



A V O I C E F R O M T H E W I L D E R N E S S

An Unforgettable Experience

What follows is the story of a Sabbath day experience, where the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan became almost visible; where life and death seemed weighed in the balance and listening to the voice of the Shepherd made the difference.

We called it a special *Waldensian Sabbath*. Alane and I had invited five families to join our family to go up into the mountains into a secluded retreat that we had endearingly named the *Waldensian Valley*. Our purpose that Sabbath was to come together to review and discuss the experience of the Waldenses and consider how we could learn from their experience in our own preparation for the difficult times that lay ahead.

Each of our families were given a part of the history of this persecuted people to read in preparation for our time together - *The Great Controversy* chapter 4. Then each family would have the opportunity to share their reading, their personal thoughts, and then discuss what practical lessons could be learned

and applied to us today.

We drove up into the mountains about fifteen miles from the nearest main road and ten miles from the nearest home. When the road ended we hiked in 2½ miles to the quiet *Waldensian Valley* surrounded on three sides by mountains forming a kind of fortress around the valley floor.

As we shared together of how God had miraculously preserved His people among the mountain cathedrals and discussed what God was calling us to do in our own lives and families, we were very aware of the subduing and enabling power of God's Spirit striving with each of our hearts. One person commented that the Devil was not happy with the strength we were gaining and that he would be looking for ways to work against us.

As we went through the day singing, praying, and discussing the practical application to our needs, our hearts were drawn to the mighty power and tender love and care of the Almighty God. Many ex-

pressed a deeper commitment to follow Him.

After lunch many expressed their desire to climb the mountain that we had been looking upon for so long through the day. It seemed a token or representation of the rough and narrow upward way of the Christian walk and our desire to reach the top. After some discussion it was decided that those who wanted to climb the mountain could do so and the others could stay in the peaceful grasses of the valley.

Since I was climbing with Josiah who was only 5 at the time, I was near the back of the group. At first the slope was gentle, but the further we went the steeper it got. There was a lot of loose shale rock that made it more dangerous for those following behind as it would roll or bounce back down the mountain. Finally I decided to get off that path and into some scrub bushes for more safety and better traction. We were nearly to the top of the mountain when I unknowingly stepped into a nest of bald face hornets. Immediately the hornets began to swarm around us. The first hornet began to sting me on my face. I knocked it off and immediately picked Josiah up and literally threw him up the mountain to where Alane and Derrol were not far ahead. As I was throwing him I was also being stung again on the forehead. The unusual characteristic of these hornets is that they will continue to pump venom into you until they are knocked off. I really was not concerned with the stings because I had never experienced a reaction to a sting before.

This time it was to be very different! Within twenty seconds I began to experience what is known as anaphylactic shock. My mind immediately went back to my years in the Radiology Department where I had assisted the resuscitative effort with patients whose throats had tightened closing off their airway, the first serious effect of this kind of shock.

I told Alane I was going into shock and I must get down off the mountain. I began to run – yes run down the mountain praying constantly, recognizing that I might have only another moment of time be-

fore my airway would fully close. Within a few seconds Alane lost sight and sound of me and thought I had collapsed. At that same moment Sally saw me running down the mountain so fast that she knew something was wrong. The Lord impressed her to grab her fanny pack and run to meet me. Simultaneously, Jim, who was now on the top of the mountain, had the strong impression to focus his binoculars on his wife in the valley. At that very instant, he saw her jump up and begin running. Upon standing up to investigate the cause, he was able to hear

Alane shout out, **“Tom’s down!”** At that, Jim repeated what he’d heard to the rest of those on the top who immediately knelt in prayer while he bolted from his place and started to also run down the mountain.

By this time, I was at the bottom and Sally had gotten to me. She told me later that my face was swollen almost beyond recognition. By providence, Sally had grabbed Alane’s fanny pack instead of hers. (They had identical packs.) Why did I say “by providence?”

Because unknown to me, while Alane was having her quiet time that morning the Lord had prompted her to check her fanny pack for charcoal. She told me at first she had begun to reason it away because she always carried charcoal. When the prompting came again she checked her fanny pack and found the usual three or four capsules. Again the Lord impressed her, this time to fill the entire film container. Again she began to reason it away as we often do by our human reasoning, “It only takes one capsule for a bee sting.” But when the impression came again to fill the container, she immediately went to the bathroom and stuffed it full. “And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, this is the way, walk ye in it.” Isaiah 30:21 How thankful we all were that she yielded to the Lord and filled the container.

Sally immediately had me swallowing charcoal capsules as well as opening some up and covering my bee stung face with it. Then we made our way to the other side of the valley where I could lay

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down.

Jim passed Alane coming down the mountain and by the time he got to me my airway was so tight it made breathing difficult. I asked him if he knew what to do should my airway close. Then I asked him if he had a pen with him. He pulled out his good Cross pen and I explained to him how to do an emergency tracheotomy. I explained where and how to puncture my throat and how to use the pen to breath for me. It was then that I recognized that I **was at peace**. I was resting, trusting in my Savior. I knew of **nothing between my soul and God** and if my time was now, what better time then after that blessed experience and with my family and friends who loved me.

I'm thankful to say Jim did not have to use the pen. But I'm also thankful that he listened to the Holy Spirit that morning during his quiet time when he was impressed to bring that pen. He told me how the Lord had prompted him to bring his special Cross pen with him that day even though he never took it hiking. He too had begun to reason with the Lord, but also **yielded his will to the Higher**, understanding later the revealed will of God. "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow me." John 10:27.

By now Alane was with me and working with Sally trying to massage the fluid back out of my peripheral tissue. Others had formed a prayer band and were praying as well as assisting in any way they could. I learned later that at this time I was swollen beyond recognition.

I had passed the first critical phase of anaphylactic shock but little did I know how close I came to death in the second, more silent phase. I found out later that my pulse was so weak that both Alane and Sally had difficulty finding it, and when they did it was thready and faint. The reason for this was because so much of the fluid which facilitates circulation was out swelling up my tissues that there was barely enough fluid to circulate the blood carrying oxygen.

I heard my wife calmly and earnestly praying for God's mercy and healing. She talked to me with confidence that we needed to get me out of there as fast as possible. Now the question was how to get me down to the vehicle 2½ miles below. I was weak, but must walk to aid the circulation. We began the walk down, Jim on my left and another Darryl on my right. Part way down I collapsed and heard Jim saying something like, "You can't die on me now - One can slay a thousand and two ten thousand!" These were very encouraging words and still are today when the Devil, self, and circumstances try to divide and conquer our two families and the work we were called together to accomplish.

I collapsed one more time before we reached the vehicles where we again saw the **importance of hearing and heeding the voice of the Lord**. When we had arrived at the beginning of our outing, Jim had been parked in by one of the other families. At that moment, Jim felt a strong indication that he should not be parked in. So he requested the other person who had parked in front of him to exchange places. It seemed awkward and so unnecessary, but how different the perspective now as every moment of time was critical.

Quickly I was put into the back seat with Alane and Sally on each side working with all the simple means and prayer to sustain my life. Within seconds Jim was racing, yes - racing down the mountain to the nearest doctor more than 25 miles from where we were parked. Alane told Jim to stop at our house, which is right on the way into town, so she could call 911 and have the one and only doctor called ahead to meet us at his office. There he gave me an injection to reverse the vast loss of fluid from the reaction. Within a few hours I was recovering and reflecting upon all the events of the day.

I found out later that Derrol, the one who was nearest to me on the mountain at the time I was stung, had also been prompted that morning in his quiet time alone with God. He felt strongly im-

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pressed to bring his best Cross pen, had begun to reason with the Lord, "Why should I take my best pen? I never hike with it. I don't want to lose it." But then he also **decided to yield to the Spirit's prompting**. But why would it even be necessary for him to bring his best pen? Because he was the closest one to me when the initial shock came and therefore would also have been prepared to do the emergency trachea procedure on the mountain if necessary.

Alane shared with me how at three different times after she lost sight of me on the mountain her thoughts and feelings of fear began to overtake her and how she prayed to God that He would strengthen her. The comfort He gave her was from the experience of Job. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Job 13:15. Each time she prayed and yielded her thoughts, feelings, and emotions she had peace, and by the third time the promise became her own never to be lost in spite of the continued trial.

My life was spared that day, not because of the charcoal or the injection, but by God's mercy and His joy in answering the prayers of His children. He had done His part ahead of time in preparation for the crisis, but He was the answer in the crisis. He promises us, "Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." Isaiah 65:24. This experience has had and continues to have a profound effect in my life and my family. I share it with you to show the love and tenderness of our wonderful God who wants to guide each one of us continually (Isaiah 58:11) and teach us to depend fully on Him and not be controlled by our human reason and emotion. (Proverbs 3:5 & 6)

In closing there are two points I want to emphasize that have impacted my life and are **vital to our relationship with God** who longs to save us to the uttermost.

(1) Did you notice that all the people who had special promptings for preparation had those promptings during their quiet time with God? Friends, we need this communion with God, not just for preparing for an unknown, major crisis, we need that time to prepare us for a dozen mini crises that

will involve self through the day. Our hearts must be in tune with Him before we enter the busyness of the day.

(2) What a strong testimony came from each person who by faith yielded to the will of God and was ready in their appointed place to meet the need. You see our **communion with God is vital**, but **are we really willing to do what God is asking us to do** even if it seems ridiculous? Or, are we too often reasoning away or arguing away those promptings? We don't always see the immediate results of heeding or not heeding our Shepherd's voice as we did in this experience, but friends, it's time **we start listening and heeding**. Troublous times are ahead and we need to know His voice. (John 10:3-5)

It may not be long until we will repeat some of the scenes illustrated in the history of the Waldensians. Our preparation comes one day at a time. Every day we are making decisions that have a bearing on whether we will be ready - **ready to meet the crisis, because we are already with Christ**.

A Voice From The Wilderness

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