



The Olive Press

February 2026

Vol. 3 No. 5

Calvary BIBLE Baptist Church 746 Norton St. Rochester, N.Y. 14621

Testimony Time

I was dedicated in the Unitarian Church at the age of two. My dad's Italian side was Roman Catholic, and my mom side was Lutheran/Presbyterian. Growing up, my church was Laurelton United Presbyterian Church. The first Bible verse that I memorized was Philippians 4:4, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice."

I left Laurelton United Presbyterian Church in 1979 and joined the U.S. Army; that is where I met my first husband. While in the Army, I attended Chapel faithfully. Thinking back, on all the various churches that I attended, I was never taught from the Bible. I do not remember anyone ever opening up a Bible in any of those churches. I owned a Bible, in fact, I owned a KJV Bible, but no one ever told me that I should read it. What I was told was this, if I wanted to go to heaven, I had to be good, I had to obey my elders, and I had to do good works – but no one ever told me what good was.

After serving 4 years in the Army, I was discharged in 1983. My first husband and I decided to stay in Kansas after our discharge. Shortly thereafter, I found out that I was expecting. Gabriel, my first-born was born in Kansas. While living in Kansas, I met a "Christian" family. The wife kept having children (5 to be exact) and her husband was totally involved in a Pentecostal Holiness Church. I decided to check it out. The church members ran through the aisles screaming, jumping up and down, waiving their hands, and falling down as though slain. It was scary.

A woman came up to me and asked me if I had the Holy Spirit. I believe she singled me out because I was not engaged to the same degree of excess of riot that the rest of the congregation was engaged in (1 Peter 4:4). I told her I did. She said, well you do not act like it. She then grabbed me, shook me, and told me to come downstairs with her. Once downstairs, she struck me in the middle of my forehead with the palm of her hand trying to drive the Holy Spirit into me and told me to speak in tongues. That scared me even more, so I ran out of there and never returned.

After living in Kansas for 2 years, my husband and I decided to move to Orlando, Florida in 1985 with our son. Shortly after moving, my husband became quite abusive to me. After a year of that I became pregnant again with my daughter Angela. My husband became increasingly abusive, so I left my husband and entered a shelter for abused woman. I had no job, no money, two children to care for, and no place to go; so, I decided to return to Rochester. The people who ran the shelter helped me to relocate to a woman's shelter in Rochester, so in 1987, with my 7-month-old daughter, Angela, and my 4-year-old son, Gabriel, we hopped onto a bus bound for Rochester – trusting in a God that I did not know, hoping that everything would turn out right.

Once I returned home, I was placed in a women's shelter. At the shelter, I ran into an old friend who worked at the shelter; her name was Ruth. I first met Ruth back in 1976. Ruth helped me to find an apartment. After I relocated, I met a woman named Alta who lived down the street from my apartment. Alta invited me to Alpha Lutheran Church of the Deaf. I joined Alpha in 1989. In 1994 I met my second husband Bobby. Bobby attended Alpha a couple of times, but Bobby was not a church person, so I left the church in 1994. Bobby and I had a good marriage, but after 14 years of marriage, Bobby was diagnosed with Lymphoma Cancer in 2008. The cancer spread quickly to his lungs. Soon Bobby was in hospice; where he passed away in 2010. I remember sitting in his room, waiting for the inevitable; I opened a drawer in his nightstand by the side of his bed, and in it was a Bible. I remember like it was yesterday, I took the Bible from the drawer and prayed to a God who I knew not; and I made a vow to God that if He would spare my Bobby some pain and give him some peace, then I would find a church and seek Him wholeheartedly. It is a terrible thing to watch the man you love, slowly waste away to cancer.

After my Bobby passed, I attended many churches; I church hopped for quite some time – never finding what it was that I was seeking. Visiting so many churches without any clear understanding of the Bible only added to my confusion; but I continued to

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pray and I continued to seek God. In March of 2011 I started a new job where I met a man named Mike McMannus. I was playing dominoes with a co-worker, and I told her that I really wanted to find a good church, and I asked her if she had any recommendations. She confessed to me that she did not believe in God, so she could not help me. Mike McMannus was sitting at another table and overheard my conversation. A few weeks later, Mike came up to me and invited me to CBBC.

I took Mike up on his invitation and I attended Bible Study that Wednesday. Mike picked me up and came with me on Wednesday. Mike did not attend Sunday morning and evening service but arranged for me to be picked up by a van. One night, Pastor Stewart preached a message on being stuck in religion. That message spoke to my heart mightily and my life changed forever. I got saved – born again in April of 2011.

I have been saved for 14 years now. I spent my whole life stuck in religion, trying to figure out how to be good enough to go to heaven. In April of 2011, I realized that I was not good enough; that I could never be good enough; but praise the Lord, Jesus was and is good enough. Now I rejoice greatly everyday – “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.”

I read my Bible; I take many detailed notes; I am currently writing in my 39th book of notes, taken from preaching and Bible studies. I serve my God in the Nursery and in my Card Ministry. Words cannot express how blessed I have been by CBBC. This church has taught me to love and to forgive it edifies me always and has taught me not to be afraid to share my testimony.

That is my story - Cathy Miller

Our Pride & Joy

“By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song: and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the LORD’S song in a strange land?” (Psalms. 137:1-4)

How much stranger must this land of ours become before we come to our Christian senses and realize that we dwell in the midst of Babylon: the land of lasciviousness, debauchery and confusion? *“...Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of*

every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.” (Revelation 18:2-4)

Drunk with the wine of the wrath of her fornication, we consider not that the delicacies of Babylon are an abomination unto GOD. We dine with devils from the plates of devils. We gorge ourselves upon every foul spirit, to the full. **We have acquired a taste for uncleanness, and the word of GOD no longer appeals to our palate.** We lost the heat of our passion for CHRIST as we partook of her sins and received of her plagues. Having forsaken the Fountain of Living Waters, we sit down by the rivers of Babylon seeking to be refreshed. Like the woman at the well, we covet waters which cannot satisfy; we stare upon the face of them, like wine they moveth themselves aright, they mock us; to the eye they are pleasing; to the touch they are cooling; to the spirit, there is no relief: they promise much, but deliver only addiction: when we thirst, we will seek it yet again.

The king of Babylon (the god of this world) is become our cruel taskmaster. Like a thief in the night, he has broken in upon us as we slept; **for we kept not a watch neither did we pray.** We were taken captive, yet not as by might, nor by power; but as by comfort and deceit. We are carried away bound, yet not as by cords, nor as by chains, but as by lies, entangled by thorns of our own making. Strong drink is raging; we erred in vision; we stumbled in judgement; sin does mock us; we tarried too long at the cup; it biteth like a serpent; under its influence, we are led away like blind men which have no eyes to see.

In the midst of Babylon, we are become a reproach by those whom we have made our fellows; a scorn and a derision to them that gather round about us; to stare upon us. We are become their song, their mirth, yea, we are become the byword upon their lips. We are in their sight most peculiar; we are as the offscouring of the earth; we are powerless to resist them. When we think to answer them again, our shame rises within us; it silences our tongues. Guilt causes us to hang our heads: **for we have forsaken the darling of our souls.**

By the rivers of Babylon, we weep as we remember the sweet fragrance of the Rose of Sharon; we

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remember the presence of His Spirit that filled and satisfied us like the aroma of summer flowers. We remember that our thoughts of Him were precious, and all our meditations of Him were sweet. Foolishly, we allowed it to slip away, like sand through our fingers as we willingly deceived ourselves. **Ignorantly, we allowed the merchants of Babylon to entice us away with the delicacies of this world.** We were desirous of their dainties. We considered not what was before us. They were deceitful meats. **We gave ourselves over to our appetites without resistance; we put not the knife to our throats.**

Our captors mock us; they say to us as we weep, "Make mirth for us, make us to laugh. Sing for us one of your LORD'S songs: be our amusement. Sing to us of your sorry GOD!" Behind our backs, they laugh as they say between themselves, **"If these be Christians, what a sorry GOD they must serve."** We hear their whisperings; we hang our heads and look away, as we stand before them in filth covered rags; our hands stained with the uncleanness of our ways. Deep within, their piercing words find their mark; **we know that the name of our GOD is blasphemed among them through us.** We creep away silent; our spirits bent low; our hearts broken, shattered to pieces. We whisper to ourselves these anguishing words, ***"How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land?"***

Our double minded hearts; our whoring eyes; our unsavory appetites for the things of Babylon; these have brought us to this place of despair; to this agony. We hang our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. **"We cannot sing the LORD'S song in this strange land."** The songs of praise, which once we played upon our harps, all have but vanished from us. We hang our harps upon the weeping willows; they are turned to mourning, and our organs into the voice of them that weep. All hope of singing the songs of joy are gone; all that remains is our shame and the unbearable anguish of our spirits.

The LORD'S song is a song of praise! It cannot be sung without the joy of the LORD. His praises shall not roll from the tongues of those who dwell not in his presence. Our sins, like thieves, have robbed us; they are become a wall of partition between us and our source of all comfort. In the shadow of our iniquity, we hide from His face; we shiver with cold; there is no warmth of spirit to be found in this

strange land. Our fingers are become numb. The instruments of our rejoicing hang upon the willows; they collect dust; spiders weave their webs upon our harps.

At night we toss, we weep upon our beds; our mornings bring no joy with them. We have broken ourselves off from the vine of life: the vine which provided our strength and joy. We have fallen to the ground like broken branches; there we remain; withering in the fires of our own making; as the fowls of the air pick the flesh from off our bones. We look for deliverance, but no one cometh to our rescue. We cry out loud, *"My punishment is greater than I can bear!"* (Genesis 4:13), but we cry without hope; there is no ear to hear our pleas.

We are defeated because we have become alienated within our minds. We have been told by our cruel taskmasters that we are beaten; and we do believe it. Our minds have been corrupted; we brought not our thoughts into captivity to the obedience of CHRIST. **Instead, we conformed our minds to the world, as we slowly replaced truth with lies of the world's creation.** The waters of our minds are become bitter. Our thoughts toward GOD are become poisoned. The winds of deceit have troubled the surface, and the waters are become murky with mire. There is no clarity: no longer can we see into the depths; where there is no clarity, there is no understanding; no light by which to see. **Our confusion passes unchallenged; we perish from a lack of understanding.** The way out is hidden from us: how is it that we have come to this?

In our desperation, we blame GOD for the absence of joy. **Fool, does GOD take it from thee? Or has thou sold it for that which satisfies not; for that which perishes with the using?** Is not the absence of joy the price extracted for our sin? Did we do well? or have we robbed ourself of that which GOD had freely given? Do we now seek to call GOD a thief? Nay, but we are the thieves. Be satisfied with that which we have withheld from GOD: for it is the wages of our unrighteous doing.

The LORD'S song – we have all but forgotten the melody. Vaguely we remember some of the words. Like faces we have not seen for so very long; they linger at the edge of light yet obscured by darkness; in the shadows we see their silhouettes, but their features still escape our vision. We say, "If only I could remember, then would I sing, and my troubles would flee from me; as when David played his harp
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and the evil spirit fled from Saul." We strain our minds to recall the words. We whisper them but they seem foreign to our lips; our own tongues convict us, as our ears hear the voices of hypocrites. By the words of our own mouths, we stand convicted; with our own tongues, we are reprov'd.

In the moment of our desperation, we fall prostrate to the ground, and we begin to whisper this prayer: "GOD, I pray that I might remember how to sing your songs of praise, that I might hum a bar, that my soul might be lifted from the mire which holds it captive. Let the words come flooding back into my memory; like a strong wind, let them sweep away this feeling of remorse. Make your face to shine on me; do not elude me always. My spirit thirsts for thee, let me not be ashamed to trust in you, let my hope come again to me; let this dark night pass at the entrance of thy words. Make me to hear joy and gladness that my bones, which thou hast broken, may rejoice. **Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.** Open thou my lips, and my mouth shall spew forth thy praise: for I have sinned in that I did not make you, my confidence; my refuge from the storm. I trusted in my own devices, my counsel was not according to thy word, and I sought to sing the song of the wicked."

These words then came flooding into my mind: ***"Return unto me, Oh ye of little faith, and I will receive you unto myself."*** And as I lay silent, prostrate before him, His words continued: ***"I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and MY WORDS abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my FATHER glorified, that ye bear much fruit so ye shall be my disciples. As the FATHER hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandment, ye shall abide in my love even as I have kept my FATHER'S commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."*** (John 15:5-11)

"But the fruit of the SPIRIT is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." (Galatians 5:22-23) In order to enjoy the fruits of the SPIRIT in your life, you need to abide in the vine and GOD'S word needs to abide in you, and you need to keep his commandments. These things were written unto us that his joy might remain in us and that our joy might be full. If we abide not in the vine, if his words abide not in us, and if we keep not

his commandment, then we do not well, and the fruits of the SPIRIT will not be ours to enjoy. ***"And this is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."*** (John 15:12-13) Jesus laid down his life for us: ***"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."*** (John 15:14) We need to lay down our lives for him. We need to come out from among them and be not partakers of their sins but live separated lives amidst a corrupt and wicked generation.

"And in the process of time, it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD." (Genesis 4:3) And Cain took his offering and set out on his way to his brother Abel's house. And when he had come unto his brother, he said, ***"Come, let us give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come with me into his courts."*** (Psalms 96:8) ***"And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof."*** (Genesis 4:4) And Cain and Abel set out together to worship GOD and as they journeyed, they said one to another, ***"Oh come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms."*** (Psalms 95:1-2) ***"Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing. Know ye that the LORD he is GOD: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name."*** (Psalms 100:2-4)

As Cain and Abel came before the presence of the LORD bearing their offerings, they were joyful, they came exuberant, they were full of excitement as they laid before the LORD their meager offerings. ***"And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect."*** (Genesis 4:5) And Cain was devastated, truly he was mortified. More than anything in the world, Cain coveted GOD'S approval. He was certain that the LORD would be pleased with his offering, that he would find favor in the eyes of his LORD. Never was it his intention to displease his LORD. However, instead of accepting his offering, GOD despised it. Cain's expectations were destroyed, that which he had yearned for was denied him. His joy instantly turned into mourning, and the anguish of his heart slowly ate away at his countenance. That which he feared most had come unto him, and in the bitterness of his soul he turned his heart away from GOD. ***"And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell."*** (Genesis 4:5)

"And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" (Genesis 4:6-7)

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And Cain communed with himself over these words, which the LORD had spoken unto him: "Yea right! If thou doest well – who does he think he is kidding? If thou doest well - I worked hard to please him and what thanks did I get. I labored and sweated all summer long. I worked my fingers to the bone to grow those fruits and vegetables, and what does he do? He spits on them. All the time that I spent out in the hot sun, sweating over the fruit, what was Abel doing? Nothing! Absolutely nothing! He just sat around on his lazy butt, and GOD knows it, he sees everything. Yet there he is, doting over Abel like he is some sort of hero. I am the one who worked hard, not Abel. It's just not fair; it is not fair at all!"

Contrary to the image one might come away with after reading Genesis, Cain was not a bad man by any stretch of the imagination. In fact, Cain was your typical devout religious type that you pass on the street every day. The type who scurry about in their busy lives desperately seeking God's favor in their life. Cain suffered with the same disease that you and I suffer with: **PRIDE**. He never inquired of GOD as to **why** his offering had been rejected; he did not inquire **because he already knew why**. Cain knew that GOD required a blood sacrifice. Cain knew that without the shedding of blood, there was no remission of sin. He knew that salvation was by the grace of God, and not by the works of his hands. Yet, Cain chose to ignore the words of GOD, saying to himself, "What is so special about blood? Anybody can bring blood, but if I bring GOD that which I labored hard for, and sweat over, surely GOD will see my hard work and will deem it to be more acceptable than that which costs me nothing. **Is not personal sacrifice better than blood?**" This same battle continues to this very day, unwittingly, we try to earn the gift which God freely gives through grace – and by doing so, we count the death of Jesus Christ as an unworthy thing, and we trod the blood of Christ under foot.

"If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him." (Genesis 4:7) Cain was given a choice. GOD pointed out to Cain what his options were. Yet Cain did not choose to swallow his pride and seek to correct that which GOD found to be displeasing. Instead, Cain maintained that his intentions were honorable, and that **GOD was unrighteous**. Rather than admit his wrongdoing, he gave himself over to his anger and allowed sin to rule over his heart. And in his anger, Cain ***"...rose up***

against Abel his brother, and slew him." (Genesis 4:8)

And God banished Cain for murdering his brother Abel. In reply to GOD'S judgment, Cain cried, "My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth and from thy face shall I be hid..." (Genesis 4:13-14). Cain was sentenced to a joyless existence: for only in GOD'S presence is there fullness of joy. Our sin desires to rule over us, it desires to drive us from the presence of GOD, and we are driven into a strange land.

Our joy is GOD'S reward for doing well, and if we do not well, then sin lieth at the door, and GOD'S face is hidden from us. Like the sun, hidden behind the clouds, his warmth is withheld, and a cold chill is sent shivering up our spine. You need to **"DO WELL"** in order to win GOD'S approval. You need to do that which you know is right in order to experience the joy of the LORD. And if you "do not well," then you go the way of Cain, who cried, "My punishment is greater than I can bear."

"Now it came to pass, as they went, that he (Jesus) entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house." (Luke 10:38) "Martha, my disciples and I are wearied from much travel. Bid us enter thy home so that we may rest and be refreshed." Martha was joyful as she bid them, "Of all people, my LORD has chosen me to minister to his need." Martha rejoiced as she quickly welcomed Jesus into her home and made him comfortable.

"What a privilege is mine," she prided herself, as she went to the kitchen to prepare a meal for her honored visitors. "The hand from which all blessings flow, has knocked on my door, he has asked that I serve him. I will cook for him the best dinner he ever tasted." As she busied herself, Jesus began to teach, those who had gathered around him, the word of GOD. "And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word." (Luke 10:39) And Mary's eyes bubbled with excitement as she looked up into the face of her LORD. She listened attentively to every word which proceeded from her LORD'S lips. And as she listened, these words ran frolicking through her thoughts: "But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee. For thou, LORD, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield." (Psalms 5:11-12)

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Meanwhile, Martha was hard at work in the kitchen in service to her LORD, "Wait till he tastes my mutton stew, he will be so proud of me, I am so excited I cannot wait." But as time continued to pass, Martha began to weary. Preparing a meal for as many visitors as she had was no easy task, bringing in firewood, keeping the fire going, milking the goat, kneading the bread, churning the butter, the list was endless! "If I do not get some help, I will never finish, what will the LORD think of me then?" Martha looked over where Jesus sat teaching. At his feet she saw her sister Mary. "Why that little twit," she thought, as she wiped the sweat from her forehead, "here I am working my fingers to the bone while she just sits there on her lazy butt. Why does Jesus not tell her to come help me? He knows how hard I am working out here in this hot kitchen. After all, it is his dinner that I am preparing! **Apparently, he just does not care about me at all!**"

Saddened by the thought, Martha went back to work, trying not to think about it, it was just upsetting her, and she did not want to be upset, not today, not on this day. Yet the more she tried not to think about it, the more it kept sneaking back into her thoughts until finally, she could not think about anything else. The more she thought about it, the angrier she became until finally, she could not contain herself any longer. *"But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, LORD, **dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.**"* (Luke 10:40) Martha was not concerned about what Mary wanted, nor did she seek out the LORD'S advice concerning her sister. Martha was only concerned with herself and what was best for Martha. She went to Jesus and said, "dost thou not care?" **Only pride questions the integrity of GOD.** As did Eve before her, Martha questioned the LORD'S love towards her, "Bid her therefore that she help me."

As a child who cannot have her own way, Martha said to Jesus, "You do not care about me! If you cared, you would make Mary help me. Bid her therefore! **Prove it, if you care!!**" *"...LORD, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone?"* It is pride that leads one to believe that they alone are left to serve GOD. It does not matter what anyone else may be doing, it is not as important as what they are doing. "Dost thou not care...that I am left to serve alone?" **Love never questions the sincerity of GOD, nor does it seek to test the integrity of His love.**

*"And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: **But one thing is needful:** and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."* (Luke 10:41-42) That's what's good about eternal things, they last forever: no one can take them from you. While Martha struggled with carnal things, Mary was feasting on spiritual things. Motivated by the pure love of GOD, Mary humbled herself at the feet of her LORD and worshipped him. Martha was much troubled and was worrying about many things: on the other hand, Mary was experiencing much joy, **and the peace of GOD made her careful of nothing.** Serving GOD – must begin at the feet of Jesus.

Pride will only push you so far, but **real joy will carry you through troubling times to the very end:** and no one is able to take that joy from you. Martha's pride was sufficient to sustain her until the going got rough; eventually her pride robbed her of her joy and left her empty, and in the place of joy, it left behind doubt, and bitterness, and anger. **Pride always looks around for someone else to blame for how it feels.** Martha blamed her situation on her sister and accused GOD of not caring. *"Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?"* (Genesis 4:6-7)

Tribulation and affliction are sent into our lives to try and strengthen our faith. As we endure the trials, our joy is increased. In the parable of the seed sower (Matthew 13 and Mark 4), there are four different groups of hearers. Only one group is said to have received the word of GOD with joy. **"But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it."** (Matthew 13:20) **"And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended."** (Mark 4:17)

This group has no depth of faith, they are shallow, being a Christian is merely a superficial matter. **They wear their Christianity like a cosmetic; it looks good, but alas, it is only skin deep.** Outwardly they look pious, while inwardly they are happy-go-lucky, they idle away their time, seeking that which gives them pleasure. They are content to be Christian so long as it is "FUN," after all, it beats going to hell any day, but do not mention sacrifice or talk about responsibility: for as soon as the joy goes out of it; they vanish. To them, it is just another garden party but mention suffering for Christ's sake and the party is over. It is time to move on to palm reading, chanting, and Yoga.

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"And have no root in themselves, and so ENDURE but for a time:" (Mark 4:17). A plant that has shallow roots cannot endure the hot sun. Having no depth of root, it cannot draw nourishment from deep within the earth, with which to strengthen itself: therefore, it endures for a time, but then the hot sun comes out, almost instantly, it wilts and dies. **A Christian needs depth**, he needs something that he can draw on for strength when things get tough. If you have been saved for any length of time, and if you do not know anything else about joy, you at least know this: *"...For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law. Then he said unto them, go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto your LORD: neither be ye sorry: for the joy of the LORD is your strength..."* (Nehemiah 8: 9-10).

"The joy of the LORD is your strength." Some people tend to think of this joy as gasoline. They say, "Well I just cannot seem to get myself started in the work of the LORD: I am fresh out of joy today. If I only had a little joy, then I would do great things for the LORD, the joy of the LORD is your strength you know. Maybe I will feel more joyful tomorrow." Go to the ant, thou sluggard, and be ye wise! Joy is not gasoline it is more like a carrot that GOD dangles before your eyes to get you hopping and hoping. "If thou doest well, shalt thou not have this carrot?" (CS 4:7) **God does not give you joy to feed your pride; he gives you joy to soothe the pain of suffering in his service.** You want a little joy in your Christian life? Get off your butt and earn it!

"Oh, if I only had a little joy, then I...", who you fooling, fool? Get off your lazy butt and read your Bible! "I just cannot seem to get myself in the mood to..." ***"A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back."*** (Proverbs 26:3) Get down on your face and pray that GOD forgives you for your endless string of lame excuses! **You want joy? DO WELL!** You know what is right, you do not need anybody to explain it to you. Get up and get going while there is still time. Get involved in a ministry, **then thou wilt be accepted.** Like Martha, you are careful and troubled about many things. But the one thing that is needful – you neglect. I am fearful for you; who hath bewitched you?

Like a carrot, joy lies before you; it is to be received as a result of doing well. It is never to be found lying in the lap of leisure. You need to run the race

which is before you that you may finish your course with joy (Acts 20:24). *"...Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith"* (now listen for once) ***"Who for the joy that was set before him ENDURED the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of GOD."*** (Hebrews 12:1-2)

"Who for the joy that was set before him endured..." Superficial Christians, having no root in themselves, endure but for a time. **Are you all out of endurance? Maybe it is because you have no joy. You need to do well.** Jesus did not endure the cross for the joy that was to be had from hanging there. He did not give his back to those who ripped the flesh from it for the mere pleasure of the experience. Do you need some endurance? Look to the author and finisher of your faith. He did not let them tear his beard from his face because it was pleasurable, neither can you be a Christian for the mere pleasure of the experience. God rewards those who do well with joy.

JESUS despised the shame. The only thing you despise is the preacher when he tells you that you need to be more responsible about tithing. "Well, maybe if he preached something that made me feel more joyful, then I could be the cheerful giver that GOD loves." Know ye not, that the only things that will last are eternal things? You mock GOD with your "Give-GOD-a-bone" mentality. Keep your bone, it was for your benefit that GOD intended that you should give it. **But GOD is not mocked, you are the one who has no joy, You rob yourself, not GOD!** A church filled with Superficial Christians will endure but for a time: and as it wilts away, are you doing well? **And if the church dies, will you blame GOD for being unrighteous?**

If you have no joy in your Christian walk, then you need to start doing well. You need to start doing those things which may not be fun but are pleasing to GOD. You need to start reading your Bible. You need to start being the witness for GOD that you know you should be. You need to become active in a ministry. GOD loveth a cheerful giver. Can GOD be happy with what you gave last week? **How can you have joy knowing that GOD has no respect unto you or unto your offering?** Your time, your talents, and your money, can only make you happy if you use them to serve GOD, everything else is vanity and pride.

Our Pride & Joy(Continued on Page 8)

"And let us not be weary in WELL DOING: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." (Galatians 6:9) In other words, we shall be fruitful, we shall, of the SPIRIT, reap joy. As we conclude, I would like to leave you with this thought: Joy is always preceded by labor. *"A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."* (John 16:21-22). Like Mary, choose that one thing which is needful: and no one shall be able to take your joy from you. DO WELL!!

Sayings, Quotes & Definitions

A Saying:

God never raised any soul to life through the Gospel without first slaying him with the Law.

A Saying:

No man has ever been argued into salvation.

Weeping Whitefield:

George Whitefield (1714-1770) - Once said, "You blame me for weeping, but how can I help it when you will not weep for yourselves, although your own immortal souls are on the verge of destruction, and for all I know, you are hearing your last sermon and may never more have an opportunity to have Christ offered to you again." It was said of Whitefield that he almost never made it though a sermon without weeping. Often times exceedingly and frequently so overcome that you would suspect he would never recover.

Gossip:

It is always best not to know what is being said about you, either by friends or foes. Those who praise you are probably as much mistaken as those who abuse you.

A Saying:

The best way to preach sinners to Christ is to preach Christ to sinners. You may shout or weep or you may plead, but you cannot lead men to believe what they have not heard.

Ava's Verses

This month Ava's Verse is Lamentations 3:24 **"The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him."**



February