

In 1966 my Christian life began to spiral downward. My earthly marriage to my surgeon husband had suffered the ultimate test and my spiritual marriage was rapidly following suit. At the time it appeared Jesus had left me. I tried everything I knew to regain my first love but the harder I tried the greater it eluded my grasp. Physical death seemed the only way of escape. I eagerly awaited the Lord's return.

The daily diet in my Christian circles was to pray more, witness more and give more. Searching for top-line 'deeper life' teachers was my number one priority and although it was before the era of the self-help craze, every sermon or teaching I sat under ended with suggested ways to; either become dead to self, to engage in prophecy or to practice the gifts of the Spirit.

As I was trying to do all these things through Christ who strengthened me, the very opposite was taking place. The good that I wished to do, I did not, and what I wished not to do, that I did.....until in great despair I cried with Paul: "How to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. Oh, wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from the body of this death?"

The sins that so easily beset me were my anger and temper. In the beginning they were the traits that showed me I was hopeless and needed a Savior. Now in this second crisis, they showed me I was helpless. Thus began the spinning wheel of trying and failing to conquer myself. If anything good came from me, I was quick to give Christ the credit. If anything bad.....it was back to me. In my flesh dwelt no good thing. I repented and confessed endlessly but the spiritual washcloth of 1John 1:9 was not sufficient to erase my sin-consciousness and restore me to a full joy. Most of my peers seemed satisfied with this menu.

When dear, sweet Norman Grubb entered my life I had been perfectly conditioned to receive the 'healing in his wings.' To me he was God coming in a human form; someone with a gentle smile and accepting ways. After hearing him for the first time I could not have told you a single thing he said; but inside, in my spirit, I was lifted. As I drove home that night I said to myself, "There must be something redeemable about Christianity and this man seems to have the keys to unlock truths I have never heard before." I immediately wrote to him pouring out my heart about all the negative myths I had spent years building and believing. Here is his reply:

Dearest Linda,

I think this is the first letter I have ever received from you, isn't it? I am so pleased you have written. Dear, you may not think so, but it is good that you have these

tough times.! I praise Him. There's no other way to find and live in the light except by feeling the reality of the dark.

You are not in Romans 7, dear, you only think you are, and what you believe is a fact to you. You are only in Romans 7 when you wrongly believe that you should be better, and I rather think you have this mistaken idea because you bemoan that "the flesh is weak", and of course it is; that's all it is. And "not much faith," and "Word and prayer life nil." Excellent! You can have no faith, nor can the Word and prayer be alive to you. Humans just remain negative human have-nots. But that's just what turns your attention away from the wretched "law" of Romans 7 which will tell you "you ought" if you still think you ought. But when you learn and accept that you ought not, because we humans are not meant to be or have anything,..... then you can say, "Of course I'm weak, of course I have these failures, of course Bible and prayer are dead to me." At that point you say, "Now Lord, You are Yourself in me, and **You Only** are any quickening in me, or any faith or anything; and **You are Yourself in me, the real Self**, though I may not feel a thing and feel as dead as ever." As you "recognize" Him in faith, though feeling nothing (and don't try to improve yourself or pick yourself up, or feel as if you ought to be something - Romans 7) then in God's own way, He will make Himself real to you.

So, I'm just glad you wrote, dear, and glad you have these dark times in order to learn this great lesson that you have "the sentence of death in yourself, that you should not trust in yourself, but in Him," in you. ( 2Corinthians 1:9)

Needless to say Norman's words were desperately needed water spilling on to the very dry dessert of my soul, and through him the Holy Spirit brought me within hearing distance of His healing voice. This time it would not be a call to perform one more thing for Jesus or to try anything ever again within my own strength. This time He was calling me to faith! Faith in the absurd.!

What was the 'absurd?' My answer came in 1Cor. 6:17. "But he that joins himself to the Lord is one Spirit with Him"..... This meant;

1. That **I had been made one with the Father**. He was not someone far off, but He had come to reside in me; Col.1:27 and that **I had been made perfect in unity**. John 17.

2. First and foremost, I must begin to accept myself; ..... just as I was ..... weakness, tempers and all.

3. That **my humanity** was the necessary agent or common human by which God could express and manifest His personhood.
4. That by His body death, **I was made righteous**; (11 Cor. 5:21) ... a right self, a right son/daughter, heir, vessel, branch, temple and bride.
5. That **I** could enter into the full meaning of Galatians 2:20 -- crucified and risen with Him and fully functioning as a safe, right self.

Can you imagine how frightening it was to hear these life-giving truths and at the same time slowly be excluded from your Christian circles? The temptation to believe it was all heresy flooded me time and again, but each time I considered turning back to the accepted doctrines of self-effort, it was as though I was putting on filthy rags.

As my reputation and righteous robes began to fade and the witness of a perfect Christ living in my **perfect humanity** began to become a reality, what seemed too costly to lose (an independent life) now became offensive to think of maintaining. Dry ground was becoming Holy Ground.

The Lord was calling me not only to accept what He had done for me at Calvary by putting me in right standing with God, but also to accept the revolutionary life that ***He was living in me, as me***. That took the greatest leap of faith of my life.... But what else could I do.....all the bridges of self-effort and self-righteousness were burned and I would either die, turn to stone or enter in. **To see that the Promised Land was a Person and that I was the unique Linda form of that Person was, to me, the gospel in its purest form.** I saw that I had no independent human nature, no life within myself that could produce life. I discovered that my humanity was simply a receiver of good or evil.

So I began to move slowly, by faith, taking no condemnation, accepting myself and walking in the spirit of Romans 8, totally depending on Him to see me through my schooldays of faith. Thank God, school days ended and graduation day did come. **The person I took, took me and I knew I had come home forever!!** I had come through the agonizing cry of my "**wretched man**" into the "**glorious liberty of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus**" where there was no more condemnation, trying and failing.....no brick wall of failure and defeat. I knew I was free forever and could depend on Him, not only to 'keep me from falling,' but also to 'cause me to walk in His ways.

Life has now become total freedom to be driven by the Spirit in His unceasing love for others through me. My supreme purpose is to live as a co-heir....."filling

up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ for His body's  
sake." (Colossians 1:24)

"For me to live is Christ." ..... Philippians 1:21

Linda Bunting - 2001