

HE MAKES ALL THINGS NEW

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A pastor asked an older farmer, decked out in bib overalls, to say grace for the morning breakfast. "Lord, I hate buttermilk," the farmer began. The visiting pastor opened one eye to glance at the farmer and wonder where this was going. The farmer loudly proclaimed, "Lord, I hate lard." Now the pastor was growing concerned. Without missing a beat, the farmer continued, "And Lord, you know I don't much care for raw white flour." The pastor once again opened an eye to glance around the room and saw that he wasn't the only one to feel uncomfortable.

Then the farmer added, "But Lord, when you mix them all together and bake them, I do love warm fresh biscuits. So, Lord, when things come up that we don't like, when life gets hard, when we don't understand what you're saying to us, help us to just relax and wait until you are done mixing. It will probably be even better than biscuits. Amen."

Within that prayer there is great wisdom for all when it comes to complicated situations like we are experiencing in the world today. Stay strong, my friends, because our LORD is mixing several things that we don't really care for, but something better is going to come when HE is done with it.

This was sent to me from my friend, Travis Adamo, formerly incarcerated, currently living in Miami, Florida.

Greetings to you all in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. After reading the piece that Travis sent me, I was reminded of a sermon I had heard recently. Having been invited numerous times, by a man who had been instrumental in my life while I was incarcerated, Mary and I visited his church. I love visiting churches and people who were instrumental in my life during my 20 years of incarceration. There's a story in the scriptures where Jesus healed ten lepers. Only one went back to say thank you. I love being that one who goes back to say thank you.

The pastor preached out of Jeremiah 24:1-10. The teaching in this passage is that the children of Judah had been sent into captivity. God presents the fact that it was His doings. He had sent them into captivity because of their sin and rebellion. He also made it clear that it was **for their good**. You can find that in verse five. I had these verses underlined in my Bible. They had spoken to me many years

ago as I began to understand the correction I was receiving, for my sin and rebellion, would be for my good. God had a purpose, a plan, a design for a particular outcome. That outcome was that I would turn to Him with all my heart. You can see that in verse seven.

One of the things we need to see here in verse one is the fact that the Lord showed Jeremiah something and Jeremiah recognized that it was from the Lord. He had Jeremiah look at two baskets of figs. I'm sure that as Jeremiah looked at these two baskets of figs he could have said, "So what, I've seen plenty of figs, eaten a few, who cares!!!" But God had a message in these baskets of figs. There are too many times God speaks to us, He shows us something, He pricks our hearts and we just ignore it. But, if we'll listen, I am thankful that God often uses the natural to teach us a spiritual lesson. There was a basket of good figs, ripe figs, and they were called very good and there was a basket of bad figs that could not be eaten. God compared the good figs to the people that had gone into captivity.

One commentator said, "Their captivity should help to ripen them." In other words, what God was intending to do in their lives, as He set His eyes upon them for good – to build them and to plant them and give them a heart to know Him – would produce the maturity, the ripeness, the softness, and sweetness He was looking for in them.

I discovered something about figs I did not know but found very interesting. According to some of the research I did, unlike oranges and other fruits that continue the ripening process after being picked off the tree before they are ripe, if you pluck a fig from the tree while it's still green the ripening process stops. Now we know why God used figs in this story instead of some other fruit. Oh, the process!

Matthew Henry, concerning the phrase, *And I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord...* said, "those who went into captivity would become acquainted with Him in a higher degree, and to a better purpose, than formerly; and would learn more of Him by His providences and grace in Babylon than they had learned by His oracles and ordinances in Jerusalem." What a statement!! I know this to be true in my own experience. Henry went on to add, "they shall be so thoroughly

changed in heart and life that they shall make my will their rule, and my glory their end, in all their intentions, affections, and actions, and my service their chief and most delightful business from day to day, for they that have a heart to know God aright will not only turn to him, but turn with their whole heart: while those who are either lukewarm in their services, or formal and hypocritical in their religion, may be truly said to be unacquainted with him.”

Matthew continues, “It was *for good* that God sent the captive portion of his people *into the land of the Chaldeans* (vs. 5) The germs of the better life of the future were preserved in them, and their very tribulations were the instruments of his gracious purpose and blessings in disguise.”

I don’t know what all is being mixed into your life today maybe pain, trouble, disappointment, a trial, a failure, a loss or maybe correction you’re having to endure. Whatever the situation or circumstance is, I know that God wants us to turn to Him with our whole heart. And when the mixing has stopped and we get through to the other side of the situation or circumstance, His desire is that we have become truly acquainted with Him and have a very deep, intimate, personal relationship with Him. He loves you. He cares for you.

So, until the mixing has stopped and the biscuits are out of the oven; until the ripening process is complete (and the figs have maybe been used to make some good ole Daddy Ray’s fig bars), as my pastor would always remind me, while I was still incarcerated, “God has a plan, keep trusting His plan.”

Howard Isom

FRIENDSHIP

I’m reading a book entitled *The Making of a Man of God*, written by Alan Redpath. He has a chapter in his book with the heading *Souls in Harmony*, based on the friendship of David and Jonathan. You can find the details of their friendship from verses scattered throughout chapter 18 of 1 Samuel through 2 Samuel chapter 1. I want to focus on the second half of verse one of 1 Samuel 18 which reads...*the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul* (KJV). Some have translated this as the following; *Jonathan was bound to David in close friendship; Jonathan’s life became bound up with David’s life; Jonathan thought of David as much as he did himself; Jonathan bonded with David; Jonathan committed himself to David, developed a*

strong friendship with, and became a good and close friend; and I like this one, the soul of Jonathan was glued together to the soul of David, that is, they were joined together by the glue of love, that may not be broken and Jonathan loved him as much as he loved his own life.

Redpath talks about the influence of the strengthening hand of a God-given friend. “What encouragement and help such a friend can bring to a man or woman whom God is shaping and fashioning after His own likeness! The love of a friend, like Jonathan’s for David is but a very pale reflection of the love of Christ for us. I would pause to say that it is God’s plan for souls to be knit together thus. In such a friendship the great purpose of God in making us one in the body of Christ is fulfilled, for the Lord Jesus prayed, ‘*That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us*’ (John 17:21).”

I like the phrase “a God-given friend” that Redpath uses. Friends and friendships certainly are gifts from God. C.S. Lewis wrote in his book *The Four Loves*, “In friendship...we think we have chosen our peers. In reality a few years’ difference in the dates of our births, a few more miles between certain houses, the choice of one university instead of another...the accident of a topic being raised or not raised at a first meeting...any of these chances might have kept us apart. But, for a Christian, there are, strictly speaking, no chances. A secret master of ceremonies has been at work. Christ, who said to the disciples, ‘*Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you,*’ can truly say to every group of Christian friends, ‘*Ye have not chosen one another but I have chosen you for one another.*’ The friendship is not a reward for our discriminating and good taste in finding one another out. It is the instrument by which God reveals to each of us the beauties of others.” Isn’t it true that few things in life are more important than having some really good friends?

Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “I didn’t find my friends; the good Lord gave them to me.” He once called his friends, “the masterpiece of nature.” He went on to say, “The glory of friendship is not the outstretched hand, not the kindly smile, nor the joy of companionship; it is the spiritual inspiration that comes to you when you discover that someone else believes in you and is willing to trust you with a friendship.”

O, how I praise God for the gift of friendship! A friend is one that knows most everything about you

and still loves you. Our friends believe in us, see the good in us, and focus on trying to bring out the best in us. They are faithful, loyal, steadfast, kind, caring, affectionate, and inspiring people who share their hearts, their laughter, their tears, and their faith with us.

They're not just with us when we soar and are doing our best they're also with us when we crash and burn. A real friend is one who walks in when the rest of the world walks out. They are with us even in our messes. They become part of the fabric of our lives and just have a way of sticking with us even after they're gone.

I am so thankful that God has given me some very good friends down through the years. Some I met before going to prison and some I met during my twenty-year incarceration. Some I met after coming home from prison. I want to share a little bit about one of those who became my friend after my release.

She was my wife's cousin and one of her very closest friends, Mary Henderson. I met Mary just a couple hours after my release in 2021. She accepted me, embraced me, and loved me, and we quickly developed that bond of friendship. She had been such a great friend and help to my wife during some very trying times.

We visited her many times since the first day I met her. We shared many meals together. She came on several occasions to hear me speak when I was speaking nearby. One thing I discovered quickly about Mary was that she loved her family. She loved people. She was always volunteering to help somewhere. She would ride for hours up and down the road to watch her grandchildren participate in some sporting event or some other event. You could always count on her to be there when you needed her.

When Mary didn't show up the night before where she was volunteering to sit with foster children nor the following morning when she was supposed to walk with several of her friends, a wellness check was made and they found Mary sitting in her recliner with her feet up, a bowl of soup on the table beside her. Mary had passed away at the age of 80.

Mary's memorial service was held the following Sunday. The church was packed. As the minister began to speak about Mary and the life she lived, we were informed that the church had already planned on honoring her that Sunday. It was shared with us about how Mary had so selflessly, and often

behind the scenes without wanting any recognition, been so involved in serving others and the difference she had made to so many in the church and the community. The minister then presented the plaque that was made for Mary to her two sons. It was a very touching moment.

Before singing a song Mary had chosen beforehand to be sung at her Memorial Service, the singer said, "Mary's theology was simple, Love people like Jesus did." He then proceeded to sing the words, *Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so... yes, Jesus loves me, yes, Jesus loves me, for the Bible tells me so.*

I sat there in awe as I pondered on the service and how incredible Mary was. She was more incredible than I had realized. Mary will be missed greatly because she and her friendship were a gift from God – the kind of friend to so many, the real deal, that true friend like Jonathan was to David. Her love was the glue that helped hold so many lives together. Mary ran and finished her race well! She gets to look into the face of Jesus and hear the words from His lips, Well Done!!

Howard Isom

IT WILL BE WORTH IT ALL

In the newsletter for November 2023 an article was written by Alan Redpath, "*Conformed to the Image of God.*" Mr. Redpath used the phrase "Indeed it will be worth it all when we see Jesus." The phrase took me back in time to when my earthly father passed away. Before his passing he and my Mom were at a funeral service where a song was sung by a friend of the family. It was very inspirational to Dad and Mom and the lyrics meant very much to them. My Dad asked the young man who sang the song if he would be willing to sing it at his funeral. The man was very happy to do so, as he thought a lot of my parents.

As the young man had promised my Dad, he sang the song at his funeral service. The song and the lyrics blessed my family immensely especially knowing my Dad was seeing and living with his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This song was written by Bill Gaither titled *It Will be Worth it All.*

There's a promised land made for all the free,
When our race on earth is run
Where no broken dreams will mar our memory,
It will be worth it all when we get home.
There no sad farewells, there no tear stained eyes,
There no heartache, grief or woe

There no shattered hopes, will ever cloud the skies.
It will be worth it all when we get home Chorus;
It will be worth it all, just to see his face,
When he claims us for his own
Then ten million years to sing amazing grace.
It will be worth it all when we get home.

In Christ's Love, Mike Campbell

A CHRISTMAS PRAYER ANSWERED

When it comes to the Christmas holiday, I am such a big kid. I love Christmas and Christmas is my favorite holiday. I love the holiday so much, for me Christmas starts December 1st and ends December 25th. I get the most out of my favorite holiday, and the days leading up to Christmas; I find a way to do something special, kind, and generous for other people. Recognizing God's creation with something tangible is one of the ways I share the love of Christ. I am a giver by nature (so to speak) and it makes me feel alive inside when I know I am making a difference in the lives of others.

During this past Christmas holiday, it was in my heart to do something special for this one particular organization. However, I did not have the resources to manifest my heart's desire, so I prayed and asked God if He would make a way without me having to ask anyone. I prayed for a specific amount of money, and I convinced myself that I would rely on God to make provisions, that is, according to my timetable, --- I wanted to accomplish my mission before Christmas. Well, a week went by without receiving any cash from anybody, so I revisited my talk with God. "Dear heavenly father, I know you know what's best, and do not move according to my timetable, but I really wanted to lend a helping hand to this organization, but you did not make a way for me to receive the resources I requested." Those were not the exact words of my prayer, but the gist of my prayer was along those lines.

Maybe a few days later, I decided to make a phone call. I tried to reach out to at least four family members, but only to no avail --- no one picked up the phone. I decided to call my sister. My sister answered the phone the very first ring, and when we got through to each other, she sounded so lifted in spirit. After inquiring about my overall well-being, she asked me "do you remember Cory from Grant projects?" I responded, "no." She then went on to say, "Well, I ran into him the other day (Thursday) and he asked about you. He did not know about your situation, so I told him that you were locked up," When my sister informed Cory about my

situation, she said he immediately went inside his pocket and gave her some money for me. What is so amazing about Cory's willingness to lend a helping hand is he gave my sister the exact amount of money I prayed to God for a week prior. What is ironic about the whole ordeal is: 1) I have not heard from Cory in over 30 years --- to be honest, I actually forgot about him. 2) Unbeknownst to me, the very week I prayed to God for His help, He made provisions, but I had absolutely no idea until I decided to reach out to my sister a week later.

By the grace of God, I was able to do what I wanted to do with the resources Cory provided. I am a grateful recipient and I thank God for making a way so speedily. We serve such an on time and awesome God. He is so good and worthy of all praise.

Cooper, Currently Incarcerated

PLEASE NOTE

We sincerely apologize but, due to time restraints, we will not be sending out a March Newsletter. Be watching for the April edition.

We are now offering the Newsletter via email. If you prefer to receive it by email rather than regular mail, please send your name and email address to mercy@hemakesallthingsnewministry.com

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