



Peace at Last!

by Gale Palmer

We went to church every Sunday. I believed the Bible was true. When I was 6, Dad became a missionary. As we traveled the U.S., Dad spoke to churches about the work. One day in the car, I heard a sermon on "Hell." I became convinced that, as a sinner, I deserved, "Hell!" The Preacher said, "Everyone is a sinner, but if you believe in The Lord Jesus, you can be saved." I tugged on Mom's sleeve. "Mama, I don't want to go to Hell! I want to be saved!" Dad pulled over, stopped, and both explained verses and asked questions. They helped me to pray. I did everything they told me to do. I did not want to go to "Hell!" They seemed pleased. I thought, "If they're happy, then I must be alright."

Next Sunday evening during the invitation hymn Mom nudged me, and I walked to the front of the church. The Pastor's wife read some verses and asked a couple of questions, to which I nodded, not really hearing or seeing much. She prayed with me and the hymn ended. The Pastor called me to the front, said something, "Yes, Sir!" I answered, and finally it was over! I was baptized. I thought, "Well, I must be 'saved', now!"

Years passed. I watched God's miracles in the lives of others, and longed to have my prayers answered, but God seemed deaf! Many nights I stood under the jungle stars, begging God to hear me! My heart turned bitter and rebellious. I was depressed and resented anyone who seemed to know God. I felt that God had deserted me! First chance I got, I left home! I didn't look back. I was on my own and liked it! I got a job, married, had children, and totally forgot God.

Years later, one night, I dreamed I was standing in a crowd. There were people around me muttering and shouting angrily. I looked up. I was standing under a cross! I stared hard at it and saw a person hanging there! His body was torn and bleeding! I couldn't recognize his face! It suddenly dawned on me, "This is Jesus!"! Sorrow suddenly overwhelmed me. I wept so bitterly I awoke. Sitting on the edge of the bed, tears streamed silently down my face! I finally looked at the alarm clock. It was still very early. I switched off the alarm. Feeling deeply sorrowful, puzzled, and troubled; I dressed, and left for work.

Weeks and months passed, but the dream still haunted me! To my family's surprise, we started attending church, again. It made me feel better, so I thought, "This must be what God was trying to tell me!" I ushered, led singing, taught Sunday School, and even preached occasionally. I knew the Bible well and was convinced of its veracity,

but when I did pause to think, I was still restless. "What more could I do? What did God still want from me?" I grew miserable, and at the end of my rope, I started to contemplate suicide. I couldn't handle life anymore like this! Heaven seemed made of solid brass! God seemed deaf and I was bitter and deeply depressed!

Towards midnight, on a Friday evening, I sat at my desk. Everyone was in bed. I felt really, really alone! My shoulders sagged, under an invisible weight. "God," I said, "if you don't help me tonight.....I'm ending it all! Please talk to me! Do something for me! Please, I beg, You!" The thought suddenly came, "If God is going to talk to me it will probably be through His Word, the Bible...but, where do I begin?" John 3:16 came to mind and so I began reading. *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life."* I read other passages and came to John 14:27. Hours before His death Jesus said, *"Peace I leave with you, My Peace give I unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."* I thought, "That's it! I don't have peace...but...if I don't have peace...I don't have Christ!...(then deeply troubled)...Without Christ, I can't be saved?! ... (confused)... Wait! I got saved as child...I think...but...God doesn't lie! He can't, because the Bible is true!" Confused and afraid, I continued to read. Verse after verse confirmed my fear and added to my confusion!

Weeks prior, I had attended a Bible study course for those wanting to help others to know Christ. A key verse was Romans 10:13. *"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the LORD, shall be saved."* In the margin, I wrote the question, "Have you called?" thinking, "What if someone reads this and doesn't know what to do?" That night, I read this, *"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the LORD, shall be saved."* My eyes wandered to the margin and the question, "Have you called?" As my eyes fell on that question in the margin, and it hit my mind like thunder! It was so quick and powerful, it stunned me into thoughtlessness! Silence followed. The question echoed in my mind, demanding a reply. Finally, drifting back to my childhood experience, details became clear. Try as I might, I could not remember calling to God for mercy!

Suddenly, it was clear! I had believed and prayed a prayer after someone, but I had not trusted and called on Jesus, myself! Then the Voice demanded, ***"WHAT WILL YOU DO?"*** Again stunned, I humbly bowed before what I knew then, to be the presence of God, and cried brokenly, "OH GOD! PLEASE FORGIVE ME!"

My heart lifted, and the great weight rolled off my shoulders! Tears of despair turned to tears of Joy! My heart sang! ***"Peace! PEACE AT LAST! OH PRAISE THE LORD!"***

My Friend,

Are you troubled? Deeply depressed? Is life just too much? Cry out to Jesus! He loves you! He died for you! He waits to save you from your despair and sin! His Peace, for the asking! Don't let fear, pride, or doubt stand in your way! Jesus is waiting patiently, NOW! *"For WHOSOEVER shall call upon the name of the LORD, shall be saved."*

Have you called? "WHAT WILL YOU DO?"

Addendum - It Is Well With My Soul

God's ways are not mysterious to the faithful. Most of my life had been devoted to serving in the Church and helping the Body of Christ, but I had always longed for closer fellowship with God. You can find peace and fulfillment in service to His Majesty, but there may not be any Joy in your life until you learn how to enjoy intimate fellowship worshipping at the feet of the Master. We scurry about in humble servitude completely bypassing the Source of our strength, the JOY of the Lord. We are so often caught up in and burned out in the drudgery and doldrums of serving the Lord, without ever coming to the point where *He* matters more to us than our "service" to him. We equate serving Him with loving him, and it's true that if I love Him I will serve Him, but we so often serve out of duty and not pure, unfeigned love and affection. We try and try and try to "feel" that faithfulness is love but it is not.

A man can stay faithful to a wife he doesn't love out of duty, but he'll have no joy. Satan has convinced us of the heresy that service comes first and it's how we prove our love. Balderdash! God sees our hearts and He knows exactly how we feel towards Him. Joy only comes from relationship, not service. We may fool others into thinking that we have an intimate relationship with the Almighty, but we cannot fool God. His eyes peer into all the secret corners and crevices of our soul and He knows if we truly love Him or not. To love someone you must spend time with them. Not just casual conversation, but long quiet talks that reveal intimate details. We find intimate details out about God by spending hours studying the scriptures and by baring our soul's secrets before Him through confession and fervent prayer. We must literally "Practice the Presence of God." We must constantly and consistently live in the realm of his Presence. "Pray without ceasing" is not a suggestion. Our Joy depends on intimacy with a Holy God. Don't let Satan side track you with service. It will only steal your Joy. Your service will be a spontaneous outpouring of your glad heart when you truly learn to walk with Him every moment.

I found my heart intensely longing for that intimacy about the turn of the century, the year 2000. I had always strived to please God, but it was not as much love as duty. I was grateful for my salvation, but I was not happy. Oh, I was at peace in my soul about my eternal Home, but I knew that there was still something missing. I began earnestly communing with God and begging Him for an answer to my yearning. It's a thirst that can only be quenched at the Fountain of Living Water. I had no idea how God would lead me to the answer, I just knew He would and that I would know it when He did.

In October of 2004, at age 52, I suffered a stroke. I was always a very active, hard working person. I had been serving and working in my local Church for about ten years when the incident occurred. Lying helpless in a hospital bed I had no other recourse than to seek God's face. That's when the realization hit me. God had brought this upon me as an answer to my prayer. As I lay there, great peace settled on my soul and I began earnestly spending time with my KING. Words cannot adequately begin to describe the pure Joy that filled my being. Suddenly, all worry and care melted away, and I knew that underneath me were the Everlasting Arms of God. I began looking around me to others in the same situation, trying to convey to them some of the hope I had been so graciously given. One of the reasons I know my "Calamity" was of the Lord, is that during my stay in the hospital I had several bedmates that came in as wanderers and left as seekers. There were many others on the ward to whom I was able to minister the grace of God. When I left, one gentleman thanked me with tears in his eyes for the help God had enabled me to give. I gently reminded him that the Saviour was his "hero," not me.

I spent the next years worry free. God amply provided for my needs, financially as well as physically. Friends came out of nowhere. "Anonymous" gifts from dear friends helped ease the financial burden. I was told that applying for Social Security benefits could take up to two years to acquire. I was not really worried. I had God on my side. I did what I could do about it and concentrated on enriching my relationship with the Almighty. I didn't neglect my duties, but I didn't find them as consuming as before. In April of 2005, I received a letter from the Social Security office stating that I had been approved for 100% disability and that there would be some retroactive compensation for the previous 6 months. It only confirmed what I already knew. God would take care of me completely if I loved Him completely.

In late 2006, I suffered a second stroke. I had been able to walk about and do for myself prior to this stroke. My left side was about 50% affected with the first stroke and the second affected my right side about the same. I began to understand how Jacob felt after his wrestling match. At this point in time, I lost the ability to walk without a walker. Was I discouraged? No. I reasoned that God had a job for me to do so I started looking around for someone that needed hope. Another bedmate came in a God-hater and left a God-lover. It was elating to

know that the Holy Spirit is using you to pour out blessings to others. Several of the staff, including a nurse, would steal away to come sit by my bed and fellowship around the Word. The nurse had been through some personal tragedy and was questioning, as we all do sometimes, "Why?" I was able, with the Holy Spirit's help, to lift her eyes to the Lord and understand that "tragedy" for the believer is just another *leaning* experience. The more we lean on Him, the more we find Him to be trustworthy and faithful, and the greater our Joy will be.

They were never able to determine the exact cause of my strokes. I never regret my request for His presence in my life, even at the expense of my mobility. I began writing. There was little else I could do. God had left my mind intact and unscathed. My voice suffered somewhat, but I was still able to communicate fairly well. I began writing a daily journal. I sent it to a few friends and they suggested that I send it to others. God has allowed this ministry to blossom into a large number who receive a daily devotion. The secret is; I get a bigger blessing from it than anyone, because it is a product of my daily stroll with the KING. I live to sit and read His Word and glean hope from it for each day. As I write and compose, the Spirit dictates my thoughts in a blessed intimacy!

I have since been hospitalized with severe peritonitis. It has sapped my physical strength even further, but my soul is satisfied with His presence. I wouldn't change a thing, *"for I know, what ere betides me, Jesus doeth all things well."*

"...Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." Job 1:21