and under a thick down blanket. Billy Mac's alter-ego is, of course, a much better dresser than he is, and he is always up for something that might feel good. He looks down on him in disappointment. "Don't tell me you're going to throw in the towel already?" The essence that is his flesh says, shaking his head. "Nobody likes a quitter."

"I'm tired, I think I'm just going to go to bed." Billy Mac manages to say, clinging to his pillow like a baby.

"Just look at you, what a pitiful little man you are turning out to be. What happened to the Billy Mac who could stay up all night drinking and partying? The life of the party? It's not even 9 p.m. on a Friday night?" His dominant self intimidates. Billy doesn't answer and finds himself taking a closer look at the pillow.

"Yeah, I know, sleep would feel good, but do you really want to end the day this way? Come on, this is your last chance to redeem the day. Not that it was all bad, you did score some extra cash and free goods! Get up, let's get down to the pub, you'll feel better there—trust me, you always do." ~

Billy Mac sighs and slowly gets it together in desperation to find some kind of up note to end the day with. He's not strong enough to fight, so he goes along with whatever sounds reasonable.

The pub is several blocks from Billy's place. About halfway there he hears what sounds like a stifled cry for help down an alley to his right. The sidewalk is fairly busy as he stops and turns toward the noise. No one else seems to have heard it, but Billy Mac in his half-drunk/half-faded state stops to look.

The sound of a can being kicked is clear enough, but the rest of what sounds like a scuffle of some kind is vague. A woman's voice begins to rise but is quickly stifled by something, or someone. Billy tries to focus into the dark and briefly sees a man being pushed back from behind some boxes and dumpsters. This time the woman's voice cries for help just briefly before the man lunges ahead out of view, silencing her voice again.

The moment of realization hits Billy Mac: it's a woman being accosted in the darkness of a back alley. He looks around to see if anyone else is paying attention. All he finds are people quickly about their business on a Friday night.

~ Inside Billy Mac's symbolic subconscious, he and his fleshly counterpart are side-by-side on the edge of a forest, looking into a pitch black cave.

"I should do something?" Billy Mac says to his other half, who is much bigger than he is.

"Are you kidding, what can you do? You're no good for anybody in this state, you'll probably get yourself killed. Just keep walking like everybody else, no one will care—it's not your business." His confident flesh says, looking down on him without much concern.

"He's going to hurt that woman." Billy replies.

"Yeah well, he'd probably hurt you too. He's probably got a knife, or a gun! You want to end this day by getting stabbed or shot? You don't even have health insurance. Come on, this is not your responsibility." Billy Mac's flesh persuades. ~

The woman manages to get another sound out, but not for long, just as a man and his wife with their two early teenage children are walking by. The man stops his family and quickly looks intently down the shadowy alley. There it is again, the unmistakable sound of a woman in forced distress.

~ Now inside the mind of this African-American family man we see him standing in front of the same dark and foreboding cave, next to a similar looking self that's not even half his size. As his flesh begins to say, "Maybe we shouldn't. . .," he runs straight into the pitch-darkness without hesitation. ~

"Stay here and keep safe or find help!" He hurriedly tells his wife as he takes off in a sprint toward the confrontation. He's fast, athletic, and very strong as he begins running full speed. Billy Mac is taken aback and steps a bit off to the side, as to not draw attention to himself.

"HEY! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?" The charging man yells intensely as he rapidly approaches what looks like a man in the early stages of trying to rape a woman. His clothes are still on but the woman's outer garments are torn and her purse is tossed aside.

The attacker looks up in horror just in time to see the black hammer of a fist flying at what was the side of his face, but now is right between the eyes. *BAM!* The man goes flying horizontal, unconsciously finding the alley cement the next to make contact with his whole body at once. Then, as if he wasn't already knocked out, the rescuer jumps on top of him to make sure he doesn't get away or pull a weapon. He sees that the man is out cold. In this moment, we are translated into the spiritual realm of the unseen.

~ The already large man is significantly larger, kneeling over the attacker who is also much bigger and stronger than in the physical reality. Our liberator is clad from head to toe in what looks like pure gold armor with sections of silver and bronze. He has a helmet that almost looks like it's from the

middle-ages with just a thin, single slot for the eyes. And even his fingers are protected with small golden plates of armor overlapping like scales around silvery chainmail. A yellow light emanates from within the armor, shining out through any opening or thinner area. Beyond this light, that is considerable in the darkness of the alley, there's a pure, incandescent white being standing at his side with a glowing sword pointing straight at the neck of the criminal. It's in the form of a giant size man, with what looks like wings folded behind his back. The brightness of the two together sparkle in unison.

Below the two radiant beings, the unconscious man on his back has a shadowy blackness that permeates his entire body like a dark aura alive and quivering in submission. ~

Back in the seen world our present hero, Charles, turns to address the woman.

"Ma'am, are you alright?" He asks.

"Oh . . . yes, I'm okay." She replies, gathering herself together. "Thank you, oh, thank you so much! He robbed me then was going to rape me. I think he's on drugs!"

Charles' wife had sent her son to flag down a police officer that was passing by, and the cop comes running in from the lit up Straight Street sidewalk, leaving his car blocking one lane with it's lights flashing blue and red throughout the alley.

Billy Mac just lingers on the fringe of the scene, lurking out of the way to see what happens.

The officer quickly handcuffs the perpetrator, who starts coming around. Then, as the attacker is able, the officer brings him out handcuffed as the others follow behind. While the officer puts the criminal in the back seat

of his patrol car, the innocent victim makes it into the light of the sidewalk walking with Charles.

Billy notices that she is exceptionally attractive for coming out of a back alley. She thanks the rescue family profusely, "I was lost on the next block over and thought I could just cut through. I should have known better. I am so grateful, I feel like I owe you my life. How can I ever repay you, here, let me give you some money." She pulls out her purse and begins to open it.

"Please, ma'am, that won't be necessary. No, no, really. Put it back, I don't want money from you. Thank you but no. The Lord Jesus Christ saved me and my family, it's the least I can do to save you from this. Praise the Lord for the timing and my God given strength. You would not have faired long against him." The father and husband says, rejoicing.

As Billy Mac watches the woman's abundant gratitude, he starts to become bitter that he had chosen to do nothing. He thinks about how he could have earned that woman's respect, and even made some money, if he hadn't hesitated to help. It's been so long since he has been considered by a respectable woman, and being this close, it deepens his self-remorse, as his usual desperate state and warped perspective makes him think he actually missed a real opportunity to potentially have a relationship with a woman like her, and to actually do something good for a change. Doing something good has become so rare, that it is beginning to fade out of his consciousness completely.

His bitterness grows into unforgiveness within himself. He quickly turns around, removing his eyes from the torment of reality, as if to mentally outrun the emotions overwhelming him, and so walks away from this now twistedly depressing sight.

At this moment—between an act of righteousness and the bar, in the big, cold, lonely city—hate begins to grow in Billy Mac’s heart: hate for his misfortune, hate for his circumstances, hate for the world, and ultimately hate for himself.

Later, bitter resentment toward the blessed upright of heart (like Charles) creeps into his mentality more and more with each drink he manages to attain; which having it’s equal and opposite reaction, means an increasing embracing of the low and shady characters who would become his acceptable, and accepting, peers.¹⁷

Slowly, through the indulgences of his flesh—whether physically, mentally, emotionally, or spiritually—Billy Mac becomes arrayed with many spirits of wickedness, first figuratively, then literally. Agents of Satan, finding open doors—and pushing them open further—begin adding up inside Billy as their new headquarters to conduct their usual business: to steal, kill, and destroy.¹⁸

Each new demon creating a snowball effect: rolling downhill out of control, growing and growing, until Satan’s grip is perpetually tight around his throat. While the voice of reason, his God given conscience, is buried deep under the many heavy layers of the lies of sin.

17 – 1 Corinthians 15:33

18 – John 10:10

Chapter 4

Faith Comes by Hearing



The following Sunday morning, when the city is groggy and slow to wake after its collective Saturday night release, there's one parking lot that's already full. Several miles down the west side of Straight Street, a medium-sized church sits beneath the dwarfing cityscape that surrounds it.

After starting in on a passionate sermon about the origins of sin, the pastor pauses in his address to take a sip of water, while the congregation is perfectly silent.

“. . . And after the iniquity of pride was found in Satan¹⁹—that original serpent, the Devil²⁰—it was juxtaposed into a perfect world, through an unsuspecting couple named Adam and Eve.”²¹ As the pastor explains the “original sin” of man, we are transported into the tranquil setting of the greatest tragedy of all time: the Garden of Eden.

~ Lush vegetation thrives like we can hardly imagine. A place where life flourishes uninhibited, and both plants and animals coexist in perfect

19 – Ezekiel 28:15

20 – Revelation 12:9

21 – Genesis 3:1-7

harmony. Perfect peace ranges amongst the entire surface of the earth, while something stirs near a free and natural human couple. Amidst the flowing waters that encompass a land filled with gold and precious minerals and stones,²² near a shining centerpiece called the Tree of Life, where there's another tree called "**the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil**,"²³ a slippery voice speaks to the woman, "**Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'**"²⁴

The woman replies with the truth, "**From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'**"²⁵

The serpent then replies with a most unusual and contradictory statement, "**You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.**"²⁶

As Eve ponders what she is hearing, we enter into her mind's significant contemplation. ~ She stands on one side of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, with her perfectly identical flesh on the opposite side, both within reach of the forbidden fruit. Eve is silent in awe and wonder, while her flesh speaks, "The fruit must be just as good for food as the others, if not more so?" A long pause ensues until the flesh side of Eve speaks again, "It certainly is the most beautiful in all of the Garden." Time ticks almost audibly, while Eve contemplates these new and unusual thoughts. The tree seems increasingly more desirable by the second, and her flesh continues,

22 – Genesis 2:12

23 – Genesis 2:17

24 – Genesis 3:1

25 – Genesis 3:2-3

26 – Genesis 3:4-5

“It is a tree of great wisdom, and it has special power to make one very wise.” Together in unison, both forms of Eve instinctively reach out and plucked the precious fruit that dangles marvelously before their eyes. ~

Eve puts the wondrously new and exciting food to her lips, taking a bite of what would have devastating, and eternal, consequences. She then immediately shares the experience with her husband Adam, and he also eats.²⁷

~ At this moment, inside the mind and soul of the married couple, their fleshly selves are instantly clothed and looking at them expectantly. Adam and Eve proper both look down at themselves and feel ashamed at their nakedness for the first time.²⁸ And deep inside their spiritual subconscious’ (just outside of their awareness), the perfect world around them begins to tremble and quake, while lightning and thunder emerge from an expanse of dark clouds looming on the horizon, slowly closing. ~

“Disobedience! . . . Rebellion! . . . Self-centered interest apart from the will of God! . . . And sin entered into the world by the one flesh of Adam and Eve, delivered by the very leader of opposition to God, the Devil himself.²⁹

“This process did not stop there. No! This process continues! For over 6000 years now, the great deceiver, Satan, has skewed the fate of the world into what it is today.³⁰ Satan, the tempter, has even managed to bring down up to 1/3 of the angels in heaven.³¹ These once beautiful and glorious angels of God, have also corrupted their free-choice in rebellion, and have wreaked havoc on the earth through mankind. God calls the Devil **‘the prince of the power of the**

27 – Genesis 3:6

28 – Genesis 3:7

29 – Romans 5:12

30 – 2 Corinthians 4:4

31 – Revelation 12:4 & 9

air,³² and **'the god of this world'**.³³ And he is 'the ruler of this world'. He has a mighty strong kingdom, with a great multitude of subjects, many subjects who don't even question his authority. And those same subjects will fight to protect his authority against anyone who dares to challenge it. This is the ultimate spiritual truth: that two kingdoms exist in this world. But there is only one God. One God who will never be defeated, not by any such creation of His own making. The resistance is futile, yet the battle rages on, day after day.

"There is no one who has lived unscathed by the influence of the Devil and his scheme. There is no one who has not sinned against God.³⁴ Have you ever told a lie? Have you ever stolen anything? Have you ever lusted? Have you ever taken the Lord's name in vain? Disobeyed your parents? Coveted another's property? Have you ever believed in a god different than who the Bible tells us God is? Jesus said the very first Commandment is to seek after God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength!³⁵ Have you always done that? No! No one has.

"Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.³⁶ That is why we are commanded to **go into all the world and preach the Gospel.**³⁷

"Well, what exactly is the Gospel? The Gospel is the Good News that redeems the bad news. And, what is the bad news? Well, the bad news is exactly this: that we have broken God's Law—His perfect moral standard, the 10 Commandments—and we deserve God's punishment of death and hell. But **God is not willing that any should perish,**³⁸ and so He sent His only begotten Son, to live the only sinless life in all of history, in order to

32 – Ephesians 2:2

33 – 2 Corinthians 4:4

34 – Romans 3:23

35 – Luke 10:27

36 – Romans 10:17

37 – Mark 16:15

38 – 2 Peter 3:9

be the perfect sacrifice that could take our punishment—**the sins of the world**³⁹—by dying on the Cross so that we might live and be born-again. And Jesus Himself said, '**Unless one is born-again he cannot see the Kingdom of God**',⁴⁰ and this process of being born-again comes through sincere repentance of your very specific sins, and the life changing transformation that is putting your faith in Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior of the world that He is. Jesus rose from the dead after three days in the grave, and with His resurrection, defeated death and showed to us that there is life in no other.

“That is the mighty Gospel my friends. And if you haven't received Jesus Christ as Savior in your life, time is running out.⁴¹ Your sins are all piling one on top of the other, building up for God's Wrath on the Day of Judgment.⁴²

“How old are you now? And how old are you going to be when you die? Have you known anyone who has died before reaching old age? Are you aware that death is imminent, and you will be powerless against it? God says, **Now is 'the day of Salvation'**.⁴³ *Today* the sins of the world are washed away one soul at a time. Will you be one of them? **Call on the Name of the Lord; confess your sins, for He is righteous to forgive.**⁴⁴ Give your life to Jesus and you will never be in better hands.”

A certain number of people pour to the altar and many tears are shed. As some of those on their knees before the pulpit are weeping, ~ bright light engulfs the inner walls of the church building, giving it a sense of extending infinitely into Heaven. The physical stained glass windows are now like

39 – 1 John 2:2

40 – John 3:3

41 – 2 Peter 3:10

42 – Romans 2:5

43 – 2 Corinthians 6:2

44 – 1 John 1:9

dazzling colorful jewels refracting the outer white light into color all about, like a prism.

The pastor stands imbued with power on the stage with his head and hands up to Heaven, his eyes gazing into its wonders. He appears transfigured in a pure white suit, with a glittering halo above his extra-large-size blood-red sphere. He is noticeably taller—around nine feet—and his physique is no longer average, but ideal. Light emanates from him and to him from above. Many in the congregation and choir are also transformed into mostly light. And though the choir is not singing, there is a far off sound of singing and rejoicing, that comes from all around as the angels of Heaven rejoice over not just one repentant sinner, but many.⁴⁵

Amidst those surrendering their lives to the Lord, we see Ricky with his head down and his hands over his face as he weeps. The hovering sphere above his head is now freshly blood-red and larger than it was before; and, as Ricky wipes the tears from his eyes, he does not notice that two hazy scales fall with the saline to the ground.⁴⁶ Through the clear liquid that engulfs his eyes, his pure eye color shines like new with a twinkling of light emanating from within.

Others around him are essentially in the same state, and what were mostly white orbs above the others' heads who are praying, are now turning the same exact color of red that all the blood-red orbs are.

Yet not everyone in the pews has blood-red balloons of spiritual indication above them. And though some are off-white, or light gray, many remain dark, and even some darken as they walk out. Some even have the mysterious dark cloud above their heads (which becomes more and more

45 – Luke 15:10

46 – Acts 9:18

pronounced the further they get from the sanctuary); and some, even some with blood-red orbs, seem to have the black cloud within them, sometimes visible only in specific areas.

In this spiritual reality, many who are wearing nice, light colored clothes physically, are now in an array of deep dark grays and murky browns, with eyes clouded over in a foggy haze behind skewed lenses, their stature and posture often completely different, as well as the looks on their faces. Some, who smile and appear pleasant outwardly, are seriously grimacing spiritually, until they are let out of the church and can depart back into the “free” comfortable outside air of *the world*. ~

Back in the physical realm of the parking lot, all the average looking people re-enter their vehicles and merge back into the city from Straight Street.

Chapter 5

Sin Abounds



In a suburban neighborhood, just a few blocks off of Straight Street, a clean Denali SUV with low-pro' tires pulls into a garage. Inside the well kempt home, a nice looking family returns to their comfort zone. Everyone heads to their rooms to change out of their church clothes and into their real clothes. The teenage son is first out of his room, looking considerably different than the impression you would have got from before. He has re-inserted some ear rings and a lip ring, is donned in mostly black, and his hair is way different. He is eager to depart his parent's domain and heads for the door grabbing his backpack and skateboard.

"Bobby, are you going to be home for dinner?" His mother asks quickly.

"No." Bobby says.

"Well, be back by curfew." She replies.

"It's Labor Day weekend Mom, I'm staying at Tony's." He retorts just in time to shut the door behind him.

The phone rings, and the father emerges from his room to enthusiastically swoop up the cordless on his way to the fridge.

“Hey, Charlie.” He says. “Yeah, of course it’s on, just like always. . . . No, I already got the beer, just bring some of those stogies you’re always hording! . . . Yeah, 3:30’s pre-game. . . . See you then, bye.”

The wife, and mother, grabs some food out of the fridge, then tells her husband she’s going to go shopping with her friend Caroline during the game. Their teenage daughter is on her cell phone in her room, talking to her best friend.

“Yeah, I’m ready; I don’t want to sit around here. . . . Have Suzie drive you over to pick me up. . . . We’ll figure out where the party is later, it’s early. . . . Alright, I’ll check his twitter. . . . Okay, bye.” She then turns on MTV while investigating the inside information on the Sunday night party situation.

Down the road, Bobby has skated past all the nice, smooth, pavement of suburbia, and is pushing along some of the rougher, older streets along some apartment buildings a block off of Straight Street. After hitting some obviously well known grinds and cityscape tranny’s on his skateboard, Bobby flips his deck into his hand and runs up some apartment stairs.

Inside the targeted apartment, several other punk-looking teens play video games on a giant flat-screen. The place is pretty messy, there is a bong on the table, and everyone has a beer. There are empty pizza boxes stacked up to the ceiling in the corner, and Soul Wars is playing on the stereo over the game sounds of automatic gunfire and random beeps and blips.

After knocking and getting the word, Bobby walks in and sets his skate against the wall, joining his friends in the glory of three-day-weekend freedom. Bobby doesn’t have to even worry about his parents until the next day, so he quickly grabs a beer too.

“Where’s Max?” Bobby asks.

“He went to get some hard liq’s.” One of the boys replies while casually slaughtering the enemy.

“But he’s been gone for over an hour?” Said another zoned out gamer.

Max is the new adult who has the apartment. He deals a lot of weed and is the life of the party. Finally Max comes bursting through the door, his arms are full and he puts the bags down on the counter of the kitchen.

“Are you guy’s ready for a memorable Labor Day weekend or what?” Max says enthusiastically. “I love Labor Day!”

“What is Labor Day about anyway?” Bobby asks.

“It’s about partying for three days straight!” Max affirms, and everyone laughs.

After putting the pop and everything in the fridge, Max sits down to load bowls. As he hands Bobby the bong, who puts the flame to the bowl, we transfer realms.

~ The darkness of the room is exacerbated and it seems filled with a kind of smoke already, yet the smoke of the weed is even darker, almost black, and gives the room more perspective. But even the darkness of the weed smoke is toned down when compared with the pitch black cloud that emanates from within Max’s body, ebbing and flowing in and out of the surface of his skin. Max’s eyes glow a dull red light, which stick out most in this spiritual environment.

Not only is Max’s orb a deep black, the mysterious vapor that is visible only slightly outside of his body—like a murky aura that is the tip of an iceberg that goes much deeper—is very much alive and aware of everything that is going on in the room. It expands temporarily whenever the drug is toked, or alcohol is drunk. Also, it pulsates whenever someone swears,

makes a sexually inappropriate comment, and especially when someone blasphemes (which is as casual, if not more, as any swear).

The smoky spirit inside Max sometimes partially drifts just out of his body and influences Max to change direction in whatever he is doing. This often means calling someone on the phone in the other room, sending out a text, or breaking out the bottle of hard liquor and loading more dope. ~

Before long, just after dark, a slightly older adult shows up at the door. Max rushes to open it and they waste no time shuffling into his bedroom. After a while they emerge to get some drinks, and they both have extra high energy (which the younger gang just assumes is because they are pumped up for the party weekend).

~ In the spiritual reality, Max's friend has a similar orb and cloud as Max; and both of their eyes glow much more intensely than Max's did before. ~

Bobby and his buddy's are having fun being buzzed and high, playing around joking and trying to be cool and funny. Max's friend leaves after a couple drinks and Max sits down on the couch with the boys, asking if they are ready to really party. He flops a little zip lock bag filled with white powder on the table. Bobby and two of his friends just stare at it blankly, while the other one says, "Oh yeah, it's on!"

Bobby and his unsure friends have never been around cocaine, and they all contemplate what it will mean, and what it will be like to try it for the first time.

~ Within the mental imagery of Bobby's quandary, he's inside a plane, at 20,000ft. The side door is open and the wind is loud as it rushes by at 150-mph in a blur of the high speed atmosphere mixed with extreme exposure. His fleshly counterpart and he are dressed in parachuting garb with chutes on their backs. Bobby himself is in an all blue jumpsuit and his flesh is in an

all red one. They have ribbed, pointy leather caps with vented goggles on, and they are both looking at the door.

“All we have to do is jump!” Says his flesh.

“I don’t know? I’m not sure if I’m ready for this?” Bobby replies.

“Well, life is short. . .the time is now. . .seize the day. . .just do it!” His flesh clichés. ~

In the living room, Bobby sheepishly glances around to assess the general consensus. He knows that peer pressure will be heavy if he’s the only one to abstain. He knows he doesn’t have much time, or many options to talk his way out of it without seeming like a party pooper and bringing everyone else down, compromising the integrity of the party comradery. It is the last night of partying for the weekend, and it’s definitely the right time (he won’t have to deal with church in the morning like after the usual Saturday night). Max and his comrade are already lining it out for everyone on the table.

~ Back to Bobby’s inner struggle: he just doesn’t know what to say to his more enthusiastic flesh. He knows it is a long way down taking this leap, and there is a significant element of risk in the unknown of it, but the alcohol and weed give him a boost of confidence.

“All right, you ready?” Bobby’s flesh encourages.

Bobby looks around inside of the plane, as if to check for options of turning back—he finds none. He sees all his friends sitting in different color jumpsuits with parachutes, all staring at him expectantly. He turns back to the open door.

“I guess?” Bobby hesitates.

Bobby’s carnal nature sides-up next to him and loops his arm into his. The wind is rushing, even inside the plane, and the sound of the engines seems

to drown out any room for other thoughts or doubts. All Bobby can do is stare out the door, almost as if he were frozen. ~

On the physical side of the pressurized situation, Bobby sits quietly in his chair, staring, mesmerized by the mysterious white powder being played with on the table.

~ Then his influential flesh says, “Here we go buddy, let’s do it! One, two, three!” He pulls Bobby with a jerk, and they run out the door going head first into the abyss. ~

Back in the room Bobby lifts his head from the table and almost immediately begins to feel as high as his symbolic imagery. And as we shift to the paradigm of the spiritual ~ Bobby’s orb grows significantly darker, and his eyes glaze over in blackness. The mysterious spirit in Max seems to be encouraged, even proud. It watches in great approval.

Chapter 6

Love Your Enemies & Eyes to See



A couple days later, several miles up Straight Street from Max's apartment, in a Christian book store, an Indian man (with heritage from India), scans the book shelves looking for something faithful and encouraging. After a bit of searching, he finds something satisfactory, and after purchasing it, goes into the coffee lounge to get a latte and look into it.

Tom's new book is from a ministry called The Voice of the Martyr's, which serves as a voice for the persecuted Church around the world. This particular book covers a number of different countries and stories of extreme persecution of Christians where the majority of hostile faiths are generally either Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, or atheistic countries with strict Communist governments.

The seating is plush and comfortable in this Christian coffee lounge, and the air is fresh with all the varied uses of the beloved coffee bean.

Tom is a relatively new Christian whose walk with God has been advancing rapidly through an intensive homeschooling by the Holy Spirit. Tom's life has changed quite dramatically, and he has found the peace of Jesus on the very

narrow path of following Him. He rarely spends time out in public places hanging out, but he finds great inspiration being in a Christian sanctioned area with such a wide array of faithful resources. This day, Tom takes the time to dwell in the lounge a bit, reading, before getting home. After reading the covers, inside and out, and going through the introduction, Tom gets to the first story.

The air in the solitary confinement cell deep underground was stale, yet damp, musky and dead. Even the smell of dirt would seem full of life compared to this old cement riddled with mold, scum, and the remnants of skin, hair, and mostly dried up bodily fluids from previous prisoners. Richard was a Christian pastor in a country overcome by Communist rule. He had refused to compromise his position as a servant of God by endorsing the atheistic deconstruction of Christianity in their attempts to control the minds of men into retreating from faith in Christ. Richard not only didn't accept even remaining silent to save himself from their cruelty, but rather felt the conviction of the Holy Spirit, and his conscience, to stand up for God and his people by speaking out vehemently in public. This stopped when he mysteriously disappeared one day while walking to the grocery store.

Before Richard's conversion, years before, he had been a wealthy businessman. He was happily married, and had been considered a very attractive man. Now, Richard has been incarcerated for four years, living off of one piece of bread a week, weighing less than 100 pounds, has had all of his teeth knocked out, and lives with several diseases that

fester in the unsanitary environment. All because he would not simply renounce his faith in Jesus Christ. Richard's wife was still out there somewhere, along with his son, and all he had to do to go search for them was to say he didn't believe and deny Christ.

For four years, Richard has not seen the sun, moon, or stars, smelled fresh air, heard birds sing or children play; he has not seen a smile or even a sign of outward happiness other than the times he was able to fellowship with other Christian prisoners who were then greatly filled with the grace and Spirit of God. Richard has scars big enough to put your thumb in, and he faces unthinkably cruel torture day in and day out. This night, Richard lay half awake in an uncomfortable place that makes it hard to ever sleep.

Taking another look into the spiritual reality, Richard's previously beaten and battered, pale little body—that seems to be one with the dirty cement block on which he lie, ~ changes into an image of bright, shining perfection. In this dark place, his body emanates a stark white light that is so bright it's almost blinding. This is the visible manifestation of the presence of the Spirit of God alive inside his soul. He is at least a foot taller, built like a body builder, and clothed in a perfectly white robe. There are also two entities of light in the cell with him, one at his head and one at his feet. These are God's holy angels keeping charge of one of His sons. And when focusing on the angel's light, you can see the form of strong healthy men, with pure white wings folded back and down behind

them. They too have halos, and they exude pure peace and righteous contentment in their work of ministering to, and protecting, their charge, regardless of the environment. ~

As Richard's tortured and drugged mind begins to feel deep resentment for his persecutors and his unjust treatment—along with its effects on his family—he begins to feel the growing energy of anger. This is a regular occurrence, and this night it begins to get the better of him.

Richard slowly shifts his body up and into the sitting position. Thoughts race through his mind of the irrationality of the Communists. A rage starts to build in him about it, and he soon stands up and begins pacing in his small space amongst the darkness.

His own mind is increasingly being adversely affected by their forcing him to take drugs. It's even by his own choice, when he knows that his only food is drugged, but that he can't possibly live without it. This loss of proper mental capacity makes him most distraught, for he fears his own rationale, and regularly tastes of madness. Many times this angst is directed at his persecutors, and *many times* he battles with Christ's example and words to **"love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you."**⁴⁷

Inside this pitch black cell, we enter into the mental and emotional turmoil of Richard and his most carnal mind.

~ In a perfectly lit boxing ring, Richard (in his pre-incarcerated physical state) and his evil fleshly counterpart are staring

47 – Matthew 5:44

intently at each other from opposite corners of the ring. It is quiet here, and the area outside the ring is like a shadow, fading into nothingness.

Both aspects of Richard have boxing gloves on, as well as boxing shorts and shoes. At first, Richard's flesh is noticeably smaller than his spiritually minded side, but that seems to be changing. They both have an intense look in their eyes as they're locked onto one another in a concentrated stare down. Which one will blink first? Who has the stronger will? The longer they engage in this way the more the flesh is growing. About the time his flesh equals in size, a loud and clear bell rings, echoing into the empty darkness, and they break from their stationary positions toward each other as if they had been tethered back by some invisible and impenetrable cord.

As they engage each other's personal space, Richard's flesh says, "These monsters deserve to die." And his flesh immediately finds a hole in his defenses and jocks Richard in the jaw, wrenching his neck and knocking him a step back. The fleshly Richard's confidence grows and doesn't stop there. He presses on with another one-two toward the face. "We've got to give them what they deserve; God knows they should pay for what they've done!"

Richard manages to mutter the blows with random-blocks, but shies away in hesitation. Richard's fighting skills are dulled by the drugs, while his flesh is strengthened by them.

His flesh comes in low with a left upper-cut, landing in some ribs while Richard blocks his face. "Think of our wife

and child and what this is doing to them. You're responsible for them!"

"I must not. . ." Richard mutters, "...give in to hate." He then manages to wiggle out from being up against the ropes. *What would Jesus say?* He asks himself as he regains visual focus on his flesh. **"My peace I give to you"**⁴⁸ Richard thinks as he strikes back catching his flesh across the cheek. As his animalistic nature is momentarily stunned, Richard remembers, **"If the world hates you, remember that it has hated Me before it hated you."**⁴⁹ This brings a quick reaction and a strong right jab to the chest of his flesh. This makes him curl forward as Richard connects a left cross to the temple. The carnal Richard is knocked off balance and side steps into the ropes.

His flesh is a bit diminished, but a deep flame of fire arises in his eyes. "We hate them, it's okay, anyone would, and should." He lurches at Richard holding his arms. Richard steps back as he's grappled by his wicked nature.

"Why don't we just catch one of those Communists off guard, when they least expect it? When they're looking down their nose at us, we could use all of our strength in one blow that could push their nose up into their brain and send at least one of them where they belong."

By this time, his flesh has pushed Richard all the way back against the ropes on the other side. Richard struggles with

48 – John 14:27

49 – John 15:18

this thought, as his flesh takes the opportunity to strike some more blows. Then, like a miraculous well springing up from within Richard, he remembers that Christ said, ***“Whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.”***⁵⁰

With this, he pushes his flesh aside and gets clear of the ropes. That same light from within reminds Richard of exactly how Jesus handled his unjust imprisonment, tortures, and crucifixion—from beginning to end. He remembers how he has handled his situation in like manner, thus far. He then knows he has to focus and hold on tight to this unbreached integrity, and carry it out being **faithful until death.**⁵¹

Richard makes a move that fakes out his flesh just enough to get in a jab to the nose, and then quickly to connect with the most effective right cross to the jaw. This knocks his flesh down on one knee; and though stunned for several seconds, Richard does not strike, but simply looks at him knowingly. His flesh begins to grow angry, then suddenly the loud bell rings again, and they know the round is over. ~

Back in the cell, Richard drops his head and sighs. He sits back down on his cold cement sleeping place, and his spiritual fatigue renders him tired once again. He knows he must try to get some sleep before he gets awakened for another day of torture, only several hours away. As he lies down, something makes him remember how Jesus had said at one time even

50 – Matthew 5:39

51 – Revelation 2:10

the Son of Man had nowhere to lay His head.⁵² Somehow, this gives him comfort.

Tom lifts his head from the book. He is deeply impressed by the contemplation of such faithfulness in the face of such evil. He has heard about persecution, but never really imagined it so vividly. It immediately makes him compare realities—to his own, and to *the world's*.

Tom feels somber at the thought of one of his brothers enduring such hardship, and this holy contrition and humble perspective renders him fully in the Spirit. As he stands up and leaves the warm thick air of the lounge for the cool outside atmosphere, he is immediately aware of the gravity of such heavy Christian burdens and how it compares to other Christians around who are enjoying varying degrees of lighter materials, joyous conversations, coffee and cake. (Not to mention those unawakened by Christ: **the Way, the Truth, and the Life.**)⁵³

Then, the reality of daily life in *the world of man* is like an abrupt smack in the face. The thought isn't exactly new to him, but now the feeling is especially magnified. He tries to ignore the surrounding hustle and bustle until he gets into his car. He goes to start his car and head home, but stops the key before turning over the ignition. The radio comes on just at the start of the song "Fire on Babylon" by Sinead O'Connor, as he takes a moment to look at the world outside his window.

Tom first realizes that the Christian bookstore is really an oasis of life in a desert of spiritually dead secular activity. No other store or anything else in sight has anything to do with God and His Life Saving Truth that is paramount to absolutely everything. He notices the businesses that sell vices

52 – Matthew 8:20

53 – John 14:6

and temptations to the wide way of *the world* are the ones doing the most business. The liquor store—also with its cigarettes, cigars, chew, and rolling papers used for illegal drugs—is thriving and even upgrading with a new remodel. The video store serves a steady stream of citizens with its infinite images of lust and sex out of marriage in stories that justify and glorify sin, and war against God, filling minds with scenes, sounds, thoughts, words, and ideas antithetical to God’s Truth and Light. Materialism abounds with perpetual shopping, advertising and sales, arts and crafts, and endless little useless trinkets of distraction. The gigantic toy store and sporting goods store stand side by side overwhelmingly exemplifying the world’s most high priority of fun and games – all the while, ignoring God and His Word that explain all the laws of nature that they live by; as well as, point to the ever dire consequence of living without repenting of sin and having faith in Christ—that is, eternity in hell.

The Holy Spirit is filling Tom’s perspective, as if it were a divine appointment to taking a serious look at the world through God’s eyes. He remembers what the Bible says about those who perish in their sins—how they are receiving their reward now.⁵⁴ Like a devious mobster who lives high on the hog for a while, only to be surprised when the law suddenly throws him in prison for the rest of his days. Only, after missing the one chance to repent and believe—in this life—the rest of their days in God’s jail will be eternal and *far* worse than jail in this world.

Tom sits in perfect patience, finding his moment of Holy Spirit filled contemplation to be one of the most real and impactful moments of his life. His emotions, amplified by the seriously symbolic song, “Fire on Babylon,”

54 – Matthew 6:5

appropriately match his spiritual consciousness of the raging inferno of lost secularism—that is *the world* that exists apart from God’s will and Truth.

A further look reveals convenience stores selling countless conveniences that satisfy the flesh with cheap, unhealthy food and drink, along with hard and soft porn. While the bars seem to have more people going in and out than any other place, even in the middle of the day.

The heavy sound of the music with the woman singing about “Fire on Babylon,” combined with a Biblical perspective of the outside world drinking iniquity like water, makes Tom want to cry at the reality of the world, and the fact that no one else seems to recognize it. And even in the center of such a populated area, it makes him feel like he’s alone in the grave desert of the real.

Everyone outside his window, it seems, is going to hell clicking their heels in what feels like happiness. And he knows that when you try to express this issue with them, they only laugh with scorn, blowing off the messenger like they blow off the Message Giver. By the grace of God, Tom’s eyes have been supernaturally opened to this reality, and he feels as helpless as Richard, in his prison cell, to do anything about it.

How could this have happened to God’s world? How could the Devil have really come so far? Why did it feel like no one else was even partially aware of this ever so dire reality? How could there be so much blind ignorance? In his heart he wanted to run through the streets screaming “bloody murder,” but in the end, all he could do was go home to the safety of his personal sanctuary, and hide from it all.

Chapter 7

Former Fellow Prisoners & Another Day at the Gym



“**R**icky, this is Hae-Won, she’s on exchange from South Korea.” One of Ricky’s new Christian friends introduces.

“Hello.” Ricky says as he shakes her hand. “How do you like America?”

“I like it; it’s a lot like home.” Hae-Won replies. “I am very blessed to make such friends here in the Lord!”

“Me too! I’ve just recently seen the light, how about you?” Ricky asks.

“I was saved very young. My parents became Christians after defecting from the DPRK. This was just before I was born, and so they were very diligent in teaching me in the Way I should go.⁵⁵ I was baptized at nine years old, and my family has grown so much through God’s mercy!” Hae-Won answers.

The group of six has congealed in the parking lot of Walk With God Church on Straight Street, waiting for their seventh friend to show up with a van to carpool them to the university for a Christian vs. atheist debate over the increasingly relevant and simultaneously redundant question, does God

exist? It's early in the afternoon and the sun, with its plentiful heat, is still high in the sky.

"Wow, defecting from North Korea must have been crazy?" Ricky inquires.

"Yeah, it's quite a story; but nothing compared to Shin Dong-hyuk's, have you heard of him? He's going to be in this city speaking next week." Hae-Won answers and returns with another question.

"No, I haven't heard of him?" Ricky reports.

"He was born inside of a prison/labor camp. North Korea—or the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, as their government would have it called—often punishes to the third generation for certain offenses they consider "dissident." His parents were there because of their supposed "sins," and because of good behavior they were allowed a prison marriage after meeting on the inside. So Shin was born inside of probably the worst labor camp, where no one ever gets out alive. They just work you to death, or kill you for petty reasons. Shin lived twenty-three years in there without knowing about the outside world. It's against the prison rules to talk about life outside and everyone is so starving and on the brink of death that they don't usually break the rules if they can help it.

"Anyway, a new prisoner arrived and he began talking with Shin about the real world. Shin really didn't give it too much thought, except for the stories of abundant food. They ended up trying to escape together, but the man was killed on the electric fence. Shin escaped and even made it into China and then to a South Korean embassy in Beijing. He lives in South Korea now, but travels the world as a full-time human rights activist, trying to expose the dark secrets of the North Korean lies." Hae-Won explains.

"Wow! He must have been blown away by the real world?" Ricky expresses in his best attempt at comprehending such an incomprehensible reality.

“Yeah, of course it was all so new and crazy. He had no idea before when he was inside. He didn’t even know about things like money, or freedom, or especially of Jesus. He didn’t even know about North Korea’s personality cult false religion of Juche; because the government doesn’t even worry about brain washing the prisoners who are supposed to never get out. Of course, he was mostly enamored by all the food options, especially outside of the DPRK.” She further explains.

“Oh man, he must just eat his heart out now!” Ricky says exuberantly.

“Yeah, he is blessed to have what ever he wants now; but he says that even though food was his highest priority in the camp, now he eats and is physically satisfied only temporarily, then he quickly begins to worry again about those people still in the labor camps.” Hae-Won explains.

“Yeah, I guess it would be hard to know that so many people are still suffering and dying.” Ricky says, embarrassingly realizing the bigger picture.

“And, I’ve learned that it’s a good example for us Christians. We have been so greatly blessed to be freed from sin and death, and our eyes have been opened to see the Truth by God; and so really, the biggest difference between Shin and us, is that our former fellow prisoners are our neighbors that we see all the time. They are not off, far away in some fenced in place, they are all around us, and we even talk with them and joke with them all the time. We should have the same concern as Shin because they are all dying just the same. Of course, Shin’s human rights purpose is also critical, but at least we can reach the lost people any time.” Hae-Won says.

“Wow, you’re right—that’s so true!” Ricky states as he contemplates the seriously pertinent implications within the new reality of his spiritual freedom.

Just then their friend pulls in with the van, and they all shift mentally and physically toward the next phase of the day, though the depth of their

contemplation over the serious subject matter carries with them in their transition. Even the excited driver notices, and comments on everyone's stern faces and lack of usual joyful exuberance. They then proceed to fill him in as they load up and begin to drive off; and, he, too, becomes deeply impacted toward manifesting his God given concern for the lost.

As the young group of aspiring Christians accelerates up to the speed limit on Straight Street, no one even notices the fitness center off to their right.

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Inside the locker room, Jack, the secular humanist, is finished changing into his workout clothes. Mike, drying off from a shower after a workout and sauna, looks over to see Jack closing his locker and walking out toward the gym.

Mike thinks about Jack with concern as he dresses for the rest of the day. Jack was yet another worldly acquaintance that immediately hit the road after being confronted with some hard truth of real Christianity. Mike offers some prayers for Jack as he pulls out a Gospel tract, hangs it on his locker and leaves.

In the weight room, once again, Jack can't help but inappropriately notice certain members of the opposite sex. It is normal to him, and he knows that basically everyone checks out everyone else; especially in such a physically oriented atmosphere. Most everyone is there to bolster their physical appearance and maintain their satisfaction with their perceived attractiveness, pumping up their muscles as well as their egos. The strong smell of testosterone stirs with every drop of sweat that is the equivalent of the "blood, sweat, and tears" that goes into ones highest passion: themselves. This is their primary idol, or breaking of the first and second Commandment, that is love of self above all else—even the Creator God.

The usual upbeat, lust-filled music pumps through the fitness center speakers. Songs dedicated to sexiness and the pursuit of it have become standard fare in even the most common of public places such as family restaurants and children's toy stores. Mike is well aware of this problem, and his ears can't help but hear every word of sin whenever he hears such filth. The Bible mentions that the Devil used to be something like a worship leader in Heaven before his great fall, and so Mike often thinks about how much the Devil uses music to weasel sin into the minds of men and women—easily impressionable minds that retain the many lyrics that contain the full spectrum of sin. He has become accustomed to starting his mp3 player before even entering the gym.

Jack decides to change up his routine so he can move closer to a woman that has caught his roving eye. As he sits near her on the next weight machine over, he catches her eye, and they both smile at one another. Soon he is flexing and pushing his physical limit in order to look tough.

Then the woman comes up and asks, "Would you mind spotting me while I bench?"

"Oh. . . Yeah, sure." Jack replies actually caught off guard. He likes to look and flirt with other women besides his girlfriend, but he hasn't been approached by one in quite a while (even for something potentially benign). He immediately gets up and follows her to the bench.

Now Jack is being put in direct contact with this woman he is attracted to, and this immediately brings conflict to his mind, as to how much liberty to take with his eyes, and how far to take his flirtations. He is in a long term committed relationship, but he always, really, wants more.

~ Before even reaching the bench, we enter into Jack's mental struggle. Jack and his fleshly counterpart are fully geared-up and mounted on



four-stroke 450cc motocross bikes behind a starting gate with a full line-up of riders beyond them on each side. They're in a brightly lit stadium that's jam packed with raging fans, and the thirty-second-board is up with everyone bracing for take off. Jack's flesh is in all black riding gear and he is in white. They look directly at each other, making eye contact through their goggles, then turning their gaze forward and dropping their focus down on the gate just ahead of their front tires. Everyone begins to rev up and max out their engines with their clutches in ready to pop.

In an instant the gate drops! All the back wheels cut loose with their new rubber tires grabbing for as much traction as possible, spitting out dirt back against the wall below the stadium seating. They all shoot out in a snap, blasting full-throttle down the start straight!

Jack reaches the holeshot corner just behind his fleshly self, who's in the lead. After breaking, downshifting, positioning up on the seat with his inside leg out ahead of him, and leaning to the inside, Jack releases the clutch and hits the gas squirting forward, accelerating out of the turn. As he looks up ahead to the first rhythm section, we are brought back to the precarious position that has him in this race against his self. ~

The woman lays down on her back on the bench below him, which gives him more than enough visual temptation, as his job is to be a safety for catching, or steadying, the weight bar if it becomes too much to bear. Instinctively, his eyes make a quick scan that he retains in his mind while trying to appear casual. And as she starts the exercise, we return to the depths of his battle.

~ Jack's flesh and he are pulling away from the pack, flawlessly timing the first rhythm sections and nailing the corners. Jack manages to push inside of his flesh on a 180-degree corner, (which symbolically means he's decided

to keep his eyes focused on the weight-bar for the time being). His flesh regroups as they smoothly land a double with their twelve inches of travel on their fine tuned and plush pro' suspension set-ups, then immediately pre-loading their air-forks and springing up high and far off the triple. In the air, soaring completely over an entire dirt mound and two troughs between the take-off and landing of the triple-gap-jump, Jack looks over his shoulder at his flesh, keeping an eye on him and realizing that he's up to his back wheel—as they float weightlessly through the air with their clutches in after tapping the rear brake to shift their weight forward in preparation for landing—with the inside line for the next corner.~

Back in the gym, Jack's eyes feel magnetized to this object of his favorite sin. So easily, as if without thinking, he can't help but take another eyeful.

~ Jack's flesh makes the pass on the inside forcing Jack wide. ~

Jack's thinks about his girlfriend and their relationship. He likes the outward appearance of it, the companionship, and the responsibility; and he knows he should not be doing what he's doing.

~ Jack hammers the throttle and blitzes the whoops (the sharp three feet deep perpendicular dirt bumps that need to be skipped over in a high gear and as fast as possible) overtaking his unruly counterpart. They're both way out front from the rest of the pack, contending for the win. ~

Back in the gym, Jack tries to be nonchalant, as the woman finishes her rep's. She then asks if he will wait and help her with a few more sets. Jack agrees as she catches her breath.

"Do you come here often?" The woman asks.

"Yeah, this is my regular gym." Jack replies.

"I'm new here, and I could use a workout partner. Maybe you and I could come together and help spot each other?" She puts squarely on the table.

Jack can only hesitate momentarily or he will give himself away, so he decides it's safe to just go along with it, since no one is around. "Sure, that'd be good."

~ In the arena of the supercross battle for the lead, Jack's desires get the best of him and the rider in black makes a pass on the outside birm going wide and coming out with more speed and a two bike lead. Inside Jack's helmet, his mind is reeling and he knows he's going to have to really work hard to regain the lead (which means he knows it's going to be hard to get out of this one). ~

"Great, I'll give you my number when we're done." She says as she smiles intently, looking him in the eyes, batting her lashes baitfully.

Of course he smiles back and they proceed with the casual, everyday workout.

~ Back on the rough terrafirma of the track, Jack's flesh is pulling a bigger gap on him. Jack's missing his timing in the rhythm sections, and every time he tries a new line it just doesn't work out. His flesh is winning, and looks across at him as he jumps another triple on the next lane over passing in the opposite direction. ~

The race is on and Jack is no match for his on-fire flesh at this point. He's playing the game, acting the pro,' trying to be cool, soaking up every playful flirtation and falling into the role of the mac.' His ego is loving it, he hasn't enjoyed this feeling in a long while, and it feels so good in the moments when he can manage to completely ignore his conscience. And though he knows deep down he shouldn't be playing this game, he justifies it in his mind because everyone else does it, and no one he knows is there to see—"out of sight, out of mind."

Soon he lets go of any convictions to act, at all, as one who's presently involved, and just eats up every spoon fed bit of overly playful interaction with this woman he just met; until finally she gives him her number and they say their excessively-friendly goodbyes.

~ Jack, almost getting lapped by his own carnal nature, rounds the corner after the finish line jump just in time to look up and see his flesh, in all black, airing over the finish line. With the checkered-flag waving, giant explosions of flame and fireworks burst on each side as he flies through the air between the dirt transitions. He throws a picture perfect whip (a trick throwing the bike sideways) to the left while pointing across his chest and down at Jack with his right hand. The crowd goes wild! ~

After getting cleaned up, and heading home in his yellow and black charger, Jack receives a call from Betty.

“Hi baby, how was the work out?” She asks lovingly.

“Good. Just another day at the gym.”

## Chapter 8

### Prayer



**A**t the beginning of the story, we observed an elderly woman walking amongst the crowded sidewalk of Straight Street near downtown. This white haired woman (in the physical and spiritual realm) is in her late seventies, and her name is Edna. Edna is in remarkable health for her age and remains self-sufficient living at home alone.

Edna lives out off of 90<sup>th</sup> and Straight Street. It's one of the older residential neighborhoods that have been pretty well maintained (overall) throughout the years. It's a mostly neat and tidy block of small, one to two story homes with modest size yards, that spans several square miles on both sides of Straight Street.

It's just about dusk, and inside one of the warmly lit homes we find Edna sitting comfortably in her living room recliner. The TV is not on, nor any radio; instead, it's perfectly peaceful and quiet. It's an orderly home with fairly outdated décor, quite a few plants, some pictures of family and friends on the walls, as well as various framed Scriptures mounted, in what looks like, has

been their fixed place for decades.<sup>56</sup> Edna has her Bible open on her lap over her afghan. She is focused and studying—as is often the case.<sup>57</sup>

~ In the spiritual realm, we once again see the younger, more divinely glorious woman of larger stature. The Bible itself is now glimmering in the exact same rainbow bright colors as her halo (which indicates permanent angelic protection). What cannot be overlooked are the four purely radiant beings standing about her on all four corners. They are all perfectly still looking down at her in her place. Slowly, one of the angels of light reaches out and gently touches the top of her Bible. ~

Edna blinks and stops her reading. She takes a deep breath and lifts her eyes for a moment of contemplation. She realizes it's time to go into prayer.<sup>58</sup>

Edna gently places the ribbon between the well worn pages of her Bible and closes it, putting it on the end table next to her. She then gets up and makes her way into her bedroom. Grabbing a small horseshoe shaped pillow, she tosses it toward the head of the bed and sits down, sliding her slippers off and putting them in their place.

Edna then rotates on the edge of the bed and puts her knees up on it, turning her weight over, slowly crawling to the center of the bed. She gets centered and sets the odd shaped pillow in place and then lies down on her stomach, cradling her face comfortably in the horseshoe pillow, with her arms down at her sides.

After a short time of relaxing into position, Edna begins her prayers: “Lord, here am I . . . Once again, it’s just You and me . . . and Your holy angels. . . . I thank You for this time, and this day . . . and all the days You’ve blessed me with. Fifty-six years, now, You’ve taken me by the hand. You first took me,

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56 – Deuteronomy 6:9

57 – Joshua 1:8

58 – Colossians 4:2

and then Ralph, and even all of our children, and even now are taking their grand-children. Father, I pray for the little ones: little Mindy and Eric, Randall and Morgan. Please take them and show them Your Way, Your Truth, and Your Life. Gently reveal to them their sinful nature and bless their eyes to see their need for You, Jesus. Oh, I praise you Lord, I worship you Father and Son, and Holy Spirit. Thank You for Your all sufficient grace, for I am confident in You through to the end.”

~ The four angels stand at the four corners of the bed with their heads bowed in unison. A light from them emanates outward in waves toward Edna and up. Then, their wings rise and steadily spread toward each other. And as their wings begin to overlap—creating a circle of light around Edna in her bed—one of them from the head of the bed reaches out and gently touches her head—the power of the Holy Spirit guiding both the angel and Edna.

Edna, in her mind, pauses from her spontaneous direction of prayer, and finds herself thinking about her bus driver acquaintance Norm. Her thoughts gravitate toward his situation of being lonely, and out on the road with strange people all the time. Soon she follows her thoughts for him with prayer.

“Lord, I pray for Norm the bus driver. He is a good man, lost and lonely in this world of abundant strangers. Please protect Norm . . . watch over Norm, and be with Norm as he diligently does his dangerous job driving around in the city. Please keep him safe from harm, whether from drunken or drugged up passengers, or from the dangers of the streets and all the chaotic traffic. Protect him in the world, and keep him for the day of Salvation. Save him Lord . . . I will continue to tell him about You.”

Just then, time begins to slow down. The clicking on the wall clock stretches and dulls to a stand still: time has completely stopped. One of the

four angels retracts his wings, and after a slight bend of the knees, shoots up straight through the roof.

Inside the spiritual world of Norm's bus, time is stopped as well. All the moving cars and city lights are perfectly still, as are all of the random characters in the bus behind Norm. Suddenly a flash of light bursts inside, seemingly out of nowhere, but really it came through the roof. The angel of light now stands along Norm, and time slowly resumes once again. Within seconds, the bus is moving at thirty-five miles an hour down Straight Street on its normal schedule.

As the angel stands above and behind Norm, Norm finds his thoughts turning from random work issues and personal interests, to thoughts about a higher power and purpose. He recalls run-ins with certain Christians he knows and other random signs he has noticed, and has to wonder about it all.

The bus is about half-packed, as usual, and not one has a red orb above their head. In fact, the best we can see is a lighter brown and gray mix. Once again, the people are of varying sizes, disproportionate to their physical similarities—some bigger, most smaller. Most of their eyes match their balloons, and several of them radiate a darkness that seems to negatively influence the thoughts of those close to them. The powers of darkness are immediately aware of the angel of light, but they only shift defensively in their consciousness.

The angel of light looks ahead, up the road, through the big front windows, and then he turns toward the back. He begins to walk, slowly, and deliberately—smoothly, as if gliding on air. After passing several people, some of the spirits in the back become annoyed, and uncomfortable; causing the people they're with to lose their focus and contentment.

Now, halfway down the bus, the angel stops and turns toward a woman who is doing something on her smart-phone. The angel looks down and



extends his hand toward her head. Just as he makes contact with her, she pauses from her pressing buttons. The angel retracts his hand, and continues to look down at her. She begins to contemplate something as she turns to look out the window. She then looks ahead down the isle and out the window ahead of the bus. Soon she puts her phone away and reaches up to pull the cord, indicating a request for the next stop. The angel immediately shoots up through the roof in a flash of departure. ~

Norm pulls the bus over for the stop. It's the last stop before one of the bigger intersections, less than a half a block away. As he opens the door for the lady, he's startled by the sounds of two or three horns instantly blaring up ahead, as a semi' crashes through the flow of traffic from the cross-street.

The big rig must be going nearly sixty-miles-per-hour, after coming down from one of the hills that crosses Straight Street at its base. It blasts right through the lane Norm's bus was in and just skims the tail end of a sedan in the next lane over, sending it sideways on its projected path. The light is green for Norm's direction, so the trucker must have lost control somehow. As the truck continues on through the intersection, it hits the back-end of a water truck moving in the opposite direction. The water truck is knocked hard sideways and flips over, skidding through the rest of the intersection like a baseball player sliding in to home plate. This slows the semi' considerably and diverts him against the retaining wall just passed the intersection. The driver manages to keep the wheels turned into the wall enough to ultimately slow it down while taking out two light poles. Fortunately no one was on the sidewalk there at that time.

Norm sits safely in his cushy bus driver seat as he watches with big eyes the accident just ahead of him. Though most of the passengers are looking out of curiosity about the excitement, Norm realizes that if the woman would

not have requested the stop, he would have been in an intercept course with the runaway truck. He can't help but wonder if he would have even noticed it coming, as he often zones out in his thoughts, driving his regular route.

This near death experience hits close to home in Norm's mind, as he had just been thinking about serious life issues; now he will not soon think of anything else.

~ Back in Edna's bedroom the three angels are once again joined by the forth. Edna is continuing through an impromptu prayer list of fellow church members she thinks about.

"And Father, I pray for the Madison family: Charles, Virginia, Devon, and Chelsea. They are a very faithful family, and I pray for Your blessing on their love for one another. Help them stay in Your Spirit with all of their dealings. Help them to be filled with the knowledge of Your will.<sup>59</sup> Help them to walk in a manner worthy of You.<sup>60</sup> Strengthen them to bear fruit in every good work.<sup>61</sup> Increase their knowledge of You, and keep them in close fellowship together as one family unit, fulfilling the roles You have appointed for them."

In that moment, two of the angels leap skyward arching out of the small house into the expanse of the darkening sky. Momentarily, they join with several angels already with the Madison family, who are gathering around the kitchen table for dinner. The table is set and everyone takes their place preparing to give thanks and enjoy another meal together.<sup>62</sup>

The angels, once again, form a circle around the family at the round table. Everyone is covered by a blood-red sphere; and all but Devon have halos that seem to reflect a specific, personal connection with the three original

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59 – Colossians 1:9

60 – Ephesians 4:1

61 – Colossians 1:10

62 – 1 Timothy 4:4

angels that were with them from the beginning. They are all aglow in the Spirit, for they have just finished a Bible study together in the kitchen as they prepared for the meal. The addition of the two angels from Edna's, magnifies the intensity of the Holy Spirit in the room. And as the family links hands to pray, the angels bow their heads and raise their wings to form a tent of light around them and the food.

The father, Charles, begins, "Lord, Father God, we are gathered here, tonight, to enjoy not only this meal and satisfaction of our physical bodies, but also to enjoy one another's company in love and in Your Holy Spirit of thanksgiving. You have blessed us thoroughly; and we strive to glorify Your Name, Yehovah. Thank You for our health, and our wealth: that is, spiritual wealth in You, and wealth of love in You and in one another. Thank You for such a fulfilling meal, we pray for those who are not so fortunate to have such food and family and shelter. Oh God, shed Your undeserved loving-kindness upon them. With Your infinite mercy and compassion, help the helpless get fed tonight. We praise You and worship You, Lord. Amen."

The rest of the family follows suit with a Spirit-filled "Amen."

Then the angels who came from Edna's retract and shoot up and back into transit. This time they head into the heart of the city.

Downtown, where there are a number of folks living on the streets, one homeless man is pacing about in his hunger. He has what the world considers severe psychological issues; but, in this spiritual realm, his chest is emanating the black cloud of the devil's angels.

The troubled man struggles to even look up or down the street as his eyes are locked on the sidewalk. His minimal cardboard shelter is near, along the wall of the alley.

He hasn't eaten in two days. What will he do? What can he do? Even he does not know, for his mind is shrouded in darkness. His eyes are glazed over with a thick, heavy tint. He wants to eat, but something inside him doesn't want him to, and it's constantly telling him he doesn't need to. He doesn't have money for food, but if he did, surely he would get some. But as it is, he goes on struggling to fight his natural inclination to eat. He is very thin, and has learned that a man can live on very little food if he's not exerting much energy, and especially if someone gives him a drug or alcohol.

A gust of wind springs by the man, and for a moment, it's as if it helps clear his mind just a bit. He takes a look up the street as if to try to focus on what's going on outside of his little world; and after he sees nothing, he drops his head in his usual fashion.

Instantly, he sees it tumbling along the wall. *Is it right? Can it be?* He tries to focus and follows it with his eyes, and figures, *Yes, I think it is?* He hesitantly scurries over and catches it, and unfolds the dirty twenty dollar bill. He holds it in his hand like a revelation that he doesn't quite know what to make of.

First, he looks left and right, to make sure no one else is after it. Then he summons up the energy to override his inner conflict by his basic need for survival, and instantly makes up his mind to spend it all on food, right now!

Throughout the city, Christians and non-Christians alike, curiously find themselves with extra compassion to give to the poor; and, a number of those in need are fed and go to sleep, in their terrible circumstances, with full stomachs and temporarily (more) comfortable minds.

As Norm crawled into bed that night, his mind was still reeling about the "what if's" of life and death, and he felt drawn to thinking more about these seriously eminent issues.

## Chapter 9

# Subconscious Desires & Night Terrors



It's a quiet night in Tom's high-rise apartment near 18<sup>th</sup> and Straight Street (as quiet as it ever gets this close to downtown anyway). At 1:17a.m., the meek and mild Tom Adani is sound asleep; and, as is fairly usual, a man's dreams can often manifest a radically different character.

In Tom's waking life he has been mentally struggling with the abundance of "casual" sin that *the world* brings with everyday interactions. It's the inner conflict of how to react to the unclean lips of every worldly person that utters a sinful thought as if it's nothing—or worse, something to laugh at. The constant overflow of unregenerate hearts coming out of mouths in everyday conversations, whether with acquaintances or strangers, can be overwhelming at times for a Christian.

Tom has been growing rapidly in his faith, but he still has to acquire a mass of experience to be ultimately proficient in appropriating God's Word thoroughly in all of his interactions. So these serious conscious concerns about how to react and respond as a responsible representative of Christ,

could very well be the cause of such a subconscious dream as what is about to transpire in Tom's sleeping mind. And as with most dreams, details blur together and scenarios aren't always linked clearly.

~ It's morning in Tom's dream, and he's walking down his apartment hallway toward the elevator. There's music playing that has a smooth, deep, R & B baseline: *Ba dom, da dom; da dom, da da dom – ba dom, da dom; da dom, da da dom*. Then the lyrics start up, (even though Tom's not really that conscious of them in his dream): "*Smiling faces, smiling faces sometimes. . .*" It's the seventies Motown song: "Smiling Faces Sometimes" by The Undisputed Truth.

Tom enters the elevator to descend to the ground floor and start his day. The elevator music is just a continuation of the same song, and it's just another aspect of realism that makes Tom casual about it being just another day. *Ba dom, da dom; da dom, da da dom—ba dom, da dom; da dom, da da dom*.

A man in the elevator smiles and Tom asks how he's doing. The man laughs out loud obnoxiously and boasts of how hung-over he is because of his rowdy night of drunkenness. As he repeatedly swears and continues to elaborate on his exploits, Tom instinctively shuts his mouth by throwing a kick straight up and back along his right side hard into the man's face. (A move that he never would be flexible enough to do in real life—maybe not even Jean-Claude Van Damme in his prime!)

Immediately, Tom steps into a left cross as the man buckles over, sending his head into the side of the elevator. They're dropping levels without stops, and this seems to quicken Tom's mission to set the man straight.

After the triple blow to the head, the hung-over man drops to the floor. Tom jumps on him and puts him in a headlock.

“Drunkenness is a sin! It is not to be taken lightly! You will pay for it, for the Lord’s wrath abides on you with every drunken drink you take!” Tom yells in the man’s ears.

Only a few more floors to go and Tom squeezes, cutting off circulation in the arteries on both sides of the man’s neck. This McKenzitine choke-out move promptly knocks the man out as the elevator opens. Tom lets him drop and steps out on his way.

He’s on the bus now, and the song on the radio is the same song as in the elevator: *Ba dom, da dom; da dom, da da dom—“Smiling faces, smiling faces sometimes; they don’t tell the truth. Smiling faces, smiling faces tell lies; and I got proof.”— ba dom, da dom; da dom, da da dom.*

A woman behind him is laughing and talking on her phone. She’s gossiping with some friend about other people’s personal business, and then begins telling her about her one-night-stand from the previous weekend. Tom can’t help but overhear this lighthearted sinful discussion, and in his heart he is fed up, not wanting to be subjected to it.

Tom quickly pops up, turning and springing off the armrest of the opposite seat with his left foot in order to propel himself around into a swinging right kick toward the woman’s face. She leans back at the last minute as the kick connects with the back of her hand that’s holding the cell phone, sending it flying into the window and then falling to the floor.

The woman is enraged at the attack on her beloved smart phone and drops an elbow into Tom’s side. He’s caught off guard kind of hanging in between the seats after the kick didn’t fully connect, and he drops down onto the floor.

The woman quickly reaches for her phone on the floor while Tom pins her wrist into the inside wall of the bus with his foot preventing her from

grabbing it. He then manages to kick the phone down toward the front of the bus under all the seats.

The furious woman naturally drops another elbow into Tom's knee, releasing her pinned arm. She then lunges up and over the seats in front of them. Tom jumps to the aisle and sprints ahead with the fast track toward the phone.

The woman realizes his advantage and takes a flying leap off the top of the seats, tackling him into the opposite row and they both fall down into the aisle. Tom feels someone's chewed gum squish into his hair, and suddenly it's spread all around his right arm and leg like a sticky gum web.

With the world passing by outside, the bus driver charges on at thirty-five miles per hour; while, the people on the bus are surprisingly casual about the whole ordeal, as if it's not abnormal in the least.

The woman, who is on top of this double-struggle to move fast amongst the awkward seating obstacles, puts her knee on Tom's chest and steps on his shoulder to try and spring ahead off of him toward the mobile phone that still has her friend's nasally voice coming out of it, "Hello, Kathy? . . . Hello? . . . Are you there? You were saying?"

As Kathy puts her weight on Tom's shoulder and lifts her knee from his chest to lunge ahead, Tom just manages to snatch her by the ankle with both hands and yanks her leg backward with all his might. This abrupt change in momentum makes her other foot slip back and up off his shoulder; and, as her hands were about to grab the seats in front of her to help pull herself forward, they fall short of their target as she drops straight down face-planting in the center aisle.

Tom quickly rolls over on top of her, grabbing her above the shoulders to quickly trample ahead of her crawling on her back. Kathy can see the phone



with the one eye that's not smashed against the floor; and, as Tom's last foot scrapes over her ear, she is already prepped to snap up onto her feet like a surfer and make one giant leap headfirst over the last row of seats like a running-back launching in for a touchdown, diving to cut Tom off as he makes the corner.

Tom sees her flying and realizes it's going to be close. He diverts his momentum from heading directly at the phone to an intercept course with Kathy. He plows into her like a linebacker, slamming her head and torso into the side of the bus just below the window.

They both fall with gravity, but now Tom has the advantage. With Kathy momentarily dazed, but recovering quickly, Tom swoops up the phone with his right hand and carries his momentum around in a 270 degree spin back toward Kathy. As she turns to look his direction, in her uncomfortable position of being mostly head down toward the floor with the front of her body on the seat and shins against the seatbacks, Tom continues his momentum around with his right hand to slam the phone into her ear, crushing the cheaply made expensive electronic to pieces.

Kathy, not only dazed but defeated, lays their crumpled and half upside down with her head on the floor. Tom shouts down at her, "Gossip is a sin, and so is fornication and pre-marital sex! Consider yourself warned! Repent, for the Kingdom of God is near!"

The bus stops and the door opens, so Tom gets out at his stop.

Now, Tom is sitting down at his desk in his cubical at work. He's going about his business trying to do a good job, while the office music continues to play: *Ba dom, da dom; da dom, da da dom—"Smiling faces sometimes, pretend to be your friend. Smiling faces show no traces of the evil that lurks within."*—*ba dom, da dom; da dom, da da dom.*

~ In the spiritual reality of Tom's quiet apartment, two black clouds seep in through the wall. They come to rest above Tom's not so peaceful sleep, and then they transform into the dark creatures of the night that they really are.

At first they are just black forms of strange beings with wings like a bat's that have been worn with holes and tears. Then, as they touch their feet down on each side of the bed, they materialize further into clear demons.

They are very big, squatting over their disproportionate feet and hunching to fit their giant heads under the eight-foot roof. One is fatter and warty with a deep, dirty reddish color to its skin. It has strange yellow eyes, kind of like a cat's eyes, only they are sunk into its skull and shriveled like raisins.

The other demon spirit looks stronger with bigger muscles, but its vein's show throughout its entire body. It looks vulnerable, like, if it were cut it would easily bleed to death, even though the blood inside looks completely black. This one's eyes are not sunk in, but bulging out unnaturally. They are a crimson red and wrinkled, while its body is a pale yellow.

Neither of these creatures have any hair and their teeth appear to be overgrown in their mouths. They both have long arms, while the fat one is much thicker with wider hands and heavier claws.

Between the two hideous monster's feet Tom lay sleeping, motionless.

As of one volition, the two wicked spirits slowly reach out and put their hands into Tom's head.

~ Back inside Tom's dream in his cubical at his work, the scene becomes darker, like shades of gray have dulled the previously normal setting. Tom feels this change but doesn't recognize it much in the ever changing dream reality. *Ba dom, da dom; da dom, da da dom—"The truth is in their eyes, 'cause their eyes don't lie, Amen."*—*ba dom, da dom; da dom, da da dom.*

What appears to be one of Tom's co-workers emerges over the partition wall in a neighboring cubical. He smiles and says to Tom, "Your work has been lacking, you don't seem to know what you are doing?"

Tom looks up and is very disappointed by the criticism, and then looks back down at his work. Then another co-worker stands in the entrance to his office space and says, "Why do you even bother to try, you should probably just quit."

Tom notices that the room is considerably darker and seems hazy or smoky. He doesn't feel right, and then instinctively knows that there is some kind of evil present. Tom looks up and the co-workers aren't visible, but he knows they are very near. He struggles for a bit to think, and then notices that he is totally weak physically. *Ba dom, da dom; da dom, da da dom—"Jealousy, misery, envy—you can't see, behind smiling faces."*—*ba dom, da dom; da dom, da da dom.*

Somehow, Tom remembers that he must use Jesus' Name to defend himself.<sup>63</sup> He then tries to open his mouth to speak the rebuke, but finds that he can hardly open his lips for some reason. He struggles harder and tries again, but only an indiscernible mumble barely even comes out. He looks for the wicked culprits, and though he can not see them, he knows they are just behind the thin partition walls, waiting in silence.

~ On his bed, the demon spirits are somehow aware of his spiritual awareness, and they keep themselves hidden in his dream, and both hold their hands tightly over his mouth.

~ Tom focuses on his goal, trying to cast out wicked spirits in Jesus' Name; but, no matter how hard he tries, it's just not working. Then, for some reason, he thinks to try to help open his mouth with his hands. Even though his whole

body is weak now, he touches his teeth with his fingers trying to push them apart. This helps and he is able to speak a little bit louder and clearer, though it is not enough to get the words out—he is encouraged. He keeps trying and it still just doesn't seem to be enough for some reason.

Then Tom decides he needs to utilize all his strength and just grab his top and bottom teeth with each hand and wrench them apart with one full powered attempt.<sup>64</sup> As he yanks them open, he finds himself speaking out loud and clear, “In the Name of Jesus Christ, be gone.”<sup>65</sup>

~ At that instant, in the spiritual reality of his bedroom, both demons jerk their hands out of Tom's head and off of his mouth, recoiling, and falling backwards off the bed into the walls and onto the floor.

Back in the dream, Tom goes to immediately say it again and finds himself transitioning smoothly from clearly speaking the same words in the dream, to ~ waking and continuing to say them out loud in the exact same way: “In the Name of Jesus Christ, be gone!”

~ At this, both demons spirits simultaneously scream in terror and instantly flee back through the wall from which they came.

Tom finds himself wide awake and perfectly calm, surprisingly undaunted by the nightmare. He remembers the exact details; and, he also remembers how with previous nightmares in which he immediately awoke from, it usually took a certain amount of time to shake the lingering feelings from the strong, stirred up emotions of the dream. But this time he feels an unmistakable, perfect peace.<sup>66</sup> He feels a total contentment. He immediately believes that he may have actually been under some kind of spiritual attack while in his sleep; and, if he was, that he had found the answer to defend himself:

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64 – James 4:7

65 – Acts 16:18

66 – John 14:27

the Name of Jesus Christ. It is the first time Tom has ever awakened from a dream finishing a sentence out loud that he started in the dream, and he finds it highly unusual.

As Tom ponders this potentially revolutionary discovery that he isn't quite sure what to make of, just on the other side of his apartment wall the two demons skulk on the far side of the neighboring residence, looking back fearfully toward the wall of Tom's apartment.

## Chapter 10

# The Snowball Effect



**I**t's been four weeks since Bobby made the choice to do coke for the first time. That night, actually, also led to Bobby doing something else for the first time.

He had been at a big party where everyone was feeling good: drinking and getting high in a variety of ways. Bobby had tried to hold on to his conscience in his apprehension to the new state of being on cocaine; but, after getting used to it and feeling a real boost in energy and confidence, he basically abandoned his conscience completely.

He felt like he could take on the world and could do no wrong. He wasn't as self-conscious as usual, and basically felt no need for a conscience whatsoever. Then, this feeling was put to the test when a girl, a little older than he, started to really come on to him.

He kept drinking and getting high to maintain his sense of authority over his self, and eventually found himself in a dark bedroom with his newfound "friend." One thing led to another, and at a crucial point it became apparent that there would be no limits to their interaction.

This prompted a slight resurgence of Bobby's conscience, 1: because he was nervous about it being his first time; and, 2: because he knew he didn't have any protection.

Back in time to that night, at the scene of Bobby's critical decision, Bobby's conscience is pitted against his fleshly desires, which are now overrun with powerful chemicals.

~ In Bobby's psychological arena of moral decision making, he is strapped into a snowboard at the Winter X-Games Big Air competition. There are a ton of people lining the run below him, which consists of one perfectly massive jump, sparkling in the lights that shine on the pure white snow from every angle. The jump appears to go completely vertical at the take-off point that is chiseled out fifteen-feet above the hard snow surrounding it, and it's about twenty-feet wide. The landing is a slight step-up (in elevation) and looks noticeably higher than the jump from the drop-in point, and the distance across the slight incline to the landing transition is eighty-five feet—which means the riders are aiming to jump ninety to a hundred-feet. The crowd is already cheering and he can hear an announcer talking and mentioning his name. There are professional cameramen everywhere and other riders are being interviewed on live TV.

Bobby's flesh is next to him, looking wild-eyed and ready to go. Unable to contain his excitement, he begins bouncing in place from tip to tail on his snowboard. There isn't much time, and this is the final jump for the win.

The next thing Bobby knows, his flesh pats him hard on the back and says condescendingly, "Good luck buddy." Bobby's flesh penguin-hops up to the gate on the tips of his board and is given the countdown.

Different colored lights shine all over, and with so many cameras flashing, it's like a giant disco-ball is hanging above them. They all feel like rockstars!

Bobby's flesh squats down super low, touching his butt to his board with his wide stance, and with a giant spring he jumps up and out of the gate, dropping in switch (less dominant foot forward).

Bobby is intimidated by his flesh, and at the same time, impressed.

Out of excitement, his flesh pumps up and down on his board, gaining speed, heading for the giant, perfect kicker. Coming up the face of the jump, he spreads his hands out wide and wraps them back in a pre-load recoil, and then he quickly spins them around, in and down as he drops his head and shoulder off the lip, throwing fast into a switch-backside-triple-cork-1620 (that is, a backwards rotating, inward spinning triple-flip with four and a half spins)!

He immediately crouches between his bindings and grabs the edge of the board between his toes with his lead hand, holding his position in perfect style as he flips off-kilter and inverted ninety feet through the air at high speed: flipping and spinning around once...twice and three times, spotting the landing in a fraction of a second, then pulling a last minute 180 (half-spin) and stomping the landing right on the bolts (perfectly centered over the board—front and back between the tips and side to side between the edges, with his weight coming down directly over the bolts that hold the bindings to the board under the center of his boots) with his hands up in full glory!

The crowd goes crazy and everyone is freaking out!

Bobby is left doubtful and discouraged to think that he can, in any way, stop the momentum of this steam-train he's created. Still, he is committed and under the gun to give it a go.

Bobby tries to pump himself up, even though he knows the best trick in his bag can't take the win.



He gets the go ahead, and decides to throw something he's never even tried: a cab-1800 flat spin—that is, a backwards riding spin that opens forward to his frontside with five full three-hundred and sixty-degree rotations. He points-it for the jump, milking every ounce of speed, hoping that initiating the spin won't sap too much of his momentum as he slides out off of his heelside edge as he reaches the lip, taking some of his forward inertia and expending a good portion of it inward into the g-forces of a crazy-fast clockwise rotation around the vertical center axis of his body and board weight.

He winds his body up fully pre-loaded heading up the face of the launch-ramp, then spins his arms out wide around his body and quickly inward initiating the spin almost reaching the first ninety-degrees of rotation before even leaving the lip. He pops up and around in a perfectly level flat spin while flying over ninety-feet in an arc horizontally.

Looking like the Tasmanian Devil flying through the air with a board under his feet, he holds his grab on his toe edge and spins with his head looking hard over his shoulder the entire time. With his desperate huck into such a fast and furious tornado of a jump, he's not even able to spot the landing in the split moments when he is facing forward, and he just goes by feel. Spinning through the one-eighty and three-hundred and sixty-degree increments: three'(sixty), five'(forty), seven'(twenty), nine'(hundred), ten'(eighty), twelve'(sixty), fourteen'(forty), sixteen'(twenty), and SLAM!!! He caught his back edge throwing him down hard and flat on his back, knocking himself out cold and sliding down the rest of the landing run-out like a dead starfish spinning out of control from the dissipation of his kinetic energy.

When Bobby finally comes to a stop, he starts coming around, dazed and confused as to exactly what happened. And before he can even see clearly, his flesh leans over him and says mockingly, "Nice try buddy!" He then puts

his foot up on Bobby's chest and raises his arms to the crowd. What seems like millions of flashes log the moment into imaginary X-Games history. ~

In the darkness of the night, and in the lust of the moment, Bobby followed through and finished what he started, unprotected.

Now, four weeks later, only hours after Bobby's family got out of church, Bobby is doing a bit of home-work (since this Sunday is a school night), when he gets a phone call on his cell. It's Samantha, whom he hasn't heard from since that blurry night two weeks ago, and he is very surprised to see her calling.

"Hello." Bobby says, trying to be calm.

"Hello, Bobby. It's Samantha, from the party on Memorial Day weekend." She replies.

"Hey, how's it goin'?" Bobby asks.

"Well, not so good, we need to talk." Samantha replies.

"Oh, okay. What's up?" Bobby says nervously.

"I'm pregnant Bobby." Samantha says bluntly.

There's a long pause as they both contemplate the severity of the predicament.

"Oh, wow, . . . uh. . . what do you want to do?" Bobby asks Samantha.

"I don't know? My family will kill me if they find out." She replies.

"Yeah, me too, for sure." Bobby agrees.

Another long pause ensues before Bobby can explore what he considers his best option.

"What about an abortion?" He says.

"I know. I think it's probably best, but I would need you to help pay for it." Samantha states.

"How much does it cost?" Bobby asks.

“\$350.” Samantha answers.

“Well, maybe I can come up with it? I’ll have to see about that.” Bobby says soberly.

Bobby and Samantha’s conversation tapers down with their far too real consequences, and they leave it with Bobby to look into getting the money as quick as possible.

After fretting all night and trying to think of what amounted to unlikely ways to get \$350, Bobby came to the realization he needed to ask his parents for help. He knew that they would rather find out now and be mad, than to become grandparents before he was a senior in high school.

Bobby thought about what it would mean to have a child at his age, and how he would be thrust into manhood and responsibility. All his personal dreams and plans would be suddenly halted and tossed aside for what would probably be his entire life. It was really too much to bear for his self, and he continued to follow through with what was the easiest answer.

Without discussing it with Samantha, Bobby decides to take it to his parents—they definitely have the money.

After hitting his parents with the truth, and enduring their surprise and temporary scorn, Bobby finds that they are definitely in agreement and are even willing to pay for the abortion in full; and, of course, not telling anyone is in their best interest as well. Plus, they know Planned Parenthood will help Samantha get her abortion even without her parents’ permission.

Bobby, then, tries to contact Samantha right away, but doesn’t get through.

After trying to reach Samantha for three days, Bobby finds her number disconnected. He has been growing desperate to get a hold of her, but she hasn’t been returning his calls. This, now, is greatly affecting the entire family.

Bobby's parents exhort him to (discreetly) try to find her through his peers who might know her, without giving away the issue. Though Bobby doesn't really know anyone who is friends with her, for the night they hooked-up, it was a huge party with a lot of people he didn't know and everyone was all over the place in a blur of drugs and alcohol. He doesn't even know how she got his number.

A week passes and still nothing. The only thing Bobby has heard was a vague report that someone thought Samantha might have left town. This put tremendous strain on him, especially with his parents.

By this time the family was so shook up that they fell out of their usual routines. They stopped going to church, and Bobby even said he didn't ever want to go back to church. Upon hearing this, Bobby's little sister said the same, and the parents weren't really too worried about it, for it really made life a lot easier for them; and, as far as they were concerned, they didn't have to attend a church to be good people, it was just a part of justifying their goodness to the world.

Time began to seriously drag on for the Phillips family with each day. The likelihood of an illegitimate child being born to a very young woman none of them knew, was weighing heavier and heavier in the back of their minds.

After a while, Bobby began to seek out his older friends who always had a way of escape for him whether it was alcohol, drugs, shows, or games and social distractions. His grades began to fail and he wasn't really concerned about it because none of his friends had gone to college, and some of them never even finished high school; yet, here they were enjoying their lives probably more than most of the serious and sad people who felt an obligation to be "responsible."

Bobby also began to drift from his parents as he approached the age of independence. His parents, who didn't want to be so distant from Bobby, didn't know what else to do and decided to let him make his own decisions and to be ready to let him be his own man. They tried not to think about it, and instead focused on their selves, and what they wanted to do.

## Chapter 11

# Standing On the Rock



**W**hen people are deeply devoted to extreme deeds of darkness, chaos often replaces any resemblance of order, and responsibility is generally neglected.

Billy Mac's lifestyle has drastically changed from his day of fretting over being a thief. A significant amount of time has passed, and though Billy's conscience might have, at one time, had a problem with much of what has become his M.O., he has become strangely comfortable with his choices and actions.

Billy now has a bold confidence that he never knew before, he feels empowered by his new freedom: freedom in accepting that he has a right to do whatever he wants (which is basically "freedom" from his conscience).

Everywhere he looks he finds others to compare to that give him more justification for his growing worldview of moral relativism. All of his new friends are in total agreement and help support each other in standing and fighting for their "God given right to freedom and equality." In the name

of opposing intolerance, they are freed from condemnation and judgment. Or are they?

After overlooking the minor violations of accumulating parking tickets, Billy Mac is finally summoned to court before incurring a warrant for his arrest. This, of course, would put a significant damper on his “freedom,” so he decides he better “defend” his “story” to the judge. Of course, in Billy Mac’s delusional mind, he finds a perfectly just cause to be absolved of all charges.

After cleaning up and putting on some clothes that, let’s just say, he doesn’t often wear, Billy Mac decides it would probably be best to take the bus up Straight Street to the courthouse uptown.

Just a couple of blocks off of Straight Street and 12<sup>th</sup>, a business district transitions into some of the government agency buildings. Only three blocks from a popular shopping area, this section of town is regularly busy with pedestrian traffic.

After Norm let Billy Mac out of the bus, without so much as a glance from either of them, he checks his watch and sees that he is plenty early and still has time to relax. He presses the button to cross Straight Street and make his way over to the courthouse.

It’s not quite 10 a.m., and his court hearing isn’t until 11. Billy feels energized after actually getting a nights rest for a change, and he is already looking forward to getting his big responsibility out of the way so that he can meet up with a couple pals who are expecting a successful transaction of the hard stuff later in the afternoon.

Adjacent to the courthouse is a courtyard with some benches and walkways that connect the varying parts of the city. Billy Mac decides to detour a bit with his extra time, and go sit outside instead of heading directly into the lion’s den.

As Billy approaches the center of the courtyard, he sees a fair crowd built up around a man standing on a box speaking with a small amplifier. The man has some sort of props on both sides of him, with an arch connecting them. He finds this public entertainment a much more interesting option than sitting on a stone bench alone, so he moves in to satisfy his curiosity.

The man speaking has an earpiece microphone that sends his voice through a six by eight inch amp' out clearly up to probably 70–75 feet, since there's not much car traffic in the immediate area.

His arms wave about as he speaks enthusiastically with his hands: pointing up to the sky, then down to the ground, making swoops across his front with both hands open, and into tight fists as he speaks with strong emotion.

The props at his sides are portable signs on sign poles. To his left is a red homemade stop sign that, instead of saying "Stop" says, "Don't Pass Go." On the back of this sign is the distinct image of a goat. The other sign, to the man's right, is a green circle that says, "Get Out Of Jail Free!" And on the back of that sign is an image of a sheep. And above the man's head, in an arch connecting the two signs, is a colorful rainbow with the title "MONOTHEISTOPOLY – The Very Real Game of Life!"

In front of the man is a space with a half-circle written in colored chalk on the cement to serve as a borderline for the crowd. There is another box just inside of the border in the center, also with a microphone and amp.'

Before Billy Mac can really focus on the man on the box's words, he is extremely intrigued by the scene and smiles as he wonders exactly what kind of crazy spectacle is going on.

"Alright, for another dollar, what's the current leading cause of death in America now?" The man speaks out while the crowd begins to answer with unamplified shouts: "Old age!" "Cancer!" "Drunk-driving!" . . .



As the man on the box listens for the right answer, he instinctively denies false guesses with a variety of humorous quips. Then, as he consciously performs his primary function as game show host with the people, as if in the other side of his brain, he finds himself seeing the same scene in front of him in an entirely different context.

~ In this moment, that doesn't fully hit his primary consciousness right away, he finds himself standing on a rock just a few feet in diameter that is surrounded by ocean as far as the eye can see. Somehow, he knows that not far behind him is a tremendous mountain of pure gold that rises out of the sea and is far bigger than Mt. Everest (though he doesn't need to turn and look to know it's there).

In this few seconds of time, he mysteriously finds himself throwing fish food out in the water before him. He also throws out nets that go out from the rock he stands on. Also he sees out in the distance, buoys that mark long-lines of baited hooks anchored on the deep ocean floor.

He knows that there are all kinds of fish out there in the water, some he can see, and many more he cannot. As he looks into the water, he sees many quality fish schooling up because of the nets; but he also sees many sea creatures like slithery eels, hard shell crabs, and shape-shifting/color-changing octopus, that he knows will probably never be caught. ~

"Nope . . . no . . . nuh-uh. Give up? . . . Prescription drugs are now the leading cause of death in America, so watch those doctors. So, no winners here, apparently you're all losers!" The amplified man antagonizes jokingly to playfully get under the skin of his hearers. "Alright, let's go for the big one. For \$10, the grand-prize jackpot, who here thinks he is a good person?"

Several people raise their hands and speak up, and he picks one that would seem to be at random. "You, sir, you think you're a good person?" He asks.

"Yeah!" The man replies.

"Alright, step up on the box and we'll see if you are. If you are a good person, you will get this crisp \$10 bill, and if you're not, I'll give you a consolation prize of \$1, okay?" Our sociable director states.

As the man agrees to the stipulations of the final round, Billy Mac is excited to watch this impromptu game show and see if maybe he can't get some money too! He works his way into the front row in case he can get some answers right and make some extra cash with his well planned timing.

"I'm Ray, what's your name?" The elevated speaker asks.

"Regal." The street game show contestant replies.

"Alright Regal, where are you from?" Our host asks.

"Fort Worth, Texas." He says.

"Wow, all the way from Texas. I'm originally from Alaska, and I must say that's a cute little state you have down there!" The quick-witted man on the box jabs.

The nice looking fellow smiles, shakes his head and drops his eyes in defeat.

"Ok Regal, I'm going to ask you just a few questions to see if you qualify to be a good person. Have you ever told a lie?" The conversation orchestrator asks.

"Yes, who hasn't?" The man replies.

"How many lies have you told?" Ray returns.

"I don't know, too many to count." Regal says logically.

"What do you call someone who tells innumerable lies?" Ray retorts.

"Well . . . a liar I suppose?" Regal says sheepishly.

"Yes, a liar is what you call someone who tells innumerable lies. So what does that make you?" Ray pushes.

“A liar?” Regal says, not entirely comfortable with that particular truth.

“Have you ever stolen anything, regardless of its value?” Ray inquires.

“No, not really.” Regal says unconvincingly.

“Are you sure? You just told me you’re a liar.” Ray puts plainly.

“Well, yeah, when I was younger.” Regal answers with the standard answer.

“And what do you call someone who steals stuff?” Ray replies.

“A thief.” Regal is forced to answer with his conscience bearing witness.<sup>67</sup>

“And so what are you?” Ray pushes to drive home the point.

“A thief.” Regal admits, not exactly liking where this is going.

“Alright Regal, one last question. Have you ever looked at a woman with lust?” Asks Ray.

“Yes.” Regal says, realizing he’s not passing the good person test.

“Jesus says, ‘If you look with lust, you’ve already committed adultery in your heart.’”<sup>68</sup> Ray explains.

By this time, Billy Mac is finding himself very bothered. He’s beginning to realize what is going on, and something inside of him doesn’t like it one bit.

“So by your own admission, you’re a liar, a thief, and an adulterer at heart. If God Judges you by the 10 Commandments, which we’ve just gone through three, would you be found innocent or guilty?” Ray tests.

“I guess I would be guilty.” Regal says even more sheepishly in front of the large crowd.

“And since you would be guilty, would you go to Heaven or Hell?” Ray asks.

“Well . . . I’d go to Hell by that standard.” Regal consents.

“That’s right, you’d go to Hell. Does that concern you?” Ray asks with all sincerity.

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67 – Romans 2:15

68 – Matthew 5:28

“Well, I’ve never really thought about it like that, but now that you mention it, I would be a bit concerned.”

Billy Mac is now almost fuming at this charade of false advertizing, this intolerant judging and unacceptable condemnation of imposing ones beliefs on others.

“Well, you should be a lot concerned. There’s nothing worse than Hell, and the fact that it’s for eternity. Do you know what God did so that you don’t have to go to Hell for your great many sins?” Ray brings home.

“No, I don’t.” Regal answers in reluctant curiosity.

“God sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to live the perfect life—where He never violated God’s Laws—and to die a substitutionary death in our place so that we could be saved. So that we would realize we have sinned against a Holy God, and rightly appropriate that Truth by repenting of our sins and putting our faith in Jesus Christ. We broke God’s Law, and Jesus paid our fine in His life’s blood, so that we could be set free.” Ray completed.

~ As Ray was saying those words, looking directly into the eyes of Regal, he once again saw, or more felt, the scene of his vision, only now there are some fish caught in the nets, and he can see the buoys afar off bobbing from something biting down out of sight. And as he finishes his Gospel presentation, he sees a giant shark fin rising out of the water headed straight at him. ~

“Who do you think you are?” Billy Mac is almost surprised to hear himself say out loud at Ray. But he instinctively continues, “You go through all this to try and sucker people in so that you can reign over them with your high and mighty beliefs?” Billy isn’t slowing down, his general boldness being extremely amplified, compels him to make a serious point in order to stop what is going on and even help the people be “free” from the injustice of this man’s intolerance. The pride of his life’s purpose is now being put into action.

“I can’t believe how much time you’ve wasted setting all this up like some fisherman trying to hook into innocent bystanders who are just going about their business! Your self-righteousness makes me sick.” Billy Mac invokes, now two steps inside of the chalk line.

“Self-righteousness is when you proclaim your own goodness, like saying you’re a good person when you’re not.” Ray rightly answers in the Spirit as he immediately prays for God’s wisdom in his response to this obviously hostile heckler.

Emboldened by the experience and the unseen forces within, Billy Mac addresses the crowd. “Don’t listen to this wolf in sheep’s clothing, look at how deceptive he is. He bribed us all with money just to listen to him and play his religious games.” Then Billy redirects his words to Ray, “Don’t you have anything better to do? What kind of religious fanatic nut are you? We’re just trying to enjoy our day, and you want to condemn us all to Hell?”

“I cannot condemn anyone; the Bible says you are condemned already because of your unbelief.” Ray says quickly.

By this time, Ray notices that a couple things are happening with the crowd. Most are shocked and standing stunned in observation, but some of the more mild ones are being scared away by the nature of the heated confrontation.

In Ray’s mind, he initially hoped the confrontation would draw a bigger crowd, but then the vision came again. ~ The shark is attacking the nets and chasing the fish around in a frenzy. The nicely condensed schools are being scattered and the nets are getting torn. Some of the fish are writhing free from the nets because of all the commotion. ~

Ray has to do something, “What’s your name sir?” He asks Billy Mac.

“It doesn’t matter, you don’t know me; you don’t know any of us. You just want to condemn us and boost yourself up by trying to gain control over us.” Billy Mack says back sharply.

“Well how about you? Do you consider yourself to be a good person?” Ray aims at the heart of the matter; for he knows that the dog who yelps is the dog who got hit.

“Yeah, I’m a perfectly fine person, but I’m not interested in hearing your self-righteous opinion about it. You can take your Book of so called standards, and shove it. I can give you a hundred books of different standards that would leave you guilty.” Billy Mac emphatically states.

Billy Mac’s ranting escalates as the contents of his heart overflow out of his mouth.<sup>69</sup> His foul mouth begins turning more people away, and Ray keeps trying to speak up and regain control of the scene, but it just isn’t working. Something in Billy Mac is set on breaking it all up, no matter what kind of spectacle it makes of him.

The confrontation does draw the attention of some newcomers, but as they move closer, many others move on with their day. Finally, a police officer comes to establish some order where it had obviously been lost.

“What’s going on here?” The police man asks the two.

Billy Mac loses no boldness in his cause and immediately answers, pointing at Ray, “This guy is out here yelling at everyone that they’re going to Hell.”

“I’m not the one yelling.” Ray tries to say through Billy’s accusations.

“Look, he’s set himself up with all this,” pointing at his set and amplifier, “and has been harassing everyone who walks by here.” Billy continues.

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69 – Luke 6:45

“What’s this?” The cop asks flipping Ray’s wire that runs down from his earpiece microphone. “You can’t be out here with an amplifier bothering people like this.

“No, sir, it’s public property and I have a permit for amplification.” Ray defends himself.

“This is the courtyard to the courthouse; you’ll have to find somewhere else.” The officer replied.

“No, Officer, this isn’t against the law.” Ray tries to uphold the reality of the law to the law officer.

“Don’t tell me what the law is! Look, I said that’s it! If you don’t cease and desist, I will arrest you for disrupting the peace as well as disobeying a police officer. So get your stuff picked up and get out of here.” The officer enforces.

This isn’t the first time Ray has been shut down unlawfully, and he submits to the authority, who is even in the wrong, and he begins packing up to leave.

While he is putting his things away and the people are all scattered and lost, his vision returns briefly. ~ The water around the rock has no more nets or buoys, and it is calming down from the disruption. He knows the cause of the disruption is the vague shadow under the surface that is swimming back down into the murky depths.

He then remembers the glorious Mountain and turns to look up at It. It is so magnificent and wonderful that he immediately rejoices in It. He knows It is entirely unmoved by the ruckus and looking down with great approval.<sup>70</sup> ~

Meanwhile, Billy Mac enters the courthouse to tend to his parking tickets.

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70 – Psalm 33:18, Job 36:7, Psalm 11:4

## Chapter 12

# The Narrow Path



**I**t's been nearly a year since the scales fell off of young Ricky's eyes. He's been growing rapidly in sanctification, and he has been unabashed about faithfully speaking out to the lost. His entire persona has changed and he is now a totally different person with a totally different focus and direction in life.<sup>71</sup>

Through the Lord's great providence, Ricky has been blessed with a great faith and a progressing number of solid Biblical teachings and materials from elder brothers and sisters in Christ.

The most fundamental lesson Ricky has learned thus far has been about the function of God's Law—the 10 Commandments—in its role to show what sin is<sup>72</sup> and to humble the proud people who think they are good enough to go to heaven, by showing the reality of God's high standard, which their consciences attest to.<sup>73</sup> This “**perfect Law of Liberty**,”<sup>74</sup> is meant to leave us

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71 – 2 Corinthians 5:17

72 – Romans 7:7

73 – Romans 2:15

74 – James 1:25



helpless in the face of our sins, leaving us nowhere to go except to the feet of Christ on the Cross for His completely merciful forgiveness.<sup>75</sup>

In all his study about the 10 Commandments, and its use by most Biblical Christians he has followed with the Holy Spirit, Ricky has greatly wondered why one of the Commandments is supposed to have been altered and, somehow, fulfilled by Christ, when all the rest remain undisputed sins. He heard the references to Christ being the Lord of the Sabbath<sup>76</sup> (which, of course, He is), and that **the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath**<sup>77</sup> (which, is true); but, to Ricky, it only seems obvious that Christ is the Lord of the Sabbath—He is the Lord of all<sup>78</sup>—and that **the Sabbath was made for man** because it helps man stay in God’s narrow path, setting him apart from the world and serving as a shadow of things to come,<sup>79</sup> while simultaneously recharging him both spiritually and physically.<sup>80</sup> Whereas, the (condemned) idea of man being for the Sabbath, refers to a legalistic mentality that seeks to serve the ordinances of God only as a necessary requirement of God,<sup>81</sup> instead of in rightful understanding of its intended purpose that is to benefit man and His relationship with God, which benefits God’s purposes.

So Ricky has decided to stay on the safe side by remembering the Sabbath and keeping it holy and for rest like the Commandment commands, and he can see no reason why it would have changed from *the* seventh day that God,

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75 – Matthew 5:17

76 – Matthew 12:8

77 – Mark 2:27

78 – Acts 10:36

79 – Colossians 2:16-17

80 – Hebrews 4:10-11 80

81 – Matthew 23:27

Himself, hallowed at the Creation of the world,<sup>82</sup> to what is now generally thought of as a Sunday, sort of, quasi “Christian Sabbath,” that somehow only accounts for part of the day.

Ricky regularly studies the issue and assesses all of the arguments about Jesus being our rest in place of the Sabbath;<sup>83</sup> and, even though true daily and eternal rest is found in Jesus, it seems to Ricky that our rest in Christ doesn’t necessarily abolish the weekly function of the Forth Commandment; for Jesus Himself said, “**I did not come to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it;**”<sup>84</sup> this being the final step (after the condemnation of the Law) for Salvation, that is: the grace that is given to a humble heart.<sup>85</sup> While the Law still serves its function: to show us what sin is. It’s still a sin to lie,<sup>86</sup> it’s still a sin to steal,<sup>87</sup> and so on, and so why wouldn’t it still be a sin to not remember the Sabbath?<sup>88</sup>

It didn’t make sense: God Himself took a rest from His work, when all things were perfect. Nor did it make sense that we still wouldn’t benefit from an actual day of rest amongst a life of toil for livelihood physically in a fallen world; as well as a rest from spending ourselves fighting against *the world* for the Lord spiritually.<sup>89</sup> Plus, Ricky saw so many people who seemed to get utterly consumed with their work and personal interests, that they could hardly make it a whole day without dwelling on these things.<sup>90</sup> And, if he

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82 – Genesis 2:2-3

83 – Colossians 2:13-17, Matthew 11:28-30, Hebrews 4:9-10

84 – Matthew 5:17

85 – James 4:6, Proverbs 3:34 & 29:23, Matthew 23:12

86 – Exodus 20:16

87 – Exodus 20:15

88 – Exodus 20:8-11

89 – Ephesians 6:12

90 – Isaiah 58:13-14

was right, then the Devil has been very successful at dismantling the Forth Commandment into a day of personal party time, for Saturday has become everyone's favorite day to spend on themselves.

Ricky sees no reason not to take Saturday as *the* holy day it was intended to be, to dedicate to the Lord, and to be on the safe side of his concerns that it may still be sin not to regard one of the Great Commandments of the Lord. He found great potential in that men may have given up a Commandment of the Lord for their tradition<sup>91</sup> (as the Bible mentions), probably by the ongoing diligent deceit of the Devil working hand in hand with his greatest ally: the flesh.

Of all the times where Jesus told His followers that if they loved Him, they should keep His Commandments,<sup>92</sup> Ricky hasn't found sufficient Scripture to convince him that what Jesus meant was to keep all of the Commandments but one; or, to transform the Forth into an assembling of the saints for an hour on Sundays. And, as he furthered his study on the subject, he became increasingly suspicious of the hypocrisy of all the Christians who refer to the "Ten Commandments," when, really, they should be saying, "The Nine Commandments and/or, maybe, kind of, part of the Forth." Then, when Ricky found scriptural references to Sabbaths in the end-times,<sup>93</sup> and on the new earth,<sup>94</sup> he found more than enough justification to remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy and for rest. Besides, this Commandment is not burdensome.<sup>95</sup>

So, even though Ricky is very aware that he is a new Christian, and that no other Christians (other than some cultish factions that he does not agree with otherwise) seem to agree with his conclusion—in fact, they condemn

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91 – Mark 7:8

92 – John 14:15 & 21, 15:10, Matthew 19:17, 1 Corinthians 7:19, 1 John 2:3 & 4, 3:22 & 24, 5:2 & 3, Revelation 12:17, Revelation 14:12

93 – Matthew 24:20

94 – Isaiah 66:22-23

95 – 1 John 5:3

him for it, often with attitudes very out of the spirit (which never helps a Christian's argument)—he has to go with his own conscience and reasoning; and, though he ultimately figures all the great evangelical elders and everyone else is probably, ultimately, right, (for how could he be the only one to be right about this?), he has decided to follow his understanding, conscience, and conclusion through until the Lord sees fit to illuminate his understanding with the revelation everyone else seems to have. Besides, he knows that with the pure intentions of his heart, taking the entire Saturday for the Lord will only be a blessing for him and for the Lord.<sup>96</sup>

He often prays about it,<sup>97</sup> for he doesn't want to disobey God in any way; plus, it makes him feel dangerously close to the false religious cults who do advocate the Sabbath. But, he found, those cults who promoted keeping the Sabbath, usually have some strings attached that are obviously in error (like: you go to Hell if you don't keep the Sabbath, or that you will receive the mark of the beast in the Great Tribulation, etc.). Ricky is very cautious about theology that has gone off the rails of orthodoxy.

Subsequently, Ricky has resolved himself to remember the Sabbath and to keep it holy and for rest. To him, keeping it holy means sacrificing his selfish desires and excluding any secular work, or secular interests, and committing to focusing on things above: the things of God, which are holy.<sup>98</sup>

Ricky finds the time to be a great shadow of things to come (the day when all things will be holy and totally free from sin), and an encouragement to keep a Heavenly perspective, which makes the wicked things of the world stick out all the more the other six days of the week. Keeping the Sabbath holy has made Ricky much more aware of sin and the world's distractions

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96 – Hebrews 11:6, Luke 14:33, Matthew 7:13-14, Luke 9:23

97 – Philippians 4:6

98 – Colossians 3:2

(and even just distracting noise in general),<sup>99</sup> and he finds the benefits of remembering the Sabbath growing exponentially, which gives him encouragement that he is in the Lord's will.<sup>100</sup>

Ricky still struggles with controlling his thoughts that tend to drift back to his normal focus of work, secular study, and pursuit of self-interest; but he is learning to control that, and he strives to master his own mind and **take every thought captive**<sup>101</sup>—as God's Word suggests.

Ricky has also begun to make physical sacrifices on the Sabbath to instill self-control over the flesh, and to keep the day holy by eating healthy. He excludes much of what he normally likes to eat that is generally unhealthy. He made a list of things like sugar, chocolate, butter, mayonnaise, and other generally unhealthy ingredients that he consumes regularly the rest of the week.

Ricky knows this is not necessarily a requirement, and that he is not being a legalist; but, he feels that it coincides with keeping the day holy and sacrificing the self, and he is finding it's becoming very beneficial for him and the spiritual purposes of God, as well. Both physically and spiritually, Ricky notices that he is becoming more self-controlled and focused on what is good, as well as opposing what is not.

This regular once a week practice has already begun to overflow with fruit into the rest of the week. He is increasingly cutting back his unhealthy eating habits, thus, gaining more self-control over his body, as well as increasing energy.

Also, Ricky's embracing of quiet time on the Sabbath has helped him to have more patience and a peaceful countenance, which causes him to restrict unnecessary noises throughout the rest of the week—like excessive

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99 – Galatians 5:17

100 – 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

101 – 2 Corinthians 10:5

secular radio or music. And when he feels like listening to something, he plays faithful materials like audio Bibles or other faithful “drive-by” studies to fill the time.

It didn’t take long before he realizes that even if he were to become convinced that the Forth Commandment was no longer necessary (or that it was altered), he would continue the practice without hesitation; for, in keeping the Sabbath holy, it really makes the selfish reality of the rest of the world’s Saturday stand out. This made Ricky wonder, that if he were, possibly, right about the Sabbath issue, then that would mean that the Devil has basically succeeded in subduing an entire Commandment—one that’s made to help man fight against him. (This thought made him think about how the Devil has managed to abolish the Second Commandment completely for the Catholics.)



On this particular Sabbath, it’s after a Thursday/Friday-four-day-weekend, which gave Ricky time for a three-day fast with a day to recover on his healthy regiment.

He has done several single-day fasts, which he found hard enough; but, he kept seeing the prevalence of fasting in Scripture. He noticed that Paul fasted regularly and that fasting used to be a big part of Israelite life. Jesus even said that certain demon spirits are only overcome by fasting and prayer.<sup>102</sup> This indicates that somehow fasting gives the child of God more power to overcome the devil and his minions.

So in the final afternoon of Ricky’s three-day fast, he found that it was surprisingly filled with grace from the Lord. The foreign feeling of not consuming

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102 – Matthew 17:21

anything but water for days, had become, somehow, acceptable; and, he was amazed to even find a good enough mental focus to read, study, and learn. Though there had been times of ups and downs, and a fair amount of naps, Ricky was encouraged to realize more of the power of God's grace.

Another thing Ricky noticed during his time fasting was that whenever a thought to pray about something would arise, he quickly, without hesitation, dropped into prayer. Approaching the Father was almost immediate, like praying without ceasing;<sup>103</sup> for it has been said, that fasting to the Lord is like prayer in itself.

The Bible calls it "**afflicting yourself**,"<sup>104</sup> and it is an extreme denying of the flesh and personal sacrifice for the purposes of God. As *the world* goes on worshipping their stomachs<sup>105</sup> and filling them like a consuming void that can never be satisfied,<sup>106</sup> God highly appreciates this particular sacrifice, and He honors it as the dedication of worship and self-denial that it is.

Ricky's fasting prayers are always filled with thanksgiving and are significantly more focused; and, as fasting also makes him more patient, his prayers regularly go deeper than he would go normally. This alone is worth it, he feels; and it makes him feel lame in his usual prayers, which makes him want to fast more—this is the positive snowball effect!

Of course, every once in a while, thoughts of food infiltrate Ricky's mind; and, often he finds himself thinking deeply about the delicious foods he loves. Regularly it crosses Ricky's mind that all he has to do is go into the kitchen

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103 – 1 Thessalonians 5:17

104 – Ezra 8:21 KJV

105 – Philippians 3:19

106 – Proverbs 27:20

and grab something scrumptious to eat. In one such moment, we translate into Ricky's subconscious, where he and his flesh are, once again, at odds.<sup>107</sup>

~ 1500 feet off the ground, Ricky is slowly and steadily walking a tightrope between two great mountains. There are three smaller mountains far below, and the wind is blowing steadily as he tightly grips a 15ft long balancing pole. Though Ricky is focused on getting to the other side, his flesh is hanging from a rope that's attached to a harness around his waist.

His flesh just hangs on and slowly spins back and forth in the wind, while his weight pulls heavily on Ricky, forcing him to focus intently and watch each step. Ricky's flesh moans and closes his eyes so he doesn't have to look down. And only every once and a while does he make a suggestion, "Ricky, buddy, why don't we just call it good? We've done more than we've ever done before; let's grab some good healthy food and regain our comfort. This is killin' me, man!"

Ricky just continues to ignore his flesh, which proves effective.<sup>108</sup> ~

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This tightrope walk is an extreme example of the narrow path that Christians must follow. The narrow path isn't always just a single wide pebbly path through a forest of potential problems. Sometimes it can be so narrow that you barely fit: not unlike a camel through the eye of a needle,¹⁰⁹ when only the power of God's hand can push you through.

Sometimes the narrow path is a fine line of slippery rocks beneath the surface of a river and its powerful current, where the heavy flow of thick

107 – Matthew 26:41

108 – Romans 13:14

109 – Mark 10:25

water and pressure from *the world* instinctively strives to force you off of your feet. This is where constant, aggressive pressure against the flow is necessary to compensate in order to not be swept off of the path and potentially over a waterfall.

Sometimes the narrow path is nothing but old footsteps made in deep snow that have frozen enough to last through a rainstorm that melted the surrounding soft powder, which then created foot sized pillars of ice that have been again blown over with new deep dry snow hiding the path's very existence from your sight. Where one blind step in that heavy snow storm must be placed slowly and deliberately, using senses beyond the eyes, in order to keep from sinking into the impassibly deep abyss surrounding the narrow path.

But, being on the path is the biggest key to keeping the path.

Chapter 13

The Thrill of Deceit



During the passing months Jack and Betty decided to get married. Although they had always professed marriage as an unnecessary formality, it just felt like the next step for them, since they had been together for over three years. There were financial benefits in their general drift toward increasing responsibility and Betty seemed to start liking the idea of marriage more for some reason somewhere along the way.

So Betty had, for months, been unleashed in planning and preparing what had somehow become their dream wedding. Her parents would come down from Maine and play their part, as well as Jack's from Florida. The location, decorations, catering, and color coordination had to be perfect for this once-in-a-lifetime event. There was so much more to a wedding than they both had realized; and after months of studying *Wedding Magazine*, and fulfilling their desire to make it as grand as they possibly could, they ended up tripling their budget.

Something about it all seemed romantic—more so to Betty of course—and so it fueled a passion that hadn't really been met elsewhere. All the

flowers, the setting, the catering, so many friends and family, the especially stylish tux's for the groomsmen and the designer dresses for the bridesmaids. It was going to be *the* day and night to remember: that ultimate dream date that blows all other dates out of the water. It is their public showing of love and dedication and style to go down in the record books for everyone, *forever*.



On the Friday before the Sunday wedding, Jack and his cronies are driving back from the gym in the afternoon. Jack hasn't seen the other woman at the gym for a while, but he had met her several times to work out, and even met her for coffee once to keep the door open. Then, ultimately, his conscience knew how much was at stake, and so he would call from a comfortable place and give some excuses as to why he couldn't meet her or work out together more. It didn't take long before she realized what was up and moved on to find herself someone else to fill the void.

"So this is it buddy! You're really going to go through with it aren't you?" Jack's unmarried, but involved, best friend questions.

In the split second between a quick reply, Jack's inner struggle flares up again. ~ In Jack's subconscious, he sits in his recliner with his flesh pacing around him. His flesh is definitely bigger and more intimidating, but Jack is very comfortable with him. Jack is trying to be cool, but he is definitely unsure of his situation, while his flesh is very sure—sure that there is rapidly becoming no way out. ~

"Yeah, of course, we've been together for over three years now, I don't see that changing." Jack replies.

“Yeah but that’s the longest relationship you’ve ever had by about two years.” Jack’s plain speaking pal states.

Though the wedding had been agreed upon and planned for almost five months now, it hadn’t seemed nearly so real as it does on the verge of the actual wedding weekend.

Inside the car there is a momentary silence as neither Jack, nor his closest friends, seem to know quite how to put their thoughts into words.

~ In Jack’s mind, his flesh knows how: “I tried to tell you about this back when all this silliness started. You’re thirty-two years old, man, are you really throwing in the towel forever for Betty? You know you want more. I mean, I know there’s always divorce, which is no big deal, but it’s such an ugly thing to have to go through and have on your record.” He paced frantically back and forth, as if trying to find the answer like a needle in an undeniable haystack of an immediate inevitability. The plans are rock solid, their parents are already in town and everything has been paid for. “There’s no way out.” Jack’s flesh thinks out loud between biting his nails.

Jack just sits there in his recliner (just as he is in his car) trying to look calm, cool, and collected. He is committed, and as with all other things in his life that he’s committed himself to, he is going to have to ride it out—come what may. ~

As Jack drops off his last friend before heading home, his pal says, “Alright buddy, we’ll see you at nine.”

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When nine o’clock strikes, Jack is in the elevator ascending up to his most swanky bachelor friend’s penthouse uptown. Bentley is, in a way, Jack’s most revered friend: that friend who is the coolest, richest, most in control of his

world guy, who always seems to have everything he wants right at his fingertips. Jack holds Bentley close, as if he were a vital pillar holding up his ideal self-image. Bentley is the one friend that Jack often tries to impress in whatever way he can. Time spent at Bentley's penthouse is always a good time.

Cheers erupt from the twenty or so guys in Bentley's penthouse as Jack comes through the door. It is another good reason to party in an unending line of celebrations; and, even though marriage doesn't really fit in with their usual party theme, its severity offers an equally severe opportunity to party.

Someone immediately pours Jack a beer into a chilled glass from one of Bentley's multiple taps behind his private bar. Bentley's place is as immaculate as ever, it seems that he is constantly remodeling or adding new artwork to his repertoire. A smile alights on Jack's face and he feels right at home; in fact, he wishes it were his home.

All the standard interactions and usual conversations go on (redesigned with the latest trends in terminology and newest jokes) in a heightened spirit as everyone grows more and more uninhibited for the exciting Friday night on top of the city. Bentley eventually breaks into some special bottles of alcohol, and as always, it is a thrill that everyone takes in glamorous stride.

By 11:30 p.m., everyone is feeling primed. Jack is the star of the show, of course, and he loves it, especially when Bentley draws near to him to give him special attention on his last real night out as a "free" man.

Then, an hour or so later, as they are all partying in the game room, Jack notices Bentley slip into the other room for some time. Then when he returns, he announces to everyone, "The moment you've all been waiting for has arrived. Let us migrate into the living room."

The floor to ceiling windows on the outside wall of the penthouse give the entire place such a rich and prestigious feel with a view out high over

the entire city—as if it were under their feet. As they round the inside corner wall to the living room, the men have their arms around Jack giving him all of their increasingly sloppy attention.

Jack is enthralled by his many great friends constantly giving him their focus, and when they sit him down on the couch, they stand over him for a brief moment in silence. Then, as if on cue, the wall of men separate to reveal one lone woman sitting at the bar all dressed up in perfect elegance.

The woman grabs her champagne and turns toward Jack. She looks at him intently, takes a sip, and then stands up and walks over to him.

In Jack's head, his flesh is already bright-eyed and bushy-tailed (of course, the bright eyes are a bit blurred). As Bentley puts on some music he deems appropriate, Jack takes one big drink of his hard alcohol, finishing the glass. By the time he puts it down, someone hands him another glass filled to the brim with the smoothly alluring gold liquid shining in the penthouse lights.

~ In Jack's subconscious, he is in his recliner once again trying to act calm, cool, and collected. But as things progress in stereotypical bachelor party fashion, he becomes more and more uneasy. All the while his flesh is dancing around, hooting and hollering encouragements at him, building him up in front of all his friends. ~

At a certain point, Jack's friends step out of the room and he realizes he may have to use some self-control in order to not to let it go too far. He knows his friends think nothing of going all the way on your bachelor party, but his conscience is on a slightly different level than theirs. When this thought makes it through all of the surrounding hype, he, once again, meets his flesh in the mental arena of conflict.

~ Jack and his flesh are on the roof of the massive skyscraper above Bentley's penthouse, which is one of the highest buildings in the city's center.

The Friday night energy electrifies the air. The noises of the city so far below are constantly reaching up and creeping over the ledge, as a slight breeze kicks up and dies back down. The air is refreshing and just being up so high above the city is exhilarating. The multicolored lights are blinking in all directions, even moving above in the night sky. It's always amazing to realize how busy the atmosphere is high above the busy streets when one takes the time to look up.

*Smack!* Jack's flesh slaps Jack hard in the back, grabbing and pushing him a few steps toward the edge of the roof, leaning him over to look down the great distance to the ground. "This is it Jack, your last big leap."

After a moment of looking down the edge of the building to the streets below, he glances at himself and realizes he has on a jumpsuit with something strapped to his back. Then, looking at his flesh, he sees that he too has a jumpsuit and a BASE-jump parachute tight on his shoulders.

"It's now or never my friend; it's time for Jack Kemplar to go out with a bang!" His flesh says, tugging on the shoulder straps to make sure they're tight.

Jack, realizing the serious nature of the issue, tries to hold down the other side. "Wait, it's illegal to BASE-jump without a permit. It's against the law to do this."

"What are you talking about, it's Friday night, the cops have more important things to do; plus, no one will even see, no one ever looks up at night in the city." His flesh retains.

Taking a step back from the ledge, Jack says, "Even if I make it out alive, this could seriously come back to haunt me if anyone finds out."

"Man, no one's going to find out. The scene is air tight, the only ones who know you are here are your best friends and they're into it man!" His flesh pressures.

“No way, I can’t do it; I’ll regret it for the rest of my life.” Jack tries to take a stand.

“Don’t be ridiculous. You’ll only regret it for the rest of your life if you *don’t* do it. What’s the big deal man, you’ve made jumps like this many times before, and people are out there doing it all the time. This is just a part of life—if you’re really living it. Everyone knows this is what happens sometimes. Come on, let’s go!” Jack’s flesh backs up to where they can make the run to jump clear of the building.

Jack walks toward his flesh with his head down, unsure, but also lured in and definitely willing—like a kid who knows he wants to break the rules but isn’t sure if he’ll get caught and if it would be worth it if he did. After reaching his flesh, he looks back at the ledge and begins to think about the process of gaining momentum, making the steps to get safely clear of the edge and thus the building. Then, mentally following through with the visualization of all the rest of the steps: he thinks about how thrilling it would be to free-fall for several seconds, and then how he would put his left hand to his head to counter-balance his right hand reaching behind to deploy the lead-chute by throwing the monkey’s-fist (line tied into a knot like a ball—in this case a two-inch ball just right for grabbing with one hand when your life is on the line) from behind his waist straight out to the right. Then he entertains the thought of how fun it would be gliding down between all of the exciting action of the city, finding a street or sidewalk that he could pull a landing on, and quickly make a get away. That would definitely be something he would remember for the rest of his life.

After contemplating and visualizing the exciting event before him, he is closer to wanting it for himself. His flesh puts his hand around his shoulder and says, “Are you ready brother?”



Jack feels the moment, and his senses are enhanced with focus. Time seems to slow down for a moment as he instinctively drops his eyebrows down over his intensely focused eyes as he peers forward beyond the edge like a hawk ready to take flight, “Let’s do it!”

“YYYYEEEEAAAHHHHH!!!” Jack’s flesh yells like the king of the jungle over a fresh kill.<sup>110</sup>

Then, they crouch down almost into a runner’s starting position. “Let’s do this! You’re the man, Jack!” His flesh encourages. “On three: . . . 1 . . . 2 . . . 3!”

They simultaneously drop hands and lead off of their front foot, accelerating toward the ledge. Then, in a split-second, at the maximum speed of their short sprint, they step up with one foot on a hard vent cover, and then step up with the other foot on the low ledge wall that surrounds the roof, launching headlong into the night.

They begin to drop, falling flat with their arms and legs out like flying squirrels, pulling away from the building and falling more and more vertically in the gap between the other buildings on the other side of the street.

With their speed rapidly increasing, the rows of floors in the high-rises begin to pass like dashed lines on a freeway. The streets below close faster and faster, until it’s time to pull the chute. The four seconds of free-fall stretches in time, yet passes in the flash of an instant.

*Snap . . . snap!* Both chutes open, and Jack and his flesh quickly reach up for the toggles, pulling them down free from the Velcro in order to gain steering control. Immediately they both yank down on one side to turn before colliding with the building on the other side of the street.

Dropping a quick oval 360-degrees while making a split-second choice for the best landing direction, they both find the same side street that’s not

as hectic as the main drag; and, even though it's fairly busy too, they know they can come in and basically land on anything as long as it's generally flat and there are no poles or wires to catch, or moving objects.

The slow traffic below affords them a bit of comfort as they can know that they shouldn't land and be immediately run over.

Coming in, Jack is just ahead and left of his flesh, and their approach is clear of any catches. With plenty of horizontal room ahead of them before the next intersection lights, they come in hot and fast, swooping down almost vertically and planing out right above the traffic. The high velocity gives them more power in their chutes to afford maximum options for landing; but, the usual ground-effect bubble is a bit broken up by the movement of the air from the traffic.

Flying horizontally just feet above the cars now, Jack and his flesh skim along with their feet up, waiting to flare out at the last possible point, utilizing every bit of their speed in order to stall themselves out just above their ideal stop spots.

Jack manages to catch a gap in one of the oncoming traffic lanes and lands with a quick roll angled toward the sidewalk. He bounces to his feet and immediately begins to recoil his chute from off the street.

Jack's flesh is on the right side hovering along with the flow of traffic; and, when the traffic just under his feet sees Jack drop out of nowhere, they all begin to brake and slow down—some honk their horns.

Jack's flesh is perfectly timed as he pulls down hard on the air-brakes. Holding the stall until the very last minute, he stomps down right on the roof of a Yellow Cab with one foot, then steps ahead as the cabbie begins to break, not yet realizing what is happening. And then, as the cabbie hits the brakes to stop completely, Jack's flesh steps down the windshield, makes a

quick step on the hood, and then, with one last big step as the car stops out from under him, he steps down on the ground, stopping flawlessly just in front of the yellow car. He landed with a perfect moving transition in a world of moving hard angles!

“YEEEEAAAHHHHH!!!” Jack’s flesh juts both hands straight up over his head in glorious victory, toggles still clenched in his fists, as his chute gently collapses over the Yellow Cab’s windshield, blocking out the gaping mouth and wide-eyed face of the utterly shocked driver. Jack’s flesh turns around to look back at the stopped traffic and laughs out loud with the hardest laugh Jack has ever heard.

Immediately, Jack begins feeling paranoid and starts looking out for cops. He then fully gathers up his chute in order to make a quick getaway.

Jack’s flesh pulls his chute down off the cab windshield by the strings, and points to the cabbie with a huge smile on his face. The cabbie nods completely dumbfounded, still in shock. Jack and his flesh quickly jump in, and are off with their big secret in tow. ~

## Chapter 14

### Fraught With Danger



**N**orm was assigned an unclean spirit when the forces of darkness realized he was being so fervently prayed for. The demon power did not indwell Norm, but traveled with him wherever he went. So, when Norm rejected the evil minister’s advice not to meet Edna at the park for coffee, he called for back up and was provided three other spirits for the occasion.



The park is fairly quiet—as it is just before dusk—and Norm and Edna see each other from afar off, long before they reach one another at their slow paces.

“Hi Norm. Thank you for meeting me.” Edna greets.

“Hello Edna, it’s my pleasure.” Norm cordially replies.

“Shall we get some coffee and then find a place to sit down in the park?”

Edna asks her casual acquaintance.

“Sure.” Norm replies, not exactly sure why he would go out of his way to meet Edna, though she seemed to be wise and understanding.

In the physical world, there is nothing out of the ordinary as the two casual acquaintances head for the coffee house; however, in the spiritual world, things are considerably different.

~ Norm's four accompanying demon spirits stalk and hover around Norm on the opposite side as Edna and her four angels. The angels and demons rarely take their eyes off of each other, and the wicked spirits constantly spit, grumble, and blaspheme. Encounters like this—in such close proximity with the angels of Heaven—always make the demons extremely nervous and agitated. All of the spirits are mindful of one another's swords, and it tests the faithful servants' self-control whenever the filthy ones blaspheme.

Norm's spiritual-orb, which hangs faithfully above his head, is now a light gray; and his new and unknown companion has noticed its lightening over the past months. This makes him all the more nervous; for, in their world, failure usually results in punishment.

Edna's blood-red orb is so disgustingly repulsive to them that they will not even look at it. Even the light emanating from her is a major irritant that keeps them at bay.

People have their alternate appearances, and the third-party life-forms of light and darkness are often on the move travelling vertically in and out, as well as horizontally among the land dwellers. Certain areas are enshrouded with an unusual heavy but transparent darkness, while others are more clearly lit for some reason. Sometimes there is little to no supernatural movement, sometimes there is much.

After an uneventful stop for coffee, Edna and Norm return to the park all warmed up with light conversation about random pleasantries. The demon spirits are growing more and more restless with the angels in such close

proximity; while the angels remain straight-faced, focused, and all about business—although it is much more than “business.”

The elderly Caucasian lady and the quiet African-American man—who is about the age of her eldest son—meander over to a park bench to have a seat. They both sip their preferred coffee drinks, now beginning to open up with the help of the caffeine.

The angels spread out and position themselves strategically on the four corners of the two, only about ten feet away in each direction. This really bothers the demons (which is part of the intent), for now they are surrounded and have no comfortable side. ~

Finally, Norm comes out with his most prominent question, “So, Edna, why exactly did you ask me here today?”

Edna straightens up, preparing for action through words. All the spirits are listening intently, and the spiritual air begins to get tense.

“Well, Norm, I have something I want to tell you, something I want to give you; and, it would mean the world to me if you would just listen.” Edna begins.

Norm nods in agreement—listening intently—as he lives a pretty private life and doesn’t have many friends he talks to much. Most of his socializing is during work on the bus, which means it is always a very shallow, single-serving type interaction.

“I’ve always enjoyed your company on the bus, Norm, and I think you are quite a nice man. Many years ago, something happened in my life that has opened my eyes to a deeper consideration for others; and, I’ve become considerate of your well being through our frequent interactions. I can look into your eyes and see a sincere respect and concern for your fellow man. Well, I too have been granted a deep concern for my fellow man, and that is why I

am here. I am concerned for you Norm, and I often worry about what might happen to you out on the dangerous roads of the city.” Edna says.

Norm is refreshed by the old woman’s earnest heart, but he is also jolted, in his mind, back to the incident where he realized he could have died if he hadn’t had the aptly timed stop. This memory intensifies his attention to what Edna has to say.

~ The demons are becoming increasingly nervous. They know what is happening, and the longer Norm speaks with the bright shining woman with the pure-white hair and the dreaded blood-red balloon, the more they know they are in trouble.

Suddenly, one of the demons leaps out from within the square of angels, who all immediately crouch down grabbing their sword handles, priming for action. The unclean spirit flies just up and over the angels, landing back down on the ground a ways off in the grass near a couple throwing a Frisbee. Now this makes the angels nervous.

The angels carefully watch his every move, as well as keep an eye on Norm, Edna, and the others.

The remaining demons crouch in close to Norm, as if to cower—or to make themselves look small.

Their close proximity to Edna causes two of the closest angels to step in closer—within a sword’s reach. ~

Edna continues, “This life is fraught with danger and the streets are one of the most dangerous places to be. You know this.”

Norm nodded and said, “Yes, ma’am.”

~ At this point, one of the demons slips his hand up and touches Norm without the angels seeing. Norm sucks some coffee down the wrong pipe and begins to go into a coughing fit.

For a moment, the coughing fit brakes up the mood and intimacy of the conversation; but, Edna uses it for good.

Patting him on the back as he settles down, Edna says, “There, there. You see, even sitting on a park bench can result in something traumatic. Now, I know you’re not as old as I am, but you’ve lived a decently long life. And I don’t know what the increasing odds are on meeting death with every day, but I’ve seen all ages go. I don’t take this lightly, and I have spent much time preparing for the inevitable; and, I have thought a lot about what happens after we die. Have you Norm?”

Norm is genuinely touched by someone he only knows casually from the bus caring about his life to such a degree. The cold city has hardened his heart to a certain extent, but his defenses are down with this tender old woman who wants to give him some loving-kindness. He replies, “Well, I *have* been doing some thinking about it a certain bit this past year or so, and I admit it is concerning to me.”

“That’s good Norm, it should concern all of us. Why do we go through life ignoring the inevitable: the most serious thing that will happen to us all?” Edna relays. “It’s like we put on blinders to the truth.”

Just then a voice shouts, “Whooaa, look out!” And before they can turn to look, a Frisbee grazes by Norm’s ear. “Oohh, sorry about that; I lost control of my throw.” A man says as he comes running by to retrieve it.

~ The angels had all seen what happened, and they had Edna protected from even the flying plastic disk. The angel closest to the demon by the Frisbee players pulls out his sword and points it at the menacing demon who’s obviously playing the distraction card. The demon mocks him and spits on the ground between them.

It was a cheap trick, and the demons are obviously beginning to take action.



During the scuttle, another demon puts his hand on Norm from behind the bench. ~

Norm, already a bit out of his comfort zone, actually stands up after the disruption and suggests that maybe they should walk and talk. This isn't ideal for Edna, but she sees no reason why she can't continue with her message on the move. She quickly brings the conversation back to attention, for this isn't the first time she's noticed people's attention spans shortening at the thought of real, serious, spiritual issues.

"Norm, what do you think happens after someone dies?" She asks.

"Well, I'm not sure exactly? It's hard tellin' not knowin'." Norm replies, as they walk down a path that leads through a part of the park that has more trees.

"Do you believe there's a Heaven?" Edna asks.

"I hope so." Norm answers shortly.

~ The demons are now beginning to feel desperate, and the angels are on high alert.

Two of the demons jump up and fly up over the trees out of sight, while the other two walk as close to Norm as they can. Hunched over, like little demonic hunchbacks of Notre Dame, the demons are still a bit bigger than Norm, and their uneven legs make them waddle like a stereotypical hunchback also. Their wings behind them are constantly moving in place, obviously uneasy about the potential fight or flight scenario that could happen at any time.

The angels, beautiful and strong, walk smoothly along on all four corners again; now with an especially high defensive alert, with the two demons out of sight. ~

"Do you believe in God?" Edna asks.

~ The very question makes the demons shutter and they both put their hands on Norm's shoulders. ~

"Well, I kind of do, but not really the God of the religions I've always heard about." Norm replies.

It is still dusk, but the impending darkness has a weight to it that Edna can feel. Like an uneasiness that suggests to her seasoned senses that perhaps something isn't liking what she is doing—and she isn't that surprised by the thought.

"Well, Norm, the God of the Bible isn't the same as the God of most of the religions you hear about out there. Not even some of the ones who claim to believe the Bible."<sup>111</sup> Edna explains.

Just then, a bush rustles along the side of their path, and a squirrel comes rushing out chirping, right at Edna.

~ The nearest angel quickly draws his sword and slams it down in between Edna and the squirrel ~ and in a flash, the squirrel is deflected in what looks like a simple sudden change of direction after seeing Norm and Edna. It runs, as quickly as it came, back into the bushes on the other side.

Edna's heart is racing from the startle, and Norm is amazed at the drama of this little adventure in the park. Norm starts to talk about these distractions, but Edna re-focuses the discussion.

"Norm, this is what I want to tell you. I've been a faithful follower of the God of the Bible and He's never let me down. I've been transformed by His Living Words, and I know that He *is*, and that what He has told us in the Bible is true. And, in the Bible, He has given us his perfect standard of righteousness, and it is what we will be Judged by on the Day of Judgment." Edna continues.

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111 – Mark 13:6

Then, as out of nowhere, a man wearing dark clothes appears on the path ahead of them, walking their way. Edna wants to continue, but decides to wait for the man to pass.

~ Just as the man begins to pass, the two remaining demon spirits shoot out to the sides, between the angels, with their swords out trying to catch them off guard. “AAEEYYYYYAAHHHH!!!” They both scream, swinging for a death blow.

The angels duck and deflect their swords as the demons fly between them. Two of the angels take after the demons up into the darkening sky.

One, trying to cut the fleeing demon off, hyper boosts himself into the trajectory of its path; but, the demon makes a quick about face and flies as fast as he can back toward the two in the woods. ~

Down on ground level, the man in black makes a quick turn and strikes Norm on the head with the butt of a pistol and says, “Don’t move, give me all your money!”

Edna is frozen stunned, and Norm is barely moving on the ground.

~ Just as the angels step in to position themselves between the man and Edna, the renegade demon flying at top speed zooms through the two of them striking one with his sword on his arm. The third angel on his tail, flies in and immediately stops at his wounded friend, letting the demon go. ~

“GIVE ME YOUR MONEY NOW!!!” The mugger shouts, knowing he doesn’t have much time.

~ The two uninjured angels there immediately recognize the reality of the situation and lunge with their swords out, slashing upward in unison from both directions through the center of the mugger. Their swords catch the two missing demons directly in the heart of the man, and they are both vanquished into thin air immediately. ~

The stranger then looks at Edna and suddenly great fear comes into his mind. He makes one quick look around and runs back the way he came, disappearing into the trees.

~ Edna and the remaining angels immediately drop down to Norm, and their collective concern and energy all work together in bringing him back to proper consciousness.

At this point, the fourth angel returns. The wounded one asks if he got the demon, and he nods in the affirmative. ~

“Let me help you up.” Edna coaxes Norm as he struggles to his feet. “Are you alright?”

“Yeah, I think so?” Norm replies, still dazed.

“Let’s go over to that bench and have a seat.” Edna suggests.

Norm silently agrees and they slowly walk ahead and sit down.

The feeling of danger Edna had sensed is passed, as she prays in her heart for Norm’s recovery from the blow.

Edna looks at his head and there is no blood or obvious open wound, so they figure he will probably just get a headache. A bump is definitely beginning to grow, but it is nothing that he can’t deal with.

“Oh Norm, these cities are so fraught with danger in this day and age. People have lost their minds out here trying to get money and serve themselves . . . and the Devil.”<sup>112</sup> Edna has to say.

Norm sits quietly rubbing his head, and Edna takes the opportunity to get down to business.

“Norm, what I want to give you is very important; so important, in fact, that there are forces at work that don’t want me to give it to you. It’s God’s Law, Norm. It’s God’s holy standard that He will Judge our lives with. The 10

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112 – Luke 11:23, John 8:44

Commandments, you know them: you shall not lie, steal, murder, commit adultery, covet, blaspheme, or make a god in your mind different than the revealed God in Scripture.<sup>113</sup> Norm, if you've broken just one of those Laws you will be found guilty on Judgment Day."<sup>114</sup> Edna speaks sternly and clearly. "Have you broken any of those Laws Norm?"

"Yeah, most of them I'm sure."<sup>115</sup> Norm replies with reasonable clarity.

"Well so have I. The only One who has never broken one Law of God is Jesus Christ.<sup>116</sup> That's why He came: to sacrifice His life as a substitutionary atonement for our sins.<sup>117</sup> We broke God's Law and Jesus paid our fine in His life's blood. Because of what He has done, we can now go free and be granted eternal life; if we will repent of our sins and put all of our trust in Jesus and what He's done for us on the Cross."<sup>118</sup> Edna finally gets out.

~ All of the angels gathered around are ministering strength and clarity to both Edna and Norm, even the wounded angel who is healing by the minute.<sup>119</sup> ~

"Well, I've never heard it put that way before; but, it makes sense to me." Norm replies, trying to keep his focus on the issue at hand. "Thank you for caring enough to take the time to come and tell me this."

"Thank you, Norm, for agreeing to come and hear it. Even if it almost got us killed!" Edna says and laughs.

They both laugh a good, long laugh; and with that, they stand up to make their way back.

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113 – Romans 3:20

114 – 1 John 3:4

115 – Romans 7:7

116 – Galatians 3:24

117 – John 1:29

118 – John 19:30

119 – Hebrews 1:14

In the back of Norm's mind, he can't help but marvel at the seemingly random adversity that came along with Edna's spiritual purpose. He remembers what she said about forces opposing the message and he can't help but wonder if that was the reason for such crazy disruptions on a simple walk in the park. He holds on to this most unusual experience, and ponders it in his heart.

## Chapter 15

### Something Different?



“**R**icky, it’s Jordan.” One of Ricky’s new friends from church greets over the phone.

“Hey Jordan, how’s it going?” Ricky responds.

“Great, I’m so blessed! Wasn’t that an awesome sermon by Pastor Duncan today?” Jordan exuberantly inquires.

“Yeah, it was. I had a hard time keeping up with my notes.” Ricky replies.

“Yeah, he’s great. Hey, I was wondering if you wanted to come over later and help me with some extra-Biblical studies? I’m having a hard time understanding some stuff.” Jordan asks.

“Um, well, I suppose I could try to help? I usually meet with the evangelism team down at the promenade; but, if you really want my help, I suppose I could change my plans.” Ricky says in an accommodating spirit.

“Oh, well I don’t want to be a bother. I just could use some help discerning some materials and I was going to ask you to pray with me about some important issues I know about.” Jordan responds.

“Well then I would be glad to help. I’ll be over around seven, is that good for you?” Ricky asks, thinking the Spirit might be directing him to sacrifice his own plans to help someone in need.

“Yeah, that’d be great. Thanks Ricky, I’ll see you then.”

After Ricky canceled with the street witnessing team from his church, and got himself together after dinner, he headed down Straight Street to meet Jordan at his parents’ house.

Ricky hasn’t really gotten to know Jordan, but they met at church and he seems to be encouraging and, for some reason, especially drawn to Ricky. Jordan’s taking a liking to Ricky was evident by his quick openness and his regular revealing of personal information.

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“Hey Ricky, come on in.” Jordan invites. “Thanks for coming over.”

Just then, Jordan’s mother comes through from the living-room on her way to the kitchen.

“Oh, well, hello there Ricky, how are you?” She asks politely.

“I’m fine thanks, how are you?”

“We are really well, I’m about to do some baking for the church cake-walk tomorrow, are you going to come?” Jordan’s mother replies enthusiastically.

“No, I have other plans.”

“Well, I hope you find yourself drawn to all the different church activities we have, I’ve been going to this church my whole life and it’s a part of my spirit now. Maybe you would like to help us with our charity drives? Through the Lord’s providence, we regularly give to the poor in a variety of ways. It’s very fulfilling.” She finishes.

“It sounds like it. Maybe I’ll look into it?” Ricky responds.

“Well I hope you do, we need vibrant young men like yourself bringing new life to the party. I better get to baking. God bless you, we’ll see you later.” She says as she bustles off into the kitchen.

Ricky can hear what sounds like a sit-com on the TV with laughter coming from the living room around the corner. The pleasant smells of a recently finished dinner and dessert still hang in the air. The aromatic smells are just on the brink of fading into the transition of night, though it will be soon revived by more baking.

They make their way upstairs in the nice upper-middle class home and into Jordan’s bedroom. They small-talk about whatever is on their minds and Jordan proceeds to make Ricky welcome in his room by showing and addressing his customized personal space.

Ricky notices his LeBron James poster and other professional sports memorabilia. Jordan has a plethora of video games and an impressive collection of blockbuster movies. It’s a really nice room filled with a bunch of cool tech stuff that Jordan enthusiastically shows and shares with Ricky.

After a while of playing around with secular toys following Jordan’s lead, Ricky thinks for a moment and asks, “So, how long have you been a Christian?”

Jordan replies casually, “Oh, all my life. My parents have always been Christians and so I’ve been going to church since before I can remember. I was baptized when I was seven, and I’ve been following the Lord ever since.”

After a moment of speculation, Ricky continues, “Well, what were you wanting help with?”

“Oh, yeah, have you heard about the New Apostolic Reformation Movement?” Jordan asks.

“No, I haven’t.” Ricky answers.

“What about Jesus Culture? Jordan asks.

“I’ve seen some t-shirts and stuff?” Ricky replies.

“Okay, well wait ‘till you get a load of what’s going on with the new generation of Christians. It’s a huge movement that’s growing like crazy! They are Christians who are really taking the Bible seriously and living out their faith through the power of the Holy Spirit. There’s been tons of miracles being witnessed and performed in the Name of Christ all over the world. There’s a number of major churches at the forefront of a massive revival. People are truly believing the Word of God and stepping out in faith to actually live what they believe. Just like Jesus and the Apostles, modern day believers are working signs and wonders like healing the sick and casting out demons. Plus they’re finding out all sorts of new revelations from God and He’s working amazing miracles that we never thought of before!”

“I’ve got this book from a church in California and I feel led to share it with you. Maybe that’s why you’re here tonight, to find out about all of this. It’s so exciting! I’m just so bored with the older generation of Christians who only seem to read the Bible and never do anything and are docile like dinosaurs on the verge of extinction.”

Ricky looks at the book and says, “Hmm, well it sounds interesting? I’ll check it out.”

Jordan continues to encourage Ricky with websites and godtube channels to check out as well, and Ricky is amazed at how much seems to be going on in the Name of Christ that he hasn’t heard about.

Maybe it was of the Lord that I was led here tonight?

Ricky is very zealous for the Lord and he wants to know the full extent of God’s will for his life and the world.

After they talk a bit more about this movement, Jordan regresses back to discussing personal interests. After another hour or so, Ricky remembers what else he had come for.

“Didn’t you want me to pray with you about something important?” Ricky asks earnestly.

“Oh, yeah. I know someone who really needs prayer . . . actually there’s several people. Do you want to pray with me now?” Jordan asks.

“Yeah, let’s do it.” Ricky answers, bowing his head and closing his eyes.

“Dear Lord, we are here to ask Your help for our dear brothers and sisters in Christ. First, we would ask that You help Sandy in her walk with You. I know that she is often tempted by sin and that she has many vices. Please help Sandy to stop her binge drinking and her smoking. Please stop her from her wild partying and fornicating. We know she has even gone so far as to have an abortion, that not even her parents know about; and so, we pray that You will open Heaven’s blessings on her and help her get her life in better order. Let Your river of life flow down and wash over her and bring her to Your light.

“Lord, also we must pray for John Williamson and his family. He and his wife are on the verge of divorce because of his cheating last month and it is affecting their entire family, and even their friends. Help him with his temper and stop him from hitting Jo-Ann any more when they fight. We know that when they don’t come to church they are fighting again.

“Father, please also help Roger with his experimenting with drugs. Make him stop seeking evil and transform him in Your glory. Bring him to the light and purify him in Your blessed fire. Keep him from continuing his pursuit of pornography. Please get him back on track with Your will and ways. Help him to see how Your glorious power is working in the world and that You are the miracle Maker. Thank You, in Jesus’ Name we pray, Amen.” Jordan finishes.

“Amen.” Ricky says, feeling quite uncomfortable; for, though he knows of the people they prayed for, he doesn’t really know them very well personally. It seems excessive to be thrust into the sin stained personal lives of people he doesn’t know, yet he isn’t sure if that’s what the body of Christ and intercession is for?

Maybe those people really need his prayer, it certainly sounds like they do; but something doesn’t quite feel right to Ricky. He wants to help those in need, but he can’t help but wonder if this is the way to do it?

After another hour or so of secular socialization with Jordan, Ricky heads home with an unusual feeling in his soul. He doesn’t feel like he does when he finishes the public evangelism ministry that he usually is a part of on Sunday nights. He feels, ultimately, unsure about the mysterious movement he is left to ponder, as well as with the interaction and the prayers with Jordan.

Though he left fulfilling his obligation, he didn’t feel any real sense of accomplishment. There was something off there that he just couldn’t quite put his finger on.

Chapter 16

The Unholy Trinity



Since Tom’s dream ordeal, he had decided to research the subject often called spiritual warfare: the dealings of human souls on earth with the spiritual forces of wickedness in what the Bible calls “**the heavenly places.**”¹²⁰ Of course, Tom knew that any and all information on this widely propagandized subject would need to start, and end, with the Holy Scriptures.¹²¹

Just endeavoring to look into this area of the Christian faith was daunting to say the least. There were many extreme extra-Biblical claims, all over the board.¹²² And after researching the Scriptures relevant to the subject, Tom found that there was only so much to go on biblically.

He found that **we do not struggle against flesh and blood, but rather against spiritual forces, powers, and principalities;**¹²³ and, that our enemies are basically threefold: 1) the Devil:¹²⁴ which includes those other evil angels

120 – Ephesians 6:12

121 – 2 Timothy 3:16, 1 John 4:1

122 – 2 Corinthians 11:4

123 – Ephesians 6:12

124 – 1 Peter 5:8, John 8:44, 1 John 3:8

125
 serving under him. 2) *The world*:¹²⁵ which is the general spirit of darkness that the Devil has sown through his deceit and rebellion against God—this “spirit of the age” that contains every form of thought, word, and deed done outside of the Holy Spirit of God, which is wrought only through Jesus Christ, His angels, and those spiritually re-born through repenting of sin and faith in Christ. 3) *Our flesh*:¹²⁶ which is our carnal nature that seeks to selfishly satisfy ourselves apart from God. Our fleshly nature wants comfort and ease and resists the purposes of difficulty. The fleshly nature strives for instant gratification and lives for the now, rather than with an eternal perspective and an acceptance of personal sacrifice. This fleshly nature within us is constantly tempted to sin, by the Devil, his invisible minions, *the world* system at large, and its own sinful lusts.

Tom knew that Yeshua said that one of the signs that would follow after his disciples was the casting out of demons in His Name;¹²⁷ yet, most of the Christian elders he knew of, didn’t take that verse at face value and believed that Jesus really only meant that His apostles—His immediate disciples—were to bear these supernatural signs for the purpose of authenticating Jesus and His early church mission to reach the lost. Tom wasn’t convinced.

Tom found the Biblical method of casting out devils to be relatively simple. Basically, Jesus’ disciples plainly stated to the wicked spirits: **“In the Name of Jesus Christ, come out.”**¹²⁸ And yet he found that there have become all sorts of stipulations and additions to this model, which was more than a bit confusing.

125 – 2 Corinthians 4:4, Matthew 4:8-9

126 – Galatians 5:17

127 – Mark 16:17

128 – Acts 16:18, Mark 9: 38-39

Tom's first instinct is always to **measure a tree by its fruit**,¹²⁹ and to be objective in testing the spirit of a human teacher to see if it is contradictory to God's Word in any way; and, whether or not it is in the Spirit and love of God.

Tom found that a lot of the so called deliverance ministers were great showmen and took great pleasure in the supposed battles with the demonic forces and were very prideful in their triumphs. These indicators were red flags and Tom quickly dismissed them—not as being merely deceivers, but—as being deceived themselves. But he couldn't help but ask himself: *but deceived how, and by whom exactly?*

Yet, Tom found there were some who maintained a calm demeanor and seemed genuinely concerned for the victims they were "serving." They would hold them in their arms and put their face close, holding eye contact, and even pray intensely with them. But then something didn't feel right to Tom when they would maintain the closeness only until the person fell back, supposedly slain in the spirit, and then they would immediately move on without regard for the previous person as if they were on an assembly line.

Tom noticed that in all the cases of those "slain in the spirit," the people actually did seem to faint or pass out involuntarily most of the time—it certainly appeared it was not just contrived. And he couldn't help but find it peculiar when these "faith healers" would sort of focus in, in some strange way, and often try different techniques, waiting for the supernatural transaction to take place. Some type of transaction was happening, but of what spirit it was remained to be seen.

With more and more investigation, Tom began to find most of these "faith healers" and deliverance ministers to be exposed in some form of deceit, in

129 – Matthew 12:33 & 7:15-20

one way or another; yet, somehow they retained a certain following and some actually had huge international followers.

Tom knew that large numbers of followers was never a legitimate point of reference to the authenticity of something spiritually supported by God; in fact, it was usually an indicator of being of the Devil. For Jesus said, **“The gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.”**¹³⁰

Yet the question remained, how could such deceit continue to go unexposed and have such a huge following? There was something more to this issue, something Tom just couldn't quite put together. He continued to look into the subject through the Bible, the Internet, books, and ministries who promoted materials on the subject. And though the secular world, and even some Christians, had their list of naturalistic causes (hypnosis, magic, mind control, etc), the explanations he heard just didn't seem to be enough to explain it satisfactorily.

In focusing his research on the influence demonic spirits can have on people, Tom did come across some seemingly reasonable sources. Certain people would write or speak what the Spirit was attesting to as truth. Whereas most sources would repel him deep in his soul, some attracted his conservative theological understanding and the logical framework of his Christian Theistic worldview.

After some objective consideration, Tom was surprised to find that he agreed that even a Christian could have an oppressive demon spirit. He had always thought that if you have the Holy Spirit, you couldn't have a wicked spirit. But it was explained that a man is a threefold being: with a body,

130 – Matthew 7:13-14

mind, and spirit; and if the spirit is re-born with the Holy Spirit, the mind and body are still somewhat separate. The mind then gets renewed by the Holy Spirit every day, but it still sins and does things contrary to the perfect Holy Spirit of God.

A good analogy Tom found for this was that as our bodies are the temples of God¹³¹ in the renewed Covenant, it is comparable to the temple of the Old Testament, in that the old covenant temple was threefold as well: 1) the outer court (symbolically comparable to the outer body), 2) the inner court (the inner mind), 3) the Holy of Holies (the Holy Spirit). And though God dwelled in the Holy of Holies (where only the high priest could go once a year), the outer court was being defiled by sinful man and his attempts to make money off of the temple. This is where Yeshua (our High Priest) cast out the defilers with a strong hand and a whip of cords.¹³²

So, though one may have the Holy Spirit in their spirit through Christ Jesus, they may still have a demon spirit that can dwell in the body and mind that's apart from the Spirit. This is not demon possession where the wicked spirit has taken full possession of someone who is not already owned by the Lord, it is oppression.

As Tom continued to study the claims of the more reasonable deliverance ministers he found, he began to contemplate the potential of this possibility. He began to recall people he'd known, or seen, who have had "psychological issues," and wondered if there could be supernatural causes behind these cases, and not just physical ones.

The same goes for the extreme criminals who plead insanity or perpetrate unthinkable acts that are beyond even human depravity. Tom read

131 – 1 Corinthians 6:19

132 – John 2:14-16

about convicted prisoners and even serial killers who were humbled in prison and came to faith in Christ. These believers then found deliverance and testified to the understanding that, through the regeneration power of the Holy Spirit, they were able to realize how the demons had functioned and worked to control their thoughts and actions.

And what about those who vehemently oppose the Spirit and Word of God, are they influenced by more than just the general dark spirit of the age? And what about people who are not Christians, but seem to have it all? Are they really successful because of their great creative abilities, or are they somehow supported and empowered by a spirit that enables them to do what they do and to be supernaturally attractive to the world in order to further the cause of error?

Tom thought about an old-school rudimentary notion that people don't really mention much any more: that notion of selling your soul to the Devil for fame and fortune or whatever it is your carnal nature wants most. He couldn't help but wonder if, somehow, people were selling their souls for a price—a price that the Devil himself claimed he could pay when he showed Jesus the great kingdoms of the world and said he has been given authority to give it to whosoever will serve him.¹³³

Tom thought about images he'd retained from childhood: cartoon images of someone passionately calling out into the air that they would sell their soul for some desperate desire, and then, *poof*, the Devil suddenly appears. Then after a brief negotiation, the Devil suddenly pokes the person, getting their blood on the sharp point of his tail, with which the contract is then signed.

Certain stories arose from the deep recesses of his mind: stories about such legal exchanges that the subject soon forgot about, as they mysteriously

found the way to their great desire. Then after achieving that great desire, found their world crashing in around them in ways they never could have imagined. Only to find, in the end, a happy Devil who successfully reaped their soul for an eternity in Hell for a very small and easy price of short-lived fame and fortune. And suddenly their greatest desire—the one they sold their soul for and the one they attained—was lost in the past like a fleeting dream fading into obscurity. And then even the memory of it became worthless, as they were left to wonder why they ever thought it would be so great in the first place.

Other cartoons popped up from his memory: cartoons where the subject was constantly dealing with a little devil on one shoulder and a little angel on the other. Each would pop up with certain moral dilemmas and make suggestions for their purpose. These polar opposite representations of good vs. evil were constantly at odds and the subject was always free to make his choice as to which advice to choose. Tom thought about how this scenario could be taken literally: with the idea of actual demons and angels making their petitions over moral dilemmas. Or, with our conscience representing the good and our inherently sinful nature representing the bad. Either way, something about these ideas kept busying Tom's mind.

Maybe, Tom thought, these old fables aren't as far-fetched as we think.

Chapter 17

Reality & Escape



Bobby and his family never did hear from Samantha, nor did they find out any solid information of what happened to her. They just knew so little about her, and there was no way to reach her or anyone who knew enough about her to be helpful.

The sobering issue put the family under a lot of strain, and mostly it was stress that went unmentioned. Sure, they talked about it here and there for a few months after her disappearance, but then they all just sort of got quiet about it. That didn't mean that things returned to normal; in fact, it changed everything, and it seemed they all aged considerably more than normal as the time passed.

Bobby found that his best older friends were the ones who helped him justify not looking back, and the fact that they always had alcohol and drugs really helped a lot.

The summer after Bobby graduated, he moved into an apartment with his fellow cohorts. He didn't have a full-time job and just managed to coast off of the money his parents and grandparents gave him.

One weekday afternoon, the phone rang.

"Hello." One of Bobby's pals answers. "Um, yeah, he's here, just a minute."

He covers the mic' and says, "Bobby, it's some girl for you."

Bobby is surprised that a girl is calling for him.

"Hello."

"Bobby?" The vaguely familiar voice questions.

"Yeah, who is this?"

"It's Samantha; I need to talk to you."

After a long delay of silence, Bobby forces his mouth to open. "Okay Samantha, I can talk."

"I need to talk to you in person, can we meet somewhere?" She says.

"Um. . . yeah sure . . . I mean, wherever you want." Bobby nervously chokes out, with the potential implications of the whole deal adding weight on Bobby's head by the millisecond.

"Where are you?" She asks.

"I'm close to 34th & Straight Street." He responds.

"Uh . . . okay . . . how about the Starbucks on the corner there?" She offers.

"That'd be fine." Bobby doesn't really know what else to say.

"Alright, I'll be there tomorrow at 2 p.m., is that okay with you?"

"Sure, that'll be fine."

"Okay, I have to go now, I'll see you then."

"Okay, bye." Bobby says, by this time completely beside himself.

What does it mean? What is going to happen now? All of the anxiety and fear about the dire, long-term consequences of his one night of partying came out of nowhere, as if the earth opened around him and swallowed him up heaping the immeasurably heavy weight of sand, gravel, and rock on top of his head.

"I need a drink!" Bobby says to his friends as he goes to the cupboard to see if there is any hard alcohol left.

Bobby's friends quiz him about the call, and they all openly talk about the situation. Everyone there then becomes deadly serious, as if one of their fellow soldiers has been hit by some shrapnel from a land mine secretly planted by the enemy. Of course, as usual, their seriousness fades with each shot, and before long they are all blacked out from reality for the night.

The next day, Bobby's hangover is distinctly worse than usual. Somehow, the very real memory of the phone call becomes clear behind all of the drunken rhetoric and lack of discernment as to what exactly happened after that and what was actually said amongst each other, until his memory ends in complete mystery.

It is a long time to wait until 2 p.m. and Bobby tries to sleep it off, but he finds himself mostly just laying there all hot and sticky from the hangover, with a headache that only gives a mirage of subsiding. Just what he needs for this situation: more harsh reality weighing down his head.

Bobby tries to get cleaned up as best as he can, but he still feels like sewer waste in a champagne glass—and realizes he looks like it. What will Samantha think of him looking like this? What will she think of what he has done in his life, now that the, very likely, most serious of circumstances have replaced good-time fun with long-term responsibility and reality? But most importantly, what exactly has she done about the baby that had started to grow in her womb?

Bing Bing, Bobby's phone rings.

Bobby grabs it..

"Hello."

"Hello, Bobby, it's Samantha."

“Oh, hi, I was just getting ready to meet you.”

“Oh, okay, good, I just wanted to make sure you were coming.” She says, obviously relieved.

“Yeah, I’ll be there by 2.” Bobby confirms.

“Great, come to the back corner booth when you get here, you can’t miss it.”

“Okay, bye.”

“Bye.” Samantha says.

The sound of desperation in her voice, what does it mean? Bobby thinks unconsciously.

It is all so overwhelming to think about, that Bobby doesn’t really let his mind go to far into speculation. He lives in the moment and will deal with the moment when it comes.

So when the moment comes to go in and face his destiny, Bobby finds that he is as nervous as he’s ever been about anything—and more.

Approaching the doors of the Starbucks, he can’t help but think about the different drugs that would help him feel better. He opens the doors, goes in, and heads for the back corner booth, which is in the most private corner of the coffee shop.

When Bobby reaches the high-backed corner booth, he doesn’t find Samantha, but there is a baby seat with a baby sitting there looking at him with big blue eyes. He is momentarily stunned and realizes Samantha is either in the restroom or at the counter.

“Bobby?” A voice says from behind him.

Bobby turns to see a woman walking toward him from the counter.

“Yes.” Bobby replies.

“This is for you.” The woman puts an envelope in his hand, and is gone before he can realize what is happening—it’s like he is too stunned (or too hung-over) to keep up with normal time.

In this moment, the feeling that something is terribly wrong grows exponentially. The shock begins to wash over him like the first waves from an approaching hurricane breaching a coastal retaining wall. The impending doom of a reality like Bobby has never known closes in around him and he feels like there is nowhere he can run and nowhere he can hide.

Bobby reluctantly opens the envelope, in a daze, and reaches in for the note. It is a small card that has a simple cartoon picture of a baby sitting in a diaper, wearing a t-shirt with three different colored balloons on it, with a header and footer that says, “Congratulations, YOU’RE A DAD!”

He is not amused. He opens the two sides and finds the words:

Bobby, I’m sorry to do this to you but my life is complicated and I can’t handle little Dexter right now. And I don’t think I ever will be able to. I’m sure you’ll do fine. I wish you all the best, Samantha.

With that, Bobby’s heart falls through the floor, and so does his brain. He can’t even begin to comprehend what has happened to him in a matter of hours, and, from something that took a matter of minutes, from an experience two years ago. Now he feels the most serious matter of the next 17 years worth of severe responsibility weighing down on his shoulders, sinking deeper with each elongated second.

Bobby turns to face little Dexter, as Dexter sits there peacefully, staring at him without moving or making a sound.

~ Suddenly, in Bobby's subconscious mind, he's standing in a mud-puddle at the bottom of what looks like a rock quarry with sand around his feet growing exponentially upward into loose gravel and then forming into rugged rock walls that are moving and shifting steeply around and above him. He gets the feeling he's sinking—which he is a bit—but really it's the ground that's moving up and up around him trapping him in.

The sun quickly gets blocked out as the walls of the quarry move not only upward but inward creating a narrower and narrower gap high above his head. The sound of the rocks growing from within is loud and rumbling like a thunderous earthquake creating a rockslide in reverse.

Bobby feels utterly alone, and though his feet are slowly sinking into the quicksand type puddle below him, he doesn't even notice as he stares upward, wondering how he will ever get out. Small rocks and gravel are falling down around him from all sides—adding to the muddy quicksand—and he feels like he might end up getting crushed if it all continues.

Then a strange mechanical sound breaches the earthly rumbling and immediately gets louder and louder. *Thump, thump, thump*. The high speed rotor of a helicopter becomes louder and clearer, as the only machine in the world that could possibly pull him from his predicament appears banking in over the towering rock walls that must be thousands of feet high by now.

Within seconds the helicopter is directly over head and a rope flops down right in front of him, splashing the muddy water up onto his chest. Bobby is still dazed and confused and looks straight up above him.

"BOBBY, QUICK GRAB THIS ROPE, IT'S THE ONLY WAY TO ESCAPE!" Bobby's flesh yells at the top of his lungs, leaning out of the open door of the helo'.

Bobby grabs the rope loosely and looks at it in a quandary, thinking about what it would mean to take this opportunity recommended by his ever faithful companion, his flesh. ~

Back in Starbucks, Bobby peers over his shoulder at the bustling little coffee counter, and recognizes that everyone is busy and focused on themselves. Then, he brings his gaze back ahead of him after making a quick scan of the other patrons, recognizing that no one can see the child buckled in behind the high corner booth.

~ “BOBBY WE HAVE TO GO NOW!” His flesh greatly urges from thirty feet over his head.

Bobby clutches the rope tighter in his hand ~ and takes a look outside the front windows of Starbucks.

~ *Thump, thump, thump, thump.* The sound and spinning of the rotor feels like slow motion to Bobby, as if this split decision needs to be made quickly and will require extreme focus if he chooses to go for it.

The rocks, still jutting upward and inward, are growing higher and higher. With the quicksand heavily peppered with gravel, now mixing like cement over his knees, Bobby looks up beyond the helicopter toward the shrinking hole of sky above. The walls around him fill in steeper and steeper; and, he knows the helicopter won't even be able to escape the diminishing gap before long.

“BOBBY, IT'S NOW OR NEVER! ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS HOLD ON TIGHT AND GO FOR IT. YOU WANTED AN ABORTION IN THE FIRST PLACE, THIS ISN'T YOUR RESPONSIBILITY. YOU WERE GIVEN NO CHOICE, YOUR RIGHTS WERE STRIPPED FROM YOU AND NOW YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO PAY THE PENALTY? NO! PEOPLE ALL OVER THE WORLD ARE GETTING RID OF THEIR UNWANTED BABIES ALL THE TIME, IT'S OKAY! AT LEAST YOU AREN'T KILLING IT; SOMEONE

WILL TAKE CARE OF IT. WE HAVE TO GO NOW!!! LET'S GO, LET'S GET OUT OF HERE. ONCE WE'RE GONE WE WON'T LOOK BACK. LIVE IN THE MOMENT BOBBY. SEIZE THE DAY! CARPE DIEM!!!” Bobby’s flesh desperately screams to be sure to reach Bobby’s heart. ~

Bobby takes another quick look around Starbucks under his eyebrows, hesitates only for a moment, and then heads straight for the door.

~ Clutching the rope with all his might, Bobby strains as the chopper slowly lifts him out of the muck that had engulfed him above his waist. Within a moment he is pulled free ~ as the front doors shut behind him. He doesn’t look back and strides quickly off into the parking lot and streets of freedom and anonymity. Even if the barista gal remembers his first name, she would never see him again to identify him.

~ The helicopter slowly climbs higher and higher as the rocks, gravel, and sand stop increasing and begin to fall away. Bobby is holding on with all his might, ~ focused on looking straight ahead ~ to where his hands must transfer all his strength to hold on, keeping him safely headed in the right direction, the direction that he wants for himself—the direction that he knows he deserves. The mountains of rocks crumble below, leaving a pitted remnant of jagged debris.

As the fear of the reality of it all grips Bobby’s conscience, his flesh lifts him up and pulls him into the chopper. He wraps his arm around him and holds him to him tight. Bobby’s fleshly counterpart, so much bigger and stronger than he, makes him feel like a child in his father’s arms—safe and protected and helpless. His flesh holds him tight as he lets his head rest against his flesh’s bosom. His flesh squeezes him snug with his right arm and caresses his head with his left hand. “It’ll be alright Bobby, you’re safe now. You did the right thing.” ~

Back at his apartment, Bobby enters the front door feeling all kinds of weirder than before. He has a mad mixture of thoughts and emotions that are fighting each other through his radical experience, lingering hangover, empty stomach, and desire for a fix.

“Bobby? That was quick, what happened?” One of his roommates asks.

Bobby simply says the first thing that comes to mind, “She wasn’t there.”

Bobby’s roommate laughs and proclaims it’s time for a hit. Bobby gladly sits down for what feels like the perfect answer to his mental and emotional dilemma. After the hit, Bobby feels quite a bit better; but, since he doesn’t feel all the way better, he decides another hit is called for. And, shortly after that comes another, and soon he is able to resist the muffled voice of his conscience and he even feels emboldened by the ability to take his thoughts captive to his own will and control any resistance that arises from within.

All Bobby needs to do is block out fifteen minutes of his life, and after all of his experience being blacked out partying, he just logically figures he will apply those types of moments to this situation, and hopefully it will fade away just the same. He then attaches a bottle of hard alcohol to his drugs and lets it all drag reality down with it into the black hole of denial.

Bobby has plans for his self that he clings to like that rope from the helicopter. Not big plans of ambition, but extremely precious general plans of sustained freedom, perpetual fun, good feelings, and self-gratification in the ways that he likes most. They are his identity; it is who he is, inside and out. He has cultivated his favorite styles for his self, and with the ultimate freedom to be himself, he feels limitless; and with that, the future holds nothing but infinitely grand possibilities.

As time goes on, Bobby's seared conscience becomes less and less of a problem for him.¹³⁴ Everywhere he looks he finds easy justification for what he did by comparing to others; for there are many, many others out there who are doing different versions of the same thing, and worse, and anyone who says otherwise is a hypocrite. Of course, drugs and alcohol are his best friends—or more appropriately, his flesh's best friends.

Chapter 18

Born-Again?



Ricky is visiting Jordan's because several months prior his mother had been diagnosed with a severe Lymphoma. After their attempts to just cut it all out of her, it was found to have only exacerbated the problem. She has just been released from her desperate chemo' treatments at the hospital and was sent home to die in the comfort of her own bed.

Many of their friends from church have been in and out, essentially saying their good byes; and, Ricky knows this will probably be the last time he will see her as well.

Of course, she isn't proud of her physical appearance any more, for she has lost all the weight she had to lose and all of her hair. She is meek and mild and mostly in a state of subdued depression. Her eyes regularly glaze over and she becomes unreachably distant. She is on heavy medication and it's obvious her physical and mental strength is failing.

Jordan wants to bring Ricky in to his mother to try to give her some uplifting interaction, although it really seems she'd rather just be left alone to fade into obscurity.

“Mom, Ricky’s here. He wants to say hi.” Jordan says to bring his mother into her latest interaction.

“Hi, Mrs. Jepson.” Ricky says gently as Jordan leads him into her room. He wants to ask how she is doing but it just seems like a bad question so he just lets it go at that.

“Hello.” She barely manages, not really caring to see anyone.

“You must be exhausted from all of the church family coming by to see you?” Ricky says.

She nods her head, not necessarily having anything to say to that.

“I’ve been praying for you. I bet you’ve been praying a lot too.” Ricky says.

At first she nods her head in the affirmative, but then speaks up and says, “Actually no. . . I’ve prayed enough. . . . I’ve spent my whole life in the church. I was baptized as a baby and was in the choir by the time I was six. I’ve done it all and I’m tired now.”

Ricky finds her response quite unusual, but he doesn’t really know what it would be like to be in her position.

Mrs. Jepson continues, “I do miss the gatherings, and I’ve made many friends at the church. I don’t know what I would have done without the church in my life. It always gave me something to do and I’ve always done very well there. I had even thought of becoming a pastor when I was younger, but then I started the family and decided it would be too much. I don’t regret it though,” she said weakly, “I have lived a good life. I have no regrets.”

“When did you find the Lord, or rather, when did the Lord find you?” Ricky asks.

“Like I said, I have been a Christian since the day I was born. I was re-baptized at age nine, but I always knew I would stay with the church. It was all just so much fun. We always had something going on and new people were

always introducing themselves.” She thinks for a moment and then continues. “I always got a lot of respect because of my faithfulness to the church, and I have always been proud to be a good example to others through my work.”

“So you’ve always known Jesus?” Ricky asks, not exactly understanding how that could be possible, but realizing there was a lot he didn’t know and understand about God and His different dealings with His sons and daughters.

“Oh yes, I had all the Bible stories read to me before I could talk and I’ve been wearing cross necklaces since I was a little girl. I’ve always been a good girl and I never ran with the bad crowd.” Mrs. Jepson says weakly but smiling.

“Did you ever have any persecution?” Ricky inquires.

Mrs. Jepson thinks back for a moment and then says, “Oh yes. I was often teased as a girl by secular classmates when I was little. But that was just a phase that all kids go through.”

“What about bringing people to the Lord, have you won many souls?” Ricky asks trying to glean for her encouragement from her own walk.

“Oh yes. I brought many people to the church. I’ve seen so many different people become members at our church and so many people come and go. Of course people move and leave for many reasons, but I trust they have found another church wherever they are.” Mrs. Jepson fades out a bit and then revives.

“We’ve raised so much money through our programs and done so many good deeds that I know the Lord is well pleased.” She says with a slight, satisfied smile.

“Do you look forward to the supper with the Lamb and meeting his servants from all the ages like Moses, Noah, and Jonah?” Ricky asks, hoping it isn’t a faux pas to speak of it.

“Of course. I would like to ask Noah what the flood story metaphor is really about. And the same goes for Jonah and Adam and Eve. Only then will we really know what happened and how the symbolism of the stories makes sense.” She says slowly pondering in her quandary.

Ricky is a bit taken aback, because her questions don’t make sense coming from an elder Christian, for he had assumed all Christians knew the literal Truths of the Bible. It crosses his mind for a moment that perhaps she hadn’t been born-again after all this time, but he dismisses that thought with a feeling of guilt that he could be so arrogant.

Ricky does, however, feel bold enough to ask more faithful questions, since she seems to be enjoying the conversation. “It looks like you’re going to meet the Creator of the heavens and the earth before us.” Although, he thinks he might be pushing it with that.

His concern is amplified as she doesn’t look glad about it and drops her eyes down to the bed. “Yeah, I guess I can also ask Him what the answer is to this whole Creation/evolution debate. I’m sure He will be able to make sense out of it for me.”

Once again, Ricky feels a strange, strong twinge inside, for he has been fully at peace with the issue ever since he found the mountains of Creation evidence on the Christian side of science. Was he presumptuous to be so convinced, when here, an older woman who has spent her life in the church doesn’t feel satisfied with the answer?

Mrs. Jepson quickly begins to fade, and so Jordan and Ricky leave her to her husband.

“I’m sorry Jordan; I hope I didn’t upset her, or you.” Ricky apologizes about his spiritual questions.

“No, it’s fine, she’s used to talking about spiritual things, we all are.” Jordan replies.

After leaving that night, Ricky couldn’t stop thinking about all of the unexpected things that Mrs. Jepson had said. He was reminded of the feeling he had the first time he went to Jordan’s house and how something didn’t quite set right in his spirit.

Several days later, Ricky found a preacher on the radio who said something that made him think of an issue he had been increasingly becoming aware of. He had learned about false conversion, and how there can be many unsaved people who regularly attend church.¹³⁵ He had assumed that it would only be a matter of time before anyone would be converted, for he himself was converted on his first visit. But this preacher said something that made him roll over numerous interactions through his local church fellowship that made him think that there must be much more to it all than he could yet know. The preacher said, “The hardest people to preach the Gospel to are those who already think they are saved.” This saying would stick in his head for a long time to come.

Then one morning, as Ricky is praying at home, he has some thoughts come to mind about Jordan’s mother, who is now right at the point of death. Although he isn’t completely sure about her words, he still has to believe that she, of all people, is saved. He thinks about how much she smiled and how she so loved the church. Memories of her extreme niceness and polite nature make him smile inside. He can’t imagine how much good she did through the church during her life.

At that very moment, Jordan and his family are gathered around his mother’s bed, basically thinking the same thing.

135 – Matthew 25:1-11, 13:24-30 & 47-50

Mrs. Jepson's face is pale and sunken in, and the process of dying has been just about what the doctors predicted so everyone is ready; in fact, by this point they are, unmentionably, ready to see her pass through death's door. They have all said their peace and though everyone is overtly sad, they all have been given the time to express themselves completely, especially Mrs. Jepson.

Jordan's Mom has been in that state between life and death for hours. Then, finally, before most of the people in the room can really notice, she passes.

~ In that instant, Marjorie finds herself standing among the group of mourning family members. She looks around with some strangely reinvigorated life, and is a bit beside herself trying to comprehend what is going on. Within a brief moment she knows in her heart that it is her on the bed and that she has died.

Marjorie contemplates the mystery of her new reality silently, and in uncertainty of what will come next. Physically she feels perfect, as she had in her prime. Then she hears voices outside of the door calling to her, telling her it is time to go. She knows she has no choice and cannot stay, and she is touched by sadness for the rest of her family left in mourning.

The beautiful voices outside of the door beckon to her again and so she turns and walks out into the hallway. Now, the hallway of her home extends far beyond its actual length and seems to disappear into another realm. Two lovely young women in pure white robes are standing at what would have been the end of her actual hallway. The women are smiling and beckoning her to follow with their hands as they turn and walk ahead of her. She follows them down the hall; and, as the light grows dim she continues steadily on, curious to find what awaits her in her new life. The reality of the

physical surroundings fades into darkness, and she finds the hallway gently descending.

In the growing darkness she is surprised at how the angle of descension is becoming considerably steeper, pulling her downward. She stops in a quandary over it, and immediately the two women, both of whom make her think of the Virgin Mary, stand before her and reach out their hands to take hers. She is immediately comforted and gently grabs their hands.

As Marjorie smiles back, the two smiles of the innocent looking young virgins begin to morph into twisted jagged fangs that are followed by the complete metamorphosis of what quickly becomes two gnarly wretched demons of terror right before her eyes. Their continuing smiles opened wider and wider; and, as drool begins to drip from their teeth, they start cackling in her face, louder and louder, with their eyes bulging out of their heads with excitement.

The sudden, unthinkable terror is amplified by the surprise of the floor beneath her disappearing completely. Her feet dangle as she realizes she is being held up by the dreadful demons who are now flapping their matte black wings that make a terrible sound like leather sheets flapping loudly in a stiff wind.

The demons briefly look at each other and begin to dive down gaining speed in the darkness. All Marjorie can see are the demons at her sides dragging her through space by her arms. Faster and faster, Marjorie begins to scream in absolute panic. And, in one perfect motion, the demon spirits sling-shot Marjorie straight down into the darkness. She begins to hurl through space gaining speed rapidly toward terminal velocity.

The rushing wind catches Marjorie off balance and flips her into a violent tumble through the air. Marjorie can't believe she is spinning so out of

control; she hasn't ever been out of control in her whole life. Then, the force of the air upon reaching terminal velocity twists and cranks her limbs in different directions as she flails through the chaos. This kind of movement and shock would normally have made her pass out, but she does not.

Spinning and flipping through the air at 120-mph, she doesn't even know which way is up. Then, in one of the split seconds when she is facing down—*CRACK*—she stops completely, in an instant.

It is relatively flat, solid rock that broke her fall—or rather, broke her and stopped her fall. Every bone in her body, including her skull, jaw, fingers, and toes, either broke or shattered in a fraction of a second. She didn't just get the wind knocked out of her, her lungs completely collapsed. Her eyeballs twisted out of their sockets due to the abrupt stop and the broken skull.¹³⁶

Marjorie lies there motionless in the dark. The pain is all encompassing, completely thorough. There is nothing to compare the pain to, no scale to measure it by, it is total. Skin shredded, bones broken and protruding through the flattened muscles and tendons all over. For the first time Marjorie can feel the sinews deep inside her core; they are severed completely, frayed, and feel exposed and in shock, as if lost and looking to be reconnected somehow.

All of this new devastating perception is interrupted by the more immediate thought that she cannot breathe. Not only is she unable to breathe, she can't even begin to imagine how she will ever be able to again, after that.

Suddenly a new pain arises from those disconnected core tendons. Somehow, they begin reattaching in what is almost as painful as the break, but much slower. The bones and muscles that had broken, ripped, and twisted aside in the dissipation of her kinetic energy, are somehow moving

on their own. The pain sensations are mind numbing, as Mrs. Jepson struggles to mentally comprehend what went wrong throughout it all.

Marjorie's senses are extra-ordinarily keen as she consciously realizes her rational thoughts function hyperactively amidst the torment and suffering. *What is this?* She thinks to herself amidst the pain. *What happened?*

Her fingers and toes snap into re-alignment, and beyond the incomprehensible horror of it, she can tell that, somehow, her body is reforming. Her face is still squished into a gob of goo and parts, flattened under her broken skull, and for the first time, surprisingly, she realizes she doesn't have any clothes on.

Marjorie's inner most parts are the first to reform completely, and within a few moments she can feel heavy, sulfuric and almost toxic air squeaking in and out of a slight hole where her mouth should be—it would make her cough and choke if she could, but she can not.

After her eyes harshly retract back into their sockets, and her mouth, jaw, and throat are restored enough to make noise, she moans an impossibly desperate sound that she herself never thought a human being could make, let alone herself—it is the worst sound she has ever heard in her life, by far.

The desperate and difficult breaths of agitating air that the body wants to reject, along with the agonized moaning and crying out in pain, adds a new element to her torment, which makes it all the more difficult to bear. She emits all sorts of horrific sounds into the abyss of silence: everything from frantic squeals of pain to screams of pure panic filled shock, as her ears begin to register her own unfathomably desperate anguish.

When her body begins to resemble a general human form again, she immediately notices that the air is overtly hot. It is a very dry heat, but that isn't in any way a good thing.

As her muscles begin to slide back under her bones, pushing her body slightly up off of the ground that she had just become one with, she realizes, through her outward expressions of agony, that it won't be long before she is going to be physically whole again.

How can this be? Am I in Hell? This can't be possible? Mrs. Jepson thinks to herself in that secondary mental capacity that functions aside from the primary mind that is struggling to make it through her agonizing physical reformation.

Marjorie thinks back to her times in church and how everyone there always knew she was a good Christian.¹³⁷ Then, an unusual thought slips in through the cracks of her conscious mental direction. It is an unexplainable single thought that somehow contains every single sermon where she ever heard the phrase, "***You must be born-again to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.***"¹³⁸ And immediately it hits her, like a ton of bricks had been dropped through the same trap door she had.

NO! She thinks desperately to herself. *NO, IT CAN'T BE!* She says again inwardly.

She yelps like a dog just hit by a car, as the pain of her spine re-twists itself into alignment, compounding on the emotional panic of her impending realization.

Her mind flips back and forth from the primary endurance of pain to the secondary concern about it possibly continuing forever. Each moment of excruciating agony is a serious indicator of the spiritual reality she contemplates.

137 – Psalm 139:2 & 4

138 – John 3:3-7

She remembers holding her hand up like a good little girl, and making her family, and everybody in the church, happy. She remembers her baptism as a trophy she regularly held high, because she had been baptized at a younger age than most people. She then finds herself thinking about how many times she, condescendingly, accused someone of not acting Christianly, with her life long authority that could not be matched.

Then she remembers, like a flash out of nowhere, in one clear thought that powerfully embodies every experience she had of hearing someone's testimony of being born-again. As her body contorts and fills back out like a slowly inflating balloon, she automatically remembers all the tears of those people as they spoke of their redemption in Christ. She remembers that she had long ago suppressed her awareness that she never cried about the Lord, and it all came flooding out in a torrent of mental and emotional torment that she immediately knows will never be alleviated.

Marjorie's body is almost back together and she is slowly coming down from all of the agony; which enables her mind to become even clearer to think about the cause of her mental and emotional torment. She—even though she knows the Truth—is still in denial, and a flame of bitterness and resentment begins to grow inside of her heart. Before even fully realizing the devastating reality of her predicament, she starts blaming God for His fault of not saving her, since in her mind she did everything she could.

Marjorie's mind goes back to all of the good she did in her life; but, in the end, her thought is somehow pulled, like a magnet, into a memory of someone giving her the Law when she didn't want to condescend to have to be truly humble and admit her sinful ways—no less repent and face the Lord—when there were so many people worse than her. These thoughts irk

her intensely, and she will not accept that she needed to do one iota more than all she did throughout her entire life.

I did everything I was supposed to. I sacrificed so much. I earned it and I deserve it! She thought to herself. The flame of anger grows in her core; and, soon she finds the motivation to try to stand up. Her increase in strength is the byproduct of her anger. She wants to face God, and bring down her self-righteous judgment on His hypocritical head.

Slowly she works herself up, though she finds that she is not full of strength—as she was immediately after her death. Actually, she can barely manage, and the weight of the environment saturates her entire being. It is like she is overwhelmingly exhausted in nearly every sense of the word: physically, emotionally, spiritually, but not mentally. Mentally, her senses are heightened atrociously, and she *knows* certain things in a way that is beyond her experience on earth.

Then, she realizes that her physical and emotional senses are also heightened, and that it is almost too much to bear—like an unknown agitation under her skin that puts her on edge every single second.

“NOOOO!!!” Marjorie shouts, as she raises her fist up to the darkness above.

Just then, she notices a flash in the blackness. It was down on the ground, like a flicker of a flame. She begins to move over towards it, trying to get used to the feeling of being weak, feeble, naked, and alone in the dark.

There it is again! She thinks to herself. She shuffles low over to it, hunching over to look for whatever it was that gave a brief light in this darkest of all places.

There it is. A flicker of a flame shines right between her feet. Immediately, she has hope that she can find a way to get fire for light and actually see

something again. As she leans down to try and find the source of the mysterious, sporadic flame, she sees a bright flash, and feels her face scorched by a flame that engulfs her entire body.

She violently throws her head back and stands up tall, recoiling, amidst the flame. She feels her outer body being torched beyond belief. As her hands go up she knows, instinctively, that her skin is melting away and that the flame is already burning through the layers of her body, heading for her bones. She falls over backwards and hits flat on the rocks, as her body turns black and sends smoke up into the darkness.¹³⁹

The flame still engulfs her; and, in a matter of minutes, Marjorie's eyes are burned out of her head, her lips and nose burn off, as well as her tongue as she screams in terror. Her own voice echoes in her head as she feels her body settling down on top of the rock surface as its mass turns to ash and the fire burns hot to the bone.¹⁴⁰

As she can do nothing but give into her own physical destruction, she manages to cry out in her mind, *Why?* And, as soon as that thought seeps out, amongst the terror of the torture, a clear memory flashes back in a condensed conglomeration of all of the times she had ever heard about the most frightful words in the entire Bible: "***I never knew you; depart from Me.***"¹⁴¹ Realizing those words pertain to her, hurts worse than the flames. ~

Back up in what is now *only* Mr. Jepson's house, they are waiting for the coroner to retrieve the body. Marjorie's body is covered by a blanket, and everyone has moved into the kitchen/dining-room area.

Many of the older people there have been through the death of a loved one before; and so, they do their best to console those that are hurting the

139 – Psalm 37:20, Revelation 14:11

140 – Matthew 3:12

141 – Matthew 7:22-23

worst. Jordan is especially tended to, and this is what he hears most: “I’m so sorry Jordan. I know it’s so hard. But you can rest assured that your Mother’s not suffering anymore; she’s in a better place now.”¹⁴²

Chapter 19

Desperate Measures



~ **B**illy Mac lie curled up in a corner with his flesh towering over him looking down in disappointment. A room full of shadows standing all around ominously adds unseen pressure to the predicament. Billy Mac's flesh stomps down on him again and Billy recoils in his fetal position and moans pitifully.

"You have got to get it together man! What are you going to do, just lie there and die? THINK!" Billy's flesh yells and kicks him in the kidneys. The shadow spirits shift and move about restlessly. ~

In the world as we know it, Billy is slowly pacing around his almost completely empty apartment. He's jonesing for a fix—it's been the longest he's gone without heroine in the past seven months. He feels like he's going to die.

Billy Mac's life has become one of striving to maintain whatever it takes to stay high. This includes selling/bartering what little possessions he owned, and doing and saying whatever it takes to be all the dealers' best friend, trying to get what he feels he deserves by whatever means necessary, for

when his favorite drug kicks in, he *feels* like he is on top of the world: mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

But now his skin crawls and the night is long. The shadow entities are full of suggestions, but none of them sound appealing in the least.

~ “What about Jimmy?” Billy Mac’s flesh asks. ~

Jimmy. Billy Mac has to try to think hard, and thinking is hard to even start in this state. The last time Billy saw Jimmy was when he was at his place, and toward the end of a hard night of partying, Billy snuck off with a sizeable score of Jimmy’s heroine. Billy knew that Jimmy would know it was him, but with no direct witnesses he figured he could give it some time and weasel his way out of it with what he considers his charm, but is really just his forked tongue.

Billy Mac focuses on concocting a convincing story, and with the spirits behind him, he begins to see a way that it just might work. As often happens, certain ideas will come into his mind—seemingly out of his amazing genius—that impress his own self. He has managed to congeal a great deal of pride in his abilities to make what ever needs to happen to get high, happen. He had, at one time, felt invincible in his power to live leapfrogging from high to high, but this last drought has made him wonder if his amazing skills are slipping.

Jimmy needs Billy Mac for nothing. Jimmy has a secure nitch in his little kingdom of drug trafficking. Jimmy deals with a certain number of close runners and is happy to remain relatively unknown. Billy Mac met him in an unusual circumstance that was actually an introduction by his demons. Once the introduction was made, Billy’s automatic nature was to stay close like a sucker fish and then work his way in like a deer tick. Eventually Billy’s selfish desires, and lack of self control, took him too far.

Billy Mac knows Jimmy will not be happy with him; Jimmy isn't one who takes being stolen from lightly. In fact, Billy knows he will be risking his life even showing his face near Jimmy's turf; but, desperate times require desperate measures.

There isn't much time to waste; Billy knows that he will be completely useless in his withdrawals if he waits another day. He has to do something, and since he can't think of anything else, he resolves to take his diminishing life in his hands and go for the gold.

Billy's demons immediately go to work giving Billy strength to press on. Billy cleans himself up as best as he can, fighting through the physical, mental and emotional pain of lacking his lifeblood: heroine. Nothing feels right and comfortable; everything feels weird and wrong. He gets into his cleanest clothes and sets out into the darkness.

Billy has a few tricks up his sleeve for lesser drugs, though they wouldn't do much for him but maybe take the edge off. He has no money whatsoever, but he has gotten used to that. Slipping down the back alleys away from Straight Street, Billy Mac detours by the back door of a liquor store he knows of and stakes it out (like he has done a number of times before).

The alley behind the liquor store is a dark, quiet section where several times during the night a liquor store employee will usually come out and unlock the storage container in the back to re-stock something, and often run in and out several times before locking it back up. Billy Mac had first noticed this from the inside, one night long ago, when he was buying some cigarettes.

This night, Billy Mac stands silently in the shadows, holding on to whatever nerves he has left, hoping that if he can get a bottle, he could muster up some liquid courage to confront Jimmy and possibly surf that high into getting hooked up.

It's about 1:30 a.m., and Billy Mac has been hanging around for forty-five minutes. He knows it could be a complete waste of time, but he simply has to try; he didn't have it in him to proceed otherwise—he's just in too desperate of a state to take on the challenge. Besides, in his world, the night is still young.

Nearly another hour passes and Billy Mac is beginning to lose hope. He is weak and vulnerable and shivers because the withdrawals, and lack of nourishment, leave him without sufficient body heat. He begins thinking about other options.

Then, the sound he's been waiting for pierces the silence. The door flies open and a gruff, older man scuttles around it and over to the container. It takes him a minute to find his key in the darkness, and then he works the lock free and pushes the door open.

It is a small window of opportunity, but one that Billy Mac has taken advantage of several times before. Billy has become accustomed to the secret life of late night back alleys. He has long lost his fear and has resolved himself to the fact that he is right at home there, blending in with the blackness, the dirt, and the stink—of course, this was another gift from his unseen companions.

Billy Mac knew right where to be to execute the objective. He had to slip down between the container, the dumpster, and some boxes, where he is close enough to quickly jump out, reach into the container and grab a bottle. Then he can just jump around the outside of the container door out of sight, and just casually walk away.

The old man quickly shuffles back into the shop, leaving the container momentarily just as Billy had hoped. The time has come and before the man

is out of view inside the shop, Billy Mac drops in and rides the excitement of the moment of opportunity into a swift flow of jumping out from the shadowy gap, to finding a bottle with his eyes and then his hand, and then spinning back around his backside—like a pick-and-roll— watching the door to make sure he doesn't have to run (which he knows he would win anyway because the man couldn't leave his business).

There is no sign of the man even coming before Billy Mac spins around the door and is in the clear, out of sight.

Billy Mac's genius is returning to him. Successes like these always boost his pride, and his cocky confidence emerges with a smirk. He cracks open the bottle without even realizing what it is. Then after taking a long swig, he is pleasantly surprised to find it is an exotic rum—how appropriate for the swashbuckling back-alley-pirate. The warm sensation in his empty stomach is like pouring jet fuel on a match. Soon, not only does he feel better, he begins to actually feel pretty good; but, he knows it won't last long and will only come down harder on his head if he can't achieve his goal.

With the help of the demons and his fleshly desires, the liquid courage is all that Billy needs to step out in faith that he will be able to not only survive re-introducing himself to Jimmy, but also come out of it on good terms with the real prize and most precious "ring of power"—the heroine. *Maybe*, Billy Mac thinks to himself, *we can even go back to the way things used to be!* The good ol' days of regular heroine flowing like water and euphoria as a, somewhat, constant way of life.

As Billy Mac approaches the block where Jimmy lives, he pulls his jacket collar up to try and go unnoticed by any of Jimmy's friends or employees who might take notice and cause a scene prematurely. He knows that there are almost always a few of Jimmy's minions lurking around the area.

It's now about 3:45 a.m., basically the darkest hour of the night. Billy Mac knows Jimmy will be up—most of these type of guys live like vampires. What Billy wonders is: whether or not Jimmy will be getting high (and whether that will help or hurt his cause), and whether or not he will be with friends, and if so, how many friends, and which ones?

Billy Mac does his best to steady his nerves, and with the last gulp of fiery assistance, he drops the bottle off in a planter outside of the modest apartments Jimmy lives in.

~ “This is it! You better make this good.” Billy’s flesh demands of him. ~

Billy Mac lets his renewed pride fill his being as he focuses on his role.

After reaching the forth floor and quietly walking down the hall to the room he never thought he’d return to, Billy Mac remembers the secret knock, hopes it hasn’t changed, and takes one last deep breath.

Knock, knock . . . (1, 2, 3, 4, 5). . . knock. Billy taps on the door just loud enough for Jimmy to hear on the inside, but quiet enough to not be noticed by neighbors.

After a long moment of silence, Billy tries to be cool, as he knows he will be seen through the view hole in the door.

There is a barely noticeable sound and shuffle from inside, and Billy’s anxiety increases. He’s committed now, he’s going to have to ride this one out, come what may. Finally Jimmy opens the door and says quietly, “Billy Mac, long-time no-see. Come on in.”

Phase one of the objective is accomplished; now, Billy knows, comes the real test.

Billy Mac can smell it fresh in his nostrils and it jump starts him full of energy and focus (on top of the adrenaline of his very life being at risk). He immediately sees that there are three of Jimmy’s regular employees there

and they look at him in silence. Billy knows that all of the men being high could be a really good thing for him, or it could be a really bad thing. The moment is pregnant with pause.

Jimmy locks the door behind him and when Billy Mac turns to address him, his entire momentum is jocked back as Jimmy's fist connects squarely between his eye and his nose before he even sees it coming.

Ka-Thump. As soon as Billy Mac hits the heavily carpeted floor, Jimmy's boys are on him pinning him down.

"Jimmy, I . . ." Billy tries to plead before Jimmy lands one, heavy with gravity, right on his lying mouth.

Jimmy, now on Billy's chest with one knee, quickly throws another punch that immediately breaks Billy's nose, splatting blood out across both of his cheeks. And in one flowing motion, as Jimmy's friends hold Billy's arms and legs down, Jimmy slides his knee down on Billy's neck, twisting his head, pinning it to the side.

"Ughhll." Billy Mac involuntarily releases as his airway is pinched closed. Blood pours out of his nose onto the floor.

"Billy, you idiot! You dare come back here? What has possessed you? You must be out of your mind to come back to me? I took you into my world, fed you as one of my own, and you repay me by stealing my goods?" Jimmy says in utter astonishment.

"Ggkk . . . hggg . . ." Billy tries to speak without air.

"And now you've come back for more? Unbelievable! And now you're going to make me get a new carpet too—great!

Billy Mac is fully submitted under the weight of the four men and his only hope is that Jimmy will be satisfied with his power over him and give him mercy.

But Jimmy drives his knee down harder on Billy's neck; and, if it weren't for the alcohol helping his body to relax, Billy thinks his neck would have been broken. He closes his eyes and re-opens them only to have them roll up and back into his head as he passes out.

"Get the duct tape." Jimmy commands his cronies.

They quickly tape over Billy's mouth and then they push him over and tape his hands behind his back, and his feet together.

"Get him out of here, quietly. No one should be out to see. Just get him to the car as quick as you can and send him down the river, for good." Jimmy says. "No one steals from me and gets away with it."

In Billy's weak and inebriated state he remains unconscious long enough for the men to carry him down the back exit and throw him into the trunk of their sedan. They all jump in and drive off as discreetly as possible. No one seemed to be around to see anything.

Billy slowly comes to in the blackness of the trunk. After a few moments of confusion he senses he is in a moving vehicle, but he immediately has to fight just to be able to breath through his nose. All other concerns go by the wayside as it takes all his power just to be able to breathe and not suck blood into his lungs.

Soon the driving becomes noisier, as the road apparently changed to gravel. Billy has become relatively content with simply being able to breathe. He knows it is a worst case scenario and he wonders how he is possibly going to get out of it with his life.

It is the industrial area that lines the river where barges are shipped up and down stream. The shadiest of criminals know that there are some spots discreet enough to conveniently off-someone down there.

By this time Billy Mac is doing his best to come up with a plan that will, basically, be mission impossible; but, he is still having trouble breathing and he knows all he can do at this point is wait.

“Over there, down between the containers.” One of the high drug runners says as he points to the most hidden spot between the stock piles of container vans and the river.

Inside Billy’s spirit the demons are growing restless. Their home and charge is being violated and they are torn between sitting back and taking enjoyment out of Billy Mac’s death or helping him fight to preserve the, essentially, worthless little kingdom they had so much fun running amuck with—either way, it’s a win-win for them—the only question is: which one serves the purposes of the kingdom of darkness more? In their spirit of error, they really don’t even know at this point.

The car stops and the men quickly get out. The sky is starting to lose its darkness and that makes everyone involved uneasy. They want to take care of business and get back to home-base before dawn.

Billy hears the key opening the trunk and then it pops open. The three men reach in and yank Billy Mac out in one easy motion.

They start carrying him between the containers toward the river. The rear guy stumbles a bit and drops Billy’s feet, which doesn’t slow down the process since the two in front just keep going, dragging Billy’s feet anyway.

Billy knows his time is short and he begins to panic. He starts struggling against the men. The powers within Billy become strengthened in his panic, and they, in turn, give him power. He begins thrashing and resisting with all of his might. This quickly becomes a real nuisance and the two start to lose their hold on him. Realizing this they stop.

They lift Billy up onto his feet and say to one another, “Let’s do it now.”

Billy sees the rear guy reaching under his jacket for his gun and this sends him into full life and death adrenaline combined with frenzied demon power. The proud forces within, who ultimately are much stronger than man, come together and help Billy rip his hands free from the tape. This startles the men and as they try to grab hold of him better, he brakes free and lurches at the gunman who is pulling his gun out to aim at his head point blank.

Billy barges into the oncoming weapon and forces the man over backwards. Billy lands on top of him with his head slamming under the man's chin, jerking his head back against the ground. This jars the man and Billy locks onto the gun with his eyes and reaches for it with his hands.

The other two men are in a bit of shock over the turn of events and they aren't sure whether to grab their guns or jump on Billy. One quickly chooses the former and the other chooses the latter.

But before the second man drops onto Billy, Billy gets the gun out of the jarred fallen man's hand. The third guy pulls his gun as Billy and the other tumble off of the bottom guy who's on his back and is still a bit dazed from the head trauma.

The second man who jumped on Billy grabs at him with his left hand and starts to throw a punch down when suddenly, *BLAM!* A gun goes off. Billy has managed to shoot back and has caught his assailant diagonally through the thigh.

"AAAHHHHH!" The man yells, loosing all strength to his striking blow.

The bullet, after passing through the thigh, whizzes by the third man who is still standing there pulling his gun. He instinctively jumps in the opposite direction and finds himself hitting the hard wall of the container. He falls down in his panic.

The shot man crumples down on Billy and Billy is still pinning down the first with his legs. The shot man recoils up in his adrenaline and desperately goes to give it to Billy with all his might; but, Billy simply turns his wrist with the gun and fires into his torso. *BLAM! BLAM!*

The man falls off to the side in a half-roll, smacking against the side of the container.

With that, the third guy dives across the front of the car to get cover.

Billy instinctively turns the gun toward the first man, who is still on his back, now looking over in horror. *BLAM! BLAM!*

Two point blank shots in his side gives Billy great hope. His feet still being taped, make him reach down with his free hand and rip through it with one finger. He then scrambles back from out between the two dying men. He reaches up and rips the tape off of his mouth with one hand as he frantically points the gun toward the front of the car.

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! Three quick shots through and around the front of the car are let fly in a panic that the other man might get the drop on him by shooting him over the top of the hood. The man behind the car flops to the ground again with his head in his hands.

Billy is completely outraged in his freedom and power. He knows he only has one more obstacle keeping him from escaping with his life. Without hesitating he dives onto his side behind the car aiming down its side at the man. *BLAM! Click, click, click.*

The man still had his head down and the last bullet from Billy's gun went straight through his collar bone, ripping through his torso and out of his leg into the ground. The man's life force quickly subsides.

Just then, that unmistakable sound hits Billy Mac's ears loud and clear: *WHOOO WOOOOO!* Flashing lights reflect off of everything. A cop skids

sideways to a stop about fifty feet away, only slightly off from a straight on view between the containers.

“FREEZE, PUT DOWN YOUR WEAPON!” The officer commands over the loud speaker.

Billy can't believe his escape is still eminent, and he jumps behind the car and grabs the gun from the man he just shot.

Billy only affords himself a moment's hesitation in thinking against this action, and as the spirits inside are worked up like a rodeo bull frothing at the mouth by the panic, fear, and death, they quickly push him over the edge of all or nothing.

Billy jumps up and fires: *BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!*

The cop dives in his car from the other side, instinctively taking the total protection of the car rather than leaving even his feet and lower legs exposed underneath.

Billy Mac knows he needs to get out of there fast in order to escape.

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! He shoots at the cop car as he quickly moves back around the car to go and get the other man's gun. All three of the men are lying completely still at this point and are almost all dead.

Billy uses the side of the container as cover, as the cop's angle is just a bit behind it. He turns and faces the cop, whom he knows would not be regrouped yet. *BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!* The shots all hit the passenger door, right in line with the front seats.

Billy turns around and runs down the container's edge toward the riverbank—his very blood replaced with paranoid adrenaline. He frantically looks left and right and logically decides to go the opposite way as the officer, out of sight.

He runs along the river's edge with a gun in each hand, trying to see where there might be a way out of this industrial maze that might very well trap him in if other cops arrive. He doesn't know if he is going the wrong direction and is going to wind up in a dead end. The chaos feeds the demons in him and they prod him to run faster and strengthen his resolve to escape.

Whenever there is an opening, Billy tries to take a quick look back to see if he is being followed. Each time he sees nothing and hears nothing. *He probably called for back up and is waiting for reinforcements to trap me.* Billy thinks to himself as he runs like crazy.

Suddenly Billy stops. He thinks he hears the faint sound of a siren, or is he imagining things? Even though running on adrenaline and demon power, he is ultimately weak and weary from the bottle of alcohol on top of withdrawals. He doesn't know how long he can keep running and begins thinking about just holding up somewhere and hiding; but he also knows that he will need food before too long (for he hasn't eaten in two days), and that the cops will inevitably scour every inch of that place if he isn't found.

There it is again—the sound! This time it gets louder and he knows it's real. It is still a far ways off and he reserves hope that it is either from some other incident or that they will not know where he is and miss him completely.

Oh no! Billy hears another siren. This adds up heavily against his hopes.

They are getting slightly louder, but slowly. They're still a fair ways off. Billy stops and hunkers down.

There really aren't any good long-term hiding places as far as he can see, and he cuts back toward the rivers edge. When he goes beyond the machinery that lines the river he sees two more cop cars with lights on crossing the bridge a couple miles down. That's it; he knows they are after him and that it is going to get even more desperate. He knows he can't shoot

his way out, and he doesn't really like the feeling of the guns in his hands when he thinks about it.

The sounds of the sirens are out there, constant now, in multiple directions. They aren't directly on to him, but it won't take long. It's now or never to try and pull a white rabbit out of a black hat.

Billy stops completely and looks at the river in front of him. It's a long way across but it's still dark enough that they probably won't see him in the river. He knows it will be cold but he thinks it might be his only chance; and, it even crosses his mind that it might help wake him up and summon more energy to survive. He doesn't even know if he can make it to the other side; but maybe, he thinks, he can float out of there to somewhere safe if nothing else?

As he contemplates taking the plunge, he realizes the sad reality of his position there on the edge of the river. Weak, half-drunk/half-faded, raging withdrawals from drugs just under his skin, a broken nose crusted with blood that is hard to even breathe through, holding two guns, and the blood of three men and possibly a cop on his hands, preparing to desperately dive into a cold flowing river when he hasn't even swam in years, and on the verge of spending the rest of his life in prison. He is in a sorry state and he feels bad for himself, but he doesn't have a lot of time for self-pity.

Billy puts his head down and trudges into the river. It quickly gets deep and he tosses the guns thinking how convenient it is to dispose of that evidence. Of course, there is another gun with his prints back at the scene of the crime, but he can't do anything about that now.

The water is icy cold and after not eating for days, going through withdrawals, and sobering up from the alcohol, it pierces him to the bone. It hurts like nothing he's ever felt in his life, but he knows it's his only chance. When the bottom drops out and he begins to swim, his head goes under

for a moment and the knife of that dark water stabs him from every angle. When he quickly pops his head up for air, he fully realizes how much it hurt his nose and his face.

Billy starts swimming but he is no swimmer, and his clothes and shoes make it even more difficult. He can't remember the last time he went swimming, and deep down he doesn't even like water and feels like a cat that's been thrown in against its will. His neck is still sore from being knelt on, and he finds it hard to even stay afloat. Soon he resolves himself to treading water and hoping he will be carried downriver to freedom.

He can hear sirens still and sees lights in almost all directions now, but he holds out hope that the river will be the last place they look for him. Then he realizes that there is a cop stationed on the bridge that he is inevitably going to pass under. All he can hope for is that he will pass below unnoticed.

The sky is beginning to share light with the surface of the earth, and before Billy even closes in on the bridge, he begins to feel that he can not withstand the water for much longer. His body temperature is continuing to drop and his energy level is running out. Even the demons have to succumb to the fatigue of the physical body, but they don't really care anyway. They are highly entertained by the whole show; and, at this point, they are just along for the ride.

Of course, as Billy approaches the bridge, he has thoughts of suicide. He knows he is as close to death as he's ever been, and all he has to do is let go and sink into the moving abyss. Besides, he is likely not going to escape, and he would then have to spend the rest of his life in a jail where the officers on the inside would hate him for his attack on another policeman.

His strength fades with every discouraging thought, and the cold water is shriveling his tendons up tighter and tighter. He is shivering uncontrollably and he has lost the feeling in his hands and feet.

The current is sweeping him toward the outer bank where the bridge spans the slight bend in the river, and the closer he gets to the bridge and the shore—and the closer it gets to daylight—the more his inner resolve dissolves.

Up on the bridge, the driver of the cop car sits inside, monitoring the radio and preparing for either pursuit or blockade. His partner stands on the edge of the bridge with binoculars looking into the areas where the other cars are searching.

~ There is an angel perched on the steel frame of the bridge just above the officer. He is watching like a bird from a tree as Billy floats down toward them. ~

Billy is slowly giving in. His vision is getting blurry and he can hardly keep his head up. Water sucks into his throat and he coughs trying to get it out, but it's already gone down the wrong pipe. Though he can still breathe, his lungs are now highly irritated and much more difficult to use than they already were. He tries to summon strength just to stay alive, but he finds that his well is dry.

Billy is closing in to passing under the bridge, being pushed by the deep water flow toward the outer bank. The officer continues to search way out above and beyond where Billy actually is, looking around the containers and industrial area where it all began.

~ The angel watching Billy Mac looks at the officer and says, "Officer."

The officer drops his binoculars and begins just looking around with his eyes.

"Look!" The angel says. ~

Then the officer lowers his glance down to the river, and to his surprise, sees Billy's head and a little movement of his hands.

Just then, Billy's hands stop and his face drops, and in his unconsciousness he sucks water into his lungs.

Chapter 20

God Knows!



Back on Straight Street, another day, Mike and Donna are faithfully searching out bargains—like good Christians—at Wal-Mart. Mike detours over to the clothing section in order to slip some small Gospel tracts into some random pants pockets. After slyly covering a few different styles and sizes, he is startled by a voice from behind.

“Hey . . . Mike.”

Mike instinctively jerks his hand back, quickly putting a tract back in his pocket before turning around.

“Jack? Is that you?” Mike says surprised, almost not recognizing Jack.

“Yeah, it’s me. How are you?” Jack says, a bit more subdued than Mike remembers him.

“I am well, thank you. How about you?” Mike says with reserve, wondering how Jack will treat him after their last *real* encounter, so long ago.

“Oh, I’m fine . . . I guess.” Jack says reluctantly.

Mike immediately recognizes something is wrong with Jack and he instinctively pursues. “Well, it’s been quite a while. Are you okay? It sounds like something is wrong.”

Jack sighs, pauses and says, “Oh, well, I’ve been going through a rough period.”

On one hand Jack doesn’t want to endure what he still perceives as pious judging by the Christian Mike, but he also feels drawn to communicating with someone who at least seems to be interested and considerate.

Donna notices them in their conversation and continues shopping around. She wonders if maybe the Lord is giving Mike a witnessing opportunity; subsequently, she faithfully prays silently for the Lord to bless Mike’s conversation with His purposes.

~ In the spiritual realm inside of the Wal-Mart, Mike is now more fit and trim and muscular than his normal modest body type. As he pursues the conversation with the unbeliever, gold, bronze, and silver armor forms around him while he readies himself to resist the casual sin that reliably comes out of any lost soul’s mouth. His helmet materializes with its protection extending down between his eyes over the bridge of his nose, and his eyes sharply focus past it on Jack. The helmet supernaturally extends ear coverings that cup them forward in order to enhance his hearing, while little golden screens bridge the gap creating a protective filter.

Jack looks thin and frail, and his spiritual-orb is a medium murky gray. His eyes are heavily glossed over and he isn’t able to really focus on much of anything. His eyes fall downward often with his thoughts about what he’s been going through.

To their side, an angel stands casually watching them. He is of a similar size as Mike, with his pure white wings folded up tight behind him, and his

golden blonde hair reflects more light than it is receiving. His face also shines more and his skin is noticeably pure and perfect. In his perfect posture, he contemplates Jack intensely.

~ Inside of Jack's consciousness, he has a bit of a struggle with his flesh about revealing his major personal life issue with Mike, whom he had vowed to dismiss indefinitely. Inside of Jack's psychological reality, it's as if time has nearly stopped; and, in the most brief of moments during the realization of his temptation to pour out his reality on Mike, Jack gets a check from his flesh.

"Isn't this the guy who thought he was so much better than you?" Jack's flesh comments.

"Yeah . . . it is." Jack says back humbly.

"Then why did you even approach him?" His flesh questions.

"I don't know." Jack responds.

"And now you're going to tell him your troubles!" Jack's flesh says in his pride. ~

Just then, the angel lifts a hand and lays it on Jack's shoulder.

~ "Oh, whatever, it doesn't even matter." Jack's flesh resolves. ~

Jack decides to let Mike hear it, "Well, you remember my girlfriend Betty?"

"Yeah, of course." Mike says.

"Well, we were going to get married, I mean, we actually did get married; but, it didn't work out. The day after our wedding—the day before our honeymoon—Betty found out that I cheated on her at my bachelor party." Jack pauses and looks down far past the floor. "I couldn't believe that she found out, it was such a crazy random happenstance that it got out, but even though I didn't think it was that big of a deal, she was completely destroyed over it. She immediately shut me out and sought refuge in her friends and family. She even told her father, who, being a lawyer and a former

military man, was very upset. They had spent all this money on the ceremony and travelled all the way here. Ultimately, Betty became convinced that I would never change and that she could not live with a relationship like that. Then, her father encouraged her to take legal action; and, so did he actually, because of the wedding costs; and it didn't take long before we were split for good. She got half of everything and we haven't spoken since."

"Wow." Mike says, not knowing what else to say.

"Yeah, and ever since, I just haven't felt right inside. I always thought it didn't really matter, and that love was something that could be changed. I always wanted more for myself anyway, and so I thought I would get over it and find plenty of other options, but I just haven't even wanted to.

"I even started losing my focus at work and eventually got demoted. Then with everything that happened financially, I had to break my lease with the condo and find a smaller apartment. It's crazy, it even seemed like a lot of my friends stopped being there and even some of my best friends were, just, always too busy for me. It's been crazy, what can I say? I'm sure I've said too much already, but it's just been so hard and I don't really know what to do about it." With that, Jack stops spilling his guts.

"Oh, man. . ." Mike says trying to think of what to say to that.

This time the angel lifts up his other hand and puts it on Mike's shoulder.

"Oh Jack, you've really been through a lot haven't you?" Mike says compassionately.

"Yes, I have." Jack responds, mainly focusing on himself.

"Well, surely you can see what went wrong for you." Mike says.

"Well . . . yeah, I shouldn't have done what I did." Jack responds a bit indignantly, as if he should be receiving pity and not responsibility.

“Yeah. The sins we commit have dire consequences; not only in the life to come, but even in this life.” Mike says, a bit taken aback by his own forthright approach.

“Yes, they do.” Jack admits.

“Do you regret what you’ve done?” Mike asks directly.

The question is more than reasonable, but it almost seems absurd to Jack in a way. He doesn’t like to admit that life does involve regrets, and that guilt serves a purpose. He always tries to live in the moment and take life one step at a time, focused on the now, dealing with the consequences secondarily. The question, and the thoughts of true responsibility, makes him feel like he is being interrogated by his parents, like when he was a kid. He struggles inwardly for a moment, wanting to resist this call to accountability and to stop the conversation like his flesh wanted to; but, he sees no choice but to humble himself once again.

“Yeah, I do. I wish I never would have done it, and I wish I would have been a better man to Betty. I miss her everyday and I don’t think I’ll ever find someone like her again.” Jack lets out.

“Well, have you told her that?” Mike puts simply once again.

Jack is once again taken aback by the seemingly outrageous question that somehow doesn’t seem to have really crossed his mind. “Uh, well, not really. I mean, I tried to tell her it didn’t mean anything when we were fighting about it before the separation.”

“Telling her it didn’t mean anything is basically like saying, ‘Your thoughts and feelings don’t mean anything to me, and our dedication to each other doesn’t mean anything either.’ To her, she’s left to wonder why a relationship should stay together when it doesn’t mean anything. I mean, did you

really expect she would be happy to be your wife when you treat her and the relationship that way?” Mike continues on the hard side of straight truth.

For Jack, hearing Mike reference Betty as being his “wife,” somehow struck him with more meaning than he really had thought of it before. “I guess I did.” Jack mustered.

“Yeah, you thought that you were so cool that she would put up with anything, even adultery. Well, Jack, you know I’m a Christian, and Jesus said, **‘Everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.’**¹⁴³ Adultery is most serious; not only is it a violation of your spouse, the adulteress, and your own body,¹⁴⁴ it completely wrecks the God given intention of marriage as a representation of faithfulness and commitment that He uses to symbolically represent His devotion to His bride, the church—God’s children.¹⁴⁵ It is the main one of two justifications for divorce,¹⁴⁶ and in the Old Testament it brought the punishment of death.”¹⁴⁷ Mike does his best to faithfully represent God’s Word.

“Oh . . . yeah.” Jack says, not knowing what else he can say.

Mike recognizes the humility in Jack, and it even crosses his mind that the entire ordeal could be considered a gift from God, as it has seriously humbled Jack’s heart. (Not that God approves the act of adultery, but that He could be helping Jack by bringing consequences that can lead to godly repentance.)

“So, Betty was certainly justified in her conclusion and actions. But God hates divorce¹⁴⁸ and deeply values reconciliation above all else.¹⁴⁹ Maybe you

143 – Matthew 5:28

144 – 1 Corinthians 6:16-19

145 – Ephesians 5:21-29

146 – Matthew 5:32, 1 Corinthians 7:15

147 – Deuteronomy 22:23-24

148 – Malachi 2:16

149 – 1 Corinthians 7:10-11

should try to talk to her and admit your true feelings, and show her that you are repentant. Even if it's too late for the relationship to be restored, you would at least be giving her what she deserves, and you can have a clean conscience about it."¹⁵⁰ Mike says, feeling satisfaction with what he is saying for the Lord.

"Yeah. I suppose I could try . . . what could it hurt?" Jack says.

"The only thing it could hurt is your pride. But your pride is what got you into this mess."¹⁵¹ As Christians, we are taught, strictly, in regard to letting pride get the best of us. Just set your pride aside and let the chips fall where they may." Mike suggests.

"I think you are right; I will do that." Jack says before getting a quizzical look on his face. "Wait a minute; I thought you were opposed to us being together."

"Jack, Christians aren't opposed to marriage, we are opposed to sex outside of marriage."¹⁵² And we are also opposed to divorce."¹⁵³ So, if you two would have been married, your living together in intimacy wouldn't have been a sin; but, anything outside of God's given parameters of marriage is something that we cannot condone. We aren't trying to limit your freedoms; we're standing for the real freedom that is found inside of appropriate, God given, boundaries."¹⁵⁴

"All things have God given roles that need to be contained accordingly. Children must submit and obey their parents;¹⁵⁵ and, if they are allowed full

150 – Acts 24:16, Hebrews 13:18, Acts 23:1

151 – Proverbs 16:18, James 4:6, Proverbs 11:2 & 29:23

152 – Matthew 19:4-6, 1 Corinthians 7:2 & 9, Hebrews 13:4

153 – Matthew 19:8-9

154 – John 8:31-32, Galatians 5:1

155 – Ephesians 6:1-3

freedom to do whatever they want, it becomes unhealthy for them.¹⁵⁶ The same goes for dogs: dogs are happy if they are in their proper role of submission to their owners, and they can function properly because of it. If they are treated as though they are humans, then they are confused and run outside of their roles, thinking they are like humans and that they deserve to be treated as such; therefore they don't listen to anyone and they just do whatever they want; when, really, they aren't happy and peaceful, because they're not intended to be such "free-dogs."

"Well, people are the same way. We were made by God to give Him His rightful authority, as God, to tell us what is right and wrong and to guide us by showing us what to do.¹⁵⁷ When people want to disregard God, they are, in essence, acting like God themselves by making up whatever they think is right or wrong, and doing whatever they want without thinking about the reality of God and what it means for God to be God. And, thusly, what it means for humans to be human.

"Even the one God, Who is a made of three Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, has roles of submission and subordination.¹⁵⁸ Just because we submit to a higher authority doesn't mean that we are less than we should be. It means that we are exactly who we should be. We're humans, we're not God." Mike can feel the Spirit empowering his voice in him.

Donna has become very much aware of the intensity of the conversation; and, as much as she wants to go be a part of it, she submits to the Spirit and continues to pray for Mike's words. The angel has looked over at her and smiled several times.

156 – Proverbs 5:23, 12:1 & 13:24

157 – Proverbs 3:5-6 & 9:9

158 – John 16:5-15

Jack digests what Mike is saying to him for a moment and responds by saying, “That sounds right, I guess. I never thought about it that way.”

Mike’s spiritual-status-globe lightens in color dramatically. The angel between them releases his hands with a smile and jumps up through the roof, disappearing in a flash of light.

Mike and Jack finish the conversation by agreeing to exchange numbers and to meet up sometime in the future to talk more. Jack is sincere about confronting Betty, and Mike definitely wants to hear about the results of his counsel.

Mike is excited by the interaction; and, as Jack walks away, the orb above his head lightens a couple more shades of gray. ~

Donna is ready when Jack departs, and she comes and pounces on Mike from out of nowhere!

Chapter 21

Opportunities for Good or Evil



Tom Adani has been greatly blessed to become the husband of, who is now, Sing Adani. Sing is originally from China and came to America through a college exchange program. Sing was led to the Lord through a Christian friend just months before she met Tom. Her friend had brought her to a Christian conference where Sing was amazed by the great many mature Christians there; and, that is where she met Tom while each independently looked at the books that were offered.

Tom and Sing's mutual love of reading is what the Lord used to start them in a lifelong journey of careful consideration and communication with one another. After what actually felt like a relatively slow and cautioned process, they were married within a year.

Sing, who is an extremely small woman, has been enduring the great trial of a myriad of mysterious health issues that regularly keep her severely humbled. A wide variety of physical symptoms are constantly coming and going, while any and all trips to receive medical help never really yield any concrete results.

Sing has been through many different tests, and if she had listened to the doctors, she would be on ten different medications by now. The process has taught her, and Tom, a lot about the medical process in America and has strengthened their resolve to heavily guard themselves against unwise medical council even (and especially) among so-called professionals; and so, they spend a lot of time studying to educate themselves about their health concerns.

Sing has graduated pre-med' and is very medically minded; but, her methods are much more naturally oriented, as she learned from her upbringing in China. In fact, Sing considers the overall system of American health care to be atrocious in many ways; but, she has been regularly finding no other option but to endure it. She has seen unprofessionalism abound in the standard health care system: from the prideful attitudes and lack of proper individual consideration from many doctors, to the shoddy practices of some nurses, to the combination of the two with the often discombobulated secretaries. Sing could write a book on the subject, and she very much wishes she could be a part of reforming the system somehow.

Because of the variety and depth of the physical suffering Sing goes through, and her constant mental torment over not understanding what's happening to her, and her wondering why the Lord isn't answering their pleas for healing, Sing's emotional state is often shaken. She is still a relatively young Christian and she still struggles regularly with her old ways that reliably arise during the worst of the trials—which is usually when the Devil attacks.

Though Sing had projected a career in medicine, all career plans have been halted by her own undiagnosed illness. And besides the occasional private odd-job she can do for friends and family, Sing isn't really able to work a regular job in her condition. Tom doesn't like leaving her home alone

when he has to go to work, but often it is all he can do. Sometimes he gets his cousin Ajita to come and help Sing throughout the day.

Ajita is a woman close to Sing's age, and although they are now like family, sometimes the struggle sets them at odds in the way only a family relationship can be. Ajita is not a Christian, and although Tom and Sing hope to reach her (and have been trying and praying), she has a very independent mentality, and the spirit of error has her well under wraps. This difference, in and of itself, creates friction; and, Tom does not like yoking with her for help, but they often don't see any other choice.

This weekend is a rarity: Tom has to go out of town for business for three days. They have arranged for Ajita to stay for two nights and the three days, which everyone knows will be taxing; but, it's better than the alternative.

Tom can only afford to pay Ajita a small amount for her help, and so he and Sing feel very obligated to her, and do everything they can to make her stay comfortable. This means that she can control the TV as long as it isn't overtly sinful; but, the constant worldly racket riddled with sin, great and small, is vexing to the Spirit. Just the presence of an unbeliever still living behind the veil is disturbing, and so Tom and Sing often pray to the Lord about her.

Ajita will sometimes talk about spiritual things, and seems relatively open, but there is no real connection that God's absolute Truth is completely contradictory to her new-age naturalistic/Hindu worldview. She will entertain the thoughts of God in one minute, then, be entranced by a secular talk show that revolves around gossip and lust, the next.

Sing tries to find tactful ways to address the sin in the TV that Ajita watches, but Ajita quickly blows her off with the justifications of a worldly mentality that is obviously the norm' and has all the weight of popular consensus behind it.

Sing tries to stay in the Spirit as best as she can, but oftentimes she gets broken down by her physical illness and the constant pressure of *the world* and its sin in her face. And when she and Ajita clash, she often resorts to her B.C. mentality, which is her deeply ingrained, default position that is a regular temptation because it seems to be the only thing Ajita understands.

Plus, Sing spends the majority of her time researching her medical issues, and sometimes it limits her quality time with the Lord, leaving her vulnerable to the flesh. All this, on top of her frequent worry about what potentially devastating illness she might be facing, and what it may mean for her future, creates a spirit of anxiety and fear that is antithetical to the Holy Spirit.

It is a lot to deal with, and Tom knows it. He hates leaving her, but doesn't know how to avoid it on occasion. He spends a lot of time contemplating options, but the reality of supporting the two of them without her working is very limiting.

When he's gone, Tom does all he can to maintain a phone connection wherever he is—which is anywhere he can be on his cell phone. He has extra batteries and chargers to keep his precious connection to his other half who is under such constant duress. They have unlimited phone minutes and so they can go so far, sometimes, as to even sleep on the phone.



Sing is on the phone with Tom as he awaits his plane in the airport. Ajita knocks at the door and Sing speaks up, "Come on in Ajita."

~ The door opens and Ajita carries in her two heavy bags over her overweight shoulders. Ajita's spiritual-orb is a murky-brown with what seems to be a mix of all colors swirling slowly about. There's a dark mist enshrouding her body, and looming over her head.

As she enters, two forms follow her in. They are obviously demons and they hunch over to fit in through the door way. A haze surrounds them as they step into the apartment and curiously look around. They are casual, like nothing ever surprises them and they've seen it all.

The first is more bulky than the second; and, what at first appears to be massive muscle, actually turns out to be a grotesque mixture of muscle and mostly fat. In fact, as he moves, the weight of his mass slops around his skeleton more than would be expected. He's gross, and looks like he's never had a bath or ever even been caught in the rain after a millennia of fighting in the dirt. His rounded skull is hairless and his sunken eyes dark. He has no form of ears, just bean-shaped holes in the sides of his head.

The second demon heads in the opposite direction in the apartment, as if to make some space between he and the other. This wicked spirit is the color of overused, cold dishwater that has no remnant of anything clean left in it. He is drooling all over as he walks around checking the place out. He's of a heavier sort as well; even though, as he moves, his bones seem to show their place from within. His feet are disproportionally large, as is his jaw; and, his limbs are noticeably uneven, making him lumber awkwardly with each step. His scrappy wings are folded up tightly behind him; but, one is badly deformed as if it has been burned, and it's questionable if it can even be used for its originally intended purpose.

Ajita makes herself at home without interrupting Sing's phone conversation—she knows what she's dealing with.

The demons take their time getting close to Sing, for her blood-red orb screams at them in a way they abhor. They never look directly at it. The first one spends a fair time at the window scanning around as if looking for something.

As Ajita clicks on the TV, the dark cloud in, on, and around her, seems to be extending toward the television. Ajita starts scanning around for something to watch.

The second devil approaches Sing's bed and seems to be studying her and the phone she's on. He lugs over toward the phone and slowly drops one hand into its base. Then, he extends his long arm to the handset that's against Sing's ear, and lets his hand merge into it. He then remains still and soon closes his eyes.

The other repulsive spirit seems to be satisfied with the view, and eventually turns to watch his cohort from across the room. Nothing else seems to be of interest and so he works his way to the other side of the bed.

Ajita, still scanning, is narrowing down her options. Finally she stops on The Maury Povich Show, where three women are fighting over one man and the crowd is in a total uproar. The chaos and sin poisons the room immediately and Sing sighs in her mind over it with a secondary thought that's subsequent to the conversation with Tom.

The servant of Satan with his hands inside the phone opens his eyes and nods at his partner in spiritual crime. The other one manipulates himself up onto the bed right next to Sing, and slowly leans over, putting his head completely inside of hers.

The hairs on the back of Sing's neck tingle, but she attributes it to her nerve issues that regularly come and go. She already doesn't like having Ajita there, but she knows it is for her benefit that she is.

The spirit inside Ajita encourages her to turn the volume up, and so up it goes, until it is almost unbearably loud. Sing wonders why she always does that, even after she asks her to turn it down so many times. The ruckus noises

quickly destroy any element of peace and quiet; and, the sad thing is, Sing knows it won't stop for three days—it makes her want to cry.

The treacherous spirits sit perfectly still, as they listened to Sing and Tom's conversation.

"My head is starting to ache." Sing says.

Now, what Tom replies and what Sing hears are two different things, because of the effects of the two demons.

"Oh no." Tom says. But all Sing hears is "Oh . . ."

"He's distracted." The phone tapping demon says to her. "He's not paying attention to you, even when you're sick."

Sing figures he is probably just distracted by an announcement from the airlines or something.

"He's noticing other women," the demon speaks, "other women who are healthy and strong and happy."

Sing is beginning to get annoyed and tries to continue. "Yeah, my head is starting to hurt and my back is burning again."

"Sorry honey. Are you going to have Ajita squirt your back?" Tom says with concern; but the manipulation of the demon spirit inside her head makes Ajita think that he has an attitude like he is bothered by having to hear about her issues.

"He's not interested in your suffering; he just wants to get on the plane and off the phone so he can enjoy some peace for a change." The wicked spirit ill-advises.

This ministering of evil jumpstarts a conflict in Sing's mind, where a struggle begins with her flesh.

~ Sing is lying in a hospital bed, with her, only slightly smaller, flesh lying in an identical bed next to her.

Sing's flesh speaks, "Sing, why do you allow your husband to treat you so disrespectfully? He's leaving you for an entire weekend, with his unbelieving cousin, in your worst state; and yet, he's not even able to show you some love and compassion before he leaves?"

Sing turns to look out the window and sees a jet flying in the opposite direction. The thought makes her feel all alone.

Her flesh grows a bit larger under the clean hospital blanket and sheet. ~

"I don't know?" Sing says to Tom in answer to his question, instinctively recoiling from intimacy.

"Oh, it's time to board honey, I better get going." Tom says kind of quickly. He has been on the other side of the airport, where it was quieter, facing the window until he turned around and realized he was the last one to board.

With the help of the demons, this hits Sing as highly unusual, because she figures he wouldn't have to go as soon as they started boarding. She finds this to support her impression that Tom is being selfish and insensitive, as well as uncaring and unloving.

"Alright," Sing says disappointed, "How long's it going to take 'til you can call me back?"

"The flight is only about forty-five minutes, so hopefully it'll be just over an hour or so." Tom says, immediately realizing that he is hoping for the best case scenario and probably underestimating the time it will take to get back to her.

But, before he can adjust his comment, Sing says, "OK, I'll talk to you then. Bye."

"OK, bye." Tom says, wondering if he has made a mistake that will be disappointing or even cause unnecessary worry for Sing.

Sing leans over to hang up the phone as the one demon pulls his hands back out of it; and, the other leans back out of her head.

They both start ministering evil to her by saying things like, “He’s totally oblivious to your needs. He acts like he doesn’t even care what you’re going through. He’ll probably sit next to a beautiful woman and find the peace of forgetfulness in her during the flight. Yeah, he’ll really enjoy yucking it up happy-go-lucky for a change. Why would he even want to come back? This marriage isn’t all it’s cracked up to be.” And so on they spend their time doing what they do best—what they’ve done for thousands of years in their choice of rebellion.

~ In Sing’s subconscious, she gazes out the window as the plane gets smaller and smaller, disappearing completely, leaving nothing but an entrail that slowly begins to dissipate on the horizon.

Sing’s flesh speaks up again, “You know, you don’t really have any authority over him. You really should try to do a better job of disciplining him and making him respect you as a woman. Maybe he thinks that you are one of these women he can step on and use and control to do his bidding. Many American men think that about Asian women, you know?”

“No, he’s not like that.” Sing says. But the words still linger.

“Well, take note, if you don’t hear from him in an hour, it will be a good sign that he’s out there enjoying himself and not worried about you in the least.” Her flesh says.

Sing feels sad and alone as she stares out the window. ~

Back on her bed, before Ajita even notices she’s off the phone, the demon spirits bombard Sing with disastrous thoughts like: “He’s never coming back. Why would he want to? You’re nothing but a problem for him. He doesn’t even like being around you anymore, that’s why he went away. Something’s

changed in him and he'll never be the same. Life as you know it is changing before your very eyes." On and on they go, as they work together with Sing's flesh.

Sing turns and looks toward Ajita and the sin-box, she cringes at the thought of Ajita's worldly entertainment oozing sin into her domain for three days. Her eyes water, but tears don't fall.

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It is almost two hours before Tom is able to call Sing; during that time she has endured Ajita's TV of sin and noise, as well as the pestering demons who continue to barrage her with evil thoughts, as well as amplify her health problems.

When Tom calls back, Sing is very upset wondering what took him so long. When he tries to explain how the plane was delayed from even getting out of the gate, to landing and taxiing, Sing finds it all hard to believe—because one of the demons is a spirit of unbelief—and her flesh has been manipulated and strengthened in her weakness.

Sing has been so continually distracted, that she hasn't prayed or opened up the Book. She has grown weary, and as they say, "when it rains it pours," for she is also beginning her P.M.S.

Tom is thrown on his heels by Sing's attitude, and he has to refute his own fleshly temptation to be defensive, though he has to defend his reality to try to help her understand his innocence and compassion.

The demons are ready for this challenge, for they have become masters of so many kinds of deceit.

As Sing and Tom talk, no matter what each other is saying, it just seems like they are on two different pages, and that they just aren't connecting at all for some reason, like there is a wall between them.

~~~~~

Tom and Sing went through a process of trying to let their issues with one another go, but the same sort of things kept happening throughout the next day. By that time neither of them were happy with each other. No matter what Tom said, he felt it was being taken wrong by a bad attitude; and, whatever Sing said, she felt she was being ignored and undermined with a bad attitude.

Many times, in the height of frustration, Tom prays fervently to the Lord for help; most often, desperate and simple prayers for the Lord to reconcile them to their former peace. Of course, Sing never sees this fruit of the Spirit and she never feels like praying (due to the influence of the wicked forces around her); and, she assumes Tom is just way out of the Spirit and doesn't even think of praying either.

Several times, after Tom was pushed to his breaking point in their conflict, he retaliated in his flesh. This is when the demons would let his communication come through with amplification, and then they would add to it with their words of discouragement, in their heavy spirit of deceit.

Somehow the spirits were able to stop Sing from hearing certain things; as well as, make her perceive that the attitude he had behind it was so negative. The situation kept escalating to the point that they even started talking about their entire compatibility being in question.

Tom managed to make it through his business requirements, but it was the most difficult work he had ever done, due to his emotional feelings from

the breakdown with Sing. Sing had been so mad and disappointed with him, in such a short time, and some of the things she said were really out of character for her.

~~~~~

On the last day of his trip, Tom is in a quiet place in the airport on the phone with Sing, as they continue to clash and hit the wall like the angry winter ocean against the high cliffs of Northern California. They just can't seem to come to a mutual understanding. In fact, they just can't seem to agree on anything—accept that they both feel extremely slighted.

Throughout the nightmare weekend, Sing would often try to address Tom's attitude seeking to make sense of it. Then, when Tom would tell her of his reasons why she had made him so mad by certain things she said, she thought that he was exaggerating and even making things up, because she hadn't said some of the things he said she did. Or so she thought.

~~~~~

Sing has closed her bedroom door again, as her raised voice to Tom is getting worse and worse. The two demons are once again positioned as before: one with his hands in the phone base and headset, and the other with his head completely inside of hers.

The demon in the phone continues to manipulate the phone transmissions as well as minister his wicked ideas to her audibly, while the demon with his head inside of hers is guiding and directing her thoughts and her words to Tom. Both of the wicked spirits are enjoying themselves immensely; and, they can almost taste the victory of disaster, that is, the breaking up of

a marriage—especially a Christian marriage. Their pride grows with every bit of anger, frustration, and confusion.

“This is not a Christian man! No Christian man would even do this to his worst enemy, no less someone he claims to love?” The filthy ministering spirit says to Sing.

~ In Sing’s fleshly struggle, her flesh is now twice her size sitting on the bed as Sing is feeling worse and worse. The heart monitor is now beeping off the chart and she feels as though she might just fall into cardiac arrest. She is shrinking and sunk down in her bed with the covers up almost over her eyes.

“You better do something, like now, or he’s going to ruin your whole life!” Sing’s flesh demands. ~

The demons continue their dirty work, as Ajita is engrossed in a “love scene” in a movie (that has nothing to do with love)—now, the sin of fornication and adultery, not only infecting and influencing Ajita’s mind and heart, it permeates the space of the apartment, both visually and audibly, creating an entire atmosphere of sin. The spirit in Ajita has done well for his cause.

All of the monstrous spirits are very proud of the work they’ve done in such a short time. All of the factors of Sing’s fleshly weakening have advanced their progress rapidly. The great accomplishment of breaking up a marriage is a highly exalted prize, and the smell of it going up in flames is filling their nostrils like smoke from the pit of Hell. This makes them foam at the mouth, literally.

The demon inside of Sing’s head is perfectly in sync with her, very much out of the Spirit, thoughts and words; so much so, that he is able to speak through her and even block her mind from recognizing his words, either now or later.

Tom finds even his faith under attack by Sing, and he is blown away by it. *How can she attack my faith after all that we’ve been through?* He thinks to

himself. It was like an attack on the Lord Himself. He is utterly being destroyed, and feels more and more helpless. He can't understand how Sing could treat him so disrespectfully; and then, he finally gives in to his flesh too.

"I wish I could divorce you?" Tom says spitefully, knowing that he is not permitted, by God, to divorce her. The frustration has mounted so greatly, over such a short period of time, it is unbelievable, but that is how he feels in the moment.

That, the demons let Sing hear naturally. This sends her over the edge and she yells at him in her anger and frustration, "OUT OF ALL YOUR STUDYING, YOU'RE NOT LEARNING ANYTHING!"

At that moment, an angel reaches out from beside Tom and touches the phone that's pressed against his ear.

Tom, trying to make sense of the whole situation, miraculously becomes significantly more objective, and as he contemplates her words, "*out of all you're studying you're not learning anything,*" he feels a distinctly different meaning behind them. He remembers all of his studying of demons and spiritual warfare. He thinks about how completely unreasonable the whole thing has been, and that maybe it was from wicked spiritual entities. Then, the phrase, "*you're not learning anything,*" hits him, as if it were coming from the angel, who is expecting him to grow by recognizing the situation for what it is, and learn in the experience.

He then says to Sing, "You know, you sound like you're under spiritual attack. Can we pray in the Name of Jesus?"

There is dead silence on the other end of the phone. The long pause makes him realize this might not be her doing, and since the pause was so unheard of in their recent heated communication, he asks again, "Do you want to pray?"

After another short pause, he hears Sing say with an odd difficulty, “I don’t know?”

That was another especially weird response. After he ponders what to do momentarily, he just goes ahead and says it: “Any wicked spirits, in the Name of Jesus Christ, be gone.”

At that moment, both demons instantly recoil out from Sing’s body and phone, stumbling in shock before getting a solid footing to flee. One shoots out the window in a flash, while the other immediately dives through the wall, disappearing.

For Tom, there is a static and then they are cut off. He knows immediately that he may very well have solved the problem. Was this the answer to his prayers?

He calls Sing back, and she picks up. “Hello.” She says, already sounding like she is in her right mind.

“Hello, Sing.” Tom says curiously.

“Hi.” Sing says casually, as if nothing happened.

Tom can tell in her voice that she is different. He, therefore, asks, “How do you feel?”

There is a momentary pause, as Sing finds the question a bit odd, and then she answers, “Oh, my head’s hurting, and my legs are shaking a bit.”

Tom knows, immediately, that her response to how she feels—being physical and not emotional—is just the answer he is looking for.

“Sing, do you remember what just happened?” He says.

“Well . . . I don’t know, kind of.” Sing replies.

“Do you remember telling me I’m not even a Christian?” Tom asks boldly.

There is another pause, “No, what do you mean?”

Tom went on to explain everything from his objective point of view, and they both felt that their communication was restored to its normal, loving, way; this gave them both hope and confidence that what Tom realized was the truth. They went on in awe of what had just transpired, and it was mind blowing to think that somehow they were just being attacked by demons and that they figured it out and acted appropriately.

When the demons left in a flash, the demon saturating Ajita withdrew deep inside of her, in its natural reaction to the others' rapid departure. He hadn't heard the command directly, and he was in an uncovered, willing host, so he stayed right where he was; but, he was aware of the potential danger.

The demon's best trick is that they are unseen; and so, they are free to cause debauchery from behind the scenes without ever being exposed. It is rare that someone actually gets on to them, and it's especially rare when someone actually knows what to do, and it's even rarer when they actually follow through and do it. Most demons have existed for thousands of years without ever once even being noticed consciously, and especially without having to leave or follow orders by a representative of that one Name that is above all names.

The demon with the problematic wing, the one who dove through the wall, ended up rolling into the apartment next door. As he hit the far wall and slumped onto the floor, he noticed two other fierce looking demons staring down at him knowingly.

Tom and Sing are reconciled perfectly, and they are more excited than ever to carry on with their experience together; and, to vow to be prepared for any kind of attack like that again. They both agree that whenever any conflict arises, they will pray together in the Name of Jesus.

They talked most of the way home this time, Tom just ignored the rules about talking on his cell phone on the plane, and used his earpiece whenever he had service.

When he made it home, he and Sing hugged and held each other close as they talked into the night.

“The Name of Jesus is our weapon; even the *Name* of Jesus has power. We must not be afraid to use it, for He is the King and we are under His authority. To any wicked spirits in my apartment, in the Name of Jesus Christ, be gone.” Tom says with confidence, getting used to saying the words.

The three demons next door shutter, turning away and quickly cowering down on one knee as if a bomb is about to go off and the shrapnel might hit them. They cover their little slotted ear holes and close their big bulgy eyes in fear.

Chapter 22

The Fire



Ricky has been getting used to a busy life of fulfilling his college studies and redeeming the time for the Lord.¹⁵⁹ School is full of knowledge and learning, and Ricky greatly values it, but he has found that his mind is more and more focused on eternal matters—learning and growing in the faith about spiritual things and God’s absolute Truth.¹⁶⁰ Ricky has become proficient at supplementing his free time with faithful pursuits; he constantly carries his iPod filled with materials he can listen to whenever he has a free moment. He likes to listen to an audio Bible regularly, and he’s learned that the “abundant life” that Jesus came to give us,¹⁶¹ stems directly from God’s Word: the living Word that is sharper than a two-edged sword.¹⁶²

159 – Colossians 4:5

160 – Colossians 3:2

161 – John 10:10

162 – Hebrews 4:12

Ricky realizes his abundance of understanding and wisdom from God benefits in every way.¹⁶³ Not only does it help with school and communicating with others, it is constantly shedding light on invaluable spiritual matters.¹⁶⁴

Ricky has been constantly fluctuating between spending himself on faithful studies, and reserving time and energy for quality prayer with the Father. He realizes the increasing prayer, in quantity and quality, is becoming more and more of a necessity and blessing.¹⁶⁵ Ricky has established the routine of getting up in the middle of the night and praying in the calm, quiet hours of darkness.¹⁶⁶ He feels more able to think clearly without distractions in his mind from the busy day before or the day ahead—even though this practice is flanked by a significant amount of time in prayer before bed and first thing in the morning.¹⁶⁷

Like sharpening the axe before cutting down a tree, he has come to understand that by seeking the Lord at the beginning of everything is always the goal. And then subsequently thanking the Lord at the end of everything goes hand in hand.¹⁶⁸

This night, Ricky finds himself exhausted from the increasing workload at school, his zealous pursuit of things above, and his growing burden for the lost. He looks forward to the day of rest that's just two days away.

As Ricky finishes his prayers and gets comfortable in bed, his mind is racing with thoughts of those people around him that he knows are not following the Lord. Like his professors, who have a certain smugness about

163 – 1 Timothy 4:8

164 – Colossians 1:9

165 – 1 Thessalonians 5:17

166 – Matthew 6:6, Luke 5:16, Mark 6:46

167 – Deuteronomy 6:7, Psalm 5:3

168 – 1 Thessalonians 5:18

them and an attitude that they are the all-knowing teachers of the world;¹⁶⁹ but who are, in reality, completely ignorant to the ultimate reality of the world and what will be the consequences of their disobedience to God's Word and their consciences.¹⁷⁰ Or his fellow students who are constantly running around having a good time, looking for parties and drinking in sin like water.¹⁷¹ Even some of his immediate family members give him condescending responses to his addressing things like eternal Salvation.¹⁷² Or his neighbors, that don't stop on either side of his parents' house, but rather extends down the block and all the way around the world—the world filled with strangers and a bustling city where you might pass thousands of people on any given day without saying a word to any of them.¹⁷³

It is all overwhelming at times, and though Ricky is becoming proficient at starting conversations and passing out tracts, he often feels so small in a wide world of lost souls—souls too busy to stop and consider the Truths of God—souls too distracted to take a look at the True things of value—souls too caught up fulfilling their own wills to contemplate the will of the God who created them.¹⁷⁴

How can he reach them? How can he be more efficient and effective for the Lord? These are the thoughts that increasingly plague the mind of young Ricky in the night.

The next thing Ricky knows, he's waking up to an exceptionally nice morning. Sun beams shoot through his window, creating a brightness that lifts him out of bed with ease in a joy to start the day. The birds are singing

169 – 1 Corinthians 8:1, Jeremiah 9:23-24

170 – Romans 1:22

171 – Job 15:16

172 – Matthew 10:36

173 – Matthew 22:39

174 – Luke 14:15-23

loudly and sweetly outside; and, as he looks out the window he notices a perfect rainbow in the not too far distance. Ricky smiles and is happy to go for a run down to the park.

As he picks up the pace out of his parents' driveway he feels like he's floating on air, bouncing and striding in the pleasure of a wonderful day made for enjoyment. The air is refreshing in the morning and it's a perfectly cool temperature against his skin, as he knows the day will warm up as it goes.

Ricky notices a car that passes him on the street. There's something unusual about the car, and as he looks closer he realizes there's a certain smoke rising up from under the chassis. It's not coming from the engine, but rather under the base of the vehicle. Then he is surprised to see all of the tires ignite in flames. He watches intently as the inside of the car begins to fill up with smoke and turns down the next street.

Ricky would like to help them but they are already too far ahead and now out of sight going in a different direction, so he continues his run.

Up ahead two other runners are coming down the sidewalk toward him going the opposite direction. As he looks at their faces in passing, he sees that they are very happy to be running too, and they smile brightly at him and nod. And, just as they pass, he catches a flicker of light below them; and, as he feels a sensation of heat on his lower leg, he turns his head in passing to find that sparks are shooting out from under their feet and flames are building around the soles of their shoes. Ricky sees the flames rising around their nice running shoes and he is enamored by the sight of the flames that seem to be rising up their legs. The runners don't notice at all and keep going, bounding off on their way.

Ricky, now approaching the boundaries of the park, is stopped by a quaint little house that looks like it has been diligently maintained with decades

of love and attention. It's the nicest little house he has ever seen, with an immaculate yard and paint job. There are all sorts of wonderful decorations throughout the yard, right up to the wonderful, picture perfect, white picket fence.

Ricky notices what, at first, he thinks is some shiny decoration reflecting the sun directly into his eyes, but upon closer examination is a flame burning out through the skirting of the house. The foundation is on fire and Ricky knows he has to do something.

He wastes no time hurdling the fence and getting up the steps to the front door. He hesitates for a moment and knocks somewhat intently. A lovely older couple answers the door, both with joyful smiles.

"Your house is on fire, you have to get to safety!" Ricky says quickly.

"Oh, look at that honey, it's a young boy out for a jog!" The man says to his wife pleasantly. "Would you like to come in for a rest and some lemonade?" He inquires.

"Oh . . . no thank you. I was just passing by and I noticed there's a fire under your house!" Ricky replies.

"Isn't that sweet!" The lady says to her husband. "He's concerned for our well being, awe."

"Yeah, you should come with me; I'll help you get out." Ricky responds.

"Oh sure, well, ya' know sonny, we've lived here for almost fifty years now, and we have things quite under control. Thank you so much though. Bye, bye." He says, reaching out and patting Ricky on the head before shutting the door in his face.

Ricky's jogging into the park and the preserved nature is really vibrant this day. People are fishing in the lake and there are animals teaming all over the place. Herds of deer are in the meadow with a large number of people

standing around them watching and tossing them food. There are turtles floating on logs by some fishermen who are having a great time pulling in shiny fish after shiny fish.

Bikers and all sorts of outdoor enthusiasts pass by on the path, each one looking like they must be especially passionate about their particular exercise and sport. They all have the latest specialty gear that makes them look like professionals, and many of them are constantly referencing the latest technology that gives them a plethora of information pertinent to their activity.

Ricky glances up above the lake through the opening in the trees, and he sees a jet airplane flying; but, something's wrong with it. He stops, focuses close in on it, and clearly sees the jet engines explode and catch on fire, leaving black entrails behind them instead of white ones. The plane loses altitude drastically as it flies out of sight.

There's a fair going on in the park and it is a grand one! *It must be a new holiday?* Ricky thinks to himself as he's running by. *There sure is a lot of beauty in the world, and exciting things to do here on earth!* Ricky finds himself thinking.

Ricky looks back out onto the lake. The lake is immense, like an ocean. In the middle of it he sees a huge, beautiful new shining ocean-liner charging through the water. He can see people on the decks enjoying themselves with full service of all kinds of sensations: food, drink, music, dancing, games, a pool with a slide, carnival rides, etc. Ahead of the ship is an iceberg and suddenly the boat comes to an abrupt halt as the bow slams into, and up onto, the massive chunk of frozen H₂O amidst the rest of the warm water. He sees the name of the ship: *Titanic*.

The people on the massive boat are so enjoying themselves that they don't even notice they have stopped. *They must all be intoxicated.* Ricky

thinks. There are various shadows under the water milling around the ship and Ricky knows they are great white sharks. The ship is sinking and fire bursts out around its hull at the water line. As the waterline drops and the water rises, so do the flames; and, in a quick moment it sinks while still on fire. Ricky can see the giant oblong ball of fire still fully blazing beneath the surface of the lake; and, he knows it's sinking to the very bottom while still on fire. As he looks into the water, he can see that all of the people are still celebrating deep under the water. He doesn't want to watch and turns away, continuing on the path.

The path is increasingly busy with recreators, to the point that Ricky finds himself often cramped for space and dodging all of the people focused on their quality time with themselves and nature. BMXers pull wheelies and race their friends flying by pedaling like mad on the dirt banks along the side. Street cyclists whiz by within inches in their yellow spandex and aerodynamic sunglasses. Skaters are constantly clacking along pulling tricks and slipping out, shooting their skate boards off in every direction. Kid's on Big-Wheels hog up the path inconsiderately, sliding e-brake stops all sporadically. Unicyclers pass going the opposite direction, some on six foot unicycles, and some even juggling as they go, wobbling all over and randomly stopping while going back and forth in place to stay balanced.

All sorts of joggers, runners, walkers and speed walkers, skippers, and hopscotchers enjoy going around and around the lake. There are motocrossers off to one side of the path on a track making a loud racket, trail riders serpentine in and out of the trees, freestyle mountain bikers airing out the gaps over the trail on elevated board walks that launch into the lake. Four wheelers and side-by-sides have a specific area designated for them. Enduro motocrossers have a special track with log jams, mud bogs, and boulder piles

to navigate. Extreme pogo stickers bounce around like Tigger, to and fro, doing front flips over trash cans and park benches, as a gaggle of motorized razor scooter riding kids buzz around all over, trying 360 tail whips and failing. Of course, the growing number of Segways takes up a lot of room.

Stand-up and sit-down jet skiers rally around on the lake, wakeboarders flip around their tow-ropes gapping from wake to wake, and water-skiers practice their pyramid stacks and jumps off the ramp, dodging the parasail boats. Someone's even got one of those jet propelled fully enclosed submergible mechanical dolphins that can go underwater for two minutes, launch thirty feet out of the water, and reach eighty-miles-per-hour on top of the water. Ricky's amazed that there are no collisions out on the lake or around him on the trail.

Sky divers are constantly coming in out of the sky, landing where ever they want to, trying to do something new and improved each time. They take off from the small plane and ultralight park runway that is constantly cycling winged inventions of all kinds. They tow gliders and hang-glidiers high up in the sky and let them slowly glide down or ride the thermals to their fill. There's bungee jumping set up off of a crane over an air-bag near the full spectrum of conventional sports area and action sports specific parks.

Ricky looks ahead of his feet on the path, and feels, once again, a strange heat on his lower leg. He looks around and sees that everyone's feet and bike tires on the path are catching on fire all around. Soon they're streaking by him all ablaze near the asphalt surface, and he recognizes even the path is burning now.

Ricky jumps off to the side of the wide path and watches as the flames rise on everyone who's racing by. He has to do something and he starts yelling and jumping up and down waving his arms.

“HEY! WATCH OUT, THE PATH IS ON FIRE!!! STOP, GET OFF THE PATH!!!”

Ricky pleads to all of the passers by.

“Stop yelling man! There’s a designated place for jumping-jacks in the auditorium.” A man on one of those eight-foot-long reclining bikes says rudely as he passes down low in the flames next to his buddy who’s lying on his stomach, pedaling with his hands.

Extreme exercisers pumping their weird exercise bikes with their legs both forward pushing their seats up while they push and pull the straight handle bars back and forth say, “Stop judging us. We know exactly what we’re doing, and we have the right to love it! It’s a free country; but, you don’t have a right to do this, we’ll report you!”

“NO, NO, IT’S ON FIRE! IT’S GETTING WORSE, YOU MUST WATCH OUT!!!”

Ricky yells again.

The cacophony of action sports continues all around and no one else even notices the flames. In fact, Ricky looks over just in time to see a whole slough of circus performers juggling fire sticks and hoops. Behind them, a modern day Evel Knievel jumps his dirt bike over a football field and through a flaming circle; while a Johnny Cash impersonator (or is it Johnny Cash himself?), appropriately, sings “Ring of Fire” on a stage off to the side.

Suddenly, hail starts falling from the sky mixed with fire. It even sets the surface of the lake ablaze. The large hail and fireballs are landing on everything and Ricky begins to panic, trying to find a safe place.

He hurdles the chaotic path in a blind leap of faith (a freestyle runner yells, “Yeah!”) and runs toward the trees, which are already starting to burn at the tops. Quickly he reaches some cover under in the thick forest, which will certainly be ablaze soon. He can feel the heat sensations all around, and smoke is beginning to cloud the air as he runs for his life.

Ricky turns to look back out at the people to see what's happening to them. They are all burning now in their activity of choice. They're beginning to feel the fire, but not really. Their tires are melting and each one is in a quandary as to why their favorite toy is malfunctioning. Tires burst and riders quickly drop to their knees and rip off their portable pumps and desperately try to pump them back up, to no avail. The ramp on the lake crumbles as a pyramid stack of ten water skiers try to hit it and only crumble and fall into the weak, charred burning remnant of its frame. Parachutes rapidly go up in smoke as the skydivers release their primary chutes and fall, once again, from the sky pulling their emergency chutes, which also catch fire and quickly disintegrate making them drop like flies and hit the burning ground disintegrating themselves.

All the motorized sports enthusiasts find their engines exploding under them, sending them flying off in random directions, losing limbs. And though the devastation is catastrophic, everyone seems to be most focused on trying to maintain their passionate fun and their different tools for it. But in the end, as they desperately try to fix their broken toys, they all crumble into ash and fall to the ground charred to a crisp.

Ricky is horrified and looks up at the trees. They are nearly completely on fire now and he takes off for the safety of the paved city streets. After dodging falling, flaming branches and trees, he bursts through a burning bush, stumbling and rolling onto the streets.

Ahh, safety! Ricky thinks as his tumble slows to a stop. He looks up to see a road full of fancy sports cars, trucks, and street motorcycles in the same treacherous condition as the park goes. A Lamborghini engine blows out of its hood, hundreds of feet into the air, sending the car careening off in a flat spin, hitting the sticky, burning tires of a jacked up Ford truck. The truck

tires peel off as its axel crunches down on the Lambo', flipping the truck into a roll over the top of it.

Ricky leaps out of the street and bounces/scrapes across the burning sidewalk onto a perfectly manicured lawn that's also burning. Ricky, now on his knees, and not being affected by the fire, observes the unfathomable chaos that is exceedingly beyond any C.G. effects movie he's ever seen. He looks over the street destruction toward the city and his heart melts as he sees the sky scrapers engulfed completely in flames, sending smoke high into the sky.

The sky itself is becoming darker and darker as the smoke, from what must be the entire world, fills the air. The tallest sky scraper, now like a burning match that's burned thoroughly through, creaks and totters and falls toward the next tallest building, that is equally as weakened by the fire. They crumble into falling charred fragments and ash as it starts a chain reaction of all the buildings in the city center that begin to collapse in on one another like dominoes.

The total devastation is utterly incomprehensible. All of the people everywhere must be dead or dying. The sky then becomes black and the yellow light of the remaining live flames stick out dramatically in horrid contrast, while the majority of everything in view is now smoldering embers of deep red. It's hard to breathe normally and the smell of sulfur is distinct. The immensity of the infinite loss washes over and through Ricky like a tidal wave of fiery death through his utterly fearful being.

As the deepest comprehension of terror and utter loss washes through Ricky's mind and body, he is startled awake in his bed. He's sweaty and shocked to be instantly thrown into such a contrasted environment. He realizes the reality that it was a dream, but the feelings of it still grip his soul.

After Ricky's eyes adjust to the bright light and he calms down a bit, he looks toward the window and sees that it's going to be a beautiful day!

Chapter 23

Fish On!



~ **A**n angel is standing at the window looking out at nothing in particular, his presence magnifies the early morning light that's coming into the room.

"Edna." Another angel says over the elderly woman sleeping peacefully in her bed. ~

Slowly Edna begins to stir, and as she opens her eyes, she realizes it's early. She looks at her clock, and it's happened again: she finds herself waking just minutes before her alarm would go off. She smiles in her heart at the thought of another day in the Lord's care, and she flips off the alarm before praying.

After an hour of prayer (her normal routine), Edna feels good about starting the day. Though her flesh would still choose to sleep, she knows that she will certainly miss her opportunity to do something of eternal value. ~ So, in her inner court of confronting her flesh, who wants to stay bed, she simply stomps on her flesh's foot and makes her yelp and wake up. ~

Norm is not surprised to see Edna at the bus stop, it isn't the first time she got up early to ride with him and fellowship through one of his circuits that takes most of the day. He knows it is a taxing endeavor for her, but he also knows how beneficial it is *for her*.

Edna was very excited to see Norm repent and believe, and she is determined to do all that she can to help disciple him, especially because he is quite alone and doesn't really know any other Christians. Of course, they have been praying about that, but he lives on the other side of town and hasn't found a church yet.

"Good morning, Edna." Norm says with joy in his heart.

"Good morning, Norm. How are you?" Edna replies with love, as she carefully steps up onto the bus ~ flanked by a strong angel in front and one behind her. They all sit down, Edna right in her favorite spot in the front-row-isle, opposite Norm.

There are three demons on the bus further toward the back, and they all immediately recognize the other spirits. There are no other angels. ~

"I am positively blessed, ma'am!" Norm says with a somewhat foreign enthusiasm that he is still getting used to. "How is Edna this morning?"

"I am blessed as well, Norm. Where are we headed today?" She asks jokingly.

"Well, I thought we'd take a cruise down Straight Street and tour past downtown and out to our fabulous bus depot, and then maybe have a picnic and pull a u-turn and come back the opposite direction to get a feel for both sides of this very straight street!" He jokes back, playing the tour guide.

“Would you like to pray together as you drive? We could pray for anything that comes to mind.” Edna asks. It is her habit to pray at the beginning of an endeavor, to acknowledge God and hope for His guidance throughout it.

“Indeed!” Norm replies, though he is still getting used to the awkward feelings that come along with praying out loud in public, especially at his job. He knows he is free to engage with the passengers and talk freely if they talk to him, so he is at peace in his conscience about it and he knows that it is a light to anyone who may hear, even if they don’t realize it. Plus, his eyes and ears, being opened to the Truth of God’s Salvation, greatly value any outward expression of faith in a world overrun with sin.

“Heavenly Father,” Edna starts in a casual tone looking ahead down the street with Norm, only a couple people toward the front being able to hear if they are even paying attention, “thank You for this day that You have made. Thank You for another day to serve You with worship and praise in the mighty Name of Jesus.” Just hearing the Name of Jesus brings Norm’s mind to attention and he realizes it’s the highlight of his day so far.

Edna goes on praying with no desire to stop; they have all day, and nothing could be better than to pray with her disciple over Straight Street as they travel. She gives thanks for Norm and their divine adoption and all of the many blessings of the Lord. She then shifts to praying outright over the street and city, praying for random people they see, as well as businesses they pass. With no agenda, but to be a blessing to the world, Edna leads Norm in prayer and it opens his eyes spiritually to the simple good he can do in his job: to pray unceasingly over the city as he steadily trudges onward amongst the endless lost souls.

As the bus travels between stops, ~ there is something like a stream of smoke rising up from the cab of the bus. It’s not the dark smoke of a fire, but

rather a light, pure white smoke that rises like incense, wafting upward into the heavens. Like a divine steam train releasing a rising entrail up into the sky, the vision is clear for miles to the spirits who know what it means. It is an encouragement to angels who notice it in passing, and it is a repellant to the demons who only feel animosity at its sight.

At a stop, a man with a demon spirit flops into the front seat behind Norm, across from Edna. The spirit with him is immediately unnerved, and the man begins to feel increasingly uncomfortable as he looks out the window trying to ignore any annoyances from the presence of strangers, which he assumes must be the source.

One of the angels escorting Edna is sitting in the seat right next to the man, the other is against the window on the other side of Edna. The angel next to the man who smells like cigarettes and booze simply turns his head to look directly at him as the bus makes another stop, and in a word, simply says, "Move."

The man stands up quickly and walks to the back of the bus where he immediately feels more comfortable. The angel who had suggested the relocation takes his place ~ and right away a fresh faced young man, who seems eager for the day, sits where the angel was—in the first available seat behind Norm on the isle, across from Edna.

"Hello." He says, acknowledging both Norm and Edna at once.

Edna, who is already strangely attracted to the young man, consciously notices her feelings and offers a cordial, "Hello." in return. "It's a nice day isn't it?" Edna says, not wanting to waste any opportunity that might close doors of communication that could potentially lead in a multitude of ways toward the service of God. Edna has become accustomed to being friendly with strangers in order to see if she may be of use to the Lord for them. She knows how to at least get people to accept a Gospel tract from a nice old

lady if nothing else; but, riding the bus often affords enough time to swing conversations from the natural to the supernatural in order to further the Gospel personally. Edna is very aware of the opportunities of God and how quickly they can pass if one is not ready,¹⁷⁵ and she has learned how to assess a person's spiritual state quickly.

"Yes, it sure is!" The young man says enthusiastically.

"The Lord sure knows how to make 'em!" Edna says matter of factly.

The young man turns his head, at that, from beginning to look out the window at the day, back to the nice lady who just mentioned the Lord.

"Yes, the Lord sure does!" He speaks, not sure how else to express his interest in a faithful conversation with a potential unknown family member.

His comment makes Norm's ear's perk up, and he immediately begins to anticipate the blessings beyond coincidence that the Lord may have in store for them on another day's journey down Straight Street in the bus—where random interactions might not always be so random. Norm has come to embrace the unknown aspect of his job, knowing that the Lord could bring any type of person, with any type of issue into his presence, where he may be given a chance to serve in one way or another, though he isn't always sure what to say. It's these types of interactions that make his days fulfilling, and give him experiences to learn from.

Edna, intuitively recognizing his response, replies, "My name is Edna, and this is Norm."

"Hello," he reaches out and shakes her hand across the aisle, "I'm Ricky, it's nice to meet you both." They all immediately feel like they are meeting long lost family members.

"Hello." Norm says, making brief eye contact through the big overhead mirror.

175 – 2 Timothy 4:2

They progress through some small talk into a more significant spiritual conversation, in which Edna explains her purpose on the bus, and Norm gains experience giving his testimony. Ricky is already encouraged and enjoying the confident feeling of knowing that the Lord is orchestrating all things for good to those who are His.¹⁷⁶

“Where are you headed?” Edna asks.

“I’m going to the college to meet with my church’s evangelism group, and several other church groups, because we’re going to engage the crowds that gather in the courtyard before the football game!” Ricky says with the enthusiasm of a child on the way to *Chuck E. Cheese*.

Edna’s mind races at the thought, and she is momentarily speechless as she contemplates such a wonderful endeavor.

“Really! That’s great! How many people do you think will be there?” She expresses in her excitement.

“Well, there’s usually close to a hundred people milling around the courts several hours before the game, but a lot more come the closer it gets to game-time.” Ricky says.

“And how many of you?” Edna asks, eager to assess the balance of the battle.

“There should be, probably, five to ten from my church, but I’m told that there are some heavy hitters coming from the other churches, so I don’t know, maybe thirty or more others?” Ricky says unsure.

“Wow! That will be great. What a wonderful opportunity to serve the Lord.” Edna says.

“Why don’t you go Edna?” Norm suggests.

At that, Edna stares blankly out the front window as she contemplates the convenient “coincidence” of the possibility. “Well, that would be fun, but I’m here to ride with you Norm.”

“Oh, Edna, I appreciate your thoughtfulness, but you would really love to go I’m sure. Plus, they could use you in fighting the good fight.”¹⁷⁷ Norm encourages.

“No, I couldn’t . . . I’m going to make the circuit with you today Norm.” Edna says, sticking to her plan to work with Norm.

~ The angel next to Edna looks lovingly at her and puts his arm around her shoulder. ~

Just then, Edna’s mind turns toward this great opportunity, she hasn’t been a part of such an endeavor for many years; but, now she is faced with a chance to not only come together with other members of the Body of Christ, but to be involved in a sacred battle and put her experience to serious work.

“Well, you are more than welcome to come. It’s only a short walk from the bus stop and we’ll be there for probably a couple hours or more.” Ricky says.

“That would be just about right Edna, it’ll take me at least that long before I get back after my lunch break.” Norm says encouragingly. He knows he will miss Edna’s company, but he feels like she should go be a part of this faithful undertaking. Besides, he is excited to practice praying over the city as he drives, in the more persevering and unceasing way that Edna had just jumpstarted him in. Plus, he wants to hear about the spiritual adventure later.

In the focus of the moment, Edna agrees, “Okay, I’ll go!” ~ Both angels smile gratefully. ~

“Great!” Ricky says, “We’ll be getting off at the King’s Highway, Norm.”

177 – 1 Timothy 6:12



When the stop comes, Edna does her best to tell Norm she will make it up to him; and, of course, Norm thinks nothing of it, and hadn't asked her along in the first place. Norm is happy to see Edna get put to good use, and just before they make the stop, ~ one of the angels places his hand on Norm's shoulder. ~ Then, as Norm masterfully pulls the big bus into the pullout and swings the door open with a spark, he says, "I'll pray for you while you're there, you might just need it!"

Edna and Ricky thank Norm and re-enter the outside world, unaware of all the spiritual activity happening throughout the city.



As they reach the rendezvous, Ricky is happy to inform the others that he has met Edna, a Christian elder who is ready for action! Ricky's church group consists of twelve total, and after they all huddle around and pray together, Ricky is beginning to feel like it is going to be a day to remember.

Their group then moves on to meet with the other church groups in the main square. Each parishioner begins sizing up the fishing holes, assessing the state of the fish, and preparing to drop anchor. Whether cutting bait by sorting Gospel tracts and unpacking free Bibles, securing the lines by checking personal open-air notes, weighting the sinkers by reciting memorized materials, or sharpening the hook by meditating on the Gospel, everyone knows why they are there.¹⁷⁸

Prayer is constantly rising up from them all at random, silently and audibly. Each person has a backpack, or bag of some kind, and not one is without their

unanimously consented weapon of choice—the Word of God. Even Edna has her trusty, well worn, faithful old King James Bible, for she had planned to read from it to Norm (or anyone else she could get to listen). She feels right at home with the others, and she is beginning to put on her poker face!

~ There are three angels with the others from Ricky's church, and so that makes five in their group. ~

The courtyard is a perfect place to witness and preach in the open-air. There are a lot of three to four foot cement walled islands around trees and planters. There are ample benches around and it's a regular place where people gather for the school and other activities in the area. Besides those fish that build up in the eddy spots, there is a constant stream of individual fish, and schools of fish, flowing by in all different directions.

Ricky and his crew find who they are looking for right at the prime spot in the middle of the court, just off from the stadium entrance. For those with eyes to see, the tight knit crowd is unmistakable as they approach. Everyone is amazed at the number before them, and some wonder if maybe not all of them are there to war against the enemy.

But they all are! Three other churches have organized teams of evangelists that are going to be led by some special guest visitors. Several famous evangelists and apologists are in town because of a conference on evangelism the night before. It's a pro' line up, and they even have cameras and camera men, sound technicians, and many have their own personal palm size video camera's to film one-to-one conversations with. And because the courts are public property, many of the more experienced open-air preachers even have slick little amplification systems so they don't have to raise their voices and come across harsh and unloving while simultaneously stressing their vocal chords.

It is an amazing sight to those who believe, and *the world* has no idea what is about to go down. Ricky is blown away and filled with excitement; and when they get close, and Edna realizes what she has been led to, she steps aside on her own, and begins to pray, being overwhelmed with the amount of passionate warrior soul-fishers of God. She greatly praises the Lord for the opportunity, and she is greatly humbled as tears begin to seep out of the corners of her closed eyes.

As Ricky's church group finds those they know from the other churches, ~ close to sixty people, all with bright, blood-red orbs above their heads. It makes for a most glorious congregation of believers outside of the church walls, and the most concentrated, for there are no orbs in this mob that aren't blood-red! The crowd's appearance is quite different than in the normal physical world.

Edna, still off to the side by herself, radiates a light as the pure white smoke of her prayers rise up through her orb and oscillating translucent rainbow halo and up into the heavens. Her body is straighter and lighter, even in the platinum chainmail type dress with what looks like gold glitter woven throughout. It reflects her now long glowing white hair; and, as she prays, more and more small jewels appear in the fabric and variances of light emanating from her being. Appearances are always in a constant state of flux in the spiritual realm.

The core of the congregation is filled with much taller and noticeably stronger looking men and women. Many of them don't seem to have any body fat, and the angels recognize the ones who have obviously persevered through much fire with longsuffering.¹⁷⁹

The crowd is united as one, while each individual has supernatural armor growing around them. Great helmets of gold, silver, and bronze, form around many heads, as each one prepares for battle. What looks like titanium

breastplates of righteousness shape over their chests, covering the heart, where the Holy of Holies is. Shiny platinum like shoulder plates, arm guards, leg coverings, and swords and shields all materialize out of nowhere, constructing outward from what looks like an impenetrable Kevlar and Carbon Fiber belt of Truth.

The five angels from Ricky's church have congregated with twenty or more just off to the side of the crowd—their process being somewhat similar to that of the saints. Other angels are dispersed throughout the people of God, and there is a wide pillar of light shining down from Heaven in a perfectly straight line directly on them all.

Dark shadows of demons pass with their hosts randomly, and a small number of individual demons have congregated behind some trees back in a shady area. Other demons passing by the area under the power of their wings cannot help but notice the rare pillar of light from Heaven; and, though many of them detour closer to see what's going on, many don't want anything to do with it and keep going. Large and small, the grotesque creatures of evil skulk about to and fro in their hoards, uneasy about the scene. Some are apprehensive and intimidated into silence, while others take out their frustrations on whomever they can, even each other. Spats between similar ranked demons create angst, and often the weaker demons are mercilessly victimized by the more powerful bully spirits.

Some of the people who have demons with them, or in them, find that they are hanging out and congregating with others in the immediate area for reasons they can not comprehend. Discussions break out amongst them that are unusually intense, and it only fuels their lust for chaos and pride. This draws more opposition to the crowd.

Suddenly, with the sound of a mighty thunder, the pillar of light from Heaven releases its connection to the congregated sons of God, and rises quickly up into the sky, dissipating where the sky meets the Heavenly opening. ~

God's people begin to disperse to areas around the courtyard that wrap around the stadium. Each individual or small group finds a good fishing spot: they look for primary perches to preach from, far enough away from the others. They search out the points where they can meet two streams of flowing fish converging. Some want good light and an exciting setting to maximize their agenda to film and use their experience to the edification of other believers. Many individuals station themselves between each other, creating a great net of servants of light for those lost in the sticky web of darkness to be caught.

Everyone gets set and digs into their places in a similar speed. Amplifiers squeak and reverb as they are turned on and checked, tracts are beginning to be offered, and the chess board is set. The pawns move forward, the rooks focus on the straight and narrow path, the knights steady themselves in prayer faithful that they will find an effective angle, the bishops stand clothed in righteousness, as the King watches keenly.

The general populous is relatively unaware and doing their thing in their usual self-centered fashion: sitting, talking, walking, eating, focusing on themselves, etc. It's a nice day.

Finally, it starts from the epicenter, and like a gun firing before a crowd of marathon runners, the rest of the soul-fishermen hit their throttles and begin to set their nets out full speed!

One by one, the open-air preachers introduce themselves, where they're from, and what church they attend. Having been careful not to overlap too closely, there is plenty of room as they are positioned all the way around the

stadium. These mature evangelists open by quickly making it plain that they are heralds of the one true King: Jesus Christ the Lord.

Most of them take time to explain the many modern misconceptions of who Jesus is, and, how if you don't have the right Jesus, you don't have the right God, and if you don't have the right God, you don't have the right Salvation; and, there is only one Salvation given by one King who accepts His subjects by way of repentance of sin and faith in the One true Jesus of the Bible: Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, the sinless Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world,¹⁸⁰ the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the Root of David,¹⁸¹ the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End,¹⁸² the one and only begotten Son of God¹⁸³ who was with the Father in the beginning,¹⁸⁴ and all things were created by Him and through Him and for Him.¹⁸⁵

Several men take the time to address the overwhelming epidemic of false converts produced by the modern church that has compromised the Law and Gospel, and thus, rendered it anti-productive.

One of the famous evangelists addresses false religions and exposes their origins by demonic forces who often appear as angels of light,¹⁸⁶ combined with sinful men whose hearts are wicked and can not be trusted.¹⁸⁷

180 – John 1:29

181 – Revelation 5:5

182 – Revelation 22:13

183 – John 3:16

184 – John 1:1-3

185 – Colossians 1:16-17

186 – 2 Corinthians 11:3-5 & 13-15

187 – Jeremiah 17:9

Another well known presuppositional apologist proclaims, certainly, the one true God whom all men know exists.¹⁸⁸ He shows that you can't know anything apart from God, because God is Truth;¹⁸⁹ and that the order of the universe—the non-material laws of logic and mathematics that all of humanity lives by, are simply reflections of God's infinite, unchanging character. For which, otherwise, there is absolutely no explanation.

A famous Creationist is interviewing people with a camera man, near one of his best friends who open-air preaches passionately, drawing a great crowd.

All of the commotion, cameras, and crews, attracts an increasing amount of people in to watch the pre-game show. Little do they know that they will all soon be participants.

Edna finds a comfortable spot to watch and learn, while she prays over the entire scene—kind of like Moses with his arms raised above the battle!¹⁹⁰

Ricky is busy multitasking with both his right and left brain, trying to listen and learn from the preaching, while also mingling with the people starting conversations. He is like a kid in a candy store, rubbernecking back and forth, up and down the courts, aware of all the faithful servants in action, trying to follow the Spirit in service of his own.

~ Up above the scene, more and more demons hover, deeply detesting the whole thing. They want to be more organized but they just aren't, so many of them just go into the scene all mavericky. They try all sorts of tactics with those who are open to their suggestions. They stir up the crowds, trying to create a chaos that will drown out the Truth of God's Word. Men and women raise their voices in objection and each heckler gives support to the others. This is where amplification is especially helpful, instead of raising

188 – Romans 1:20

189 – John 14:6

190 – Exodus 17:11

their voice to compete audibly and seem out of the Spirit, those with experience just turn their volumes up and continue to speak normally and in the Spirit. Many times, as a heckler becomes far too unreasonable, the warriors of Truth resort to simply preaching over them, around them, and through them—hoping and praying that others, and the hecklers, will be reached by the power of God’s Holy Spirit.

Swearing and blasphemy quickly taints the work of the Saints, but they know it is a dirty job that gets ugly. People rip up Gospel tracts and stomp on them with smiles on their faces, while servants of the living God pick them up like casualties in a war and bury them in the trash.

The angels minister to the saints as they preach, pray, and discuss passionately the spiritual things of God. The angels are constantly guiding their charges and also protecting them from those under the influence of the demons, who are getting stirred up into a panic like sharks after blood. Their whole existence and purpose is being challenged, and they have to serve their master with their lives, so they do anything and everything to thwart the work of the saints all around.

An elderly woman sits near Edna and appears to be captivated by the scene. Edna observes her for a bit, and recognizes her opportunity to go to work. She goes up and introduces herself like she has heard the preachers do, and begins to openly discuss the woman’s view on sin, righteousness, and Judgment.¹⁹¹

The air is ripe for spiritual conversations, and basically everyone in the entire court understands the issues at hand. All one has to do is start talking about it, and that’s what the Christians are doing (as are many others in their different worldviews).

191 – John 16:8

Throughout the courtyard, worldviews are being challenged; and, as some honestly assess what they are hearing, many of their spiritual-orbs lighten in color. Some even find themselves strangely humbled and wondering what to do about the many thoughts of past sins and guilt running through their minds. Some of them haven't felt feelings like this since they were kids, and it is refreshing in a way, yet foreign, like something inside wants to resist it. Yet many of their mouths remain shut,¹⁹² and even some find deep emotions welling up into tears, even when they really don't know why. Those are the ones with pale-white orbs, and those are the ones to whom the seed of the Gospel was intended to flourish—the good soil.¹⁹³

Others seem to have cement hardening in their spiritual indicators, which reflects their hearts. A dark gray, lumpy matter grows and congeals over the murky and black balloons above the heads of those who choose to vehemently oppose the open proclamation of the Truth, whether of their own volition or through the influence of demonic spirits behind the scenes. These are the people whose consciences have been seared,¹⁹⁴ and in no way do they want them revived; they've killed them through years of hard work suppressing the Truth in unrighteousness,¹⁹⁵ and they would continue that work in others. ~

More and more people are filling the square, getting ready for more jolly-good times at the game. The reality of the walls of Truth they run into is like a slap in the face, and most intuitively recoil at the spoiling of their beautiful, peaceful day. Words and phrases about absolute Truth and morality, sin

192 – Titus 1:10-11

193 – Matthew 13:8

194 – 1 Timothy 4:2

195 – Romans 1:18

and Judgment, righteousness and Jesus Christ, are like daggers of divine fire piercing through their ice-cold beers. Thoughts of Hell and ultimate responsibility to their Creator and His perfect standard are the last things they want to hear, but they are the first things God wants them to hear; and so, this day, that's what they hear.

It is like an overstocked hatchery opener in commercial salmon fishing, where a mass of fish have built up in the head of a bay and the fishermen are unleashed to catch as many as they can in a confined area. There really isn't anywhere for these fishy people to go, they are trapped in their devotion to another one of their idols: the game—as more and more fish pour in and press them in closer against the nets. Many of them fight and swim around the nets as fast as they can. Many are being snagged, by the error of their worldview being exposed, though as they splash and splash, making a ruckus, they only wind themselves up tighter by the neck along the cork-line between the world under the surface and the world above. Fish are jumping everywhere, desperately trying to find the answers to defend their beloved sins, but knowingly failing and subsequently extending their delusions further into the absurd in order to justify their ridiculous worldview that they themselves haven't really thought very deeply about.

Their purposes in life are being attacked, they're idols are being torn down, the strongholds of darkness that oppose the Word of God are being exposed by the great Light;¹⁹⁶ and, though they outnumber the Truth warriors, the veracity of the saints and the Holy Spirit strikes fear into the black, cold, and hard hearts of those living in rebellion to the God they know exists.

196 – 2 Corinthians 10:5

Even though many of them kick and scream like children being forced to accept discipline after being spoiled their entire lives.¹⁹⁷

Soon, the place is overrun and finally the doors open into the stadium. The lines slowly begin to move in what is their only escape. As the crowds funnel back into their disillusioned life in the matrix of sin and death, the remaining soldier saints finish their one-to-one conversations with all diligence, in order to fully execute their service to the King.

When all is said and done, the family congregates once again. They are all exhausted from expending themselves mentally, emotionally, and spiritually, over the last two hours. As they catch their breath, tend their spiritual wounds, and scrape the scum of blasphemy off of their armor, they decide to pray.

As is the theme of their work, they continue in the Spirit of unity as everyone, in awe of this massive work of God, instinctively drops down onto one knee. Most of them still have their Bibles hot in their hands, and many raise them up to the sky as they bow their heads in total subjection to the glorious Father in Heaven, without regard for anyone who may be watching.

~ As the soldiers of Christ dropped to their knees, loud clanking sounds from their knee armor hitting the ground echoed clearly throughout the courtyards. Their full body armor—now tainted with dents, cuts, scrapes, gashes, and broken off darts—begins to shine brighter. The armor of precious metals transforms back to glistening perfection. The light that emanates from them comes from within them, yet at the same time, is actually more of a reflection from above them. In their hands, pointing upward, are their sharp, double-edged swords: all different styles of swords, from huge and

197 – Proverbs 12:1

heavy mid-evil type swords, to samurai swords (that also have the back edge of the blade sharp), to smaller fencing type swords, and many other styles.

The angels look Heavenward and open their wings to full stretch. Through the radiating light, the pure white smoke ascends as one giant nuclear smoke-stack from these industrious followers of Christ.

They thank the Lord for the day, the family, the time, the knowledge and understanding, the ability, the Word, and the Holy Spirit. They pray for those who heard the Message that day, whether in pretense or in humility. Then they finish by asking the Lord to continue His work in their Sanctification, by whatever means He deems necessary, and for His guidance in their pursuit of fully functional and effective service to the Kingdom—everyone’s greatest desire being to be pleasing in the sight of the Lord.

As the holy smoke of their faithful corporate prayers ascends high into the sky, a tear in the sky opens as the pillar of light quickly extends down upon them, completely enveloping the rising incense of the prayers of the saints, falling as a ray of divine light over the children of God. This immediately impacts the spirits of the men and women down on one knee, and they all hold their position after the prayer is finished, in silent worship of the King in Spirit and in Truth.¹⁹⁸

After this glorious moment of silence, the ray of light withdraws back up to Heaven, and the renewed and refreshed servants of the living God slowly rise and begin to look around at one another, mostly at a loss for words for what they have all just been through, and also for what the future will hold for those they engaged.

Many people have been reached that day, in one way or another. Tears were shed by some as the Gospel touched their humbled hearts, while hatred flared in others as they fought to suppress the Truth, and their consciences,

198 – Psalm 46:10

in their unrighteousness. While the silence of those who's eyes and ears were open, are left with a great many seeds of eternal value, each of which stands for the unfathomably monumental potential of God's working in the foolishness of preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ through His Holy Spirit.¹⁹⁹

By this time, any and all wicked spirits have been long since dispersed from the light, knowing that they have plenty of work to do with those they can more easily influence, for these saints are currently greatly protected. The demons then become the sneaky black crows who will try to eat up the seeds that have been scattered along the path—through distraction, deception, *the world*, and the flesh.²⁰⁰

Now greatly relieved, the dear ones all say their heart felt goodbyes, as they have just bonded in a way that can not be compared to by any other means. After many hugs and hand shakes, and exchanges of information, the servants of God begin to disperse and make their way to their respective destinations.

Ricky and Edna maintain a lively exchange all the way back to joining Norm on the bus. Norm had expected Edna to be quite exhausted by that time, but he finds that she is ready to do back flips!

They fill Norm in non-stop on the ride home, and Norm is extremely encouraged. He tells them how he had spent almost the entire time praying. He prayed for them whenever they came into his mind, which was often, and he prayed unceasingly for whatever was before him or whatever came into His mind—it was a memorable learning experience of its own for Norm.

As they talk, Ricky thinks about how much he would like to start open-air preaching. He figures he could begin a diligent study of open-air sermons and perhaps transcribe some from audio to do some slow and thorough analysis

199 – 1 Corinthians 1:21

200 – Matthew 13:3-4 & 19

of the pro's work; and, then he quickly recognizes he can learn even more by reading them out loud, as if preaching himself. He then realizes he could start writing open-air sermons in his own style, and start practicing his delivery in the comforts of his own home, and then maybe go outdoors to practice somewhere in solitude, and then begin to search out places where he can reach people without too much trouble. He knows that he will have to be a very mature Christian to represent the Lord in this way, but he also knows that that is what time and diligence is for. He knows he will have to gain the support of his elders, and he is willing to do whatever it takes.

Ricky, Edna, and Norm all exchange contact information and vow to meet again—especially for public evangelistic outreaches.

It was a day to remember for everyone!

Chapter 24

Han Solo



Not a day passes without Bobby's conscience surfacing to one degree or another over his choice to abort his responsibility for his own actions; whether he scans through a channel with a show about an orphan, or whether it just pops up in his own mind at random, Bobby finds the challenge to forget what he chose to do harder and harder. But he does his best to persist, with the help of his flesh and *the world*, to suppress the truth in his darkened heart.

Drugs, alcohol, TV, movies, video games, internet, sports, parties, gambling, friends, exercise, fun and games, pornography, playing, lust, traveling, fornication, coveting, eating—all on top of work and the basic necessities of life—keep Bobby plenty busy, distracted, and pre-occupied with the temporal pleasures of sin in a selfish and rebellious life from one moment to the next.

Bobby hardly ever sees his family, something about what they stand for bothers him, and his flesh doesn't like the idea; and, even though he knows they won't bring up what they know about the situation with Samantha,

subconsciously he just doesn't want to even be around anyone who cares about it—out of sight, out of mind.

Bobby's parents never went (or will go) back to church, the responsibility to those there was, and is, too much for them; and, their fleshly natures have better things in mind. It's nice for Bobby's dad to have all of Sunday for football during the season; and when it is the off-season, he has no trouble filling the time at all.

The same goes for his wife, and although she doesn't like her former church friends to think of her as falling off, she eventually learns to let that go too. There is no shortage of things for her to do with her self either, and she finds a number of new hobbies and friends that change over the years.

Bobby's sister follows suit with *the world*, basically chasing teenage drama and inappropriate sexual relationships until she makes a relationship work towards the long term goal of what is commonly called "love." She would be divorced within several years, but remarried again without much trouble and without much time.

Bobby matures very slowly and with much resistance—which is to be expected in our day and age. Bobby adheres to the culture's growing admonition that if we act younger at an older age and it will help us stay young—like *the world's* embracing of sayings like: "Thirty is the new twenty!" When the reality is that people are simply growing more and more selfish and unwilling to grow up and mature and sacrifice their own desires accordingly, in an attempt to hold on to a youth that's a delusional form of denial.

Along with Bobby's prolonged responsibility, it takes a lot longer for him to find a suitable spouse. But eventually it happens, and she helps him stop living so desperately, and she gives him some kind of hope that helps him

learn and grow in considering someone other than himself; and also, she, slowly, will replace his desperate love of drugs and alcohol.

But that, too, will be temporal, and when it all falls through, he reverts back to his default position. He has always been conflicted within himself over the changes he was enduring, but after the divorce he feels free to be natural once again; and, even after regaining contact and communication with some of his old friends, he begins to feel a great sense of pride in his independent personality—just like old times. And with the transition back into drugs and alcohol, he even manages to lose that extra thirty pounds he had put on in his brief period of “true love.”

But, what appears to be a vicious cycle returns again, and he finds himself in a long term relationship, only this time, they both decide that marriage isn’t actually necessary. They will be content in the state of their relationship, and don’t want to get caught in the same pitfalls as they both had in their previous marriages.

They will both enjoy doing the same things, and together they will make enough money to be relatively happy with what they have and what they can do—in a constant comparison to others. Bobby never tells anyone about little Dexter, and Samantha never surfaces again. As far as he is concerned, he is just another person who gave up his child for adoption—just without all the paperwork and hassle.

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When Dexter had been in the orphanage for just three months, his story made its way into a church, where an already significantly sized family felt moved by the Holy Spirit to consider his adoption. After a couple of months

of careful and prayerful consideration, they finally take the step to go and meet little Dexter.

“Thank you for coming Mr. and Mrs. Madison.” The orphanage director says as he shakes hands.

“Call me Charles, and my wife, Virginia.” The man of African-American heritage replies.

“So, do you have any questions before we go and meet little Han?” The director says.

“Um, no, I think we’re ready?” Charles says as the orphanage director begins to walk them down the hall. “How did he get the name Han?” Virginia asks.

“Oh, ah, Suzy, one of our field workers, is the one who answered the call about him and, you know, he was abandoned, just out in the big world alone, and she started calling him little Han Solo; and well, I guess it just stuck. There was no name with him, so since we had to call him something, we just stuck with Han.” The director says as they walk down the hall.

“When we heard his story, our hearts really went out to him. We both really felt a strong impression from the Lord to investigate his situation. And after we learned of his plight, and that he was close to the same age as our third child, we really felt like it would be a good opportunity to give him a home and the love he deserves; and, at the same time, give our youngest son a sibling close to his age. Plus we, as Christians, have been adopted by the Lord, through Jesus Christ, and have been given His great love, so we really feel we would like to give back in some small way.” Charles says modestly.

“Well, it’s no small thing to take in a child and give him a home! I commend you for your selflessness.” The director says.

“Well, thank you, but we know that he will be just as much of a blessing to us as we will be to him!” Charles says enthusiastically.

“Okay, we’re here, are you ready to meet Han?” The director says looking deep into their eyes, well aware of how significant the moment is for them.

Charles and Virginia look at each other and smile, then they look back to reply, “Yes. Yes, we are.”

The Madisons have seen all the pictures of Han that the orphanage has, and they have all the proper measures in place to adopt him, this is the last and final step before committing to take him as their own.

The director opens the door to the play area where the younger children have play time with each other and the volunteers who help care for them.

The room is fairly large and quite busy. The children are all used to different people coming and going, yet they often stop to ponder the reality of who they are and who they might be there for. Han is one of the younger children in the area, and he is sitting next to some of the younger kids with disabilities, playing with the more basic toys.

The director tries to pay attention to others as he leads the Madisons across the room to Han; he talks to the volunteers as he goes and smiles at the kids who look up.

“Hello Virgil,” the director says to one of the older ones who runs up to say hi.

“Hi, Mr. Vashon, look at what I made!” Virgil says, holding up a Lego construct of some kind.

“That’s very good Virgil, did you show Susan?” Mr. Vashon says.

The boy runs off to show Susan, who’s quick to give him attention.

They approach the area where Han is playing, and Charles and Virginia have already spotted him.

“Hello everybody, how are you all doing today?” Mr. Vashon asks the group.

A varied set of answers come out and he addresses each one, not being overtly intentional at reaching Han.

“This is Mr. and Mrs. Madison, they are very nice people who stopped in to visit us today.” Mr. Vashon says, obviously having a way with children.

They all greet each other and start small talk; and, though the Madison’s attention is aimed at spending time with Han, they also take the time to address each of the ones around them, for they know the children there are all in desperate need of special attention. Everyone is happy to be mingling with new friendly people, and little Han sits quietly playing with his red toy Tonka truck.

Han is now around fifteen months old, obviously they don’t know exactly, and he is very cute with big blue eyes that look out with uncertainty. He is perfectly healthy, and the Madisons feel a bit guilty for not adopting the children with special needs, but they are certain that the Lord has led them to choose Han since the moment they first heard of him. Of course, their big hearts want to be able to give everyone a home, love, and the biblical parenting that they all deserve, which makes this an especially emotional visit.

After about a half an hour, with both Charles and Virginia getting to spend time directly with Han, it’s time for the children to get ready for lunch. The adults say their good byes to everyone, and they let Susan take Han as they follow the director to the door. As they reach the door they turn to see little Han rounding the corner to the cafeteria in Susan’s arms.

“Well, how does your intuition feel about little Han now?” Mr. Vashon asks with peaked curiosity.

Charles and Virginia had been in perfect sync with one another and their time with Han and they both knew through their unspoken interaction of

body language and eye contact that they are now mutually certain about their commitment. They both look into each other's eyes, one last confirming time, and agree, "Yes, we are ready to adopt Han."

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Two weeks later, after beginning the formal procedure for adoption, Charles, Virginia, their teenage daughter Chelsea and teenage son Devon, as well as their two-year-old son Richter, had all spent an ample amount of time with Han privately. They had begun by bringing the whole family in with gifts and explained to Han what was happening. They returned again and asked little Han if he had any objections to becoming a part of their family, to which he seemed to have none. Then they came to see him almost every day. They were even allowed to take him to their home with Susan accompanying them, and Han was very pleased with his time there.

So when the time came for the final papers to be signed and for Han to be legally released to the Madison family, everyone was ready and happy.

The Madisons had done a great job preparing a place for Han, and he and their youngest son already got along famously. Bringing Han home was such a dream-come-true for basically everyone involved, that they all were filled with deep gratitude to the Lord.

After settling Han in and feeding him, he became tired and so they took him to his room and put him to bed. Han was a quiet, well behaved little guy, and he already seemed to sleep heavily.

Charles and Virginia watch over him, both aglow and with permanent smiles on their faces; they then look to one another and nod. There's something they've wanted to do with Han for a long time, and though he is sleeping,

they can't help but get started, for they knew from the beginning that they could help him receive an even greater gift than *their* home, family, and love.

Charles returns from another room, and kisses Virginia on the cheek as they sit down beside Han's bed. Then he opens up the Book and begins reading, **"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters."**²⁰¹

~ Four angels stand in the room, in unspoken approval. ~

At that moment, the rest of the family makes their way in and sits down on the floor to join them, they all want to be a part of Han's new experiences, and they also want to be a part of the reading, so they sit patiently to hear the Word of God be read by their parents.

"Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light."²⁰²

201 – Genesis 1:1-2

202 – Genesis 1:3

Chapter 25

The Sanctuary



Crack! Thud! Pop!
“Stay down, punk!”

“Don’t ever get up!”

“If we see you again, you’re dead!”

The gang of inmates in the maximum security prison say to the man they just shanked and beat to a pulp, before they disperse back into the general populous. It wasn’t done without the guards’ awareness, they had simply chose to busy themselves just out of sight.

After a few moments of silence, one of the closest guards meanders over to the bloody clump of a man left on the cold concrete in the fetal position. The guard slowly strolls up, as if he were on vacation taking his time approaching a scenic bluff with a pleasant view—he very much enjoys what he is seeing. In the spiritual reality, each of them has their demons, and they are all greatly amused.

The guard patiently lifts his radio off of his belt and calls it in.

Three hours later, in the medical ward, the staff finishes fixing up the man who is semi-conscious and in critical condition. This isn't the first time he has been close enough to taste death.

~ An angel stands over the bed along the far wall, as the prison chaplain enters to see what he can do. The chaplain assesses the man in bandages and looks for any kind of conscious awareness in his movements and under his eyelids—there are none.

The chaplain pulls a chair beside the comatose man's bed, and sits down putting his Bible in his lap. The angel smiles in proud approval as he studies the chaplain and the blood-red orb above his head. Light emanates from them both, and the many demons within the walls of the prison are oblivious to their plight.

"Mr. Macklehaney?" The chaplain speaks out to his soul, knowing that a response is unlikely. "Mr. Macklehaney . . . I am the prison chaplain, George Stedtsen. I am here, by the will of God, to speak to you about your spiritual condition, and your ultimate destination." George pauses to look for any sign of acknowledgment—nothing.

The angel then steps behind the head of the bed—in the gap between the wall—and slowly he opens his wings and reaches out with both hands, placing them around Mr. Macklehaney's temples, as he looks straight up, far beyond the eight-foot ceiling.

One of Mr. Macklehaney's big toes trembles slightly, and George notices, but he cannot tell if it is a good tremble or a bad one.

After a quick, silent prayer, George continues: "Sir, I don't know if you can hear me or not, and I don't know what you know about God, but I'm going to assume that you, like the vast majority of people in this fallen world, are in dire need of God's forgiveness.²⁰³ The Lord has brought me here to you

203 – Matthew 7:13

today, to explain to you what is the most vital information you will ever hear. It supersedes everything you have done to wind up here, and it far surpasses the freedom of a pardon from your sentence here.

“I bring to you the only way to be pardoned from the consequences of every single sin you have ever committed against God.²⁰⁴ You are here in this place because of a handful of specific sins against your fellow man and *the world*, but if you will listen to the words that are coming out of my mouth, your conviction and this attack could quite possibly be the two best things that ever happened to you.”

George thinks deeply for a second and continues steadily: “Your rap sheet with the law here on earth may be long by human standards, but you have another rap sheet that has been accruing since you were very young. This rap sheet is of your sins against God, and I’m sure you know they are many.²⁰⁵ Every lie you’ve ever told is written in a book in Heaven. Every thing you’ve ever stole is written in that book. Every impure thought and word toward any of your fellow man for whatever reason, are written in that book.²⁰⁶ It is the biggest book you have never even considered, and whether you die here, now, or whether you die another day, that book is waiting as evidence to convict you before the Judge of the universe.²⁰⁷

“You will have no defense. You will have no attorney. You will have no one to testify on your behalf. You will have no one else to point to, and compare to, to make yourself look better. You will not be given a plea bargain. You will not be able to plead insanity. And there will be no question, whatsoever, as to your guilt.

204 – Psalm 103:3 & 12, Romans 4:7-8

205 – Psalm 51:3

206 – Matthew 12:36

207 – Psalm 7:11

“And if you are found guilty, you will face a punishment that you cannot imagine.²⁰⁸ The pain you felt before they gave you painkillers is nothing in comparison to the torture of the punishment awaiting your sentencing in the holy courtroom of ultimate divine justice.²⁰⁹

“In the righteous court of God, there are only two verdicts: completely innocent and completely guilty.²¹⁰ There is no gray area in between and there is nothing you can do to sway the Judge.²¹¹ In fact, when you are given the opportunity to give an account for your life, you will probably not even open your mouth, because His righteousness and Truth will be so powerful that it will cut straight to your heart, where you will know your guilt is obvious.”²¹² George speaks with methodical seriousness, plainly and forthrightly, and with the sober conviction of the Holy Spirit of God.

“There will be no way out. There will be no one to rescue you. There will be no pressing on with any shred of hope.²¹³ There will only be the heaviest and darkest doom that you’ve never imagined.²¹⁴ And the sentence will not have an end. Once you die, your sentencing will be eternal.²¹⁵ It will be a life sentence that will not end because your body wears out and shuts off. Your torment will extend infinitely beyond your wildest imagination. There will be no parole or early release, it will have no end.

“Is that what you want Mr. Macklehaney? Do you think you’re tough enough to fight through it somehow? If you do, if you choose this path, then your pride

208 – Psalm 32:10, Job 31:3, 1 Samuel 2:10

209 – Revelation 14:11

210 – Luke 11:23, John 8:24 & 42-44

211 – Deuteronomy 10:17

212 – Hebrews 4:12

213 – Isaiah 38:18

214 – Psalm 88:6 & 49:19, Job 10:22, Jude 13

215 – Jude 7 & 13, 2 Thessalonians 1:9, Revelation 14:11

will get the best of you; just as it was the original sin of all time, when the Devil filled his mind with pride and rebelled against his Creator in foolish arrogance.²¹⁶

“I don’t know who you are Mr. Macklehaney, I don’t know what you would say right now, and I don’t even know whether or not you can hear me; but, I will tell you how the love of God can save you. I will tell you how **God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son**, so that you might live. So that you might find the Salvation and forgiveness that only the one true God can give you.²¹⁷

“Do you want forgiveness Mr. Macklehaney? Do you want Salvation?” The chaplain looks over his charge and waits for a sign—he receives none.

“Well, I’ll tell you how God’s love for us has brought eternal forgiveness, and rescued us from eternal damnation, and taken us from a verdict of completely guilty to completely innocent.

“Two-thousand years ago, God sent His Son to earth in the Person of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. And there is only one Jesus; though *the world* has done its best to turn Him into something He’s not. He is the Christ, the Messiah: fully God and fully Man and without sin.²¹⁸

“Born of a virgin, he lived the perfect life for thirty-three years; a life that you and I could never live, even for a second.²¹⁹ And thirty-three years into that physical earthly existence, He went to the Cross to suffer and die a horrible, bloody death that He did not deserve, to take the punishment that you and I rightly deserve.²²⁰ Then He rose again three days later, and forever defeated sin and death.²²¹ He ascended to the Father in Heaven, and He

216 – Ezekiel 28:13-19, Isaiah 14:12-15

217 – John 3:16

218 – John 8:58, Luke 2:7, Hebrews 4:15

219 – 2 Corinthians 5:21

220 – Philippians 2:8

221 – Luke 24:1-15

remains there at His right-hand side. He was with the Father in the beginning, and **all things were created by Him and through Him and to Him.**²²²

“He is one with God the Father, and God the Holy Spirit, in a trinity of the Persons of God.²²³ And one day, He will return to Judge the world, and He will violently put an end to all evil.²²⁴ And this is the One, before whom you will stand to give an account for your life.²²⁵ This is the One who created all things—including you—and owns all things—including you—and has the full right and authority to destroy all things—including you.

“And He will destroy you, not through annihilation to no existence, but to everlasting torment and the torture of eternal punishment for living a rebellious life against Him and for His enemies, forever.²²⁶ There, in that terrible place, where there will be great weeping and gnashing of teeth,²²⁷ all who chose to finish the race following the Devil and his minions, will be bound forever together in the treacherous, unending consequences of their own thoughts, words, and deeds.

“But that same God, who is a consuming fire²²⁸ and full of wrath²²⁹ and is angry with the wicked everyday,²³⁰ is the same God who is loving and kind and merciful.²³¹ He willingly sent His only begotten Son to be crushed under the full force of His own wrath, so that little human beings, like you and I,

222 – Colossians 1:16-17

223 – John 10:30, Matthew 28:19

224 – Matthew 24:37-39, Isaiah 34:1-10, Revelation 5:12-22:21

225 – Romans 14:12

226 – 1 Samuel 15:23

227 – Matthew 22:13-14

228 – Hebrews 12:29

229 – Jeremiah 30:24-25, Isaiah 34:2

230 – Psalm 7:11 KJV

231 – Psalm 36:5, 86:15, 103:11

could be redeemed—ransomed and paid for in a divine legal transaction that can set us free to become His adopted sons, forever.²³²

“What God commands of you, (and I and all people everywhere), is that you repent of your sins:²³³ turn from your sins and your wicked ways that only breeds pestilence for you and dishonors the God who deserves only glory; and, humble your heart, mind, and soul before Him; and, admit that you are a wretched worker of evil in His holy sight, and throw yourself at His feet. Throw yourself upon the mercy of the court, and believe His testimony that Jesus Christ, the one and only Son of God, came to save you, and that only He can.²³⁴

“Follow God’s just terms of forgiveness and repent. With all of your being, let your lustful desires go and confess them before the Lord who knows all things, sees all things, and owns all things.²³⁵ Repent of your great many sins, big and small, and turn to Christ in faith; and by faith, and by faith alone, receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and your Savior.

“If you will choose to humble yourself and seek the Lord on His righteous, rightful terms, He will not turn you away, as He is faithful to His Word, and He cannot lie.²³⁶ He will forgive all of your great many sins—past, present, and future—in thought, word, and deed—and you will be given a new spirit, God’s own Holy Spirit,²³⁷ who will guide you into all Truth.²³⁸ He will comfort

232 – Ephesians 1:5

233 – Acts 17:30 ESV

234 – John 14:6

235 – 1 John 3:20

236 – Titus 1:2

237 – John 14:16

238 – John 16:13

you²³⁹ in times of need, and He will wash you clean and raise you up in sanctification that will ultimately land you in His Kingdom as a son and heir.”²⁴⁰

With that, George stops. In the Spirit, he feels no more guidance to speak. He sits still in focused silence, open in his mind and spirit, waiting for more words for Mr. Macklehaney. After a few moments, George feels the time winding down; he then slowly moves down to his knees along the bed and bows his head in prayer.

As George prays in petition for his charge’s redemption, the angel at the head of the bed raises his hands up over his head wide toward the Lord—light radiating from him through Billy Mac and George. ~

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Three months later.

Billy Mac has recovered from his near death beating; and, fortunately for him, the confrontations with insiders who had found basically nonsensical reasons to prey upon him (which was really demonically influenced), have seemed to wane as of late. Life has relinquished a generally more mundane and routine prison way of keeping to himself and trying to avoid eye contact with anybody who might get set off and decide to release their extremely pent up frustrations out on him. Billy doesn’t really know the real reason for this change in his opposition, but he will eventually understand; and, he only vaguely remembers bits and pieces of what the chaplain told him.

Of course, the guards still loath Billy for killing their brother behind the badge, and so they constantly make life as difficult as they can for him.

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239 – John 14:26 KJV

240 – Galatians 3:22-29

It's chow time, and Billy has become accustomed to a small contingent of somewhat like minded independent misfits who haven't assimilated into an established group—seeking safety in numbers—and who are, let's just say, very concerned about their well-being, in every sense of the term.

The mess hall is extremely contrasted, as usual. Loud noise comes from the greater majority of inmates who take the opportunity to exercise their favorite weapon and tool—their mouths; while a number of others, who don't really care to seek comradery and interaction in their new, uncomfortable lives, eat quietly in silence.

The other great contrast is the opposing desires for conflict: some, usually of the larger and more numerous variety, look for any excuse to exercise authority over others—who are the ones living in fear of such conflict.

Aside from three meals a day, the inmates get only two, one-hour breaks from their cells: one between breakfast and lunch, and one after dinner. They are allowed to go outside into the courtyard, congregate in the cafeteria, or attend a church service in, what is called, The Sanctuary.

The Sanctuary is really a foreign word (or bad word) to most of the inmates, and to even bring it up is crossing a line of unspoken "respect" and toughness that most don't dare to do. It's well known that many of the people who start attending The Sanctuary gatherings, end up getting beaten up, sometimes on a regular basis. It's basically asking for trouble—big trouble—big trouble that hurts, and sometimes even kills.

"Hey Billy, why don't you come to The Sanctuary tonight? It really is like a sanctuary . . . at least until you get out." One of his unofficial cronies says.

"No way man, you're crazy. I've got enough to worry about as it is." Billy Mac replies.

“Well, think about it; it’s actually kind of nice and it’s the only time I ever feel safe around here.” The fellow inmate says, almost surprised at his own words.

This stirs up something inside of Billy and he speaks no more; instead he finishes his food and walks away. He really doesn’t want to even be associating with someone whose weak disposition landed them in The Sanctuary.

Later, in Billy’s cell, lying on his bed, he finds himself thinking about his (somewhat) friend’s invitation. He doesn’t want to think about it, but something makes him return to contemplating it. Even though going to The Sanctuary carries a heavy weight and burden, in a place that is nothing but a heavy weight and burden, he keeps coming back to pondering what it might be like. There isn’t much variety for him, and the thought of a safe place, if even for a couple hours a day, sounds very inviting. Plus the experience would be something different to think about amidst his regular mindless and mundane reality.

But as Billy begins to entertain the idea of going into The Sanctuary, something stirs inside of him and a conflict of interest begins within.

~ Inside of Billy Mac’s subconscious, he and his flesh are out in the yard shooting baskets at night, with lights illuminating the court. The courtyard is empty except for a number of shadowy figures blending into the darkness around the court—figures that are not acknowledged by Billy.

With Billy’s consideration of The Sanctuary, his flesh turns and says, “Come on, let’s play one-on-one.”

Billy’s flesh is much bigger and stronger than he is, but he decides to take him on. What does he have to lose?

At that, the shadowy figures congregate along the sidelines to watch the game and cheer on their man.



Billy's overconfident flesh gives him the first possession and Billy tries to catch him off-guard by charging as fast as he can around him toward the low post, hoping to beat him off the draw and to get a shot off quick enough to avoid being blocked.

The tactic almost works, but his flesh's size reaches out and swats the shot hard out off the court into the darkness.

They start again at the top. Billy tries the opposite move and bluffs another charge but quickly pulls back and shoots a long fade-away. The shot goes unblocked, but bounces off the rim and backboard landing in his flesh's hands.

Billy's flesh slowly struts his dribble up to the top of the key, and as Billy prepares for his defense, his flesh decides to just throw up a quick three pointer (he's not worried about losing)—*swish!* All of the unnoticed shadow figures get worked up. ~

Back in the quiet cell, Billy thinks about how attending a service at The Sanctuary would probably just give his adversaries motive to seek out his pain once again, and that is the last thing he wants—he almost died last time. He dismisses the idea in one moment; but, then in the next moment, for some strange reason, he can't help but wonder what really goes on in there.

~ It's Billy's ball, and he dribbles around, left then right, trying to get comfortable and to find a way to score against his flesh. He finds himself struggling to back his flesh into the key, and he surprises himself at how much he's moving him in. Not sure what to do, Billy fakes a spin right and then cross steps back left throwing up a hook shot reminiscent of the great hook shot master Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. It sails well clear of his flesh's reach but bounces wide off the backboard and rim.

Billy's flesh rebounds and takes four long strides to reach the restart point outside of the three-point-line. He holds up, and looks intently at Billy, as he stands bent over dribbling ready to attack. He drives straight at Billy, and Billy digs in preparing for the collision; surprisingly, Billy stops his flesh from completely running him over, and in an unfocused moment his flesh throws up a hap hazard shot that bounces out to Billy and puts the ball in his court. ~

Back in Billy's conscious mind, he knows that if he decides to go to the service on the next break, it would be a last minute decision. At this point, he thinks about how he's already been brought to the edge of death by his inmates, and since he is in for life, what does he really have to lose? *Am I just going to live in fear forever? Who really cares at this point?*

~ Billy Mac decides to test his flesh and slowly backs him down to the low post again. With his flesh almost directly under the basket, he still looms large over him with his big burly arms. Billy then jumps a step out and fakes a fade-away; and, as his flesh is dead-set determined to block the shot by jumping out and up, Billy cross steps under and around his flesh for a finger-flip up off the backboard. It's a good move and he has the bucket marked; but in his excitement, he puts too much mustard on the hot dog and it overshoots the rim.

Billy Mac quickly gets his own rebound and tries to put it up again before his flesh gets back. Too late—his flesh catches the ball on its way up with a fast sweeping smack that sends the ball flying over the mysterious shadow figures cheering on the sideline. ~

Billy thinks about his last serious injuries and really contemplates the pain and difficulty of recovery in prison. He really doesn't want to go through that again and he knows it's probably not wise to be attending a Sanctuary service simply out of curiosity.

~ Billy starts with the ball, and while trying to confuse his flesh with a fancy spin dribble, his flesh taps the ball free and grabs it on the run. His flesh has him well beat and leaps high, from a fair ways back, off of two feet, pulling the ball back over his head with both hands and slamming it down, shaking the entire basket and leaving Billy dumbfounded, while the shadows observing rejoice. ~

During that evening's break, Billy hangs out in the cafeteria alone, as he often does; only something about it seems even more destitute than usual.

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Over the next few weeks, Billy Mac found himself thinking more and more about The Sanctuary, and he even noticed that often times when he did, something else would come up and distract his thoughts. During that time, he couldn't help but overhear people talking about their experiences in The Sanctuary services; and also, it seemed that his memory was regurgitating more of what he heard when he was half out-of-it in the medical ward—but he didn't quite know what to make of it.

The deep subconscious struggle continued on a regular basis over this question of entering The Sanctuary; and throughout the experiences, Billy Mac was getting used to confronting his flesh. He hadn't actually beaten him, but he had come close and was beginning to believe that it could be done. In fact, his flesh was not nearly as ominous as he had been when they first started battling over this issue; and, Billy wasn't sure that he was all that much bigger anymore. The fear was subsiding, and the matches were getting closer, longer, and more and more heated.

The shadow masters were more and more directly influencing his flesh during his challenges, and they made it even more difficult to overcome him.

One sleepless night, before a special guest speaker is to be at a Sanctuary meeting, Billy Mac finds himself extremely close to taking the plunge and risking an uncertain future by attending. He had noticed something different about some of the inmates' attitudes who went there, and even how much different the situations were when they would get accosted because of it. Somehow, the way they handled the persecution and remained fully dedicated to their cause, made him deeply desire this purpose, in his purposeless existence.

~ This night, the inner-court basketball battle has been raging for hours. Both Billy and his flesh are beaten up, bruised, and both have even spilled a little blood. The score is forty-eight to forty-nine, and they are playing to fifty. Billy's flesh is in the lead and the determination in his eyes is fueled greatly by the dark supporters just off the court. But Billy, too, is determined, and he has long decided to fight with all he has, for he has nothing else to live for.

Billy's flesh has the ball and needs only one point to win. He pulls a fake and then charges in trying to get around Billy. Billy pushes him out with his chest and manages to keep him from getting in too close. Billy's flesh quickly turns around and tries to get around again sweeping through the key toward the opposite side. Billy shuffles his feet in keeping up with his flesh and, again, manages to keep him from making up ground.

Billy's flesh bumps hard into Billy's chest, and bashes him with his shoulder trying to regain the strength he once had. It hurts Billy, but he doesn't have time to feel the pain. Billy's flesh is flustered in this possession, and after a pump fake, he tries a desperate side fade-away; but Billy just catches enough of the ball to keep it from the winning score.

Billy has the inside track on the rebound as his flesh's momentum takes too long to stop and change direction; and so Billy quickly gets the rebound and runs, adrenalized, back to the top of the key.

Billy's flesh is right there, tight on him—he's not going to let him win the game with an easy three pointer now (which is really a two pointer, as they are playing by one's and two's without foul shots). Billy knows he's going to have to fight for this win anyway, and he begins to try and fatigue his flesh in his own excitement over this potential win. He starts running fast and hard back and forth trying to lose his flesh and play smart, waiting for the right moment. Finally it happens: his flesh hesitates on getting back after being suckered in by a shot fake, and Billy spins back opposite under the hoop, extending a left hand reverse up and under off the backboard and in!

It's tied at forty-nine, and they aren't playing the win by two rule. It's sudden death, the next point wins and the game is over. This would be the first competition Billy Mac has won over his flesh in many years. ~

Back in Billy's conscious mind, as he lies on his bed, he is oscillating back and forth about making the decision to risk his life by attending a simple church service in a maximum security penitentiary. He knows he can always wait for another day, but something in his spirit wants him to make this decision. Of course, something else in his body and mind wants him not to make this decision.

~ Billy's flesh has the ball and he is glad about it! He wants to put an end to this hope that's grown to be formidable; and so he feigns a hard charge to the hoop, while Billy Mac puts up another tough front. Billy's flesh pushes into Billy and quickly pulls back for a high, slightly faded, jump shot. Billy is not close enough to make the block and he cringes in his heart as he spins

to watch the ball just catch the back of the rim and bounce straight up and back out to the left hand side.

Billy has the inside line, but his flesh is coming in hard for the rebound. Billy leaps for it and feels his flesh barrel into him, cracking his neck with whiplash as he misses the ball knocking it out of bounds.

“Foul!” Billy shouts with authority.

“Whatever . . . you wimp.” Billy’s flesh says. “Why don’t you step-up and play like a man?”

Billy doesn’t respond to the intimidating trash talk, and just gets the ball back up top. After flipping it to his flesh for a check start, his flesh throws it down at his feet to annoy him. Billy gets it back and puts his head down, focusing in on his best game yet.

Billy’s confidence is at an all time high. Even though he hasn’t actually won yet, he’s come a long way in challenging his fleshly desires, and he likes the idea of regaining proper control over his self.

Billy backs up with some quick dribbles between his shifting legs, and then he starts faking with his head and shoulders—left, no; right, no; forward, no; up for a shot, no—his flesh is becoming increasingly irritated.

Finally, Billy Mac starts in to the right and then spins back to the left—his flesh playing him hard and tight, smacking at his hands with what would certainly be fouls by any normal standard.

“You’re weak!” Billy’s flesh insults.

Billy Mac then decides to take him hard to the hole and go for the shot. He gets a bit of space on his strong side to make the shot and jumps for it with all his might. He’s off the ground heading for the corner of the backboard trying to get off a high-flying sideways jump-shot off the backboard with his right hand. He pumps in the air, and pulls the ball down cocking it

for the perfect, game winning shot, and begins to shoot with a clear focus on the square target on the backboard.

Smack! Billy's flesh just throws his open palms across Billy's left bicep and into his face—Billy goes flying out of bounds with a desperate flail.

Billy catches himself from falling and is about to call the foul when he notices the ball come down through the net off the backboard.

"Foul before the shot!" Billy's flesh calls out in desperate anger. It's a call that's void in prison street-ball.

"Whatever! Game over—cheap shot!" Billy says back, regaining his momentum and footing.

Billy's flesh catches the ball and immediately throws it at Billy's face with both hands. Billy catches it in the side of his head and his flesh follows with a right cross to the jaw. Billy hits the ground hard at the feet of the shadow puppets, who are disappointed by the game, but encouraged by the shots to Billy and him lying at their feet. Billy's flesh kicks him in the gut while he's down.

"The foul was before the shot, the game's not over! Get up!" Billy's flesh desperately tries to demand.

"Right." Billy manages to say through throbbing teeth, for he knows that it doesn't matter on a defensive foul when the shot goes in. "Game's over . . . sucker!"

Billy's flesh shrinks in stature, kicks Billy in the shin and turns to walk away, defeated. The dark spirits simply stare in dumb awe. ~

Billy Mac finally drifts off to sleep with only about an hour before the call for breakfast.

“I’d like to thank everyone, once again, for coming to The Sanctuary. We are happy to see some new faces.” Chaplain, and Pastor, George says enthusiastically.

Just the thought of enthusiasm is foreign to Billy Mac, and it immediately makes him uncomfortable.

“Let’s start, as we always do, in prayer; please bow your heads.” The chaplain says.

This adds greatly to Billy’s increasing comfort issue, and he is slow to bow his head and close his eyes; only after he looks around and assesses the scene fully, does he humor them.

“Lord God, Heavenly Father, we thank You today for Your many blessings, Your many mercies and compassions for us; and we thank You for opening our eyes and ears to Your Truth. Please keep us, through our trials and tribulations, and protect us from evil, in Jesus’ Name.” George prays.

What blessings is he talking about, we’re in prison? Billy thinks to himself.

“Please bless the reading of Your Word today, as always, and help us come to know You intimately, through the truth and light of the Holy Spirit. Amen.” George finishes.

After that they sing some hymns, with which Billy isn’t any more comfortable; but, he is deeply intrigued, for he hasn’t heard any kind of music for a long time, no less songs of joy—and by his fellow inmates! It is a strange conundrum that he has difficulty reconciling, but over time he comes to really enjoy it.

After his first visit to The Sanctuary, he felt a bit of a quandary about what the big deal was over it all. He saw no harm in it, and wondered why anyone wouldn’t think spending the time in The Sanctuary wasn’t better than the alternatives.

Slowly Billy Mac found that his time in The Sanctuary seemed to really be going unnoticed by the general populous, and he became more and more comfortable about it. Before long, he actually found that some of the inmates there were more than friendly, they were actually becoming friends. The concept of having a friend was something he hadn't even thought about for a long time, even when he was on the outside. It was all so different, but something about it felt right. He couldn't fully comprehend it, but it was like his conscience was being resurrected. In The Sanctuary, he was often reminded of times in his youth when he was happy, or learning something new, or even feeling remorse for wrongdoing.

Though it was still very foreign, it was very refreshing, and he found himself being ever more drawn to the Light. The contrast of The Sanctuary compared to the general gang mentality in the yard, was a dramatically blatant difference that further supported his involvement.

Slowly Billy Mac began to apply his mind to the Scriptures, activities and psalms; and, strangely, it made him feel young in his spirit.

It wasn't long before Billy Mac was praying at night alone, and even in the morning; and with his prayers, often came tears—tears of remorse, that over time, turned into tears of joy.

And yet, throughout his time of seeking the Lord in a spirit of repentance, and exploring faith in this miraculous Savior, Jesus Christ, Bill still felt a strong sense of darkness within him. He still felt a certain negative disdain.

Bill found himself constantly fighting within over certain irrational urges to hate the Light. Even long after he was confident in his faith and sure of his eternal and divine adoption, strange thoughts would surface that were something even beyond his fleshly nature. It bothered him regularly, and he

struggled to understand what the inner turmoil was that, now, felt so foreign and out of place—even in the long dark nights.

Chapter 26

Jordan Makes His Decision



It's Ricky's senior year at college and he sees an email from Jordan in his inbox. Jordan had moved to Colorado three years ago with his, at the time, pregnant fiancée. Jordan still looks up to Ricky, and over the years has continued to maintain contact. Ricky, long since, highly concerned about Jordan's Salvation, has made numerous efforts to reach Jordan with letters and faithful materials; but, Jordan always seems to take them, presumptuously, as a brother in Christ and not someone who hasn't appropriated the Gospel accordingly. Most of the time he doesn't supply any feedback, and Ricky can't help but feel like he doesn't even look at them most of the time.

Ricky,

What's up man?

Life in Colorado is great—we've been doing some short hikes with our little Sam up in the Rockies! There's so much to do here outdoors, I can't wait until Sam gets a little older.

Next year we're going to take Sam to our church camp that has so many fun outdoor activities that he'll be blown away!

I'm sorry I haven't sent a reply after your last letter and DVD, I've just been so busy. Yeah, the video was good, thanks. I finally watched it last night.

Anyways, I have to go, Sam is calling for me!

God bless,

Jordan

At the time of Jordan's writing the email, the indicator of his spiritual state was a light brown with swirls and bits of different colors mixed in—kind of like Rocky Road ice cream. Before he watched the video Ricky sent, it looked more like a chocolate-marshmallow brownie conglomeration.

In Ricky's letter, he had asked some probing questions about Jordan's worldview. Ricky has found that it is sometimes easier, and more efficient, to express hard spiritual Truth and personal concerns in writing. Often times the ongoing relationships with many acquaintances, who are busy in the world, tend to be filled with quick and passing communications that remain shallow due to the limited interactions. So Ricky has decided to show his concern for those he knows and loves, by taking the time to write his thoughts about their interactions in light of his Christian theistic worldview. Often times, the short conversations in person are only sufficient enough for Ricky to bring up spiritual things to a small degree and get a clue, by their response, about where they may be at spiritually; then, he addresses their comments, taking them deeper and always guiding them to the Gospel and God's Word.

Jordan didn't answer any of Ricky's questions about what his final arbiter of Truth is. In fact, he didn't respond directly to any of Ricky's thoughts—this isn't unusual, but it is never a good sign for the recipient. Usually a true

Christian will engage in the spiritual/theological inquiry; but, the ones who don't seem to have the Spirit, Ricky found, usually just tend to think written communication is something that doesn't need to be addressed specifically, but just responded to indirectly, or shallowly, in simple acknowledgment of the transaction—as if this somehow just sweeps the issues under the rug and allows the relationship to function in a way they consider normal.

Ricky often oscillates emotionally over these types of communications; because, if his words and efforts go unaddressed, what's the point in communicating on such a level. But, then again, what if the Holy Spirit is working and they are just seeds growing in the dark, just under the surface, waiting for the right time to sprout? Ricky regularly gets fed up—in his passion—with those who won't engage the issues properly (especially those who profess Christianity); and he struggles to not just release them back into the big ocean of *the world*. But, usually, after a time, times, or half a time, he finds himself persisting in another way to reach those who appear to be without the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom.

Apart from God, you can't know anything! Ricky says in his letters to unbelievers, trying to address their epistemological foundation of knowledge. *Your naturalistic worldview cannot account for the very things of God that you are using to refute Him. What is Truth in your worldview? You claim to be propped up by logic, but how do you account for logic? How do you account for all the laws that govern logic? How do you account for all the laws of mathematics? These laws, that are absolute, universal, eternal, unchanging, impartial, and transcendent, are reflections of God's own character. The order of the universe cannot be accounted for by a naturalistic worldview that thinks the only constant is change; it violates the Law of Non-Contradiction. We are not just byproducts of chance and evolution—where our thoughts*

and morality are simply the results of different bio-chemical mutations that have no objective standard of right and wrong.

Many of the, so called, atheists or agnostics that Ricky expresses these things to will usually engage in their way of refuting the Truth, which is really just the outworking of their subconscious life's purpose to suppress the Truth in their unrighteousness.²⁴¹ But the ones who call themselves Christians—the false converts—usually have a great difficulty dancing around the fact that even though they call Jesus Lord, and try to claim the Bible as their authority (when they're talking to Christians), the reality is that they, themselves, are sitting in judgment of what they consider truth—picking and choosing from God's Word and man's word. But the Bible says **you can't drink of the cup of God and the cup of the devils.**²⁴²

And so, Jordan (even though he didn't respond to any of Ricky's questions) feels more like a Christian just by the communications of Ricky in his life. When someone he admires is a Christian, and they interacted with him (without blatantly calling him on his spiritual bluff of life), he feels better about being a Christian himself and even, at times, wants to be more of one; however, when someone he admires isn't a Christian, he can be easily swayed into a totally secular mindset, even to the point of dismissing many of the Truths God tells us through His Word. And, as time goes on, there are more and more people of *the world* that he admires and finds himself attracted to, that the Christian side of his life gets, more often than not, shelved into a backlogged category of spiritual beliefs that don't really have any actual bearing on the "real" world, and is something that keeps him able to, theoretically, reap the best of both worlds.

241 – Romans 1:18

242 – 1 Corinthians 10:21

When he meets a Christian, he knows how to speak their language and they can be his friend without any disapproval. When he meets an unbeliever, he can speak their language and they can be his friend without any disapproval;²⁴³ besides, he knows that he shouldn't judge²⁴⁴—that is, judge according to the Bible anyway—he can judge according to *the world* all he wants—which includes judging that one shouldn't judge according to the Bible.

Of course, to Jordan's pragmatism, the evidence is in the results: if he judges according to the Bible, most people won't like him, and if most people won't like him then how can that be good for the Lord? And if he speaks out against what people do, namely sin, then people will, not only, not like him, but they will hate him, and that is very uncomfortable.²⁴⁵

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Jordan, his lovely wife, and their three-year-old son are out playing in the front yard on a sunny Saturday. They've spent a good hour out there on the green grass and they're minds are beginning to turn to different things.

"Honey, why don't you go to the store to pick up some more mayo' for our tuna fish lunch?" Jordan's wife asks, suggests, and commands all at once.

"Alright, baby, I'll be right back." Jordan replies as he goes inside to fetch the car keys.

As he opens the front door to head for the car, little Sam runs inside in front of his wife Jennifer. Jennifer and Jordan kiss and smile as he turns to head for their SUV, while Sam slips out again looking for his favorite toy.

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243 – James 4:4

244 – Matthew 7:1

245 – 1 John 2:15-17

Jordan hears the door shut behind Jennifer and he gets in the car, starts it up and begins to back down their nice and clean suburban driveway.

*Clank-thump!* Jordan stops after hitting something. *What could that have been?* Jordan thinks to himself. And, as he opens the door to check, he hears the loudest, blood curdling scream he's ever heard coming from his wife in the front doorway of their house. Jordan quickly looks at her standing immobilized, cupping her mouth with both hands and her eyes wide open staring at the rear tire.

Immediately the mood changes into serious panic as Jordan jumps out of the car, turning to see his three-year-old Sam's head pinned under the rear tire with the rest of his body under the car. Jordan's eyes bulge and his mind cannot believe what is happening. He quickly jumps back into the car, pulling ahead.

*No no no no no! God no! Oh, please God! Oh, no!* Jordan thinks while he puts the car in park. It is bad, real bad, and even the best case scenario from this will not be good. *No no no!* Jordan thinks as he jumps out of the car leaving the door open.

Jordan's eyes behold his innocent three-year-old's body twisted excessively, with his shoulder and head misshapen and in a pool of blood that's beginning to run down the driveway. *Oh no!!!* Jordan's heart is in his throat and panic pervades his entire being.

"Call 911!!" He yells back at Jennifer who is still paralyzed in total shock. She hesitates and then snaps into action, for the paramedics now hold the key, if there is any potential key, to the future of their son.

Jordan drops to his knees over Sam and doesn't know what to do. He immediately sees that there is more than just blood on the pavement and that Sam's head is crushed open. His neck is also stretched beyond normalcy and the shoulder is obviously broken. Devastation.



Devastation for Sam and devastation for Jordan. And when Jennifer gets back and off the phone: devastation.

The police officers that arrive first at the scene do their best to help, but there is nothing they can do but wait for the paramedics. They all basically know that there is nothing that can be done for Sam, since his heart has been long stopped, and the child had no response to CPR.

The officers wept with the parents, and now stand alone, aside from Jordan and Jennifer, who clutch each other in grave desperation. The officers hate the harsh realities of life and feel guilty for not arriving sooner—though that really wouldn't have mattered.

After the ambulance arrives and heads back to the hospital with Jordan's family, it doesn't take long before the verdict is in.

"I'm sorry Mr. and Mrs. Jepson, there's nothing we could do." The words fall like the star Wormwood in the book of Revelation: fast and hard, with immeasurable weight, force, and devastation. Life from that moment forward will forever be changed for Jordan and Jennifer.

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The slow, arduous process had begun; and, even though Ricky had made his attempts to assure them that Sam was with the Lord because he hadn't been old enough to be responsible for his sins, and, in his hopes of their humbling from the trauma, lead them into the safety and peace of Christ, Jordan's mind was made up; and, like the waters that will be made bitter by the falling star Wormwood, Jordan's heart became bitter, and he could no longer believe, or agree, with any God who would allow such a tragic thing to happen to him and his precious family.

Both Jordan and his wife (for the two have become one flesh²⁴⁶) became hardened to the things of God;²⁴⁷ and, the wide ways of *the world* were right there to catch them and make them feel better—naturally, temporarily, from moment to moment—though the fleeting “better” that they felt would always be a cheap counterfeit to the real peace and contentment that is true faith and trust in Christ.²⁴⁸

After Sam’s body was lowered into the ground, Jordan’s spiritual indicator sealed itself completely. Like a balloon filled with spray foam, it congealed a calloused shell that would become harder and harder with the outer layers growing thicker and darker with time, revealing that God was never his final arbiter of Truth, but that he was. Jordan sat in the judgment seat all along, deciding what will stay and what will go.

Jordan was, and is, the final arbiter of what he thinks is truth. He will suppress the actual Truth in order to remain in control of his perceived world, but this will only last until the day he lands somewhere near his mother, who will be in the exact same state as the day she arrived herself. Then, although he will try to retain his authority to establish his own truth, it will be painfully obvious what the real Truth is—the real Truth that is even obvious to everyone in *the world* now: the Truth that God exists and that we will stand before Him in Judgment and pay the penalty for our sins if we do not comply with His commands. God does not send us to Hell for not knowing He exists; He sends us to Hell for our sins against Him, Who we do know exists.²⁴⁹

246 – Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:5, Ephesians 5:31

247 – Hebrews 3:15

248 – John 14:27

249 – Romans 1:20 & 2:1-8

And finally, all of Ricky's efforts were drawn to a close, when Jordan dis-annulled the relationship and communication by remaining out of contact after eventually moving and changing his contact information.

Chapter 27

Jack in the Box!



Jack had honestly gone to Betty for reconciliation but their trust had been broken. After all of the legal issues, and with her Dad, Betty had finally let it go. She actually already found someone else within months after the divorce, and she loved the way he treated her. Jack had known this was a high probability, and though he was prepared for it, he was saddened by her rejection. But, as Mike had mentioned, Jack did feel better in his conscience after apologizing properly, and the process humbled him even more.

The situation has sobered him up quite a bit in regards to the responsibilities of a meaningful relationship with a woman. Jack has matured because of the consequences of his actions, and he tries to embrace the life lesson; but it's still especially hard for him.

Jack has dated a little bit throughout it, mostly because it was just what he felt a guy is supposed to do; however, he remained reserved, not letting anything go too far—emotionally or physically. This was different to Jack—using self-control with no apparent reason.

Jack was conflicted in his half-hearted attempts to seek another spouse and companion, because even though he still had a desire to find true love, he kept recognizing his spirit of lust rising up, even toward other women when he was on a date. It was just so contradictory: striving to find meaningful love, yet being unable to even stop looking at other women sexually while he was on an interview for that potential “love.”

Is that just the way it is? Is man a slave to his lust even when he's married? Or is there some way that movie-style true love is actually fulfilling? These are the thoughts that are a part of Jack's current everyday life. There must be something to the stereotypical human desire for true love—one spouse that fills all relational desires? Or have we, as a society, become so selfish that we want too much, and cannot be satisfied? Everyone, it seems, wants that true love, yet every time people think they have it and then they lose it, they come around to thinking they have it again, and then usually lose it eventually too. Is love an illusion somehow? Is love more of a choice that requires compromising ideals, or is there actually some divine force that orchestrates our destiny?

All of these questions continually arise for Jack and he feels like he's never thought so deeply about anything before. And throughout his routine ups and downs, Jack doesn't usually think about what Mike told him about God and His roles for men and women. Though he has talked to Mike on the phone a couple brief times, he hasn't really taken the time to explore the biblical definition of love between a man and a woman.

But something has been stirring in Jack's heart, and he can't help but feel like he is closing in on some kind of an answer—or is that feeling just an emotional mirage? Whatever it is, Jack is finding that his resolve to discover the answer is strengthening somehow.

Jack has become increasingly comfortable in his new life of more humbling work and living arrangements. The loss of certain old friends because of it have also given him much to think about in regards to friendships and which kind of relationships are of a more significant value. It's all changed his mentality quite a bit about pleasing others, compared with being real, regardless of the person. In this sense, Jack has been coming into his own in a way that he's never known before.

One night, home alone, Jack cracks another beer after work and heads for the couch to do some channel surfing. Jack is already aware of his deep desire to watch something with women he finds attractive; but he knows that it's something he's been trying to keep under control; but he also knows it's a matter of time before he comes across something that will be a temptation for him. Plus, he really doesn't know where to draw the line, but he wants to have some sort of control over this impulse.

~ The competition within begins: he's paddling out through the clear-water breakers of tropical island paradise on a hot sunny day. The wind is a stiff offshore and the saltwater mist being blown off the breaking crests of the waves up into the air is refreshing—to the touch and with the saltwater scent in the nostrils—as the waves are setting up nicely from a serious ground swell. The smell of the coconut/pineapple scented surf-wax adds to the exotic tropical flavor. His flesh is right beside him and they simultaneously duck-dive the crests and whitewater as they head out to the line up of plentiful waves to choose from. They both continually look over and check each other out as they approach the primary peak drop-in area. It's busy with surfers all over the place, up and down the coast. Jack and his flesh stop paddling and sit up on their boards, looking out toward the open ocean to foresee the swells coming in. ~

On the couch Jack flips on the TV with the remote and checks the guide. There's a Laker game on and he thinks that will be a safe start.

~ The first wave is a good one and Jack only has to paddle a few strokes before he snaps up to his feet and makes the drop. In a flash he's carrying a lot of speed, sliding on the awesome dynamic of perfectly smooth fiberglass on water. He makes a bottom turn and pulls up carving off the top sending spray high and far with the offshore wind. He pumps down the line and cuts wide, looking back at his flesh (~ proud that he's feeling content without perversion ~) and then makes a cutback carving up toward the moving peak and slashing back down and around again. Jack glides up to the top of the crystal blue face again and takes all of his speed from the powerful push of the wave and carves hard and fast out and over the shoulder to paddle back out in the safe zone. As he drops to his chest on the surfboard, he notices sizable colorful fish swimming between him and the bright reef below. ~

Some time goes by in typical pro-basketball style, and as Jack is zoning out, drinking his beer, the cheerleaders are shown, first from a far, then up close as they dance.

~ This time Jack's flesh has the inside line and makes the drop leaving Jack out. ~ (Jack doesn't even realize what he's doing, for it has become so ingrained in his nature that it's just normal—even though he's been trying to resist it.)

~ Jack's flesh pulls the bottom turn with ease and turns hard up, airing off the lip. He pulls a frontside-air and sticks the landing right at the top of the highest part of the moving transition. With the momentum from the drop, and the twenty-foot face below, Jack's flesh is in prime position to maximize his speed out of the pocket. ~

Back in conscious life, Jack realizes what he's doing and quickly turns to the guide.

~ Jack's flesh takes all of his speed, from the wave that abruptly starts to close out, and he turns up launching high into the air off the flat breaking crest of the wave into a tucked up double-back-flip off of the board, splashing down feet first! ~

Jack goes from page to page on the guide, consciously avoiding any potential sexuality that might upset his conscience—as if on some personal vendetta against his own self. Most of the movies, he knows, will have some “love scenes” that are really not about love. He thinks about how many of the sports seem to be intertwined with perversion—traditional sports with cheerleaders, motocross and its starting/trophy girls, surfing and blatant shots of gratuitous women in bikinis on the beach, MMA and the women who start off each round in minimal and provocative clothing, etc. And then of course commercials are always going to be a problem, especially the sports channels with mass amounts of beer ad's. Fortunately Jack doesn't have any of the porn' channels, but even seeing their perverted titles on the guide is disturbing to him.

Jack decides to check out a food show with that crazy guy who travels the world and eats anything and everything. There he is, in Zimbabwe, eating giant tree worms—yum! *Man, how does he do that?* Jack thinks to himself. *It's just so gnarly!*

~ Out in the line up, Jack catches another one, with his flesh way out of position. Though he's late on the wave, he makes the steep drop and sharply snaps his board hard over ninety-degrees and leans back on the tail, digging in and stalling as the wave jacks up and over his head. Jack then leans forward and matches the momentum of the wave as it peels steadily around

him forming a giant tube. He holds his position as the wave overtakes him a bit, putting him deep in the pocket on the foam ball. In the few seconds he's getting barreled, he puts his hands up over his head, not even close to touching the ceiling of the wave. Finally, Jack explodes out of the shadowy pit of the wave and gets blasted with the collapsed barrel spray from behind. Jack races out (even faster this time) and over the back with a ton of speed, getting well clear of the next wave as he drops down on his stomach and starts paddling back out. ~

The show went from Zimbabwe to Tasmania; and once again, Jack's untrained, unregenerate, and slightly inebriated mind, gets caught off guard when a commercial comes on for a perfume that repeatedly shows women inappropriately.

~ Jack's flesh has to paddle out a bit to catch the monstrous swell building and preparing to peak on the outside. He gets to the right position just in time and stops his momentum by dragging his hands, arms, and feet, and then quickly sits up on his board, pivoting it 180-degrees, and in one fluid motion, he stuffs the board down and back into the arching wave, using the buoyancy rebound of the foam and fiberglass board to spring him into a forward momentum with the wave. Jack's flesh gets only two quick, half paddles, and he springs into action accelerating to the pace of the twelve-foot groundswell reef-break.

The drop is long and fast, Jack's flesh stays low and begins to drag his inside hand in the water for leverage to bank hard and fast off the bottom. *Boom!* The initial drive of the breaking wave hits the sucking shallow water, just before the reef behind him, as he pulls up to slash off the top out in front.

Jack, paddling out with a perfect view, watches in dumb awe (in more ways than one).

Jack's flesh sweeps gigantic turns all over the face of the strong wave that has set up perfect. Off the top—off the bottom—off the top—cut back—off the top and down the inside and around off the bottom again. He pulls up into the face again and gets propelled back into top speed before the wave begins to lose its power. Jack's flesh pulls out around the back laughing loudly. ~

Back on the couch, Jack realizes what just happened, and he is immediately annoyed and frustrated. *Why is it so hard?* He wonders. *Am I the only one in the world feeling like this?*

Desperately searching through the guide again, Jack decides to go with a safe bet; a movie he knows is without racy scenes and commercials. Jack turns on *The Matrix*.

It's in the beginning, where Mr. Anderson is searching for the truth and has this perpetually nagging intuition that there's something more to life than what he realizes. He doesn't know what it is, but he finds himself being pulled into whatever it is by some force outside of his understanding.

Jack ponders the scenario and chuckles to himself thinking that it's really kind of how he has been feeling for quite some time in his world and dilemma. He continues watching with particular intrigue.

Soon, the characters that are functioning outside of the matrix are exposed as Mr. Anderson learns first hand about the agents of evil and those who have rebelled against the world system and have found the truth. After a series of risks to seek the truth regardless of the consequences, Mr. Anderson finds that the events that seemed beyond coincidence, really were.

Jack is engrossed in the highly symbolic movie as he gets further buzzed by the beer.

Mr. Anderson finally get's unplugged from the superficial world of the matrix, and his eyes are opened to the real world—eyes that have never been

used before. He then has a lot to learn, and he must be fed by his elders. He grows rapidly and is soon equipped to fight the agents of evil and their fake world system called the matrix. The agents of evil have no regard for the humans in the matrix, they only use them for their own purposes; and, if you're out of the matrix, they only want to destroy you.

Finally, in the end, the good guys save one of their own and Neo defeats an agent, which has never been done before, greatly encouraging the brethren and instilling confidence in their hero.

Jack is somehow inspired by the film, and after the heavy rock music comes on and Neo flies up into the sky, he shuts the TV off. For a moment the silence is abnormally overbearing, as if it were tangible. Then, abruptly breaking that silence, Jack's phone rings. He looks at it for a moment, reflecting on the movie and its beyond coincidence theme and perfectly timed phone calls, and then he answers.

"Hello."

"Hello Jack, it's Mike."

Jack pauses for a moment and then says, "Oh, hi Mike. How's it going?"

"Good, thanks for asking. How are you?" Mike replies.

"I'm okay, I suppose. What's up?" Jack asks.

"Well, this may seem weird to you, but I was just praying and I started thinking about you; and, the more I started thinking about you and what we talked about last, I started praying for you. Then I just felt like I should give you a call. So what's up with you? Mike asks matter-of-factly.

Jack is a bit hesitant, still symbolic in his thinking, and now facing this suspiciously "coincidental" encounter. His eyes fall to the floor and he starts telling Mike about his personal life. He eventually explains his struggles and Mike decides to go all out and tell him how he will never be able to overcome

temptation on his own, and that in order to find true love and a meaningful relationship that will last, you have to realize that the One and only God, who is Love, is the only One who can grant such a thing.

Mike explained to Jack that God is the great Power and Orchestrator of the universe, and He is the One who ordains true destiny, which can include love and marriage. Mike went into great detail about how people know God exists, and many people believe that there are no coincidences, but they usually resist the Spirit and reality of the biblical Truth that will set them free, because they love *the world* and its sin.

Jack mentioned he had just watched *The Matrix*, and how he thought there was something mysteriously intriguing to it. Mike had seen *The Matrix*, and had actually thought about its theme, symbolically, in regards to the world as he knows it—being a born-again Christian freed from sin, and with open eyes to see and open ears to hear the Truth.

“You know, Jack, *The Matrix* is actually a good symbolic analogy for the world as it really is. Now you may not understand this right now, but let me try to explain something to you.

“There are two worlds going on, just like in *The Matrix*. Well, not exactly like *The Matrix*—with machines using people as batteries—but very similar in certain ways. What Christians call “the world,” is like the matrix; that is, the world system that operates outside of the Truth of God’s Word. That matrix consists of the majority of people, who remain slaves to sin and the system that has been instigated by the unseen agents of evil—the Devil and his demons and their deception that leads to death and results in Hell.

“Jesus said, **‘enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter**

through it, and the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.²⁵⁰

“The vast majority are addicted to their sins and will not repent of them, and so they remain slaves to them.²⁵¹ And those slaves to the system, the system of error—the matrix, if you will—will flock together and fight to keep it—for it is what they know, it is what they do, and their tower of pride has been firmly built on its foundation.

“And so, similar to *The Matrix*, when someone is freed from their sins through Salvation in Jesus Christ, their eyes are opened by the Holy Spirit and they come to realize the reality of the spiritual world that exists side by side with the physical world that denies it.²⁵²

“And those who have been freed learn to fight for their freedom²⁵³ and the freedom of anyone who will be saved;²⁵⁴ but, they have to be diligent and wise in their conduct of serving the Lord and trying to “unplug” the people who would rather die than repent.²⁵⁵

“And the agents of evil in *The Matrix* are good examples of the demons that go unnoticed behind the scenes, as they are able to work through people and even indwell people kind of like the movie. And though they are stronger and faster in many ways, they are not impossible to defeat.

“There are a lot of similarities to the real, biblical truth and *The Matrix*. Like when Neo becomes unplugged and freed, he is then submerged in water and pulled out into his new life in the true reality. He was confused at first and unaware of the extent of the surprisingly different reality, and he had to be

250 – Matthew 7:13-14

251 – John 8:34

252 – Mark 4:9

253 – 1 Timothy 6:12

254 – 1 Timothy 4:16, Jude 1:23

255 – John 8:24

fed and taught and rehabilitated in order to overcome his lifelong presuppositions and become effective in the truth. He even had a new name that is like many Christians, even in the Bible, who have had their names changed after becoming reborn spiritually. Then, with his passion amplified by the discovery of truth, and its realignment of purpose to the truth, Neo faithfully grew in knowledge and wisdom that would help him overcome his enemies.²⁵⁶

“Or there’s the scene where Morpheus, Neo’s wise elder, first shows Neo an image of the world as he knew it—beautiful and bustling with life and wonderful activity. Then he shows him an image of the real world that is dead and full of rubble and worthless debris. If everything secular in this world that functions apart from God’s will was to be turned black and into stone, this world would look much like the dark, destroyed world depicted outside of the matrix.

“And so the world we live in is at war.²⁵⁷ If you are not unplugged from being a slave to sin, then you remain a slave to it. If you are not saved from the system that keeps people in bondage, then *you* are in bondage. Jesus said, “**He who is not with Me is against Me.**”²⁵⁸

“Now I can only tell you so much of what I know—just like Morpheus said when he first spoke to Neo—because you will only be able to understand so much before experiencing the Truth for yourself; and I, again like Morpheus, can only guide you to the door, you are the one who has to stand and knock. And so I am here to offer you the choice of either the red pill or the blue pill: one will take you where you really want to go, that place of absolute truth that will open your eyes and answer all of your deepest longings for a real understanding of the world we live in; or, the other pill will leave you in a

256 – Romans 12:21

257 – 2 Timothy 3

258 – Matthew 12:30

world you have always known, a world you are comfortable with; and if you choose that particular pill, there you will stay; and then, when the answer finally comes to your unanswered questions, it will be too late.

“And so until you are chosen by God to be humbled and granted the free gift of repentance of sin and faith in Christ, you are blind to the realities around you and you are lost in *the world*—or in the matrix of sin and death.”

Jack listened intently as Mike expounded upon the Truth to him, and he could not deny the significance of what he was hearing—it was sobering, right through the beer. Jack and Mike continued their conversation into the night, and by the end, Jack allowed Mike to pray with him.

Jack’s mind was reeling for days and he began to search out the Scriptures for himself. He also started researching all sorts of materials about Christianity, and soon he started praying. He felt a strong desire to pursue this path, and at one point he even consciously correlated his need to step out in faith, with Neo following the signs and taking the risks to commit to finding out the truth at all costs. It almost felt like he was living in a real mystery movie, with the truth unfolding before his eyes. And the one thing that gave him hope was that he didn’t have to do it all on his own, that there was Someone on his side that was able to work miracles.

One day, about a week after the Holy Spirit entered Jack (unbeknownst to him), Jack was pondering spiritual things in his car driving down Straight Street. He remembered contemplating the spiritual symbolism of *The Matrix*, and as he looked at all the traffic and bustling streets, he wondered at the possibility of all those people living in a deception that they play their part in.

Stopped at a stop light, as Jack looks far down one of the cross streets, he zooms the focus of his eyes in to the light pole covered in flyers, stickers, and ads on the corner of the intersection. Something there is drawing his

eyes, and as he looks closer he sees a sticker right at his eye level that has a back image of the matrix linear calculator and has written in bright red and yellow letters, *BEWARE the Matrix of Sin and Death!*

Chapter 28

Special Delivery



Three and a half years later.

Tom Adani has followed the lead of the Holy Spirit and appropriated the recognition of spiritual truth revealed to his open eyes, especially in regards to his experiences with demonic forces. Following after Christ, one step after another, Tom has become a deliverance minister whose work has been greatly blessed by the Lord. This does not mean that he has a lot of experience, for it is still all relatively new to him, but his ability to study effectively with great consideration has built a foundation of understanding that has been established upon the experience of others passed down for the purposes of defending God's Kingdom and freeing the captives of oppression by the Devil and his many minions.

Tom's been led into a significant prison ministry that, he finds, is a field white for harvest. The great humbling circumstances of a prison, that can strip a man of his hindering pride, often renders many incarcerated men humbled enough to receive the Gospel, and, subsequently, ready to live in the spiritual freedom that can only come by the Name of Jesus Christ. And

though many receive that precious and priceless gift of eternal Salvation through God's gracious grace, those saved on the inside are still left to deal with the ongoing consequences of their sin-stained lives—both physically and spiritually—and in more ways than one.

After several visits to this particular maximum security prison, Tom has arranged for a private meeting with an inmate to minister deliverance from what he believes is a multiple demonic occupation and oppression that was most likely a major factor in the inmate's crimes.

The inmate sits patiently (for patience is something most prisoners learn over time) in the six by eight-foot room that is usually used for interrogations and interviews with the prisoners by outside sources for a variety of reasons. It's plain and empty with only a small table, three chairs, and a clock on the wall.

The silence is broken by, what seems like, the amplified sound of an unlocking door, a turning of the handle, and the footsteps of Tom and his support partner Luke. After they flood through the door, the security guard shuts it behind them from the outside, leaving them all alone.

Bill stands and eagerly welcomes them with a grateful handshake. "Hi Tom, Luke, thanks for coming."

"Hi Bill, good to see you, how are you doing?" Tom says and asks as Bill nods at Luke, finishing shaking his hand.

They go through a short period of small talk, and a quick overview of what the deliverance process will entail, touching on the most essential aspects of it. Bill is meek and mild in his demeanor, and anyone who knew him before as Billy Mac would probably not even recognize him now. Then, after discussing a bit about Bill's past and some potentially pertinent past sins, Tom begins.

“The thing that we’ve got to be concerned with, Bill, is, I know that you’ve been reading an awful lot—and that can be more detrimental than helpful. Because a lot of the material that is written is not Scripturally accurate—it can’t be supported with the Word of God—and, of course, the Word of God is the final authority; and if it doesn’t stand up to the Word, then it’s wrong. And a lot of people fill their minds with things that are wrong.

“The thing that you need to understand, first of all, even though you don’t know us that well, is that we love you; and, nothing you can say or do can change that. So that means that you can be completely open and honest with us and it doesn’t matter what you say, it’s not going to change the way we feel about you. Alright? We love you anyway; it’s not our love, it comes from the Father—His love is unconditional, so ours is not conditional.”

“Thank you.” Bill says mildly.

“So, the thing is, that, as a child of God, your own confession is that you’ve received Jesus Christ as your Savior through repentance of sin and by faith alone?” Tom asks to establish the basic rights of a child of God.

“Yes.” Bill responds.

“And it’s only on that basis that you can have any hope of victory over Satan and his demon powers. There’s no victory outside of Christ. If you want victory, it’s yours by right of inheritance; you don’t work for that, it’s something that’s already been earned for you—Christ earned it on the Cross.

“It’s obvious by the things that we’ve been reading about your case that you’ve had some problems for a long time.” Tom states.

“Yeah.” Bill admits freely.

“And those problems that we read about, and that we hear about, some of them obviously by compulsion, would be what we would call symptomatic of demonic oppression. Now I say *oppression*, not *possession*—*possession*

implies ownership; if you're born-again you cannot be owned of the Devil because you are owned of the Lord. But you can be invaded or controlled or what we call oppressed. So, things done by compulsion are symptomatic of that type of oppression.

"Now there's one thing that these things we have read do not tell us, and that is: is there anyone that you have any unforgiveness toward?" Tom asks.

Bill shifts a bit in his seat and sighs as he looks down at the table.

"Now, think very carefully about this because it's extremely important that we know the truth." Tom emphasizes.

Bill looks down again and says, "Yeah . . . um . . . well, there have been a few people in my life that I've never really forgiven."

"Well, what you need to do is go to the Lord, and with total forgiveness of heart, tell Him, 'Lord, I'm sorry for the sin of unforgiveness. I repent of it. I ask you to forgive me through the blood of Jesus Christ.'" Tom explains about this serious issue.

"Should I do that now?" Bill asks.

"If we're going to go on that's the only way we can." Tom replies.

Bill nods his head in agreement and says, "Yeah, I'd like to." Then bowing his head on his hands on the table, he prays, "Father in Heaven, I repent of unforgiveness, towards my mother, for the beatings and all; and, I ask You to forgive me for that unforgiveness, in Jesus' Name. Father, I repent of unforgiveness against Sister Rosemary for hurting me in fifth grade; and, I ask You to forgive me for not forgiving her. And I repent also for unforgiveness toward my ex-wife, who, really, was only reacting reasonably to my bad ways, and temper. And, Father, I ask for You to forgive me for that unforgiveness. I also admit that I've harbored bitterness and unforgiveness toward many people

who have had it better than me in this life, and I ask you to wash me clean, in the Blood of Jesus Christ. Amen.”

After a slow release of the prayer, Bill looks up to Tom to continue.

“Okay, in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ we command you Satan to be gone from here. We command that you cannot give any assistance to any demon powers that may be associated with Bill, nor can you send any new demons. The command, by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ to any demon powers that may be associated with Bill, is that you cannot regroup, reorganize, multiply or divide. We command in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ that from this moment on there will be only one way traffic as we relate to Bill, and that is out, away, and into the pit of Hell.” Tom says, stating the legal parameters set by the legal authority of almighty God.

Bill’s countenance changes and he begins to squirm in his seat. His eyes close and he turns his face away from Tom in a negative sense. His hands are clasped in front of him on the table and his fingers begin to fidget.

“We command in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ that you must come out quickly and that you can do no harm to Bill or anyone else here in this room. We command in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ that you must hear my voice and that you must obey.” Tom continues as his friend Luke begins to pray out loud worshipping God.

Bill’s head is down and his eyes closed, something inside of him is resisting the message as his head shifts back and forth. His body convulses slightly and his hands twitch and show an outward sign of inward uneasiness.

“Now in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ we command that any and all demon powers that may be associated with Bill, that wherever they may be, whether here present, hiding, sneaking, using some form of trickery, out in free circulation or in the subconscious, that we gather you up in your entirety,

with your works, the residue of your works and all other associated demons. We command no passing on of your duties. We command that you come immediately and totally and directly into Bill and that you be bound and come to full attention and that you can not move.” Tom commands.

Bill’s constantly shifting and uneasy body movements come into a stillness as his head stays down with his eyes closed and with his hands clasped in front of him on the table.

Luke continues praying audibly, just loud enough to be heard by Bill, “We praise You Lord, hallowed be Your Name, Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Please forgive our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Glory be to You, oh Lord! In Jesus’ Name, we praise You and worship You, for You are the One and only God: Father, Son, and Spirit. . . .”

Tom continues, “And by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ we destroy all hiding places, shields and shadows, and we command it in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. And in the mighty Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I command that you demon powers come to attention and you come to the front. And in the Name of the Lord Jesus . . .”

“NO!” A demon says through Bill’s mouth.

“I command that you . . .” Tom is interrupted again.

“No!” Bill’s eyes open as if something is trying to look out, but they close heavily as if unaccustomed to the light and receding back into the dark.

“In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, you look at me.” Tom demands.

“No!” Bill’s demon says again in rebellion.

“In the Name of the Lord Jesus, what is your name?” Tom asks.

Bill’s body struggles as if it wants to collapse in on itself.

“Answer me demon, what is your name?” Tom commands again.

Bill sits stiff and trembling with eyes closed, his fingers opening and closing around his hands.

“What is your name?” Tom asks again.

“Um . . . um . . .” The demon in Bill is reluctant to submit.

“In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, what is your name?” Tom persists.

“Obar.” The spirit says with a distinct air of arrogance, like some Hollywood villain who’s never been caught for his many heinous crimes.

“Obar. Is that your name?” Tom questions.

“Yes.” The wicked spirit says reluctantly.

“Will that stand as truth before Yehovah God?” Tom confirms.

The look on Bill’s face is serious and almost hateful. He’s now looking into Tom’s eyes and he answers again, “Yes.” His breathing is intense, as if struggling.

“Alright demon Obar, how many demon powers are associated with Bill, altogether?” Tom asks.

Obar begins to breathe harder and closes his eyes, recoiling from the engagement. “You can’t cast me out.” He says as he slightly rubs his hands together.

“In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I command; answer me, how many?” Tom orders.

The demon looks up with fear and then turns Bill’s face inward again in a tightness, crinkling up his skin between his eyebrows. He shifts back and forth and says again with more strength, “You can’t cast me out!”

“You will obey the command of the Lord Jesus Christ; and now, how many demon powers are there, Obar?” Tom continues in the authority of his Master.

Bill’s face scrunches up again after looking up to see if Tom is going to be intimidated. He breathes hard through his nose and shifts at more of an angle.

“Answer me!” Tom commands.

“No!” Obar says again in defiance.

“In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, you answer me now!” Tom persists with Luke continuing in prayer beside and slightly behind him.

Obar continues to struggle in place and says, “You have no power over me.”

“I take authority over you in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ—I have all power and authority over you in that Name.” Tom explains.

“No!” Obar says out defiantly again.

“In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, demon, how many demon powers are there with you? . . . How many?” Tom continues.

“Too many for you.” Obar says sinisterly.

“How many?” Tom asks again.

“Too many for you.” Obar bluffs again.

“How many?” Tom asks again.

“Too many for you!” Obar says more forcefully.

“How many?” Tom asks again.

Bill’s body rocks slightly back and forth with louder breaths.

“In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, how many?” Tom commands.

Obar grunts out loud and rubs his fingers together in extreme discomfort. “No!”

“How many?”

“I hate it!” Obar says as Bill’s fingers straighten and bend.

“How many?”

“I hate it!”

“In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, how many?”

Bill’s body language is increasingly dramatic, with his head shifting uneasily and breathing deeply but as if struggling to get through the nose.

Air puffs out of his mouth blowing his lips and puffing his cheeks a bit; and finally it comes out, “Eight-hundred and forty-two.”

“Eight-hundred and forty-two?” Tom affirms.

“Eight-hundred and forty-two.” Obar says, knowing he’s just been forced to rat out his own partners in crime.

“Will that stand as truth before Yehovah God?” Tom reaffirms.

“Yes.” Obar admits.

“In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, demon Obar, what is the name of the demon power that’s been responsible for Bill having been involved in murder?” Tom asks.

“Zertha.” Obar blurts out.

“Zertha?” Tom affirms.

“Zertha.” Obar says again.

“Will that stand as truth before Yehovah God?” Tom asks through the authority of God, the only One who demons cannot lie to.

“Yes.” Obar confirms, grunting and struggling more knowing he’s being forced into submission—which he absolutely cannot stand.

~ A huge demon hovers above the roof of the prison where Tom, Luke and Bill are. It’s dark, almost black but with a presence of a dirty dark brown in its oversized body. Its wings are almost an exact replica of giant bat wings and they beat slow like thick leather sheets with great resistance to the air. He then lowers himself down through the roof and into the interrogation room.

Luke is the first to notice that his senses are being blurred. His prayers aren’t flowing as naturally as they have been and he immediately feels the change. Tom also finds his mind losing focus and he glances down at his notes for the first time of the entire deliverance.

The free roaming territorial spirit comes to a stop on his feet, squatting to fit in the room.

Though Tom's head is falling out of sync and beginning to ache, he immediately remembers his training and addresses Obar, "Obar, is there another spirit here outside of Bill?"

"Can't you feel me?" The newcomer says through Bill.

"Why yes, I can feel you. And you are not welcome here." Tom says.

"You can't cast *me* into the Abyss." The mighty demon says.

"That may be true? Do you have a right to be here?" Tom asks.

"No." The demon replies.

"Well, I can cast the demons out of Bill, who has relinquished any rights they may have had to be there, and I can cast you out of this place. By the authority vested in me, by the Creator of the universe, His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, I command, in the Name of the only begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ, that you leave us and this courtroom of deliverance—now!"

The mega-demon says no more and his time interfering with Bill's deliverance is over before it really begins. He lifts his wings off of his back and spreads them throughout the upper parts of the building structure transferring his immaterial weight up into flight and is gone as quickly as he came. ~

Tom promptly picks up where he left off and says into Bill, "In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, demon Zertha, you come to attention, you come to the front."

Bill's countenance shifts and he says, "I am the prince of darkness."

"In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, what's your name, prince of darkness?"

"Zertha!" Zertha exclaims, extremely annoyed.

“Alright Zertha, are you a demon prince?” Tom asks.

“Yes.”

“Will that stand as truth before Yehovah God?” Tom asks in the only effective method of extracting truth from the liars who serve the father of lies.

“Yesss.” Zertha draws out in a different way of speaking than either Bill or Obar.

“Is demon Obar a demon prince?” Tom asks.

“Yess.” Zertha says.

“Will that stand as truth before Yehovah God?”

“Yes!”

“How many demon princes are there all together?” Tom probes.

After a brief hesitation and swaying of the body, Zertha says, “Forty-two.”

“Will that stand as truth before Yehovah God?”

“Yes.” Zertha answers, utterly disgusted.

“I command in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that you, demon Zertha and Obar and the other forty demon princes that have not been identified by name, we command in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ that you’re no longer demon princes.” Tom says as he is interrupted by another outburst.

“NO!” Zertha says in rebellion, unwilling to relinquish his precious power and authority.

“In the Name of Jesus Christ, your authority as a demon prince is stripped from you. . .”

“No! No!”

“It is done.” Tom announces.

Zertha breathes out and grunts at the same time, expressing his unfathomable frustration—for evil, power and respect is everything. He rocks back and forth rubbing Bills hands together at a complete loss for words.

“Now look at me, demon. In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I command that you not take your eyes off of me.” Tom says as the demon behind Bill’s eyes opens them hesitantly, as if scared of the light. “It hurts doesn’t it?” Tom says recognizing the pain in Zertha’s countenance through Bill. Zertha nods in the affirmative.

“In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, demon Zertha, I command to know how long have you been associated with Bill?” Tom asks.

Bill’s flush cheeks and turned down mouth, combined with his red eyes, unstable movements, and wholly distraught expression, make him look as though Zertha wants to cry. Zertha drops his eyes recoiling from the whole line of questioning.

“Look at me Zertha!” Tom demands.

Zertha quickly looks back up in accordance with the demand and snuffles in his torture.

“How long?” Tom asks under the authority of Christ.

Zertha whimpers and utters, “Since birth.”

“Since birth? At the time of birth, just before birth, or after birth?” Tom narrows with specifics.

“At birth.” Zertha replies.

“At birth? At the moment of birth?” Tom interrogates.

“No. Conception.” Zertha says.

“At the moment of conception?” Tom questions seeking confirmation, and Zertha nods affirmative. “Will that stand as truth before Yehovah God?”

“Yes.”

“And where did you come from?” Tom asks.

“From his ancestry.” Zertha reveals.

“How long have you been associated with this family?” Tom pushes for more. “How many generations?”

“Since his grandparents came over from Ireland.” Zertha divulges.

“Will that stand as truth before Yehovah God?”

“Yes.”

“In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I command that demon Obar and demon Zertha are bound at attention and that they will not move. Now, in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, do you, demon Zertha, or any other demon in Bill have a right to be here that God would recognize?”

“Yes.”

“Will that stand as truth before Yehovah God?”

“Yes.”

“What right do you have?”

“He wants us here.” Zertha says a bit sheepishly.

“Bill wants you there?” Tom asks.

“Yes.”

“Will that stand as truth before Yehovah God?”

“Yes.”

“In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I bind all demon powers to attention, I command that they cannot move; and I call a spiritual division between them and Bill by the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.” Tom says as Bill’s countenance relaxes a bit and the previously glossed over eyes of Bill seem to resemble more of his normal self and he begins to breathe more normally.

“Now Bill, why do you want the demons here?” Tom asks directly.

“I don’t want them here . . . I don’t want them associated with me.” Bill says.

“Well they say that you do, and that it’ll stand as truth. Now, is there some reason why you don’t want to get rid of them?” Tom further probes.

“No.” Bill says.

Luke chimes in saying, “Is there something Bill wants to do that would be aligned with the will of the demons? Is there one thing you want to do that would be the same as what the demons want to do?”

Bill thinks out loud, “One thing that’s the same?”

Tom offers some suggestions, “For example, do you want to smoke, do you want to drink, do other drugs, fornicate, gain the respect of the world?”

Bill is thinking hard and he says, “No . . . well, there could be a link with alcohol, maybe, there’s been times when I’ve desired it, and I’ve had a battle with it.”

“But you do not give consent to any demon power to remain in you?” Tom asks.

“No.” Bill says straight up.

“I want you to say it, ‘I do not give consent to any demon power to remain in me.’” Tom orders.

Bill closes his eyes, drops his head and says, “I give no consent to you, Satan, and demon powers, to remain in me. In the Name of Jesus.”

“In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, demon Zertha, you come to attention, you come to the front.” Tom says like a supreme court prosecutor.

Bill shifts within himself and returns to the countenance and look of the demon Zertha.

“Now, demon Zertha, do you, or any demon powers associated with Bill, have any right to be here that God would recognize?” Tom asks again.

Zertha begins to show signs of even more nervousness; then he closes his eyes, rubs his hands together and slightly shakes his head saying, "Nooo," with the attitude of a kid backed into a corner with nowhere to run.

"Will that stand as truth before Yehovah God?"

"Yes."

"Now, in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, demon Zertha, I command that you and Obar," Tom is saying as Zertha recognizes where this is going and blurts out, "No!" And Tom continues, "You and Obar and the other eight-hundred and forty demons that have not been named or identified, that you have no multiplications, divisions, or shared demons, and that you will unite into one demon power completely and totally now."

Bill's eyes remain shut with his head slightly down and his body is tensing up even more with the lines on his forehead sticking out in a flush.

"With the works, the residue of your works and all your associated demons, I command no passing on of your duties. Now, in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, demon Zertha, has that command been obeyed?"

"Yes."

"Will that stand as truth before Yehovah God?"

"Yes."

"I bind demons Zertha and Obar at attention and I command that they will not move." Tom says, and each time he says not to move in Jesus Name, Bill's body straightens up and stills for a bit. "I command the other eight-hundred and forty demon powers that were not named and identified, that you gather up your works, the residue of your works, and all of your associated demons. I command no passing on of your duties, and I sever you from Bill and I command that you come out and go immediately and totally and directly into the pit of Hell. By command of the Lord Jesus Christ, you will go there now!"

Bill seems to struggle with a burp that makes him instinctively reach for his throat and then kind of grab his shirt. He puffs his cheeks out as Tom calls for Zertha again.

“Now, demon Zertha, have those eight-hundred and forty other demon powers, that were not named and identified, obeyed the command of the Lord Jesus Christ, and gone into the pit of Hell?” Tom prosecutes.

“Yes.”

“Will that stand as truth before Yehovah God?”

“Yes.”

“Now, in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, are the only demon powers left in association with Bill, yourself and Obar?” Tom seeks further assurance with the ever sneaky powers of darkness.

“No.” Zertha responds.

“Will that stand as truth before Yehovah God?”

“Yes.”

“How many more, besides you two?” Tom asks.

“Hundreds.” Zertha responds with an inkling of power in his voice.

“Now, are you saying the others didn’t go into the pit of Hell?”

“No, you commanded eighty-four.” The sneaky spirit said.

“No, I said eight-hundred forty. You didn’t listen.” Tom clarifies.

“It was eighty-four.” Zertha insists like a child.

“Alright, demon! I command then, in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ that the other seven-hundred and fifty-six go immediately, totally, and directly into the pit of Hell now!” Tom continues.

Zertha is continually trying to deny the command, saying, “No, no, no.” Over and over.

“I command it of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Bill's body convulses a bit in the chair as his body folds inward and a stifled gurgling comes up and out of his mouth turning into a slight cough.

"Now, in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, demon Zertha, have those seven-hundred and fifty-six obeyed the command of the Lord Jesus and gone into the pit of Hell?"

Zertha hesitates to answer, swaying back and forth like a baby.

"Answer me demon Zertha." Tom quickly pushes.

"Yes."

"Will that stand as truth before Yehovah God?"

"Yes."

"So, now there's just you, Zertha, and Obar?" Tom prods further.

Another hesitation.

"Answer me!" Tom insists.

"Yes."

"Will that stand as truth before Yehovah God?"

"Yes."

"There are no others?" Tom thinks to ask further.

Zertha breaks down and spits out another name, "Arcolias."

"Will that stand as truth before Yehovah God?"

"Yes. He's the dweller . . . the dweller in the threshold." Zertha breathes deeply. "He's the serpent . . . at the base . . . the base of . . . of the spine. He has power."

"He has no power."

"He has power!" Zertha insists.

"He doesn't have any power, the Lord Jesus Christ has all power and authority; and demon Arcolias, you come to attention and you come to the front!" Tom commands.

Bill shifts countenance once again and a distinctive hiss comes from between his lips.

“Demon Arcolias, you look at me.” Tom demands. “Look at me!”

Arcolias is hesitant to follow directions as if it goes against his entire being, but he slowly follows suit and looks up through squinted eyes.

“Where’s your power demon?” Tom asks confidently.

Arcolias breathes hard, chest heaving, looking as if he would cry if he could.

“Where is it?” Tom says again.

“They’ve been cast away.” Arcolias says in utter pitifulness.

“Now, in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, demon Arcolias, what is your function—what do you do here?” Tom asks.

Between difficult breathing and slight bodily convulsions, Arcolias answers, “I came in . . . he invited me in. . .”

“For what reason?” Tom quickly snaps like an angry father over a disobedient child.

“To obtain power.” Arcolias answers.

“And what kind of power did you give him?” Tom asks.

“Intellectual power . . . power over his body . . .” Arcolias responds.

“Demonic power. Power to do evil.” Tom says.

“No . . . power, good power, educational power . . .” Arcolias says.

“Oh, demon now!” Tom says unaffected by the demon’s attempt at convincing him of his good intentions.

“Power to study, to obtain.” Arcolias maintains.

“In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, look at me, demon!” And Arcolias is forced to look at Tom but it hurts him almost like looking into the sun. “The power that you have and the power that you can give comes only from the evil one. Is that not true?”

"Yesss." Arcolias forces out.

"Will that stand as truth before Yehovah God?"

"Yes."

"So the power that you gave him was evil power!" Tom asserts.

"Yesss." Arcolias concedes.

"And were you doing anything else there, demon Arcolias?" Tom asks almost antagonistically.

"I was teaching him . . ." Arcolias says and hesitates.

"How to do other evil things?" Tom asks.

"Teaching him mantras . . . mantras to repeat . . . other name of demons to come in . . . open doors . . ."

"In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, demon Zertha, you come to attention, you come to the front." Tom commands for the other demon spirit to come through Bill.

"Demon Zertha, what is your function here? Look at me! What's your function?"

"I'm the prince of darkness." Zertha says in a shell of his former power.

"You *were* the prince of darkness." Tom corrects.

"I am!" Zertha demands.

"You are no longer a prince, remember?" Tom reminds.

Zertha struggles within and can say nothing.

"Oh, that bothers you doesn't it?" Tom asks antagonistically again.

Zertha searches for the words when only a pitiful moan comes through Bill's vocal cords.

"Now, again, what is your function here, Zertha?" Tom asks again.

"I came into him when he yielded to fear, fear of me. I spoke to him . . . I spoke to him . . ." Zertha says.

“He has no fear now—God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”²⁵⁹

Zertha struggles in his weakness and makes the motion and noise of sobbing but without tears. “No! He fears me.” He tries to continue in vain.

“No, he doesn’t fear you . . . we don’t fear you.” Tom affirms.

Zertha, still crying without tears, is turning Bill’s face red.

“Look at me Zertha!” Tom restates his control.

“He fears me!” Zertha says in all desperation.

“Look at me demon.” Tom says again as Luke raises the volume on his prayers of praise just a bit.

And like a little kid, refusing to admit the truth, Zertha tries to demand again, “He fears meee.”

“In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, is that your only function, to cause him to fear?” Tom asks.

“I let in all the others.” Zertha moans.

“Oh, you’re the one that let in all the others!”

Bill’s face contorts in anguish as Zertha’s emotions show through him.

“I let in all the others.” He proclaims into the air for no reason. “Don’t cast me out, you can’t cast me out.” Zertha states in a desperate plea.

“In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, you be silent for now. Demon Obar, you come to attention, you come to the front.” Tom demands again.

Bill’s demeanor changes into the more calm, but afraid, Obar.

“Now, demon Obar, what is your function here?” Tom asks.

“I came into him as he crossed the county line. I’m the other half of Johnny Vance.” Obar says.

“You’re the other half of Johnny Vance? And who is Johnny Vance?” Tom asks.

“Johnny Vance lives on the corner of How Road and Wood Street. He is a homosexual and he didn’t want me living in him.” Obar explains.

“And so you came into Bill. And you’re the other half? Did you leave the other half of yourself with Johnny Vance?” Tom asks, trying to figure out what the demon is talking about.

“Yes.”

“In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I command that you call that half of yourself now, immediately and totally with your works, the residue of your works, and all your associated demons, I command no passing on of your duties. Now have you obeyed that command?” Tom asks.

“Yes.”

“So there is no longer half over in the other place? You’re all here now?” Tom asks. “Answer me. . . . Demon Obar, answer me!”

“It can’t happen.” Obar says.

“It did happen!” Tom says.

“It didn’t happen.” Obar says truly.

“Then it must happen.” Tom states firmly.

“I command it in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, you do it now!” Tom demands.

Obar shakes his head and says, “Johnny is his own person . . . he can’t give up himself.”

“Demon Obar, if you have a shared demon there, you bring them here now by the command of the Lord Jesus—we’re not asking to bring the person, you bring your other half demon power here now! In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I command it.”

Obar swivels a bit and oscillates in his chair making a choking sound as if something were caught in his throat on the way down.

“Now, have you obeyed that command?” Tom asks.

“Yes.”

“Will that stand as truth before Yehovah God?”

“Yes.”

“Now, in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, demon Obar, besides you, Zertha and Arcolias, are there any demon powers that have not been named or identified that are associated with Bill?” Tom asks forcefully.

“No.” Obar admits.

“Will that stand as truth before Yehovah God?”

“Yes.”

“In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I command that all bits and pieces, scars and workings wrought by any demon powers in this life, mind and body are removed from Bill and welded to you demon powers. Completely and totally, you will leave no residue behind, there will be nothing left behind, no withdrawal of any type left behind—there will be nothing! You will remove all of your works of evil in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ and they will be welded to you, by command of the Lord Jesus.” Tom begins to finish the job.

All the while Bill’s body increasingly trembles, shakes and sways back and forth. Obar says out loud, “No. No. No.”

Luke praises the Lord in the Spirit, “Oh, dear God, we praise You. We praise You Jesus. . . .” while Tom continues, “Demon Zertha, you come to attention, you come to the front.”

Bill’s demeanor changes back.

“Demon Zertha, do you confess Jesus Christ to be your Lord?”

“No! No. . . . No.”

“Who is your lord?” Tom asks. “Who is he?”

“The master . . . Satan . . . Lucifer!”

“Look around demon, see if you see him anywhere.” Tom instructs the demon.

Zertha sheepishly looks around the room for the first time and it’s as if he’s looking into another world (or through an unusual veil). Slowly right, then left, all the while breathing unusually hard. “No.”

“No? Oh! He’s deserted you hasn’t he? You’re all alone.” Tom points out the harsh reality.

Zertha closes his eyes again and breathes like a little kid who has just stopped crying but is in the after effects of it, still bouncing through each breath.

“Our God never leaves you nor forsakes you.” Tom says.

“No.”

“But you’ve been forsaken demon Zertha.” Tom says again.

“No.” Zertha says blubbering.

“Does that bother you?” Tom asks.

After a hesitation, “Yes.”

“In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I command demon Zertha—here bound at attention—that you will not move.”

Zertha struggles to be absolutely still.

“I command demon Obar and demon Arcolias, that they’re welded up together with their works, the residue of their works and all their associated demons; I command no passing on of their duties, and they are severed from Bill and they will come out and go immediately and totally and directly into the pit of Hell. By command of the Lord Jesus Christ, they will go there now!”

~ In the spiritual realm within Bill’s body, Obar and Arcolias are huddled together and being pushed toward a drop off that’s like an eternal fall into

darkness off of the edge of the world.²⁶⁰ A large angel pushes them with the flat edge of his sword sideways between them. They are on the verge of being pushed off the edge, then they both jump in at the last minute, disappearing into the darkness. ~

Bill's face turns down in defeat and his hands are white from clutching hard. Bill's body begins to rock back and forth and struggling sounds come from his airways.

Tom prays out loud to the Father, claiming His promises to His children for freedom.

The cries of objection and words from Bill's mouth are indiscernible in the arduous process, only a high pitched "Nooo" comes through clearly. The demon resists with all of his strength, crying and wailing in its place.

"Demon Zertha, you come to attention, you come to the front!" Tom commands as the demon quiets down. "Demon Zertha? Answer me!"

"Ohh . . . yyeessss." Zertha can barely stand to say.

"Has demon Obar and demon Arcolias gone into the pit of Hell as they were commanded?"

"Yes."

"Will that stand as truth before Yehovah God?"

Sniffing, Zertha pushes out the necessary answer, "Yes."

"Are you the only one left, demon Zertha?" Tom asks.

Zertha can hardly stand what has become of his kingdom and it's all he can do just to comply with the required response for the legal prosecution.

"Will that stand as truth before Yehovah God?"

"Yeaeaeaesss." Zertha squeals out like an obstinate child being forced discipline.

“There are no more out in free circulation that haven’t been identified?”

Tom seeks completion.

“Noooo.” Zertha whines.

“Will that stand as truth before Yehovah God?”

“Yes.”

“Are there any in the subconscious that haven’t been identified?”

Tom probes.

Zertha can hardly stop crying to speak, “No.”

“Will that stand as truth before Yehovah God?”

“Yes.” Zertha says sheepishly, and then mourns, “My power, my power, what have you done to my power?”

“In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I command you now, are there any other demon powers hiding somewhere in some trickery that have not been identified?” Tom asks in order to execute the job fully.

Another whining, “No.”

“Will that stand as truth before Yehovah God?”

“Yes.”

“Are there any here present that haven’t been identified?” Tom asks for final reassurance.

“No.”

“Will that stand as truth before Yehovah God?”

“Yes.”

“In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I command that any demon kingdoms associated with Zertha and Bill, that any and all demon kingdoms are welded to demon Zertha.” Tom begins the final extraction.

Zertha struggles in his refusal of defeat. Bill's breathing is hard and puffing up through his nose forcing snot to hang down with his head. Luke wipes his nose as saliva and spittle come out of his mouth.

"I command in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that demon Zertha and any demon powers associated with demon Zertha, their works, and the residue of their works and all their associated demons, I command, no passing on of their duties. Now, demon Zertha, are there any demon kingdoms united to you now?" Tom asks once and for all.

"No."

"Will that stand as truth before Yehovah God?"

"Yes." Zertha hangs his head even lower.

"Then in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ I command you, demon Zertha, to take your works, the residue of your works . . ."

As Tom exacts the command, Zertha continues to resist crying out, "No . . . no . . . no . . ." squirming and struggling in place.

"and all your associated demons, I command no passing on of your duties, I sever you from Bill . . ."

Bill's body is swaying harder and harder, back and forth on his forearms on the table, swaying the table, repeating, "No! No! No!"

". . .and I command that you go out and go immediately and totally and directly into the pit of Hell. . ."

"No! No! No!"

". . .and in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, you will go there now! In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, you will go there NOW!

Zertha holds on, swaying back and forth continuing to say nothing but, "No! . . . No! . . . No!"

“Without any delay! We take the promise of the Word of God where any two or more agree in the mighty Name of Jesus Christ, it will be done.” Tom states in faith.

~ In the spiritual realm within Bill, Zertha is perched on the very edge of the abyss with all his might. He’s squatted down low facing the darkness, but he grips with his talons for all he’s worth. ~

Zertha is losing his grip, as Bill’s head hangs bobbling, almost touching the table, and lets out a loud, wavering, high pitch cry of one last “Nooo!”

~ Finally, the mighty bailiff in this courtroom of deliverance, the angel of God, comes swooping in from above under the power of his wings, and slams his feet into the center of Zertha’s back, launching his upper body forward and down, even though Zertha’s talons hold tightly to the ledge as his body flips down and slams against the wall of the edge, first ripping one talon out, twisting his body and torquing the other talon out as well, dropping him down and bouncing off the wall into the pit of Hell. ~

Zertha’s violent release jerks Bill’s head back upright and he recoils back, tipping the chair slightly against the wall; and, as one hand instinctively reaches up to cover his eyes, he slides further off to the side of the chair and falls with the chair against the wall, flopping onto the floor and knocking the wall-clock down with a crash. A wretched belching sound blurts out of Bill’s body as he hits the floor; and then, silence.

A gasp breaks the silence and Bill struggles to breathe, and then he lay perfectly still.

“Now, in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I want a *yes* or a *no* answer: are there any demon powers associated with Bill in any way?” Tom asks sternly.

Bill lay clumped against the wall on the floor, without making a sound. Then a pinky twitches; and after a few seconds, he begins to breathe

noticeably, heavy at first and then slowing down to normal. His eyes are closed with his head on the ground over his shoulder.

“Are there any demon powers associated with Bill in any way?” Tom asks again.

Luke praises the Lord behind Tom, “Hallelujah, hallelujah!”

“In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I want a *yes* or a *no* answer: are there any demon powers associated with Bill in any way?” Tom asks firmly.

Finally Bill speaks, quietly and lowly, “Thank you, Jesus.”

“Are there any demon powers associated with Bill in any way? I want a *yes* or *no*.” Tom asks again, eager to complete the job.

Only a whisper, “Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Jesus.”

“Bill, I want an answer, *yes* or *no*, are there any demon powers associated with Bill in any way?”

Tom’s words finally reach Bill’s consciousness, and he jerks his head a bit and swallows, with his eyes beginning to move under his eyelids, “No.”

“Will that stand as truth before Yehovah God?” Tom asks.

Bill answers, “Yes,” and begins to stir. “Yes.” He says as he regains his awareness, and he smiles as he stretches his limbs. He exhales a big sigh of relief, still fully in his position on the floor.

“How do you feel Bill?” Tom asks.

Bill doesn’t even have to think, “Great!” He then reaches out his arms against the wall and floor, lifting up his head to get up. Then realizing he has spittle on his chin wipes himself with his shirt. Then he begins to get up, sighing in relief with each movement closer to regaining his composure. Grabbing the table to help him stand up, he smiles and breathes deep again, sighing greatly.

Bill immediately reaches for Tom and Luke's hands and says, "Thank you!" wholeheartedly.

Luke pats him on the back and Tom says, "Don't thank us, thank the Lord."

Bill immediately freezes in his present position and closes his eyes to thank God, "Oh, thank you Jesus! Oh, praise You Lord! Thank you."

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Bill then began his life in complete spiritual freedom for the first time; and though Bill would never get physical freedom in this life, he would go on to follow the Lord wholeheartedly, winning numerous souls to Christ before the end—more than everyone else in this story combined.

## Epilogue

### Life Goes On - & So Does Death



**I**t's busy on Straight Street, vehicles of all kinds travel to and fro in what seems to be an endless rush of progress. Sidewalk corners build up piles of pedestrians and then crosswalk lights flood them on toward their next destination. Others sit perfectly still inside the walls of different businesses and residences tending to a variety of issues and interests. In essence, everyday life is going on.

Straight Street isn't located in one specific city or on one limited route, it's every street in every city and every town. And the same war rages every second of every day. It's the perpetual conflict of all of God's highest created beings—the human race and the angels (both the fallen and the righteous).

Who are the real warriors? Which side are they on? What deception lies just under the surface of what is seen?

A consistently nice and lovely woman, who seems to have mastered her emotional sensitivities, cares for many of those around her; but, at the mention of a certain Name, she surprisingly changes her tune, and a different side—an ugly side—of her emerges.

A strange looking bearded man who walks with his eyes down, always looking straight ahead, seems unusually private in his daily life, making you think he has psychological issues. He walks with a scowl and turns you off because he is not physically appealing by the current cultural standards of what is attractive; but, when you find yourself in need, he springs into action and saves you much trouble without cost, and then leaves you with a strange treasure chest of spiritual gold—that is, a Gospel tract that has the words that lead to everlasting life. (But then again, maybe this just confirms the specifics of his issues you suspected at first glance—when you judged a book by its cover while saying, “you shouldn’t judge”.)

Maybe the guilty criminal is partially a victim of circumstance, partially a victim of wicked and manipulative spirits, partially a victim of the matrix of *the world* who follows the Devil’s lead, partially a victim of his own sinful nature, and therefore, partially to blame?

Maybe, when nobody is looking, the cute, “innocent” little children are wickedly degrading the child who doesn’t fit in because of a mental or physical defect that he has absolutely no control over, scaring him or her for life?

Things are not always as they seem.

“Everyday life” goes on, and everyday death goes on. Not only in the 160,000 people that pass into eternity each day, but in many of the living choices we make—big and small. The Bible says **the tongue holds the power of life and death**,<sup>261</sup> and therefore, the heart, mind and will, which are the driving forces behind the tongue, ultimately hold that power.

In the same way, the heart, mind and will can hold the power of life and death in actions, without speaking a word. And our minds and wills are constantly caught in between our God given conscience, our physical/fleshly

nature, the outside opinions of the world, and even outside spiritual forces on either side of the great conflict between ultimate good and evil.

So the main issue is ultimately one of sin. God tells us what sin is,<sup>262</sup> but is it always black and white? Well, let's start with the Ten Commandments—God's perfect moral Law—which shows us the foundation of what sin is:<sup>263</sup>

**1 – You shall have no other gods before Me.** God's appropriate role is as the prominent Ruler of our lives, for He has created us and the entire universe,<sup>264</sup> and He knows how all things work and He deserves the respect to maintain His rightful authority. And Jesus magnified this Commandment by saying, **“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your soul, and with all your strength.”**<sup>265</sup> God is worthy of all of our affection and He alone deserves to be our highest priority in life.

**2 – You shall not make yourself any graven image.** Yes, there has been, throughout history and even now, those who actually fashion physical images and idols that they ascribe deity; but, the more common form of idolatry is that of creating a God in the mind that is anything other than who the One and only God of the Bible has defined Himself as in the Holy Bible. Any deviation of the Biblical definition of God is a direct violation of this Commandment and the sin of idolatry.

**3 – You shall not take the Name of the Lord your God in vain.** The fact that there is only One Name that people of the world use as a cuss word is a

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262 – Romans 7:7

263 – Exodus 20:1-17

264 – Genesis 1-2

265 – Mark 12:30



perfect testimony to the reality of the wicked spirit of the unsaved world; and also, the fact that all people know the one true God, and that they are living in direct rebellion against Him.<sup>266</sup> And those who take His Name in vain also know that it is a sin because they know that God is holy.

**4 – Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy.** This is surprisingly the most controversial of the Commandments. There are New Testament Scriptures that seem to suggest that the specific day of rest has been replaced by the New Covenant established by Yeshua when He tells us to find our rest in Him—this is what the majority of Christians believe. Yet, these same Christians translate the original, specific, Sabbath Day (the seventh day of the week, Saturday, the original day that God Himself rested on after creating the heavens and the earth) into a quasi-sabbath on Sunday. The majority have changed *the* Sabbath Day into: not neglecting the gathering of the saints (which is a command to believers only, whereas the 10 Commandments are God’s standard of sin for all people everywhere), or to give back to the Lord any one day of the week, or to simply not neglect the things of God; yet, without a direct Scripture reference to negate the Forth Commandment, they continue to refer to the Ten Commandments as a whole and not the Nine (or Nine and a half) Commandments. And, therefore, all of Yeshua’s direct commands to “**keep My Commandments**” or His indirect commands through His apostles in His Word to “**keep *the* Commandments**”<sup>267</sup> mean something a bit different for the Forth? This sin is no longer black and white—or is it? **Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy** and for rest.

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266 – Romans 1:20-21

267 – Matthew 5:17-19, 19:7, Luke 16:17, John 14:15 & 21, 15:10, 1 John 2:3-4, 3:22, 5:2-3, 2 John 1:6, Romans 2:13, 3:28, 31, 8:3-4, 13:10, 1 Corinthians 7:19, 1 Timothy 6:14, 1 John 2:3-6, 3:24, 5:3, 2 John 1:6, James 2:10-12, Revelation 12:17, 14:12, 22:14 (KJV)

**5 – Honor your father and your mother. This is the first Commandment with promise: “so that it will go well with you.”**<sup>268</sup> We all can recognize that dishonoring your parents is sinful; yet, certain situations, where they may be operating in unbelief, may bring about unreasonable expectations in their conflict of living in opposition to the things of God and can often create an outward appearance of disrespect by going against their wishes; when Yeshua Himself said, **“For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man’s enemies will be the members of his household.”**<sup>269</sup> Or, when a man asked Yeshua if he could go and bury his father before following Him, Yeshua replied, **“Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the Kingdom of God.”**<sup>270</sup> And so it is, that there appears to be a gray area to the sin of dishonoring your father and mother; though, I believe, there is a way to remain honorable even to your enemies, as Yeshua also taught to **love your enemies**<sup>271</sup>—even if they are your mother or father.

**6 – You shall not kill.** Pretty straight forward, yet those living in opposition to God, will often require an elaboration of the definition of sinful murder, opposed to just killings, such as, in war, punishment, or self-defense. Also, God’s Word says, **“Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer.”**<sup>272</sup> God’s Judgments focus on the heart of the matter.<sup>273</sup>

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268 – Deuteronomy 5:16, Ephesians 6:2-3

269 – Matthew 10:35-36

270 – Luke 9:60

271 – Matthew 5:44

272 – 1 John 3:15

273 – 1 Samuel 16:7

7 – **You shall not commit adultery.** On the surface, a plain and simple Command. But when Yeshua said, “**Anyone who looks with lust on another person** (other than their married spouse), **has committed adultery with them already in their heart.**”<sup>274</sup> So this is a prime example of how God judges the heart, where all sin originates. If you even think about wanting to do it, you are committing it.<sup>275</sup>

8 – **You shall not steal.** Taking something that belongs to someone else is quite black and white; yet, could there be theoretical scenarios where taking something from a criminal who would otherwise perpetrate a crime with the object is just? This, I think, would not be the same as stealing with sinful intent; but, this is a gray area that is left to conscience and to take before the Lord.

9 – **You shall not lie.** Again, ultimately straight forward, yet circumstances arise that may, theoretically, justify a lie; but, does it remain a sin? For example, if a single lie can save lives without denying Christ. A gray area arises, and, of course, God will be the Judge of all such things; but these aren’t usually the types of lies people are really trying to defend if they address the gray area involved and deny their guilt—for who can truly say they have not lied sinfully?

10 – **You shall not covet.** Some have translated this as meaning, “don’t want what others have”; but, once again, there’s a heart issue here that defines coveting. Can you want something that is the same as what others have, or do you want that specific thing when they don’t want to give it up? Is it okay to want something that belongs to someone else when it is for sale? Or is it okay to

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274 – Matthew 5:28

275 – Hebrews 4:12-13

want something to be for sale, or to offer to buy that something? I think there is a difference, and we are responsible for our innate understanding of that difference; yet, on the surface, it appears to be a gray area. Though I think we are all readily aware of our sinful covetousness when it happens—which is why we need to have a tender conscience, which testifies to sin.<sup>276</sup>

So the Ten Commandments are the most plain and official sins that we are accountable for; yet, as we've seen, there are issues of conscience involved, even with them.

So what about other sins that are explained in the Bible? Sins like drunkenness,<sup>277</sup> homosexuality,<sup>278</sup> destroying the temple of God (which is our body when we have the Holy Spirit)?<sup>279</sup> These are all fine examples of why the Bible is so controversial.

And this is why Christians should not be too quick to be trite or respond to objections with oversimplified answers. I think that our human nature has an overwhelming tendency toward wanting things to be condensed and reduced into their lowest common denominator. This combined with a fleshly lack of patience creates the potential for many closed doors to never be opened. When the reality is that issues of truth are often varyingly complex and regularly involve plural senses which need to be properly assessed, especially when dealing with a “natural man,” which God says cannot understand spiritual things.<sup>280</sup>

This is the major issue of what is called a paradox. A paradox is a seeming contradiction, which upon closer examination, is no contradiction at all. It's

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276 – Romans 2:15-16

277 – Ephesians 5:18, Galatians 5:21, 1 Corinthians 6:10, 1 Peter 5:8

278 – Romans 1:26-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10

279 – 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 6:18-20, 2 Corinthians 6:16

280 – 1 Corinthians 2:14

one of the reasons unbelievers who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, are quick to take a shallow look at the Word of God and then walk away justified in their unbelief, claiming contradictions; whereas, the Christian is willing and able to take the time to study and examine deeply the intricate reality of God's Word, and find the answers that explain such apparent contradictions.<sup>281</sup>

Like this rudimentary example: one witness of a car accident says the hit and run was by a green car, and another witness says it was a red car = paradox/apparent contradiction. But a closer investigation reveals that one witness was on one side of the street and the other was on the other, and later it's shown that the car was painted green on one side and red on the other.

And an example of different aspects and senses of a specific sin would be this: the Bible clearly states that it is a sin to get drunk; but it's okay to drink some wine. This presents at least two issues: 1 – how do you define drunkenness, or, at what point does one cross the unseen line into drunkenness; and, 2 – what about someone, for example, who was an alcoholic, and has personal issues with alcohol? Both are a matter of conscience: 1 – each person is responsible for not crossing that line into drunkenness—the line that each person will know if they are willing enough to pay attention; 2 – For a person to violate his or her conscience by drinking some wine when they know they have self-control issues with alcohol, is a sin, in and of itself, and the responsibility is theirs.

So these issues of personal conscience bring a lot of unseen gray areas of sin that are not always universal. Yet what is universal is the individual's responsibility to heed their conscience and flee from sin.<sup>282</sup>

And so when a person would sear their conscience and claim that they don't know right and wrong, it is still their responsibility in the end. The Bible

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281 – 2 Timothy 2:15, 1 Timothy 4:13

282 – Ezekiel 18:20

says that we are all **without excuse**.<sup>283</sup> And when the Day of Judgment comes, we will not be guilty of ignorantly sinning against a God we don't know, we will be guilty of committing sins we are fully aware of and against a God we *do know*. And the punishment God has ascribed for sin is eternity in hell.<sup>284</sup>

This is why **the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom**.<sup>285</sup> **“Do not fear those who kill the body . . . fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell.”**<sup>286</sup> Until you realize your place under the authority of the God who created you, you are living in willing ignorance and self-deception that—no matter how intellectual you may be regarding things of the world—leaves you outside of the God given definition of knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge and wisdom begin with God, and any worldly knowledge or wisdom you may have, started with God as well—you may just not admit it or understand it.

This is why God says **the meek will inherit the earth**,<sup>287</sup> because the humble of heart can accept submitting to God's authority and will receive the Gospel of Yeshua Messiah with reverence. While the hard hearts and stiff necks of the proud are a reproach to God and He will oppose them; or, if they are blessed, humble them to the point of submitting themselves to their rightful place under Him.

So in the everyday world around us, people are able to become increasingly proud, by one decision after the next; or increasingly humble, by one decision after the next; or vacillating in between somewhere. And if one chooses to increase in pride, they may very well find themselves completely given over by God to the wicked desires of their hearts,<sup>288</sup> which will

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283 – Romans 1:20

284 – Matthew 25:41

285 – Proverbs 9:10

286 – Matthew 10:28

287 – Psalm 37:11 KJV

288 – Romans 1:24

land them in flaming eternal consequences. And, on the other hand, if one humbles himself continually, he may become very great in the Kingdom of Heaven; for, **“He who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted,”**<sup>289</sup> and **“Whoever humbles himself like a child, he is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.”**<sup>290</sup>

Could it be that the spirits of evil are able to give humans a wide variety of power to achieve great status and respect, which promotes increasing pride of self, which solidifies the wall between them and God?

Who has the Spirit of Truth living and growing inside of them? Who has a spirit of lies living inside of them? And who can discern the difference?<sup>291</sup>

This is the world we live in. Where simple everyday choices and consequences build our character, where our own carnal nature can be our ruin, and where all three of our primary enemies are completely unseen—Satan (the head of all evil), the matrix of the world system operating under his deception and apart from God’s will, and our own fleshly tendency to fall away from God and into sin.

Who is standing next to you in line at the grocery store, and who do they work for spiritually? Yeshua said, **“Whoever is not with Me is against Me.”**<sup>292</sup>

Who are you with and who are you against?

Have you been unplugged from the matrix of sin and death? And if you have, are you on active duty in the ultimate battle to the death? And if you are, are you more passionate to serve the Lord’s primary purpose to seek and save the lost than *anything* else?

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289 – Matthew 23:12

290 – Matthew 18:4

291 – Hebrews 5:14

292 – Luke 11:23

The apostle Paul said, **“No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the One who enlisted him as a soldier.”**<sup>293</sup>

And not all soldiers fight honorably, some are dishonorably discharged. Some surrender without cause, simply because they don't want to fight. And those are the ones who would sit back and criticize the other soldiers because they must satisfy their own justification in suppressing their own consciences.

Every time you engage in a casual conversation with the lost and don't address spiritual things, God may hold you **accountable for every idol word you speak.**<sup>294</sup> Every time you smile and joke around in secular fashion, trying to maintain your love and respect from the world, you are fraternizing with the enemy and are in danger of making yourself an enemy of God.<sup>295</sup>

If you are not diligently intending for every single interaction to be directed into the spiritual Truth that points to God and can save the lost for eternity, then you might as well douse them in gas as they dance their way into Hell.

Every time you hold hands with the world and follow it wherever it wants to go, then you are a fellow slave with them. Like a prisoner of war, you are a captive to their judgment, as well as your own fear.<sup>296</sup>

This is not a game, this is the most serious reality there is and it's right under your nose, every day of your life.

So we have many important choices in our lives, and they come every single day and in any given moment. And though we may struggle with certain decisions, we must try to recognize the eternal implications of each and

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293 – 2 Timothy 2:4

294 – Matthew 12:36-37

295 – James 4:4

296 – Matthew 10:28



every one. The war rages on, even now, and even in the most “mundane” of lives and in the most mundane places.

Everyday life is truly filled with countless unseen challenges and opportunities to choose to think, speak, do, and promote the things of darkness or the things of light. Eternal values of good and evil hang in the balance with every challenge to the conscience. Every single day, we are in a spiritual action story that we are a part of writing, playing, and sowing and reaping.<sup>297</sup>

God works with us hand in hand and we play a valuable part in our own destinies. No, we don't earn our Salvation; and no, we don't actually do the work of granting Salvation; but we play our part, and it is no passive role. The apostle Paul said, **“I become all things to all people that I might by all means save some,”**<sup>298</sup> and **“run in such a way that you may win the race,”**<sup>299</sup> and **“show yourselves diligent and approved as a workmen under God who does not need to be ashamed,”**<sup>300</sup> and that **“solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.”**<sup>301</sup>

We must continually be putting our spiritual knowledge into practice! And we must be training our senses to discern good and evil! There is a great battle going on all around us, everyday. God sees it, God knows it, and we do too. Can we always see the true spiritual realities of evil working around us? No, but we have been given God's Word and His Spirit to learn and grow in its recognition. The question is, what are we going to do about it? Well, we should be doing all that we can.

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297 – Galatians 6:7-8

298 – 1 Corinthians 9:22

299 – 1 Corinthians 9:24

300 – 2 Timothy 2:15

301 – Hebrews 5:14

Every single human being is involved in this battle, from the moment they are born to the moment they die. There are no civilians in this war, only soldiers: those fighting for Truth, and those fighting for error.

Everyone makes decisions one at a time and it's essentially one choice at a time that leads us into our eternal destiny. There will be ups and downs along the way, but no soldier is alone; they will be supported either by the devil and his world system or God and His eternal Kingdom; yet each along the way can be affected by the other side.

Like an oak growing slowly with each second of time, we all are moving and changing each day, which is like a thousand years to God.<sup>302</sup> And by that math, a decision that takes us five minutes to make is like five years worth of time for God; and so as time is greatly magnified to the Lord (though it is also very short in the opposite sense), we must pay close attention to our thoughts and the intents of our most basic moral decisions. For even the smallest of sins in our eyes is eternally unacceptable to God.

Life is not always as it seems. Truth is not always as simple as we would have it. But patience, self-control, and long-suffering are fruits of the Holy Spirit,<sup>303</sup> and we must abide by them, in Christ.<sup>304</sup>

**Broad is the road that leads to death, and many find it; but narrow is the road that leads to life, and few will follow it.**<sup>305</sup> We must be content on the narrow path, for this world is ever broadening its ways and it is sucking in souls like a black hole.

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302 – 2 Peter 3:8

303 – Galatians 5:22-23

304 – John 15:4-5

305 – Matthew 7:13-14

It's not enough to simply believe in Yeshua, the demons believe and tremble.<sup>306</sup> The Devil himself is a believer in the one true God and it's not helping him any! I believe the Devil and his minions have done a bang up job of running around behind the scenes in the unseen spiritual world, while deceiving people into living by sight, where seeing is believing, to the point that the unbelievers don't really think they even exist and believers just ignore them almost completely to the point of forgetting they're even there.

How many heinous crimes that are so far beyond reasonable comprehension happen through men and not one Christian brings up the potential of demonic influence? Yes, the human heart is deceitfully wicked,<sup>307</sup> but, I believe that many times certain acts of extremely irrational wickedness (and even some simple every day acts of wickedness) are very much the result of the fallen angels who have become demons. We don't know how many angels were originally created, but we can gather that there was a very large number; and their original purpose was to minister to mankind,<sup>308</sup> so when some of the angels became agents of evil, I think we can safely assume that they retained their original abilities to influence men, only now it is for purposes antithetical to God's.

We know angels can appear as men,<sup>309</sup> and we know they can be all around us without our seeing them,<sup>310</sup> and we know they can wage war on human lives.<sup>311</sup> This reality needs to be appropriated by the church; and we need to speak and teach about these issues and make a deliberate attempt to learn about our enemies and how to fight them.

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306 – James 2:19

307 – Jeremiah 17:9

308 – Hebrews 1:14

309 – Hebrews 13:2, Genesis 18 (& God), 19:1-22, 32:24-30 (God?)

310 – 2 Kings 6:16-17

311 – 2 Kings 19:35

We know that Yeshua Messiah and His Name, that is above all names, is the ultimate authority over demons,<sup>312</sup> and we know from Scripture that fasting and prayer has its place in effective warring against them.<sup>313</sup> We cannot be scared off because some (or most) of the spiritual warfare movement is unbiblical. Are we scared away from good theology by bad theology in any other way? Are we scared off because of opposing worldviews? No, and we cannot be scared by the mysterious reality of demons, who very well could be the very source of many of our problems—physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual.

And so we must fight, and look to people for who they really are—souls of eternal value whose spirits are not reflected by their bodies. We must learn to look inside: inside of ourselves, inside of others, and inside of the unseen world that reveals itself by principalities of Truth or error. Yeshua said, **“You will know them by their fruits.”**<sup>314</sup>

Some will say, “You can’t judge another man’s heart,” and in certain regards that’s true; but, when a man blatantly denies Christ, we can certainly judge their heart with righteous judgment and conclude that they are still lost in their sins. And in the same way, when a professing Christian claims faith in Christ, but is incapable of explaining the very Gospel that they claim to be saved by, then we must judge their heart with righteous judgment by concluding—not always with a definite yes or no, but often with a highly probably no—that they are very likely a false convert to whom you should always lean on the side of caution, assuming the worst, and give them the true Gospel, in case it could mean the difference between eternal life and

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312 – Mark 16:17

313 – Matthew 17:21

314 – Matthew 7:20

eternal death. (Besides, even believers need to hear the Gospel on a daily basis anyway.)<sup>315</sup>

If a person claimed to be a professional carpenter and they said, “There’s nothing to it, you just get a saw and a square and you cut up wood to fit where it needs to go and you nail it together,” and that’s all they can say about being a professional carpenter, would you believe that they are a professional carpenter? Would you hire them to build your new dream house? No, and subsequently, we should be concerned that many professing Christians could be miss-representing the God of the universe and His all-important one way to eternal Salvation.<sup>316</sup> And leaving them to continue believing their delusion only puts their soul and other souls at risk when their false representation of the Gospel will only solidify contentment in their error.

So, by all means judge—**judge with righteous judgment**<sup>317</sup>—as the Bible says. Everyday even unbelieving people judge with righteous judgment when they heed their conscience and choose what is right and when they speak out against what is wrong; but, not all judgment is righteous, only judgments that coincide with God’s will are righteous.

And so I say again, beware: life is not always as it seems. Most things have an underlying reality that needs to be understood and not overlooked. Most people have underlying realities that need to be understood and not overlooked. Most of life has an underlying reality that needs to be understood and not overlooked. The souls of men and the means by which God reaches them are of utmost importance. The reality of spiritual Truth and error are the ultimate and essential focal points in this battle of the unseen.

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315 – 1 Corinthians 9:14 KJV

316 – John 14:6

317 – John 7:24

God's Word and God's Spirit are the two guiding factors in this epic war for Life and death. And, as in *The Matrix*, time is always against us. Death is swallowing up 160,000 people each day, which is like two souls a second! God will always be in sovereign control but He has called us to the eternal honor of being His divine instruments of His perfect righteousness in a world that's rapidly being swallowed up by sin faster than the Second Law of Thermodynamics.

Your honor and your duty call you each day when your eyes open first thing in the morning. If you are a Christian you are not in the voluntary reserves, you are enlisted, charged, and employed to follow your Captain in His primary purpose with this world: **to seek and to save the lost**.<sup>318</sup> And though all who wander are not lost, not all who are lost appear to be wandering.

If your eyes have been opened you must use them to see beyond the physical world and into the unseen spiritual world that they were opened to see. Or are you content with your private, personal sanctification that exists altogether aside from the matrix of the lost? Giving into your fleshly tendency to acquire knowledge selfishly, always internalizing and never putting it into practice through deliberate experience that comes with risk?<sup>319</sup>

And if your eyes haven't been opened by God's Spirit through repentance of sin and faith in Christ's sacrifice—in order to make you born-again spiritually—then your very life hangs in the balance and on the dangerous side of the valley of the shadow of death because death looms over you casting its dark shadow on everything you do. And if you do not search the Scriptures to see that these things are true and humble yourself in submission to the God who created you, then you will live your life in obstinate rebellion to

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318 – Luke 19:10

319 – James 1:22-24, 2:17, Philippians 4:9

God, earning for yourself **the wages of sin that is death**<sup>320</sup> and the penalty of continuing in separation from God for all eternity in a place called Hell **where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.**<sup>321</sup> And time is therefore against you, and you will not know when your time will be up and suddenly it's "game over." All the memories and fleeting pleasures of your temporary sins will be lost in a bad memory as they will only haunt you as the very cause for your lifeless torment that will be the consequences of your own actions whether the Devil himself directly influenced you or not. Beware. Jesus said, "**If God were your Father, you would love Me . . .**"<sup>322</sup> and if you do not understand and hear Jesus' words, then "**you are of your father the Devil.**"<sup>323</sup>

They are out there, waiting to engage: the agents of evil, the demons in the unseen spiritual realm; and, the agents of evil in the seen physical world, the lost—those who are still plugged into the matrix of sin and death, those who will fight to retain their right to die in their sins and pay an eternal penalty that they deny in their devastating delusion.

The war rages on, and **the same eyes of the Lord that are in every place, watching the evil and the good,**<sup>324</sup> are *always* upon you!

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320 – Romans 6:23

321 – Matthew 13:42

322 – John 8:42

323 – John 8:44

324 – Proverbs 15:3

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325 – Romans 8:28



gospelpioneers.com or at 9090 W. Herbison Rd. Eagle, MI 48822. A video of the deliverance is available by mail for \$15 plus shipping. Also, I highly recommend his book *Set At Liberty*. Thank you, Bruce, for your part in the war.

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