

# The Quarterly Journal



THE NEWSLETTER PUBLICATION OF PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH

VOL. 23, NO. 1

JANUARY-MARCH 2003

EDITOR: KEITH A. MORSE

## The Mountain Trek of Christian Living Avoiding Growth-Stunting Detours

by G. Richard Fisher



B.B. Warfield once observed, "It is mere superstition to imagine that only good books sell well."

Every road leads somewhere, even if it is to a dead end. In life it is not just where I have been, but where I am going, how I am going to get there, and what it will be like upon my arrival. Not any old road will do, and so the urgency and practicality of right views of sanctification.

The little-known book, *Preaching on the Life of Christ*, published in 1958, studied Jesus from the standpoint of the mountains in His ministry. From Bethlehem (built on the ridge of a mountain), author W.S. McBennie traces Christ's life to the Mount of Temptation and on to the Mount of Beatitudes. McBennie then goes from the Mount of Beatitudes to the Mount of Transfiguration; from there to the Mount of Olives and Mount Calvary. The book concludes at the Mount of Ascension. This is a great way to encapsulate the highlights of Christology. The mountain theme in Jesus' ministry is a fascinating paradigm for the Christian life.

Four years earlier, a missionary to Mexico, F.J. Huegal published his

*High Peaks in Redemption.* It was dedicated to "All Spiritual Mountain Climbers."<sup>1</sup>

Israel's covenant relationship to God began at a mountain and often Israel's great events and turning points took place on mountains, as in Deuteronomy 27-28 and 1 Kings 18. The Christian life could be viewed from the perspective of a mountain called "sanctification." Caleb's request was, "now therefore give me this mountain" (Joshua 14:12).

There are some religious groups that thrive on strange and unhealthy views of sanctification. The Bible presents the view that sanctification is an ongoing aspect of one's salvation received at conversion. It is an outworking of conversion just as human growth flows from human birth. It is not a separate and distinct work apart from salvation.

Sanctification is a progressive outworking of the grace that is in every believer, as we will see. It is a lifelong (continues on page 15)

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endeavor. Those who seek to go up like rockets often fall like rocks. Once one has righteousness imputed, practical righteousness can be lived out. Perfect righteousness cannot be obtained in this life.

Peter's second epistle calls on Christians to engage actively in growing. Peter does not say grow *into* grace, but rather "grow *in* the grace" (2 Peter 3:18). Enabled by God's grace, we put forth an active cooperation to advance our life of faith. Peter says, "add to your faith" (2 Peter 1:5) and Jude says, "Building yourself up on your most holy faith" (Jude 20). We can grow because we are commanded to, and the Holy Spirit empowers us. God calls us to live a life because He has given us a life to live. Paul urges in Philippians 1:27, "Let your conduct be worthy of the Gospel of Christ."

Views of sanctification that teach some kind of crisis experience or a shortcut to maturity are unhealthy because they do not agree with Scripture and they fly in the face of biblical teaching, common sense, logic, and human experience. These emotional highs and high-pressure pursuits leave people depressed and confused when things return to normal.

### THE WORST IS YET TO COME

Satan may want believers to think they will never be tempted, but Luke 4:13 reminds readers that even Jesus did not have that luxury: "Now when the devil had ended every temptation he departed from Him *until an opportune time*." It is a matter of biblical record that Jesus' greatest trial came at the end of his ministry in Gethsemane and Calvary.

It makes a huge practical difference whether we see sanctification as a crisis experience or an ongoing experience. Crisis-experience teaching (not to be confused with numerous crises that come into each life) is a form of legalism which prescribes that each believer must experience the crisis that the leader or group dictates that he should have.

One analogy after another is given in the Bible comparing spiritual growth with natural growth. The figure of "babes" compared with grown-ups is used repeatedly, as in 1 Corinthians. Growing in grace is a common theme in the epistles. A baby is brought to life. A baby cannot become a grown-up simply by others wishing it or forcing them into adult clothing or adult activities. We are to beware of promoting a novice (1 Timothy 3:6).

There are some who speak of God "operating" on people or God performing "spiritual operations" to "fix" our deeper spiritual problems. This creates an expectancy of quick, complete spiritual fix. The Bible model is not surgery, but growth. Just as natural growth has stages, so does spiritual growth. Natural growth continues in many different ways even through adulthood. Natural growth is a process. It is true also that growth may accelerate or slow at different times, but that is part of the process.

Carol J. Ruvolo reminds us:

"Neither spiritual nor physical strength comes by sudden infusion. Both require patient development. ... Just as physical strength is built up and maintained when a personal trainer guides us through a program of good nutrition, strenuous exercise, and rejuvenating rest, spiritual strength is the product of God's Holy Spirit guiding us through a regimen of Bible intake, obedience to God, and regular prayer. ... Building spiritual strength is, without doubt, an arduous journey — one that will prove overwhelming if we fail to recall that we never travel alone."<sup>2</sup>

### IT JUST ISN'T WORKING!

History convincingly shows how unhealthy it is to seek shortcuts to sanctification. The constant depression of Hannah Whitall Smith, who urged a crisis experience to the higher life, is an example. She never found it.<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Harry Ironside, who sought "entire sanctification," did not find

perfection, but ended up in a convalescent home with nervous exhaustion.<sup>4</sup>

A.B. Simpson, founder of the Christian Missionary Alliance denomination, sought through his entire life for an elusive baptism of entire sanctification and received only a nervous breakdown the year before his death. His constant search for "more" was a deluded dead end.<sup>5</sup>

In what was called the Cane Ridge Revival, the evidence of the "baptism" (a second work of grace or distinct crisis experience after conversion sometimes seen as a second conversion) was spasms, comas, "the jerks," and barking. Detractors called it "barking up a tree."<sup>6</sup>

Well-respected author, J.I. Packer, reports the bondage of his early days as a Christian attempting to "let go and let God" in an effort to bring him to entire sanctification or perfection in this life:

"...the higher Christian life as I was conceiving it is an unreality, a will-o'-the-wisp which no one has ever laid hold of at all, and that those who testify to their experience in these terms really, if unwittingly, distort what has happened to them."<sup>7</sup>

Packer lays bare his confusion and struggle:

"All I knew was that the expected experience was not coming, the technique was not working. And since according to the teaching everything depended on consecration being total, the fault must lie in me. So I must scrape my inside yet again to find whatever maggots of unconsecrated selfhood still lurked there. A few months of this left me, as can be imagined, fairly frantic."<sup>8</sup>

One of the contradictory notions of the kinds of groups mentioned by Packer is their idea that believers have to work harder at surrendering. If we think of that statement, we realize it is a self-defeating activity. Working at surrender or working to surrender is a contradiction.

In his classic tome, *Perfectionism*, B.B. Warfield traces the ups and downs of the so-called higher life/deeper life movement and the checkered careers of its leaders. They taught a second distinct work of grace for complete sanctification. By their lifestyles and admissions they never reached the goal of entire or complete sanctification. The movement that grew out of Wesleyanism is referred to as the Holiness Movement and is only a little more than 200 years old. History shows that it has not worked. The negative results and the constant changes in exactly what is to be sought and how, shows that the paradigm is seriously flawed.

Samuel G. Craig explained the Wesleyan roots of the higher life teaching:

'Perfectionism was first given standing in the Protestant churches through the teaching of John Wesley, although he himself never claimed perfection. ... This meant that there are two types of Christians: those who are only justified and those who are also sanctified. Other factors contributed to giving perfectionism its present vogue — factors which have worked throughout the centuries, such as Pelagianism and Mysticism. But Wesley's influence is perhaps the dominant one among present day Evangelicals.'<sup>9</sup>

Historically, extremist sanctification groups fostered strangeness, instability, and heresy. Benjamin Hardin Irwin, founder of the Fire-Baptized Holiness Church (c. 1900), began teaching three necessary baptisms as a route to perfect holiness. This was dubbed "the dynamite heresy" because of the chemical jargon Irwin used. Eventually Irwin added three more new baptisms making a total of six. Irwin then made it mandatory to adjust one's diet to the Old Testament dietary laws. Then he forbade the wearing of ties.<sup>10</sup>

Unfortunately some of these ideas have been ignorantly promoted because of renderings from 1 John in the King James Version. The verses tell us

that "whoever abides in Him does not sin" (3:6, see also 3:4 and 3:9). John, however, is not contradicting his statement in 1:8, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves." In chapter 3, the underlying Greek text (Textus Receptus and Majority Text) is clear that John is talking about a continuing, unbroken slavery to sin. If one has unbroken habit patterns and continues in sinful practices, both they and others have reason to question the validity of their salvation. Grace must produce some changes in attitudes and behavior.

### TRAPPED IN THE BUILDING

Of course, the teachers of shortcuts to perfection or the higher life, which produces an elite class of supposedly more holy and more separated Christians, will argue that sanctification is an elevator ride and not a mountain climb. They will try to convince you that through some experience you can be delivered back to original righteousness. Not just imputed righteousness, but practical everyday perfection. Elitist groups are often more into appearances than substance or reality. The elevator beckons.

It is their elevator and they dictate which floors their followers must stop at. One floor may be demon deliverance. That floor is a maze with many rooms and many exorcists contradicting one another. It may have a room called "inner healing." Another floor may be called "entire sanctification." There are other floors designated as the higher life floor, the total surrender floor, the various spirit baptisms floor, and the anointing/impartation floor. The names may vary and there may even be one called the "deeper life" floor. But all the floors turn out to be empty and one begins to plead for another floor higher up. The elevator ride never ends and the payoff never happens.

Some people get stuck on a floor and never progress. They comfort themselves by imagining they have arrived at the top. Many get so disoriented they are happy to be taken to floors below just for a change. They become addicted to

riding the elevator and checking for floors that are more exciting. At this stage they become floor addicts and floor junkies. Their spiritual life has been "floored."

### BE YE UNHOLY?

Often PFO is accused of not believing in certain things because it critiques and rejects certain extremes. PFO, however, totally and without hesitation, endorses biblically balanced books like *The Practice of Godliness* and *The Pursuit of Holiness*. The titles alone say it all.

The issue is not whether PFO believes in sanctification and holiness, but the proper route there. We must be sure we define and understand these subjects in a balanced and biblical way. We must also understand that sanctification has an impact on the rest of the believer's life. Salvation is the arrival point for the beginning of a lifelong journey with Christ, with ups and downs, and with a Savior who never leaves or forsakes.

### PAUL — ELEVATOR MAN OR MOUNTAIN MAN?

To answer the question, "How do I get there?" we turn to the Apostle Paul and his letter to the church at Philippi. Frequently, an experienced tour guide in Israel will refer to the importance of location and time. Applying that to Paul's epistle to the Philippians, we note that the book's location is in a grouping of letters referred to as "prison epistles." That location tells us that it was written from a Roman jail making it one of the last that Paul penned.

The location points to important issues of time. Paul was at the end of his career. He is now a senior citizen and has been on the road of the Christian life for many years. Out of his mature wisdom and divine inspiration, he tells us the secret of sanctification.

The Bible clearly recognizes three distinct aspects of our salvation. The first aspect is *positional sanctification*. The root meaning of sanctification is "to be set apart" or "separated." The Greek noun is *hagiosmos*. In salvation

we are set apart as members of God's family. It is a position not earned, but given through our union with Christ. This, according to Hebrews 10:14, is once for all. Regeneration then saves us from the *penalty* of sin and we have a positional sanctification.

At the other end is a *perfect sanctification* that occurs at the Second Coming of Christ, according to 1 Thessalonians 5:23, when we are glorified and saved completely from the *presence* of sin. Then we will be sanctified body, soul, and spirit, as is clear from the verse.

Between those two "book ends" is what can be called *progressive sanctification*, that is, being set apart more and more to Christlikeness and godly living. In progressive sanctification we are being delivered from the *power* of sin. It is on that battlefield that the crucial question of *how* takes on such enormous significance. One can either get stalled in a deluded sense of subjective perfection or continue to grow in grace.

Putting together scriptural details we can arrive at a practical working definition of progressive sanctification that will reflect biblical truth and be workable in application.

Dr. Jay Adams, a former professor of Practical Theology and the father of the *nouthetic* counseling movement, weighs in and says that "Sanctification (personality change toward holiness) is the work of the Spirit through His Word."<sup>11</sup> Adams further establishes that "Change is of the essence to his sanctification. ... Sanctification requires the daily crucifixion of one's own desires."<sup>12</sup>

The commands (found in Ephesians 4:22-32) to put off evil behaviors and put on godly reactions and responses clearly support Adams' views of sanctification as continuing character, change, and growth, motivated and energized by the Holy Spirit and grace, in accordance with the Scriptures. Colossians 3 supports it overwhelmingly. It is *change* that God wants. Adams also says that "we are not merely human *beings* but also human *becomings*" and that "such change is difficult."<sup>13</sup>

Now back to Paul. He has planted churches, won souls, worked miracles, and even penned Scripture. Surely this man can now take his ease. He is in jail, sidelined with only his leisure. His life has been packed with great achievements. He deserves a rest.

Paul, however, does not tell the Philippians he is finished and they can now pick up where he left off but rather, "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended (Greek: *katalambano* — attained or completely laid hold of); but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:12-14).

Paul says he is still progressing, still growing, still being sanctified, still moving upward and onward. The idea of pressing here is a picture of a man covering his face from wind and rain and straining with each step to move forward against the storm and make progress. Paul wanted to keep going and growing. He knew that his sanctification was progressive and would only be perfected in glorification by Christ.

Marvin Vincent writes that "reaching forth" in verse 14 is a metaphor "of the footrace."<sup>14</sup> Racers run for the goal and stay in until the race is finished. They do not pretend and try to convince the fans that they have arrived at the goal until they have gotten there.

Paul then continues in verse 15 to describe the mark of the mature man. He says the mature (Greek: *teleioi*) Christian will have the same mind as he himself does in wanting always to press forward.

As we look at sanctification, there are two major points that need stressing:

First, *the journey is a daily, progressive, lifelong struggle*. Philippians 2:12

reminds us to "work out your own salvation." We cannot work out what we don't have in us. Salvation is a prerequisite for this work. If we have salvation we can "work it out" through our life, our good deeds, and our testimony because God is working in us "both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (v. 13). God works in us so that we can work out the issues of our growth in cooperation with Him.

## TRUE OF FALSE?

In our honest moments we all have to admit that we have not loved perfectly or lived perfectly and always have a long way to go. But are we willing to "press on"? The issue is not perfection, but direction. Though sin may still be *resident*, we do not have to let it become *president*.

Some teachers will argue that we need their experience to do it well or do it better, but Christians already have what we need. Ephesians 1:3 tells us that God "has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."

Ephesians 5:18 speaks to us of our need of the Spirit's filling. Kenneth Wuest properly translates Paul's command as "be constantly controlled by the Spirit."<sup>15</sup> This verse alone proves there is never an arrival point short of heaven. The Holy Spirit must fill each believer repeatedly. As someone has humorously observed, "We leak."

No believer prays as much as he should. We often let other things take our time and attention. God's mercies are new every morning because we need new starts and renewed determination every day.

F.J. Huegal wrote:

"There must be a constant returning to our Centre for an ever deeper appropriation of the spiritual forces generated on Calvary. Our growing in grace necessitates an ever repeated and ever deeper nailing of the 'self-life' to Christ's Cross (Gal. 5:24)."<sup>16</sup>

In his book, *Counterfeit Miracles*, B.B. Warfield wrote:

"We are no longer under the curse of sin. But we remain sinners. The struggle against indwelling sin, and therefore indwelling sin to struggle against, continues through life."<sup>17</sup>

In notes on counseling distributed by Dr. Dan Skogan we read about the false "Systems of change that ignore that the sanctification process requires a great expenditure of effort, expects (in place of effort) an infusion, 'zap', or some instantaneous magical change. This superstitious thinking will lead the believer to frustration and possibly to doubt the authenticity of biblical Christianity."<sup>18</sup>

### HERE'S HOW IT WORKS — OR DOESN'T

This writer came to Christ at age 21. The immediate challenge before me was to begin to live as a single young man in purity and godliness. I knew I had a lot to learn about the Bible and about my new station in life. I knew I had God's grace, God's Spirit to equip me, and God's Word to direct me. Knowing I was not a robot, I knew that God was asking me for a demonstration of my love to Him in my daily choices. I knew also that I was commanded to "exercise" myself "unto godliness" and flee "youthful lusts." Where I was selfish and anti-social, I had to begin to learn and practice loving others sincerely.

I began to get some of that down and then God changed the assignment. I returned to college to begin studies for ministry. Now a new area of sanctification opened up. The stewardship of time and life on a college campus left me wondering, "How do I do all this?" Doing my best in studies was a challenge. I began to realize that the terrain in life would constantly change and God would move me on to new areas and levels of sanctification and never let me think I had arrived in my spiritual growth.

The old jingle, "first comes love, then comes marriage, then along comes a baby carriage," may be passé to this generation and they may

reverse the order, but there was a day I said "I do" and a new theater of sanctification was given to me. Now there were two people capable of sinning and selfishness in the same household.

How does one now learn to be a godly husband? How does the Bible apply to all of that? I had to get busy with Bible studies in that area and read some helpful Christian books. I knew I had a lot to learn. I am still learning about marriage as we both change through life. Now I was juggling a marriage, a full-time job, and night school, wanting to handle them all as a Christian should.

I was hardly getting some of the basics of marriage under my belt and we got pregnant. My beautiful bride turned into a ball of mush with not just morning sickness, but all-day sickness — and for months! I felt like saying, "Please, Lord, slow down — I haven't even gotten the husband thing down yet and now I am going to be a father." At times, I was carnal and had to ask God's forgiveness when periods of self pity overtook me and I thought more of myself than I did of my wife. After all, we men need our meals on the table after working all day, as the litany goes. Upon reflection, I know it was much harder for my wife than for me, but as sinners we tend to see only our side of things. God kept reminding me that when I thought I was in the high school of sanctification, in some ways I was still in kindergarten and even preschool. I kept adding "balls" to my juggling routine and I wanted to be a Christian "juggler."

I struggled to learn the father things, first for God and then my son. The ride accelerated with the arrival of our second child — a daughter. I had just started to get somewhat consistent as a father to a boy, but now a girl? How do you do that? How does that all work? I had never done that before. I really believed that the two children would always get along. After all, they would be living in a Christian home; not realizing I would have to learn to be a Christian referee.

The struggles in sanctification show cracks in one's life when it comes to disciplining children consistently and especially if the husband and wife have differing views and philosophies on the topic of child rearing. But then a third child comes along and the fun is only just starting.

Added to that is the fact that I was by then in full time ministry with a church full of people expecting the PKs to be angelic and perfect at all times. They may have believed that a parsonage atmosphere sanctifies the children by osmosis. Just as Ezekiel's wheels, there are sanctification cycles within cycles.

Then comes the pious college and career guy who informs you that he has come into entire sanctification and a second work of grace and wants to share this new revelation with the whole church. Somehow I, as pastor, had missed it. You want to tell him to get a job and a wife because he has too much time on his hands, but you struggle to treat him with grace and teach him. By this time, I began to realize that only prayer and dependence on God will give one the wherewithal to deal with people "from other planets." Sanctification applies to all of that, too.

Then conflict arises in the church. People let others down. People sin grossly. Matthew 18 discipline cases are grueling and sometimes mind bending, bringing strain on a whole congregation. Progressing through the steps with grace puts a huge strain on the sanctification process. One might even find that what was thought to be the music department has now become the war department.

Just when the household appears to be under control, with family devotions every day, church services together, homework being completed, and consistent bedtimes, the thought occurs: "Wow, I have this sanctification pretty well in hand." Then it happens.

### THIS I NEVER EXPECTED

The teen years hit and the *Dirty Ds* appear: dating, driving, discipline, and a lot of "discussions." Discussion

may be an overstatement because some 13-year-olds only grunt as a major, with eye rolling as a minor. More and more the kids are teaching about limits, vulnerabilities, and the desperate need for daily grace. Spanking isn't even an option anymore; they're too big. The cry goes out: "I need thee every hour, most gracious Lord."

Then there is sanctification for college searches and prayer for college finances. As the old carnival barker used to say, "'Round and 'round it goes, and where it stops nobody knows.' There must be grace sought for sanctification for the grueling, stressful, inevitable weddings.

Then comes the empty nest. Some agonize and grieve while others sing, "Free at last, free at last, thank God Almighty, I am free at last." No matter, the "best" is yet to come. There is sanctification to be a good Christian in-law, not an out-law. Then, as time rolls on, grandchildren come along and there is new territory to conquer as we struggle with how to be good grandparents. It goes on and on. Some have their hearts ripped out with children divorcing or going off the deep end as an adult.

Health breaks and one must revisit Job and 1 Peter to learn how to suffer well and not give in to bitterness, self pity, or depression. God opens a whole new world of sanctification called "growing old gracefully." I have not met many who mastered that course. Some old folk who tell me they are so close to God are the grumpiest people I know. They have learned their delusions well, but not biblical sanctification.

Then there are the schedule challenges of just keeping the doctors appointments straight and the struggles of how much medicine one needs and takes. There is the dilemma of allowing oneself to have bad days and still push on treating others well, even though not feeling well.

## ON AND ON

In and through it all is the need to deal with our attitudes and our thought life. That in itself is another

world of endeavor as we seek God's grace daily for a renewed mind. There will be repeated times when we will have to revert to 1 John 1:9 and Psalm 51 as we repent and confess our sins.

The following is so true.

*What a difference 40 years can make (from 1963-2003):*

- From long hair to longing for hair
- From Doublemint to liniment
- From Rolling Stones to kidney stones
- From trying to look like Elizabeth Taylor and Marlon Brando to trying *not* to look like Taylor and Brando

*What a difference 40 years can make.*

## WRINKLED BUT NOT RUINED

More and more, books like Jay Adams' *Wrinkled But Not Ruined* become a constant companion. One may continue to learn and apply sanctification to hospital stays. Failing eyesight may even dim one's vision of that blessed hope if self-absorption sets in.

Adams speaks of the devastation that shortcuts to sanctification bring, especially to the elderly:

"According to this quietistic doctrine, the 'cloud nine' experience may be attained by 'yielding,' or 'letting go and letting God,' or something equivalent. ... Those who hold to the instantaneous sanctification doctrine can only despair after a time. After all, in old age there are enough trials (physical and otherwise) to bring out the fact that there is much sin remaining in a believer, and that he has by no means achieved perfection — or even 'life on a higher plane' than other Christians. Only if he is blinded to reality, is extremely egotistical, or avoids introspection altogether could he ever conclude that he has reached 'cloud nine.' In addition, the realization that for years he has failed to reach the goal of entire sanctification, and now that his life is drawing to a close

he still has not 'yielded all,' can only bring about discouragement and confusion. If he doesn't conclude that he is yet unsaved, he is most likely to think that he must strive harder to strive less!"<sup>19</sup>

Then friends die and one must get grace to let go and live with loss. If a spouse dies, how does one plan a funeral to the glory of God? We find ourselves again and again in the school of grace at the feet of Christ pleading for help and renewed strength, reminding ourselves that He restores our souls. We find ourselves, as some in my church, searching the Bible for those unexplored and undiscovered passages on how much God loves the widow and becomes a husband to them. Does it ever end?

It is wonderful to know that God provides dying grace. We may not die with dignity, but we can die knowing He holds our hand. How much dying grace will we demonstrate? The sanctification process will be at work even on our deathbed, which will only be a platform to launch us into complete and perfect sanctification forever.

Through it all, what has really mattered is consistency in daily devotions, consistency in church, worship and fellowship, and the knowledge of not what we have accumulated, but what we have *been* as the legacy for our children.

Progressive sanctification goes on and on through all the seasons of life. It does end — but not here — not in this life. As has been stated, the sanctification process is a journey that is a lifelong, daily struggle. It is a mountain climb. On that mountain, Christ is always with us and we are never alone. God just keeps moving us up the mountain. Even if we get stuck at certain spots, He nudges us on. Our confidence and joy is that at the top of the mountain is heaven, heaven at last. So the end is really only the beginning. We are only on the mountain by the grace of God and it is God's mountain, therefore we rejoice.

This now brings us to our second major point of sanctification that

needs stressing: *Though the journey is a daily, progressive, lifelong struggle, we are assured that the journey has all the resources from God that we will ever need.*

The Apostle Paul has already spoken of these resources: "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:2). He reminds us of the "inheritance" (Colossians 1:12). We have great resources.

In John 16:33, Jesus reminds us that, "In the world you will have tribulations; but be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world." Paul was reminded in the midst of his struggles with his "thorn in the flesh" that God's grace was sufficient (2 Corinthians 12:9). Isaiah reminds us that "they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength" (Isaiah 40:31). Yes, we have great resources from God.

Philippians 4:13 bolsters us and boosts us as we hear, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." What more can be said than, "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

Charles Spurgeon's powerful words are a great impetus for godly living and advancement in progressive sanctification:

"Not only has Christ travelled the road, but He has slain thine enemies. Dost thou dread sin? He has nailed it to His cross. Dost thou fear death? He has been the death of Death. Art thou afraid of hell? He has barred it against the advent of any of His children; they shall never see the gulf of perdition. Whatever foes may be before the Christian, they are all overcome. There are lions, but their teeth are broken; there are serpents, but their fangs are extracted; there are rivers, but they are bridged or fordable; there are flames, but we wear that matchless garment which renders them invulnerable to fire."<sup>20</sup>

Spurgeon continues:

"The sword that has been forged against us is already blunted; the instruments of war which the enemy is preparing have already lost their point. God has taken away in the person of Christ all the power that anything can have to hurt us. Well then, the army may safely march on, and you may go joyously along your journey, for all your enemies are conquered beforehand. What shall you do but march on to take the prey? They are beaten, they are vanquished; all you have to do is to divide the spoil. You shall, it is true, often engage in combat; but your fight shall be with a vanquished foe. His head is broken; he may attempt to injure you, but his strength shall not be sufficient for his malicious design."<sup>21</sup>

Annie Johnson Flint (1866-1932) was a lifelong sufferer of rheumatoid arthritis. In spite of that, she progressed because she understood her need of grace. She also understood the availability and unfailing nature of grace. She wrote the hymn, "He Giveth More Grace." In this beloved composition she described that true resources come from God:

"He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater; He sendeth more strength when the labors increase. To added affliction He addeth His mercy; to multiplied trials His multiplied peace. ... When we have exhausted our store of endurance, When our strength has failed ere the day is half done, when we reach the end of our hoarded resources, Our Father's full giving is only begun. His love has no limit; His grace has no measure. His power has no boundary known unto men. For out of His infinite riches in Jesus, He giveth and giveth and giveth again."<sup>22</sup>

#### Endnotes:

1. F.J. Huegal, *High Peaks in Redemption*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publish-

- ing House, 1954, Dedication page.
2. Carol J. Ruvolo, *A Believer's Guide to Spiritual Fitness*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 2000, pp. 18-19.
3. See further, G. Richard Fisher, "The Secret of a Christian Classic — The Unhappy Life of Hannah Whitall Smith," *The Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 17, No. 1. Also see, Marie Henry, *The Secret Life of Hannah Whitall Smith*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Chosen Books, 1984.
4. See further, Harry Ironside, *Holiness: The False and The True*. Neptune, N.J.: Loizeaux Brothers, 1912.
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