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IS THIS AS GOOD AS IT GETS?

(A friend sent me a clip from John Eldredge's book, "A Sacred Romance," that really spoke to my heart. I modified it a bit. Please get in a quiet place and let these thoughts speak to you.)

If for all practical purposes we believe that this life is our best shot at happiness, if this is as good as it gets, we will live as desperate and despairing men and women. We will place a burden on this world it was never intended to bear. And when our hope in this world fails, as it will, our hearts will fail as well. Truth be told, most of us live as if this life is our only hope.

We live in a world no longer under heaven, and all the crises of the human soul flow from there. All of our addictions, depressions, rage that simmers just beneath the surface of our Christian facade, and the deadness that characterizes so much of our lives has a common root: We think this is as good as it gets. Take away the hope of arrival in heaven, and our journey becomes the Bataan Death March.

The best human life is unspeakably sad. Even if we manage to escape from the biggest tragedies, and few of us do, life rarely matches our expectations. When we do get a taste of what we really long for, it never lasts very long. Vacations come to an end, friends die or move away, our careers don't quite pan out.. The years pass unobtrusively, stealing our strength and beauty. Our longing for heaven whispers to us in all our pains and disappointments.

C. S. Lewis wrote, "If I find in myself desires which nothing in this world can satisfy, the only logical explanation is that I was made for another world."

"He also set eternity in our hearts."
(Ecclesiastes 3:11)

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**WHEN GOD'S WORDS PIERCE
LIKE A TWO-EDGED SWORD**

It happened when I was on a night flight from Guadalajara, Mexico, to Loveland, Colorado. I was deeply satisfied because I had spent 3 weeks ministering in about a dozen different churches and had seen people saved and healed emotionally and even physically, I had cast demons out of people, and several marriages were healed and given new life.

It was a big plane with capacity for probably 50 people, but only about 15 or so were in the plane. For some reason the temperature got very cold and uncomfortable.

Then God spoke to me, not orally, but in my mind the words were as clear as a bell. He said, "You have been teaching a lot of people about the importance of forgiveness, and you have led many people to forgive others. But you have bitterness in your heart against some people in your former church. I want you to go to them and ask them to forgive you."

The truth of what I was hearing was undeniable, and the words pierced my heart like a sword. I started weeping and repenting, weeping and repenting, weeping and repenting, for the next two hours. Before another day passed I met with each of the people against whom I had so much resentment and tearfully asked for their forgiveness.

What were the consequences of my actions? They were kind and forgave me and our friendship was rekindled. Why did God confront me like this? Because he loves me and that bitterness was poisoning my soul.

Unforgiveness is in my experience an ongoing problem even for mature Christians. We know what Jesus said about it - that if we do not forgive others God will not forgive us (Matthew 5:14-15). And we know that the Apostle Paul wrote to a church, to Christians, and said that "We must forgive others."

(Colossians 3:13). Yet we resist and disobey these clear commands.

Please consider the following:

- (1) The sequence is as follows:
**a.unforgiveness-b.anger-c.resentment
d.bitterness-e.hatred-f.murder.**
Unforgiveness carries the seed of murder. John said it very clearly: "Anyone who hates another brother or sister is really a murderer at heart, and you know that murderers don't have eternal life within them." (1st John 3:13)
- (2) We think that the passage of time settles the issue, but it does not. Obedience settles the issue, and God does not forget.
- (3) Even death does not settle the issue. If you have resentment against your father or mother who have died, you still need to forgive them.
- (4) "Forgive and forget" is not Scriptural. We can't erase our memories, but we can choose to forgive. Then- **HOW DO WE KNOW WE HAVE ACTUALLY FORGIVEN SOMEONE?** When God takes the pain, fear and anger out of the memory. The memory no longer has power over us.
- (5) Express your feelings of hurt, anger, grief and loss to God and to another appropriate person. If you try to hold your anger in it will make you sick and you may eventually blow up in some destructive way.
- (6) Cancel the debt. Say "I forgive him or her. I renounce anger and resentment." Determine not to speak evil against them. Sometimes people say, "I just can't do it, I can't forgive him or her." God will help you. It's a process and he will show you the steps to take.
- (7) Consider reconciliation. There are some abusive people that are dangerous to be around, or for your children to be around, until they drastically change. Even then they should be monitored when around your children. A friend of mine has a brother, an alcoholic, who

has been verbally and physically abusive to her. She has forgiven him but knows she would not be safe to be with him in a private setting. He is dangerous. And if a father, grandfather, or stepfather has been physically or sexually abusive to you, you must forgive him, but it would not be wise to trust him around your children or grandchildren.

- (8) Establish boundaries in order to protect yourself and your children. Please read or reread the classic book, "Boundaries," by Cloud and Townsend.

My friends, God is firm and unyielding to us in these matters not because he is against us but because he passionately loves us.

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TRUST IS DEEPER THAN FAITH

The New Testament is clear that we are saved by faith in what Jesus Christ did when he died for our sins on the cross. But there is another step that God wants us to take, the step of trust. Trust is deeper than faith. I believe the reason that so many Christians are falling in life is because they are not trusting in God.

Do you really trust God? Do you trust his character, his promises, and his care for you and your loved ones? Or do you suspect that he might let you down? Or that your faith might fail in a severe test?

One of my favorite scriptures is in Proverbs 3 - "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take. Don't be impressed with your own wisdom; instead, fear the Lord and turn away from evil. Then you will have healing for your body and strength for your bones."

Wow, is that powerful or what! The Bible says that wisdom is better than silver, gold and diamonds. Do you want to be rich, really rich? Then wisdom tells you to trust in the Lord with all your heart. God is in control. We can't understand all the things that happen in this life, but we can choose to trust our God. He is trustworthy.

THE ANOINTING

One man can stand behind a pulpit, open his Bible, and preach a clear Biblical message. But he may as well be reading from the dictionary. The congregation is bored, distracted, looking at their watches, thinking about lunch.

Another man stands behind the pulpit, preaches a very simple message, and the congregation is electrified. His words are like a double-edged sword piercing their hearts. Some of the people are deeply touched, tears are rolling down their faces. Others are offended and angry. They came to church to be encouraged, appreciated for all the good things they were doing for God, not insulted by some ignorant fundamentalist.

What is the difference between these two preachers? The anointing. What is the anointing? It is the presence, truth and power of God.

A man was preaching down by the Jordan River. Was he crazy? He was subsisting on dried locusts and wild honey. The man was dressed in an animal skin! His preaching was confrontational. Why would anyone pay any attention to such a wild man? But thousands streamed out of the surrounding countryside to listen to him and to allow him or his disciples to baptize them in the Jordan. He told the people that he was preparing the way for the special one that had been promised to their nation by the prophets.

And one day Jesus came, to be baptized, to spend 40 days in the wilderness, and to start his ministry. Many say that Jesus was delusional, a mad man, but his improbable life and death have shaken the world. It certainly shook me. How about you?

And Jesus was "the anointed one." In fact, his name, "Christ", is actually a title and means "anointed." Jesus is "the anointed one, the Christ," and when someone is anointed by God, he or she is experiencing the presence, power and impact of Jesus the Christ.

Do you want to be anointed? Spend more time with the anointed one. Listen to him, trust him, obey him. He loves you.

AND IN A LIGHTER VEIN

I just remembered a story from about 1970. Holy mackerel, that's over 50 years ago!

A Christian businessman who lived in Houston confessed this story about himself. He was driving home on a Friday afternoon, and he was exhausted. The temperature was 108°, the humidity was 98%, his car had been sitting out in the sun all day, and the AC unit needed to be recharged. And bumper to bumper traffic stretched to infinity.

As he stopped at a red light, the car behind him honked. He ignored it, but at the next light the same thing happened. Anger started building, and he turned and glared at the guy. When it happened again at the next light, he lost it. He started cussing and made a rude gesture at the man. He imagined going back and getting in a fist fight and perhaps getting the police involved and decided that would not be a good idea.

He stewed all the way home. When he got out of his car and walked around behind it he noticed that his wife had affixed a bumper sticker. It read, "Honk if you love Jesus."

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"WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?"

A pastor said he was in a little home group teaching about the Holy Spirit when a lady raised her hand. She asked, "Who is the Holy Spirit?" That lady had been a church member for over 20 years and didn't know who the Holy Spirit was.

A similar thing happened to the Apostle Paul in Acts 19. He came to the city of Ephesus on the coast and asked the congregation, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" No, they replied, we haven't even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.

If someone asked you, "Who is the Holy Spirit?" What would you say?

Let me describe some of the things the New Testament says about the Holy Spirit:

The Holy Spirit is God. He is omniscient - he knows everything; he is omnipotent - he is all powerful; he is omnipresent - he exists

everywhere. He is a person. He has always existed. He is the Breath of God the Father. He inspired the holy Bible. He came to a group of empty men and women and filled them. (Acts 2) And what did they do? They went out and changed the world.

How do people act when they are full of the Holy Spirit? They are full of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. In other words, they are full of God.

Have you ever been filled, baptized with the Holy Spirit? Do you need to be refilled? Boy, I do, I need to be refilled regularly because as the old saying goes, I leak. All we have to do is ask.

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ARE YOU READY TO GRADUATE?

I kept the Christmas letter from my friends Jim and Marian Lewis and reread it periodically because it buoys my spirit. They retired to Stillwater, Oklahoma, in 2022. Following is the last paragraph of their letter:

“Many friends have graduated to Heaven during the last decade. In terms of age, we also may be close to completing the appropriate coursework. Thanks to Jesus, we already have our graduation gowns, caps, tassels, and diplomas from Eternity University. The only thing lacking is the graduation exercise to be arranged in his perfect timing.

Love, Jim and Marian”

God bless,

Glenn