



The Necklace

2 Samuel 22:29

**For You are my lamp, O
LORD; And the LORD
illuminates my darkness.**



THE NECKLACE

Samuel's Story

John 11: 25

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he dies, yet shall he live,

Romans 14: 8

For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.



(“Jesus Healing the Sick” painted by Tissot)

In preparation for the story of Samuel, a man the writer met while ministering to the elderly at a local nursing home, let us first concentrate a bit on the enormous compassion our Savior demonstrated when encountering the downtrodden in the world.

During this time in history when the Roman Empire ruled with an enormously heavy hand, along with the deeply ingrained caste system well in place, it was thought that nearly 90% of the population struggled to survive on a daily basis. Given these conditions, what Jesus witnessed as he walked the highways and byways along the dusty, rugged trails had to be truly astounding and appalling; to say the least. Although our Lord had the mission of delivering the good news regarding the arrival of the kingdom of God to all creation, the reality of this abject poverty had to be truly overwhelming to his compassionate heart. Just think how difficult it was for him to announce his message of hope to an audience that was hungry, ill, and filled with thoughts of only surviving another moment in time.

Thus, given the weakened physical condition of many suffering from various disease states, the atmosphere would have reeked with foul odors, accompanied by an array of incessant voices crying out along the side of the road. Witnessing constantly those suffering from ulcers and putrefying sores must have always been in the path of Christ. The horrifying moans constantly uttered by them as they endured the agony of existing under the monstrous evil of oppression

must have been ever present no matter the road Jesus chose to travel. There would simply have been no escape from being exposed to the plight of mankind during this point in time.

Yet, dear readers, Scripture clearly states that not once did our Lord show any sign of distaste or disgust, but instead viewed each person with a heart full of compassion and pity. The act of associating with people such as this that were labeled as “unclean and untouchable”, automatically set him apart, as well as placed his own life in grave danger because of breaking the law that regarded individuals in this state as being punished by God. Simply stated, his actions flew in the face of the established rules that governed his own Jewish people by failing to ignore them; laws he chose to break every moment of his earthly life; all because he came to fulfill the law, not destroy it. Not flinching or looking down on their plight in life, without hesitation, he gently touched one right after the other; healing and offering sustenance.

Today, some might utter the words, “Yeah! Yeah! That was then and this is now! What does this old Bible story of Jesus and the poor have to do with me?” Well, my friend, it has everything to do with all of us now and forever.

You see, if you read the stories in the Bible with the attitude of asking why the writers felt they were important enough to record, perhaps it will motivate you to ascertain various ways they apply to your life today. Even though we are centuries removed from when these words were written, are not the poor and downtrodden still among us? Was not Jesus trying to model the example of how we should love our neighbor as ourselves? Folks, all you have to do to see if this fits in your world today is to research the statistics on poverty in your community. In so doing, you may, like the writer, be surprised and appalled after viewing a poverty map to discover how many around your comfortable home are daily scrambling to earn enough money to survive.

Then, after exploring this area, there is no doubt you will be either prompted to consider the situation in depth and go into immediate action as to exploring possible solutions, or choose to ignore the facts and go right on with your busy schedule. As followers of Christ, the Scripture: “Then Jesus told his disciples, *“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me,”* (Matthew 16: 24) should be paramount in your mind. Perhaps, it even means not only contributing financially to an outreach program, but actually, physically touching the individuals in question; a behavior that is not always comfortable for even those possessing great compassion.

Perhaps, Charles Spurgeon, in his book, “Morning by Morning”, says it best with this statement, “If we truly love Christ, we shall care for those who are loved by him. Those who are dear to him will be dear to us. Let us then look upon it not as a duty but a privilege to relieve the poor of the Lord’s flock---remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, *“Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”* Surely this assurance is sweet enough, and this motive strong enough to lead us to help others with a willing hand and

a loving heart---recollecting that all we do for his people is graciously accepted by Christ as done to himself.”

One word of caution from the writer regarding a pledge to carry out a plan in touching the downtrodden: “Easier said than done.” Read on, dear one, and you will see what I mean. And--above all, understand it is all right to admit your fear and weakness; a circumstance lived out by the person recording these words. Additionally, it is important to remember that taking up the cross of Christ does not mean you will carry it alone, unless, you forget to cry out to the one to whom it belongs.

Samuel’s Story

Let us begin the story of Samuel by stating that the one in this situation that knew him best, and at all, was God; a fact that was out of the norm for the writer and those responsible for this type of care. After all, the healthcare staff attending to nursing home residents usually were provided with at least a bit of background information; but, unfortunately, not in the case of Samuel. Thus, given this setting, it is perfectly understandable that what is about to unfold was the perfect storm for blowing overhead dark clouds of discomfort, fear, angst, and helplessness for all those trying to make things better for this sweet creature belonging to God.

You see, just days prior to the writer’s usual Thursday visit to the nursing home, Samuel had been found by the authorities, living in an old vehicle, critically ill and trying to survive during an extremely hot summer when the heat gauge consistently had hovered around 105 degrees for three long months. Given these weather conditions, are you able to bring to mind how hot the interior of a vehicle gets as the intense rays of the sun pour down on it for hours?

Certainly, at this point, if the visual imagery of how much suffering one endures inside a car that feels like it has been consumed by the flames of hell, then expanding it with the knowledge that the individual was struggling to walk, spoke in whispers, and was in an emaciated condition physically, will allow you to draw a shocking photograph of how dire his circumstances had become by the time help arrived. However, having painted in your mind an image of his appearance, does not even come close to describing the trauma he endured in real time; meaning it is impossible for the writer to conger up words that will allow you to internalize the direness of reality as it existed for him.

Samuel And the Writer Meet

Over the course of several years, walking beside departing nursing home residents without family members, or simply to offer extra support until their passing, had been the usual assignments given to the writer. Therefore, it was an established fact that being in the company of those dying was simply part of life’s cycle for the elderly; a time that was so dramatic that caregivers often felt the presence of the Lord in an enormous way: moments when the Scripture, *“Precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his saints,”* literally came

to fruition. Without doubt, everyone coming in contact with a dying resident always treated the process with great reverence and respect.

Therefore, on this particular Thursday, it was not alarming to be asked to take a special case of a resident whose passing was labeled as eminent; meaning it didn't seem out of the norm. However, having been presented with the above information, along with the fact that he was extremely afraid, gave the writer immediate pause for concern.

Thus, before entering Samuel's room, feelings of distress and a severe lack of courage filled the writer's heart and caused a cloud of doubt and weakness to be overpowering; to the point of becoming incapacitated; so much that she stood paralyzed in the doorway.

However, as a result of being raised by a father that always taught his children to finish the race set before them, the solution came to mind that it was time to go quickly to the Comforter and ask for consolation; thus, prompting the cry from the writer's heart to be, "Please help me. I cannot do this alone. I don't know what to say or do. My well is dry. Come Holy Spirit. Be the wind beneath my wings."

Then, dragging one leaded foot in front of the other, the writer resolutely approached the drawn curtain that surrounded Samuel's bed. Dear friends, the two tiny fearful brown eyes that peered at her from the gaunt, gray, boney face prompted the beating of the writer's heart to hammer within her chest like loud drums of war. Quickly analyzing his physical being as that of a mere shadow beneath the covers, the only words that would accurately describe his condition would be the appearance of a refugee arriving via a stretcher off a dilapidated boat; meaning he simply resembled a bag of bones held together by thin, dry, wrinkled skin.

However, after this rapid assessment, along with the desire to offer support, the writer pasted a comforting smile on her face the best she could, and reluctantly made her way around the foot of the bed.

Then, miracle of miracles, Samuel smiled weakly, stretched forth a hand that was too big for his body, and patted the mattress, indicating he wanted the writer to sit down beside him. Thus, cautiously lowering herself to the spot he designated, she stated, "I don't want to touch you in a way to cause you pain." As a response, he slightly smiled and put her hand in his; a reaction that was startling beyond measure, and one that promptly propelled her into the painting by Tissot above; meaning totally out of her comfort zone without a bail out ramp. Yes, ladies and gentlemen, the writer's mouth was like cotton; making speech impossible. Thus, after a bit of shallow breathing, Samuel and the writer just sat in a time of strained silence; moments that seemed to stretch out like a highway without end.

Folks, at this point, it is important for the writer to admit that this sweet child of God named Samuel, who had merely moments to live, was in the process of teaching a lesson to the writer that would last a lifetime. In short, the comforter suddenly was being comforted by the

downtrodden, and used in a big way by the Lord. Not only was the writer being tested by her Father, but purified by the fire of the true meaning of taking up the cross of the Savior.

Thus, as the two unlikely strangers quietly learned to sit comfortably together as children of the Creator, Samuel's eyes suddenly centered on the cross necklace the writer always wore; a gaze that seemed to claim his undivided attention. Therefore, over a period of several somber moments, he intently studied its shape; literally never blinking. Then slowly, he would peer into the eyes of the writer, linger for a moment, and immediately resume his focus on the cross. Back and forth his focus traveled, from the cross to the writer's eyes; obviously his way of expressing a desire to explore the topic of Jesus.

Noting this, the writer placed her fingers around the cross and asked, "Samuel, do you know the significance of the cross I am wearing around my neck?" In reply, he simply nodded affirmatively with his head. Then, the writer followed with, "Have you repented of your sin and asked Jesus to be the Savior of your life?" Again, in response, he weakly smiled, followed by the affirmative nod; meaning yes it had been accomplished.

Then, being totally guided by the Spirit, the writer remarked, "Given the fact you have received Christ as your Savior, I have wonderful news for you." Hearing this, Samuel's eyes intently searched her own, anxiously waiting to hear the message about to be delivered from the writer's lips.

Continuing forward, the writer stated, "First, Samuel, the Bible states that God will never leave you or forsake you; meaning, even though you are here in this room alone, Jesus will be right at your side, both day and night. Second, because you have indicated dedicating your life to Christ by first believing in him and then repenting of your sin, Scripture assures you that your name is written in the Lamb's book of life. Also, since the Great Promise Keeper never fails to deliver on his covenant, after taking your last breath of earthly air, your very next one will be with Jesus in heaven. And...Oh, what a sight that is in store for you! It is so incredibly beautiful that Scripture reads in 2 Corinthians 2:9, *"However, as it is written: What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived" ---the things God has prepared for those who love him."*

And...Scripture goes on to assure all his children with these beautiful words from Romans 8: 38-39:


"No in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord..."

After listening to the two Scriptures being quoted, he seemed to project a totally different demeanor, just as if a miracle had occurred within his heart. Then before leaving, the writer first prayed for peace to descend over his entire being, waved sweetly at him, and floated out

of the room feeling blessed from inside out by our magnificent God. Shortly after, word was delivered to the writer that Samuel's earthly journey was no more.

Thanks be to the Lord for the honor of having met such a wonderful child of God, who, when had little time left on his earthly journey, courageously assumed the role of a comforter to an individual that so desperately needed his strength and wisdom.

Ladies and gentlemen, isn't it an incredible miracle how God brought together two total strangers in a situation that served as a blessing for both? Additionally, it provided a powerful example that the mere mind of man is incapable of understanding the thoughts of the Almighty. However, since then, one seed that has grown and produced much fruit in the writer's ministry is that, on this day in an ordinary nursing home room, both Samuel and the writer had carried the cross of Christ **together** while residing on holy ground. Amen.



JESUS