

WHOLENESS IN DYING

The Rev. John H. Parke, Sharing, July/August 2011.

God's grace and our wholeness can be experienced at any stage of our earthly life; but does that include our dying moments? For many people the approach of death is a time of insecurity and even fright, but it needn't be so. Our state of

Dying

preparedness as we leave this life will depend entirely upon our relationship with God.

Do you remember Simeon? We read of him in the second chapter of Luke. He was an elderly man of Jerusalem, being righteous and devout. For many years he had shared the longing of his people that one day God would send a deliverer, the Messiah, to overthrow the forces of evil and establish a Kingdom of righteousness. Often he had dreamed and prayed about it and he had received a clear message from the Holy Spirit, "Simeon, you will not see death until you have seen the Lord Christ." He was in his 70s, maybe approaching his 80th birthday, and he knew his days on earth were numbered, but he kept watching and waiting.

Then one morning, as he entered the temple for worship, he saw a man with his young wife bringing forward their baby son to be offered to God. The Spirit within then spoke to him the most astounding of words, "This child is the one, the Messiah." Hurrying forward he greeted the couple and asking permission to hold the child, he took him in his arms and blessed him, and said, "Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen your salvation..." He could die in peace because his hope was assured, the Saviour had come, he was certain of it.

Jesus has come as our Saviour too, and through his death and resurrection he has given us the hope, indeed the certainty, of a glorious life beyond death to look forward to. "Because I live," Jesus said, "you shall live also." (John 14.19) Writing to the Christians in Corinth, Paul proclaimed this certainty of the resurrection, "If we have only hope in Christ in this life, we are of all men most to be pitied, but now has Christ been raised from the dead... and in Christ shall all be made alive." (I Cor. 15.19-22) With that hope, we, like Simeon, may approach death with a deep inner peace. Something wonderful, something

glorious lies ahead!

Think of another man mentioned in the Gospel of Luke, a man also approaching death. This was not death in old age, but from capital punishment. He was being crucified on a cross next to Jesus, possibly for having participated in violence against the Roman rulers. He might have known the Lord in the earlier days of his ministry, and



had certainly heard the message of the Kingdom of love. Hanging there on the cross, the man now realized that the Teacher's way was right; God's Kingdom is a Kingdom of the Spirit, and the entrance is not by violence, but by love. He spoke to our Lord

as one would to a personal friend, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom." And Jesus, sensing his repentance, lifted his burden by saying, "Today you shall be with me in Paradise." Like Simeon, this man also died in peace, forgiven, healed in his soul.

It may be that you or I, when our time comes to face death, may have some twinges of guilt. Even at this present time, looking back over our lives many of our sins, failures and shortcomings may be upon our mind, leading us to wonder what awaits us before the judgment seat of God. We know that our every action and thought, good or bad, is there in God's record, but do we need to think we will face him in fear? No! No matter what we have done, if we, like the man on the cross, are truly repentant, then we will know we are forgiven through Jesus Christ. He has cleansed our record! The black marks are gone! We can face dying without fear, in wholeness and in peace, because of Jesus' sacrifice for us. They mocked him, they cursed him, they nailed him to the cross, but he responded only in love as he prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And this is the third secret for wholeness in dying. Simeon died rejoicing in hope; the penitent man on the cross died reassured of forgiveness; and Jesus died with an outpouring of love from his lips. And if one day we would die in peace, then this is the third basic lesson we must learn. There must be nothing but love in our hearts; we are called to forgive anyone and everyone who has ever hurt us.

Stephen, the first Christian martyr, had learned this truth well. As he was being stoned to death, he instinctively reacted not with anger but with love as he prayed, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." In embodying the spirit of forgiveness, even as he was dying in great pain, he was the witness that soon afterward led to the dramatic and history-defining

> conversion of Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus. What will be the witness of our dying? Will our testimony be despair, guilt and anger, or will it be hope, inner peace and love? It is something to think about and to pray about now, well before the occasion of our passing is upon us. Each of us can look forward to that time, if we have the assurance that "my eyes have seen your salvation."



The Best Days of Your Life are Still Ahead of You

We can short-change ourselves if we consider good days are necessarily enjoyable days, pleasant days, days spent doing what we like doing. Jesus had 33 years of good days. Was every one of them fulfilling? Yes. Was every one enjoyable? No. And so for us, we also have all kinds of days, but our best ones are those lived in the knowledge that we are in the Father's will. In John 8.29 Jesus gave us a very simple guide to success, "I always do those things that please him [the Father]." Nothing can compare with the assurance that our Father is pleased with us, as He works in us and through us to bless others, establishing his kingdom. Well, the good news is that the best days of our lives are definitely still ahead of us, because each one of us could definitely be more committed to God than we already are! If that's not true then we must already be in heaven.

Jesus called us to seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and then all these things (other aspects of life) will be added to us. The emphasis here isn't on "having all these things added to us"; it is on "seeking first the kingdom of God." The needful things in our lives are going to be there, but they aren't to be what we are focused on. Then of course there are those things which we cling to that aren't needful. They are going to fall away, if we are willing to let go of them. "Those who try to gain their own life will lose it; but those who lose their life for my sake will gain it." (Matthew 10.39)

It's not the external pressures that hinder our entering into what God has for us. It's our own flesh, the struggle we have with our selves. "For what our human nature wants is opposed to what the Spirit wants, and what the Spirit wants is opposed to what our human nature wants. These two are enemies, and this means that you cannot do what you want to do." (Galatians 5.17) But, thanks to God there is a way, there is a person, leading us to victory, "Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Romans 7.25)

So, we certainly have all God's resources available to us, but how do we ensure that the days in front of us will be our best days? Isaiah knew the answer, "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." (Isaiah 40.31) 'Waiting' can mean spending time on our knees in prayer, and it can also mean going about our daily activities while being attentive to what the Holy Spirit is saying to us, having a sensitive ear and a trusting readiness to be obedient to God.

It doesn't matter if we are weak, infirm, sick, troubled, downcast, or approaching the end of our lives. The strength that Isaiah speaks of is transcendent over all of these issues of the human condition. Why? Because God is transcendent, and he is promising strength to anyone who will wait upon him. Today, right now, we have the opportunity to recommit our lives to God, to yield to him the things that don't bring glory to his name, to place him at the centre of our affections, and to wait upon him for his will and for his person to be revealed to us. Let's contemplate the days yet ahead of us, and let's consider what we need to do to make those days the best days of our lives. Amen.



Heavenbound

HEALING FOR YOU

Some years ago I was worried over my business which was in financial trouble. The more I tried to think my way out of it the more problems I had; one of which was sharp pains in my body which made me think I was going to die. I heard a few words of a song from the Lutheran Radio Hour, "Fix your eyes upon Jesus." I wondered "How?" I found a bible and opened it to these words, "If we confess our sins, He (God) is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1.9) I asked God to forgive my sins in Jesus' name, and immediately the guilt and fears I had been experiencing disappeared.

I told a friend and he showed me Psalm 103.12 where God tells us he removes guilt "as far as the east is from the west." I had been experiencing man's worst fear, death. The apostle Paul had also looked death in the face, and he was able to say, "Death is destroyed; victory is complete." (1 Cor. 15.55) Again, the Lord Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life Those who believe in me will live even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die." (John 11.25, 26) The Spirit and God's word provide for each one of us deliverance from fear and sickness. Death will no longer be a dread for the repentant believer in Jesus Christ, for, like St Paul, he fixes his eyes on Jesus, whose resurrection and eternal life are ours also, as He promised.

After this time my business went from strength to strength, bringing joy to my staff and to me. Twelve years later God called me to full-time Christian ministry, to serve Him and to serve His people. God is good!

A woman rang me up and told me that her teenage son had been severely injured in a

The above items are extracts from the booklet "The Exciting Spiritual Tool Kit -Healing for You" by the Reverend Derek Pryde. Rev'd Pryde, who is now 88, is ready to give away 100 copies of his booklet, which is a collection of healing testimonies. He can be contacted at 8 Firmin Court, Mermaid Waters QLD 4218 Australia.

"Prayer is bringing the presence of Jesus into the situation we name." Mark Mitchell, All Saints, Hamilton, NZ

Three and a half years ago I had an accident in Egypt that left me a paraplegic and led to a long journey home to NZ. After finally leaving the Auckland Spinal Unit (thanks again to all the staff if you get to read this) I went from blending into my community to standing out, by virtue

of a wheelchair. Yanked from one culture into another, encountering many barriers, receiving attention both wanted and unwanted, coping with a new language and many frustrations, I felt like a toddler all over again.

Auckland Hospital, a world authority on spinal injuries, told me to look forward to a "good life in a wheelchair". That is what the world says is hope. But when true hope looks at disability, its prognosis is different. Jesus is a higher authority. He is a sovereign surgeon. He invites us to follow Him, He offers forgiveness, and has promised to restore us to the Father. He offers more than just

Rev'd Derek Pryde



motor accident. He had been riding a motorbike and had collided with a car. He was unconscious in hospital, and the doctors didn't expect him to live. Would I pray for him? I asked

the Holy Spirit how I was going to pray. He said, "Pray for a miracle." So, that is what I did, in the name of Jesus. Then I called the woman and told her that God was going to give a miracle healing to her son, just as the Lord had told me. I had put myself out on a limb, as faith requires. Seven days later the boy woke up, he was completely normal. From that time he has not had any disability or pain from the accident. Thank you Lord for this miracle!

In John 4.47-54 we have the story of a government official who went and asked Jesus to go to Capernaum to heal his son who was about to die. Jesus said to him, "None of you will ever believe unless you see miracles and wonders." "Sir," pleaded the official, "Come with me before my son dies." Jesus said to him, "Go, your son will live." The man believed the words of Jesus and went. On the way home his servants met him and said, "The boy is going to live." He checked the time when the fever left the boy, and it was exactly the time Jesus had told him of his son's recovery.

Yes, God is the same yesterday, today and for ever. He teaches and heals through believers, especially those filled with the Holy Spirit, who ask for and are given the Holy Spirit gifts. These gifts, including miracles, are from the Holy Spirit, through us, for others.

> a good life in a chair. He offers real life. In Matthew 14 we read how Jesus had just miraculously fed five thousand people using five loaves of bread and two fish, before walking on water and then calming a storm. The people who had been fed followed Him across the Sea of Galilee looking for more miracles

and more food. In response to their requests Jesus proclaimed, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst" (John 6.35). But what is this bread? Is it a physical thing?

Life Is Not About Us Mike Potter, The Encourager, November 2011

Jesus fed five thousand people in the desert just as Moses had done. But because He hadn't yet died or ascended to heaven, the crowd saw only His humanity, not His divinity. To them He was a prophet, the son of Joseph and Mary, possibly the new Moses, someone who could feed them in the desert and deliver them from oppression. John had the benefit of hindsight in

his writing. He is at pains to point out that Jesus was not a prophet as the crowd conjectured. Nor was He a revivalist offering spiritual food and miracles to entice people to follow Him. Rather, Jesus declares that those who believe in Him, those who take up His invitation to follow Him, will have real life, they will have real life for eternity. Jesus was not on earth to do what He wanted. He wasn't here to perform miracles, change the government or instantaneously wipe evil from the face of the earth. He lived to obey the One who sent Him, God the Father. And God's will is that everyone who believes in Jesus will live with Him in community forever.

This is what gives true hope. To be fully healed today would be wonderful. I know that Jesus will do it in His timing; He will do it for all who believe in Him. But real life is not about us. It is about the agenda of the Father, loving, forgiving, giving, and restoring all creation to Him. We are all invited to participate in that future.

Instantly Healed

The Rev. Ian MacPherson, Perth

"I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you." (Job 42 5)

Along with calamities other had suffered Job from а dreaded skin complaint right through the book that bears his name,



until this last chapter. His three friends had remonstrated with him, assuring him that God had visited these disasters on him because he or one of his relatives had sinned, while Job insisted that it didn't work that way. Then, out of the whirlwind, God finally entered the dialogue and challenged Job to call to mind all of the wonders of nature that He had created. God asked Job, "Can you make one of those?" At that the penny dropped for Job, and he ceased to question the way God does things. And then, with that new trust in God, which writers have called, "Job's beatific vision", God healed him of his skin disease.

I had a similar experience. For several years as a young man I suffered from a very troublesome neurotic problem, OCD, or Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder. Then in my personal devotions God led me to read the Book of Job in just four days. At the conclusion of my reading God led me to change my constant prayer, offered day and night, oft with pillow-soaking tears, from, "Lord, heal me" to, "Lord, if somehow your purposes can be better achieved through my not being healed, then that's fair enough. I know I won't have this OCD in heaven, so if I have to put up with it on earth, that's OK." And as I uttered that prayer the psychological trauma, sustained when I was about five, and long repressed, came flooding into my conscious memory. It all made sense to me then, and I was instantly healed. Praise to God!

The outcome of that experience has been a life-long commitment to the Church's healing ministry, in the hope of leading others into receiving the healing that we know our loving heavenly Father wills for each of us.



ORDER OF ST. LUKE

For all OSL enquiries: Rev Brian Flower, National Chaplain, 1 Monterey Key, Papamoa 3118, natchap@oslnz.org, phone 07 575 8802. For prayer requests, testimonies etc., contact "Wholeness" using the addresses on page 4.



"Choose for yourselves who you will serve, but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." (Joshua 24:15)

Most people are familiar with the account of Moses leading the people of Israel from Egypt where they had been bound in slavery. Then, after a period of forty years spent in the desert, with the Promised Land in sight on the other side of the Jordan River, Moses died and Joshua took over the leadership of this nation of people without a home and took them across the river into the land that God had promised them, a land "flowing with milk and honey". It was also a land occupied by many pagan peoples who worshipped the idols of their time. The Israelites sadly followed their practices, until Joshua, in his advancing years, challenged them to choose whether to follow the pagan gods or to follow the Lord who had brought them out of slavery to this land of plenty. He set the example by declaring that he and his household would serve the Lord.

The One Who Listens

Rev. Dr Russ Parker, Chrism, Autumn 2010

Consider the three stories in the Gospels of men grappling with blindness. There is

the man born



blind, in John chapter 9, for whom Jesus puts a mixture of mud and saliva on his eyes and tells him to go and wash in the Pool of Siloam. Then there is the man brought by his friends in Mark chapter 8. Jesus walks the man out of town, where along with the familiar routine with saliva he lays hands on him twice before he is healed and is then encouraged to avoid the crowds and to go home. Finally there is the beggar Bartimaeus at the gates of Jericho in Mark chapter 10. This time Jesus initiates the prayer encounter which takes the form of a question and answer routine beginning with, "What do you want?", and ends with him following Jesus on the road.

The question is, as they all had the same problem of blindness, why the different methods of praying and healing? The answer is that Jesus is not simply dealing with our problems, but relating to us as persons, and we are all different and we all move through life in a variety of ways. The professional beggar had lived with challenges all his life. The man who was taken aside from his friends was possibly one who would not find it easy to come forward in front of others to receive prayer. The man born blind had been on a long journey and he is sent on another. Although we are not told so explicitly, I believe that Jesus' unrecorded heart action was to listen to the person and to listen to God at the same time in order to present a bridge of faith that each individual could cross.

It is this same listening dynamic we need if we are to succeed in any of our care ministries. In applying it we will be engaging with, and drawing from, Christ, the one who listens.



Rev. Lionel Brown

Today false gods still lead men and women astray and many Christians fall by the wayside. New Zealanders are amongst the foremost users of illegal drugs in the world, having one of the highest youth suicide rates, and having major problems with gambling and prostitution. Into such hopelessness we bring a message of hope. This message is that our God cares for people, no matter what their status in society, no matter what they may have done. God's forgiveness is available if only they will ask for it in all sincerity and are ready to change their way of life.

Not only forgiveness, but healing of body and of mind and of spirit is available. When you have seen people come to a service supported by a crutch and next morning discard the crutch because it is no longer needed; when you have seen skin conditions disappear; when you hear testimonies of deafness healed and internal organs realigned; when you have seen spines straightened; when you have seen people released from spiritual bondage; then you will have no question that God is alive and well. This is not magic, nor is it turning on and off a tap of grace; it is the love of God in action. The Order of St Luke is committed to Jesus' healing of people, situations, nations and creation itself. If you wish to know more about the healing ministry do feel free to contact the Order of St. Luke at the address given above. Lionel Brown Blessings to you.

AND.

In Christ I am redeemed, forgiven, and set free through His blood. In Him I am a new creation, the old has gone. The new has come.

The Spirit bears witness with my spirit that I am a child of God, a joint heir with Christ. In Christ there is no condemnation. I have been set free from the law of sin and death.

I am sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. My mind is being renewed and transformed by His Spirit day by day. He is my peace. My citizenship is in heaven. I am whole in Him.

> In Christ I am a conqueror and more than a conqueror. In Him and through Him I have authority over all the power of the enemy. He has delivered me from the power of darkness.

Thanks be to God who gives me the victory and keeps me in victory through the Lord Jesus Christ.

A Change of Mind

Rev'd Des Pritchard, Queensland OSL Senior Chaplain

Caterpillars are earthbound creatures. They live a very limited existence, both in time and in activity. But when the day comes that they experience metamorphosis and change into a moth or a butterfly they are no longer earthbound. We are also called to a metamorphosis. A limited life centred on what this world has to offer was always meant to be an eternal, abundant "life in all its fullness." (John 10.10) How can

this happen? Romans 12.2 tells us, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed (Greek: metamorphosed) by the renewing of your mind." The Amplified Version's translation of these words is a clear description of repentance, "... an entire renewal of your mind – new ideals and new attitudes."

In the New Testament we hear this key word first from John the Baptist, "Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand." (Matthew 3.2) This is the same message repeated by Jesus in Mark 1.15, "The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the good news." The call certainly emphasises repentance from sins, but it also encompasses a complete change in thinking. The word 'repent' in the Greek is metanoeo, meta = change and noeo = mind. Instead of anticipating the Kingdom of God as coming at some future time, perhaps when the Roman occupation force is ousted, or the world is made perfect, or we are in heaven, the Good



News is God's Kingdom is Now! God is reigning Now! God's sovereignty is being revealed in the ministry of Jesus Now! So, says Jesus, change your thinking! Repent - put your faith in the Good News!

Thinking is a faculty of the soul. 1 Corinthians 2.14 says, "The natural man does not receive the things of the spirit for they are foolishness to him and he cannot understand them for they are spiritually discerned."

The person being described is a soulish man, a person who functions only at the level of human thoughts and will and feelings. For such a person to even begin to understand spiritual things and follow the Spirit's leading he or she must repent – let God change them from the inside out.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Cor. 5.17)

In baptism we are made one with Christ, and so "... we have the mind of Christ." (1 Cor. 2.16) Christ is now our life because, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me." (Galatians 2.20) And since he is the same yesterday, today and forever, as he lives in us he will continue to speak only God's words and to do what he sees God doing. Only now, it is our voice he will use to bring blessing, and it is our hands he will lay on others to bring healing. So, be renewed!

My Position in Christ The Rev. Frank Rigg

These scripturally based affirmations will help to remind you of who you are and to remind you of your authority.

Are You A Gambler For God?

Based on the writings of W. Barclay, "Philippians, Colossians and Philemon" p62

"He risked his life and nearly died for the sake of the work of Christ, in order to give me the help that you yourselves could not give." (Philippians. 2.30)

Where Paul says of Epaphroditus, "He risked his life", he used a word that later came to mean "he gambled". In the days of the Early Church there was an association of men and women called, in Greek, 'The Gamblers'. It was their mission to visit the prisoners and the sick, especially

those who were ill with dangerous and infectious diseases. In A.D. 252 when plague broke out in Carthage, the heathen threw out the bodies of their dead and then fled in terror. Cyprian, the Christian bishop, gathered his

Thanks Be To God!

Intercessors for New Zealand

"Thanks be to God who is always leading us in triumph in Christ." (2 Corinthians 2.14)

Wow! God is always leading us – as we wait on Him and seek His will and direction. And, moreover, He leads us in triumph through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! If our lives are truly surrendered to Him, and our desire is to do His will, then we are on His side, and we know that He will ALWAYS be victorious! Sometimes this might not appear to be so, but we need to have faith in God that He sees the bigger picture – much, much more than we do – and if we are on His side then we ARE on the side that will be victorious! Praise God that as we "pray always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit" (Ephesians 6.18), we are praying according to the will of God and our prayers WILL be answered, for His glory and for His praise. Thank you Lord!

Finance Update

We are very pleased to be able to bring you this August edition of God has Wholeness as scheduled. provided wonderfully for our current financial needs through the response of faithful donors. We are particularly appreciative of a special Australian reader who sent in \$5000.00. This most generous gift will pay for the current edition and for some of the next. Join with us in praising God for His provision, and in believing for a continued supply of the resources we need. As always, our most important needs are for prayer, items to publish and finance.

HOW TO ORDER

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Cheques in your currency are acceptable, but not Postal Notes. For donations to our KiwiBank account number 3890050310586-00 please include your name in the details space. For N.Z. receipts (tax deductible) a stamped and addressed envelope is appreciated. God bless you all and thank you.

We love to hear from you: testimonies, news, donations, and requests for prayer. Please address all such letters to our editorial office. We also hope that you will interest others in our paper. congregation together and set them to burying the dead and to nursing the sick in that plaguestricken city. At the risk of their lives they saved Carthage from destruction and desolation.

There should be in every Christian an almost reckless courage which is ready to gamble with life itself to serve Christ and to serve men. Do you regard serving Christ as a quiet and agreeable activity that you do to fill in your spare time? Or

do you do those things that are risky, difficult and uncomfortable – but are required by love and compassion? Are you a gambler for God? To be so is to be assured of an inestimable reward.

Today's Bible Verse

Dave Whitehead, Senior Pastor, GraceNYC.org

"I want to know Christ - yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead." (Philippians 3.10,11)

Notice how Paul is describing an amazing tension in knowing Christ: sharing in both his suffering and in his resurrection life. We can't avoid suffering if we really want to know Him. But it doesn't stop there. The suffering we are called to is the pathway to life! Somehow, through one of God's great mysteries, knowing Christ in suffering leads us to power, leads us to resurrection life, leads us to eternal victory over death! O to know Christ!

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"I will be put to death, but three days later I will be raised to life." Matthew 16.21

There were a great many painful steps to take before our Lord could reach that blessed hour and be received up to glory. The immediate future was full of struggle, loss, and pain. On distant heights his eye saw the radiance of heaven, with its opening gates and its glorious welcome home; but before his feet could enter the shining portal there was a broad battle-plain to pass through,

and it was full of enemies. There would be days of toil and nights of loneliness. Then, at last, he must pass through Gethsemane's gloom, and Dolorosa, the way of sorrows, which led to Calvary. He must die and go into the grave. All this before He could be received up into his Father's presence.

But he did not think of any of these painful steps. He did not let his eye rest on the shadows that lay in the valley, but lifted it up to the mountain-top beyond, where the splendours of heaven blazed. Keeping his thoughts on the glories that were to be his when he had ended the journey, he forgot the travails and the tears and fainted not.

This wonderful secret is one that all of us need

"WHOLENESS"

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to learn - to think not so much about the toil and the hardness of the way, but to look beyond to the brightness of the destination - to press on, no matter how rough the road, as long as it brings us home at last. Many of us go worrying through this life, keeping our eyes downcast on the path we are treading. We see all the troubles, the difficulties and the discouragements, failing to raise our eyes to see the joys and the blessings that are waiting for us. We must learn this life-secret which made Christ forget the

shame and the sorrow of his cross and see only the glory beyond. Learn to look up toward heaven! Think of its joys, its blessedness, until earth's trials shall melt away in the brightness, and its griefs and losses are forgotten in the hopes of glory.

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Bob Gass

If our need for a relationship with God is so deep and so constant, why do we fail to pursue it? One reason is we're convinced He remembers all the bad we've done and is quick to judge us for how we're doing now. That's not so. Think of the qualities of a best friend: they accept you and make time for you; you always leave their presence feeling better. What you appreciate in a best friend is exactly what God offers you today. He wants to abide with you even more than you want to abide with Him! "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love." (John 15.9) If we were really abiding in His love we'd come away feeling so cherished that we'd rush back to Him at every opportunity.

The word abiding means to 'be at home' in God's love; to be convinced of your acceptance as a valued member of His family; to be at peace there, to be fed and nurtured by His presence, to feel protected knowing it's the safest place on earth that you'll ever be. Abiding is all about the most important relationship in your life. In abiding you seek, long for, thirst for, wait for, see, know, love, hear and respond to Him. Abiding means having more of Him in your activities, thoughts and desires. Too often in our rush to perform for God we simply fail to enjoy His company. Yet we were created to be incomplete with anything less. That's why David wrote, "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God." (Psalm 42.1) May that be our heart's cry too.

Abiding