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Testimony Time

I was raised in an un-churched home and was spiritually ignorant: absolutely. My once church active parents left church attendance after their dear friend and minister hung himself in the church basement. I was about eight years old at the time.

Shortly before this tragedy, my four siblings had completed confirmation and were baptized in the church. Being the only one not baptized would bother me for many years. I was under the false impression that without baptism I would not go to heaven.

As a teen, without any spiritual direction, I embraced the many vices that the world enticed me with including alcohol, marijuana, lust, greed, lying, foul language, etc. While bothered, by who I was becoming, I rationalized that I was not as bad as some others. I was spiritually clueless and unaware that my sin condemned me before a thrice holy God. I remember feeling, on many occasions, empty and unfulfilled. I thought to myself - there must be something more meaningful in life than this. I had no idea what it was.

I moved away from home after high school to attend school in Ohio. I met Nancy there and we were married that same year at age 19. This was unusual to do as by this time most people just lived together. We had witnessed many couples fail at the living together model and decided we wanted a more permanent arrangement. Nancy was raised very differently than I was. Her family faithfully attended a Lutheran church. She helped me turn away from

several of my vices. As a couple, we felt spiritual emptiness in our hearts.

A short time later my sister Denise and her new husband Connie became born-again believers. Their lives changed dramatically in positive ways very quickly. They were all-in with their newfound faith and were a consistently bold witness of Christ. We did not understand all they were trying to tell us and were skeptical of their church, but we were not able to doubt the profound life changes that we saw.

On occasion Nancy and I attended Lutheran churches out of spiritual guilt and emptiness. The experiences never left us enlightened or fulfilled. We continued feeling a hole in our lives.

Several years later we moved to southern California for a job opportunity. I was paired up at work with a man who had relocated from Chicago. As we carpooled to work and talked, he shared that his neighbor had told him and his family about Jesus and that they had become believers. After several invitations we attended his new church. We were immediately welcomed by a church full of joyful friendly people. There were people of all ages there and they were actually happy to be at church. The music was uplifting and the pastor spoke of the Lord's great love and provision for the sins of mankind.

A few weeks later my coworker's same neighbor visited us in our home to tell us about Jesus. I quickly realized my sin made me a man separated from God with an eternal destiny in hell. I learned I could be saved by repenting of my sin and receiving Christ's blood sacrifice on the cross as payment for my sin. He paid in full the debt that I owed God. I was promised a relationship with God in this life and an eternity with him in heaven after death. I prayed for these things, and my name was written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Thankfully, my wife Nancy did the same.

For the first time the Bible came alive for us. Wonderful brothers and sisters came alongside us to disciple us. We now found meaning and purpose for our lives. The Lord opened doors for us to adopt

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two beautiful children. We moved to Orlando to be closer to our families. Leaving our church was very hard. The Lord provided us a new church home and several years later Nancy gave birth to four additional children.

Through the years the Lord has proven himself faithful and true like no other. He has seen us through both trials and triumphs. We are so thankful He walked with us through all of them. His process of sanctification has been steady and continual, correcting us of error and providing grace to help us get things right. He is ever patient, always loving, and as close as our willingness is to receive him. Today Jesus is everything good in our lives. We seek to be used as His instruments until He calls us home.

On reflection, as the great hymn "Victory in Jesus" tells us, it is obvious He sought us and bought us with His redeeming love. Thank you for the opportunity to share our story. We pray the Lord uses this to encourage you.

With love, your brother and fellow servant. **Scott MacDonald** (Denise Simmons' Brother)

As It Was In The Days Of Noah

"And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years." (Genesis 6:3)

The name Noah means comfort, yet the relationship between God and man is described in Genesis 6:3 as one of striving; a relationship marked by struggle and opposition. Man was opposed to the will of God upon his life and God exerted great effort, through His Spirit, to reason with man. Finally, God grew weary of man's rebellion and set a limit upon what He would endure; and GOD gave man one hundred and twenty years to mend his ways. Certainly, God is longsuffering; *"...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."* (2 Peter 3:9)

"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart." (Genesis 6:5-6) Though He was grieved, God saw that Noah was a just man; and it gave God comfort in His grief. And Noah found grace in the eyes of God (Genesis 6:7).

Like a great artist painting a picture, God chose His words like colors, to capture the brilliance of His thoughts. Every word conveys light; giving understanding to those who sit in darkness. The word **"every"** means, all, without exception. The word **"only"** means, to the exclusion of all else. The word **"continually"** means, without ceasing. Evil was their every and only thoughts; continually. ***"The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence."*** (Genesis 6:11) Filled with violence sounds like the nightly news broadcast on television and every box-office hit. The word **"filled"** means, to the point of overflowing. The earth was overflowing with violence. The earth was so full of violence, it was to the point where it could no longer be contained. It was spilling over. It was corrupt before God. No wonder God's heart was grieved. No wonder God repented that He had made man. Knowing good and evil (Genesis 3:6), the slant of mankind was, without exception, always towards evil and violence.

I find it extremely remarkable that God knows every thought of every man. God knew their every thought back then and He certainly knows our every thought today. Who, or what occupies the realm of your every thought? Is it God or is it evil; continually? There is nothing hid that shall not be revealed; for the day shall declare it (1 Corinthians 3:13). ***"And as it was in the days of Noe (Noah), so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man"*** (Luke 17:26).

"And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt." (Genesis 6:12) The word **"corrupt"** means, morally decayed, degenerate, perverted, depraved and indifference. It is a condition characterized by unrighteous and improper behavior and conduct. That pretty much describes Mardi Gras as well as downtown USA. Look around you: we live in a modern-day Sodom and Gomorrah. People have no reverence for anything good and no restraint when it comes to doing evil. These days, the only place you can find the meaning of godliness, is in a dictionary. Holiness is the word used by dinosaurs to spoil a good time; and justice has been replaced with poetic justice, which simply means - the idiot asked for it.

"For all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth." (Genesis 6:12) The world is corrupt. Our political system is corrupt. Our politicians that we elect are corrupt. Our business community, driven by the love of money, is corrupt. Our entertainment industry, which oozes with filth from every pore, is corrupt. The minds of those who sponge up their

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filth, are corrupt. Our education system, which trains our children to be twice the children of hell, is corrupt. Our religious institutions are corrupt. Nothing in this corrupt world is pure in the eyes of God. TV evangelists are still on prime time deceiving the multitudes, and the Pope is still riding around in his Pimp-mobile selling indulgences. Even born-again Christians, like Lot, have been corrupted by the filthy conversations of the wicked (2 Peter 2:7-8). "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners." (1 Corinthians 15:33) So much for those who believe television does not affect them (see Ephesians 4:22 & 29, 1 Timothy 6:5, 2 Timothy 3:8).

Like fruit in a barrel, corruption begins as a blemish, then quickly spreads like a disease: until the whole barrel has been spoiled. What do you suppose happened to New York City - the Big Apple? It rotted to the core. **"And God looked upon the earth, and Behold, it was corrupt."** (Genesis 6:12) God looked down from heaven and said, it is time for a new barrel. "And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth." (Genesis 6:13) God pronounces judgement; stating the reason as well as the method.

"My spirit shall not always strive with man ... yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years." (Genesis 6:3) Plenty of time to put your act in order; don't you think? God appointed a predetermined time when His Spirit would cease to strive with man. The righteous would be removed to safety, and then judgement would fall upon the wicked. The method God chose was "I will destroy them with the earth." (Genesis 6:13) In this case, with the earth meant flood waters. "Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished." (2 Peter 3:6) And so, the world that then was, perished.

Once again, God is striving with man in our generation. At a predetermined time, God will remove (by rapture) the righteous (His Church) from harm's way, and then He will judge the violence and corruption of man. As before, God will use the earth as his method; only this time He will not bring a flood, for He promised mankind that He would not. This time, God will bring upon mankind pestilence, and disease, and hunger, and famine. There will be earthquakes and volcanoes in divers places. There will be wars and rumors of war as

kingdom rises against kingdom, and nations rise against nations. Fathers will turn against their sons, and daughters against their mothers. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold (Matthew 24:12). All these things will God use to purge the face of the earth.

"And as it was in the days of Noe (Noah), so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe (Noah) entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all." (Luke 17:26-27) It was life as usual, food (*they did eat*), wine (*they drank*), sex (*they married wives*), and parties (*they were given in marriage*). Satisfying the desires of the flesh, and neglecting the spirit: gluttony, drunkenness, and perversion. In these verses, Jesus testifies to the truthfulness of the flood, and He likens the end of the world, as we know it, to the days of Noah. *"And it repented the LORD that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at his heart."* (Genesis 6:6) What we do not learn from history, we are destined to repeat in our future.

Noah was building an ark: a boat if you please. This was no ordinary boat; it measured 443 feet long, 74 feet wide, and 44 feet high, and it had a flat bottom. Once it was built there was no way to move it; the only thing it was capable of doing was floating. And to top off everything, there was no way to get it into the water, even if there had been water around, which there was not. Noah lived inland - in the middle of the country.

As people passed by and saw Noah patiently building his ark, they would stop for some casual conversation with him. At some point, they would maneuver the conversation to the elephant in the room - the boat. Let's face it, they had nothing in common with Noah: the only reason they stopped was because they were nosey. At that point, Noah told them that God was going to cause it to rain; that God planned to flood the whole earth because of the wickedness of man. At which point, they would interrupt Noah, politely excuse themselves, and scurry off - secretly laughing as they went.

Now the strangest part of this whole matter is this: there was no such thing as rain. "Oh, really, God is going to cause drops of water to fall rapidly, and profusely, out of the sky, and it's going to pile up, you say, until it covers the mountains; fascinating,

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this really is quite fascinating.” *“For the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth...But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.”* (Genesis 2:5-6)

Needless to say, Noah soon became the laughingstock of the neighborhood. Everyone, with the exception of God, thought him to be a fool. Their reaction was very similar to the reaction received by professing Christians today. “You say we did not evolve from monkeys, and there was no big bang, and you are going to simply disappear in the twinkling of an eye? Marvelous, simply marvelous: I must tell George. You see George has been a little down in the mouth of late, and this might be just the sort of thing to cheer him up.” *“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet (rain), moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which He condemned the world, and became heir of righteousness which is by faith.”* (Hebrews 11:7)

It took Noah 120 years to build the ark. God called him a righteous preacher (2 Peter 2:5). For 120 years, Noah was a faithful witness, warning people to repent, and to turn from their sins in order to escape certain doom. Even if Noah never opened his mouth, his boat spoke volumes about what laid in his heart. Noah was not building an ark in secret; even if he wanted to, it was too big to hide behind the barn. For 120 years, this huge monstrosity loomed above all who lived in the area. It could be seen from miles away. The news of it spread like a byword throughout the whole land, and beyond; and Noah became a joke at their social gatherings.

One day, as Noah was busy working on his ark, his father came by. Noah began to tell him about God, and the coming judgement; at which his father replied, “You know, a little religion in your life is a good thing, but too much of a good thing is bad for you. If you ever live to be as old as I am (750 years), you’ll understand what I’m trying to tell you. My god, look at that thing. You can worship god in the privacy of your bathroom. You do not have to go around making a fool of yourself in front of the whole neighborhood.”

Is it not amazing, how those you love the most trust you the least? If a fool tells them they saw little green men hopping up and down on their roof, spitting out jellybeans, then they will believe. But when you try to share with them the thing that is most dear to your heart, the truth about God, they treat you like an outpatient from a mental ward. They act as though faith in God is a contagious disease. They take a step backwards, they look away, they try to change the subject, they even pretend not to hear; they stop their ears. For in hearing, they

lose their cloak of ignorance wherein they feel safe: the lie they hold in their right hand vanishes, like a mist in the light of day, when it is exposed to the light of God’s word. *“A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.”* (Matthew 13:57)

Listen to me: there is no such thing as safe: you are either saved or you are lost. As it was in the days of Noah, you are either inside the ark, or you are not. You are either sheltered from God’s pending judgement, or you are not. There is no neutral ground. You are either for God, or you are against Him. *“(Jesus said) He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.”* (Luke 11:23) *“And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”* (Joshua 24:15)

A week passed by, and Noah’s sister shows up. “Noah” she says, “I do not quite know how to say this, but your father thinks you are mad at him because he does not believe the same as you believe. You keep shoving that damned boat down his throat, telling him the sky is going to fall or something like that, and that everyone is going to die. You know, he probably does not have too many more years to live. Can you not just be his friend, and shut up about that damned boat?”

How can you answer the sister you love? In her heart you know she means well; but surely her words come not from God; surely God had not persuaded her to come. Should I answer her as Job answered his wife? *“Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh.”* (Job 2:10): or as Jesus answered Peter? *“Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.”* (Matthew 16:23)

“Is it better that my father should go to hell with my blessing: or should I try to persuade him, with tooth, and with nail? Shall I stand silently by as Satan holds his mind captive in ignorance? Nay, my sister, but I shall declare unto him the truth: peradventure he should believe and repent to the saving of his soul (2 Timothy 2:25). If he chooses not to be my friend, surely, I am not his should I keep my tongue. And should I become his enemy, because I tell him the truth (Galatians 4:16), it is not I whom he hates, but it is to God whom he turns his back. And what about you, dear sister, Will you not help me build my ark?”

As Christians, we are sometimes accused of having no heart; but it is precisely because of our hearts that we cannot be silent. It is precisely because our hearts are pricked that we cease not to warn; sometimes with anguish and tears to those we love.

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It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God (Hebrews 10:31). It is a needless fate; but multitudes refuse to avail themselves of the mercy which Christ purchased for them with His own blood. How can we hold our peace knowing their fate? But if they will not hear, my soul shall weep in secret places for their pride; and mine eye shall run sore (Jeremiah 13:17).

The following month Noah's boss drops in for a visit. "I've heard a lot about this monstrosity, but I just could not believe it; so, I thought I'd drop in and see it for myself. You know Noah, we all like you tremendously back at the office. We think you have great potential; you just need to apply yourself; you need to get with the program. You need to stop wasting all your time and money on this... this... What the hell is this damned thing anyway? Well anyway, enough said, you get the picture. Gotta run; so much to do; time is money. Stop by my office on Monday. I've got a great little stock option I want to talk to you about. A few shares of this baby, and you won't have to worry about retirement. Oh, and by the way, get rid of this darned thing. The whole town is gossiping about it."

"And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die." (Genesis 6:17) It is hard to conceive of the burden of Noah's heart. His friends, his neighbors, people he grew up with, people he passed on the road and did not even know, all of them were doomed to die, none of them would listen to a word he said. Imagine what raced through his mind with each nail that he drove in. Imagine his grief, knowing that the harder he worked, the less time they had; time was certainly running out for all of them.

Noah was a preacher of righteousness; but we know from history that he did not persuade one person to believe him: not a single soul. For 120 years, Noah faithfully preached to every man that crossed his path. He preached the same message for 120 years, and not so much as one person believed him. How distressful! Would you call that success? Now we know he was not in it for the fanfare. It was not for the notoriety that he received, or the popularity that he enjoyed that kept him going. We know from history that Noah did not quit, he did not give up. So, what kept him going? It was not because of the friends he was making along the way. It certainly was not for the money. Do you realize how

expensive boat insurance is: not to mention the cost of gopher wood? So, what kept Noah going – he believed God. *"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."* (Hebrews 11:13). He believed in Him who promised, and by faith, he was thoroughly persuaded of the promises of God, and he embraced the promises, having seen them afar off. *"Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he."* (Genesis 6:22)

"They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe (Noah) entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all." (Luke 17:26-27). It does not say they helped their neighbors, they fed the poor, they attended church regularly, they worked hard, and they taught their children to be God fearing honest citizens. No, it says: they partied, they took their leisure, they gorged themselves, they threw expensive banquets, and they drank themselves into a stupor: it was all one big honeymoon – until the flood came.

God said, that every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts, were only evil continually. They took their ease, they worshiped and served the creature, and they ignored their Creator (Romans 1:25). Their lives were self-centered and they excluded God. When Jesus returns, He will find the same conditions on the earth that were prevalent in Noah's days; that are prevalent today. The flood took them all by complete surprise. Though they had been warned for 120 years, no one was prepared for what was to follow. Neither will the world be prepared for the return of Jesus Christ. *"For the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?"* (Joel 2:11) Will you be ready?

And Noah's son came by and said, "What's up? You still obsessing about water gushing out of the sky? You got to give this flood theory up; that's narrow man. You need to chill out. You've got your noodle all twisted into a pretzel. You need to get out more and see what's happening man. Take mom to the flicks and relax and stop wiggling out man. The way I see it, the problem is those conservative capitalist dudes; they got the whole world messed up. There's no good and evil... dude, its money; it's all about the money. Money has screwed up everything. Say dad, can I borrow 40 bucks? My friends and I are going to see these people who paint themselves all blue and run around the stage getting all weird and stuff... Sweet: thanks! You know everything is relative; you need to get out and party more: seriously. Catch you later man."

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Some many days later, Noah's neighbor came over and found Noah busy doing the Lord's work. "Noah, excuse me, Noah?" interrupted the neighbor, "Did I ever tell you about the blind man who picked up his hammer and saw? No, huh – well anyway, think about it, it'll come to you. The real reason I stopped by, believe me I really do not want to be here, but it's my wife you see. My wife wants me to get my hammer back. You know, the one I let you borrow 72 years ago when you took up carpentry as a hobby: if you can really call this a hobby: it seems to have blossomed into more of an obsession. Anyway, my wife, you know my wife, she's kind of upset with you: if you want to call it upset; it's more like furious if you ask me. She says your boat is bringing down our property value: if you want to call it a boat; seems more like a cruise liner than a boat. She says it's your fault the house did not sell. I mean who wants to live next to a guy with a cruise liner in his back yard – if you know what I mean?"

"Do not get me wrong, the open house was a great success: if you want to call a hundred gawking turkeys pecking down 200 clams' worth of hors d'oeuvre a success. I mean they did not come to see the house; they came to see this... this... thing you are building. Its kind of a novelty: if you want to call this thing a novelty: it's more of an eye sore if you ask my wife. It's just not the kind of thing you want to live next too: not to mention the constant hammering. My wife has not had a descent night's sleep since you started: talk about being cranky, you look up the word cranky in the dictionary, and you will find my wife's name written there. If it were up to me, I would let you keep the hammer. The noise really does not bother me. I mean I could sleep through a flood if I had too. Aha, sorry – I just could not help... What, aha – think about it. It will come to you."

"And as it was in the days of Noe (Noah), so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe (Noah) entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." (Luke 17:26-30)

Jesus is coming back soon. This time He will not come as a child in a manger. He will not come to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. He will not come as the Lamb of God to be sacrificed by cruel hands upon a cross. No, this time He will come as the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He will come as the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He will come to execute judgement upon a godless world. We need to be ready when He returns. *"For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a **thief in the night**. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then **sudden destruction cometh upon them**, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief."* (1 Thessalonians 5:2-4).

*"Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, **Behold the man!**"* (John 19:5). *"Pilate brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha. And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, **Behold your King!** But they cried out, Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar."* (John 19:13-15). In this article I have brought forth Jesus, and I have presented Him to you. And here – the Holy Ghost says unto you, **"Behold your King!"** This is your hour of decision. Will you shout with those who were present that day; away with Him, away with Him, Crucify Him? Will you shout we have no king but Caesar? Will you also reject Him as they did? I say unto you, Behold your King! What is your response?

Why would you reject Him? What argument yet remains? Why will you not hear? *"And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean... Come now, and **let us reason together, saith the LORD:** though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it."* (Isaiah 1:15-20). As though God did beseech you Himself, **what will you do with this man?**

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“Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.” (Revelation 1:7-8) ***“And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; And His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars: and out of His mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and His countenance was as the sun shineth in His strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.”*** (Revelation 1:12-18)

God Hardened Pharaoh's Heart

“And the LORD said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go.” (Exodus 4:21)

It is never God's desire to harden anyone's heart or to close one's eyes against the truth, but it is a running principle throughout the word of God that Truth will either soften or harden the hearts of those who hear. It has often been repeated that the same sun that melts the wax (the ice) will harden the clay: and so, let it be known that the word of God shall never returns void; ***“So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”*** (Isaiah 55:11) God's word will accomplish that which God intends for it to do. God's word will divide the light from the darkness. Make no mistake about that. If you will receive the truth of God's word, contained in the Scriptures, that truth will soften your heart; however, should you choose to reject that truth, the word of God will harden your heart even more than it was.

When you hear the word of God with the ear, what you are hearing is truth. What you choose to do with that truth is entirely up to you: but know this, God will hold you accountable for your choices. The word of God will always do what God intends for it to do – it will make truth manifest, and it will expose darkness: the truth will either make you free of the devil's devices, or it will expose your affinity for darkness. ***“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”*** (John 8:31-32)

“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.” (Matthew 10:34) God's word is a sword; it will divide; it will separate light from darkness. ***“And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.”*** (Genesis 1:3-5) God separated the light from the darkness, God divides the good from the evil. You cannot put back together what God has cleaved asunder. There is light and there is darkness, there is good and there is evil, there is right and there is wrong – there is no grey. The world wants to mix light with darkness, good with evil and call everything grey. They say – you get to choose what is good and what is evil for yourself. You get to decide what is right and what is wrong for you – you not God. But God says: ***“Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”*** (Isaiah 5:20)

Jesus said: ***“I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”*** (John 9:4-5) But the night cometh when no man can work. Jesus is gone out of the world. The light of the world has left, and the darkness is come upon us. The sun has set, darkness has crept in from the shadows, and light has succumbed: and just as the sun sets slowly before it disappears entirely, so it is in this present evil world. We find then that this too is a principle found in the word of God. Darkness rules where there is no light. This principle can be applied to a man, to a family, to a church, to a nation and to the world at large: light does not suddenly disappear; rather it slowly wanes; in degrees. All you need to do

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is look up at the sky and you shall see our future. The sun has run its course. The light of the world is gone, and darkness has taken its place, degree by degree, little by little, until the darkness rules.

The sun is setting upon this once great nation: the light has left, degree by degree, and darkness has engulfed us. What was once clearly visible has now become obscured. Our nation, a name once respected, once feared, once honorable; is now become a disgrace. We are named with the crooked and the abominable: a name not to be trusted, corrupt and full of iniquity, devilish, godless at best. This came not suddenly upon us. We were not overtaken by the strong. We lost not the battle. No man stole our dignity, nor carried away our great heritage. No, we sold our honor for drugs and idleness; we have cast lots for our people; we have given a boy for an harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that we might drink (Joel 3:3). ***"Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that puttest thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!"*** (Habakkuk 2:15) No nation took our honor, nay, we sold it to the devil for pride, for fulness of bread, and for abundance of idleness. (Ezekiel 16:49) We turned our backs to the light; we turned and embraced the darkness. ***"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."*** (1 John 1:5)

All these things came not upon us suddenly; it came upon us by degree, little by little, inch by inch, the light slowly dissipated and gave way to the darkness. Certainly, the sun has run its course, but God be praised for there is hope – soon the sun will come again, the sun will return and darkness will be vanquished. The sun will return. This is our future. This is our blessed hope. Jesus Christ will return; He is coming again; this time to rule and to reign. This is our destiny.

Can you not see that the light will reign eternal? Does not the heavens declare the glory of God. Does not day unto day teach us that it is merely a matter of time? ***"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. "Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, Which is as a bridegroom coming out***

of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof." (Psalms 19:1-6) His going forth is from the end of the heaven.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not." (John 1:1-10)

"The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." (Romans 13:12-14)

The same sun that melts the ice hardens the clay. In Exodus 7:16, God told Pharoah, ***"Let my people go, that they may serve me."*** We are also told, that God hardened Pharaoh's heart that he listened not unto Moses. ***"And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt. But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, and my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments."*** (Exodus 7:3-4) It has often been said that Pharaoh was not the bad guy here, that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. They suggest that God wasn't playing fair. I must admit that I too was somewhat confused, as I pondered these verses. I asked myself, "why did God harden Pharaoh's heart? How did God harden Pharaoh's heart?" Is God unjust?

The so-called theologians step in at this point and say – "We can attribute this hardening to the fore-
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knowledge of God; God foreknew that Pharaoh would not obey His word so God just gave him a little nudge.” But their explanation only served to bring me back to why: why did God harden Pharaoh’s heart? Then God said to me, son – that is how God talks to me. God said, son, it is not why that matters; it is how. It was not until I considered how, that I understood why. We must return to the principle found in the word of God, and that principle is this – the word of God never returns unto Him void. God’s word will always accomplish that which He sent it to do. *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”* (Isaiah 55:8-11) The word of God always produces a result. As the rain comes down from heaven and waters the whole earth, so the word of God touches every living thing. And in like manner, the rays of the sun shine forth and touches every living thing, and the effect of those rays can be good or bad, depending on how they are utilized.

If you cut a green branch from a tree, so that it falls to the ground, the rays of the sun will soon cause the leaves on the branch to wither. Before long the leaves are crisp and crumble beneath your touch. But the other branches, which be still on the tree, are green and vibrant. Should we condemn the sun for the dead branch’s sake? Was the sun unjust to scorch the fallen branch? Obviously, the answer is no, the sun is not unjust; for the same sun that giveth life to the branches still on the tree, is the same sun that scorches that which was severed. Consider the branches. As long as the branches abide on the tree, they are able to **utilize the rays** of the sun, but as soon as the branch was severed it was no longer able to utilize the sun, and so it began to **absorb the rays** which caused the leaves to heat up and wither. So it is with men, and so it is with churches, and so it is with nations, and so it is with the world.

God sends us light that we may utilize it to our benefit and live. If we refuse the light, if we refuse to utilize it for our benefit, then we do refuse life. The same sun

that God gave us for life, now becomes the sun that brings forth judgement and death. It is a choice which each of us must make. It was a choice that Pharaoh also had to make. The same sun that melts the ice hardens the clay. God is not unjust. God sends the rain upon the just and the unjust. Pharaoh refused to obey the word of God and his rejection of the word of God hardened Pharaoh’s heart. The question was never why; the question has always been how.

