

THE RED THREAD

WHEN GOD DREAMED

THE GIFT OF SALVATION

Acknowledge to yourself and to God that you have sinned (Romans 3:23).

In sorrow for your sins, turn from them to God and ask His forgiveness (Isaiah 55:7).

By faith receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, believing that He died in your place on the cross (John 3:16).

BETWEEN TIMES

PSALM 18
BIBLE STUDY

Day 1—
Psalm 18

Day 2—
vv. 1-3

Day 3—
vv. 3-6

Day 4—
vv. 7-15

Day 5—
vv. 16-19

Day 6—
vv. 20-24

Day 7—
vv. 24-30

Day 8—
vv. 31-45

Day 9—
vv. 46-50

Day 10—
2 Samuel 22

WHY & HOW

THE RED THREAD exists to be an encouragement to the men and women currently separated from family and friends in correctional institutions. It is published on 2nd and 4th Wednesdays by **Crimson House Ministries** at 1616 North Robberson, Springfield, Missouri, 65803. Please send all correspondence to that address. Subscription information is available online at: <http://readingroom.crimsonhouseministries.org/>

Seated at the great desk, the Author opens the large book. It has no words. It has no words because no words exist. No words exist because no words are needed. There are no ears to hear them, no eyes to read them. The Author is alone.

And so He takes the great pen and begins to write. Like an artist gathers his colors and a woodcarver his tools, the Author assembles His words. There are three—three single words. Out of these three will pour a million thoughts. But on these three words the story will suspend.

He takes His quill and spells the first: T-I-M-E.

Time did not exist until He wrote it. He, Himself, is timeless, but His story would be incased in time. The story would have a first rising of the sun, a first shifting of the sand. A beginning...and an end. A final chapter. He knows it before He writes it.

Time: A footspan on eternity's trail. Slowly, tenderly, the Author writes the second word. A name: A-D-A-M. As He writes, He sees him, the first Adam. Then he sees all the others. In a thousand eras in a thousand lands, the Author sees them. Each Adam. Each child. Instantly loved. Permanently loved. TO each He assigns a time. To each He appoints a place. No accidents. No coincidences. Just design.

The Author makes a promise to these unborn. In my image, I will make you. You will be like me. You will laugh. You will create. You will never die. And you will write. You must. For each life is a book, not to be read, but rather a story to be written. The Author starts each life story, but each life will write his or her own ending.

What a dangerous liberty. How much safer it would have been to finish the story for Adam. To script

every option. It would have been simpler. It would have been safer. But it would have not been love. Love is love only if chosen.

So the Author decides to give each child a pen. "Write carefully," He whispers.

Lovingly, deliberately, He writes the third word, already feeling the Pain: E - M - M - A - N - U - E - L .

The greatest Mind in the universe imagined time. The truest Judge granted Adam a choice. But it was Love that gave Emmanuel—God with us.

The Author would enter His own story.

The Word would become flesh. He, too, would be born. He, too, would be human. He, too, would have

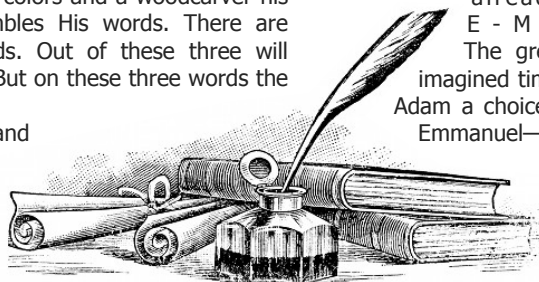
hands and feet. He, too, would have tears and trials. And most importantly, He, too, would have a choice. Emmanuel would stand at the crossroads of life and death and make a choice.

The Author knows well the weight of that decision. He pauses as He writes the page of His own pain. He could stop. Even the Author has a choice. But how can a Creator not create? How can a Writer not write? And how can Love not love? So He chooses life, though it means death, with hope that His children will do the same.

And so the Author of life completes the story. He drives the spike in the flesh and rolls the stone over the grave. Knowing the choice He will make, knowing the choice all the Adams will make, He pens, "The End," then closes the book and proclaims the beginning.

"Let there be light."

—Author Unknown



THEY HAD BEEN WITH JESUS

AN EXCERPT FROM A MESSAGE BY CHARLES SPURGEON

"...And they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13).

A Christian should be a striking likeness of Jesus Christ. You have read lives of Christ, beautifully and eloquently written, but the best life of Christ is His living biography, written out in the words and actions of His people. If we were what we profess to be, and what we should be, we should be pictures of Christ; yea, such striking likenesses of Him, that the world would not have to hold us up by the hour together and say, "Well, it seems somewhat of a likeness"; but they would, when they once beheld us, exclaim, "He has been with Jesus; he has been taught of Him; he is like Him; he has caught the very idea of the holy Man of Nazareth, and he works it out in his life and everyday actions."

A Christian should be like Christ in his boldness. Never blush to own your religion; your profession will

never disgrace you: take care you never disgrace that. Be like Jesus, very valiant for your God.

Imitate Him in your loving spirit; think kindly, speak kindly, do kindly, that men may say of you, "He has been with Jesus." Imitate Jesus in His holiness. Was He zealous for His Master? So be you; ever go about doing good.

Let not time be wasted: it is too precious. Was He self-denying, never looking to His own interest? Be the same. Was He devout? Be you fervent in your prayers.

Had He deference to His Father's will? So submit yourselves to Him. Was He patient? So learn to endure. And best of all, as the highest portraiture of Jesus, try to forgive your enemies, as He did; and let those sublime words of your Master, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," always ring in your ears.

Forgive, as you hope to be forgiven. Heap coals of fire on the head of your foe by your kindness to him. Good or evil, recollect, is godlike. Be godlike, then; and in all ways and by all means, so live that all may say of you, "He has been with Jesus."



LET'S HEAR FROM YOU...!

We love hearing from you and so do our readers. Please send your articles, poems, praise reports, testimonies, etc., to *The Red Thread, Crimson House Ministries, 1616 North Robberson, Springfield, MO, 65803.*

WHEN I SAY, "I AM A CHRISTIAN"

When I say, "I am a Christian," I'm not shouting, "I am saved!" I'm whispering, "I got lost." "That is why I chose this way."

When I say, "I am a Christian," I'm not claiming that I'm perfect; My flaws are too visible, But God believes I'm worth it.

When I say, "I am a Christian," I don't speak of this with pride. I'm confessing that I stumble and need someone to be my guide.

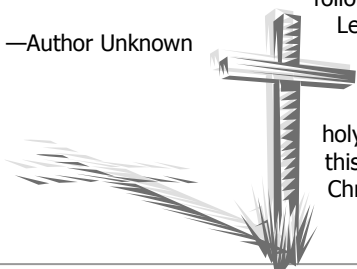
When I say, "I am a Christian," I still feel the sting of pain. I have my share of heartaches, Which is why I seek His name.

When I say, "I am a Christian," I'm not trying to be strong. I'm professing that I'm weak and pray for strength to carry on.

When I say, "I am a Christian," I do not wish to judge. I have no authority, I only know I'm loved.

When I say, "I am a Christian," I'm not bragging of success. I'm admitting that I have failed and can never pay the debt.

—Author Unknown



PASTOR'S DEVOTION

Text: Psalm 18:20-24

At first read it may seem that David believed he earned his deliverance by personal works; however, he quickly brought perspective through repeating verse 20 again in verse 24 as he prefaced God's practices, mercy, and grace. Spurgeon writes, "God first gives us holiness, and then rewards us for it. We are his workmanship; vessels made unto honour; and when made, the honour is not withheld from the vessel; though, in fact, it all belongs to the Potter upon whose wheel the vessel was fashioned."

Yet that does not negate the fact that just as God had practices, so too did David. He chose both *to do* and not *to do* things: he *had* kept the ways of the Lord and *had not* wickedly departed from Him (cf. Psalm 18:21). And in his practices he makes a very revealing statement: "I kept myself from mine iniquity" (v. 23). Remember the words of James? "But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire" (James 1:14 ESV).

It is so very important to not only know your strengths but also your areas of weakness—and then fortify yourself against them. When David said he "kept myself" that is exactly what he was doing. "Kept myself" is translated from the word *shamar* which means to

THE CHRISTLIKE LIFE

"Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." - Philippians. 2:5

And what was the mind that was in Christ Jesus? "Being in the form of God, He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea the death of the cross." Self-emptying and self-sacrifice, obedience to God's will and submission in love to men, even unto the death of the cross -- such was the character of Christ for which God so highly exalted Him. Such is the character of Christ that we are to imitate. He was made in the likeness of men that we might be conformed into the likeness of God.

Self-effacement, self-sacrifice that God's will might be done and that man might be saved -- such was the life of Christ. "Love seeketh not its own." This was His life: He lived only to please God and to bless men.

Let no one say that this is an impossibility. "What is impossible with men is possible with God." We are called to work out this salvation of a Christlike character with fear and trembling, for "it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

He of whom Christ said, "It is the Father in Me that doeth the works," is He who works in us to will and to do.

It has been said that "the missionary who is to commend the gospel must first embody it in a character fully conformed to the likeness of Jesus Christ. It is only as far as he can live Christ before the eyes of the converts that he can help them to understand his message. It has at times come to pass that our representatives on the field, just because they are what we have made them, have far too often hidden the Christ whom they are giving their lives to reveal."

As the church aims at making some marked degree of likeness to Christ's character the standard for Christian teachers, our missionaries will be able to pass this on to their converts and say to them: "Be ye followers of us, even as we are of Christ."

Let us not rest until our faith lays hold of the promise, "It is God that worketh in us." The confidence will be aroused that as the character of Christ is the revelation with which every missionary has been entrusted, so the power will be given to fulfill this high and holy calling. Let ministers and missionaries and all intercessors make this their one great plea and aim: to have this mind that was in Christ Jesus. •

—Andrew Murray

hedge about; to guard. Thus, David desired to protect himself from himself; it is a practice that we must embrace as well.

Personal protection will include hedging ourselves (as David) with *having* kept the ways of the Lord as well as *having not* departed from Him. If carnal lust is a struggle, put only pure things before your eyes (cf. Job 31:1) and don't go near the street, let alone the door of the adulterous woman (cf. Proverbs 5:8); if pure speech is a challenge, speak with caution and grace (cf. Colossians 4:6) and not in shadows or deceit (cf. 1 Peter 3:10); if unholy ambition is a weakness, humble yourself before the Lord (cf. James 4:10) and do not make "back door" alliances and propositions (cf. Matthew 20:20-22). Once we realize just how vulnerable we are to "mine iniquity" it is easy to see that we really do earn nothing, but receive any and all blessings by his grace.

Acknowledge your weakness today; know "mine iniquity's" temptation and purpose in your heart to guard yourself from it. Thank God for His grace that will allow your protection. •



1616 NORTH ROBBERSON
SPRINGFIELD, MO 65803