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TRIP TO MEXICO

Had an interesting and different two-week trip to Mexico with my long-time friends, Fred Feller and Lynne Cumming. We spoke at churches in Mexico City and Guadalajara, and Lynne spoke at a BIG Women's Conference. The Holy Spirit showed up at our meetings, thank the Lord! Moses said to the Lord, "If you don't come with us on our trip, I don't want to go," or words to that effect. I feel the same way. To those of you who donated funds to enable me to make this trip, thank you so much!

We are truly amazed at how God is using our friends, Pepe Quiroz and his son, Israel, who is now 39 years old. During the past 11 months they have held 42 consecutive weeks of meetings (which they call "camps") with street kids at their 14-acre site above Tlalmanalco, a town of about 60,000 people, and just below the extinct volcano, Ixtacuiatl (or Sleeping Woman), and Popocatepetl, an active volcano which puffs and spews daily.

Each week buses of young people, ages 16-26, arrive for the camps. They are lured with the promise of athletic games, an obstacle course, free food, and great music. They are delighted to escape their life on the streets for a while. These are street kids! That means drugs, gangs, violence, theft, prostitution, etc. From 300 to 500 kids attend each camp, and after they are tired and full, Christ is presented in a winsome way, with testimonies from young people whose lives have been transformed by Christ. Consistently, from 30 to 50% of those attending make a commitment to Jesus! They are not just taken back and dumped on the street. Local pastors and leaders are the people who rounded up all these young people, and they take names and follow up with the kids to incorporate them into small groups and church life. What a fabulous way to go into all the world and make disciples!

Israel has gone into other cities in Mexico, and into Colombia and Cuba, to teach pastors how to hold these camps, and he has been invited into several other countries in Central and South America. Wow! We (Lynne, Fred and I) are thrilled to be a little part of this outreach. We are in a Covenant relationship with Pepe and Israel and their families, and for over 20 years we have visited, prayed, ministered, counseled, contributed, and raised funds to assist them. When I first visited Alfa & Omega (in 1993, I think), their facilities were comprised of several shacks built from the oval part of a log which is discarded when the mill makes lumber, a dining area of hand-made concrete blocks, Pepe's office was the back-end of a wrecked yellow school bus, and the bano for over 40 students, drugs addicts and staff was a hole in the ground encircled by brush. Today they have a huge: auditorium that will seat 600 to 800, a dining facility of the same size, a number of buildings to house staff and hold small meetings, and the homes of Pepe and Israel. God has done this. I could tell you stories of miraculous provision and protection. But it has also taken a lot of faith and hard work.

NEEDED:

1. A motor home, 22 to 26 feet in length would be ideal, older than a 2007 model (because newer models are taxed by Mexico at a prohibitive rate). If you have such a motor home to donate, call me and we will arrange to have it picked up and driven to Chihuahua, south of El Paso, where it will be picked up by a Mexicano and driven to Tlalmanalco. It has to go in via that route because that state of Mexico does not have any tax on motor homes built prior to 2007. **Israel will use it to carry teams into towns and villages to present the youth-camps.** If you want to send a few bucks and get tax credit, make it out to "Leaves for the Nations," send it to me, and I will forward it.

2. God "called" Lynne, Fred and me to be in a Covenant relationship with Pepe & Israel. That is an absolute conviction in each of us, and we feel honored to be a part of their ministry. I know you already support your church, missions, etc., and I'm not asking you to stop any of that. But, as you read this, if you feel you should explore the possibility of also being in a covenant with Pepe & Israel, phone me and let's talk and pray. We can arrange for you to visit them or? They need help to finish the dorms, to build another A&O in Juchitan in southern Mexico, and to expand their work to other nations. This would have to be a God connection for you, as it is for us.

Following is part of a message I preached in Mexico.

SALVATION: GOD'S PART AND OUR PART

What do you have to do to be forgiven for your sins and to earn your way to heaven? Go to church every week? Give a tithe of your income? Help the poor? Visit sick people and those in prison? Become a pastor or priest or missionary? Live a life of purity and kindness?

No, no, no! Those things are all good, but one of the first things we learn is that salvation is a gift, and we receive it by faith. *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.* (Eph. 2:8)

Several years ago Warren Buffet announced that he was donating most of his fortune, \$40 billion dollars or so, to the charity foundation of Bill and Nancy Gates. Warren was quoted as saying, with a laugh: "There are many ways to get to heaven, but this is certainly a good way." Warren is a nice man, and his donation will help multitudes of needy people, but he did not get an "A" in theology, he got an "F." If it took that big a donation to get into heaven, most of us probably couldn't raise \$40 billion. \$400, maybe. \$40, probably.

Then why did I name this article the way I did? Do you and I have a part in salvation? We certainly do. Consider Philippians 2:12-13: ***Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*** (NKJV) Note that we are not working "for" our salvation but working it "out." And there is an implied "you" to start that sentence: "You work out your salvation." God is going to help you, but He is not going to work it out for you.

These are among the key verses in the New Testament that have helped me to understand the Christian life. They tell us, first, that salvation is not only something we received in the past, which it is, but that it is on-going, progressive, something to be worked out presently with God's help. 1 Cor. 15:18 — *The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are **being saved** (present tense) it is the power of God.* Let me give a dumb illustration: If you give your daughter a laptop or an I-phone for Christmas, she can use it or set it aside as she decides. But if you give her a colt, it is going to require from her a big investment of time and work. If you were a family of horse people and your daughter kept begging you for a horse to raise, you would carefully consider whether she is old enough, mature enough, for the responsibility. Then you would ask her to "count the cost," to think about the investment of time and hard work required to care for, feed, exercise, clean up the barn, and train a horse.

God offers us a new quality of life in a connection with Himself, but it is costly. Consider those verses (Phil. 2:12-13) in the NLT version: ***Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.***

It is clear that we have a part in the process of salvation, and God has a part. God's part is primary. Jesus said, ***Apart from me, you can do nothing.***

(As I was preaching this message in front of a small congregation in Guadalajara, my friend Fred, who was sitting behind me, interrupted and whispered, "Glenn, the service is dead!" That happens a lot when I am preaching. I had also noticed that the service was as flat as a pancake, and I did what I have done many times — I stopped the service and said, "God doesn't seem to be here. Let's invite Him to come." Then we all prayed and waited a few moments, and God graciously answered our prayers and the atmosphere changed. I used this as a teaching moment and explained that "working out our salvation" includes preaching, teaching, and hearing, and that we have to do that part. God doesn't come personally or send an angel to do what He has commissioned us to do. But if God does not come by His Spirit and enliven the service, then it is just empty words that fall to the floor and accomplish nothing as far as the Kingdom of God is concerned.)

I believe that "God's part," as explained in Phil. 2:13 in the NLT version is also the definition of grace. We are familiar with grace being defined as, "**The unmerited favor of God.**" That is a great definition, but grace can also be defined as, "**God works in you, giving you the desire and power to do His will.**"

So let's look further at our part in working out our salvation:

First of all, our part is to believe, to have faith in who Jesus is and what He accomplished on the cross. An important note: faith is not something that falls out of the sky, it is not something that just happens. Faith comes *by hearing the Word*

of God. Faith is a choice, it is an act of our will. We have to choose to “hear” the Word of God. (Also see the 1st chapter of Romans.) Paul also says we have to “confess” it with our own mouth: *That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved.* (Ro. 10:9)

But “having faith,” or “believing,” as the Apostle John emphasized in his writings, is deeper than our English words convey. In the Gospel of John, the word “believe” is often followed by the Greek preposition *eis* (“into”), which is an entirely new way of using the Greek words. Faith is the work God wants from us (see John 6:29). It involves abiding in Jesus’ word, loving Him, and obeying Him. Notice the ideas expressed in the following verse: *Anyone who believes in God’s Son has eternal life. Anyone who does not obey the Son will never experience eternal life but remains under God’s angry judgment.* (John 3:36, NLT) That is a verse designed to cause some fear and trembling!

The two parts of salvation, God’s part and our part, are found everywhere in the New Testament. Think about the “fruit of the Spirit.” When the Holy Spirit comes to live in us, which happens when we receive Christ as our Savior (*You are the temple of the Holy Spirit.*), the fruit of the Spirit, *Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control* (Gal. 5:22) lies resident in our hearts. But do love, joy, peace, etc., come bubbling automatically out of every Christian you know? Do you and I always exhibit love, joy, and peace in every circumstance? No, it doesn’t happen automatically. So the Bible commands us to **engage our will** and **do** every one of the things on this list. *Husbands, love your wives. Love one another. Love your enemies.* We certainly don’t always feel like doing these things, and love doesn’t flow up from inside and take over, but as we obey and choose to love, to do those things that express love, then God’s Spirit suddenly empowers us to love even the unlovely and the unlovable.

I like the analogy of Power Steering. I started driving when turning the steering wheel on a vehicle was by man power. In a big car or truck or bus on a winding mountain road, that took some strength, and it was easy to end up in the ditch. But with power steering, the slightest motion by your hands engages the motor that makes it easy. God will not drive the car, our life, for us. We have to do it. But He will supply the power to make living a Christian life doable.

Corrie ten Boom wrote a book about her experience in a Nazi concentration camp during the 2nd World War. After the war, she spoke in many churches. On one occasion in Germany, a man came up to her after the service and she recognized him instantly. He had been a particularly evil guard and she remembered him brutalizing her and her sister who had died in the camp. He told her that he had become a Christian and, extending his hand, he asked her to forgive him.

Corrie said that awful memories flooded her mind and she was filled with rage, and for a moment she could not, would not, lift her hand to his. But inwardly she asked God to help her, and in obedience to His command to forgive our enemies she reached out and took the man’s hand. She said that the moment she touched his hand, it was as if a high current of electricity flowed into her hand and flooded her body. God’s love instantly filled her, and she felt tremendous compassion and pity for that man.

And so it is with each of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Scripture tells us to: *Rejoice* (express joy); *to have peace*; *to be patient*; *to be kind to one another*; *to be faithful*; *to exercise self-control*. As we choose to obey, God will give us grace “to be willing and able to do His will.” Carefully study Ephesians and Colossians and you will see the things that God

tells us to do (which are impossible except for His grace): *Put off the old man, put on the new man; put away lying; be angry and do not sin; don’t let corrupt words proceed out of your mouth; let all bitterness, wrath, anger, and evil speaking be put away from you; be kind to one another, forgiving one another; walk in love; put to death fornication, uncleanness, passion, and covetousness; put off wrath, blasphemy, and filthy language out of your mouth; put on tender mercies, kindness, humility; put on love, and let the peace of God rule in your hearts.*

God has extended to us an amazing gift, the gift of salvation through the sacrifice of His Son. Have you accepted that gift? Don’t blithely say yes without counting the cost. If you have accepted that gift, as is true with most who receive this newsletter, it would be good for each of us to spend a quiet time before God and ask Him to show us some area where we need to work out our salvation, with His grace and help.

THOSE WHO TRUST THE LORD SHALL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED

While flying home from Mexico I read a little paperback that I had picked up at the church (title above), by Peggy Joyce Ruth. Boy, it really spoke to me and gave me an inner peace about a certain situation that I have been wrestling with for years. You simply must get a copy of this book! (That’s pretty authoritarian for a mousey guy like me, so let me reword that.) I gently hope you will read this book. In fact, if it is not too late, it would make a great Christmas gift for loved ones. Following are some excerpts:

“My head shot straight up off the pillow. Was it a noise or just a dream? I was soon busy getting breakfast for my husband, Jack, and two children, and scarcely noticed the thought that floated quietly through my mind the first time – “Those who trust the Lord will not be disappointed.” After everyone had gone out the door, the thought came a little stronger – “Those who trust the Lord will not be disappointed.” I was distracted and never remembered reading that scripture in the Bible. Where was that thought coming from?

All day I found myself subconsciously quoting that same phrase over and over again. By afternoon I realized something unusual was happening. Finally, my lightning-fast mind recognized that God was giving me something important that He wanted me to hear! I searched the concordance and found a passage in Isaiah which was quoted in I Peter 2:6-8 - *For this is contained in Scripture: “Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone, and he who believes in him will not be disappointed.”* I found other verses with the same declaration: *.....and he who believes (i.e., trusts) in Him will not be disappointed.* (Ro. 9:33) For the scripture says, *“Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed.”* (Ro. 10:11) *In Thee they trusted and were not disappointed.* (Ps. 22:5) I found this truth paraphrased over and over throughout the Old and New Testaments, and in several places it was a direct quote.

I remember arguing, “But Lord, I think I do trust you, but sometimes the Word looks like it’s not working, and I get confused, and even disappointed...but that doesn’t mean I’m not trusting You!” That’s when the Lord began to show me that trust and disappointment are exact opposites. Just as fear and faith are opposites and cannot operate at the same time, trust and disappointment cannot both operate at the same time. Notice the tenses in this scripture. *Those who trust* (trusting is present tense) *shall not be disappointed* (shall be is future tense). This is a promise with a condition, meaning that if we trust and continue to trust (in the present), every single time we won’t be disappointed (in the future).

But it does not say that opportunities for disappointment won’t present themselves. Temptations to doubt the Lord will come. That’s a fact! But when that happens the ball is in your court. You can either (1) fall for the opportunity to be disappointed or (2) continue to trust God no matter what things look like at the moment, trusting that the time will come when you are truly not disappointed. Trusting is the prerequisite before we see the outcome. Important! It is not a matter of feeling. It is a decision of our will. So I made the following resolution between myself and God:

I don’t care what the situation looks like. I don’t care what my reason tells me – I am not going to go there. I don’t care if it looks as though You didn’t come through.

I don’t care what people say. I don’t care what negative reports come down the road.

I don’t care what my emotions are dictating; I have made up my mind that from this day forth I am going to steadfastly trust what You have said. I will be obedient to do what you tell me to do. I will make your Word my final authority; and then I will rest in you. When feelings of disappointment try to crowd in, I will see that as my warning signal, and I will stop and renew my choice to trust in you. Then Lord, the rest is up to you.

The Lord gave me a simple little statement to say out loud every time I am faced with an opportunity to be disappointed. I simply say, “Lord, in this particular situation (name the situation) I choose to trust You.”

This is not positive thinking. It is not a passive trust or a “Whatever will be will be” kind of trust. It is a deep commitment to trust the Lord and depend on the Lord’s integrity! God is big enough to work out any situation, no matter how impossible it looks. He is the God of the impossible. But the degree to which we trust Him determines the degree of victory we will experience, because trust (a synonym for faith) is the medium of exchange here. And there is nothing more exciting than to constantly anticipate, in faith, how God is going to work out our impossible circumstances. And there can be no real, lasting trust in God apart from a *love walk* with Him.” (The book then relates how Peggy Joyce and Jack felt that the Lord was leading them to build a house in the country, in south Texas, without going into debt, and that this would be an adventure with great challenges to teach them to trust in Him. They wanted a very large house to accommodate their family and to hold Bible studies. I will only use one of her many examples.

THE ONLY CONCRETE IN TOWN

“After we had erected the two-story wall in the den, we discovered that we needed to construct a planned-for-the-future patio immediately to shore up the wall and give it stability from the outside. A high wind on the hill where our house was being built could have played permanent havoc.

Right away Jack started building the cement forms for the patio foundation, only to be told that the concrete company could not promise a load of cement anytime in the near future. A building boom was occurring state-wide, and the concrete company was working 24-hour shifts and still could not meet the demand. They told us it would be at least six months before we could expect a delivery. We didn’t know what to do. We were surprised to learn that there was an additional

problem. The water canal from Lake Brownwood had collapsed during the night, and no concrete trucks were running.

Disappointment was running so high that neither of us spoke on the way home. Then, all of a sudden, we both remembered the scripture that had been given to us – *Those who trust the Lord will not be disappointed*. Our reason told us there were no possible answers, so it took everything we could do to choose not to be disappointed and to trust God. We began to confess that trust out loud. The next morning, Jack felt impressed to place the order anyway. The dispatcher wrote it down but kidded Jack unmercifully because there was no water in the entire city of Brownwood. We knew the situation was impossible, but over and over again we confessed out loud, “Those who trust the Lord will not be disappointed.”

The next day, about midday, a temporary fix at the canal site turned the water back on. The water brought with it numerous orders for concrete, but since Jack’s order had been the only one on the docket all morning, his was the first to be filled. And the moment Jack’s order was filled, the canal immediately collapsed again and they were not able to get it repaired for the next couple of days, making our pour the only one in the county. When it became known that ours was the only active construction site anywhere around, the men who finish out the concrete slabs followed the trucks to our place, giving Jack all the help he needed. Jack had already hired three men, but seven extra men stayed and worked for nothing. When the job was done, rejoicing definitely took the place of any prior temptation to be disappointed!”

(God used this scripture and the adventure of building the big house as training for Peggy Joyce and Jack. Jack left his military career and started a church, bought a Christian radio station, and started a missions outreach. Peggy Joyce has taught a large Bible study for over 30 years and has spoken across the nation. Her teaching on this subject of trusting the Lord has impacted many lives.)

Merry Christmas

and

Happy 2015

Glenn

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I would like to thank each of you for your support of this ministry.

If any of you want to receive tax credit for your financial contributions, you
may send them to:

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