Audacity To Love

Written by Maureen (Woods) Williamson
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whom these stories come from.
Something To Ponder

After a while you learn the subtle difference between
holding a hand and chaining a soul
And you learn that love doesn't mean leaning
and company doesn't mean security,
And you begin to learn that kisses aren't contracts
and presents aren't promises,
And you begin to accept your defeats with your head up
and your eyes open, with the grace of an adult,
not the grief of a child,
And you learn to build all your roads on today
because tomorrow's ground is too uncertain for plans.
After a while you learn that even sunshine burns
if you get too much!
So plant your own garden and decorate your own soul,
give flowers instead of waiting for flowers.
And you learn that you can endure ....
that you really are strong,
You really have worth,
Because of who you are in Christ
These are not the adventures of a superwoman.
You are about to read stories from the real life of a very ordinary young woman, who simply has faith in the One True God. The incidents you will read occurred as a result of Maureen’s reactions to life situations, with ‘Audacity To Love’.

Most people would not even have noticed Buddy, who resembled a bundle of rags thrown beside the road.

Who would have been able to show love to an old woman after being drenched with foul smelling water at her hand?

Would you have bothered with Israel, especially when his own family clearly believed him guilty?

Her faith is a positive, vibrant, living faith in a God who has never let her down. It has been severely tried at times, as she has waited until the very last minute for the rent to arrive, or has spent days in involuntary fasting as the fridge was bare. But she was able to praise the Lord that she had a fridge at all, and a roof over her head. She is grateful for the experiences God has given her, and the opportunity to lift the spirits of the poor of this world, if only for a moment.

But above all, she is anxious about those who are poor in spirit, for those who do not know the joy of a relationship with the living God. For those who do not know if there is a life beyond the grave and who have no certainty of going to heaven when they die. To them she would reach out and say, ‘Come, you don’t have to live life at this level, Jesus loves you and wants you to experience new life, exciting life, victorious life.’

She knows that material riches don’t count for much in the long run. She had everything she needed materially, as a top model, but she gave it up, without a backward glance, in order to follow the Lord, and has had no regrets, in spite of trials and tribulations.

Our prayer is that you will read and enjoy this book. And, that you will check your own life to see if there may be a missing ingredient; a degree of trust in God, or, an ‘Audacity To Love.’

Learn to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit on a daily basis, and dare to obey, to love the unlovely, in spite of what others might say. And, Praise the Lord!
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Chapter 1

The Thief

My joy knew no bounds! I was back at last in Israel!
The flight from Zimbabwe, where my parents still live, was of nineteen hours duration, and even in a jumbo jet that's a tiring flight.
But touching down at Ben Gurion Airport, Tel Aviv, was like a refreshing shower. Standing at the top of the steps leading from the airplane, I looked around the tarmac at the variety of planes into the distance, typical of many a dull airport around the world, and I wondered again at the ability of, Israel to produce this quality of excitement and expectancy.
My stay in Zimbabwe had been an extended one, and I had become very homesick for Israel, but at last the Lord had indicated that it was time to return.
As I said, my joy knew no bounds!
I took a sherut from the airport to Jerusalem, excitement mounting as we left behind the flat country and started the long, slow ascent through forested hillsides up to the city itself.
A sherut is a special kind of taxi, which, for a fixed fee, about a tenth of that charged by a 'normal' taxi, takes one from the airport to one's own front door, complete with luggage.
The other six people sharing the sherut had all been taken to their homes or hotels, and I had enjoyed the trip with them around Jerusalem, but it was good now to reach my own home, or rather the home of my friend, with whom I would be staying until the Lord provided me with my own special hideaway, refuge, and open home.
The sherut driver took down from the roof rack the three suitcases in which were packed all the possessions I had in the world, and placed them on the pavement outside my friend's flat in the lovely old suburb of Rehavia.
Few people have their own houses in Jerusalem, but since the flats and apartments are mostly individually designed and all are dressed in the lovely golden Jerusalem stone, by municipal decree, the effect is attractive rather than otherwise; and the trees, which have been left wherever possible, add to the beauty of this city, the planning of which has been a matter of considerable care since it was unified in 1967.
I paid the sherut driver, and, after placing the third suitcase in the foyer of the apartment block, I took
the two lighter suitcases, one in each hand, and clambered as fast as possible up the flight of stairs to the second floor, pressed the bell, and shouted out, "I'm here! I'll be back in a moment" Then I raced back down the stairs for the third and heaviest bag.

I blinked. I shook my head to clear it, and blinked again. No! My eyes were not deceiving me. The suitcase WAS NOT THERE!

My heart skipped a massive beat, and then I found myself running out of the building onto the street. There, in the distance, I saw a rather fat man, running with great difficulty, almost toppling over lopsidedly, as he tried to compensate for the weight of my suitcase!

With not so much as a second thought, I ran out into the road, and stood boldly and insistently in front of an approaching car. It stopped!

Praise God! The driver looked curious, rather than annoyed. “Please help!” I begged him, in my best, but still rather poor and broken Hebrew, “That man is a thief.”

He seemed to understand, and rallied to a lady in distress. “Get in,” he indicated, and we set off in pursuit.

As we gained upon our quarry, I began to wonder how I should tackle the next stage. “Should I leap out of the car just ahead of him, and confront him? Hmm. If he chose to resist me, he would have little difficulty. He was a large, fat guy!

Would I be able to enlist the aid of any passers-by? Maybe police or soldiers would be near? Difficult! My lack of eloquence in Hebrew would be a distinct disadvantage here.

The thief could tell them any story, 'that he'd never seen me before', 'that it was his wife's suitcase', 'that I was crazy', and since I wouldn't know what he'd said, I'd have difficulty in refuting it. However, I knew the contents of the suitcase, and he did not. Yes, maybe it would be possible

However, there were no passers-by in sight, and certainly no police or soldiers. What I did see, to my dismay, was my quarry flag down a passing taxi, and leap in to the back seat, dragging the suitcase, MY suitcase, behind him!

At this point we were about three cars behind his taxi, and approaching one of the busiest intersections in West Jerusalem. The lights were against us, but could change any moment.

We watched in incredulity and frustration as, seated calmly in the taxi, leaning back with a smug sense of achievement, he lit up a cigarette.

My driver, my accomplice, a middle-aged Polish Jew, had by now truly entered into the spirit of the occasion, and together, in a mixture of my feeble attempts at Hebrew, and his little knowledge of English, we planned how we might intercept the taxi, and recover my suitcase.

The lights changed and we followed the taxi around the corner, travelling towards the very centre of the city.

We eased our way through crowds of Ethiopians who had chosen this time to hold a demonstration, in the road in front of the Great Synagogue. It was a right ballygon, (a vividly descriptive word, much used in Israel to describe a mess, a hiatus, an unorganised 'happening'), but at last we were through, and the chase was on again.

Suddenly a space opened up before us, and my driver yelled, “Now!” With remarkable skill, ignoring the possible risk to our lives, and damage to his much-beloved little car, he swung the car directly in front of the taxi, which came to a screeching halt on its two front tyres.

“Praise God for it's good brakes,” I thought, as I leapt out of the car, and wrenched open the door of the taxi.

Till this moment, the thief had been totally unaware of our pursuit, and he was contemplating his spoils with a look of complete self-satisfaction.

Now, however, a shot could have produced no greater effect He snapped around and saw me! With a blood-curdling scream, and a look of complete horror on his face, he burst out of the far door, and escaped like greased lightning, through the crowds at this very congested intersection.

I cannot believe that it was I alone, who produced such hysteria. Did he see a legion of angels with me? Certainly the words of 1 John 4:4, “Greater is he that is within you, than he that is within the world,” took on new and deeper meaning that day.

I could still hear him screaming, as I reached into the taxi, and retrieved my suitcase.

The crowd on the pavement, who had witnessed the whole incident, gave me a standing ovation, but the taxi driver was not so amused. He had lost a fare, and demanded that I should pay it!

My accomplice was delighted with the outcome. Over a very well-deserved cup of coffee he told me that he couldn't wait to tell his fifteen year old son how he was 'innocently driving to the Post Office, when out of nowhere, this woman, from Africa no less, burst upon him with a cry of, “Help!”'

So invigorated was he with the whole experience that he suggested that we should meet again soon, and do it again!

Three hours later I was back outside my friends apartment in Rehavia.
“What ever happened to you?” demanded my friend quizzically.
“Well, you'll never believe it,” I began.
“Oh yes I will, this is Jerusalem,” she said. And carrying my suitcase firmly between us, we climbed the stairs to the apartment.
Chapter 2

The Blind Man

Today, I travelled by bus.

Many things can be said, and many stories told of experiences in Israel’s Egged buses, but one of the nice things to be said for them is the tradition of having the front seats as the prerogative of the elderly, the infirm, the pregnant and the blind. Other people are welcome to use them, and often do so, to enjoy the view, talk to the driver, or to be able to follow the bus route in an unknown neighbourhood, but if any of the above mentioned enter the bus, then these seats must be given up to them.

This should be done with a smile, even if the bus is now full, and you find that you have to stand, enduring the bumps in the mad, the Grand-Prix like swaying around corners, and the standing on the brakes. At the same time you have to take care that the opening of your purse, (handbag), is visible at all times, as the shock on getting off the bus, to find that your wallet, (purse), has been skilfully appropriated, is not to be recommended. Three of my friends have thus had their loads lightened in the past few weeks. They were 'not amused'.

But today, there were few passengers, and I decided to sit on one of these seats. Maybe the Lord would have me talk to the driver.

However at the next stop, as a whole bunch of passengers were slowly boarding the bus, I noticed a well-dressed young man, feeling his way along the curb to join them.

I jumped up and offered him my seat, but then, there being no-one else in need, I sat down again, next to him. “Boker Tov,” (Good Morning), I greeted him in my best Hebrew.

I'm naturally very interested in people, and have often been accused of leaping in where wise men would fear to tread, but I believe that the Lord made me this way, and since I have dedicated my tongue, as well as my life, to Him, I trust the Holy Spirit in me to be guiding me correctly, and I leap away.

On this occasion, I asked him, politely, if I could speak to him about his blindness.

He was equally friendly, and open, and his English was perfect. He declared that he was happy to answer any question I had in mind, so we settled down to a good conversation.

How marvellous it was to meet someone who couldn't see and yet was glad to be alive, and pleased to communicate with someone like myself, who had an equally great zest for life.
He told me that when he was very young he had had limited vision, but as he grew up his sight had worsened until all he could see were vague shapes, predominantly in one shade, which he called ‘grey.’

He said that he was happy just to have life, and I could see by the quiet radiance of his face that this was true.

“God has blessed me in other areas to compensate for my lack of sight,” he said. “I’m perceptive of people, and of their characters, and am seldom wrong in defining if someone belongs to the people of light or the people of darkness.

“If we had time,” he continued, “I could tell you a lot about yourself, simply by the kind of questions you’re asking. But one thing I can say right now you’re definitely of the light.’

“I am indeed; I said, “and I know that you are too. Like you, I don’t perceive this with my physical sight, but with my spiritual sight.’”

He told me that he had no desire to see this world, which he perceives to be full of temptations, but would choose to remain the way he is, being able to concentrate on that which is good, and perfect and holy.

I was really impressed by this blind man. He had a lot of wisdom, and I felt he actually saw and understood life much better than most people, who, in concentrating on the physical, neglect the spiritual.

I was pondering on this, and thinking that this man, for whom most people would feel pity, was really very blessed, when he touched me and said, “This is my stop. I must leave you.” He squeezed my hand as he moved past me.

“In the spirit I can see you,” were his parting words. Just as I want to stay as I am, so you should stay as YOU are.’”

A strong sense of joy remained with me. How thankful I was to God that he had caused me to initiate that conversation.

As I thought on this the second verse of Hebrews 13, came to mind. “Don’t forget to be kind to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realising it.”

Today I travelled by bus.
How I Met Him

I enjoyed life! I would have said that life was wonderful, for I was spoilt, very popular, financially secure, always busy doing enjoyable things, and meeting interesting people. What more could I ask?

I became a fashion model at the tender age of seven years, and from that time onwards was caught up in the fashion world, and also in the fashionable social world in South Africa. As a child 'star' I was made to feel very important, and as time went on I became very sought after, and as you might imagine, somewhat conceited.

I was also very well known and in much demand and hence could pick and choose my assignments from the many which were offered to me, and even at times, name my own fees. Financially I was very secure.

Smoking and drinking were part of the scene and I indulged heavily in both.

Like attracts like and I was surrounded by people of a similar kind to myself, bubbly extroverts, self-confident, and plain selfish I can now say, enjoying the affluent lifestyle to the full.

It was a very shallow existence, but I didn't realise it at the time. Actually, I didn't know there was any other kind of living.

I was thirty three years old, and my life had been crowded with people of all kinds, yet I had never met a Christian. I mean the real thing of course, not just somebody professing to be a Christian, but someone whose life had been turned around because of a living relationship with the Saviour of the World, the Lord Jesus Christ.

God's timing is perfect, however. He knew that I had been too busy to think of Him. I think that He always knew that soon this life would have begun to grow old, and that I would have started to challenge myself and others as to the meaning and purpose of life. I would have wondered if there was life after death, and I would have started to think about many other such fundamental questions, that demand answers sooner or later.

It was at this point that He placed in my environment, a born-again believer.

I don't remember, if indeed I ever knew, how she came to be part of my social scene, still less how she came to single me out and befriend me. All I know is that she was there, with her beaming face, and unselfish attitudes. Her desire to be my friend caught me unawares and I was very drawn to her.

She didn't hesitate to tell me that I was lost, and that I needed to repent and ask Jesus to come into my life!

I was astounded by words such as these, my flesh recoiled and I wanted to avoid her, and yet .... I was
drawn to her. I was intrigued by the fact that she was always on top and smiling, even though I knew that she herself had been through a great deal of hardship and had suffered many hurts.

She kept inviting me to go to church with her. I, in turn, kept resisting, yet ... secretly hoping that she would continue to ask me!

Little by little the Spirit of God was wooing me through this precious child of His. One day she came up to me and, with a twinkle in her eye, said that since their church had grown too big for their present building they were moving into a theatre from this Sunday onwards.

"Would I be interested in coming this Sunday to the new venue?"

"Ah Ha! Now you're talking. The Church in a theatre? I believe I would like that. Yes, I'll come," was my response.

"But what shall I wear?" I asked anxiously a moment later.

"Wear whatever you like," she replied with a knowing grin, "I'll pick you up at six."

Well, that was the day God ordained for me to meet Him. From the moment I walked into that theatre I knew it was going to be a day I would never forget.

I listened as the Gospel was preached, becoming more and more interested.

I inched myself to the very edge of my seat, hanging onto every word. These words, this message, seemed to have power and meaning, and the answers to questions that had often crossed my mind, but which I had quickly dismissed as unanswerable, and therefore, not to be dwelt on.

Then I sat bolt upright, as the preacher made a truly amazing statement. He said it quite calmly, but to me the result was cataclysmic.

"If there is anyone here who would like to accept the Lord Jesus Christ, and make him Lord of your life, come up now!"

I didn't even excuse myself as I clambered over the knees of the people sitting in my row between me and the aisle. I wasn't just in a hurry, when I reached the aisle I was actually running.

Whilst I was running up to the preacher who had given that invitation, I was crying real tears in recognition of the blindness that I had lived in all those years.

I felt as though a hand had cut into my breast and was literally removing my heart, which was heavy, cold and hard, my heart of stone, and was replacing it with heart that was warm, tender, loving, my new heart of flesh.

I reached the preacher and just stood there staring up at him, my eyes swimming in tears, as I said rather pathetically, "What has happened to me?"

He smiled a wise and sympathetic smile, and said gently, "I believe you have been born again, Sister."

I didn't know what it meant to be 'born again', but I knew without a doubt that something had happened to me. Something was truly different, and it sure felt good.

I returned to my seat, this time apologising to the folk whose knees I had stumbled over, and whose toes I had trodden on. They all grinned back at me, so happy to have a new sister in the Lord.

My friend was just sitting there, saying, "Hallelujah," and, "Praise the Lord." She seemed to be incapable of saying anything else, but those words sounded real good to me, so I said them too.

Later that night, when I was walking through my lounge, still feeling quite incredibly good, I glanced in the mirror as I passed it, and stopped in astonishment. My eyes looked so different I could scarcely believe what I was seeing.

They were decidedly different, and I liked the way they looked!

Since then I have noticed the same look in the eyes of other born-again believers. I suppose, since the eyes are the windows of the soul, this should not be very surprising, but at that moment I was just amazed.

I felt an indescribable joy welling up within me, and decided I would have a drink to celebrate this altogether unusual day. I poured a stiff whisky into one of my crystal glasses, and raised it to my lips, anticipating the fragrant aroma, and the delicious taste I enjoyed so much. Without warning, an unseen force took the glass from my hand and dashed it to the floor. I looked down at my whisky soaked skirt, and the heap of crystal on the floor at my feet, and knew that alcohol was no longer a part of my life. Instinctively I was sure that all desire for it had been taken from me.

Somewhat startled, I sat down and lifted a cigarette to my lips. I lit it and breathed in deeply to calm myself. I coughed and spluttered till I came to the realisation that neither did I have any desire to smoke!

I got up and walked over to the bookcase, searching for an atlas. I seemed to be in a bit of a daze, but I knew that what had happened to me that night was going to change the rest of my life. I had a certainty that it was also connected with a country, the country of Israel, about which I knew absolutely nothing. I was in such a hurry to find out where this country was that I was searching for an atlas.

Eventually I located the atlas and after much searching found the country of Israel. As I looked at the map, at this small country, surrounded by so many large countries, all of whom had sworn to destroy her, I felt my heart skip a beat.

Joy welled up again within me, and I knew, just as it had done when running to the preacher, that my life, and my destiny, had changed. I was no longer in the Kingdom of Darkness, ruled by my emotions and the Prince
of Darkness, but had been translated into the Kingdom of Light, to be ruled by God, the one and only God, the God of Israel.

Nobody told me that I would be going into all the world to preach the Gospel. I just knew that I had been called into the kingdom to do just that.

I had met, and decided to serve, the King of Kings, the Prince of Peace.
Chapter 4

An Opportunity Missed

‘Heaven above is softer blue, Earth around is sweeter green, Something lives in every hue, Christless eyes have never seen.’

I was discovering for myself the surprising, yet wonderful truth of this verse. It was as though I had never really seen the beach at Durban, South Africa before. I gazed, as though mesmerized, at the magnificent Indian Ocean. The rhythmic, yet unpredictable action of its waves, providing an exciting challenge to the many surfers, and the colours of the sea, ranging from deep purple to vibrant hues of blue and green made me feel slightly, yet gloriously, intoxicated.

The beach was crowded. Sun-bronzed bodies lay stretched out on towels, rugs, air-beds, etc., each one, or, each pair, trying to forget the existence of so many others encroaching on the space they would have liked for themselves, and concentrating on the sun, or on each other.

A few brave young men and girls were playing a form of beach tennis near the water's edge where it was not quite so crowded, and further along I could see members of what I termed the, ‘Adonis brigade,’ young men who specialized in muscle control and who were practising their slow handstands on one hand expecting adulation from some of the nubile young women around.

The panorama, the cinnamon coloured background of the beach, covered with the shimmering kaleidoscope of humanity at leisure, stretched onward as far as my eyes could see.

I strolled along the edge of the sea, exulting in the coolness of the sand between my toes and the tickle of the waves which sometimes reached out tentative tendrils towards me.

And as I strolled, I meditated. For the first time it my life, it seemed, I was allowing myself, without fear, to think about those things that matter eternally.

It was two whole weeks since the coup d'état in my life, when I had installed Jesus on the throne, scarcely noticing Satan's enforced slinking out of the back door with his tail between his legs.

I knew that Satan would be back, using all kinds of subversive activities to try to regain control, but .... I also knew that nothing that he had given me, though by worldly standards that was a great deal, compared with the thrill of having Jesus in my life. How could you wish for a rather dim candle once you have seen the
sunshine?

I was alone; a rather unusual experience for me. I had shared what had happened to me with each of my friends expecting them to be thrilled, and eager for the same experience, but each in turn had declared that they preferred their little candles to my sun, and even though they recognised that something tremendous had happened to me, they did not want to change their lifestyles and saw no need of repentance and a saviour, and in rejecting my message they rejected me.

But I didn't really feel alone, and spiritually I was not. My Lord was with me. Even in two short weeks I had learnt that God calls us into His kingdom so that he can have fellowship with us, and He has promised that he will never leave us or forsake us.

My thoughts were on things eternal as I looked at the masses of people on the beach and wondered how many of them had a living and vital relationship with God. Sadly I suspected that only a few of them. Most would be wanting to live their own lives, as I had done, and few would be prepared to lay down their lives to follow Jesus, something which I realised was one of the keys to the Christian life. Jesus is a radical and any follower of him must be pretty radical too.

As I gazed over the beach my eye was caught by a movement in the distance. A figure was weaving between the bodies in a drunken fashion. Surely not! I looked at my watch. It was only just after ten, could they really be drunk already?

The gap between us steadily narrowed and I saw clearly that the figure belonged to a little old lady, and that she was indeed very drunk

My heart went out to her as I just knew, could even feel, the awful pain that had brought her to the sad place she was now in. I knew too, and had discovered it in glorious technicolour, that Jesus loves the sinner and longs to change their lives. I now belonged to Jesus and his loving heart was beating within me and I could feel his love reaching out, wanting to help this woman.

Not a word was exchanged, but our eyes fixed on one another and Lightness and darkness confronted each other and neither of us moved. I wanted to speak, but the words did not come to my mouth, and my courage failed me. I figured that prayer would do it and I closed my eyes and put my hands together in the attitude of prayer taught to little children in the West. She stopped firmly in her tracks and stared at me.

There is a time for prayer and a time for talking. The trouble was I just hadn't learnt the difference. Now I know that when the Lord prompts us to speak, we had better speak, and likewise when he prompts us to pray.

This woman sensed that I had something to give her, and she stood there expectantly, if rather tipsy, before me. She waited courteously till I finished praying, then she moved up even closer and stared into my face.

Had I opened my mouth at that point I firmly believe that the Lord would have filled my speech with words that would have spoken His life into her life. He longs so much to use us as His vessels to touch the lives of those in darkness. It doesn't matter how the person is dressed, how clean they are, how nice they smell, or how attractive or unattractive their personality appears to be. The Lord sees through all veneers to the soul beneath, to the true person designed in His image, whom He is longing to set free, and He wants to use 'us' to do this.

Why do all our instincts incline us to converse with the 'respectable' people? More often than not it is those who are unattractive, maybe shabby, unkempt, the drunkard, the obvious sinner, who are most aware of their own weaknesses and needs, their own sinful state and are most ready to listen to someone who has an answer to their problems.

However, in this case, not a word passed between this lady and me, and eventually she seemed to get tired, to give up looking for something from me which was not forthcoming. I hung my head in shame, and she left me, shaking her head sadly as she tottered on.

In retrospect, I could see how the Lord had engineered our footsteps so that we should come into contact with each other. I have now learnt to recognize such contacts, that the Lord delights to make in our everyday lives, and to grasp the opportunities therein offered with both hands, eagerly, excitedly, knowing that God does not make such meetings without having prepared the way.

We have the authority, and therefore the ability, to snatch from the very gates of hell those to whom His voice and hands direct us.

The Lord is gracious and I'm sure he engineered another meeting for this lady with someone who would not fail him. I was only a very young Christian, but that lady's face haunted me for a while, and I determined that never again would I let the Lord and my fellow human being down in this way. Besides, once I had dared to let the Lord use me in this way, I discovered that it was the greatest fun in the world. It never fails to thrill me to see someone discover new life, eternal life in Christ Jesus, and I just praise his name and rejoice at the opportunities he gives me.
When I arrived in the Northern Galilean town of Kiryat Shemona, Israel, I discovered that many of the children there had rarely slept in their own beds.

Kiryat Shemona is also known as Katyusha City, and until the Israelis went into Southern Lebanon in 1982, the town had been subject to nightly attacks by these deadly rockets. A generation of children had grown up expecting to sleep each night in bomb shelters, and even to run to them in the day time as the whine of the warning sirens would be heard at all hours. The sound of incoming rockets followed closely behind the sirens.

Many people had died in these attacks over the years, but the survivors had, with great fortitude continued to work. They tried, also, to maintain their culture, and tried especially hard in the education of their children, to prevent them from developing bitterness and hatred towards the Arabs as a result of the abnormal lives they were living and the deaths of relatives and friends.

The attacks, you understand, were not war or aggression, but merely the P.L.O. or the Syrians having a little 'target practice', and who could blame them? The Israeli 'aggressors' were taunting them beyond endurance by going about their daily lives within sight of the border.

It was to this town that, when newly arrived in Israel, I first came to live, having accepted a position at the Christian Radio Station, the 'Voice of Hope'. The promise of God, given to me on the day I came to know him, had now been fulfilled. I was indeed in Israel.

I was a foreigner in every sense of the word, having come fresh from the big cities of South Africa, but I was delighted to be there, in spite of the contrast and the danger, as I was quite certain that it was God who had placed me there.

The honeymoon did not last long. I had to venture out to do my own grocery shopping. The super-market seemed the easiest choice as I would not have to ask for anything, but could simply select off the shelves the items required. I soon found that it wasn't quite that easy. In the first place the trolley had its own ideas as to where it wished to go.

In the case of a difference of opinion, either I gave in or the trolley went on strike, much to the annoyance of the other customers, who now had to squeeze their way between my recalcitrant 'help-mate' and the
overflowing shelves. However, somehow I managed to maneuver it up and down the aisles, and here I encountered the second problem.

Have you ever tried to buy food merely by looking at the pictures on the labels? Believe me, it isn't easy. Everything was marked, of course, but since my Hebrew vocabulary was very tiny and my Arabic nonexistent, this did not help me. I listened for a voice speaking English, but to no avail, Hebrew or Arabic were my two choices.

So, figuring that as I was starting from scratch with my pantry I had better get in a good stock, I proceeded to fill my cart. Much prayer, and a certain amount of guessing were used in my selection, helped by some produce visible in polythene and pictures on a few cans. Have you played that game where you view pictures of things, taken from unusual angles, and have to guess what they are? I was playing it that day, but I wasn't quite in the mood.

I then persuaded my helpmate, (crippled shopping cart), to join the queue at the checkout, and waited very patiently as each person in front of me debated at length with the cashier the correctness of each item on the bill. Sometimes the manager became involved, and sometimes the loud and angry sounding debate was confined to the two of them, but each person finally left smiling, so I guessed that here, the bark was definitely worse than the bite.

At last the cashier proceeded to add up the cost of my goods, and as she checked out the various items, I began to pack them in my capacious carrier bags. I was doing well, and about three quarters of the goods had been totalled up when I decided to get out my purse, and realised to my horror that I had forgotten that my plan had been to go FIRST to the bank and SECONDLY to the supermarket.

I had no money to pay for the goods I had selected with such gay abandon! Oh well, I'd have to leave the bags in a corner of the supermarket whilst I ran down to the bank. Sometimes the manager became involved, and sometimes the loud and angry sounding debate was confined to the two of them, but each person finally left smiling, so I guessed that here, the bark was definitely worse than the bite.

As I settled down to wait, I decided to read some of my favourite verses. "Moreover we know that to those who love God, who are called according to His plan, everything that happens fits into a pattern for good."

The manager entered into the spirit of the show. Unlike the other encounters of the day, this would be one where 'he' was the top dog.

He had an interested audience and his attitude really seemed to be, "Now's my opportunity. Let's really embarrass this Gentile foreigner. Let's teach her a lesson she'll never forget."

Item by item he returned my selections to the shelves, and with each trip he added various graphic adjectives. I remember the gentler ones such as 'wasteful', 'unnecessary' and 'extravagant', and I prefer to forget the rest.

Throughout it all the Lord gave me an incredible peace. The people were watching me intently, whispering to each other and obviously expecting the spirit of retaliation. Perhaps I disappointed them? I enjoyed watching them watching me, but I didn't react at all.

Finally there were only three items left; a small bread roll through which the manager quite deliberately, and meanly, stuck his finger, a small yogurt, and a small piece of cheese.

The manager was looking very pleased with himself. Aware of his audience, he then asked me very condescendingly, "Do you have enough money to pay for THIS?"

"Yes, I believe I do," I said, trying hard not to laugh. Now it was my turn.

"Rac Rega, Bevakasha," (literally, "Only a moment, please"), I managed in Hebrew, indicating that everyone was to stay where they were and that I would be back in a moment.

Heads nodded in agreement. This was far too good a drama to miss.

I turned and ran as fast as my legs would carry me, across the street, down another street and into the bank. I drew out all the shekels I had and raced back into the store, where I was delighted to find the crowd still huddled together, waiting just as I had asked them to do.

I grabbed another cart, which fortunately worked smoothly, and raced up and down the aisles, piling up the cart with the original goods as far as I could remember.

My audience was fascinated. With a joyful smile on my face I apologised to the now irate manager for all the inconvenience that I may have caused him, and rejoicing in the grace that the Lord had given me for that moment, I went back to the original cashier and went through the same procedure all over again.
I paid for everything and then said aloud, “Baruch HaShem,” (literally — 'Blessed be The Name', an equivalent to 'Praise the Lord'). I then smiled and shook the hand of each one of those who had participated in the drama, whether as actor or audience, and left the store with my groceries.

In the days to come, as I walked through the streets, the people of the town would point me out to one another and say, “There she is!” Then they would smile and wave at me.

One lady said, with a smile on her face, “That's the woman who refused to be Upset.”

A few months later I made a point of going to the manager. He remembered me well. I told him that I was grateful to him for teaching me that I could live without many of the things I had bought, which I had been brought up to consider to be necessities.

All I had really needed was a bread roll, a yogurt and the small piece of cheese. In fact, I've since learnt a much simpler lifestyle and am happier and healthier for it.

We never became really good friends, but at least I got a pleasant greeting whenever I entered his supermarket, and I did make good friends from amongst my audience.

The Lord really did turn a potentially very embarrassing and unpleasant situation into a victorious one. Praise His Name!
In the extreme north, Israel shares its borders with Lebanon and with Syria. It is a very beautiful area. In some parts the mountains are covered with trees with tracks winding through them in a way reminiscent of Switzerland, in others the rounded hills are covered with good grazing grass, and yet others are dotted with caves and mine-shafts where the ore for making cobalt blue dyes used to be obtained.

They are closed now, and few sheep are grazing the lovely hillsides as, in spite of the peaceful vista, these areas are now too dangerous to be used. Soldiers patrol them in small groups, constantly on the alert for terrorists attempting to infiltrate the land with their various engines of death.

The northern most settlement town on the border is called Metulla. It was founded in 1896, and has not grown a great deal since then. It is a very pretty little town, with houses dotted around the hillside, in addition to those lining the main streets. The likeness to a Swiss village grows as you look up to the usually snow covered peaks of Mount Hermon.

I lived in this village for two and a half years whilst I was working for the Christian Radio Station, the Voice of Hope, which had its transmitting station just over the border in Lebanon.

It was not far to walk up the sloping hillside to the 'Good Fence', a gateway in the border between Israel and Lebanon, and a real lifeline to the people of Southern Lebanon, enabling them to come into Israel for hospital treatment, for work, or just to visit relatives and friends. 'The Good Fence' also became a stopping point for tour groups, Christian and Jewish alike, who wished to see something more of what was going on in the land at the present time. Archaeology and sacred sites were important, but here was history in the making, with living people encountering severe problems, yet victoriously overcoming them.

One of the most enjoyable parts of my work there was to meet with these tour groups and try to give them an understanding of the situation. I shared with them the purpose behind the radio station and the commitment of those who had come from all over the world to live and work in this dangerous area. I then attempted to sketch in the historical background to give them a deeper sympathy and understanding for the people whose homes were in the area and who rarely had any choice other than to remain where they were.

Most of the Christian groups had a time of prayer there, on the small hill overlooking the 'Good Fence.' My earnest desire was that these prayers would not be an ‘one time’ occasion, but that the groups would return
to their churches and inspire them to pray for the land, and for this very needy area in particular.

Often Christians in the West would attempt to put us up on pedestals, but I always tried to get over to them that the only safe place in the world is to be where the Lord has told you to be, and that, in fact, those of us who were there counted it a privilege and a very real joy.

One day in particular I recalled as being very busy and I remember leaping off one bus and on to another. I was aware that this second group came from Canada, and that they were especially interested and friendly, asking many questions and showing a real desire to pray in an informed way.

Several weeks later I had a phone call from Edmonton in Canada. It was from a lawyer who had been on this particular tour, and who now felt that the Lord was telling her to pay for me to visit Canada. She wanted to bless me, and perhaps the Lord had shown her that in spite of my joy and the Lord's upholding, I really did need a break. And she also felt that I could bless them and be an instrument to provoke prayer for Israel in that part of Canada.

She told me that my round trip ticket for a ten day visit was awaiting me at Ben Gurion airport, and that they would meet me off the plane at the airport in Edmonton.

Although I could not recall any of the faces in the group, I did remember the loving spirit amongst them. But such a gift? I was truly overwhelmed.

Within an incredibly short time I was on the plane to Canada. The Lord had confirmed to me that the trip was of His planning, so the fact that I was going to folk I had met so briefly and could not even put faces to, did not matter in the least.

I left warm, sunny Israel with temperatures in the mid seventies fahrenheit, and arrived in Canada to experience thirty degrees of frost! I almost fainted at the shock of the cold.

However the welcome could not have been warmer, and the Christians meeting me wrapped me up in true Canadian fashion and I walked off looking like one of them, though with icy stalactites hanging down from my tongue and any other part of my flesh which I had inadvertently exposed to the elements.

The Canadians really treated me proud, and needless to say I had a wonderful time speaking at all the places the Lord had prepared for me. The response was rich, and I know that their prayers for Israel were a blessing.

I also learnt to understand the culture and the mind set of my precious brothers and sisters, and thanked the Lord for this unexpected and valuable opportunity. I was refreshed and renewed by their love.

On my last night before returning to Israel, a group of us were dining out in a magnificent restaurant in which the entire thing revolved 360 degrees, and was many stories above the ground. We were sharing, rejoicing, and counting our blessings. My own heart was just bursting with praise for all the glorious ways in which He had undertaken for me, especially in the last ten days.

Suddenly my eye caught sight of a small boy, way down on the ground beneath us. He had a red cap on his head, and a stick in his hand.

As I looked, he threw the stick up into the air and walked off. The words he had written in the snow stood out starkly and beautifully, ‘JESUS LOVES YOU’.

I was moved to tears as the truth of those words overwhelmed me yet again.

God is indeed no respecter of persons. He longs for each of us to yield our very lives into His care and to put our total trust in 'Him who is able to do exceeding abundant above all that we ask or think, according to the power operating in us.'
Chapter 7

The Tempting Falafel

She was a little beauty. I really couldn't stop praising the Lord for her. After a year without wheels, I was again the owner of a brand new, glorious car!

It wouldn't have been a problem had I been living in Jerusalem or Tel Aviv. There the bus services are excellent, covering the whole city from 5.30 am until midnight. But I was living up on the Lebanese border, and had felt the lack of a car very keenly.

Now, not only would I be released from long waits for the few buses in this area, or risky 'tramps' as hitchhiking expeditions are called here, but I could visit friends around the country and do a little sight-seeing in my time off.

Another pleasure I discovered in my first few exhilarating weeks of driving again, was being able to give lifts to soldiers. Mostly young boys and girls, many in their late teens, doing very difficult tasks with little thanks, needing our help in travelling across country, either to a new posting, or, to and from a few days well-deserved home leave. I met some beautiful young people, and had some very interesting conversations with them.

Then ... disaster!

The maddening thing was that it was all my own fault!

It was a very hot day in July. You know, the kind when you feel like someone's opened the door of the blast furnace and you're standing right in front of it, when you feel that if you don't escape, blisters will pop up on your skin before your very eyes.

I was driving along, feeling so thankful for the breeze which the car's speed generated, when I realised that it was a very long time since I ate, and seeing an attractive looking falafel stand ahead, I stopped and bought one.

A falafel consists of a pitta bread, opened up to form a pocket, in which falafel balls, (a chick pea mixture rolled into small balls and deep fried), and a range of salads and sauces are all packed inside to form a nutritious and delicious meal.

Unfortunately it is also rather difficult to eat, but I discovered that just sitting in the car, or even outside, in this extreme heat was truly unbearable, and I decided to eat whilst I drove!

Yes, I know. I can hear the wisdom and sage advice oozing out of you, but it really seemed a good idea
at the time. After all, I had often eaten chocolate or an apple whilst driving along and it had never been a problem.

I turned onto the main street of Kiryat Shmona, enjoying my delicious falafel, and also looking around at this city which never fails to interest me. My mind had been miles away, thinking of the children of this city and the surrounding kibbutzim, who had spent so much of their lives in bomb shelters due to the daily attacks of Katyusha rockets coming over the border.

In an instant, my falafel was pressed into my face, the white and red juices of the sauces creating strange patterns as they made rivulets among the chick pea balls and salad items.

I lost control of my steering as I lurched to a stop, and I gazed through my window upwards to see two Israeli soldiers staring down at me in horror from the small windows in their full sized military tank that towered above me!

The ‘thud’ which had caused the misplacement of the falafel and the loss of steering was caused by this tank which had been peacefully ambling along the main street, until I had turned into its path.

Now, I was, at this time, working with the Israeli army, and felt very close in spirit to the young men and women of this army, but one can have too much of a good thing.

My sideways drift was arrested by the hedge which, Praise God, was bordering the street on the opposite side. I dread to think what damage I might have inflicted on some of the shops a little further up.

The whole of Kiryat Shmona appeared to gather at the scene, each eager to give their account of this exciting accident. For a while I sat there numbly, with a sense of unreality, and then slowly I got out of the car to survey the damage.

My beautiful new car, my pride and joy, had both passenger doors stove in, and looked as though I went in for stock-car racing. The tank appeared to be undamaged, as one might expect of a vehicle built for such a purpose. Thankfully, as it was undamaged, the army did not press any charges against me.

I completed the legal formalities with the police, the army, and a few witnesses, before driving home, mourning my car which was less than six weeks old and had less than 5,000 kilometres on the clock. Fortunately I was still able to drive the car with the damage confined to only one side. It had been totally my fault and I felt a complete fool.

I remembered that we must praise God in all situations and I began by thanking him that no-one had been hurt. Then I thanked Him that, persuaded by a friend's insistence, when I acquired the car, I had taken out comprehensive insurance.

I then prayed that He would somehow bring some good out of this crazy situation, even though I was totally to blame. At the very least I would never eat again at the wheel, and would keep strict control on my thoughts.

At my apartment I parked the car in such a way that no-one would be able to see the damage. I felt I had had enough laughs at my expense to last the whole year, and commiseration would be even more difficult to handle without bursting into tears.

I phoned the insurance company to give them the details, and learned that my thanks in this area were somewhat premature. I was still liable for the first two hundred dollars and on top of that would lose my ‘no claim’ bonus.

My salary was small and I could see no way of getting the car repaired, but I knelt before the Lord, before my Father in heaven, and asked his help in this serious financial situation.

I knew I deserved no help, but He is my father, and he is always gracious and merciful I knew too, that I should tell no-one of my plight, but just leave it in His hands.

The next day, after a remarkably peaceful night, I drove to work, admittedly taking the long way round where my friends were less likely to spot me, and again parked the car carefully, screening the damage as far as possible.

During the morning, as I was busy with my secretarial duties, the door opened and in walked Major Saad Hadad, the leader of the Free Lebanese Army. I acted as his secretary when he had dealings with Israel, and I considered this to be a great privilege. Major Hadad was a born-again believer in Jesus the Messiah, and I had the greatest respect for him both as a man and as a believer. I firmly believe that God raised him up for the task of protecting both Israel and the Southern Lebanese at that time.

He did a tremendous job, in spite of being misunderstood and abused by so many. The responsibilities on his shoulders were many and heavy, and he really cared for the Lebanese amongst whom he was working, and the Israelis, whose lives he was saving by creating a buffer zone to prevent the launching of Katyushas into Israel.

However, no-one is indispensable. Just a week before this incident I had watched him on TV, as he declared that if someone took his life, as so many had threatened to do, then God would raise up someone equally effective to do the job.

This proved to be the case, as, sadly, Major Hadad died a few years later, after a long battle bravely fought against the too often deadly enemy, cancer.
However, at this time, he was fit and well, and we sat together drinking turkish coffee and chatting over the exciting things the Lord had been doing in our lives recently. He then took a paper knife and began to open his mail.

A sudden breeze swept into the office, and two pieces of paper which he was just taking out of a letter, were gently prised out of his fingers and landed on my lap. We both laughed.

Then Major Haddad became serious. ‘God wants you to have this money,’ he said. ‘You have a need of this money.’ As he spoke, he took the two cheques from my lap, signed the backs and handed them back to me.

I found it difficult to speak. The tears I had thought safely bestowed, leapt out and coursed down my face. I beckoned him to come to the window, “Have you seen my car?” I said between sobs.

We went across the street to the car park where I showed him the damage. He was so excited. It is always more blessed to give than to receive, but he was most excited by the fact that God had spoken to him and that he had acted upon it.

I was thrilled too, of course. My Father is so faithful. The next weekend I drove down to Tel Aviv, and left the car at the repair shop for the next two weeks. They repaired it beautifully, even to a perfect touching up job, and the cheques covered all I had to pay for it. There was even a little over.

The Lord is bountiful, giving full measure, pressed down and running over. Nothing is impossible for those who believe. He is faithful and will indeed never leave us or forsake us.
One of the loveliest roads in Israel leads from the ancient town of Acre, to Safed. Acre was founded in the middle bronze age and is a truly fascinating town with a mixed Jewish/Arab population. It is the Akko of the Old Testament and the Ptolomais of the New Testament. Safed was our destination this particular day and we wound our way from the coast up into the hill country of Upper Galilee.

En route, we passed by the valley of Zebulun, the sun glinting off the water of the fish ponds which cover large areas of the valley. I was reminded that in the early part of this century the whole area was covered in malaria swamps, and that these efficient and economically valuable fish ponds owed their existence to the sacrificial labours of the settlers of the early kibbutzim.

A little further, about halfway along the route, we stopped at the observation point, Mitzpe HaYainim, (Observatory of the Seas), from which one can view the entire Lower Galilee, as well as the two seas, the Mediterranean and the Sea of Galilee. A memorable experience.

We continued to follow the road as it wound its way upwards, passing the village of Amirim, renowned for the fact that all its inhabitants are vegetarians, living very simply off their land. A tough, hard life for those born and bred there, and perhaps a good place for those who have a yen to live close to nature?

Finally, at 2,800 feet we reached the highest town in Israel, Safed, where I encountered a young Jewish boy named Israel.

I had spent an enjoyable few hours wandering along the picturesque ancient streets of Safed, (also called Safat or Safad), climbing up the ancient stairways, enjoying the view from the highest area, now a memorial park, and the artist's quarter where one can always encounter artists and would-be artists of all ages, easels set up or sketch books at the ready.

My mind had wandered off into the past. Romans, Crusaders, Arabs, Mamelukes, and Druze, all fought for this city. Its height made it an important town, though since it was off the main trade and army routes it had been spared the ravages of many of the towns in Israel.

Its height had also made it an important link in the signalling system set up to enable Jews as far afield
as Mesopotamia to know the exact time of the start of the new month, and the special Jewish holidays, since these were calculated from the time the new moon and certain stars became visible in Jerusalem.

The system was that at precisely the right time, a bonfire was lit on one of the hills in Jerusalem. A lookout in Qeren Sartaba in the Jordan Valley, on spotting it, lit his own bonfire, which in turn was visible in Ramat Kochay.

This fire was seen in Safed, Safed's fire was visible in Hauran, and Hauran's fire could be seen by the large Jewish population in Mesopotamia. As it was extremely important for the Jewish faith that exact times were observed, the signalling centres were highly regarded.

But it was in the 16th Century that Safed became a really important town. Commercially, the textile and dying industry rivalled that of Italy, and the work produced here was taken all over the world. Spices, cheeses, and oils were also marketed from here and produced an economically strong and viable community.

The first printing press in the whole of Asia, with the notable exception of China, was set up here in 1563, and the first books to be printed in Hebrew were produced in 1578.

The Ottomans, who ruled the area at this time were sympathetic to the waves of Jewish refugees from Spain and Portugal flooding into the area, and this sense of security encouraged other Jews to make Safed their home.

The main attraction and importance of Safed however, was due to the fact that several renowned teachers of Judaism, and especially of the Kabbala, had made their homes and headquarters there. Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, the author of the Zohar, on which the Kabbala is based, was thought to have been buried nearby, and the prestigious leader of the Kabbalists, Rabbi Isaac Lurie, also known as the 'Ari' (Lion), and Joseph Caro, the author of the 'Shulchan Much,' (Prepared Table), an important simplification of the rules and tables of the Talmud, were amongst the sages who settled there.

But my main enjoyment is in talking to the living about the Lord Jesus Christ, and besides, all this walking had made me thirsty, so I left my historical meditations and returned to the present and began to look for a cafe.

I had just spotted one, when I became aware of four young men who had come up behind and were now doing their best to keep abreast of me. One of them, a tall and good looking Israeli greeted me, in Hebrew.

I returned the greeting cheerfully, and turned to walk into a small coffee shop.

"Can I have coffee with you?" the same young man then asked me.

I realised that he said it in fun, but as I've told you before, I'm always delighted to meet new people, so...

"Sure," I replied, and smiled at him.

He clearly hadn't expected this response, but taking advantage of the situation, as he thought, he turned to his friends and said firmly, "Beat it! I'll see you later."

He pulled up a chair and sat opposite to me, and we ordered our coffees. It only took a few words to realise that we were going to have difficulties with language, but I felt that somehow with my broken Hebrew and his broken English, we would manage.

He opened with the usual questions an Israeli male fires at a female. "How old are you?" "Where do you live?" "Why are you here?"

"Too old for you. I live in the area. I'm here to be a witness for Jesus Christ," I answered.

We stared at one another, then burst into laughter. The ice was broken.

I then told him that nothing happens by accident, and that it was by divine appointment that he was sitting there in that chair opposite me. He liked that.

Briefly I shared with him how God had brought me from the other side of the world, had given me a great love for the people of the Middle East and a desire that was unquenchable to share with them about their Messiah.

I watched with interest as his expression quickly changed from fun to seriousness. Without hesitating he started to tell me about his life. He was a dope pusher and an addict, and at the age of twenty-two he felt he had done all and seen everything. I am lost," he concluded.

"Would you like the opportunity to begin life all over again?" I asked.

"Of course," he replied, "but it's not possible."

"Oh yes, it is possible," I said firmly. "The life I'm living now is a new life for me too."

By this stage he was no longer sitting opposite me, but had moved next to me, and was holding my hand.

For what seemed to be a long time, I spoke to him of the love of God. His heart was tender, and his eyes, swimming in tears, reflected the turmoil of his young and wasted life.

Suddenly I glanced at my watch and realised that I was late for an appointment on the other side of town.

I jumped up, saying, I have to go."

"No! Please! I must see you again. When can we meet?" he pleaded.

I thought rapidly. "I'll buy you a coffee in Kiryat Shmoma on Friday. Meet me at the North Hotel at 10 am."

"I'll be there," he said confidently and with the most beautiful smile.

We did indeed meet on Friday as arranged, but I was not able to speak to him as before. On this occasion
he was as 'high as a kite'. He was unable to walk straight, and the outrageous clothes he was wearing spoke volumes. I realised just what bondage he was in, and in response to my immediate arrow prayer, felt constrained to repeat the Words of Life I had shared with him before.

God's word would not return to Him void. A sharp two-edged sword, it would penetrate even the thick spongy wooliness of a 'stoned' mind. God's love too, can penetrate where all else fails, and I felt His love flowing from me to this young Israelite named Israel.

A few days later I was relaxing at home with some friends when the phone rang. It was Israel, anxiety and tension in his voice, "I'm in jail," he began. "They told me I could make one phone call, so I'm phoning you to say, 'help'. Go to my parents at ..., (and he gave me their address), and go to the girl who has done this to me. Her address is ..., (and he gave me her address too)."

"Done what to you?" I asked, feeling somewhat lost.

"Believe me, it wasn't rape, but that's the charge, and here in Israel it's a very serious crime with a long jail term."

His voice started to break up, and I heard someone remove the phone from him.

I excused myself to my friends, simply requesting their prayers for Israel, and myself in the situation, and ignoring their resigned looks which seemed to say, "There she goes again." I ran downstairs, climbed into my little car and drove off.

At the jail, I asked permission to see Israel. I was informed that he was a dangerous man, and could not be allowed visitors.

"He is not dangerous," I replied indignantly. "He is my friend. Please let him know that Maureen is here."

The jailer reluctantly stretched out his hand and took a large bunch of keys. He walked slowly down a dark and dingy passage, carrying with him a note from me telling Israel that I would do everything I could to help him.

"Maureen! God bless you!" I faintly heard shouted from the cells situated somewhere in the depths of the building.

At least Israel now knew that somebody cared.

I next drove around to a friend, Dave, who willingly agreed to accompany me to Israel's parents, and to be my interpreter. They were very upset and clearly embarrassed by their son's arrest. I suspected that he had given them much heartache over the past few years. They marvelled that, in their time of need, it was not one of their own people who had offered help and succour, but Christians!

I tried to explain to them that I believed Israel to be innocent of this charge, and that God would vindicate him, thus revealing Himself to Israel, and to them. They seemed to find this very difficult to understand. Maybe they were too disillusioned to believe Israel to be innocent, or maybe their concept of God was not great enough to believe He could do this. However they were eager to hear what we had to say of God's love and holiness and power, and were very receptive to our praying in Jesus' name for Israel, for them, and for the situation.

We left them, looking, I felt, a little more hopeful, and drove off in search of the address Israel had given me for the girl. We prayed as we drove that she would be willing to let us in and to talk to us, and that God would be in absolute control of the conversation.

She welcomed us in, and we had a very interesting time sharing, and praying with her. At first she insisted that her story was true, but I sensed that although she wanted to be honest she was too afraid.

What if she was pregnant? What if Israel boasted of his conquest? What would her parents say and do? What would the neighbours say and do?

After we prayed however, it seemed that God had really touched her. She was convicted of the sin of what she had done to Israel by telling such a lie, and she wanted now to put things right with God by confessing the truth regardless of the consequences.

She told us that Israel had not forced her, but that, attracted by him, she had encouraged him. Right then and there, she made, and signed, a statement completely withdrawing the charge which had put my friend behind bars.

Within twenty-four hours Israel was out of jail, all the charges dropped.

He knew, as well as we did, that God had worked a miracle for him. Only God and the Holy Spirit could have convicted that young girl and given her the courage to confess her wrong doing. In our own strength we could have done nothing, but in the name of Jesus all things are possible.

Wherever Israel is now, he cannot escape the fact, that alone, he would still be in prison.

He now knows of the love of God in Jesus, that God saved him for a purpose, and that in Jesus he has a friend who sticks closer than a brother. I pray for him, and for others like him, who now know the truth, that they will accept the Lordship of God in Jesus the Messiah, and discover the reality of the New Life which has been offered to them.
Chapter 9

A Bathing Suit And A Bottle Of Coke

It's a long drive from Metulla, on the northern border of Israel, to Tel Aviv. However, it can be well worth the trip, as whether you are wishing to conduct business, to shop, or simply to dive into the sparkling cool Mediterranean. Tel Aviv is THE place to go.

One Friday, when I was living at Metulla, I had to make this trip to conduct various pieces of business. Being Shabbat Eve, the shops and offices would be closing very early, so I really raced around. To my delight, the result was that I found I had an hour to spare, and so I sped down to the beach, and the 'cool, blue waters.'

In Israel, the heat and humidity produce dehydration dangerously quick, so after my swim, not waiting to dress, I draped my towel around my waist, leapt into my car and drove off in search of liquid refreshment.

I drove to a corner tea room, hurriedly parked the car, and ran in to buy myself a coke.

I was back out of the store within half a minute, but ... half a minute was too long. To my horror, I watched my car being towed away, neatly attached to a large tow truck. I had no idea where my car was being taken, and I was left standing on the corner, with a bottle of coke in one hand, whilst the other was engaged in holding the towel around my waist.

I determined to do something, and, with a presence of mind that surprised me, I stepped into the road, and stopped a bus. The bus driver was highly amused at my attire, and also at my explanation of what had happened. He turned to his passengers, and asked them to bear with him for a moment.

“I need to help this lady,” he told them.

Fortunately he knew where my car would have been taken, no great distance from where we were, and off we went. He wouldn't even take the money for the bus fare, and the passengers, no doubt amused by my inappropriate attire, were very accommodating.

They all waved to me as I walked, ever so purposefully, into the compound where all the confiscated vehicles were sitting forlornly around. It seemed to be full of men, and I guess I looked somewhat out of place, but at that moment only one thing had any importance for me.

I told them that I had come for my car, to which they responded that the fine was 50 shekels, (at that time around $30).

I said I was sorry, but I didn't have the money. Would it be all right if I mailed it to them?
“Definitely not,” was the firm but uninterested reply.
“Could I leave my watch and ring with you, as collateral, until I return to Tel Aviv?” I asked.
The question was not even considered. “We are closing in ten minutes,” one of the men said, “unless you can pay now, you must leave your car here.”

Now, I dare say it would have been an interesting experience to have found my way, on Shabbat Eve, from Tel Aviv to Metulla, dressed in a swimsuit and towel, without money or means of identification, but somehow, at that moment I was not feeling adventurous or thrilled by such a challenge. The coke had been consumed and the bottle discarded, but the need for further liquid was also adding to my discomfort.

It was quite clear that the men were not prepared to be helpful or understanding. So, right then and there, I lifted my eyes to heaven, not caring who heard me, and I prayed that God, who sees everything, would come to my rescue.

This obviously was, to say the least, a very unusual thing for these men to see, though for me, to pray to God thus, was as usual as breathing, and they laughed aloud, as I just stood there waiting for the Lord to intervene.

And intervene the Lord did.

Just moments later, another man, who also had had his car impounded, walked up to where I stood, surrounded by these men who thought that my predicament was a matter for laughter.

He could have been an angel as he walked up to me and said, “Can I help you?”

I explained to him what had happened, and even before I had finished telling him the story, he had taken a 50 shekel note out of his pocket, and handed it over to the men, discharging my debt.

We became firm friends, this man and I, and to this day I call him 'Angel'.

Those men may have laughed, but I had proved once again that God hears and answers our prayers.

As I drove home, re-clothed and rejoicing, I remembered how Jesus told his followers, that the very hairs of their head were numbered, and they shouldn’t worry. That they were more valuable to our heavenly Father than many sparrows. And if anyone would publicly acknowledge Him as their friend, He would openly acknowledge them as His friend before His Father in heaven.
Chapter 10

A Grain Of A Mustard Seed

People often comment wistfully on my strong faith. They “wish that they could have my, ‘Audacity To Love,’ and my, ‘audacity to trust.’”

They seem to imagine that faith is a sign of great maturity or a special blessing from the Lord, a gift of personality given at birth, or one of the gifts of the Spirit given to some and not to others, and in varying quantities.

I like to put the record straight with them, and I’d like to do it here with you before I share any further. Some find trust in God easy, as infantile and childhood trusting was always honoured, and often it does seem to be a gift of the Lord, but nevertheless faith is none of these things.

I am not a theologian and do not intend to attempt a theological discourse or sermon on faith, but will simply share what I have learnt through personal experience and observation.

My encounter with Jesus, as I shared in Chapter 3, was such an overwhelming experience that I could not doubt that Jesus was indeed who he claimed to be, the Son of God, our Messiah, and as such all power was in his hands. Hands of love pierced for me. I knew without doubt that I not only could, but should trust my life to him, and that this was the safest, indeed the only truly safe way of living.

So, my vision of God, and his son Jesus Christ, was such that I knew him to be all powerful, and all capable, and what is more, all loving, interested in every detail of my life, and wanting the very best for me.

It was not hard to trust, to have faith, in such a God!

“But we must not rely on our emotions!” I hear some of you say in horror.

True. But neither should we be devoid of emotion or revealing contrary emotions to that which our mouths proclaim.

Have you seen miserable looking Christians declare that Jesus saves and that the fruit of the Spirit is love, JOY, peace ...? Have you seen Christians who look as though they are responsible for the national debt, declaring that Jesus takes all our burdens? Have you seen Christians clutching their stomachs with the pain of their ulcer as they boldly declare that Jesus has healed them?

If the reality in our lives, in our emotions, does not match up to the reality of the Word, then something is wrong. Either we have misunderstood the Word, or we are ignoring the foundational commandments.
So, let's look at what the Word says about Faith.

There are of course hundreds of texts about faith, but we only need to look at a few to get an understanding of the Biblical idea of faith.

Let's begin with a few lovely verses from the Old Testament. In Isaiah 12:2 we read, “God is my Saviour. I will trust him and not be afraid. The Lord gives me power and strength. He is my Saviour!” And the psalmist takes up the theme in Psalm 18:30, “God, His way is perfect. The Word of the Lord is proven, tried. He is a shield to all who trust, confide in, take shelter in Him.”

Proverbs 30:5 says, “God keeps every promise He makes. He is like a shield for all who claim his protection.” And again the psalmist takes us a step further, (Psalm 5:12), “You bless those who obey you, Lord. Your love protects them like a shield!”

So we have every reason to trust God, who is not only all powerful, but our loving Saviour and our shield against all evil. But there is the little provision that comes in that last verse. He can only bless us if we obey him.

Take an illustration from life. We may give a friend a perfect map through a dangerous area, and guarantee his safety. But ONLY if he obeys our instructions. If he goes his own way he could fall into a multitude of dangers. Likewise, God wants to guide us through life.

He has given us free will. He wants to bless us, but can only do so if we follow his advice and his commands.

Jesus takes this further in John's Gospel, chapter 14, where three times he says, “If you love me, obey my commandments!”

Not only is it true wisdom to obey the Lord, but if we really know and love Jesus and are grateful to him, then we will long to obey him, to do his will. Not only that, but it will give us the greatest happiness to do so. In addition, Jesus tells us that when we do so, then the Holy Spirit will come to us, and he will whisper lovingly to us whenever we are unsure of the way to take, or the response to give.

Hallelujah! We are not left alone to make important decisions or to decide what the Lord's will is in a given situation. Choices in the little things of life are ours. The Lord delights to see us decide whether to give our guests Turkey pilaff or Duck a l'orange, whether to buy a Ford or a Volkswagen, whether to spend our day off at the beach or walking in the hills, or visiting sick folk. But when it is important that we follow a certain path, we can trust him to make this known to us, and then we can go forth to follow that path in perfect trust and faith, however scared we may feel and however dark, and/or, unknown this path may be.

Hebrews 11 gives us a long list of Old Testament characters whose faith is an example and encouragement to us. Read and reread it, many who are mentioned were poor, illiterate, scared, and feeling inadequate, but they had FAITH.

Let's get back to our title, “A Grain Of Mustard Seed.” As you know, the mustard seed is so tiny that most of us need a magnifying glass to separate one out, yet it becomes an enormous tree that is a real blessing to the birds.

So with our faith, we do not need an enormous amount of faith, but the object of our faith must be great. Our faith is in God, and our faith is that he will keep his promises and will bring his Word to pass, could anything be more certain? God is both able and trustworthy, so the amount of faith we need can be microscopic and yet still be effective.

We cannot measure faith, or buy one kilo, or litre, of faith. I have heard people praying for more faith. Very fervently they were praying, but not for faith to believe God's Word, or to commit their lives to Him, or to step out in obedience to his command, but just for faith.

Perhaps they thought they could store it up for a rainy day, or that the time would come when God would send them out on an assignment and not provide the means, and there would be the faith, neatly stored within them.

Jesus said, in the Sermon on the Mount, “Do not be worried about the food and drink you need in order to stay alive, or about clothes for your body. These are the things the pagans are always concerned about. Your Father in heaven knows that you have need of all these things. Instead, be concerned above everything else, with the Kingdom of God and with what He requires of you, and he will provide you with all these other things.”

When he sent the disciples out to preach, he said to them, “Heal the sick, raise the dead, heal the lepers, and drive out demons. Give as freely as you have received. Don't take money with you. Don't even take a bag with extra clothing or shoes, or even a walking stick. For the labourer is worthy of his keep.”

Would you have believed Him and gone ahead in such a way? It truly required faith. The whole principle was that of faith, FAITH RISKS EVERYTHING ON TRUST IN GOD. No man can raise the dead, or heal lepers, or cast out demons by his own power. They were to go out, trusting God to do it all through them, and not only that, they were to trust God to supply all their needs for food and shelter and everything on a daily basis.

That is faith ... and that is freedom.

Praise the Lord!

Most people devote their lives to providing for themselves and their families. Since they have to look
out for themselves, to be sure they get enough of what they want and need, they are not free, for they are
obligated to be the source of their own supply.

But God adds all these things to the man or woman who puts Him first, so such a person is free, as they
do not have to worry over mundane matters. God is the source of their supply.

But I must stress that it is not a matter of God ‘serving’ you. The modern ‘prosperity movement’ often
goes overboard on this, and gives the impression that God is simply around to do our bidding. I have heard
proponents of this doctrine tell their audiences, “Don't ask God for a new winter coat, ask him for a mine.”

“Don't ask him for a small car, but for a Cadillac, or Rolls Royce'
GOD is the master, and WE are the servants.

To get a more accurate picture of our relationship with God read some accounts of the early church, or
missionaries of the last century. They did not have an easy time, but God blessed them, and they will have
their reward in heaven.

YOU must serve GOD, and as you do so, He will provide for you. God acts in response to faith. He
gives in response to being asked, IF the person doing the asking truly belongs to Him.

It is when you give yourself to God unreservedly, and serve Him with all your heart, that God will
provide everything you need.

The faith and trust God requires is not a passive thing. It is deliberate and voluntary and active. It’s a
wonderful, liberating thing to serve God wholeheartedly and to be able to rely on Him for everything. You can
count on Him, without any striving on your part, to make things happen. You can see Him fulfilling his promise
to supply all your needs, day by day, year by year. There is nothing imaginary about the provision. It is real!
Real food on your table. Real clothes on your back. Real money in your purse. Real shelter and all other
necessities.

The Bible very clearly explains that, “that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of Spirit,
is Spirit,’ (John 3.6).

If you have been born of the flesh, that is by your natural parents only, then you are flesh and blood, a
normal human being.

But when you are born of the Spirit, born of God by the acceptance of Jesus Christ as your Saviour and
Lord, you are given the power as a son or daughter of God, and your life is on an absolutely new basis. You
will be a different person. The result will not only surprise other people, but will surprise YOU as well.

My own experience of trusting God began in a small way, and like a human muscle, it has been exercised
to what some might say is a ridiculous extent, but which to me seems very normal. I expect it to increase way
beyond the place I am at today, knowing that my heavenly Father owns the cattle on a thousand hills.

Remember, Jesus said, “Seek first the Kingdom of God and all these things will be added to you.”

A Word of Warning! This is not a soft option. God never promised an easy path, free from the usual
human ills and sorrows, but He did promise that His transforming presence would be with us in all things,
tribulations and trials, as well as joys. James reminds us that trials are part of the perfecting of our faith.

He also points out that whenever we request anything from God, or ask His help to carry out the tasks
He has given us, we must be quite, quite sure that we really want to do the task, and that we really want His
help, or we will be like a wave of the sea, tossed back and forth and getting nowhere.

Finally, true faith does not waver even in darkest hours. Habakkuk triumphantly declares, “Even though,
(I lose everything), yet will I be joyful and glad, because the Lord God is my Saviour. He gives me strength”
We saw happy, glowing people, strolling in care-free fashion along the elegant, yet friendly boulevards, bordering shimmering white beaches. We encountered bouncy little balls of children, of all shades from light bronze through mahogany. We exulted in blue skies, sunshine, and fluffy white clouds chasing each other over the vast dome of the heavens and playing hide and seek around the craggy tree-covered mountains behind.

We were in Hawaii, the islands of romance and dreams, formerly islands of intrigue, horror and bloodshed.

It's a lesson book for anthropologists and sociologists, and home to many races now trying to forget the past and live in harmony, the island for honeymooners and rich holiday makers.

How 'we' got there is another story in itself, for we are neither rich, nor honeymooners. We just praised our God and thanked Him for bringing us to a place so exquisitely beautiful.

Then, out of the corner of my eye, I spotted an incongruity.

Creating visual disharmony amongst all that beauty was a man of some thirty five years, dressed in rags or a close approximation to them, his shoulder length auburn hair uncombed and unkempt.

He was carrying a bundle, wrapped around with large banana leaves.

I couldn't resist him!

My friends looked at one another. They know me well and have often been embarrassed by my involvement with strangers, and here was a stranger they most definitely did not want to get involved with.

For myself, I am no longer embarrassed by strange people, or strange situations, being somewhat unusual myself. Since the Lord has called me into this ministry, I have been privileged to see Him at work in so many unexpected ways and I have learnt that each person is unique and very important to Him, and the ones that the world shuns are each most precious to Him.

However, “See you later,” said my friends, abandoning me to my fate.

Yet who could blame them? You are so often judged by the company you keep, and here was an example of extreme filth, weirdness, perhaps madness.

I don't actually recall how I started the conversation with him, but within minutes I was standing in front of him, talking about the Lord.
I found myself saying, “Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ?”

To my amazement, his eyes sparkled with life at the mention of this Name. He seemed to be staring into my very soul, as, without blinking he quoted the words which begin the glorious Gospel of John, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him; and apart from Him nothing has come into being that has come into being. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.”

I suddenly felt very small, very humbled. This man whom I had judged, somewhat patronizingly, was my brother in Jesus. Not only that, but I felt instinctively, that here was a man from whom I could learn a lot. I hastily asked the Lord's forgiveness for my attitude, then I smiled back at the young man.

“I've got a few dollars. Can I take you out to lunch, my brother?” I asked.

“I have no need of your money, or your lunch,” he replied.

I must have looked rather taken aback, for he continued, “God sustains me with His word. I have need of nothing. Our brother, John the Baptist, lived like me, and probably looked like me. He wasn't the average guy on the street I'm sure. And he gave me a beautiful smile.

“God bless you sister,” he said, as he strolled away, leaving me standing, feeling rather foolish.

What an encounter! But what a priceless lesson I learnt that day. Never again would I judge a man by his looks. The only way to judge him is by what he believes in his heart, and since God alone knows what this is, He alone should be the judge.
Meet my friend, Willie.
He's just nine years old, but already he knows the Lord, and it shows.

I mentioned that it was another story how I, and some very dear friends came to be on the beautiful island of Hawaii. Well, part of that story is that the reason we came to be there was to attend a Discipleship Training School, DTS, at Youth With A Mission, YWAM.

It was there that I met, and made friends with Judy, and her sons, Willie and Jay.
The school was a wonderful experience. Each day we would listen intently to the really anointed Christian speakers who flew in from all parts of the world to share with us. Their expertise, their enthusiasm, their experiences, were all to challenge us and encouraged us to go out and witness to a needy world that Jesus really could change lives.

By the time evening came, we were singing for the sheer joy of knowing Jesus, and our hearts were yearning for others to have the same joy.

How could we be so selfish as to keep this tremendous news to ourselves, that Jesus, the Son of God, had died to set us free? How could we sit around, or go to bed, or into a cafe in a large group, when there were thousands of people on this island alone, who hadn't heard of Jesus, or at least hadn't heard the truth about him?

So we set out, after supper, in two's and three's, and allowed the Holy Spirit to guide us to those people whose hearts he'd already been preparing. We had such interesting confrontations. We learnt so much about the incredible diversity of the human experience, and, because our approach was never stereotyped, but always direct from the heart, people opened up to us, and we saw the pain, the pointlessness, the lack of fulfillment at the root of those who did not know Jesus.

I wondered time and time again, how I would have reacted to this kind of approach in the days before I knew the Lord, and how very different my life would have been, had anyone cared enough to approach me in like fashion.

Only God knows the answer to this, but I have certainly made it my practice to share whenever the Holy Spirit gives me the nudge to do so. I would hate to deprive anyone of even an hour's loss of walking with Jesus. It's also a most exciting pastime. In fact, I challenge anyone to suggest a more exciting one!

Willie certainly thought so, and .... he had been left out! It did not seem right to him, and after a few
days, he plucked up courage and asked me if he could join me in my time of witness that evening.

I must admit I was a little taken aback, but after a quick prayer to our Father, saw no reason why he should not join, provided, of course, that his mother was completely willing.

Her permission was readily granted, and so after supper, Willie, as if embarking on a great adventure, which of course soul-winning is, came bouncing along with us. He listened, mingled, and smiled at the people, but that was the limit of his contribution that night.

But the next night too, there he was, dressed to go out and raring to go.

This night, we so divided up that Willie and I went off alone together. As usual, we committed the evening to the Lord, trusting him to direct us to those whose hearts he had prepared. However, if there were to be none that night, then we would just enjoy each other's company and delight in the people and the scenery of this picturesque island.

Masses of people filled the beaches, trading at the stores or simply 'being', that's the way life is in Hawaii. Suddenly, Willie was tugging on my arm, and saying, “Now it's my turn.”

I gulped! “Are you sure, Willie?” I asked, in some trepidation.

“Sure, I'm sure!” replied Willie confidently.

I found myself being steered swiftly and skilfully through the crowds until, to my amazement and perturbation, we stopped in front of a real giant of a man, a Hawaiian who stood head and shoulders above all the other folk on the street.

I admired Willie's courage and gave his tiny hand a squeeze.

He got the man's attention by knocking on his knee! As the giant's attention was lowered to his level, Willie spoke up, “Excuse me, Sir; he said, very politely. “May I speak to you?”

“Yes, kid! What do you want?” came a very gruff reply.

“I have a very important message for you,” Willie, continued.

“What do 'you' know about important?” The giant was mocking now.

“IT's the most important message you'll ever hear,” Willie replied, his face very serious, and yet I could see God's glory shining out of it. “Jesus loves you so much that he died for you.”

The man was completely taken aback. He stared at Willie without replying. Then he started to shake, and I watched the colour drain out of his face. Slowly he turned his gaze from Willie, onto me. “Is this your child?” His voice was choked with emotion.

“Not my child, but my friend,” I answered. “You should thank God for him. He's never done anything like this before, and out of all the hundreds of people on this street, God led him straight to you.”

The giant was speechless, and quite ashen, as he walked away from us, shaking his head.

We may never know the end of this story, but Willie and I went on our way rejoicing, confident that our divine encounter will bear fruit, in due season.
I know that its God's nature to bless, and as I see him moving on my behalf in such wonderful ways, so my faith grows to ask in prayer for bigger and better things. The more you understand the greatness of God, the more your faith will reflect your confidence in him.

The only thing I need to know is that I'm in the centre of his will, and then I find I can calmly and joyously trust the Lord for anything. Hallelujah!

At the time of this particular incident I was back in the country of Zimbabwe again, visiting my precious family, having entered the country on a one-way ticket.

It was all I had the money for at the time. I wasn't in the slightest bit worried however as I knew that whenever the Lord wanted me to move on He would tell me where He wanted me to go and He would supply the wherewithal.

It's a truly wonderful life being in the service of the Living God.

I began to feel a desire to go to America, and so began to pray about this to ascertain if this was indeed the Lord's will for me.

As I prayed I became more and more excited and my peace was absolute. I now firmly believed that this was where He wanted me to go.

Without a cent to my name, I went down town to a Travel Agent. I walked in with the calm confidence attributable to someone with many thousands of pounds in her account, for after all, does not my Father own the cattle on a thousand hills? He owns every inch of everything to be had on this crusty old earth. I booked a window seat in the non-smoking area on the British Airways flight from Harare to New York, via London, on the date I had felt the Lord had given me, some two months hence, and walked out singing praises to our wonderful God.

Next I needed to get a visa, and here I hit a snag as I was only able to get one for two months and I had thought the Lord had said I was to be there for six months. However that was in His hands. I need not worry.

I would be flying out of a African summer into an American winter, so I had to give careful consideration to clothes, and I needed to write as soon as possible to my friends in America, to say I was on my way, and to enable them to fix up lodgings & speaking engagements.
These matters completed, I was able to relax and enjoy my final six weeks in Zimbabwe. I never questioned as to how the Lord was going to bring in the money. I'm in the army of God. When He says, “Go,” then I go, trusting Him to provide whatever is necessary for the journey. If He says, “Come,” then I come. The principle is very simple. I go about His business, and He feeds, clothes and shelters me.

Sometimes He provides the opportunity to earn some money, sometimes I receive gifts from friends, or even from strangers, sometimes I receive ‘love gifts’ after a speaking engagement, and at yet other times the money appears mysteriously. He is sovereign. The one thing I do know is that He ‘will’ provide.

This is the way I had been living for the past ten years, ever since that radical encounter with Jesus Christ which turned my life around. Translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light, I now live entirely because of my faith in Jesus. Praise His lovely Name.

During this time in Zimbabwe, I had neglected no opportunity to speak in churches there of the love of God, sharing with them all the Lord had been doing in my life, encouraging them to step out in faith, encouraging them to realize what a great God we have, and to realize just how much He loves each individual one of us.

One couple who heard me speak had a great burden and longing that the kingdom of God should be extended more and more.

They felt that I could contribute to this, and desired to bless me and enable me to extend my ministry to America.

They gave the money with joy, and I received it with joy, knowing that they would be richly blessed in their giving.

I could now return to the Travel Agent and pay for my ticket! Hallelujah!

Of course, I would arrive in America penniless, but what of that? I had the strong assurance that the Lord would take care of my needs there as adequately as He has done in the past, in so many places where I have served the King of Kings.

There was still the problem of the visa, but that was His responsibility and He was going before to prepare the way, as always.

So, on the appointed day, I boarded the plane at Harare airport, my heart full of expectancy for the adventures that I knew lay ahead of me.

From the stifling heat of midsummer in the heart of Africa, we arrived at Heathrow International Airport, London to a carpet of snow. So much prettier than a plain old red carpet I thought to myself as we were ushered into one of the lounges of the terminal.

A few minutes later I was not so sure, as the announcement was made that passengers for New York would have at least twenty-four hours delay. New York, it seemed, had had an exceptionally heavy snowfall, and the airport was closed to all traffic.

So be it. Maybe one of the passengers needed an extra long time for me to talk to them of the love of Jesus?

Maybe there was someone I had to meet the next day before flying on. Maybe ....? Anyway, it was in the Lord's hands and He would show me.

I strolled over to the huge picture window to admire the view. Even mundane things take on a new beauty and elegance when covered in a dusting of snow, or shimmering with ice crystals. In front of me, also made more beautiful by its light covering of snow, stood Concord. I had seen pictures of it but the reality was breath-taking. It was enormous, yet with such beauty of line.

"Wow!" I thought to myself. "Imagine flying in a machine like that!"

I had read a little about this fabulous plane. It travels as fast as the speed of sound, linking London and New York across the enormous Atlantic ocean, in a mere two and a half hours. The cost too was staggering, $1,500 per seat!

I returned to the group of passengers in transit from Africa, and let my eyes play over each one, wondering which was the person the Lord knew to be ready to be receptive to the Gospel.

My reverie was broken as an official of British Airways appeared in front of our group.

With no explanation, he pointed to myself and to two other people standing in the crowd and said, “You, you, and you. Come this way please.”

The three of us meekly followed the official, not knowing whither we were going.

Had we unknowingly broken some regulation? Had our luggage been sent on to Australia? Were we chosen to be go-between’s for the group?

We followed our guide through another lounge, down a corridor and .... into the Concord lounge.

A few hundred bored and dissatisfied looking business men filled this lounge. We discovered that they had already been delayed for twelve hours owing to the extreme weather conditions in New York.

A British Airways officer walked up to me, and with a charming smile on his handsome face said, “Madam, with our compliments, would you please lead these passengers onto Concord?”

What a God we serve. He not only hears the prayers we pray, but he also gives heed to the desires of our hearts.
It was a champagne flight and the passengers were treated like Kings and Queens. Gifts of all kinds were handed out, and the most exquisite and beautifully prepared food was served.

When we took off, it felt as though our very hairs were standing on end as the near vertical rocket-like take-off of Concord enabled us to actually feel the force of gravity pulling us back against our seats.

It was an incredible experience!

On arrival at J F Kennedy Airport, New York, we were told that as a special concession to Concord, they had worked hard to clear one of the runways for the landing. No other plane would land that day, and in fact the runway on which we had landed was now covered with snow again.

As passengers of the famous Concord, we were received with much bowing and scraping. Nothing was too good for us.

The normal customs formalities were dealt with speedily and efficiently.

I felt a nudging of the Lord to take advantage of the situation. I approached the immigration official, smiled brightly, and said, “Excuse me, I wonder if you could help me? I have a visa for two months, but I'd like to extend it.”

“Most certainly,” said the US Immigration Official, and without another word, he cancelled the two month visa, replacing it with one for six months.”

“Enjoy America,” he called, as I went confidently through, rejoicing anew in the greatness of our God.
I was exhausted. I had been kept on the hop in the state of Wisconsin with numerous speaking engagements, and I was really relishing the thought of a few hours sleep on the plane I was about to catch to Los Angeles.

Now don't get me wrong. I absolutely adore speaking engagements. I love to talk about the Lord. I love to share with other people what I know of Him, especially of the experiences I have had as I have been obediently following the path he has chosen for me.

It is my greatest joy to encourage others to trust Him. There is such a reluctance to take Him at His word, and to claim His promises.

Many people fear that it is presumptuous to think the promises apply to ‘them.’ I get many people coming up to me after meetings and saying, “Of course, it's wonderful what God does through you, but it would never work for me.”

What nonsense. There is nothing special about me. I'm His child, certainly, but so are they, and so are you if you have accepted Jesus as your saviour.

The promises are for ‘you.’ Believe God, He does not lie. Accept them, and trust Him.

Of course, with most of the promises there are conditions. Maybe that's where the trouble is. We cannot expect God to heal our worry induced ulcer, if we have no intention of giving up our worrying, and handing our lives over to Him in perfect child like trust. We cannot expect God to bless us if there is part of us, of our lives, that we have not handed over to Him. Neither can we expect Him to use us in witnessing to others if secretly we do not want to share with others, if we're scared of rebuffs, or of looking foolish in the eyes of our friends, or even of strangers.

But I digress. Exhilarating and stimulating though it is to share about the Lord in this way, especially with such a fabulous bunch of believers as I found in Wisconsin, it's also necessary to take heed of the Lord's command to rest one day in seven. If we are working, preaching, sharing, taking meetings on Sundays then we must select another day to be our day of rest.
God, who designed our bodies, knows how they function best, and this command to rest is a very important commandment.

Without realising it, since I was asked to take a meeting, and the time was free, I had simply said yes, I had disobeyed this command and I was suffering the consequences.

So, with the loving farewells of many new friends ringing in my ears, I boarded the plane for Los Angeles, breathing a prayer that my time in sunny California could be a little quieter, and resolving to keep to a weekly day of rest.

All the window seats having been taken, I was given a seat next to the aisle, which rather spoilt my vision of curling up, undisturbed, next to the window, where no-one would need to get past me to visit the rest room, or simply to take a stroll around the plane.

However I committed this to the Lord, and started to praise Him. There is so much to praise him for. Once I start, whether because I'm so happy in the face of all I see God doing today, or whether because I'm feeling low due to the circumstances I find myself in, I find it difficult to stop, and certainly I'm always uplifted in the spirit. 'Rejoice always' may not be an easy command to obey, but when we do so, we realise afresh God's wonderful wisdom and caring.

When I reached my seat, a young Korean man was sitting there. He stood up, and very graciously offered me the window seat.

How often surprising things happen as we praise. Equally graciously I accepted, and folded myself into the seat, with a prayer of thanks. As I leaned over to thank him, however, I looked into his intense dark, almost black, eyes, and my heart sank.

I heard that still small voice I know so well tell me that I needed to speak to him of Jesus.

Normally, I would have been excited, expectant, I have seen the Lord at work through such 'chance' meetings on numerous occasions, and have never failed to be thrilled at the ways He has of working. He cares so much for each individual, knows exactly how they think, and what their reactions have been and will be to the truths of the Gospel.

So, if we listen to the Holy Spirit, we will be able to say the right, helpful words, whether we are to be a link in the chain, or to have the privilege of being that final link and see yet another life changed through an encounter with Jesus Christ, but this time ....?

Well, as I said, I was exhausted, and to my shame my reaction was to say, "Oh, Lord, give me a break."

The nerve of it. But, unrepentant, and determined to rest, I requested a blanket, and curled up with my face to the window, and prepared myself for sleep, beautiful sleep.

I wasn't disobeying the Lord, you understand. We had several hours in the air, and I would speak to him later, but right now I needed my sleep! However, seldom does the Lord allow me to get away with such self deception, and this was no exception.

Sleep would not come. I prayed and prayed. I reminded the Lord that I was exhausted, that I needed to be fresh when I arrived in California, that I really would speak to the young man when I was refreshed, after a little sleep.

But sleep would not come. I wriggled and fidgeted, I twisted and squirmed for what seemed like hours, and ended up more exhausted than ever.

Finally I gave in. Why do I ever think I know better than the Lord? I straightened myself up, turned to the man sitting next to me, quietly minding his own business, looked him full in the face and said, "Do you want to know something?"

Startled, he answered, "Sure I want to know something?"

Having got his full attention, out of my spirit came these words, "You must turn from your sin, return to God, and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

His face revealed the shock my words were to him. He stared at me wild-eyed, as if in unbelief, then he started to cry.

"Thank you, thank you," he kept saying. "Thank you, thank you, thank you. You don't know how long I have been praying. I've been praying to whoever God is, asking Him to reveal himself to me, so that I should know what to do."

He became so excited that he could hardly contain himself, and was quite oblivious of our fellow passengers, who had turned, and were staring at us in amazement.

"But why did you wait so long to speak to me?" he then asked. Why indeed? How dare I put God on hold? Normally I respond immediately to the 'still, small voice', regardless of the circumstances. Why not this time?

It's my greatest joy and a very real privilege to be called to such a ministry. But this time, my desires did not correspond with God's, at least not as to timing, and I had put my own desires first.

How ashamed I now felt, how very humbled. God had brought me together with this young man, who had been truly seeking to know God, but had no-one to show him the way, and I had run the risk of letting him
travel on, still searching.

I apologised, but his main concern now was to know more about God, and how he could learn more. The journey was far too short, and soon, wide awake and thoroughly refreshed, I saw Los Angeles below us, and we prepared for landing.

Outside the plane, as I looked around for the friends who were meeting me, my new Korean friend showed that he had no intention of letting me go so quickly. He steered me towards a crowd of Koreans who were waiting for him, and with great excitement began to tell them all that had happened on the plane.

He kept pointing at me and saying, “She told me.” I would have liked to have stayed and shared with them all, but I had done my part, the Lord would use my new friend and others to minister to them, so I made my farewells and moved over to where my friends were waiting philosophically, what had Maureen been up to on this plane trip?

“Where must I go?” he yelled after me.
“Is this California?” I asked, momentarily confused.
“Yes,” he said simply.
“Then take yourself, family and friends to the, ‘Church on the Way’,” I shouted back.
“Hallelujah,” he responded, and I rejoiced anew at how his heart had been so touched by the Spirit of God.

The words I had spoken to him were not the words I would have chosen with my own mind. They were not a very logical choice, but they were the words of the Spirit, the words God knew were the right ones to touch the heart, the need of this young man.

God has commanded and promised, “Open your mouth and I will fill it.” I had obeyed, albeit belatedly, and He had fulfilled his promise abundantly, pressed down and over flowing. How good is our God. Hallelujah!
I'd just returned from a really good time with my family in Africa. It had been an unusually long time spent with them, six whole months, and I had enjoyed it immensely, but oh what a joy it was to be back in Israel again.

I dashed into the Post Office in Rehavia, forgetting for a moment that in Israel the Post Office is always a beehive of activity. For a few seconds culture shock hit me, then I grinned to myself and joined one of the long lines of people, looking around to see if there was anyone I knew.

It's one of the few places in Israel where queues exist.

The normal procedure is to wait in a milling throng until a vacancy occurs and then sidle or push into position.

It reminds me of the man at the Pool of Bethsaida who had no one to help him into the water when the angel stirred the surface. Thirty eight years he had been waiting. Certainly the queue system did not exist then.

Here, however, no one seemed to be in a hurry or unduly distressed by the lengths of the lines, and all seemed most relaxed as they chatted to friends and strangers alike.

There was no one that I knew, but after a few minutes I became aware that an elderly gentleman, way towards the front of one of the other lines, was staring at me very intently.

I followed my natural impulse and smiled and waved at him. He did not respond but continued to stare at me.

A little while later he completed his business and I watched him leave his line and come over to me. In a way that is typically Israeli he came very close, and, eye-ball to eye-ball, asked, “Who are you?”

What would you have done or said? What thoughts would have gone through your mind?

I didn't have any reservations, but simply said, “My name is Maureen and I come from Zimbabwe, and from time to time I live in Israel.”

As I looked at him more closely I couldn't help but notice great compassion in his tired and weary eyes. “I've never done this before,” he said, seeming surprised at his own actions, “but I feel to pronounce a blessing on you.”

“Baruch HaShem,” was my response in Hebrew. The literal meaning is 'Blessed is the Name', but it is
best translated as 'Praise God'. I was amazed and thrilled at this unusual turn of events.

He pushed me out of my place in the line, not such a terrible thing as it would be in the States, as in Israel you are allowed back in again, and into the only unoccupied corner in this tiny crowded Post Office. Not only did he have my full cooperation, but he had captured the attention of everybody else in the Post Office.

With tremendous conviction, his eyes closed and his hand resting on my shoulder, he prayed aloud, in Hebrew, the most beautiful prayer I have ever heard.

When he had finished, his eyes were full of tears, and he again stared deeply into my eyes before squeezing my hand and walking out of the door.

As you can imagine, I too was in tears as I resumed my place in the line. I turned to the lady behind me in the queue and asked her, “Who was that man?”

I'm not sure why I thought she might know, but she replied, “Why, he's the well-known Rabbi, ----, (for obvious reasons I cannot divulge his name).

I was startled. “Rabbi?” I said, “He wasn't dressed like a Rabbi!”

Suddenly my reasons for standing in the Post Office line no longer seemed so important, and I found myself running out of the door after him.

Half way down the block I caught up with him, and rather breathlessly said, “I want to thank you, Rabbi ----.”

Nearly overcome with emotion, he dismissed me with a wave and the words, “Don't thank me, thank God.”

I especially wanted to share this story, as it made me more aware of how important it is that we Christians should shine with the love of our Saviour. Jesus' command in Matthew 5:14 is, “You are the world's light, a city set on a hill glowing in the night for all to see. Don't hide your light! Let it shine for all to see, so that they will praise your heavenly Father.”

We are his reflection, designed to be seen by this dying world, that all men might be drawn to Him.
Many people believe that the climate in the Middle East, and in Israel in particular, is warm and sunny all the year round.

Let me disillusion you.

In the winter, especially in Jerusalem, it is cold! Jerusalem is high elevation, one half mile above sea level, and although the temperature only occasionally falls below the freezing point, the winds are both cold and piercing.

This particular day was very cold, and I was thankful to have completed my shopping, and to be standing in the group of people waiting for the No. 4 bus to take me to Ramat Eshkol, the suburb of Jerusalem, in which I was then living.

Everyone in sight seemed to be wearing very thick and very dark clothes and it was a day on which it would have been easy to fall prey to the clutches of depression. The wind too seemed to cut through me as easily as a laser beam, leaving its chill impression on every inner layer of my body. I huddled into the people around me.

Please note that in Israel one does not form a queue for the bus, but sits or stands around till the bus is sighted. Then as it arrives at the stop the people surge forward and one is somehow carried by the momentum inside the bus.

To take my mind off the discomfort, I looked around me. Maybe I could use the time wisely by reading the signs on the shops and so improve my Hebrew. I succeeded with one or two, but it was a little disheartening. My vocabulary was not yet that good.

Then my attention was caught by a pile of rags on the pavement across the street. It was a very unusual sight, as people in Israel are very security conscious and any unattended baggage causes people to ask each other, “Does that belong to you?” until the owner is found, or, if no one claims it, then the police are quickly notified. Many lives have been saved over the past years by this vigilance on the part of the ordinary person. The police arrive quickly and deal efficiently with the object, sending in robots to discover the materials inside the package and then either probing and carefully exploring it, or blowing it up in a controlled explosion.
However, on this occasion, a second look was sufficient for me to see that this was not, in fact, a bundle of rags, but a very inert, very dejected looking man.

You don't see so many beggars on the streets today, and one soon gets to know those that are around. Some beg for themselves, while others beg for a charity and keep a certain percentage of what they get. Some enjoy seeing the people pass by and chat to numerous acquaintances, while others know of no other life. I thought I knew all the beggars, at least to pass the time of day with them, but this was a new one.

From across the street I could see that he was not a native of these parts, and the position of his drooping head pulled at my heart strings.

A surge of excitement swept through me. Here indeed was someone who needed to know that Jesus loved him, and had died for him, and who needed to know it right now. Yet the bus must be arriving any minute, and I had an appointment to keep on the other side of town. What a dilemma!

I found myself walking towards the crossing, but I paused and took stock. “Lord,” I cried, “If this is truly of you, then please will you clear the traffic and keep the No. 4 bus away.”

Immediately, it appeared, the traffic cleared, and the bus was still not in sight. I skipped across the crosswalk and with a smile of victory on my face I approached this man for whom Christ died, and who obviously had no idea of this sacrifice and this love.

Around his neck was draped a dirty piece of string and pinned to it was a piece of cardboard on which was written in English and in Hebrew, “Help! I'm penniless!”

I never use the same approach twice on any of the crazy errands I attempt for the Lord. This time I bounced up to him and found myself saying, “Hello!”

He might as well have been asleep for all the notice he took of me, or even stoned out of his mind on drugs. He neither flinched nor raised his head one centimetre. I sat down next to him, my precious winter coat dripping into a puddle. “Hi there!” I said, and reached out to touch his blond head. Still no recognition. What next?

“My name is Maureen. I'm a Christian, and because I am, I care about you,” I said very firmly. He raised his head and looked at me for a split second before resuming his hopeless posture.

Well, at least I now knew for sure that he was awake. A little encouraged, I asked him, “What is your name?”

A long pause followed and then, “Buddy,” he replied.

“Jesus sent me to tell you that he loves you very much,” I said with all boldness. “Ha Ha!” This time I got a slightly longer look before his head dropped back again.

I became aware for a few minutes of the people all around us. Most were in a hurry, anxious to get home out of the cold and damp, and we were causing, not an obstruction, but certainly a slowing down of the flow of pedestrians on that side of the road. There was quite a muttering in various languages as they shuffled around us.

Well, I was sorry to inconvenience them, but what was a few moments delay for them compared with the possibility of drawing this sad, miserable man near to Jesus, who could set him free?

I looked down at him again, and this time noticed that he had a throwaway plastic cup beside him, at the bottom of which were a few coins.

“Where do you come from?” was my next question.

To my delight, he answered me, saying, “Ireland, and I want to go back there as quick as I can.”

I thought perhaps I'd had my day's ration of words from him when he suddenly added, “Don't waste your time talking to me. I'm not worth it.”

By now, I was growing rather tired of talking to the top of his head, and I suddenly found myself with my hands under his chin. With the minimum of effort I lifted his face up to a natural position. He stared at me in utter amazement.

I believe that everyone, every single human being is important to God, and it really hurts when I see someone in such a state of feeling worthless and unimportant. I know that God is saddened by it.

I burst out with real urgency and passion, “Jesus thinks you are worth it. He died on the cross because he thought you were worth it. Believe me, this is the most important message you are ever going to hear.”

He did not lower his head this time, even though I had taken my hands away, and I saw that his lovely blue eyes were swimming with tears.

“Jesus has sent me to tell you that he wants to take care of you,” I continued. “Instead of doing what you are doing, He wants you to cry out to Him. He'll fill your life with joy, get you back to Ireland, and so much more. He's knocking at your heart's door, and it's up to you to invite him into your life.”

“Are you for real?” he asked, and his voice was shaking with emotion.

“I don't know about that,” I said, laughing. “But I do know that this is a divine appointment, and all I'm doing is being the messenger, bringing you God's Word. It's His truth I'm telling you, and it was He himself who sent me to you to tell you this.”

“Do you mean to tell me that God will do that for me?” Buddy then asked.
“Believe me,” I said, with a knowing smile, “This is just the beginning of what he plans to do for you.”
In my enthusiasm I knocked his little plastic cup flying across the pavement. “You have no need of this silly little cup,” I said. “But if you receive this message, then I guarantee you will never be the same again!”

Suddenly, it was as if the sun came out. Buddy smiled at me with a smile of love, and together we rose to our feet. His head was held high as he straightened his clothes and pulled off the cardboard sign, his badge of shame. I watched in utter delight as he walked off, with a bounce in his step and his head even higher. Maybe I'll never know the end of this story, but I know for sure that the Lord began a great work in Buddy that day, and He always completes his work. Hallelujah!
Chapter 17

Dirty Water Descending

It occurs to me at this point that most of the 'noteworthy' events I write about happen on the streets, and most of them involve people who at the time were complete strangers.

I think that it stems from the fact that if you really love people, then strangers are not people to be feared, avoided or ignored but simply friends whom you do not yet know.

I believe that I have entertained many angels unawares, and I really thank God for His gifts and grace which enable me to respond to people positively, expecting the best from them, never the worst.

It enables me to turn a bad situation into a victorious one, and it never fails to delight and amaze me how well people respond when they sense that you love them and expect them to act and react in a good way.

I believe that nothing which happens to a child of God does so without His full knowledge and permission, and that He will use each and every situation, however disastrous it might seem, to produce growth in his child. His word tells us that the refiner purifies silver by burning out the dross, (Isaiah 1:25; Malachi 3:3), and that if the impurities are taken out of the silver then the artist can produce a thing of beauty, (Proverbs 25:4). Just so it is necessary for us to be purified of our dross that we might reflect the glory of God.

Did you know that the refiner heats the crucible in which the gold or silver is placed, skimming off the dross which rises to the surface, continuing to increase the heat and skim off the dross until he can see his face reflected in the precious metal?

Isn't this a beautiful picture of the way God would work with us?

We have a free will. We have a choice. But just what are the options? The way of the world which produces the fruits of frustration, anger, bitterness, un-forgiveness, envy, hatred, strife, hopelessness, desolation, loneliness .... need I go on? Or the way of the Kingdom which produces the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility and self-control.

It doesn't take a genius to work out that the latter is far better. But of course these fruits can only begin to be produced after you are born again.

Let me illustrate by sharing with you the story or happening which caused me to dwell on these wonderful truths.

It was a Sunday and I was on my way to church. I like to put on nice clothes when I go to worship my
creator, and today I was wearing a favourite dress, with my high heeled shoes. Perhaps not the best footwear for the cobbled streets of Jerusalem, but I'm used to them and find little problem.

Suddenly, I was drenched to the skin! Not only that, but the water with which I was soaked stank very foully.

I looked down at my beautiful dress stained with this liquid and covered in bits of fluff. I touched my elegant bouffant hair style, now clinging to my head, so unendearing. Many thoughts raced through my mind, as the people around me started to shout and yell. I dried my face and looked up to the point to which these people were gesticulating.

There, on a third floor balcony, was an old Jewish woman, staring down at me, obviously in a state of shock. She had her hands in the air and was gesturing to me that it was an accident. The bucket had slipped and the contents had landed on, you know who.

I became aware that the expression on the old lady's face was also one of fear, and I was pleased and thankful, for her sake, that I had been the recipient, and not one of these other people around who were shouting abuse, shaking their fists and demanding retaliation as they pointed accusingly at her.

Needless to say I was in a sorry state, but right then and there I made a decision, made my choice, that I was not going to allow this incident to spoil my day, nor would I allow it to change my plans. So, without moving from the spot, I took out my mirror, my comb, my lipstick and a small bottle of perfume and, much to the amusement of the onlookers, I proceeded to do what little I could to repair the damage. I smiled through it all, as my audience yelled advice as to what I 'ought' to be doing about the situation and the little old lady.

Having done all possible, I replaced my toiletries, and nodded to the old lady. She understood that I realised it was an accident, and the fear left her.

I waved goodbye to all around and, still very wet and very smelly, I walked off briskly to the house of the Lord.

I don't expect I was too popular with those sitting around me, though by the time I arrived my dress was merely damp and the smell considerably reduced, but I was able to join them all in praise to our great God, and to thank Him in particular for enabling me not to get angry with the old woman, and not to allow the incident to upset my spirit and spoil my day. Hallelujah!

The incident brought clearly to mind the Lord's comparison of the people of God, and the people of the world, and I rejoiced that there is a clear distinction.

Jesus said, “Give, and it will be given to you, good measure, pressed down and running over,” (Luke 6:38).

The world says, “It's my life and I'm going to live it the way I please.”

Jesus said, “For whosoever wishes to save his own life shall lose it; but whosoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” (Matthew 16:25).

The world says, “Judge the faults of others, cut them down to size if necessary, to keep them in their place?”

Jesus said, “Do not judge, lest you be judged.’ (Matt.7:1).

The world says, “None of that Christian stuff for me. I don't want to live in bondage to do's and don't's.”

Jesus said “Take my yoke upon you, for it is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:30).

The world says, “There are a lot of things that I couldn't possibly do.”

Jesus said, “All things are possible to him who believes.” (Mark 9: 23).

The great apostle Paul, writing to the believers at Ephesus, put it like this, “So get rid of your old self, which made you live as you used too, the old self that was being destroyed by its deceitful desires. Your hearts and minds must be made completely new, and you must put on the new self, which is created in God's likeness and reveals itself in the true life that is upright and holy. You must fling off the dirty clothes of the old way of living, which were rotted through and through with lust's illusions, and with yourselves mentally and spiritually re-made, to put on the clean fresh clothes of the new life which was made by God's design for righteousness and the holiness, which is no illusion.” (Ephesians 4: 22-23).
Chapter 18

The Crippled Beggar

Disengoff Street in Tel Aviv looked more beautiful than ever. Possibly it seemed so, simply because I had been away from Israel again, on a speaking tour in my home country of Zimbabwe, but it is nevertheless an exciting street.

Uri is one of my Jewish friends, and he and I were tripping down this well-known street in Tel Aviv, admiring the stores with their beautiful offerings, and enjoying the sight of tourists and locals mingling together in the pavement cafes for which Dizengoff Street is renowned.

If you listen carefully as you walk, you can distinguish many languages. They stem from all corners of the earth, but of course nowadays the predominant language is Hebrew. Praise God for the vision of Eliezer Ben Yehuda, who insisted, against much apathy, that the language of the new, State-to-be, should be that of ancient Israel, the language of the Bible.

To Uri, the sights were commonplace and he was more interested in hearing about my adventures overseas. He was particularly anxious to hear what people believed in other parts of the world.

So we walked and talked and stared, and were delighted and fascinated, until my attention was caught, with a sense of shock, by a crippled beggar sitting there on the sidewalk.

I was moved with compassion, and I stopped right in front of the man. Both Uri and the beggar were giving me their full attention.

"The day will come," I declared, "When believers who are filled with the Spirit of God, will pass by people like this dear man, and by the anointing that is upon them, the sick shall be made well." Since I had spoken in English, the beggar had not understood, and he now looked away, seeking more likely givers of alms.

I started to walk on.

Uri, however, stopped me in my tracks and said, "Please would you repeat that, Maureen?"

As I had spoken loudly and clearly, and Uri spoke English perfectly, I knew that he had understood what I had said, but at that very moment the realisation swept over me that I, myself, had not understood what I had said. I needed to repeat the words for my own benefit.

"So, you don't have the power now. You're going to get it later?" Uri shook his head, and I hung mine in shame.
Of course we don't have to wait for such power. It isn't going to mysteriously appear at some future date, it is available to us right here and now. In Christ we can do all things. When we accept him as our saviour and take him to be our Lord we become new creatures in Him with new life and new potential. When we receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit, we receive the gifts of the Spirit also, which includes the gift of healing.

Jesus told us that we would do the things He did, and still greater things when he had returned to the Father and had sent the Holy Spirit to us. According to your faith, be it unto you. Some believers have very little faith and others the kind that can move mountains.

Of course, sometimes there are factors we know nothing about and which can prevent a healing. We may wish to see someone healed but the Lord does not give us the confidence, the go-ahead. The Lord is sovereign and omniscient.

If we are truly listening to Him each day, then we will hear that still small voice telling us in which situation to exercise our faith. If we are then willing to be made to look fools for Christ's sake, if we are willing to step out in faith, when Satan whispers that nothing will happen, then we will see miracles each day. Our faith will increase, and signs and wonders will cause many to seek to know our God.

As born again, spirit-filled believers we have the power, we have the ability, we have ears that should know our shepherd's voice.

Are you excited by this, or have you allowed Satan to persuade you, contrary to scripture, that the gifts are not for us today?

Or do you believe it, yet are scared to try it lest nothing happens and you are left feeling a right Charlie? Do you really think our God is so feeble? Come on, let us attempt great things for God, let us use the power he has given us, not hide it under the mattress. The parable of the talents is very relevant here.

Will you join me? I'm going to try to step out in faith on a daily basis, after keeping my special time with Him each morning so that I can distinguish His voice from his mimics.

Thank you, Uri!