

JUDGMENT THE INNOCENT SUFFERING

2nd Edition

By
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"What is this place?" I whimpered as I looked around the dark, cold, and worn cave. I boasted of a wondrous vision, yet I could hardly see anything. The room was pitch black, and I quivered against the chill of the rails I had just grabbed. My hand touched a portion of iron, and its coldness jolted me back as I fell. My heart raced as I searched for something to hold onto in the dark room. Suddenly, bright lights flooded the room. Reflexively, I squinted and looked around to get my bearings.

The place was small, and I felt trapped. Letters jumbled together all over the walls of the room as if someone had scribbled the words repeatedly until they muddled together in an artistic mess. I whimpered again against the cold and held my hand over my shirt; the cold bristled my hair.

I moved my body faster and raised my voice a little louder. "Where am I?" But my words muddled off the walls, resonating throughout the cramped space. As I glanced at two words on the wall: the fall, sadness overwhelmed me as my last memory flooded my mind.

The story of John Williams is a Chapter from a larger book entitled: “Eternal Choices” While that book focus on the life of those leading up to Judgment— This story of John Williams examines what it could be like for Judgment as he awaits in a solitary room for the Great White Throne. His unique Judgment involves learning what true suffering is and what true love is by experiencing the suffering and love of different people in seven different seasons.

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THE LIFE OF JOB

Suffering loss



John and Winifred Williams are a testament to true love. As they celebrate forty years of marriage, recalling the memories and moments of their relationship brings them joy. When they first met, John had been withdrawn most of his life, but Winifred saw past that and into the protective shell that covered his heart. She knew that there was something special between them, and what blossomed was a strong bond.

John and Winifred had been friends since high school. Even though John wasn't very interested in the idea of friendship, he still sat close to her in all the classes they had together and barely said a word to each other, until one day at the cafeteria.

"You don't have your card, do you?" Winifred said from behind John as he searched his pocket frantically. John felt a wave of anxiety wash over him as he frantically searched his pocket for his student card. His heart began to race, and he could feel the sweat forming on his forehead as he heard the rest of the students in line behind him growing impatient. He was sure that he had brought his card with him today; it was something that he would never forget. But try as he might, John just couldn't seem to find it.

At that moment, Winifred stepped in from behind him and handed her own card to the attendant. *"You can put his bill on my card,"* she said softly with a kind smile. It was enough to calm John's nerves, despite feeling embarrassed at having held up the line.

Through all of their years together, the couple has remained faithful to each other by standing side-by-side through both the good and bad times. They even attended college together in Birmingham, United Kingdom.

Through laughter and tears, they have weathered every storm with trust in each other's love as an unshakable foundation. To this day, Winifred still feels deeply loved by John, who shows her his affection in countless ways throughout each day—a glance across the room or a gentle touch on her arm conveying more than words ever could.

This is why Winifred believes so strongly in their relationship—it has been built on truthfulness and tenderness, with genuine care for one another's happiness at its core. Even after 40 years of life together, she appreciates how lucky she is to have found someone like John—someone who she can laugh with until it hurts, who will always be ready to listen, who will stay up late talking about whatever comes up, and most importantly, who loves her with unwavering devotion.

John often rejected Winifred's love because he was afraid she would want something from him that he couldn't provide. She saw that he was scared, and she wasn't afraid of that.

Winifred spent many years making John's heart soften. When they graduated, John knew he wanted to spend the rest of his life with her. He had everything he never thought he would have with her. The pain from his life with his mother,

the love he never felt, and the dark hole in his heart was filled up with Winifred's love. She was his world, and he was hers. He had everything he needed, and nothing else could make him feel more complete. Nothing.

John found a job as a salesman for a company that sells appliances. He got decent commissions from his job. On the other hand, Winifred found a job as a nurse at a big hospital in the city where they lived. They had more than enough money to spend, and they enjoyed many vacation trips. They had a slight delay with childbirth, but this did not worry them since they were still enjoying each other's company and were not exactly ready to start a family life yet. Life, for them, was one long, continuous honeymoon, and many of their neighbors longed to be like them.

The couple got accustomed to their neighborhood and decided to attend a Church close to their home. This was not because they needed anything from the big man in heaven; I mean, they knew they had it all already. They only did it to seem normal and accepted in the neighborhood since every other family got dressed every Sunday to sing hymns in the big white house down the road.

They were not very serious or devoted Christians, but the ministers and deacons at the church were constantly trying their best to help them reach a good level of spiritual maturity.

"Why would such a lovely couple have it all here on earth and lose it when Christ comes again?" Winifred overheard one of the women saying to another woman one day as they stepped out of the church. She was more concerned than angry at the statement. It troubled her very much.

"Honey, is everything okay?" John asked his beautiful wife as they drove back home. Winifred was his joy, so he knew the moment something was wrong with her.

"I think we are missing something, John," she replied with sadness in her voice. She stared out of the window.

"What do you mean? Tell me what you want, and I will give it to you! You know I will."

John stole occasional looks at his wife while trying to stay focused on the road.

"Talk to me, honey."

"We don't have what other people at our church have. We should get it even if we think we don't need it."

John burst out laughing but cautioned himself, so he does not hurt his wife's feelings.

"Honey, we have everything we need. Trust me. Nothing should steal our joy ever."

Winifred found it hard to get it off her mind. She eventually shook it off and started smiling again when John turned around and took her to her favorite restaurant to have dinner, but when she got home, the voice of the woman rang in her head again.

When Christ comes again?

Precious Little Anita

John and Winifred's lives were truly blessed. They had each other, they had their health, they had a thriving career, they had a beautiful home, and now they even had their own baby on the way. Although it was unexpected and unplanned,

the couple could not help but feel a deep sense of gratitude for all of the blessings that fate had handed them.

The days flew by as John and Winifred eagerly anticipated the arrival of their child. John often reflected on how much his life had changed over the years; it seemed like only yesterday he was wallowing in despair at his perceived misfortune and lack of luck in life. Now, instead of being mired in sadness and tragedy, he was enveloped in love, joy, peace, and contentment.

Cherishing every moment before the arrival of their little bundle of joy, John thanked God for all He had done for him and his family. With tear-filled eyes, he thanked Him for his happy union with Winifred, their friendship that seemed to make all troubles around them disappear with one hug or caress— something money could never buy — and most importantly for this new life that God was bringing into their world; this blessing, which promised an eternity of blissful moments!

John and Winifred were truly blessed with the safe arrival of their little baby, Anita. She was a perfect bundle of joy, and with her birth, they felt they had been bestowed a divine gift. They showered her with love and affection, striving to give her all the best that life had to offer. John spent countless nights watching over Anita, ensuring she was safe and secure while Winifred got a much-needed rest. It was a labor of love for them both, as they wanted their daughter to live a peaceful and happy life—something John himself never experienced during his own childhood. Therefore, he hummed along with joy on his way from work every day in anticipation of seeing his two little angels again. His heart would swell at the sight of them both, and it made all the tough days at work worth it. Buying gifts at the store for his

wife and daughter became routine, and little Anita became so used to it that when she was four years old, she would run to the door with her hands stretched out, excited to see what her father had for her that day.

He felt immensely grateful for being able to provide for his family, and he showered Anita with blessings every night before going to sleep.

The Williams family was dealt an unexpected blow when Anita became very ill. John felt his throat tighten with sorrow, his heart aching painfully in his chest as he looked around the room. The once happy and carefree family had been torn apart by Anita's illness, with every day seeming longer and harder than the last. He remembered her chubby cheeks, her bright eyes, and her infectious laughter that filled the house with love. It all feels so distant now. All of those memories were replaced by pain and sadness as she lay there struggling to breathe. Every glance at her brought another rush of tears to John's eyes, remembering how vibrant and full of life she was before. Even in the darkness of night, he could feel the oppressive weight of tragedy hanging over them—a palpable reminder of the cruel hand fate had dealt them when it struck down their beloved Anita.

It was moments like this that haunted John for days on end—thoughts that kept him up at night and made him question if he had done something wrong to deserve such sadness. He knew deep down that none of this was his fault, but still couldn't help but be plagued by doubt from an inner voice from his past that gnawed away at him relentlessly: 'I told you nothing good comes from you'.

John opened his eyes in a hurry and looked around. He knew that voice anywhere. He recognized that pale, harsh, and unkind voice, but he never expected to hear it again.

Your life is a mess, and you cannot run from it. You can never be happy, John.

His mother was long gone, but now, in the middle of the confusion that he was feeling, he heard her words, and his heart shattered. He held on to Anita's hands as tears rolled down his cheeks. Things had to get better fast.

But they did not. They got worse, and John and Winifred took Anita back to the hospital, ran all the necessary tests, and gave her medications, but the illness kept recurring. After spending more money, time, and energy on the entire procedure, Anita was eventually diagnosed with leukemia.

This was heartbreaking news for the entire family, but they did not even have the time to console one another. John was anxious about the diagnosis, wondering what could happen next. He was happy that they finally had closure on what the problem was, but he was sad that his little girl had to suffer this sickness for nothing.

"She wronged no one, Winifred," John said. "Just like me, she did nothing wrong to get any of this. What is this life, and why has it decided to steal my peace away?"

Winifred had no words to say to comfort her husband. She also searched for peace, but she did not find it. She did her best, but it was not enough. It took some effort to ensure they did not grow apart from each other. John spent his free time staring into space as thoughts filled his head, and Winifred tried to read books or tend the garden to free her mind a little bit.

The couple spent a small fortune on treatments and a lot of time by her bedside, trying to ensure that their beautiful baby girl got better one way or another, but despite everything, her condition remained the same, sometimes seeming to get worse.

One and a half years after Anita's diagnosis, an economic crash hit the country hard, and John's company had to lay off workers to stay afloat. As if life were not hard enough, John happened to be one of those who got a termination letter, and it could not have come at a worse time. Nearly every penny of his severance package paid for little Anita's treatments. The loving father would not mind becoming homeless or broke as long as his little princess was fine and healthy again. He hid his pain and confusion each time he was with Anita or Winifred, but they were growing in his heart, eating deep and making his soul bitter. He never thought he would experience pain ever again, but here it was.

Because John had more free time from unemployment, he spent most of his days by his baby's bedside, reading to her or just sitting by her and holding her hand, willing her to recover and get better. Not even Winifred, a trained nurse, could care for their daughter as much as John did. He also prayed for her fervently. He never saw the use of prayers before Anita's sickness, and even till now, he only did it because he had no other options. He was ready to do anything in the world, and now, Anita was his only prayer point.

"Lord, I do not care about my job and I do not care about nothing else in the world, just please give me back my baby."

One afternoon, Winifred had gone to the grocery store to buy some of Anita's favorite cookies. They could not afford to buy them as regularly anymore, but they just had to, as she

turned down many meals but accepted these sweet treats. He had been praying in tears before he fell on his knees and clung to his chest for breath. He wept loudly and looked at the sky through the window in his room.

"Why don't you allow me to stay happy?! Why? I have suffered so much, and you choose to cut my joy short!" John wept bitterly, shaking from head to toe and trying to catch his breath.

"Give me my peace! If you are God, you will give me back my daughter and my joy once more!"

That was all John asked for every day and night.

Unfortunately, life does not always cater to human wishes. One and a half years after losing his job, John lost his daughter too. John's sorrow was as deep and wide as the sky he stared at. He felt his chest tighten, and tears threatened to consume him every time he thought of his daughter and the life they once shared. All that was left for him now were memories, some of which brought a sweet smile to his lips, but those moments were fleeting and soon replaced by the deep tragedy that had befallen him.

He slowly began to assemble the shattered pieces of himself as he remembered his daughter's laughter, her warm hugs, her bright eyes, and her kind spirit. But no matter how hard he tried to cling on to these precious memories, there was still an aching emptiness within him that could not be filled.

Searching for blame

Time passed ever so slowly for John as he continued to be haunted by the memories of what once was. His heart filled

with an unbearable sorrow as tears streamed down his face in agony-filled wave after wave, never ceasing until sleep finally enveloped him each night. He thought this cruel cycle would never end—that he'd be forever trapped in this cycle of grief and suffering with no hope of escape.

Every day, John would sit on their porch, rocking in his chair and staring longingly at the sky. The loneliness felt like a physical ache as family and friends tried to reach out to him; it seemed like nothing could ease the crippling despair that consumed him. In his moments of solitude, John thought about what could have been. He wondered if things would have been different had he not lost his job or if she could have fought harder against illness.

The church pastors and other members who had been supportive during the child's illness also came to try to console him, but John did not want to hear anything they had to say.

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

— JOHN 16:33

When he heard this scripture quoted, something seemed to spark off in John's head. He stared straight at the Pastor and said, "Tribulations, huh? That is what your Jesus promises. Tribulations? Well, fine! But he could have left my little baby out of it. He could have left my Anita out of his tribulations. She did not do anything, man."

The Pastor tried to calm him down by saying, "No, Brother John, it's not like that; I was only trying to..."

"You need to take this garbage and get out of my house this instant! Leave my house with your Jesus and tribulations nonsense this moment!"

John was in over his head already and did not let the Pastor finish before fuming angrily. He would not have any of it again, and he was tired of pretending to care.

There was nothing any of the church members could do. They got up and left, fearing that John would get violent.

Winifred was shocked by this, but she consoled him out of love. She was also heartbroken, but she tried to contain it. It was the exact opposite of Job. Unlike Job, he did not have a wife who told him to curse God and die. John did the cursing all by himself.

As soon as they left, John became very angry. He slammed the door shut and walked back to his chair. But when he got there, he fell to the ground in pain.

"Why me?" John yelled. *"My life was supposed to have a happy ending! But now it's all gone! I suffered as a child, and now I'm suffering again as an adult. And those people tell me to give up and accept the same man who takes my life away from me over and over again?!"*

John continued to wail in pain, breaking Winifred's heart even further. Then Winifred walked into the room, went down on her knees, and prayed.

"Lord, if this is your will, please give us the strength to accept it. We need you more than ever right now."

Winifred's pain was palpable. She was struggling to cope with the tragedies that had befallen her beloved husband, John, who had become increasingly depressed and taken up drinking as a form of self-medication. The sight of him in such

anguish pained her deeply; she knew it was beyond her capacity to help him. It broke her heart to see how he had become so bitter and resentful, yet still, she tried to love him, hoping that eventually he might be pulled from his sorrows by the light of God's grace.

Her own faith had been greatly strengthened during this difficult time; she turned to Him for guidance and comfort. Winifred spent more and more time poring over the Bible, searching for answers, seeking strength and solace in its pages. And each night, on bended knee, she prayed fervently for John's redemption, never once giving up hope that one day he might find peace again.

The pain she felt was all-consuming—a deep-seated agony that pervaded every aspect of her life. She went through each day with a heavy heart, barely managing to put one foot in front of the other as she struggled with her inner struggle between despair and faith, between sorrow and hope. She wept often—tears of sorrow mixed with prayers for deliverance—knowing that only God could redeem them both from their current state of suffering.

Winifred became the family's breadwinner as John had no money, did not go to work, and could not contribute toward the household. This particular Saturday night, Winifred tried to gently convince her husband into going to church the next day. She brought up the idea over dinner, but before she could continue, he gently replied to her.

"Baby, you know I love you and appreciate the things that you have done for me and us," John said. "But this Church thing, I really can't keep worshiping someone who allowed my daughter to suffer and die. I can deal with the job loss, but not Anita; he should not have taken my little Anita. She was so

innocent, pure, and sweet, but he chose to put her through so much pain and then steal her away from me."

John was close to tears again, but Winifred tried her best to console him.

The following Saturday night, Winifred said goodbye as she was on her way to the hospital for a double shift.

"I love you, John, and I love seeing you happy. If you suffer here on earth and then suffer after death that would be a waste, and I want you to experience peace once more. Please, give what I have said a thought, and we would discuss it again when I come home after church, okay?"

John was moved by her words, but his mind was made up. He kissed her goodbye and watched her from the porch until he could see her no more. For a split second, he panicked and imagined how he would feel if he never saw her again. Then he relaxed again, knowing she was healthy and nothing could steal her away from him.

He waved again at her even though he knew she could not see him, buried deep in his thoughts.

How could they possibly know this might be their final goodbye?

Early Sunday Morning: The Rapture

John Williams sat in his armchair at home after his wife had gone to work. He liked this armchair and its positioning within the house because it directly faced the mantelpiece, where he could view pictures of his late little daughter. John always had these kinds of periods, downtimes, where he would sit on that armchair and stare at his baby all day long — his Anita. She was his world, his universe. Anita was almost

everything he had—well, except for Winifred, and he loved her dearly, too. But losing Anita was like losing himself. There was nothing left here for him worth living. He kept going over the events again and again.

"I prayed, didn't I? I was a good person when I was a salesman. I never cheated anyone, and I never looked at other women with lust. I deserved to live happily ever after and watch my baby grow up and teach her how to ride a bike, swim, and drive."

John broke down again. He was distraught.

"She should have lived long enough for me to walk her down the aisle and give her hand out in marriage to some handsome, responsible young man."

John kept thinking these thoughts over and over. He felt like he had been treated unfairly. This should not have happened to him. Suddenly, he remembered a Bible verse that he had heard in Church.

What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?

—JOB 2:10

John thought about this for a long time. He thought about how his baby did nothing wrong, and she didn't deserve the pain she went through. But John also thought about how God is in charge and how he knows what is best. While John was thinking, he read a devotional that someone had given them when they lost their daughter. It had some Bible verses meant to help people deal with grief and pain. John's wife had prayed over those verses and used them as an anchor during their daughter's death, but John was stubborn. He rejected every form of peace and comfort. Yet, as he was thinking that

morning, two of those verses particularly attracted his attention.

The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord

— *JOB 1:21*

And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and for the gospel's, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.

— *MARK 10:29*

John felt like a knife had been thrust into his heart with these two verses from the Bible. It was as if those parts of the Bible were specifically written for him because he was going to experience something like this. But once again, John rejected those words in his heart and rebelled against God even more.

When the incident happened, he made up his mind and decided that he would never go to Church again. And with all of the thoughts that were swirling around in his mind today, he came close to changing his mind. However, his stubbornness ensured that he stuck to his guns and kept alienating himself from God in his mind.

Anita was taken and now Winifred

It was Sunday early morning and John finally dozed off to sleep when suddenly awakened by a loud noise and then a trumpet sound. He was frightened and wondered what was

happening. After a few minutes, he decided it was nothing and went back to sleep on the sofa.

About an hour later, he woke up and saw that the sun was out. John turned on the TV to see what was happening and saw that there were reports of strange disappearances and graves that were empty. John didn't know what to think about this. He tried calling his wife, but her phone just rang without going through.

John became worried. His daughter was gone, and now he couldn't contact his wife. He grabbed his keys, hopped in his car, and drove to the hospital. John didn't notice the commotion on the road, nor did he realize that there was no guard at the hospital gate. All that John's mind was on was reaching his wife and keeping her safe because if anything happened to her, he would never be able to go on after that. She was all that he had left in the cold world his daughter had left him in.

Where are the babies?

John ran to the maternity and pediatric department, where his wife worked. When he got there, he saw that her phone was on the table, but she was nowhere to be found. He saw that she had missed fifteen calls from him. He tried to calm himself down and figure out what was going on. Then he noticed something strange. The maternity and pediatric ward was usually filled with the sound of crying babies, but it was now silent.

When he turned around, he noticed that the cribs were empty. The babies had vanished! It was then that it occurred to him. Was it possible that the rapture had happened as promised in Church? Did God take Winifred as well?

John fell to his knees, crying. Then John remembered what he had always thought growing up. Why would God finally show him love and then take it away? Then he quietly mumbled, "I will never follow this God! He is not my father!"

The Solitary Room

John Williams Awaiting Judgment



"What is this place?" I whimpered as I looked around the dark, cold, and worn cave. I boasted of a wondrous vision, yet I could hardly see anything. The room was pitch black, and I quivered against the chill of the rails I had just grabbed. My hand touched a portion of iron, and its coldness jolted me back as I fell. My heart raced as I searched for something to hold onto in the dark room. Suddenly, bright lights flooded the room. Reflexively, I squinted and looked around to get my bearings.

The place was small, and I felt trapped. Letters jumbled together all over the walls of the room as if someone had scribbled the words repeatedly until they muddled together in an artistic mess. I whimpered again against the cold and held my hand over my shirt; the cold bristled my hair.

I moved my body faster and raised my voice a little louder, "Where am I?" But my words muddled off the walls, resonating throughout the cramped space. As I glanced at two words on the wall: **the fall**, sadness overwhelmed me as my last memory flooded my mind.

The Solitary Room Part I

How did I get here?



I had just finished running on the treadmill after **the fall** occurred. One minute I was running with my gaze set on the timer in front of me with five more minutes to complete my workout; the next minute I was on the ground.

The gym instructor had smiled at me from afar, a proud smile. I was finally losing the flab in my stomach. Gary, my potbellied friend, was with me. He was beside me on the red treadmill, going at a slower pace as his stomach danced in an up-and-down motion that intrigued me. He nudged me to go slower because I was dehydrated and tired, and I laughed. Now, I had two more minutes to go; my heart was beating wildly; my legs became heavy, and the air in the room was still. I inhaled deeply, but nothing entered because of the obstruction. The air was preventing me from breathing, and I eventually lost focus on the timer. My eyes drooped, and everything went black.

I could feel the air still swirling around me as I heard my name called from all directions, simultaneously rendering the air silent. My body refused to move, and I tried again. I screamed that I couldn't breathe, but my throat was rough and parched. There was no sound. My voice suddenly cleared, and fresh oxygen rushed in. For the first time, I could breathe. I breathed quickly in and out of my chest with every breath. I

opened my eyes again to see my baby, whose memory always made my heart race when I saw children on the street.

My baby, Anita, was wearing a long, pink dress that flowed around her. Her blonde hair was tied up with flowers. She looked happy, but I knew something was wrong. It couldn't be my Anita; her skin was purer and milkier than it had been during those final days when leukemia consumed her body and stole away her youth just before she turned seven.

I remember it was a Sunday in March. I had just ordered her birthday cake, which featured a large seven-pointed star balloon. My steps were springy as I entered her hospital room. Anita's grin never faltered, no matter how much she hurt. However, on this day, she couldn't smile. She was pale and motionless in Winifred's arms. As she took her last breath, surrounded by motherly love, I was sure God was punishing me for something. Losing my daughter Anita so young to the disease that ravaged her body until she gave up everything, even her smile, was a punishment to me.

I regained consciousness, still lying on the floor with people surrounding my limp form as Gary called out my name. As I stretched out my hands to try to feel Anita, I blacked out once more. And that was the second time God afflicted me with punishment. The first time, He took Anita away; the second time, He prevented me from holding her, even in my unconscious state.

The Solitary Room Part II

Chained to My Memories: Mark of the Beast



I woke up to a loud noise and a burning sensation on my forehead. I screamed, and the sound bounced off the walls of the strange room. I put my hand over the mark on my forehead, but it didn't help. The mark was still hot, even though it hurt so much that I couldn't stand it. As before, I tried to focus on getting out of the room, but my thoughts wouldn't let me concentrate. The gate was huge and black, and my mark burned brightly. I was so overwhelmed by everything that happened the day I got the mark that I couldn't focus on anything else. I tried to clear my mind and think about how to get out, but thoughts about my wretched life and the choices I made just kept swirling around in my head.

I thought about that Monday in spring, the year after Anita died, and the day Winifred and I finally spoke. She had started attending church again, but I refused to serve a God who took my daughter's life. When she walked into the dining area wearing her black boat-necked dress, she stopped by our table and said, "John, you can't keep this up."

I walked past her into the guest room that I now occupied. She followed me in, her mouth set into a hard stare, and continued, arms now akimbo. "You can't keep living like this. We are a couple, and we both lost a child." At this, I sharply turned and set my gaze on her, my lips quivering with

the intensity of the emotions that ran through me. She moved a step back as I moved one forward.

"We are a couple?" I inquired loudly, repeating myself.

"You call us a couple, yet, you abandoned me for your faith when we lost her. Do you think I didn't love her as much? Do you feel God loves her so much that He took her away? You're insane! In our darkest hours, you chose God over me. Has He returned our daughter to us? You've always served God, but He still took your child. Why give her to us in old age only to take her back? Are we simply tools in God's hands?"

"You can always talk to God, John. He listens, and He will give you peace. You need peace, John, and I can't give you that. I don't hate you; I just want you to come to Jesus. He isn't going to leave you as your father did."

The room grew silent as I mulled over her words. Winifred's eyes bulged, and her pupils dilated as she watched me in shock, and I instantly regretted my words. We had gone separate ways from the day Anita died. She clung to her faith like a rare treasure while I lived in willful abandon. The room fell silent as I pondered her warning. "God always listens, John," she said softly.

The Solitary Room Part III

Remembering my Suffering Childhood



I grew up feeling unloved. My parents divorced when I was eight years old. The recollection of my parents' divorce has always left me devastated, and I have felt rejected and unwanted ever since. Even now, the memory of my father's cheery expression as he departed is painful. He had appeared in his big, faded blue shirt with a grin on his face, the same one he exhibited each time he exorcised bad spirits out of me with his cane. He would begin by reading from the Bible while flexing his biceps.

Sometimes, he would open the book of Proverbs and read a chapter. With each verse, his hands would strike me into oblivion. At the end of each beating, we would recite the grace together. He was a religious fanatic, and it was evident God punished sinners for even the little things.

My mother was different from other mothers. My father's hatred for me made her very angry, and she began to hate me too. Hence, I grew up feeling scared, and I told Winifred everything. So she knew about it.

It was my thirteenth birthday, and my mother was putting on her favorite dress—the green one with the protruding belly that matched her eyes.

"John!" she screamed, her veins bulging. I walked out of the corner I had been hiding in for an hour and knew I was in trouble. She glared at me and then started pacing the room.

"I am sorry," I whispered. "I didn't know." I didn't need to hear her say it before knowing I was wrong. She eventually stopped staring at me, and I could finally breathe again. Just as suddenly, she spoke.

"What did you do to my mug?" she fumed.

"Mom, it wasn't me," I said. "It was Jasper." I pointed at my dog.

"It was Jasper. We played, and he jumped on the table and knocked over the mug."

"You shameless liar!" She grabbed me and removed the belt hanging from her waist. She muttered prayers with each lash that landed on my back. The minute she was done beating me, she dragged me into the kitchen and placed my hand on the hot burner.

"Mom, please!" I yelled.

"Now, how does it feel?" she said with a grin.

"Mom, it hurts so badly," I cried.

Mom laughed vengefully. "This will teach you a lesson," she retorted. "Don't touch my belongings."

The next morning, my mother walked into the house with a woman in a light gray suit and a black briefcase.

Mother had accused me of attempting to start a fire. To demonstrate, she showed the woman my hands. I said, "I got this burn yesterday, and it was due to my mom putting my hands over a hot burner."

My mother snorted, declaring, "It's true that my son has a mental illness."

I was taken to a facility where I spent the next few weeks learning how to handle mental illnesses. When I returned, my mother was wailing in the doorway. She hugged me lankily and nastily, grinning deviously through her tears.

"I'm sorry," she murmured as she held me tight. Her gaze spoke volumes about her plans for future mischief-making.

Everyone was affected by my parents' divorce, especially me, since it happened when I was young and powerless.

Winifred was aware of all this, so she knew what she was talking about. God had abandoned me just like my father and made sure I received the same punishment. I remember one day, she came closer to me, running her fingertips across my forehead, and she said,

"John, you must stop blaming God for all that has happened. Return to this faith and allow God to be your Father." I uncurled my fingers from her touch, flinging her aside in the process.

"You don't know what you're talking about, Winifred. I don't need a father, and if I did, it wouldn't be God. I will not return to a religion that has made me who I am today!"

"I have no choice," I responded before exiting the room.

That was our final conversation. The rapture occurred the next day, and I lost Winifred to God forever. Again, as usual, God took everything away from me.

The Solitary Room Part IV

Recalling Tribulation and Post-Rapture



I was brought back to the present by a slithering movement to my left. I found myself in the dismal chamber again, with words scrambled over. This took me back to my most traumatic memories. My heart pounded against my chest in fear as I closed my eyes and attempted to make sense of everything that was happening without revisiting my worst memories.

Something crawled by my left side, and I shrank from the motion while turning my head to look away, only to see a red, long, slithering locust. The locust reminded me of the ones from when the beast ruled. They would bite you, but you wouldn't die.

The memory of the impact sent me screaming once again, and the pain of the locusts returned. It forced me back into my previous memories as a captive under the beast's reign.

The Beast and his mark

Immediately after the majority of Christians were taken from the Earth in the rapture, everything was in danger and turmoil. The people who remained were afflicted by epidemics, and each viral outbreak caused them to fight to survive. But death was out of reach. Swarms of locusts came from the west, making life unbearable. They stung us for five

months and the pain was so intense that we wanted to die. Only death was not possible. God would not allow us to escape the pain from the stings. There was nowhere to hide. Borders were closed, and the fear of catching new illnesses kept everyone indoors in constant hunger, sickness, and discomfort. Living in such a chaotic world was unbearable. But out of the blue, a superhero appeared and seemed to erase everyone's problems. His name was "The Beast," and he started a movement that changed the entire world.

A new alliance government was formed that controlled the tax, education, and health care systems, as well as every other institution known to humans. No one could question this government's decisions. Economic growth occurred, and with central coordination in place, life became promising again.

In the process, this autocratic government implemented a program that required everyone to have their mark on their forehead or right hand. It was advertised by the media as a progressive way to ensure control and accountability. It made absolute sense! But my prior knowledge of the Bible made me suspicious. Nevertheless, I took the mark anyway. After the hell-on-earth I'd experienced, I wasn't going to discard the opportunity to live a good life.

The Solitary Room Part V

I am not alone



I gasped when I felt the electric shock from the door of my solitary confinement cell. I was relieved when I wasn't chained to my memories anymore. This room must have been for revisiting bad memories. Looking back, I couldn't remember seeing the locust-like beast as before. Once again, I asked if it was just my imagination or if the room was making me go crazy. Alone in the room, I felt like someone was watching over me. Was this hell?

"What is this place?" I softly gasped for the umpteenth time, wide-eyed as I looked ahead.

Something else felt odd about the room. It meshed my soul with uncontrollable gloom. It was almost as if it had a life of its own and wanted me to suffer. "Hello...is anyone here?" I called out, hoping someone would answer.

I introduced myself and explained I had never done anything wrong before. "The candy thing was my way of showing my resentment. My mom never..." I said, and then my voice trailed off. "...never liked me."

I was so upset that I started crying. "Someone, please talk to me," I begged. But there was silence in the room. My painful memories were still too loud to ignore. I didn't deserve this, so I got up and stood firm. If they caught me, I wouldn't sit still. In a desperate effort to find a way out, I looked for a

window, a ladder, or even a door—but there was nothing. Suddenly, the echo of my thoughts broke through the rumbling silence. I recognized what sounded like another male's voice.

"Hello, John," the voice said. It was booming and deep and came from inside me. I wasn't sure how deep it was, but it was very deep.

"Who are you?" I asked.

"You don't want to know," the voice said. I shivered against the cold wall. Someone was speaking from inside me; yet, the person wasn't me. Was I possessed?

"Who are you?" I mumbled.

"Pride, John," the voice softly replied. "Pride has always been your downfall. It has caused you to make the wrong decisions throughout your life."

"I'm dead, right?" My hands shook in anticipation. "What is this place? Is this heaven or hell?"

"Neither," the voice said. "This is a holding prison while you await the great white throne judgment. You're here to remember and reflect. It is called the solitary room."

"Remember what?" I snapped. "I don't want to remember."

"You need to," the voice said. "It is a necessary part of your judgment."

"What should I remember?"

"Your sins, past decisions, and rejection of the life of Christ," the voice said. "You claim that you've suffered more than anyone. Others have suffered more, and you will soon learn how much more."

"I didn't commit those sins intentionally; the world pushed me too far," I said.

"There was nothing I could do," I said. "You murdered my Anita, raptured my beloved Winifred, and abandoned me to sorrow. What alternative did I have?" I pleaded.

There was no response. Instead, something else occurred. A severe pain forced me to the ground and filled me with agony from the inside out. My muscles bunched together across each other, drawing tightly until my joints were strained and I was short of breath. With each labored intake of air, the agony increased dramatically. Seconds ran into minutes, minutes into hours, and hours into days. Every day was just as painful as the first; the intensity remained the same, as flaring as when it began. "I'm sorry," I cried out in painful regrets for blaming God for my situation.

Interesting thing about pain: From the standpoint of reason, pain is a good thing. It works as an alarm that goes off in your brain, telling you when something is happening that could hurt your body. For example, if you get too close to a fire, your brain will tell your body to stop because it's dangerous.

Pain also begins the healing process. The dead can't feel pain. If you hit a dead dog, it won't bark. Pain signals there is still life in something, no matter how bad it seems sometimes. Pain gives you hope that your body will go through the path of restoration and be healed again. Even during painful experiences, sometimes the body finds relief when the healing process starts.

After thinking about it, I realized people who have not accepted Christ can't relate to pain in the same way. The pain

I felt never stopped. There was no promise of healing or assurance that my body would get better.

This kind of pain was uncomfortable. It made me feel heavy and left me breathless. It went through my bones and into my soul, and I hated myself for rejecting the Healer, Jesus Christ.

"No! No! No!" I screamed at the voice in me. "I've suffered enough. As you've said, I've been horrible and have made grave decisions. But, that shouldn't be something worth remembering, should it?" I fell silent.

"Please take me away from here."

"No," the voice finally replied, softly as before, "but I will show you a place."

My body floated in the room. The ceiling above me burst into fire, in which I was engulfed. Then the floor beneath me started to burn too. It melted away like an ice sculpture in a kiln. In my mind's eye, I could see flames of hellish intensity engulfing half of the world and consuming everything. My eyes adjusted to the darkness, and then I gazed upon the inferno and its overpowering blackness.

At times, the fire bellowed down, and at the same time, it rose up. People crammed themselves into each burning structure; screams rent the air, and my ears bled with pain. The cries were the most heart-rending noises I'd ever heard, and they haunted me for days after. When they brought me back to prison, I asked only one thing: "Oh, my God! What was that?" My suspicion was confirmed.

"That was hell," the voice said.

"I don't want to go there, ever!" I pleaded, "Please, let me be with my family. My daughter, Anita, I want to see her."

"You can't be with her," the voice replied. "You have taken the mark of the beast, and you are awaiting judgment."

The last statement hit me like a punch in the gut. I felt weakened. Yes, I had taken the mark of the beast. But wasn't it harmless?

"It also forced all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and enslaved, to receive a mark on their right hands or foreheads. So that they could not buy or sell unless they had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name." (Revelation 13:16-17).

"It wasn't my fault."

"It wasn't?" The voice taunted.

Anger filled me again.

"God could have kept me with my wife and daughter, but He took them away. It was always about his anger. My mother didn't want me. I stole because my father beat me, trying to get the devil out of me. My wife was taken away during the displacement of the chosen ones. Did I ever have a choice? Was I chosen? I chose to be branded because that was the only way to save myself."

The voice whispered softly as if to comfort me as I leaned against the harsh walls. "Do you want to see Winifred?"

A window appeared before I could nod yes, and there stood Winifred, glittering and smiling in her angelic robes. I watched her in silence. In that gaze, more was said; yet her smile remained.

"You loved your faith more than me," I accused her, finally breaking the silence. "You had your chance," Winifred

said. "But you didn't take it. You could have come with me to heaven."

I scoffed at this. "How is it?" I asked with interest, bracing myself for her response. But in an instant, Winifred vanished.

I was startled when I saw her. I wanted to look at her one last time before she left, but the window was gone. I looked where the window was and started to cry because of all the memories I had lost and the times that I could have spent with her if things were different.

"No, no, no," I said to myself as I remembered these events. "I don't want to remember these things again. I have suffered enough."

Or have I?

Love or Unprovoked Murder?

Remembering Mrs. Catherine



I tried to lead a normal life in my neighborhood. I played with my dog Jasper in the fields and attended Sunday service with my mom like every other kid. But I always made sure I arrived early for Sunday school so I could get Mrs. Catherine's delicious homemade cookies before anyone else did. Her cookies usually came in several forms—angels, animals, supermen, and even babies.

I looked forward to knowing what shape we'd have each Sunday, relishing that I'd get to eat another of her unique creations at church and her home later in the evening. The day Mrs. Catherine handed me a dinosaur-shaped cookie, my eyes brightened and glinted as I jumped in excitement about the unique shape. "Oh my, oh my, I'm about to gobble up a dinosaur."

Mrs. Catherine was loved by everyone. She was always happy and wore colorful evening gowns with unique patterns. We compared her to Mother Teresa of Calcutta because she was so kind and loving. Mr. Elton, her husband, had a beautiful singing voice that rang out during services. He was also very kind and loving, and the kids looked up to him.

The couple spent a lot of time with us in the neighborhood, telling us about love. Mrs. Catherine would sit on the balcony of her house and talk to all of us kids. I would

go over on Sunday afternoons and eat cookies with her and the other boys. For hours, we would listen to her talk about love and then move on to Bible stories while drinking chocolate milk.

Love?

Mrs. Catherine talked for a long time about the power of love. I thought she was going crazy when she started talking about a guy like this. How could she be so passionate about a man and also express her devotion to Him in public? Wasn't her ideal spouse enough for her? I wondered.

After another passionate episode of love, I spoke to my close friends Randy, Bridget, and Foden about it. I said, "Look here." I pointed at the cookie in my hand. "I don't know what's going on with Mrs. Catherine. That woman is after another man," I exclaimed.

"An older man," they said, laughing at my absurdity. Bridget pinched me and whispered: "She was talking about Jesus, the Savior. If you had stayed at church, you would have known this."

Stuffing another half of my cookie in my mouth, I looked at her quizzically, eyes narrowed in youthful confusion. "But does Jesus Christ love us that much? I mean, would He love Mrs. Catherine more than her husband does?"

I thought to myself that what she was saying was crazy. I knew about Jesus, but the Jesus Mrs. Catherine referred to was still alive. She used to act out His story dramatically, and she always had a sparkle in her eyes.

I was stunned the following Sunday when I heard Mr. Elton declare his devotion to Jesus as well. Wasn't Jesus the same individual Mrs. Catherine loved? I couldn't believe what

I was hearing. How could a wife and her husband love one man?

I had heard about this man. He came to the world as a Messiah. I knew His name: Jesus Christ, the Nazarene. I knew what color His clothes were: white robes. And I knew where He stayed: Heaven, no doubt. But I didn't understand why He died for us all. According to Mrs. Catherine and all the Sunday school teachers, it was because He loved us. But even though He loved them, I doubted He even knew my name, much less where I lived or what was going on in my life.

I asked myself, "What is love? Have I ever loved someone or has anyone ever loved me?" The questions plagued my young mind, racking it with inquiries that had no answers. I was sure about my dog's value because he was my company in my misery

In my wanderings and sojourns, I could not discover or understand love. It thickened my heart with more perplexity. How could I relate to something I didn't understand?

Mrs. Catherine was always looking at me in a way that made me feel uncomfortable. She tried hard to persuade me to talk, but I remained silent. As a last resort, she told me about her lover.

"One certain time in the distant past, a powerful man owned everything we see today in the world. This man also had a beautiful farm over which he placed a man, asking him to manage his property. The powerful man gave the farm manager the chance to do whatever he wanted, but he told him not to eat from a specific plant. He said if he did, he would die."

In anticipation, I interrupted her, my face filled with the excitement of the privilege of a story without the other kids. "Why? Was the plant dangerous?" .

"It was," Mrs. Catherine said, a note of pain and despair in her voice.

"What happened? Did the farm manager get close to the plant?"

"His wife did," Mrs. Catherine said.

Her eyes widened.

"She didn't eat it. Did she?" Mrs. Catherine responded sorrowfully, "She did."

"Oh! That's sad," I said.

"She not only ate the plant, but she also gave some to her husband."

"And the husband... did he eat it?" I rose from my seat, eager.

"Yes, he did."

I was in a frenzy. "Why would he eat the plant? Wasn't he afraid of dying? He was the one the powerful man told about the plant, right?"

"That's right, John."

"He ought to have known better."

"He ought to."

"And both of them died," I added.

"You are correct. They both died," Mrs. Catherine said.

I grew silent as my mind filled with images of a bony-faced farm manager and his plump wife's lifeless bodies. My

cookie slipped out of my hand in shock. Mrs. Catherine picked it up, dusted it, and placed it on my lap.

“If you were that powerful man, what would you do?”

“I’d bring them back to life,” my face lit up, and I replied instantly.

“That was exactly what the man did.”

I exploded with excitement. “Wow, you don’t mean it!”

Mrs. Catherine waited for my excitement to settle. “And how do you think the powerful man brought the farm manager and his wife back to life?”

“Well, I never thought of it. Now that you’re asking, I think it must have been magic.” I said with conviction, flexing my small arms.

“The powerful man was neither a magician nor a wizard.”

“Okay,” I said, standing and raising my hands. “I guess since he owned the entire world, he called all the doctors together and told them, ‘Fix these guys, will you?’”

“Just like that,” Mrs. Catherine said, beaming.

“It isn’t impossible, rig—”

“John!” My mother called from a distance.

I stood up and without looking back, I ran up to my mom. She was waiting by her cream pickup van. As always, the trip home was quiet. “Are you going out with an older woman now?” she asked as she stopped the car in front of our house. I tried to open the door, but it was locked. Then she started yelling at me. I tried to stay calm, but I was so scared.

“Mom, please,” I said, trying to sound calm. Then I saw her face and I closed my eyes, waiting for the hit. But it didn't come right away.

“Why were you with her alone? So you could tell her that I don't treat you well?” She took off her bracelet and slid it between us. “Despite your father's lack of interest, I do all I can to educate you properly,” she yelled as she hit me.

Before she could touch my face, I sensed the hit. When she beat me, I wondered what love was once again.

The next day I was watching the boys play football as the sun set on them. Their skins glistened in the evening light as they ran around the field in front of our home, which also served as a football field for the kids. As they went by with their brown ball, Jasper wagged his tail excitedly in a rapid back-and-forth motion.

Then, I saw someone who was smiling and appeared to be beckoning me. Was that God? I giggled at my own silliness as I gazed at the figure in the rain. The figure kept motioning and greeting me. I returned her smile. If love was like this, I wanted to keep on smiling for eternity. The image continued beckoning as I studied it, and I felt an inflow of joy course through me as I ran toward it with delight.

Mrs. Catherine was standing in the rain in a huge black coat and a yellow bonnet. Her glasses were drenched with water spots all over them. She usually donned flowing gowns, but because of the raincoat, she looked youthful and attractive.

“Mrs. Catherine, what are you doing here?” I said, beckoned, and ran over.

“Two things,” she said, smiling, and shivering, “to complete my story and give you this.”

She handed me a box. I was thrilled—the drizzle, the gift, and Mrs. Catherine's proximity. It was time to meet the powerful man, finally.

“I'm all ears, Mrs. Catherine,” I said with a ghost of a smile.

The powerful man did not allow the farm manager and his wife to perish. He loved them so much that he let his own son die in their place.

“For God so loved the world that He gave us His only begotten son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

I was confused and disappointed. I had expected something amazing, in the style of a powerful man who rules over the dead and the living, a man who would go to Earth to rescue the farmer and his wife.

“The powerful man let his son die in their place because he loved them so much. How come? I thought you said they ate the poisonous plant together. How did the strong man transfer the poison to his son after eating from it himself?” I inquired, my perplexity growing as I mulled over each word.

“Remember, he created the whole earth and was a powerful man.”

I thought about the story.

“Are you talking about what God accomplished through His Son, Jesus Christ?” I asked, raising my hands in resignation.

I couldn't deny seeing it coming. It was easy to see that Mrs. Catherine's narrative would always refer to God's love.

She nodded, and I looked away to the field where the boys were playing. One fraction of me was ecstatic, while the other was dejected.

I felt Mrs. Catherine's intense stare, but I couldn't hide my disappointment. It was the same old boring story to me. To me, the powerful man murdering his son was not love; it was **unprovoked murder**.

"I'm here to introduce him to you formally. I perceive you're going through a tough time. You are a really strong boy. Accepting Jesus into your life will change you completely."

It wouldn't. I loved going to church and attending Sunday school, but becoming a Christian, as Mrs. Catherine put it, was a big decision, and one I wasn't interested in making. If He loved me, as I was told countless times, why did He allow me to be born this way? What kind of love subjects one to a life of misery?

Mrs. Catherine's voice jolted me back to reality. "John, this may be the most important day of your life," she added. "The Lord directed me here. He says you are restless; you may never have another chance like this again. Accept Christ as your personal Lord and Savior."

"No."

"What did you say?" She watched me, pity shadowing her beautiful, aging face.

With all the courage I could muster at thirteen, I stood and puffed my chest. "I don't want to surrender to Him. If He's so powerful and loves me, then why would He let His Son die for a stranger? How is He any different from my father?"

Refusing to be bribed, I dropped the cookie box and ran away.

The Court Room

Memory of my first courtroom experience



I remember the first time I visited a courtroom, I was with a lawyer friend. This would be my first of many visits to the courtroom. The accused that day was an unusually wrinkly 80-year-old woman. She had a mesh of tissue scars in the hole that had once housed her right eye. Tissue was meshed together to form strings of ruffled skin. Although she was eighty, she looked more like she was ninety in her oversized gown, big, cheap boots, and frail frame.

Mrs. Rose Norfolk, the widow of the Duke of the City, who had died many years ago, was one of my earliest memories. Mrs. Rose recounted how she met the Duke at an old Baltimore hotel where she worked as a maid in her early twenties. She described it in a soft and pleading tone. Hers was a Cinderella story, delicate and lovely, with the Duke playing the part of her ideal lover.

Sadly, our beloved prince charming was a lover of young people and had been courting several adolescent females while married. Mrs. Rose, on the other hand, averted her gaze each time, clinging to the faint hope that one day, the Duke would recognize his faults and stop forcing minors into his bed. Despite this terrible secret, she kept smiling.

However, dear Prince Charming was also a very jealous man. He always got mad when he found Mrs. Rose happy and pretty. One day, he got so mad that he removed her right eye. And just as always, he begged for forgiveness. But this time, Mrs. Rose had had enough. It was early on a Saturday morning, and she made his favorite coffee—black and bitter. The next day, she buried him in the backyard of her estate.

The Duke's body was discovered fifty years later, and the cold case was reopened there. On the stage stood Mrs. Rose, now a grandmother, with a group of women, many of them elderly, who had been sexually abused by the Duke as teenagers.

Everyone in the courtroom remained still, listening to all the details as the case opened. The team of prosecutors mounted fresh evidence, produced thick files, and submitted them to the court. Here was a woman who had lost her husband, her youth, her sanity, and her eye and had lived with the guilt of a dead husband for fifty years. Yet, emotions never win in a courtroom.

All in the courtroom held their breath as the judge signaled that the court was in session by banging his gavel on the bench. In the end, we all wept for Mrs. Rose as she didn't get justice in court.

With so many prosecutors, this courtroom was the only thing I remembered when I was abruptly awakened as the sounds of millions of trumpets blew a long and sustained note in synchrony and the great iron doors of the solitary room flung open. I hated the sound of trumpets—they were so loud and obnoxious. Every time I heard one, it felt like a drill going through my head. I couldn't stand them.

The Great White Throne

Separation of the Sheep and Goats



I suddenly became weightless and rose toward the gate. As the noise increased, it sent shivers down my back. I closed my eyes, thinking about Mrs. Rose's eyes. I got lightheaded in the air, and my legs dangled beneath me. I was not falling, though. I just hung there. I shut my eyes, dread washing over each breath I took. The trumpets blared again, and this time, they were so loud they made my hands shake. I wanted to scream, but I couldn't.

My weight was pulling me down. I was falling endlessly. I prayed for someone to save me. Suddenly, I was thrown onto a large, shiny surface. When I opened one eye, I saw the biggest room I had ever seen in my life. It was decorated with gold and white. Chandelier-like lights hung from the sky in this room, and the beams and rays reflected on each other, sending light everywhere.

The great white throne of God was a sight to behold. It was a celestial terrain that glittered and sparkled with purity, radiating luminous splendor and heralded with beings too wonderful to describe. Still, it was God's outer glory that overflowed from His temple. The minutest fragment of God's wholesome and majestic aura edged out the dazzling sight, and before it, I was as bare as stone. There was no place to

hide from His glory. There were no shadows or darkness. The light shone so brightly that darkness had no place or space.

The left, right, and center walls were the brightest in the room. The entire chamber was covered in gold, yet it glittered like diamonds. A magnificent white throne stood in the middle of the chamber, with stairways that went on and on to reveal an even more breathtaking sight: THE GREAT WHITE THRONE!

On either side of the stairways were elders with wide grins and gold-plated hair. They all bowed in unison. Their robes were clear and sparkly, and each one was overflowing with happiness. They radiated joy, which came from within them as they bowed and rose continuously. Each side of the great white throne was so tall that my eyes could barely see its end. Winged celestial creatures were flapping their golden wings in synchrony on either side.

People's voices rose from the right side of the great room, where the golden city stood. They were speaking different languages: Greek, Italian, Chinese, and Roman. These languages merged to create a symphony of octaves that transcended human languages. The people in the golden city were laughing and leaping with joy, and their spirits were filled with happiness.

The glorious city was protected by a dome. It looked like a geranium. Within the dome were tiny castle-like structures, and each resident had his own castle. Pure gold was used to create these tiny citadels. I recognized Winifred, Anita, my family, and my friends among the throngs of people in white robes, golden crowns, and limitless happiness.

Winifred wore her smile with her characteristic dimples. But something was different this time. Her beauty was like

Mrs. Catherine's—ethereal, pure, and flawless. She glowed and looked young, without the wrinkles I was used to seeing on her face.

I saw friends and family and the guy from my office. Yet something else was unique—everyone was ageless. Everyone appeared in the physical form and age at which I knew them the most. I jumped and waved, spreading my palms haphazardly toward the side, but they couldn't see me. They giggled as their voices rose in cadence as they exclaimed, "Hallelujah!" asking only to live together, love, and worship God. I pictured myself in the dome, in my castle, gallivanting about in my white garments while everything remained unchanged.

I was still on the left side, ignored by those in the golden city. I despised my frail body, bleeding ears, and my life. My desolate condition disgusted me. The anger I felt gave birth to resentment. Why did I give up my life for such selfish and sinful desires? The Bible foretold all of this. But I still hoped things would change. This was far worse than the previous confinement. I was bursting with rage. None of this was my fault!

I was the one with an abusive childhood. Guilt pricked my skin, and I shed the layers. I didn't know who God was, and it wasn't my fault that I refused to believe in the same person my father called his God. How could the same man who told my dad to leave us also claim to love me?

I felt that living as a Christian was like living in slavery. I saw this from Mrs. Catherine's life and the lives of a few other faithful people. They behaved as if they had no control over their lives. They talked to a Being whom they couldn't see or touch, calling it prayer. But to make this thing work, you had

to believe the Being heard you. And Christians were expected to behave and think the same way Christ did. Furthermore, they had to recognize the Lord as King over their lives and do exactly what He said. If one morning the Lord says, "Hey, son, don't touch your breakfast today. We need to talk," the typical response should be, "Yes, Lord."

I didn't know this Jesus; was I supposed to give my life to Him? Was it my fault that I chose not to trust Him? Was it? I shed the guilt, even as it overpowered my mind and taunted every breath I took. The resounding no I told Mrs. Catherine filled my mind with unique tones and octaves, all echoing and reverberating until I could no longer stand it.

I screamed, my hands pulling at my chest to pluck the memories out. My legs trembled and gave way. I wondered if it was hard to say yes to God. Should I have given Him a chance? I sat, my lips quivering as I asked myself questions I had already forgotten. My eyes became blurry as tears streamed down my face with vigor. I gasped for breath as I tried to suppress the tears, yet they flowed like a deluge, spreading wetness all over my tattered, filthy garments.

Anger and guilt warred in my thoughts. I was furious with myself for being so stupid and not seizing all of the opportunities I had been given to follow God.

These citizens of the golden city would never understand what it meant to be John Williams.

"For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it" (Luke 9:24).

It was hard for me to say yes to God. But if I were honest with myself, I always knew God existed. There was evidence of Him all around us—in the beauty of nature, for example.

And my conscience bore witness to this. I also wondered about the brain behind these amazing scenes, like a magnificent mountain or an intense waterfall. Someone must have created all of this.

I studied sociology at the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom. I learned that societies function because they have structure. When legal and administrative measures become obsolete, disorder is sure to follow. But I didn't consider the person who created this order. Even during the rule of the beast, people could see something was wrong with the world. But they just didn't know who to blame.

I began to understand Scripture better. I had never studied the Bible before, but now I could see I had been ignorant of the truth. Once, I saw a man who was very excited as he preached by a waterfall in Chester, NY. He had a strong Northern Irish accent, and his voice was very sharp. I admired his energy as he spoke about the great white throne and how it separates the sheep from the goats.

The words of that preacher stood as a witness while I was before the great white throne. His words blasted like blaring cymbals in my ears. He said: "That day will be great. You will stand before the white throne and remember these words. By the God I serve, you will. The goats will be separated from the sheep. Woe to you if you find yourself on the left-hand side of the Great and Mighty One. That will be bad news, brother. It means you are one of the goats, people that God does not like."

That day at the waterfall, the preacher's voice was nothing but a cacophony of mucho gusto. I loved how he put energy into his words and found it tremendously thrilling. I imagined he would make a great salesperson. But his

message? It was the same boring stuff my father preached all the time.

I tell you the truth, the goat and the sheep thing isn't a made-up fable, nor is it by any means figurative. I saw them. They were as clear as the linings in a silver sky. The sheep wore white clothes, had glamour splayed on their faces, and were unworried. On the other hand, the goats had anxiety written all over their faces. They were restless, agitated, sad, and fed up. I shifted my hands away from my face to see where I stood on the left in a long queue of similar tattered and frail people. "Who will plead my case?" I thought. "What chance do I stand before the great white throne?"

I wiped my tears with the back of my hand and puffed my chest out to look strong. Then I prepared to present my case to God as strongly as possible because He is just, isn't He?

The sound of trumpets bellowed again, and the ground trembled. I felt goosebumps all over my body. My resolve wavered, and I shook. I glanced everywhere but not at the golden city. I focused on the person in front of me. He didn't have to say a word for me to know some basic information about him.

He had worked as a scientist for the Nazis in Auschwitz and subjected Jewish prisoners to cruel and inhumane experiments. Later in life, he worked with a red-label organization. I could sense he became a nuclear scientist and the genius behind a chemical weapon that killed close to a million people. Unfortunately, he died from cardiovascular disease.

I looked behind me and saw a man, a Duke, who had raped teenage girls and tortured his wife. He died from food poisoning.

Even though I didn't do anything nearly as bad, I still felt scared. I told myself I stood a chance, but I wasn't sure if that was true or not. My hands started to sweat, and I trembled because I was worried about what might happen to me if I didn't survive.

I told myself, "You have a chance." I clenched my fists and tried to comfort myself with these words. I had not killed or raped anyone. I was only a victim of circumstances. I repeated the words until they felt true, but doubt crept in. My palms started to sweat, and I trembled as doubt overwhelmed me. Maybe I didn't have a chance after all.

When I saw Him, my whole spirit was overwhelmed. The trumpets began again; billions at once rent the air of silence as the sounds penetrated my eardrums fiercely. I gasped for breath. I coughed and attempted to breathe, but it was practically impossible. My eyes watered again, and my temperature rose in my clothing. This was the final summons.

The Great One entered in a crescendo of words, voices, and music. Everyone sang in a variety of languages and tones like an orchestra of song that filled the space with notes. Worship poured out, extolling God, who rides on the cloud. Angels dropped to their knees before His feet. Everyone fell before Him, and the winged creatures at the throne flapped their wings harder, adding to the glitter and glamour. Who could resist His glory?

I had heard of the Lord's awesomeness. I had listened to Christians recite lyrics that tried to describe how great God is. They combined metaphors made up of precious stones such as jasper, gold, silver, and anything else their minds could comprehend, aided by the Holy Spirit.

When I stood before Him, I saw it was impossible to accurately describe the Great and Mighty One. Human language couldn't bring Him to life vividly. The lifting of gates made His coming alone possible, and the pulling down of everlasting doors.

"Lift up your heads, you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, you gates; lift them up, you ancient doors that the King of glory may come in. Who is he, this King of glory? The Lord Almighty— he is the King of glory" (Psalm 24:7-10).

I kept my head bowed. We all did. The judgment began. It started with people who belonged to the household of faith, the sheep.

People on the left waited without knowing what would happen to them. We had no idea what our fate would be. We only felt a sense of doom, as if we were being punished for something we did wrong. And we knew that this punishment would last forever.

Satan and his assistants moved around in a box on the left side of the room. They were getting ready to condemn us. We saw Satan as we looked at ourselves in the mirror. He had lots of paperwork with each person's name on it. As he shook the files, his flock of winged creatures flapped their arms violently in the air as if enraged.

The great white throne was a courtroom where the passage of time did not change our judgment. There was an oval cubicle overlaid in pure gold. Angels surrounded the cubicle, each wearing an expectant face. In the middle of the table was an elevated throne, on which the Father of Light

and Judge of both the living and the dead sat, presiding over the court.

Before Him, a file of books on which the deeds of every person who ever lived were recorded. Each person's life file showed up in a book. In the middle of the cubicle was a brass bowl that bore the Lamb's blood. The blood represented how sheep overcame, destroyed their files with Satan, and found it difficult to take their form.

They obtained the form of Christ and vanquished Satan and his foes using the blood's power. Satan, the attorney, could not bring a charge against any of them. However, in our situation, it was different. It was him versus us; he and his accomplices were eager to accuse us.

When it was my turn, I fought back the urge to break down and cry. I wished I had a defense lawyer. I wished I didn't have to stand before the judgment throne. I wished I had led a normal childhood and was raised by normal, caring parents, attended church services with a clean and open mind, and lived like every other kid. I wished God would see my suffering the way I saw it and experience the bad days the same way I did. I wished God felt the torrents of emotions as I felt them.

I wished any of the twenty-four elders would take a break, alter the hand of the clock, go back to Ohio, and live the life of John Williams from infancy to this present moment. If any elder did that, he'd have no restraint opening the door to the glorious city for me.

I wished I could go back in time and do things differently so I would have a better life. This included having a loving, respectful family where everyone got along. I also wished I

hadn't done things that broke my spirit and made me see life differently; if only I could rewrite my story.

"John," the Mighty One spoke through my heart in a peaceful, lovely, powerful yet soft tone, "You have said well."

I trembled as my eyes dilated. The Lord had heard me. He was speaking through me. He was hearing my words. Teeth gnashing, lips quivering, and coughing, I said, "My Lord, I didn't mean to put it that way."

"What claim do you bring to my court today?" the Great One inquired.

I breathed in and out rapidly, blowing air through my mind. This was my chance. This was my chance to defend myself.

"Mm, my Lord, I suffered on Earth. A man shouldn't suffer as much as I did."

"True," the Great One paused.

I counted my breaths as fear gripped me. Again, I must have said something wrong.

He continued, and I exhaled, "But I gave you the chance to live beyond the natural."

I fell silent, my heart roaring against my chest. "I was blinded, my Lord."

"I gave you sight."

"I was lost, my Lord."

"I sent people to show you the Way."

"Was Mrs. Catherine You?"

"The Chester, NY preacher was Me as well."

Mrs. Catherine's words filled my mind again, and I tried not to listen to her. I didn't want to see her smiling face in the rain. But then her image faded away, and she became Winifred, and the memories jabbed me. The shrill voice of the Chester, NY preacher replaced Winifred's soft voice, and I pulled at my ears, screaming in agony.

I was tired and sure of my suffering. So I screamed the words out. They were my reality from childhood. Weren't they the reason I didn't accept Christ? Doubt clung to me, and I shrugged it off.

"Do you know what suffering is?" the Great and Mighty One asked.

For a moment, my heart stopped beating. I puffed my chest and said, "Yes."

"You talked about altering the hand of time. Didn't you?"

"Yes, my Lord," I said and waited for a reply. When none came, I added, my heart now beating faster, "I didn't know my thoughts were that loud."

"Nothing is hidden from Me."

"Every creature is aware of this eternal truth, my Lord."

"Do you also know that with Me, nothing is impossible?"

"In the little time I've spent on this side of the universe, I have rightly observed that all power belongs to You and there is no invariableness."

"You wanted to have time at the tip of your finger. This you will. Being the first of its kind, I pass this verdict to you. You shall return to the Earth. You shall go through seasons. Seven seasons in all. Each season, you shall put on the form of a different person—seven persons in total. Then, you shall

return to the solitary room at the end of a season, where you will reflect on your sojourn. Finally, you shall return to court at the end of the seventh season."

I smiled, "Your judgment, my Lord, is forever gracious."

What a session!

Seven Seasons of Judgment

The First Season

True Innocents: The Unborn Child Experience



One minute I was talking to God; the next minute, I felt a strong surge of energy go through me. It was like a knife cutting off my air supply and sending me back into space. Then I wasn't in the room where the Lord's presence exploded.

Whether a baby or a tree, life starts small. For a tree, life usually starts with a single seed, which grows slowly, developing roots and leaves until it becomes a majestic tree with many branches.

For an individual, it all starts in a woman's womb, an environment conducive and safe for the fetus to grow until maturity. I was like a small seed as tiny as the soil in an oven-like place with no air or light, yet, I was comfortable.

I had no legs, eyes, or skin; I was a mass of blood clumps, hoping and praying to live in this comfortable, yet, stagnant place so I could live to my full potential, my purpose. There was no day or night in this gloomy, humid place, and I kept tumbling about. My cries and screams produced no sound. I wept and wailed, but nothing changed.

Gradually, I grew until I became a fist-sized cluster of blood cells jumbled together.

A sharp tingling hit my ears, and they rang for a long time—a shrill, thin, and sharp sound. There were too many sounds outside of this place called home that I couldn't tolerate. However, I was ecstatic since I could hear again at last.

"Stop it!" Someone screamed from outside. I cowered as I retreated deeper into the space. Suddenly, there was a loud crash and then silence. I trembled. What was going on?

"I'm four weeks pregnant," my mother cried. My body shook with anticipation as this woman's heart pounded as if expecting something. There was silence after that, and my mother's heart rate slowed as she sobbed in agony, flooding my tiny mass of blood and tissues with water; her feelings were mine, and likewise, mine were hers.

Whenever she was happy or afraid, her heartbeat raced erratically, and on days like this, I receded into the corners, afraid to move or shake. And when she was sad or hungry, her energy level drained, and I starved. She was sad and fearful simultaneously, always on the edge, and her heartbeat was erratic. I longed to comfort her in my tiny corner and perhaps tell her to take it easy. Could she not see that whatever she did affected me as well? We shared the same compartment for now. When she ate, I ate. If she drank, I drank too. She ran; I ran—the list was endless.

Unfortunately, my mother never quite reached a state of inner peace, and, as a result, my growth was hindered. The situation deteriorated with each passing moment. I wasn't receiving enough nutrients to meet up with my daily needs. It was five weeks. What was going on? Weren't the people out there happy I was coming? I coiled up further, afraid.

"We are not having a baby now!" another person screamed. My mother's heartbeat rose in tandem as she

clutched the compartment that held me and squeezed. Someone kicked this compartment, battering me with an iron-like object. I ran about in agony, but there was no escape. My mother was no longer breathing well; her heartbeat slowed so much I held on to the walls of this compartment, praying for a miracle, even as the kicks reduced in frequency until they ceased. Someone was beating my mother.

"I am that baby's father, and I have the right to decide as well," the other person said.

The pain of rejection can be terrible. It may not be that impactful for fully grown humans since they have many options to pick from. I mean, it's pretty difficult for someone to be rejected by everyone. One person has to accept you and love you for who you are. Yet, I knew only one person, and there was no place to hide, so it was tough to accept I wasn't wanted, even in the space where I grew up.

The events that followed eventually revealed concealed facts. My mother picked herself out of her mire of sadness. Her heart rate returned to normal, and she began moving us about once more. I caught a whiff of affection, and I eased back into my cocoon. My mother started resting well, eating properly, and getting enough sleep. So did I, but the dread never left me. Her devotion screamed insincerity; she was too cheerful, in my opinion.

So, it wasn't a shock when substances that hurt me entered my safe space. Although I didn't know what they were, I had never needed them before, and each time, they hurt me deeply. The purpose of the introduction couldn't be mistaken, the intent misunderstood, or the effects on me forgotten. They wanted to take me out; they tried to kill me.

I plunged into despair. What had I done? Did I do something ignoble or unbecoming? Had I incurred the wrath of anyone from this impasse world of mine? Why did they want me dead? To be rejected was one thing. To live in constant fear of being killed was another. Living with rejection and the fear of being killed is terrible.

I had to learn the hard way. I had to accept living with severe aches all over my unformed body. I learned to silently bear the burden of a crime that wasn't mine. My mother forced me to live under harsh conditions. Even so, I refused to give up hope. I had a mission in life. My mother became agitated and restless; she stopped sleeping and eating at night. It was eight weeks now.

The intent to snuff out my little, dangling light was still strong. But my will to let that light burn, come what may, was much stronger. I had a purpose, and I was going to live. So, the tug of war between life and death lasted. It was twelve weeks. Hell broke loose each day, but I kept up the good fight. I had a purpose. Twenty-two weeks passed. I couldn't wait to hit the road. A while longer, and my perseverance would pay off.

With no warning, a brilliant light burst in. It was a tiny aperture. Voices were hushed as people conversed outside, but I couldn't understand what they were talking about. Nonetheless, it didn't matter. "I was about to be born soon," I reasoned with delight, squealing and giggling. It was finally time for me to fulfill my purpose.

The opening got wider and wider, and I started seeing images of the outside. For the first time, I saw a picture of a whole person. It was a portly baby who dangled from the wall. How could this be? A man in white robes appeared before me. He moved quickly. "Oh, boy," I thought, "today is your lucky

day." To verify my preconception, I looked for proof inside myself. I discovered one clue there. I wasn't fully developed, so what's the big deal?

The man in white would be my right-hand man, meaning he would usher me into life.

"Hello, man in white. I'm good to go. Are you set?"

I longed to hear the man tell my mother to push, but she was sleeping. Her heartbeat was relaxed. She must have been sedated so she wouldn't be aware of what was going on.

"Would I come out through the belly? Was it a C-section? I mean, not everyone goes for a natural birth, right?"

The opening, however, wasn't a cut. It was the natural birth canal. So, I was expecting to see the hands of the doctor reach in and deliver me into this fantastic world.

To my chagrin, I saw a claw-like instrument heading toward me. The man in white needs to be careful; otherwise, he might harm me. To avoid being harmed, I scurried away to the other side of the room, but another tool approached and seized my legs first. I screamed as the plier-like device twisted and contorted until it fractured my bones.

"That hurts. What are you doing to me? Will you please stop?"

Jab.

That was my toe.

I screamed, "My goodness! Will you please stop butchering me? I'm not a chicken. Can't you see?"

Jab.

My right leg was gone.

I resorted to empathy as I wept, but there was no sound besides the man's heavy breathing. Maybe the man would change his mind if I appealed to his emotions. Even if I did, the man wouldn't hear me and certainly would not listen. The pain surging through my body was overwhelming and unbearable as they ripped apart my flesh from tendon to limbs. My thoughts cleared, and I realized I was in a clinic, not a hospital. I was being aborted! I was John Williams, the unborn child who never had a chance to live.

A burst of strength went through me, and I was back in my solitary chamber, sobbing loudly as I yelled in agony, my voice now loud and reverberating throughout the room. His unheard screams echoed in my head like a chiming church bell, tormenting me. And the devastation of being ripped apart overwhelmed me.

"What did he do?" I screamed. My voice was hoarse, and the words echoed back at me.

Nothing.

He was a shining light and a man on a mission. He was to advance the helm of justice and let peace reign. Equipped with an unwinding heart and a mind not easily waved, he was to be an unbiased judge who would fight for the rights of the oppressed and set the captives free, including those wrongfully imprisoned.

I sat in the dark room and recalled the baby who was murdered—death by detachment—my chest hurting from anguish and my throat raw from sobbing. If I were God, I would deal severely with the parents and those involved as accomplices. Those individuals had minds that were more banal than any animal.

Comparing my experiences as the unborn child to my life, I saw parallels. He didn't have a chance, but I did. His pain was unavoidable. They murdered the unborn child in cold blood. I could have prayed to God for protection and healing. The unborn child could not pray and was not protected. However, the child will be in heaven. As for me, well, we have to wait and see.

The Second Season

Experiencing the Man with a Smile



Once again, my spirit departed my body. This time, I was in a man's body. Let's call him Albert. Unlike the baby, who wasn't allowed to fulfill his purpose, I was in a man, and I knew I was in him. Our souls merged so that I could see life through his eyes and experience his pain. Unlike every other man, Albert, a short, wiry man with a limp in his left leg, was not desired by anyone. He was thin and pale, and although he was thirty years old, he appeared much older. No one treated him with sincerity, and that itself agitated my spirit. I was in the body of a man no one loved or cared about, and I could do nothing about his situation.

Albert was a sharecropper in Mississippi. He worked hard on the land every day, but he never got anything out of it. The landlord would give him a set amount of money, no matter what happened. As the landlord got rich, Albert became weak and tired. Eventually, he was sent away with nothing because he couldn't afford to stay anymore.

Albert worked hard and eventually bought some land to farm on. However, that year, a huge flood ruined all his crops. Albert was forced to sell the farm and served under a cruel, mean Hispanic boss. The boss would hit Albert every day while he worked. Albert did this for seven years until he

saved enough money to move to Michigan and start his own grocery store.

Fortunately for Albert, the store he started in downtown Detroit became prosperous. Albert's yellowish-white skin glowed under the influence of money, and soon he saw a woman whose heart he longed for—Rose.

Rosaline was a petite woman with green eyes and dark black hair who charmed Albert; he soon ordered her flowers from France to win her affection. She succumbed to him before the season ended, and they were married at the church downtown. They had three children: Michael and the twins.

However, on the twin's fifth birthday, tragedy struck. After working hard the night before to prepare for the twin's party, he woke up in the morning to the news from his closest friend and employee, Alvaro, that his store was robbed over the weekend and burned to the ground.

The following Monday, Albert had already spoken to his insurance carrier about the tragedy. His agent reviewed what happened and explained how much the insurance covered. They submitted a claim. The next day, the insurance firm sued Albert because they claimed he had maliciously set fire to the business to profit from them. Alvaro, his employee and friend, testified against him in court and said that he saw Albert burn down the store. It didn't take long for everyone in the street to brand Albert as a desperate and dangerous person.

He sold his house for a cheap price and took his family with him. He drove to his old friend's house, who lived in Oklahoma, in an old truck that served as both a temporary home and a way to get around. But after two days, they had to leave because the friend's house was too small. His wife was forced to move back to her parents' house with the kids, and

Albert went to his parents' home in Florida. But his father called him aside that night and said in a stern voice, "Son, you can't stay here. We're barely scraping by."

The next day, he left his hometown back to Rose's parents' house. They weren't just wealthy, but they also lived in a large house, where he prayed he might stay with his family for a few days until he could get back on his feet; he could also get a loan. However, they were angry about the situation and sent him away in the middle of the night, leaving him with nowhere to go. So he returned to the only other area he knew in downtown Detroit, to see what he could possibly accomplish at the location of his former store.

The store was rebuilt and had a new owner, Alvaro, the same employee who falsely accused him of fraud three weeks after the fire. Albert went to see Alvaro that night to ask why. Albert questioned Alvaro, his lips quivering in response to the power of the words.

In a hooded jacket, he sat opposite the man who had taken away everything he'd worked for, and yet all he could say was, "Why?" There was so much to say, but that one word mattered. He raised his voice once again, this time barely above a murmur.

"Why, Alvaro?" He removed the hood, revealing his small face, that had become saggy over the last few days. He touched Alvaro, who refused to turn after hearing the familiar voice.

"Alvaro, why?" Alvaro walked away faster without saying a word. The next day, Alvaro filed charges against Albert in the local court for attempted murder. Alvaro made a false claim that Albert tried to kill him, but his dog saved his life. Unfortunately for Alvaro, fate was not on his side this time, and he lost the case.

Albert, on the other hand, chose not to sue Alvaro in court. He decided to leave it all up to God. Because I was part of Alberto, I was angry at this decision and thought Albert was an idiot, lunatic, and weak. He was desperate, but he still had a smile on his face.

Albert eventually took a job in a factory. He went in with an open mind and was willing to learn. The operations manager valued him highly because he had been taught all his life to trust in the good and give everyone a chance. As a result, everyone admired Albert because he was kindhearted and helpful.

They got Albert to take on the position of a regional manager because of his honorable conduct. He did not let them down. He performed his duties with the same enthusiasm and diligence that he began with. But soon, jealous co-workers devised a plot against him. They charged Albert with money laundering, and a local judge sentenced him to seven years in jail for a crime he did not commit. In addition, his wife, hearing of the news, filed for divorce.

Albert was released from prison when he was 37 years old. His wife had moved back to Detroit, but she was married to someone else, and his kids no longer acknowledged him as their father. He had nowhere to go and no one to help him. He was very unhappy to work. I was angry with all of the people involved in his situation, but there wasn't anything I could do. I knew everything about the guy, but it didn't make me feel any better. God allowed this to happen for a reason. In one life, I was John Williams; in the other, I was the man whose thoughts made me very angry. He nodded his head and accepted everything that happened to him calmly. I wanted to fight for his rights, but I couldn't do anything because I didn't

have a voice. His voice was mine, but I couldn't control what he did.

I needed to take his body and descend on Alvaro, giving him the beating of his life, but my legs wouldn't move on my command.

I did nothing because I was powerless to help this man, Albert, who had been forced to survive on the streets and beg for money. My fury increased with time, and I came to despise the individual himself, his smile and apparent dim-witted behavior that got him into trouble. Alvaro deserved what he was going to get, but I couldn't do anything about it. So instead, I began telling people about the man no one wanted every time someone walked past him. Although I was aware she couldn't hear me, a youngster once dropped a dollar bill in the man's bag, and I began again.

"Life, my pretty angel, doesn't always give you what you deserve. Everyone who knew this man who is begging for your penny rejected him. You should count yourself lucky."

She walked by without looking back.

A woman walked past me without a glance as she ate a hot dog. I called out to her, "Can't you see this man needs some money?" But she didn't listen. Over time, I just watched and flowed with the situation.

I wondered what would happen to us as the weather turned to winter and before the clouds changed to gray. I had concerns and desired answers. Where would we get clothing and warmth? Would anybody who passed be charitable enough to offer shelter?

I felt worried because I didn't get any answers to my questions. I didn't know how we would be able to survive in

the open. The weather was getting colder, but Albert stayed positive and greeted strangers with enthusiasm. Then, suddenly, Albert's spirit left him, and I, John Williams, remained in the body, as if it were my turn to take action.

"What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me. I have no peace, no quietness; I have no rest, only turmoil" (Job 3:25).

Finally, I could communicate with other people and be heard. I could go wherever I wanted. I was free from the trap. But someone else's happiness was taken away for my freedom. After spending a few months as a spectator inside his body, another thought lingered in me—revenge. It was finally time to pay a visit to Alvaro.

I dusted my dirty clothes and walked the short distance to Alvaro's home. The wind had gathered and was blowing hard. I needed to do what was right: fight for what was rightfully his. I sneaked into the house through the window. My heart seemed to stop when I saw Alvaro asleep on a sofa. That made me angry; I had endured the cold of the nights, my teeth chattering, while he was there in front of the fireplace, resting on a couch and dozing off. My fisted hands shook from the cold and my fury. I tapped his head, and he sat up, his eyes widening as recognition dawned on them.

I replied in a mocking tone, "Your time is up."

Alvaro asked, "What do you mean by that?"

I smirked and said, "Don't you speak English? I told you your time was up."

Alvaro said, "You don't want to do this. I have six cameras in this room; you can't get away with it."

"Thank you for that piece of information," I said, not afraid and unbothered by the new information. Clearly, he thought I was the same Albert he knew, the one who took nothing to heart. He was mistaken. I laughed again and attacked him, venting my disappointment, misery, and anger at him.

I thought of my previous journeys, taunts, and Albert's family. I had nothing to lose. So I kicked him with all my might. As Alvaro's wife (Albert's ex-wife) hovered at the edge of the room, her terror grew greater, becoming more intense as she gazed at me beating up her husband. She saw me pummeling him.

"Why?" I asked. "Why did you abandon him, your lawfully married husband, for a moron who cost him his business through lies? Why did you go after a guy who shattered your family?"

Rose yelled as she moved closer, "Get away from me, you lunatic!"

Alvaro staggered to his feet, bloodied, yet, desperate for revenge. He charged at me like an angry bull. I saw him coming out of my peripheral vision. I knew if he hit me, it would probably send me reeling and writhing in pain. But I couldn't move. Rose's words played over and over in my head until they became a loud symphony. I couldn't lift a finger. Alvaro descended on me like a starving tiger. When he couldn't get any more pleasure out of me, he hurled me out of his home into the snow.

Rose stood in the doorway. She stared at me for a long moment before slamming the door shut and retreating inside. She never returned my gaze. I felt a strange sensation in my heart. The power of love moved through me and warmed the tears on my frozen cheek. I considered love to be a feeling. I

believed it was based on the sight and majesty of things. Love, I thought, was confined to the teenage years and limited to the indigo sky of adulthood. My assumptions were incorrect. I did not know what love was because I had never experienced it in my entire life.

I prayed for someone to help me, but no one came. I knew the man I was with had lost the battle. He held on to happiness and life and refused to let them take his joy away. Even though his friends had abandoned him, his parents rejected him, and his wife and three kids had deserted him, he fiercely guarded his joy and made sure that no circumstances in the world robbed him of it. In fact, he overcame life despite living in a society where there was no love or compassion for him; he did not want to be defined by it.

"They have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, and no mercy" (Romans 1:31).

I struggled to my feet, ignoring the pain. With considerable effort, I continued with the man's life. Winter's cutting cold was far more distressing than Alvaro's fists and a dozen times more devastating than my love story that had gone sour. I believed I would pass out from the cold.

"Death, when will you embrace me?" I cried, screaming at no one in particular.

"I can't bear this cold a second longer."

"Please let me have just five minutes of warmth, and I will be grateful for eternity. Please let me sleep in a cozy bed for just one night, and I will thank you forever."

Yet, nothing changed. On winter nights when the icy wind paralyzed me, I thought about his children, who rejected him, and their mother, who slammed the door in my face.

I remember the day she called me a lunatic. But that didn't stop me from getting up every morning. Christmas came with its dazzling lights, but I was alone in the streets until a fever took hold of my body. That evening, my warm soul departed my beaten body as I lay outside on the icy sidewalk, having lived the life of the man with a smile.

Sharp pains assaulted my body again, and I was back in the solitary room. The person whose life I was blessed to live was a treasure. He had his heart set on God. Every day, he smiled at tough times and carried the cross over his body. He devoted his life to worshipping God. His heart sang hymns and melodies in his mind, and he raised his hands in praise. He rejoiced when it looked like his beliefs would suffer more rejection, but even though his life was worthless, he still lived for God.

I wanted to scream, shout, or cry, but I had no energy. So instead, I coiled up in the corner of the solitary room and stared into empty space. As I thought about the man's life, I trembled.

Everything he did was done with the best of intentions and in the most polite way possible. He was that guy whose life was devoted to pleasing the One from whom he was created, as well as the people placed on his route by God in His infinite mercy. He bore immense pain throughout his entire life, yet his smile never faded.

I had endured most of my suffering growing up, but I blamed God for it every second of my life. As understanding washed over me with dread, I shook again. There might be a chance for me; then I trembled even more.

The Third Season

The Young Soldier's Experience



As I was reliving the pain over and over, my spirit once again left me, and I was in the body of a young, abused boy. Unlike my previous experiences. I could only watch and wait as he was mercilessly beaten.

The boy, young David, hacked and coughed as he gasped for breath while his father continued to strike him. He put up his hands in surrender and said, "I'm sorry, Daddy. I won't say no to a fight ever again." He heaved until he couldn't breathe anymore.

But on this particular occasion, young David had initially refused to fight. As a result, his father hit him in front of his mother until he complied. The fights were scheduled every Saturday when the father came from the local tavern, usually drunk beyond standing. With a beer bottle in his hand, the father would call his twin boys into the living room. He would usually place an open beer bottle against the wall at a 45° angle and leave six empty bottles around it.

He would sit in the rickety reclining chair, front and center, by the fireplace, eyes red, enormous stomach protruding and quaking, while his knees shook. The youngsters would stand before him at arms' length, so he could easily hit them if required.

He would start with a disgusting burp, his eyes straying to his wife, the boy's mother, who peeped from the door with a void expression on her heavily bruised face. The event was neither new nor unusual. So each time, she stood at that door, face blank and body trembling, as she watched her husband order her twin boys to beat each other to death at the command of their father.

Every weekend, Daniel, the slightly bigger of the twins, would win. This would cause wounds to form on young David's body until his skin became a map of his shattered soul. Their mother was powerless, no matter what occurred. Every day, the man would beat her with abandon for minor faults as if she were a punching bag. She shrank in her frumpy clothing; her matted hair thinned out; her sagging face aged, and the scars on her body increased. Her purple back represented an image of sorrowful harmony made up of many beating scars that merged to form an exquisite representation of desolation. She was helpless and could do nothing about the weekly battering of her sons.

The following weekend, after the father beat young David, the stakes changed, and the boys trembled in helplessness as they rushed to their mother. "Mommy, we don't want to fight today. We don't want to fight. Can we just go outside and play with each other?"

Daniel's eyes glistened with tears as he glanced at young David's swollen eyes and immediately looked back at their mom. She drew the boys closer to her bosom as the tears fell in torrents, and shook her head. She embraced them tightly and, without provocation, pushed them away. The two boys staggered back to the living area, their bodies dripping with sadness.

Their father laughed when he saw they didn't want to fight. He knew they were scared. Then he said, "The stakes have changed." He paused and coughed. "Whoever loses today's fight will have to battle me." He picked up a beer bottle from the floor and took a large swig. He stood up and spat the beer on the boys. Then he drew an imaginary line in front of them and said, "The battle line is drawn."

Young David attacked his brother as soon as he could, remembering the beatings from the previous week. Even though he had never beaten his brother in a fight, he felt compelled to do so now. He couldn't face fighting his father again, no matter what happened, so he threw punch after punch at an unconscious level, obsessed with wondering what would happen if he lost again.

But Daniel was scraped, and he fell to his knees, clutching young David's arm. Daniel coughed up blood as he battled to rouse his brother out of his frenzy. Daniel was too locked in a panic to defend himself against him, and he became reliant on a wheelchair for the rest of his life.

The twins grew older; they never spoke to each other again after their father's death. No matter how much young David attempted to communicate with his brother, Daniel remained silent while gazing ahead into space and ignoring him.

This grief led young David to paint, telling the tale of his emotional, physical, and mental abuse through each brush stroke. The paintings showed a boy whose life was a nightmare. Monsters who chased him in dark corridors haunted his dreams, demanding his flesh and life. The monster was the stranger who kept combing his hair in a distressed manner. The strange man seemed disturbed by it as well. But then again, he wasn't furious, just frightened that

no one could understand him or that they might think he was like them. He had this sensation before whenever someone new entered his life. It felt as if everything was spinning out of control, yet, at the same time, there was something comforting about it all.

Young David had nightmares about a monster whose face morphed into his twin brother's. The nightmare always ended with screams of "Why have you broken me for life?" Sometimes, the monster appeared as his mother, crying silently for help. And on rare occasions, it appeared as his father, laughing in that crooked way and telling him he was just like him. On most nights, when he awoke, breathless from these dreams, the boy rushed to paint, making heavy and light strokes in a flurry of emotions.

"They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them" (Romans 2:15).

When he was eighteen, the form for the US army was published. Young David enlisted when he ran away from home. He broke all of his paintings to break free from who he was becoming. Then he went to his brother's room and knelt in front of him with the enlistment letter. Daniel read it carefully for a long time before slowly shaking his head no. As they made eye contact again, his twin said softly, "Never come back to this hole. Run! Run far!"

Young David soon turned into a young soldier, and that soldier became a man.

As he raced toward the base, two feet at a time, rumbling thunder and lightning lit up the horizon. Bullets were carried deep into targets by torrents of wind. The moaning and

screams of the soldiers were heard in every direction. David ran as a bullet passed him, Bullet-dented bodies scattered across the ground, and the man in front of him dropped dead. He stepped on the lifeless body as he rushed forward; it was critical to reach the base without being killed.

David finally reached the top of the base, beaming with pride as he ran the last few strides before a bullet shattered his shoulder. He made his way to the doctor on duty, who immediately doused him with disinfectant without notice. In anguish, David rose from his seat and convulsed in pain, his muscles and veins swollen.

The doctor said, "I'm sorry, but I'm not going to give you anesthesia. I'll give you something to make you sleep instead." The doctor stitched the young soldier while he screamed. The soldier's view blurred, and he fell unconscious.

The next morning, David was no longer inside his own body. Instead, I was alone in the body of the young soldier. As I considered all of the challenges I would face while in this new body, dread rose up within me. For a long time, I looked at my reflection in the mirror, examining each scar and shuddering at the scars on my new skin. The flesh on this body was engorged with fresh welts, both purple and dry ones, which represented his painful journey.

As soon as my shoulder healed, I was rushed back out on another mission. I was part of a Special Forces team sent to the Kalahari Desert to confront a band of militants who were residing in the wilderness. It didn't make sense that terrorists would be hiding in the Kalahari jungle because it's so dangerous due to landmines and predators. It was said that no soldier had ever emerged from the forest alive. Ten of us were sent there, nonetheless.

When we got close to the jungle, I had a panic attack. I said, "I'm not going into that jungle." The commander looked at me and then away. He didn't want to deal with me. The other fighters agreed with me. They were scared too. But when the commander told us to keep moving, I asked him if we could wait one day before going in. He said no and went into the jungle anyway.

The woods were thick with many different trees of various heights, and, from time to time, the wailing of wolves was heard. A soldier emerged from behind me and gently patted my shoulder. "Thank you for rescuing me."

I looked at him empathetically. We both knew what was happening; this could be our last conversation.

"I did nothing." I smiled softly. "I only saved a wounded soldier. You would have done the same had the roles been reversed."

"Still, thank you," the soldier said as we both stood up.

I had a feeling I wouldn't make it out of the jungle alive. With every step, that feeling grew stronger. I was exhausted from walking for 72 hours straight, and the cold was so piercing it made my teeth rattle. Our clothing blended with the surroundings so well that we moved like graceful lions. Every step was critical, and we needed to be careful not to make any noise. We were walking on "landmines," and anything could happen at any moment.

Captured and Tortured

The sound of gunshots pierced the air. I heard a rifle, and something hit me. I blacked out. When I woke up, I was in a dark room. Someone threw a bucket of water at me, and the

cold water made me shiver. I tried to stand up but couldn't because the pain in my calf was so bad.

"I don't want to waste your time and mine," my captor said seriously. "I know you American soldiers can be stubborn, but let's not make this hard." My captor signaled with his index finger as he said, "I will ask you one question. And you will provide the answer."

I stared at him expectantly, and fear crawled further up my spine with each passing second.

"Where can I find the M6 explosive?" he asked. I looked at him in confusion. I had never heard of that before. "I'll give you the benefit of the doubt," my kidnapper said as he raised his hands. He yelled so loudly that his voice shook the basement. Other captives were visible behind him. In a rage, he dealt me a blow to the stomach.

"The finger, my captor said, showing me a box I didn't know was there, "was not designed to go through pain." He ran his hands over the box as he talked. "I believe you are aware of this, soldier."

I nodded.

He grabbed a sledgehammer from the box and, with the metal head, went to work on my body. He ran it over my skin and then stopped at my finger. He placed my thumb on an iron plate and delivered a blow. Bolts of agony shot through me like high-voltage electricity. It pulsed through my veins and made me shake violently. I could barely hold back the tears in my voice as I yelled and cried out. The door slammed shut and locked, and my captor punched me.

The pain was unbearable. My lips wouldn't cooperate when I tried to speak. He struck me again, and I screamed. I

saw myself in hell, screaming in agony, "I can't take this any longer. I can't."

"Where can I get my hands on the M6 explosive?" he asked, striking harder.

The rain pounded down on me, and my body turned into a pillar of fire. My flesh burned in the rain; yet, I remained frozen. All at once, I was both hot and cold.

"How about I smash all your fingers, soldier?"

I couldn't speak or take the torture anymore. My captor untied me and pushed me to the ground. Then uniformed men descended on me and started pounding me. It felt like I was dead for a moment, but the pain told me I was still alive. They hung me upside down on a pole and tied my hands and legs together. They lowered me into a boiling pot of water over and over. My body was scalding while I was also drowning. They considered my silence as resistance, so they tortured me until I died.

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

I was back in my solitary room as soon as I gave up the ghost. And all I could think about was the young soldier's life, from birth to his adult years, which were filled with violence, especially the constant guilt he must have felt for crippling his brother.

We both had unfair and suffering childhoods, but my experiences failed in comparison. I know. I just lived his life.

He had a tremendous tolerance for pain at all levels. But the suffering he went through as a POW was simply too much for any human being. He would not go down as an unsung

hero. His name would not be listed among the fallen. He would not be honored with medals of valor and presented with neatly folded flags; he did not deserve his body's final resting place.

The Fourth Season

Experiencing a Slave on the Run



I was in deep thought about my experiences thus far when a familiar feeling began to stir in my body. The suffering of these season are weighing me down, and I don't know how much more I can take, and I still have four more to go.

This time I was in the body of a man running for his life away from a farm. His name was Ja, and he was tired of working in the fields and getting whipped. He wanted to be free. The wind blew through the corn field, and the leaves rustled as he kept running, not stopping to catch his breath. This was his chance to escape. His skin was brown like gold, and he wasn't supposed to be a slave. His master cared more about his dogs than him.

He ran quickly through the endless corn field. He had worked in it every day for the past eight years, but now it seemed so much bigger. Even though they were slaves and tended to different areas of land, He always thought the end of the property was where he could see with his own eyes.

But as he ran, he realized that wasn't true. The end of the property was much farther away than he thought. And even though part of me wanted to believe he would be free from Mr. Thompson's land soon, another part of me knew that wasn't true.

Ja thought about the ocean and how he couldn't wait to go home to his father's property. There, he wouldn't have to worry about people looking at his scar, and he could go to school and eat like other kids.

Recalling Captivity

Ja's father was a well-respected chief in Africa; his mother was a successful trader, and their family had no shortage of the necessities of life. That's why his father would never have sold him. His sister Je and he went to elementary school in the morning and retired to their mother's store in the evening. There, they ate delicious food like steaming pap and bananas dipped in fresh, glistening palm oil while counting stones. They completed their schoolwork with the open-flamed lanterns that they occasionally used while gathering insects.

As the last child of his father, Ja was the disobedient one who got into trouble every time. He was causing havoc, starting disturbances, or simply being a participant in the mayhem. He would rather stay at school to play with the other boys than accompany his sister to her store. The other boys and Ja would play until the crows went to sleep, until the twilight fell and night prevailed. But one time, they didn't go home.

They were all captured and put into a large vehicle. More than fifty people were crammed together in the vehicle. They were taken away from their little African village and exchanged for money. Then, they were put on a ship with many other people. The boys and Ja huddled together, trying to stay warm. Their chains clanked against each other as they shivered from the coldness of the sea.

They were kidnapped and taken to a place where they would be either murdered or made to work hard alongside other people of different skin colors. They were all shackled together. Each morning, they would be escorted outside where they could urinate, and then they would return inside and be fed only water at set intervals.

On this ship, Ja encountered an old woman, Ka, from his hometown. She and her 14-year-old daughter were kidnapped while on their way to the farm. Because of his well-known stubbornness, she recognized Ja, and on that boat, they all became like family.

They all told stories from the village to raise their spirits, but by the seventh day without food, their throats were sore. They escorted the young girl, Ko, into the ship captain's chamber each night. One day, they threw her into the river. The Captain said Ko cried too much and was uncooperative, so he smacked her with a club. That day marked the end of the old woman's speech until they departed Africa for the white man's territory. She would gaze into space for hours, clutching her breasts.

A different kind of mark: Branded like cattle

When Ja was purchased, he was lined up with other enslaved people. They were all naked and waited for someone to pick them up. They were commodities and looked at as nothing by white masters who filled the purchasing area. They would banter until they agreed on who to buy. Usually, grown men were bought first.

The chains were tight and dug into Ja's body as he was forced to stand up straight. I couldn't believe what was happening as I watched through the eyes of Ja. They were

being treated like livestock, even though some were respected members of their communities who had been kidnapped.

I felt Ja's hunger because he hadn't eaten well for months. But these people didn't care. They were treated like animals being bought and sold in the market.

When Ja's owner arrived, I was still confused about what had happened. I watched as a white guy with bright green eyes, long blond hair in a ponytail, and a hefty physique pointed at Ja. I felt Ja's terror because he, like me, didn't know what it meant. His owner looked at Ja so intensely that I felt he could see right through Ja and see me. It was unsettling.

Ja was so exhausted that he just fell to the ground. The white man didn't say anything at first; he just looked at Ja. I could see he was trying to figure out what to do with Ja. Finally, he sighed and came over to where Ja was sitting. "Stand up!" he ordered.

The seller held something in his hand that I couldn't identify. Ja was guided from the stall like a horse. The buyer shook his head and whispered something to the seller. They pointed at Ja, smacked their lips, and then the buyer gave something else to the seller. The seller beamed as he beckoned for a slave to approach him. To conclude the transaction, they branded him with their property rights mark on his cheek.

I had seen other slaves go through the cruel branding ordeal. I had watched them cry out in pain, and I had shed a few tears for their sakes. But even though it made me shudder to hear their screams, it was not my pain. Now, it was my turn. Although Ja was being branded, I would also suffer the pain as well. Some men grabbed Ja and held him down. Ja yelled and cried for help as a red-hot iron traced a line across

his cheek. I felt the hot branding iron as it was embedded in Ja's skin.

The agony of the heat, the iron's intensity, the threatening grips of my buyers, and madam Ka's despair as she shouted at Ja while they passed by her stall haunted me whenever I closed my eyes. My mentality was perpetually affected.

"Ja, do not allow them to take your spirits from you. You are a man. Do not let them take that away."

The words echoed in my heart each and every day of occupying this boy's body during the eight years of slavery. The words from Madam Ka gave Ja the courage to plan his escape when the time was right. If he could just dash past the field, he would be free in no time.

Returning to the beginning of the story

This is what is happening to Ja at the beginning of the story. He was fleeing from his master's property with scars on the side of his face.

Footsteps approached, and Ja dashed about in a zigzag pattern, fleeing like a crocodile across an endless expanse; no matter what, Ja would not allow himself to be captured. He would rather die than be enslaved and returned back to his abusive master.

Ja was running down a rocky trail when he tripped and fell over a stone. Immediately, he got up and continued running. But then, two people grabbed him from behind. They pulled him back, even though Ja tried to keep going. After several people grabbed him, I sensed that Ja knew it was all over and he couldn't escape. He had to stay and be a slave. Madam Ka was incorrect in saying that men were only slaves

if they believed they were. But in the end, didn't they continue to be slaves? Ja closed his eyes as he succumbed to the beatings that left him unconscious.

Ja's spirit has left me

I woke up and found myself chained to a stake with other slaves gathered around me. Ja has left this body to me, and I must continue to suffer what he would have suffered.

I had injuries on my hands; my body was in pain, and I closed my eyes tightly. I refused to cry; if I was going to die, it would be like a man. Just like my master's son, who came from time to time to visit the plantation. My voice had become deeper, just like his; my body was going through the same changes as his, so I refused to feel anything less. I no longer wanted to lose my spirit, no matter what happened.

This was not the first time a slave had tried to escape, so the punishment was not new to me. I knew the master would come, and they would whip me one hundred times before being allowed to die. And yet, as the long, shrill sound of the gong that usually awakened us filled the place, fear crept into my heart.

The sound of a gong was used to wake us all up at 5 a.m. If we didn't get up and start working, we were punished. At 3 p.m., the gong would sound again. It meant it was time for an hour lunch break. At 9 p.m., the gong would sound once more, signaling it was time to stop working.

There was also another time when the gong would sound, and we were terrified because it meant our master was nearby and we would be in danger. They also used the gong as a signal for punishment if any of the slaves did something

wrong. When the gong sounded three times in a row, it meant someone was going to be punished, usually with death.

I was thinking about my master's words as he spoke. I realized his words were becoming a part of my life. I heard the sound of the crowd growing louder, and I knew that my master was already there. He saw me, and I had to think fast about what to say to him. Should I beg? Should I make up a story about why I needed something? My mind raced through several possibilities, but as soon as my master reached the arena and moved into the place where I would be hung, his words refused to leave my mind. He approached me and looked at me with anger. He took out his pocketknife and addressed the other slaves in a thick accent.

"I care for my slaves, and I treat them well. Every day, I give them a loaf, but this one is different. This one has made the mistake of wasting my money by attempting to run away. Look at him; notice how he looks at me." His brows furrowed as he spoke. "You never listen to the advice I give you, no matter how much I tell you not to run away." He climbed onto the podium and ran the knife over my skin. Its chill against the morning cold shocked me. "As a reminder to pay attention, I will remove this one's left ear." He amputated my left ear. After that, the other slaves wrapped it up, and they dubbed me Ja, the slave with only one ear.

I was a dog who only wanted to please my master. All I could do was cry out in pain while my master looked at me with what appeared to be sadness. Then I rebelled. I refused to listen to anyone, and I made a promise never to give up my spirit again. Even though I was a dog, I deserved respect and the same rights as other people. No one talked about it, but deep down inside, I knew that I could do anything my master could do. I also served a purpose.

"When you open your hand, you satisfy the hunger and thirst of every living thing" (Psalm 145:16).

I was living, and I contributed to the universe. I existed and thought, and I could feel. My unconscious mind learned how to communicate with others. This made me self-aware. I started to think differently than before, which caused problems with my master. He became harsher toward me because of it.

He whipped me, beat me, crushed me, grated me, and chopped me. He wanted to break my spirit. He tied me to a tree and left me there for days. He fed me just enough bread to keep me from dying. He needed me to stay alive so that other slaves would be scared. No one wanted to get near me because I was like a virus. I worked so hard that my master couldn't easily replace me, or so I thought.

I was working in the field early in September when my master came to me with a group of men following close behind. As they got closer, I raised my head from digging the ground to see them. Some had long poles with curved ends, while others were carrying clubs. One man rode on horseback, armed with a shiny blade. As they drew closer, my skin puckered with goosebumps.

I had never seen such an angry crowd in the fields before, and my heart started beating quickly. I knew I had done nothing wrong, but I sensed the group was coming for me.

The young, white lady I had seen with the master's son a few times walked ahead of the men, and she looked happy. I would have paused to admire her beautiful white skin, her waistline, and her grey eyes, but the people behind her scared me, so I returned to digging in silence.

I looked up and saw a young woman that appeared to be pregnant. She was looking in my direction and pointing. My heart raced as I prepared to run. It wasn't every day a white lady comes to the farm with men and pointed at a slave. I didn't know what would happen, but I knew it wouldn't be good.

The men who were with her looked very angry, and they came over to me. I turned around and ran away from them as fast as I could. I didn't know where I was going, but I had to get away from them. The mob was getting closer and closer to me, and they were getting more excited.

The speed and anger were confusing. They threw stones at me and shouted. A rider on a horse stopped the other slaves from helping me; they ran away in fear. Blows hit my head, and I couldn't breathe. My ribs broke, and my lungs collapsed. I was beaten all over my body—and my soul. A white horseman grabbed me as the others rushed at me. I was terrified and didn't know what would happen next. Would they kill me? Torture me? I could only wait and see.

I was barely alive and covered in blood when I stood. I saw men who looked as tall as trees, and I fell back. Someone held me down while they tied my legs to a cart. The cart galloped, and they dragged me along while dust, debris, and shame entered my sores.

I was injured and barely alive. The cart stopped abruptly, and they dragged and tied me to a tree. Now, I was standing in front of a council of white men, including my master and the young pregnant lady.

I closed my eyes and surrendered to the pain as they accused me of raping her. I knew I was innocent, but they didn't believe me. I kept quiet as they examined her.

Paralyzed by fear, I couldn't run or hide. If only they knew the truth, but how could I tell them that this body I inhabited was sterile and couldn't have possibly gotten her pregnant? I remained silent. The young lady's father had already decided my fate. There was no turning back now.

It was no surprise I was pronounced guilty, and they would hang me by the neck until I was dead. As the noose tightened, the rough fibers scratched my skin, and the knot dug into my flesh. The rope cut off my air supply, and everything started to spin. I was going to die. But before my soul breathed its last breath, I remembered Madam Ka's words: "Ja, do not allow them to take your spirits from you. You are a man. Do not let them take that away."

I was suddenly brought back to the solitary room without Ja's body, but still struggling to breathe from the rope choking me. However, his memories and life were still mine. I sobbed loudly and uncontrollably. I had to go through the agony of his death. I had to endure the lack of food and the inhumanity. How could people treat others so callously? It made me angry and sad all at once. I felt helpless. I could do nothing to change the situation.

Yes, Ja, the son of a king, was persecuted like an animal and treated as one. And why? Was his skin so dark it diminished him to a lesser human being? Was he so repulsive they made him into a tool of labor rather than a person? Was it his skin color or the disposition of people's hearts that caused him to be lonely?

What does this tell us about our society, if this is true? That we are heartless people who value power and money above human kindness. I refuse to believe that. Something must be lacking for things like this to happen. Society needs to

change so that everyone is treated equally, no matter their skin color or where they come from.

But then I remembered something Mrs. Catherine always used to say: "You can't change the world, you must change yourself." I didn't think I could do that, but I decided to try. I resolved the fact that I grew up rejected and unloved, so I rejected everyone because that is all I ever knew.

The words from Ka will remain with me for eternity.

"Ja, do not allow them to take your spirit from you. You are a man. Do not let them take that away."

"All have turned away, all have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one" (Psalm 14:3).

The Fifth Season

Experiencing Unfaltering Faith in God



This time, I was in a Jewish woman's body. At first, I was shocked to see the curves in the body I had taken over. But my surprise soon gave way to confusion. I knew myself as a woman, and being in another person's body scared me. But becoming a woman's body terrified me even more. However, despite all of this, the woman's form soon became my own. I was able to understand her past, as though I was reading her life story, but soon I would inhabit her body and experience everything that happened to her firsthand.

The woman's behavior confused me a lot. She was with her countrymen, but they were being held back by forces from other countries. They were all packed together, but she still had faith in her heart that everything would be okay. I was amazed that, in spite of her circumstances, she had so much confidence and faith.

She was more curious than fearful, despite her piercing eyes. This woman had suffered many hardships in life but refused to be labeled as a victim. She was quiet and mature. She moved swiftly and spoke softly. She sounded like a little boy with his pet cat. Her wonderful and loving spirit always believed, forever hoped, and was willing to forgive. She had lost her husband and two children—devastating situations

that would adversely affect most individuals. But the Jewish woman remained strong.

Her husband died after five years of marriage, and left her as a young widow and mother of two active boys. She mourned in the Lord, as she had been instructed in the synagogue as a child. Being the only daughter necessitated double dedication, according to her father, who was a rabbi in the synagogue.

She always wanted to be like Esther in the Bible and have a strong relationship with God. Esther was someone who believed her sense of selfhood came from Christ. She was willing to stand up for what she believed in, even when things were tough. Esther saved the Jews from death in a foreign land.

I wished I had known her name. One was not made known to me, and perhaps it was because God wanted her to represent all suffering Jewish women. However, this woman loved David, the man after God's heart. God affirmed him and said he was a man just like Him. It surprised her that even though David had killed many people in battle, God still loved him and thought he was special. But it was clear that these two famous people had gone through many tough times. David battled Goliath, and Esther confronted evil, supernatural forces in Shushan.

When this young Jewish woman's husband died of an illness just after their fifth wedding anniversary, she thought it was for the best. She believed God was trying to teach her something important. Every night, while weeping for the loss and pain in her heart, she filled the void left by the death of her spouse with Scripture while clutching tightly to her children as she smiled with hope.

However, there was only so much pain she could bear before breaking down completely. A year after her husband's death, just when she could sleep without prescription medications, tragedy reared its ugly head again.

Her two sons caught the flu that year and died. She lost three family members in a short period of time because of the pandemic. The pain of losing her sons and loved ones was so unbearable it threw her into a psychological crisis. She stopped going to the synagogue and roamed the streets searching for her kids, talking to herself, and screaming.

At last, she emerged from her bubble, praising God with all her being. She was a hero who sacrificed everything for those she loved. She never gave up praying or petitioning God for the strength to cope. The Bible was her only comfort, and Job's story was her favorite and most relatable in Scripture. She found the courage to get out of bed every day and had faith she would be fully healed.

She didn't give up when a foreign country invaded her nation and killed and imprisoned many people. As a captive, she fearlessly spread optimism among the other prisoners. They mistook it for her crazy episodes.

She didn't care what people thought about her or if they were afraid of her. It was not the first time she was in that situation. And she always managed to escape. She knew Jehovah, who parted the Red Sea and made the ancient fathers walk on dry land, would help her again.

She leaped to her feet and ran away from the other captives and headed toward the door, but it was closed. So she then ran to the other side of the room, where there were only a few soldiers. She opened the door and ran outside into the bright sunlight. The sun turned her skin into a golden

color. She laughed as she ran through the empty town. As she looked up, she saw the sun was setting. Hope arose in her heart, and she believed God was with her. Suddenly, she heard footsteps coming closer, so she started to run without thinking. The wind rushed past her ears.

She ran down the street, her dress waving behind her and soldiers pursuing her. But she laughed with joy. She refused to think about what could go wrong. All she could focus on was the exhilaration in her soul. Suddenly, she departed her body, and I became her completely. I was in full control of her body and her thinking. I wanted to scream at the irony of becoming her at a stage when I needed to run.

The transition was sudden, and my heart raced as I ran further. Obviously, I couldn't outrun the increasing number of soldiers chasing me; nevertheless, I wouldn't give up without a fight. I turned and ducked to avoid an iron crossbar on the right side.

I ran faster, covering more ground. The soldiers didn't see the crossbar, and they hit their heads on it. They grimaced in pain for a second, giving me time to run ahead. When I got to the junction of a long road, I flew into an empty candy store. I gasped for air and hid behind a counter. I peeked out to see if the soldiers had lost sight of me. One soldier went left down a road parallel to my route, while the other went right down another street parallel to my path. The few opened boxes of sweets on the floor took me back to when our town came under attack.

Jews worldwide were under attack. I was mad at the widespread persecution of my people. No matter where we ran, we were not safe. The Jewish race was in danger of extinction. Jerusalem was in pieces, and it reminded me of a

story from the prophets about a time when Jews were captured.

"How deserted lies the city, once so full of people! How like a widow is she, who once was great among the nations! She who was queen among the provinces has now become a slave" (Lamentations 1:1).

I knew a script was being played out against the Jewish people, as well as the rest of the world. But I also trusted Yeshua, and his awareness provided me with confidence and strengthened my determination. We had to do something. But we did not know what wrongs we had committed as the Jewish nation.

However, if you do not obey the Lord, your God, and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come on you and overtake you. The Lord will cause you to be defeated before your enemies. You will come at them from one direction but flee from them in seven, and you will become a thing of horror to all the kingdoms on earth. (Deuteronomy 28:15, 25)

The Jews hid in the shadows and were crushed beneath the feet of men. The impending darkness intrigued me, and I thought it would only get worse. We were like a tent without a covering; we couldn't worship, and God's light couldn't be seen. They condemned us without His light.

I emerged from concealment and made my way through the desolate city, where I saw dead bodies on the ground with flies buzzing around them. It was obvious the devastation was great when I saw cars parked on the roads and goods scattered across the floors of now-closed shops. People were killed in strange locations. The spirits of monuments and

structures remained, some of them still standing, and two youths' bodies hung from two shelves in a shop.

Night was quickly approaching. I breathed a sigh of relief, hoping for darkness to conceal my movements. But when I least expected it, a light flashed before my eyes. It was the soldier I'd met earlier. He excitedly alerted his buddies to my presence. I stood motionless and weary, anticipating death. The soldier tried to seize me by the neck but released his grip when he saw me struggling to breathe. I coughed out blood but maintained my resolve that if I went down, I would do it with style.

I refused to be scared, and the soldier was delighted in my discomfort. My body was begging for mercy, but I knew that wasn't going to happen. The people who attacked the Jewish population didn't care about human life. Expecting them to be kind or understanding was like expecting an olive tree to turn into a cedar tree.

Two other soldiers appeared, pushing four more people in front of them with guns pointed at their backs. They forced me into the line as they took us back to the city center, where hundreds of Jews were huddled together in the train station. They shoved us into an empty cart, kicking, slapping, and intimidating us with their shouts.

They continued to push us into the crowded cart, and we trampled one another with each step. Some people died, but the soldiers could care less. They kept packing more people in.

The train station soon became a war zone. Shots were fired at the village, and a big fire started razing the entire community to the ground. Troops ran back and forth, shouting at each other as they screamed above the rain of

bullets. Amid the upheaval, the cart rolled out as the weight of dead and living passengers slowed the journey considerably.

The box train slowly crawled out of the station and headed towards a new land. We moved through the woods for days in the overcrowded cart with only a little ventilation. We breathed in stale air. The cart was about thirty feet long and six feet wide, with no ventilation. People tried to position themselves close to the only vent, which was about a foot wide and two feet long and stood about six feet from the ground. That led to a stampede, but I refused to lose hope.

I knew the woman whose body I was occupying would hold on to hope in this situation, so I did too. No one spoke as we all grieved our shared and personal losses. Every one of us had lost one thing or the other—family members, homes, work, peace, and, without a doubt, the Jewish community. Our hearts were too heavy to speak. I gazed out the window. My eyes focused on whatever scenery was available as I tried to figure out where the cart was going.

We all knew we didn't want to leave our community. But we knew what lay ahead would be worse than what we were experiencing now. The people who had died had been spared what was ahead. Others would die soon, but they just didn't know it yet.

A part of us all died today.

The passengers, who were packed in the cart, emitted a strong odor of fear and worry. Everyone's eyes were filled with fear as we considered what else we might lose. They had driven us to live on the poverty line in recent months, taking away our livelihoods. We had to hide in the dark because we were afraid of what was next. They had crushed us,

dehumanized us, and reduced us to nothing. What else could they possibly take from us?

I was standing for a long time, and my feet were numb. I really wanted to fall, but there were so many people that if I did, I might get trampled. So I remained standing. I was also very hungry and tired, and my body was shutting down. The train went past some fields and ranches before arriving at a station. It gradually slowed down until it came to a blood-curling, screeching stop, and then the doors opened.

Normally, arriving at a destination is a time to be happy and excited. But this time was different. We were greeted by soldiers who yelled and pushed us off the train. We were very tired from the long trip, and when we got down, they started beating us. They ordered us into the woods and brought us to a large brown gate. It was nothing like the gates of heaven.

"Auschwitz."

Auschwitz was one of the largest concentration camps operated by Nazi Germany during World War II. The camp was located in the southern Polish town of Oswiecim, about twenty-five miles west of the then German city of Krakow. The Auschwitz concentration camp operated from 1940 to 1945. It was one of the largest of the Nazi concentration camps, comprising three major camps, Auschwitz I, Auschwitz II-Birkenau, and Auschwitz III-Morwitz, and forty-five sub-camps. Most of the victims were Jewish people, but also Poles and Roma (Gypsies) were killed.

We walked down a dirt path that was overgrown with weeds and thorns. The belts of the soldiers hit our skin as we walked. Some older inmates passed out. We kept walking, but if we slowed down, we were beaten by the soldiers. I was crying, but I wondered if the Jewish woman could remain

upbeat in this situation. Would she know something that we didn't? We were terrified when they led us through the gates to see a big brown house with high walls. Our group was separated by gender when we got there.

The men, women, and children were divided into groups. The sick and the severely wounded were set aside. I was in a group of women who appeared to be middle-aged or elderly. Doctors soon arrived to examine us after they split us up. They herded us into a large hall and stripped us of our clothes, jewelry, and dignity. Then the physicians probed every inch of our bodies, and the nurses shaved our heads bald.

After the doctors' examinations, we were divided into groups of two dozen and escorted to a dark room the size of a bedroom. It was horribly cold because there was no heater. A stack of burlap mattresses lay on the back wall, covered in urine and blood stains. A foul stench from the crematorium next door filled the air.

A very large soldier came into our cold cell while we were still nude and threw some tattered, brown clothes at us. Each of these pieces of garments had a numbered patch sewed over it many times. My number was 3512. The soldier brought in a pitcher of brown and dirty water. He spat in it and then gave each person a tiny cup to drink. We drank it without thinking because we were so thirsty. A moment later, the soldier came back in with a piece of bread the size of a pan of cornbread. He threw it on the ground and left, slamming the door shut behind him. We looked at each other uncertainly.

Then, all twenty-three captives fought for a piece of bread like wild dogs. They devoured it quickly. I didn't care. I

watched. I realized that life or death would be determined by the strongest ones. The bread was our only hope, so we would have to ration it in the future and make sure everyone got an equal share. But some people were never satisfied. They would steal from older or weaker ones.

I was starving, but I refused to eat bread that was thrown at me like a dog. The next night wasn't any better. A soldier came with a stick of bread, and we all looked at it with hungry eyes, hoping he would bring more food. But he just left, slamming the door behind him.

I was starved on the third day. I didn't have any energy left, and I lay on the floor because I couldn't stand up anymore. It had been ten days since I last ate anything. I only drank a cup of dirty water. Starvation hurt my stomach.

By the fifteenth day, a few inmates had died, and the cell was polluted by their rotting corpses. Living conditions got worse and worse; no attempts were made to make them better. My emaciated body fought hard just to stay alive in the terrible living conditions.

Shortly after they returned, the soldiers grabbed me by the collar and dragged me across the floor to a well-lit room. It looked like a hospital room. I passed out and couldn't remember anything after that. But I knew they took me to a laboratory where they were testing different kinds of drugs on me. The first drug made my whole body shake, and I woke up immediately. A man in a lab coat with a syringe in his hand waited for me.

The short, wiry, bald man approached me. I looked away. He had a stern countenance. The man in the lab coat told me to do a series of tasks, like adding numbers and reciting the alphabet backward. I did them without any hesitation. Then

they injected me with another drug that made me feel really good, as if I was floating in space.

As he came closer, I could see the wicked grin on his face. I knew what was coming, and soon enough, the serum was injected into my veins. My body started to feel hot as if it was on fire. I tore through everything in my path as my hands caused destruction. I let out a loud howl that sounded like that of a lion whose cubs had been taken away. The pain soon faded and was replaced by numbness. I no longer felt or smelled anything, including the antiseptic room or the hospital bed I was lying in. As I looked ahead, I saw I was halfway to being in hibernation mode.

A little while later, I returned to the cold cell. I was back to normal and could smell the stench of dead bodies. There was a loaf of stale bread and an awkward stew. I grabbed the bread and ate it quickly. But after the first bite, my stomach rejected it. I looked around the cell and realized that I was the only one there.

As the same soldier returned, I was scared. He came over to me and tried to grab me, but I bit his collar and pushed him away as hard as I could. Blood filled my mouth, and I spat on the ground just as the soldier knocked me down and tied me up. The soldier stretched me out on the floor with a broken nose and missing teeth. When he was sure I couldn't put up a struggle, he grabbed me by the collar and dragged me along the floor. I prayed earnestly not to be returned to the laboratory; this time, the faith the Jewish woman had might have been impossible to maintain.

They put me in a room with other women. We were all crying. I recognized some of the women from the box cart and my old neighborhood. There were also men and kids there.

They told us we had to take off all our clothes and that we were done with the hard part. Now, we just had to get clean, so they could let us go.

The youngsters were very excited and running around without any clothes on. I also saw a few men looking at me, but this was not the time to be modest, given the circumstances.

As I stripped, I noticed the forms and statues of people and the emotions on their faces. I wondered what their lives were like. Were they beaten by soldiers? Were they subjected to testing like lab rats? What were their lives like before, and how would this experience change them in the years to come? These people had been through so much. Yet they remained strong and full of optimism and resolve. The fact they survived these conditions was a testament to the human spirit's capacity to endure. Their strength humbled me and fueled my desire to continue fighting, regardless of any difficulties I encountered. They showed me that anything was possible if you put your trust in God.

The shower was on the left side of the room, and for the first time, I let out a deep breath of air as my heart sang. I couldn't wait to get inside the running shower and rinse off the grime. Not only would I wash, but I'd drink to my satisfaction, disregarding who might be watching. As we entered the shower, they opened the doors for us. I became aware of a gut-wrenching clang when the bathroom door was locked, which intrigued me. There was no water to drink after the valves were opened. The body wasn't cleansed. There was no assurance of release because it wasn't water that filled the shower room. It was a deadly poisonous gas.

"While people are saying, 'Peace and safety,' destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape" (1 Thessalonians 5:3).

When the poisonous gas entered our bodies, we responded immediately. We felt a burning sensation in our eyes and throats. We began to cough and wheeze uncontrollably. Our lungs burned as we tried to flee the room, but it was too late. The gas had already reached our brains, causing us to fall unconscious on the ground.

I had heartbreakingly witnessed people fall to the ground, as if in slow motion, as each one of them succumbed to the poisonous chemicals. When I finally took the last gasp of breath that God gave me, I found peace knowing I had maintained my faith even to the very end.

I was back in the solitary room. Panic engulfed me as I deeply gasped for air. Burning poison traces were still in my body, and tears poured from my eyes, both from the gas and horrifying thoughts about what I had just witnessed. I fell to my knees, and I swore I would never take the breath of life God had given me for granite again.

I experienced what it was like to live as a Jewish woman. I was blessed with her strong faith. Although she deserved a better life and not death by a chemical bath, my existence flashed before me when I saw how steadfast she was in the face of adversity.

The woman never stopped trusting in God, even when things were tough. She knew He would be with her through everything, and she drew strength from His presence. Even when she was facing death, she held on to her faith and remained strong.

I will never forget her example. It inspired me to stay strong in my faith, no matter what happens. She was like David and Esther. She was a woman after God's heart.

THE SIXTH SEASON

A Martyrs Love: The Story of Galileo



People went to the Colosseum for different reasons, but they all wanted one thing—entertainment. All types of people (tax collectors, fishermen, and royals) watched stage plays and gladiators fight, and they participated in other activities for fun. The Colosseum was the ultimate place for entertainment during this time. It was a very large structure in the Roman Empire. Its exciting shows every day were always entertaining and drew big crowds.

On every national holiday, the Emperor would host a dinner. Many people would gather at the Colosseum to see the bands from Galilee arrive with fanfare to entertain the people with their synchronized movements and crescendo music. But the most spectacular show of all was when two gladiators battled to death. It was a bloody battle, but the audience was very excited to see them fighting on horseback or among cushions.

The Colosseum was a place where people had fun, but it was also a place where people were executed. These were mainly criminals or religious fanatics. The last group of people to be executed were those who believed in a man they said had died and come back to life.

As Galileo watched the play in the stadium, he thought about the last execution he had seen in the Colosseum a few days before. The man who was executed had done some amazing things, and Galileo couldn't stop thinking about the smile on His face as they covered his head. He seemed so calm and at peace. It was as if he believed in what he was dying for.

The executioners said that the man was arrested in the streets for proclaiming that Jesus had died and come back to life. Galileo couldn't understand why people would believe in Jesus so much they were willing to die for Him. He also believed in Christ and loved His teachings, but he would never die for Him. Why would he? His grandfather, who sat beside him, looked at him with scornful eyes as if he was disappointed in Galileo.

"So, are you going to watch the play or waste your ticket? You look happy; I'm wondering what you're thinking about. Are you lost in thoughts?"

Galileo grinned as he turned to his grandfather and then back to the stage, where a lady held a kid while being heckled by a man. Galileo chuckled as his grandfather shook his head. "As you can see, the stage play isn't dull; instead, it's quite amusing."

Galileo laughed back lightly and said, "It's not my fault that I have watched this play so many times that I now find it boring. Isn't this the third time we are watching it this year?"

"Way to tell me that I love a boring play, Galileo." The grandfather laughed back lightly, and they turned back to the stage and watched.

Why would someone smile in the face of death? Surely this man must have known something that Galileo didn't. Was

it simply because he knew his life would continue after death? Or was there something more to it? Galileo couldn't help but be curious about what could make someone so confident.

He had so many questions that even his grandfather, who had trained him in the way of the Lord, couldn't answer. He had been taught to believe in the existence of gods and a supreme God, but the belief was dogmatic. He believed because they had told him to believe and not because he was convinced. Galileo tapped his grandfather,

"Do gods believe in themselves?" The grandfather narrowed his eyes at him and continued watching the play.

Galileo tried again, "Do you even think these gods believe in themselves the way people believe in them?" It was a question that had been bothering him for a while. He didn't see how it could be possible for beings that were supposed to be all-powerful and all-knowing to also have faith in themselves. It seemed contradictory.

The grandfather finally turned to him and said, "It is not for us to question the ways of the gods."

Galileo was not satisfied with this answer. He wanted to understand why things were the way they were. He was not content with simply believing what he was told. He wanted to know the reasons behind it.

"Why not talk about gods, grandfather?" Galileo asked, unable to keep the curiosity from his voice.

"We are here to watch a play, not talk about gods, Galileo," his grandfather said without looking away from the stage.

Galileo heaved in disappointment.

His grandfather turned to look at him then, and Galileo met his eyes. "You know how I feel about gods, boy," the grandfather whispered.

Although the man didn't say anything, Galileo knew his silence was related to the fact that he couldn't walk because of an accident a year before Galileo was born. Even though they believed in the Eternal God, they weren't sure if He could heal the 65-year-old man. But Galileo nodded, and the grandfather turned back to watch the play. He wondered if it could be true—if the God they believed in could really heal him and let him walk again.

Both of them had a dream in which the old grandfather would walk one day again. Their hope, on the other hand, declined with each passing day, and the grandfather believed in other gods as he trained Galileo in God's ways.

"Galileo, do you think your grandpapa will walk again? What use are legs to him? Isn't he already 65-years old?" people would ask with mischief in their eyes and squinted eyebrows.

Galileo would answer, "My grandpa will walk again; that is all I know. Give it a year."

But these days, Galileo and his grandfather were unsure about the timing. They were unsure if the older guy would be able to walk again. When people continued to ask if he would walk again, he generally responded with a tight-lipped smile, "Of course, wait until the sun turns purple, and you'll see me stroll."

Silently, both men held on to hope that the man would walk someday. For Galileo, the miracle of his walking was

what would make him believe in the eternal God and answer the questions in his heart about God and gods.

Many people believe that traditional folklore teaches us not to trust the gods. Even though Galileo was not a follower of Stoic philosophy, he believed in a Supreme Being. He knew the world wasn't created by chance. It was carefully designed by the Supreme Being. But when he thought about all of the different religions around, he had more questions than answers.

The only way he could solve the questions in his mind was by seeing his grandfather walk again. But each day, the possibility faded. He had so many questions that he felt he was losing control of his life. This is why he was surprised by the smile of the Christian as he awaited execution. Even though he was persecuted, he seemed happy. The boy wondered why this was so. He figured if the Eternal One existed, He should have healed his grandfather's foot.

Galileo decided to seek the Eternal One, not just because he wanted miracles, but he also wanted to know God, the only true God, and meet Him in person. He knew his grandfather would only believe if he had evidence.

If God created everything, then He surely has a say over His creations. He can fix them and make them perfect. Galileo believed this, too. He saw God as a potter who could fix things. Galileo wanted to know more about God, so he asked everyone he encountered if they had met Him.

His heart was so disturbed that he constantly looked for evidence of God everywhere he went, in the market, the stars at night, the air, and even the people. Sometimes, he stared at the sea and asked the fishermen if they had ever found God

beneath the waters or on the coasts. Although it seemed crazy, Galileo was very restless for God.

The Colosseum was a great place to have fun and see shows, but when it was over, everyone went home. People would be tired from all the excitement, and then they would have to go back to their normal lives.

Although Galileo was a warm and friendly person, he was not happy inside. He needed to fill his soul with the love of God, but he never found the right opportunity. He wished he had met the Christian before his execution so they could share in the joy of the Lord together. Even though Galileo always tried to make people happy, it was just a mask that hid how unhappy he really was. He needed to save himself, but no one ever seemed to understand how he felt.

"I feel like I'm missing something," Galileo said to his grandfather. "It's like there's a hole in me that needs filling."

His grandfather looked at him quizzically and said, "A hole? You are a complete man; you don't have a hole."

"It's like I'm not whole," Galileo added.

The grandfather looked on in confusion and asked, "Do you mean there is a hole in you? What does it feel like?"

"Empty," Galileo replied.

"I feel I have a purpose I should be fulfilling, but I can't understand exactly what it is. If I die today, I would die without accomplishing anything."

His grandfather moved closer to him and hugged him. "You are not going to die now, Galileo. Why are you thinking of death at your young age?"

His grandfather removed himself from the embrace and continued, "You have plenty of time to find out what your purpose is."

"It's hard to think about death," Galileo said, "especially when I see people being killed at the execution center. It could be me tomorrow. But even if I tell people this, they will not understand. They will think there's something wrong with my brain."

Galileo's grandfather rubbed his back and spoke softly: "I might not understand what is wrong with you, but I trust in God that He will heal you and be with you."

"Why hasn't God healed your leg?" Galileo asked. His grandfather looked away, and Galileo knew he had gone too far. Even he couldn't believe what he had just said. He still hoped that God would heal his grandfather, but the fear of death scared him. Whenever people around him were on the verge of death, the agony on their faces was always frightening. He wondered if they were sad because of life after death.

He was a student of nature and believed that life didn't end in death. He thought there must be more to life after death. His biggest fear was that he would be empty after death. That's why he wanted to meet the executed Christian. He knew the man would understand his plight and answer his questions about what happens after death.

"And the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it" (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

As Galileo rode through the streets of Lystra, he noticed a crowd had gathered. He was excited to see his friend, but as he got closer, he saw that the crowd was agitated. People

were shouting and pointing in different directions. It was hard to hear what anyone was saying over all the noise.

Galileo heard someone say the word "God" loudly; he got off his horse and pushed through the crowd to get a better idea of what was happening. He lived in the capital, so he rarely heard the news from other places. He wanted to share the full story with his grandfather when he got back.

He left the capital to visit his friend, who worked as a goldsmith in Lystra. The man's job prevented him from visiting the capital for years, so Galileo went to see him. Galileo had news for him. His shop was just down the crossroad, and Galileo knew he could still meet up with him. Since the goldsmith was busy and lame, it was obvious he didn't have time to watch the spectacle.

Galileo shoved a man away as he advanced to the middle of the crowd. The man tried to stop him, but Galileo pushed through. Two ordinary-looking men in purple and white robes stood in the middle of the crowd. Some people bowed to them, but others were trying to stop them from bowing.

He looked at the man next to him and asked, "What's going on?" The man impatiently replied, "Can't you see? The gods have come to visit us."

Galileo looked at the two men to whom the crowd was bowing and asked, "Are these men gods?"

The man beside him smacked his lips and said, "Can't you see people bowing to them? Do they look ordinary to you?"

The man smacked his lips again, and Galileo looked back at the two unkempt men. They wore regular clothes and looked like regular men. Nothing about them seemed special except their scrawny frames and wild, untamed hair.

The man continued, "They made a lame man walk." Galileo laughed and then said, "I don't believe it."

"If you're not going to bow, leave. I saw it with my own eyes. They made a lame man walk."

The man beat his chest, and Galileo glared at him as he walked back to his horse. He couldn't understand why people would make up fantasies about normal humans. He galloped to his friend's place in anger.

Although he wanted to meet God, he couldn't believe those men were who he was seeking. Anger overrode the guilt in his mind as he galloped away. But when he got to his friend's shop, the place had no sign of life. The usually crowded shop was empty, and even the goldsmith wasn't at his usual spot.

He looked around the shop and checked out the goldsmith's works while wondering what had taken him away from his shop. He marveled at the various idols and the people who would come and pay homage to them. Were they not aware these were man-made idols? Can a man make a god?

He also marveled at the crowd and their stupidity for calling fellow men God. Were they all blind?

The goldsmith called out to him, and he looked up to see his friend running toward him with open arms. He stepped backward and stumbled on some of the idols as he gaped at the goldsmith's legs; this man had been lame all his life. Yet he was running. He screamed when his friend pulled him into an engulfing embrace but was happy to see him.

Even after the goldsmith told Galileo how he had been healed by two men who called themselves Jesus' disciples, Galileo

remained in a state of disbelief. His legs, however, told a different story and were proof enough of what had happened.

"Rise and walk!" Galileo repeated the words of the goldsmith.

"You are a lucky man."

The goldsmith laughed heartily and said, "If being helped by the gods is luck, then I am super lucky."

Galileo insisted, "You are."

"Where are the men?" Galileo asked.

"They were beaten," the goldsmith said sadly, "by the same crowd that called them gods and wanted to offer sacrifices."

"Who cast a spell on the crowd and made them act that way?"

"No one did. Some people came from Antioch, I think, and convinced the crowd that the men were out of their minds and were fraudsters to be avoided at all costs. The crowd should have asked me if the men defrauded me. But they did not. Instead, they took the speaker to the city's outskirts and threw stones at him."

Galileo ran out immediately when he heard this while ignoring the goldsmith's chants of his name. He ran toward the outskirts and hoped the men were still alive. He needed to see them and find answers to his questions. An inexplicable joy overwhelmed him when he saw one of the men staggering to the nearby town. He was hurt and bleeding from every part of his body. His clothes were torn, and his face was swollen. He walked up to the stranger and steadied him.

"You're not God, are you?"

"That is what I was telling the crowd," the man said, spitting blood.

"So who are you then?"

"I'm His servant," the man coughed as he spoke with great assurance.

Although Galileo had more questions, he remained silent as he helped the man walk through the dusty and windy road to Derbe, where the man stayed with his brother. He was willing to wait until the man was better and well enough to answer his questions without distress.

"You must be Galileo," The man said when he woke up on the second day. He continued, "Before you came to meet me at the outskirts of Lystra, the Lord said, 'A certain young man from Rome who came to visit his friend will come to your aid.'"

"The Lord said that to you?" Galileo looked on, still surprised.

"He told me you were looking for the truth."

"I am," Galileo rushed the words out.

"I am Paul, a servant of Christ. Today, you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free."

The man's words inspired Galileo. He found the answers to questions that had been bothering him and learned that there is life after death. From Paul's words, he found a purpose for his life and discovered new powers he had in Christ. After two days of listening to the Word and getting baptized, he was filled with joy and left for the capital to fulfill his newfound purpose.

"In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:10).

When he returned home, Galileo told everyone who would listen about the man called Christ and his love for

humanity. "Christ is the Son of the living God who came to save us from the power of darkness and sin."

He preached in the streets as he returned to his grandfather, who was overjoyed and said, "Galileo, what did you bring? I feel a surge of power around you."

He replied with passion, "Jesus, the Son of God, died on the cross so we can be saved."

He repeated the words over and over again until he felt an intense desire to know more about the Master. He spent entire nights in prayer, seeking Jesus' face.

One night, something miraculous happened: his grandfather got feeling in his legs and started walking again. The love of Christ filled Galileo's heart, and he started proclaiming this love everywhere he went. He told everyone about how much Jesus loved them and how peaceful it was to have Him in their lives.

Although Galileo was relieved of his duty as a clerk in the capital, he continued to preach the gospel of Christ. He found some believers and took his grandfather with him to where they fellowshiped and preached the gospel with power and authority throughout the city. They performed miracles and saved souls for Christ throughout Rome until the government began persecuting them because of their message of hope. But they didn't stop preaching the gospel of Christ. It cost them their lives.

Galileo and the other men continued preaching to the people on the execution stage. As Galileo smiled and the executioner began to cover his face, he shouted his most important message of life to the anxious spectators.

"Christ is love!"

"Whoever does not love does not know God because God is love" (1 John 4:8).

After Galileo was executed, I felt a range of emotions that lifted my soul, and I was back in the solitary room again. I kept hearing Christ is love. The voice echoed in my heart until I felt the weight. Christ is love! Christ is love!

Having observed the life of Galileo from twenty-five years to the end, I had no trouble accepting that Christ is love. I could still feel the love Galileo had for the crowd. He did not want any of them to perish. In his last moments, he wanted to let them know the truth. His own life counted as nothing to him.

Galileo had a perfect understanding. He was very hurt before he met the personality called "Love." When he met the great Redeemer, his whole life changed. I was also amazed by Galileo's attitude toward death. Before he met Christ, his biggest fear was death. But look at how happy he was when he faced death at the Colosseum. He embraced it with joy.

In every other experience, I have had to live through someone else's life, and death was a sad occurrence. But Galileo made it look simple.

"I will deliver these people from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. Where, O death, are your plagues? Where, O grave, is your destruction?" (Hosea 14:13).

Christ is love!!!

The Seventh Season

Exercising the Ultimate Suffering on the Road to Golgotha



Someone kept calling out saying, "Thou son of David! Have mercy on me!" But I was still too stunned in my new body to answer. This body was the epitome of grace, power, and authority. With it came an overwhelming effervescence of calmness, tranquility, and a thrust of another entity: the Great Power within.

The Holy Spirit overcame the feeling of worthlessness I felt when I saw life through this new body. I was not supposed to see my worthlessness and imperfections here. Instead, I had to feel and endure what this body felt. This scared me. One moment, I was reflecting on Galileo's life and love for Christ. The next moment, I became a part of that love.

"Son of David! Have mercy on me!" The man shouted again, and love overwhelmed me with deep affection, bringing forth the essence of life and mercy the man needed. The man was in God's image and likeness and spoke with the voice of one loved by God so that he couldn't be ignored or shut off. He had found favor from God.

"Shut your mouth!" the crowd boomed.

"Don't!" I said as I raised my hands. The crowd hushed in surprise as they fixed their gaze on me. "Bring him to me."

The crowd thought I was crazy for listening to him, but I couldn't ignore someone who spoke with authority and faith in God. For so long, the Father had watched His creation suffer at the hands of the wicked one even though they were rich in His eyes. The Father's creation suffered because of a wrong that happened at the beginning.

He made them perfect, but now they were far from perfection. He made them strong, and now they were weak. He gave them the right to be called His, yet that right was snatched. The situation looked hopeless. But I came as that great beacon of hope. What then was hope if it did not show mercy?

"Have mercy on me," the man muttered as they led him to me. I admired the image of God in him and again blessed God for the gift of humans to the world.

"I will have mercy on you," I said, "tell me, what do you want."

It was important to find out what the man wanted, not just what he needed. Different people followed Jesus for different reasons. Some people wanted to be fed, while some wanted healing. Others wanted to know more about the kingdom of God and how they could get eternal life. When the man said, "I want to receive my sight," I filled him with love, and I could feel his thirst for God.

I said, "Go, by your faith. You have been healed." The man's eyes fluttered open, and he saw. He smiled, and I turned away and continued my journey.

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness, a light has dawned" (Isaiah 9:2).

This is why the Son of Man came. He came to free those who are in darkness. He set the captives free and preached the good news of salvation to the lost sheep of Israel. He also shined a light on foreign lands. Christ did this so that people could be saved. Christ I did this because the Father wanted Him to do it.

Jesus was sent to Pontius Pilate early in the morning. There were lots of people there waiting to accuse Him. Pontius Pilate listened to them for a while, but he couldn't find anything wrong with Him.

The people were shouting and accusing Him. Pilate was confused and picked a word from one of the accusers. He asked Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

"You said it yourself," Christ answered.

"The people are accusing You. The high priests, chief priest, and everyone want You dead. What do You have to say to them?"

Pilate waited for an answer while Jesus stayed silent. Pilate turned to the crowd and spoke loudly so everyone could hear, "You all know that Barabbas was a thorn in your side. He caused trouble in your cities, disrupted your villages, and caused everyone great grief." The mob became quiet as they waited to see what would happen next. "As you all know, it is your custom that I release a criminal to you as part of your celebration of the Feast of Passover."

Pontius Pilate asked the crowd, "What should I do to this man, your king?"

The crowd chanted, "Give us Barabbas. Give us Barabbas."

Pilate was surprised and said, "He's a criminal!"

The crowd became louder and chanted, "Give us Barabbas. Give us Barabbas."

Pilate raised his hands, and the mob became quiet again. He asked again, "What should I do to this man, your king?"

"He's not our King. We have only one King, Caesar. Crucify Him!" The crowd chanted ominously.

Pontius Pilate looked on in disbelief as he granted the people's wishes and went back into the palace.

Barrel-chested Roman soldiers walked up to Jesus and pushed Him to the cross before a company of soldiers.

He was stripped of His clothing and tied to a pole. Soldiers gathered around Him, holding long whips made of bits of iron and bones.

The first stroke left Christ reeling in shock and pain. As I witnessed this through his eyes, I cried out as well, and I could feel the pain as it dug into His skin and pulled out pieces of flesh. I bit my lips to stop myself from whimpering as Jesus prayed for the strength to bear the burden. The iron from the whip tore away His muscles and flesh. I shook inside uncontrollably.

Christ suffered so the entire world could be forgiven for their debts. Each lash represented a debt paid for each person. He became an embodiment of suffering so that humans could become sons and daughters of God and enter His kingdom. They would not have to pay the price for their sins.

"But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us

peace was on him, and by his wounds, we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

I watched as they put Christ in a purple garment and placed a crown of thorns on His head, which tore through the flesh. Jesus was so weak from losing all the blood that He appeared to lose awareness of what was happening around Him. The soldiers surrounded Jesus, and they took turns hitting Him on the cheeks and mocking him. The only thing that I could see were their forms and silhouettes.

One soldier kneeled and said, "May your royal highness live forever."

"Your scepter, mighty King, another soldier said, "got broken this morning, remember? You could as well make do with a thistle."

In a peal of roaring laughter, another called out, "Have you ever seen a king with a crown of thorns? It's most likely the King of the Jews. His name is Jesus Christ."

They continued until the wooden cross and the physical representation of Christ's burden were ready. He smiled as He bore the cross to Calvary, even as exhaustion appeared to weigh Him down. He stumbled with His head hitting the cross and the thorns of the crown penetrating His head further. I felt every inch of pain in Him. He tried to stand, but His legs failed Him, and He staggered up to bear the cross again. The Father had given Him great strength to bear the burden, but the cross was a physical burden, and I could feel His body was beginning to fail out of exhaustion.

One Simon of Cyrene was forced to carry the cross to Cavalry as Jesus was dragged along the streets by Roman soldiers.

Then I left his body and watched from the eyes of a random observer. I was not permitted to be a part of what was about to happen. Not even a little bit. However, as I helplessly watched, I still felt the pain that I knew He was enduring.

He was nailed to a wooden cross at Calvary. His feet and arms were attached to it. He was lifted up, so His soul could be raised and He could be in perfect submission to the Father's will. He became a living sacrifice, the only one needed for humans to come to the Father. In this state of perfect surrender, the greatest agony known to humanity descended on Him as the sin of the whole world seemed to weigh Him down and His righteousness was shed away from Him.

He seemed to search for the Holy Spirit deeply, as He needed comfort in His empty state. But the Holy Spirit was silent, and He did not feel His presence. I was in pain as I watched His righteousness take on the sins of the world and His pureness become stained with iniquities. I cried out at the magnitude of the pain I watched him endure that came with carrying the weight of the world.

"It is finished," I heard Him proclaim, giving up the ghost.

New revelation about my sojourn

When I, John Williams, was returned to the solitary room, I realized that Christ's death wasn't an unprovoked murder. It was evidence of the love of God for us and the greatest sacrifice ever. My opinions didn't matter anymore because they were based on wrong notions. I had taken the price Jesus paid for granted and toyed with the greatest sacrifice. I had also taken God's mercy and graciousness for granted.

"Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance, and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?" (Romans 2:4).

I realized that I could not compare the pain I felt to what Jesus had gone through on the cross. The agony I felt was not final. His was a stage that had to be passed through in order to restore the world to its perfect order and save us from sin. Although destructive, the pain had a goal, and Jesus' life was the ransom for our sins. I only lived a life parallel to Jesus, and the pain within Him wrecked me; how much more must Jesus have suffered? How does He feel about how I spent my life, belittling His sacrifice and ignoring the ransom for my sins? As these thoughts resonated in my mind, I wanted to know Christ more and was ashamed of my rejection of his love. Even in my most difficult times, Christ was there for me; and I just didn't see it.

Sometimes things happen for a reason, and we don't understand why. Like my Anita, although I didn't understand why God allowed her to die, Christ was there and offered me strength and comfort, but I rejected it. Why? Because I was angry and falsely blamed God.

The Great White Throne

Back where I started: New Revelations



Do you have a sense of what it's like to be face-to-face with unrivaled riches and splendor? Have you ever caught a glimpse of the magnificent city perched on a hill that the brilliant countenance of God's glory illuminates? God is everywhere present, and He glides across the sky, enveloped in radiance.

The Lord of heaven and earth is the One who sits on the great tribunal throne, and He has authority over heaven and earth. He is the God of all creation, and when He speaks, the earth trembles and the seas are parted. Chains are broken in God's presence, and destinies are altered. Who could confront Him and not be consumed? What kind of man on this planet or in heaven can look upon His face without bowing down to the greatest King ever?

God is everywhere! All creation should remind us of His presence since He is everywhere: in the market, at church, at work, at home, and in the air we breathe. He has always been here for us—even when things appeared to be at their darkest—telling us we are not alone and that He knows our sufferings. He is present, past, and future. We can't run from Him. His very existence reflects His presence.

During my search for myself, I'm seeing how much love there is in the world. God's presence can be felt even in caves and the highest mountains. However, all of my life, I've ignored it in favor of pursuing worldly desires. I traded an eternity in heaven for a meaningless existence. The seven seasons throughout many ages, times, and worlds taught me that I had a chance to live a life for God.

The unwanted kid never had a chance. The guy from Detroit, with his sunny disposition, chose to live life to the fullest regardless of what occurred. The young soldier was denied the opportunity to live a purposeful life, yet he saved people when he could and gave his life for his country. The African slave didn't get that chance. The Jewish woman defied expectations and trusted God in every circumstance.

The Galilean youngster chose to stand for Christ in the face of opposition, and Jesus, in His amazing love, paid the greatest price with His life and righteousness. I had a chance, but I never took it. I no longer had an alibi. If there was ever a time to repent and return to God, it was now.

I know that I need to keep searching for myself, and in doing so, I'll find my way back to God. My identity crisis is really an opportunity for a spiritual awakening. I thank God for His presence in my life.

I knew the trumpets would summon me soon, and the memories of their harrowing, overwhelming sounds scared me. I wanted to stay in the solitary room forever, but in the cold room with walls and letterings that sent one back into memories, God wasn't present.

I broke out in an icy chill and paced the room, my thoughts and body agitated. I didn't want to face the great white throne; all I wanted was to be forgotten once again. My

past mistakes no longer provided me with excuses. Rather, I had dwelt on the ephemeral things instead of seeing the trauma of my childhood as suffering pain that could end.

I had refused to live a meaningful life. I had been introduced to religion as a youngster, and I even celebrated Christmas every year, but did I ever celebrate the real reason for which Christmas was created? Did I know why it was called Advent season? The concept of gifts, lights, feasts, the holiday period, and the hoopla of Father Christmas attracted me. But did I ever wonder why Jesus' birth was so significant?

Throughout my life, I had been introduced to Jesus several times. There was Mrs. Catherine, the NY waterfall preacher, songs, movies, my wife, and numerous books and hymns that talked about the love of God for me through Christ. Even my conscience stood against me. I ignored Winifred, who had shown me the path many times. I remember the day she called me out on a chilly Saturday morning two years into our marriage.

"Why did you lie to me?" she asked.

I furrowed my brows in confusion and asked, "What are you talking about?"

"You told me you were a Christian."

"I am."

"No," Winifred said, eyes glistening, "you are not."

I had wondered what she was saying at the time; a million questions running through my mind. I went to church regularly; didn't that qualify me to be a Christian? I heaved a sigh, wrapped a towel around my waist, stepped out of the bathtub, and hugged her from behind as I whispered,

"Would you rather I say I was an atheist?"

"It would have been better," Winifred said as she removed my arms and walked away. That could have been a perfect time to know more about Jesus, but I didn't care.

I did not know how long I'd been in the solitary room. Time was meaningless and not measured; nevertheless, it had to be a long time because I went through everything I had ever done. Even though I accepted the mark of the beast for a better life at one point, I relived that decision every day and suffered for my choice. When the trumpets reached their greatest intensity, doors opened, and I was returned to the great white throne with angels, elders, and winged creatures under the pressure of the bellowing sound of the trumpets.

I was once again at the position where everything began, the very place where I pleaded for forgiveness and began my seven-season journey, and those who came before me in line remained the same. Nothing had changed, although it felt as if thousands of years had passed. This was eternity, and time was a mirage.

The Lord's presence was as overwhelming as ever, and the Glorious One was enthroned. His splendor was brighter than a million suns combined, and His radiance surpassed a constellation of billions of stars. I kept my silence before Him since I could no longer defend my previous assertions about suffering.

The unwanted child's pain engulfed me again. Meanwhile, my heart stopped from the coldness of the city streets, and I began to choke as the rope constricted around my neck. My flesh sizzled when the chemical gas engulfed me, and I yelled in agony, demanding that the torment ceased. I no longer had a case or a cause for obtaining the mark of the beast.

I lay on the floor, sobbing. "Please forgive me," I screamed as I fell back in pain. "I have nothing to bring before You. I cannot bring a charge against You or have an excuse for my actions."

Suddenly, the pain departed my body, and the Almighty spoke through my mind, "What did you do with the life I gave you?"

I asked myself again, my pain now coming from a place of regret, "John Williams, what did you do with the life God gave you?"

"Again, it (The Kingdom of Heaven) will be like a man going on a journey who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. To one, he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey" (Matthew 25:14-15).

To God, my response should have eternal value. He was not curious about the automobiles and property I acquired on this earth. He was not concerned with my daily life. These were all things God knew. It was my responsibility to explain what I spent my life on, the lives I changed, and the people who became a force for good because of me.

God wanted me to tell Him about the talents of gold He entrusted to my care. What natural abilities did I discover while growing up? How did I employ them to bring glory to His name? I could play the piano; did I give glory to God with my music? Was it possible for me to write well, or was it just another talent that went unused? My speaking abilities are exceptional, but what did I do with them?

I buried my talents in the earth and did not make use of them. I squandered my resources, and I wasted my life.

What are you doing with the life God gave you?

Are you wasting it as I did or fulfilling your purpose? Are you using your talents and skills for God? Do you ever think of eternity? Do you even believe it exists?

You should ask yourself these and many more questions. The distance between you and me is just time, and your eternity could come today or tomorrow. Are you prepared to meet the Father at the great white throne?

Final Conclusion



You are probably wondering what happened to John, right? Do you think God forgave him, and he can go to heaven and spend time with Winifred and Anita?

Perhaps you believe that he would continue to relieve these seasons over and over again until his heart has truly changed. Some may claim there are no second chances for taking the mark of the beast, but doesn't God have the ability to pardon and have the final say?

What if this was a warning from God to John, and it has all been a wildly vivid dream that all began when John collapsed on the treadmill.

I will leave the ending up to the reader to decide. Yes, you get to determine the end of this fictional story. However, if you reject Christ, you do not get to decide the ending of your personal story; and your Judgment could be far worse than that of John's, and the decision to follow in John's footsteps or those of Christ will have eternal consequences. Free will is a gift from God. But free will also has consequences.

If you are serious and are not saved, do well to say the sinner's prayer today.

"Father, I am sorry that I have sinned against You. Please be the Lord of my life."

That's it. Is it so hard to say yes?

It's so simple yet powerful and life-changing. The decision you make today could impact your tomorrow. However, no one is guaranteed a tomorrow, so you better make up your mind now before the rapture occurs and your tomorrow is a gone forever, yesterday.

The Bible is your manual, and the Holy Spirit is your teacher, and your decision now will affect your eternity later.

Seek Christ while He can still be found!

About the Author



Ronald Fahrenholz was born in Dayton, Ohio, to a devout Christian family. He has always been searching for ways to share his love and adoration for Jesus. Ronald studied psychology at Ashworth University and obtained skills as a Christian counselor through the Christian Leadership Institution and American Institute of Health Care Professionals. For 30 years, Ronald worked as a Program Manager for adults with developmental disabilities in Florida. Not only did he take his clients to church, but he also led weekly Bible studies with them.

Ronald also has a DISC Personality Consultant certificate and was an expert in recognizing spiritual abilities. He ran a life coaching service; however, the Lord directed him to serve in other ways, which prompted him to leave his home in Florida and move to Kentucky to write Christian books.