

# The Amish Voice



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## PART 16—What Is The Church

### The Removal of the Church

Dear friend, it is possible that this will be the last part of “what is the church”. Some of you have been with us since the very start of this study, which was published in September of 2007. And it is my deepest hope that Almighty God would have helped us get a better understanding of the great value and consuming passion He has placed on the church as a whole.

If you missed out on any of the previous studies and would like to have them all, please let us know and we will send you every single one of them. You can either call or send your request through the mail. A donation of \$10 would be a big help in covering the cost of printing and postage.

Today, we are going to look at the removal of the church. The church as we know it will some day be removed from earth and translated to a place where all tears will be wiped away. A place where the Apostle John writes...

*And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. (Rev 21:22)*

At this point, the church will have full and perfect knowledge of God's Spirit and presence. Therefore, there is no need for a temple and its ceremonies and rituals to pull the hu-

man mind into the worship of God.

The place it speaks about is a place of everlasting safety for the church, a place where Satan and evil is not allowed to enter in. To that I say hallelujah and glory to God, our



Savior. What a wonderful day that will be!

But for now, let us travel back in time, about 2000 years ago, and look at when the church began.

1. The Church has not always been in existence.
2. The Church has not always been on earth.
3. There was no Church in the days of

Abraham.

4. There was no Church in the days of Moses.
5. There was no Church in the days of David and Daniel and Isaiah and John the Baptist.

The Church did not begin until **AFTER** the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In Acts chapter 2 we learn about a very special day--

*And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. (Acts 2:1)*

Something very special happened on this day . The next two verses tell us that it was on this day that the HOLY SPIRIT came to live in believers.

*And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues*

*like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. (Acts 2:2-4)*

This day marks the birthday of the Church.

1. It was on this day that the Church was born.
2. It was on this day that Christ began BUILDING HIS CHURCH (Matthew 16:18).
3. It was on this day that people were

first baptized (placed) into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13)

When the Church first began there were about 120 believers (Acts 1:15). These would have been the first people who became members of the body of Christ. Peter then preached a powerful message on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14,36-40) and 3,000 more people believed (ACTS 2:41).

*Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and **THE SAME DAY THERE WERE ADDED UNTO THEM** about three thousand souls. (Acts 2:41)*

As we can see, the Church was growing and increasing by the thousands. Jesus Christ was building His Church. More and more "bricks" ("living stones"--1 Pet. 2:5) were being added to the (spiritual) building.

Can you imagine the excitement of the people, as they gave their lives to Christ and were born again, not to mention the pure joy that was ringing in heaven, as they looked on with

great excitement.

Jesus had given everything He could, including His very own life, so that He could redeem (buy back) His sin stricken creation. His plan was working!

God continued to ADD new members to His Church and new bricks to His building. We are told in Acts 2:47 that people were being birthed into God's family on a daily basis.

*...the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. (Acts 2:47)*

The moment a person is born again, he (or she) becomes a member of the body of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 12:13).

Looking at the next two scriptures, did God continue to add believers to His body and bricks to His building?

*And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women. (Acts 5:14)*

*...and much people was added unto the*

*Lord. (Acts 11:24)*

Today Jesus Christ is still building His Church. The building is not finished yet. God is still adding new members to the body of Christ. There is still room for more.

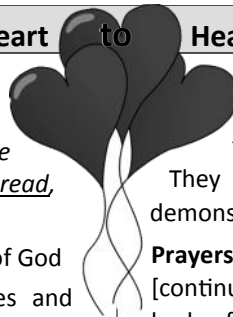
Someday the Church will be completed and the building will be finished. Someday (and we do not know when), the last "brick" will be in place and the building will be finished. Someday the last member of the Church will be saved. (although we do not know who this person will be or when this will happen or where this will happen).

Perhaps God is now working on the "finishing stage" of the Building. When the finishing pieces are finally in place, then the Church will be completed. What will happen then? What will happen on the day when the last member of the Church is added to the Lord?

### **A Tombstone and a Victory Stone**

People are born and people die. Every person has a date of birth (BIRTHDAY) and every per-

## Heart to Heart with Joe Keim



Today, I would like to take a look at the **FOUR** main concerns in the early church.

**Acts 2:42** *And they [the church] continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

**Doctrine:** it means teaching, instruction, training the Word of God  
There is only one message, only one Word that saves and grounds people in the Lord—the Word of God Himself, the message of the New Testament. On the day of Pentecost, the persons who were born again needed to be grounded in the faith. It was that doctrine the apostles taught.

**Fellowship:** it means coming together in unity or as a community of believers

Yes, it is true, the Christian is attached to Christ individually, but he is also attached to other believers. Through fellowship with one another, all believers stay encouraged and fired up for God, while new believers can learn and become grounded in the Faith.

*Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye [born again Christians] are all one in Christ Jesus.*

**Breaking of Bread:** it means the early believers observed and remembered the Lord's death.

Verse 46 tells us that they observed the breaking of bread daily. Why so often? Because it was a reminder of the fact that all they were and had was due to the death of Christ.

They wanted to remember and thank God for His great love demonstrated in the death of His Son, and to do it often.

**Prayers:** the early believers were a people who persevered [continually] in prayer—the idea is combined prayer with the whole body of believers.

Through prayer they were brought into the most intimate fellowship and presence of God. They could get no closer to God than when they were *drawing nigh* to God through prayer.

As a result of continuing stedfastly in the **apostles doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers**, some great things took place.

**Acts 2:43-47** *And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.*

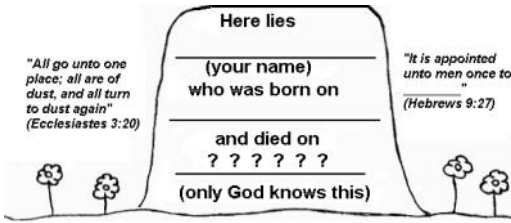
*And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*

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son has (or will have) a date of death (DEATHDAY). Go to any cemetery and you will see birth dates and death dates on the grave-stones.

**Please fill out your own TOMBSTONE below:**



This person (YOU!) will someday die. At that time, your days on earth will have been fulfilled and completed. At death you will be removed from the earth. Your body will go in the ground.

The CHURCH is different than a person. The Church had a BIRTHDAY (the Day of Pentecost --about 30 A. D.) but it will never have a DEATH-DAY! The Church has been living in the world for about 2000 years. Many enemies have tried to destroy the Church, but the Church lives on. Members of the Church have been persecuted and tortured and burned and stoned and executed, but the CHURCH LIVES ON. Remember, men can only kill the body, but they are not able to kill the Soul (Matthew 10: 28).

The Church lives on! Jesus said,...I will build MY church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (Matthew 16:18)

Also, as a reminder, lets see where the church gets its life from.

*When Christ, WHO IS OUR LIFE, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory. (Colossians 3:4)*

Therefore, to kill the Church you must kill the HEAD of the Church! Is it possible to kill Him (see Revelation 1:18 and Romans 6:9)?

The Church will never die, but someday the Lord Jesus Christ will come to remove His Church from the earth and to take His Church to heaven. Jesus said...

*And if I go and prepare a place for you (in heaven), I will COME AGAIN, and re-*



*ceive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:3)*

Therefore the VICTORY STONE of the Church reads like this:

**A Man Who Was Removed From the Earth**

The Church will someday be removed from this earth. There is coming a day (and it may be soon) when every living believer on the face of the earth will suddenly disappear. Did you know that thousands of years ago there lived a man who suddenly disappeared from the face of the earth? Let's learn about him:

Read the following verses in Genesis and notice the one thing that keeps jumping out.

*And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died. (Gen 5:5)*

*And all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years: and he died. (Gen 5:8)*

*And all the days of Enos were nine hundred and five years: and he died. (Gen 5:11)*

*And all the days of Cainan were nine hundred and ten years: and he died. (Gen 5:14)*

*And all the days of Mahalaleel were eight hundred ninety and five years: and he died. (Gen 5:17)*

What are the last three words in each of these verses? \_\_\_\_\_

All of these men died! Methuselah, as we will see in the next verse, was the oldest man who ever lived (Gen. 5:27). Did he die also?

*And all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred sixty and nine years: and he died. (Gen 5:27)*

All of these men died, but there is one man mentioned in Genesis 5 who did not die. Something very special and something very unusual happened to him.

This man's name was Enoch and he is described in Genesis 5:21-24. Did Enoch rebel against God and disobey God or did he love God and walk with God (Genesis 5:22)?

WHAT HAPPENED TO THIS MAN? WHY DID ENOCH NEVER DIE?

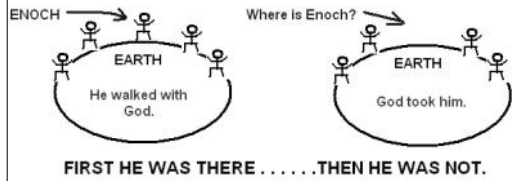
Genesis 5:24 tells the amazing story of Enoch:

*And Enoch WALKED with God: and he was NOT; for God TOOK him. (Gen 5:24)*

Enoch was walking with God and all of a sudden HE WAS NOT! All of a sudden he disap-

peared! Who removed Enoch and took him from the earth? \_\_\_\_\_

Enoch is also mentioned in Hebrews 11:5. According to this verse, did Enoch ever see death?

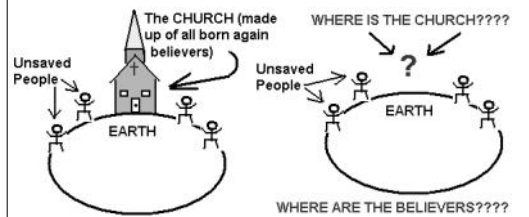


*By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. (Hebrews 11:5)*

Translated means that he was moved from one place to another. He was quickly moved from earth to another place (God's place of safety). Enoch was NOT FOUND (Heb:11:5), and this means that there were those on the earth who could not find Enoch! He had disappeared! God took him! This speaks of sudden removal.

**What Happened to Enoch Will Happen Again!**

Something very unusual happened to Enoch. He was a man who never died. Did you know that what happened to Enoch is going to happen again, perhaps very soon? This time it will not just happen to one man but it will happen to MANY PEOPLE.



There will be a whole group of people living on earth who will never see death. GOD WILL TAKE THEM! There will be a whole group of people who will quickly be removed from the earth to heaven, and they will not be found by those who remain on the earth. Someday Christ Jesus will come and remove a whole group of people from the earth and take them to heaven (John 14:3).

This group of people is called THE CHURCH: The Bible teaches that there will be a group of people living on the earth who will never SLEEP (see next verse).

*Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. (1 Corinthians 15:51)*

This means that they will never DIE (just like Enoch). They will never sleep the sleep of death. The reason they will never die is that they will be taken up to heaven by Christ.

This great event (the removal of the Church) is sometimes called THE RAPTURE. This word "RAPTURE" comes from a verb which means "to be caught up, to be snatched up, to be taken or carried away suddenly." Long ago Enoch was raptured and someday the Church will be raptured also.

The passage which most clearly describes the RAPTURE or REMOVAL of the Church is found in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

*But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.*

*For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*

*For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that WE WHICH ARE ALIVE AND REMAIN UNTO THE COMING OF THE LORD SHALL NOT PREVENT THEM WHICH ARE ASLEEP.*

*For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:*

*THEN WE WHICH ARE ALIVE AND REMAIN SHALL BE CAUGHT UP TOGETHER WITH THEM in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

*Wherefore comfort one another with these words. (1 Thes 4:13-18)*

We need to remember that many of the members of the Church have already died and have gone to heaven to be with the Lord. This would include such people as Peter and Paul and Stephen and perhaps some believer that you have known who has died. There are also those members of the Church who are still living today. This would include you, if you have been born again.

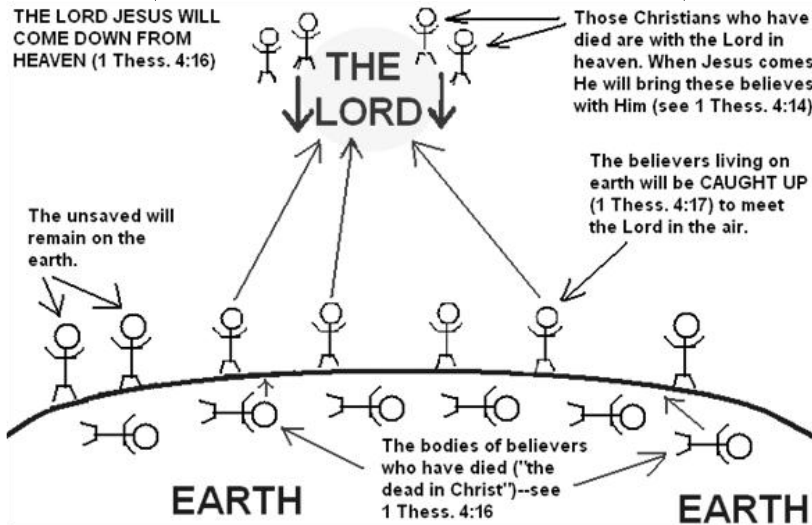
**The following diagram may be of help:**

THEY (the members of the Church who have already died) and WE (the members of the church who are still living on earth) will

meet **together** in the air to be with the Lord forever (see 1 Thessalonians 4:17).

**This great event will take place very quickly in three stages:**

1. First, the Lord Jesus Christ will descend (come down) from heaven (1 Thessalonians 4:16).
2. Second, *"the dead in Christ will FIRST"* (1Thess. 4:16). This means that church-age believers who have died will be raised up and given brand new resurrection bodies.



3. Third, those who are living when Christ returns will be CAUGHT UP (raptured) with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:17).

These believers will also receive a new body:

*We shall not all sleep (die), but we shall all be CHANGED... for this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality (1 Cor. 15:51-53).*

**When Will This Event Take Place?**

When will Jesus come to remove His Church from the earth and to take His believers to heaven? When will the rapture take place? Today? Tomorrow? Next month? Next year?

God has not told us when Christ will return for His Church. This event may happen at any time. We do know, however, that when God is finished using His Church on this earth, then the last member of the Church will be saved and the last "brick" (living stone) in the building will be in place and this will be when Jesus will return for His Church. Today God invites all people to become members of His Church. The day is coming, however, when it will be impossible

for a person to become a member of the Church.

Think about the days of Noah. For 120 years Noah built the ark as God commanded him to do (Genesis 6:3). The people living on the earth had many opportunities to believe God. If they had believed God they could have gone through the door of the ark and been saved from the great flood, just like Noah and his family. For years God gave them opportunities. Finally the door of the ark was shut (Genesis 7:16) and the day of opportunity had passed. It was now impossible to get into the ark of safety.

For about the last two thousand years God has been giving men the opportunity to become members of His Church. Soon the day of opportunity will be past and the Church will be removed from the earth. After the RAPTURE it will be impossible to become a member of the Church. It will be too late. The Church (the body of Christ) will be completed and it will be taken to heaven. Acts 2:47 will no longer be true.

God will no longer keep on adding saved people to the Church, because the Church will no longer be on earth.

People can still be saved after the rapture, but they will not be members of the Church and they will live on earth during a very difficult time known as the time of tribulation or trouble (Matthew 24:21). During this time men's hearts will not grow softer, they will grow harder and harder (like Pharaoh)--see Rev. 9:20-21.

When will the rapture take place? We do not know. Maybe there is only one more person that needs to be saved before God's purpose for the Church is fulfilled. Only God knows this. Only God knows when He is finished with the Church and when the Church will be completed. Maybe there are 10 more people or 100 more people or 1000 more people that God will save before Christ returns for His completed Church. For about 2000 years God has been saving people and making them members of His body which is the Church.

Are You Ready?

1. The first thing that you should do to

prepare for the Lord's coming is to make sure that you are BORN AGAN. Those who are born again will go to heaven to be with Christ. Those who are not born again will remain on earth. If you are not sure that you are born again, then today is the day to see how.

2. If you are born again, make sure that you "walk with God" as Enoch did. Stay in a close relationship with the Lord: "And now little children, ABIDE in Him (stay in a right relationship with the Lord and confess your sins as

1 John 1:9 tells us to do); that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming (at the RAPTURE)--SEE 1 JOHN 2:28.

3. Tell others about the Savior and invite them to be members of Christ's Church. Don't keep the good news to yourself!

Remember, there is still opportunity to be born again and to become members of God's Called-Out Assembly. Your friends and family need to know that God wants to save them and died to save them. There is a

wonderful Savior who is able to save all those who come to Him.

Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. (Hebrews 7:25)

All that the Father giveth Me, shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out. (John 6:37)

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## God's Love is Free, But Not Cheap

Down through the centuries, Christians have suffered and died for their faith, for this free gift of God's love. Even today, around the world, thousands of Christians risk their lives each day for their faith.

According to a Wikipedia article on the persecution of Christians in the two thousand years since Christ, about 70 million believers, of whom 45.5 million or 65% lived in the twentieth century, have been killed for their faith.

This week a News agency reported that an Ohio teen, who converted from Islam to Christianity, ran away from home because of threats from her own family to kill her because of her conversion.

God's love is free, but sometimes God's love will cost us, because God's love will change us.

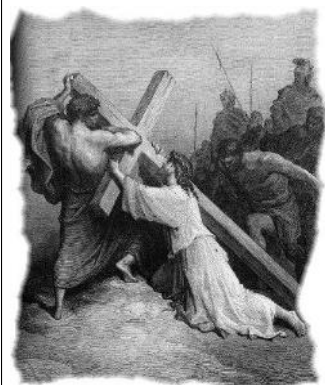
While it might not cost us our lives literally, it will cause us to die to the old way of life.

It might cost me a job, if an employer asks me to do something that is not pleasing to God. It might cost me a relationship that I now see as unhealthy and sinful. It might cost me a habit that I like because I now see it as a sin and something that blocks me from experiencing the full love of God.

God's love is free but it is not cheap. God's love is given to us at a great cost to God—it cost God His Son.

It is not cheap—it has been handed down to us through the generations at the cost of those who have given their lives to share their faith.

God's love is not cheap—it demands that we give it away to others no matter what it might cost us personally.



Are you ready to count the cost and stay faithful? By His grace, may we all be ready.

This should not come to us as a surprise, because Jesus made it clear to those around Him.

**Luke 14:25-27:** And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and

children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

### What then did Christ mean? Very simply...

- Christ is to be *first* in a person's life: before family, even before self.
- Christ is to be put before family: even if one's family opposes his decision to follow Christ.
- Christ is to be put *first*: before the companionship and comfort and pleasure of family and home.
- All—even family and self—are to be put behind Christ and His mission. All must be denied and put behind a person's love and devotion to Christ and His cause.

### The following might illustrate what Jesus was talking about:

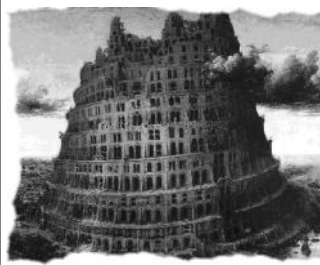
Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, **WE HAVE LEFT ALL**, and have followed Thee. (Mark 10:28).

And when they had brought their ships to land, **THEY FORSOOK ALL**, and followed Him (Luke 5:11).

### Christ used two parables to get His point across:

**Luke 14:28-33:** For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.

Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassador, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.



—1—

A man who wants to build a tower, first sits down to *think* about the project and to count the cost.

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Does he have *sufficient resources*, enough of what it takes to finish the task?

He has to make sure, or else he will not be able to finish the task and will end up being mocked.

The point is clear: before a person begins to follow Christ, Christ wants that person to think about it. He wants the person to be sure, absolutely sure. Can he afford to follow through; does he have what it takes to build the tower (life)? Why? Because a false profession damages the Kingdom of God.

A false profession causes...

- the world to mock and charge true believers with being hypocritical.
- potential believers to turn sour.
- believers to be hampered and hindered in their ministry.
- some believers to become discouraged.

—2—



The second parable concerned two kings at war. The king being attacked had only ten thousand soldiers, whereas the king marching against him had twenty thousand soldiers.

The defending king sat down and thought long and hard about his resources and the consequences. He was forced to think about the loss of life and property even if he did win.

Note: this king had to make a decision. He was being invaded. He had to decide to fight against the invading king or to surrender. He had to *think through the consequences both ways*, the consequences of fighting or surrendering.

**The point of the two parables is clear:**

A man must pay the ultimate price. He must forsake all, renounce and give up all that he *is and has*; or else "he cannot be my disciple." When a man counts the cost of following Christ, he needs to think about two things.

**1. It will cost him all he is.**

The man must be willing to center his life around Christ and His mission to reach a world lost and full of desperate needs. It will cost the man...

- his heart: total devotion and commitment.
- his mind: being controlled by Christ.
- his eyes: watching what he looks at.
- his ears: watching what he listens to.
- his hands: watching what he touches and picks up.
- his feet: watching where he goes.
- his mouth: watching what he eats and drinks and says.
- his desires: watching, controlling, and changing his urges and

desires.

- his energy: committing his strength, initiative, and will to Christ.
- his effort and work: dedicating and centering all in Christ, using his efforts and work in the cause of Christ.

*Romans 12:1 says, I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye **PRESENT YOUR BODIES** a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

**2. It will cost him all he has.**

The man must be willing to give everything he has to Christ, without watering down the cost. It is this point that will cause so many to be lost and doomed (see Luke 18:18-30—Luke 18:18-30—Matthew 10:16-23— Matthew 10:16-23).

To really follow Christ will cost...

- family: being put after Christ.
- friends: being put after Christ and centered around Christ.
- home: all the comforts and extravagances.
- job: being centered around Christ and being used to earn enough to give to those who do not have (Ephes. 4:28).
- money: taking care of personal necessities and then using the rest for God's cause.



Whatever a person has, it will cost him. He must surrender it to Christ, which is to say, he must be willing to use it in the Lord's mission, the mission of helping a world lost and reeling under the weight of enormous needs.

When a man counts the cost of following Christ, he must think about the consequences of both fighting against Christ and surrendering to Christ. If the man chooses to reject Christ, to struggle against Him, the man will...

- never experience abundant life, deep satisfaction (John 10:10).
- never know God, His love and care, on a daily basis.
- never have an *eternal sense* of purpose, meaning, and significance.
- never know nor have the assurance of eternal life.
- never be free from the uncertainty of life.
- never be free from the dread and fear of death.
- never be free of some sense of judgment and of what lies ahead.
- never be freed from a sense of false security.

The consequences of surrendering to Christ are, of course, the very opposite of the above.

*Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved (1 Cor. 10:33).*

**Isaiah 43:1-3** But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called *thee* by thy

name; thou *art* mine. When thou passest through the waters, I *will be* with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire,

thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I *am* the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour...



**I Believe:** That just because two people argue, doesn't mean they don't love each other. And just because they don't argue, doesn't mean they do love each other.

**I Believe:** That sometimes when I'm angry I have the right to be angry, but that doesn't give me the right to be cruel.

**I Believe:** That we don't have to change friends if we understand that friends change.

**I Believe:** That no matter how good a friend is, they're going to hurt you every once in a while and you must forgive them for that.

**I Believe:** That you can do something in an instant that will give you heartache for life.

**I Believe:** That it's taking me a long time to become the person I want to be.

**I Believe:** That you should always leave loved ones with loving words. It may be the last time you see the.

**I Believe:** That you can keep going long after you think you can't.

**I Believe:** That we are responsible for what we do, no matter how we feel.

**I Believe:** That either you control your attitude or it controls you.



**I Believe:** That heroes are the people who do what has to be done when it needs to be done, regardless of the consequences.

**I Believe:** That money is a lousy way of keeping score.

**I Believe:** That my best friend and I can do anything, or nothing, and have the best time.

**I Believe:** That sometimes the people you expect to kick you, when you're down, will be the ones to help you get back up.

**I Believe:** That maturity has more to do with what types of experiences you've had, and what you've learned from them.....and less to do with how many birthdays you've celebrated.

**I Believe:** That it isn't always enough to be forgiven by others. Sometimes, you have to learn to forgive yourself.

**I Believe:** That no matter how bad your heart is broken the world doesn't stop for your grief.

**I Believe:** That our background and circumstances may have influenced who we are, but we are responsible for who we become.

**I Believe:** That you shouldn't be so eager to find out a secret. It could change your life Forever.

**I Believe:** Two people can look at the exact same thing and see something totally different.

**I Believe:** That your life can be changed in a matter of hours by people who don't even know you.

**I Believe:** That even when you think you have no more to give, if a friend cries out to you.....you will find the strength to help.

**I Believe:** That the people you care about most in life are taken from you too soon.

**I Believe:** The happiest of people don't necessarily have the best of everything; They just make the most of everything.

Thank you God for all the wonderful people who help us throughout this journey called Life.

May angels guard you and guide you & May God continue to bless you and keep you!

## Lutherans Ask Forgiveness for 16th-Century

—By Stephen Brown

GENEVA (RNS/ENI) Lutheran World Federation leaders plan to apologize for their ancestors 16th-century persecution of Anabaptists, religious reformers whose successors include Mennonites and the Amish.

"We ask for forgiveness -- from God and from our Mennonite sisters and brothers -- for the harm that our forebears in the sixteenth century committed to Anabaptists," says a statement adopted unanimously on Monday (Oct. 26, 2009) by the LWF's council.

The apology is now recommended for formal adoption by the highest LWF governing body, its assembly, meeting in Stuttgart, Germany, in July 2010.

Anabaptists, whose originally pejorative name means "re-baptizers", stressed the need to baptize Christian believers, including those who had been baptized as infants. They were persecuted as heretics by both Protestants and Catholics, and many of them fled to America.

The Rev. Larry Miller, general secretary of the Mennonite World Conference, who attended the Geneva meeting, welcomed the vote by the LWF council. Miller said this request for forgiveness would

require that Mennonites also change.

"Mennonites have learned from Lutherans that we are justified by faith alone, because we know that justification produces not only relations between oneself and God but also communion between the churches," said Miller.



LWF president, the Rev. Mark Hanson, who is also presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, said the apology process had begun 25 years ago, "when we began to examine Luther's anti-Semitic writings".

"We are also heirs of a tradition that has borne pain in the lives of others because of how our ancestors have written, spoken and communicated," said Hanson.

A document presented to the LWF council about the apology described repentance as "the only fitting response to the persecutions of the 16th century and the continuing Lutheran characterizations of Anabaptists in the centuries which followed." It noted how the Augsburg Confession of 1530, a central Lutheran statement of faith, explicitly condemned Anabaptists and their teachings.

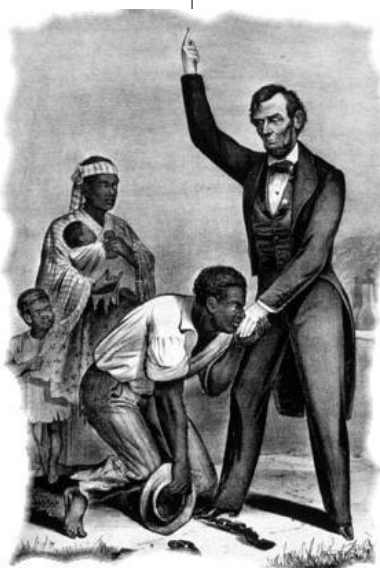
The function of a redeemer is hard to describe without going to the situation a slave would have encountered.

In this age, we are not exposed to the harshness of slavery every day. But if you will, let's imagine being a slave 200 years ago. As a slave, you had no property you could call your own. Slaves were bought and sold as cattle are today. In order to be free, you had to have someone own you and then set you free. It was more than just money; it had to be a person.

Even if you saved all your money and gave the purchase price of a slave, still you could not set yourself free. All your money would have belonged to your owner. Were you the most honest and hard working slave, smiling all the time, still, unless you were set free, you could not do a thing to gain your freedom. All that you produced while in the employ of your master was his.

Imagine then being born into a slave family. You are told there is no other choice for you. All your friends are also slaves. Your master may not be too harsh, just an average slave owner who realizes that a healthy, happy slave will do more work in the long run. He wants you to be content with being a slave. But inside you, something wants to be free. He describes all the risks of being free. Running away is risky, because there was always a bounty offered to anyone who would capture such a slave. Life would be even harder for you afterward.

**One day, you hear of a redeemer that buys slaves and sets them free.** "How



does that work?" you ask. "Slaves have nothing they can call their own, so how can I get him to set me free?" Ah, they say, all you have to do is ask. That seems almost too good to be true.

A slave cannot afford a lawyer or another person of influence, so how can I ever be set free? Now your friend tells you that you have to admit you are a slave, and then get word to him, and he will come. OK, you say, let's do it! But you know your master won't be too happy.

The Bible often uses the analogy of a slave to describe what we were before we were redeemed.

Luke 4:18 says; *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.*

And in John 8:31: *Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.*

Notice that He uses the word 'captives' and 'bondage.' If you think

you are not, or were not, a captive to sin, see what the Bible says about that.

*Romans 3;10: As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: and 3;23; For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*

Clearly we are in trouble if we think we don't need to be set free.

What shall we do, then, to solve this dilemma? The only way out is to have someone redeem us from our captivity.

The story of the children of Israel being set free from Egypt in one night gives a picture of how we, too, have to be set free by one more powerful than the slave owner; in this case, Pharaoh.

First, I have to realize fully the hopeless situation I am in. Then I have to ask the Redeemer (Jesus Christ) to apply the price of freedom. But will he do it? That is where many of us stumble. And that is where we need to build faith. In order to know the answer, we need to study scriptures that reveal what Jesus did when approached for help.

**John 6:37** *All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*

Also see Matthew 12; 15 and Luke 6; 19 where sick people came to Jesus and "He healed them all."

There are many, many other passages that are too numerous to print here that relate to His willingness to redeem. You can imagine the joy a slave would feel upon being freed! That's why believers rejoice when they find they are completely redeemed!

**Are you free yet?**

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**J**oy is one of life's most sought after characteristics and the one that often eludes us. We can never muster up joy by ourselves. God is the source of joy! It is He who grants it. If I try to clench my teeth and drill myself, "You must be joyful!" "You must be joyful!" "Be joyful!" It never happens. Joy does not come by discipline but from God.

**O**"The joy of the Lord is my strength" says Nehemiah. Joy is different from happiness. Joy is an inward singing that cannot be silenced by outward circumstances. Joy is a by-product of the Holy Spirit.

**Y**May you know and experience "His" joy!

**Pennsylvania Deitsh Testament**

If you would like to obtain a New Testament with Psalms and Proverbs in Pennsylvania Deitsh, they are available for \$13.95 postpaid from the **Committee for Translation, 3864 Township Road 162, Sugarcreek, OH 44681.**

**Phone 330-852-4663.** You do not need to send money ahead of time; they will bill you with your order. Your local Christian bookstore may also have them available.



## Why does God allow good things to happen to bad people?

This question is similar to its opposite: "Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people?". Both questions refer to what seems to be the puzzling unfairness we witness every day. The 73rd Psalm is our answer to the very same questions that also tormented the Psalmist. Finding himself in terrible distress and agony of soul he writes:

*But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity [success] of the wicked. (Psalms 73:2-3)*

The writer of this Psalm was a man named Asaph, a leader of one of the temple choirs. Obviously, he was not a wealthy man, but rather one who had dedicated his life to serving God (see 1 Chronicles 25). But, like us, he had experienced some difficulties and questioned the unfairness of it all. He watched the evil people around him living by their own rules, enjoying all the wealth and pleasures of the world and piling riches upon riches. He complains:

*For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. (Psalms 73:4-5)*

Asaph was looking at these people who didn't have problems. They could pay their bills. They had plenty to eat and plenty of luxuries. But poor Asaph was stuck with directing the choir and trying to live godly. And to add insult to injury, it didn't seem to be getting him anywhere. He began not only to resent these people, but even to question God as to why He would allow such a thing to happen!

How often do we find ourselves relating to Asaph? We dedicate our lives to serving God. Then we witness the wicked, the ungodly people around us get new things, nice homes, and take lots of trips, while we struggle to pay for groceries. The answer lies in the rest of the psalm. Asaph resented these evil people until he realized one very important thing. When he entered the sanctuary of God, he fully understood their final destiny:

*When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors.*

*As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image. (Psalms 73:16-20)*

Those who have temporary riches on earth are in reality spiritual beggars because they do not have true riches—eternal life!

There are many times when we do not understand what is happening to us, nor do we understand how providence works. When Asaph entered the sanctuary of God, he began to see that there was no need for him to be envious of the prosperity of the wicked because their prosperity is in reality an illusion. He began to comprehend that the deceiver, Satan, had played tricks with his vision and used lies to distract him from the reality of God. Upon entering the sanctuary, he realized that prosperity is a fleeting fulfillment, a show of what is to pass away, like a pleasant dream that pleases us only for a little while but when we awaken, we realize it was not real.

Asaph rebukes himself for his own stupidity. He admits to being "senseless and ignorant" to envy the wicked or to be jealous of the perishing. His thoughts then returned to his own happiness in God when he realized how much more joy, fulfillment and true spiritual prosperity he had in the Creator.

We may not have everything we want here on earth, but if we have been born again, we will one day prosper for all eternity through Jesus Christ our Lord. Whenever we are tempted to try the other road, we should remember that the other road is a dead end (Matthew 7:13). But in all truth, the narrow road before us through Jesus is awesome and is the only road that leads to eternal life. That should be our joy and our comfort.

*Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee. But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works. (Psalms 73:25, 27 & 28)*

We need not concern ourselves when good things seem to happen to bad people. We only need to keep our focus on our Creator and enter into His presence every day through the portal of His holy Word. There we will find truth, contentment, spiritual riches and eternal joy.

1. It was once against the law to slam your car door in a city in Switzerland
2. It's against the law to catch fish with your bare hands in Kansas.
3. Like fingerprints, everyone's tongue print is different.
4. Maine is the only state whose name is just one syllable.
5. Money isn't made out of paper, it's made out of cotton.
6. Mosquitoes have teeth.
7. Most dust particles in your house are made from dead skin.
8. No word in the English language

- rhymes with month, orange, silver, and purple.
9. One quarter of the bones in your body, are in your feet.
10. Only one person in two billion will live to be 116 or older.
11. Our eyes are always the same size from birth, but our nose and ears never stop growing.
12. Over 1000 birds a year die from smashing into windows.
13. Owls are one of the only birds who can see the color blue.
14. Peanuts are one of the ingredients of dynamite.

15. Research indicates that mosquitoes are attracted to people who have recently eaten bananas.
16. Studies show that if a cat falls off the seventh floor of a building it has about thirty percent less chance of surviving than a cat that falls off the twentieth floor. It supposedly takes about eight floors for the cat to realize what is occurring, relax and correct itself.
17. The average person falls asleep in seven minutes.
18. The average person has over 1,460 dreams a year.

Howdy there, friends!

Spring's almost here! It's so easy to be joyful in the spring, I think.

Well, this time I'm 😊 going to be talking about a subject that is one of my weakest areas in my marriage: the fact that husband & wife are ONE. What does that actually mean?

Go with me to Genesis 2:24: *Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*

It doesn't say "they might" or "if they want to". It says "THEY SHALL BE ONE FLESH"!! So I guess, if we have a problem with that, we'd better stay single!

I have to admit, I struggle with it. My flesh keeps thinking we are still two, instead of one. When we have disagreements, I often forget we are on the same team, and it seems like if he wins, I lose, and if I win, he loses. But it's not like that at all. If one of us wins, it's because we both win, and vice-versa. This is an awesome truth to remember because we then get around to making up.

God's will for marriage is an amazing thing; that two totally different people should somehow become one. I'm sure He knew it would sometimes be a struggle, but if God says it, we must choose to believe it, even if we can't completely understand it. And, remember, all the "do's" and "don'ts" in the Bible are ultimately for our good.

Imagine how a half of a person would look: one leg, one arm, and a

half of a head. Such a person is pretty helpless, but when you put two halves together, it's perfect. That's how we are supposed to look at marriage; it just doesn't work to try to operate in any other way, except the way God said it shall be.

Remember Genesis 2:23: *"And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh..."*

Also, we should read Eph. 5:22-33 over and over to get these things settled in our minds because the devil always tries to derail us in ways that we are not rooted and grounded in God's Truths.

John 13:34-35 *can also be applied to marriage: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."*

What is more beautiful, and more of a testimony, than marriage done God's way!!! I think that is one big reason we should let our love show in a Godly way. *"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples..."*

God's Word is just FULL of these precious nuggets waiting to be discovered if we only open our hearts and go searching.

God be with us till we "meet" again, Love, Joy

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### Daddy's Empty Chair

—Continued from back cover—

It means to understand and feel with a person to the point that the hurt and pain are actually felt within one's own heart. The idea is that Jesus Christ actually suffers when we suffer. He knows and suffers right along with us when we...

- **become sick — suffer trials**
- **fall into sin — lack money**
- **are stricken with suffering**
- **lose a loved one — face temptations**
- **sense emptiness — lack purpose**
- **suffer persecution — face death**
- **have an accident — feel lonely**
- **are hungry — lack clothes**

Name the trial or pain, temptation, or suffering—name the infirmity or weakness—name any and all human experiences—Jesus Christ actually sympathizes and feels with us.

He actually suffers and hurts right along with us. We could ask for no greater Savior; we could crave no greater Intercessor; we could

long for no greater High Priest to stand before God for us.

Jesus Christ is our *great High Priest*. He is our representative before God. He is the One who carries on the glorious ministry and intercession for us, and He "is touched with the feelings of our infirmities"—with all of our human weaknesses and frailties.

King David writes:

**Psalms 63:8:** *My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me.*

**Psalms 73:23:** *Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou [God] hast holden me by my right hand.*

—2—

**Hebrews 4:15-16** *For we have not an High Priest [Jesus Christ] which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*

**We have a High Priest who was tempted in all things just like we are, yet He was with-**

**out sin.** We must remember this glorious



truth and never forget it, for it is the very basis of man's salvation. No man will ever be saved unless Jesus Christ did live a sinless life. Why? Because some man has to live a sinless life and secure the ideal and perfect righteousness

that covers sinful men.

Apart from Christ there is no ideal righteousness that can stand before God and be acceptable to God. And only perfection, only the ideal, can stand before God. Therefore if Christ has not secured the ideal and perfect righteousness for us, then there is no righteousness to cover us—no righteousness in which we can believe and place ourselves—no righteousness to make us acceptable to God.

—Continued on next page—

—Continued from Page 10—

But this is the glorious gospel, and it is the point of this verse: Jesus Christ was sinless. He was tempted in all things just like we are, but He never sinned. He went through every experience and every trial and temptation that we go through. And He bore them all, never sinning.

**Forgiveness**

**2 Cor. 5:21:** *For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin;*

*that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.*

—3—

**Hebrews 4:16** *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

We can call upon God—boldly. But note two things.



- God is sitting upon a *throne*, the seat of authority, power, honor, glory, respect, and reverence. Therefore, we are to approach Him in respect and reverence.
- God is sitting upon the "throne of grace." Grace means that God is love, and He longs to shower His love and blessings upon man. But how could God, who sits upon the majestic and glorious throne of the universe, be so gracious to man?

How could God care for man, care for a creature who is such a small part of so vast a universe? Care for a creature who has cursed, denied, ignored, and rebelled against the Sovereign Lord of the universe? Because of Christ Jesus.

Christ is there in the throne room of God, and He is seated there as the Savior of the world, as the Ideal and Perfect Man who sacrificed His life for the sins of the world. He is there pleading our case before God. And the one thing God does is listen

**Promises**

to His Son. Whatever Jesus asks, the Father does.

**Grace**

Jesus Christ is our Representative, our Intercessor, our great High Priest before God's throne. He has turned the throne of God from a throne of judgment into a throne of grace. Therefore, "let us come boldly before the throne of grace." We have the right, so let us do it. Let us approach God through Jesus Christ, and God will do whatever we ask through Christ. God's throne is now a throne of grace; it is now opened up for any person to approach, no matter how bad and terrible a life he has lived. God will receive him through Christ Jesus.

**Ephes. 1:7:** *In whom we have redemption through is blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.*

—4—

We can now obtain the mercy of God. We need God to have mercy upon us because we have sinned against Him. We have done everything imaginable against God...

- **ignored Him — neglected Him**
- **rebelled against Him**
- **disobeyed Him — cursed Him**
- **rejected Him — denied Him**

**Mercy**

God will forgive our sins; He will have mercy upon us. But we must come to the throne of grace and ask for mercy. We must acknowledge that mercy comes only through Christ Jesus, the great High Priest. He and He alone knows our need for mercy; He and He alone bore our sins and paid our penalty and condemnation. He and He alone can represent us before God.

**Ephes. 2:4-10:** *But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.*

*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should*

**Love**

*boast. For WE are HIS workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

**Blessings**

**Titus 3:5:** *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to HIS mercy HE saved us...*

—5—

We can now find grace to help in time of need. What a glorious promise! Help is now



available to carry us through life. No matter what confronts us—trial, trouble, tribulation, temptation—help is available, the very help of God

Himself. God will pour out His marvelous grace upon us—all of His strength and blessings. God's grace will strengthen us to walk right through the trial and trouble.

His grace will help us conquer and triumph over all circumstances and situations. But remember why God is able to do this: because Jesus Christ has suffered the same experience. He has been upon earth Himself, suffering through the very same trial. Therefore, He knows how to walk through

This study was taken from the Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible - Commentary.

and conquer the trial and suffering. All we have to do is come boldly before *the throne of grace* and ask Him.

**In ending, here are some Scripture verses that are well worth memorizing.**

**Phil. 4:13:** *I can do ALL THINGS through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

**Phil. 4:19:** *But my God shall supply ALL YOUR NEED according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*

**2 Tim. 4:18:** *And the Lord shall deliver me from EVERY EVIL WORK, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever.*

Current Resident

### Daddy's Empty Chair

A man's daughter had asked the preacher to come and pray with her father. When the preacher arrived, he found the man lying in bed with his head propped up on two pillows. An empty chair sat beside his bed. The preacher assumed that the old fellow had been informed of his visit. 'I guess you were expecting me, he said.

'No, who are you?' said the father. The preacher told him his name and then remarked, 'I saw the empty chair and I figured you knew I was going to show up.' 'Oh yeah, the chair,' said the bedridden man. 'Would you mind closing the door?' Puzzled, the preacher shut the door. 'I have never told anyone this, not even my daughter,' said the man. 'But all of my life I have never known how to pray.

At church I used to hear the preacher talk about prayer, but it went right over my head.' I abandoned any attempt at prayer,' the old man continued, 'until one day four



years ago; my best friend said to me, 'Johnny, prayer is just a simple matter of having a conversation with Jesus. Here is what I suggest. 'Sit down in a chair; place an empty chair in front of you, and in faith see Jesus on the chair.

It's not spooky because he promised, 'I will be with you always'. 'Then just speak to him in the same way you're doing with me right now.' 'So, I tried it and I've liked it so much that I do it a couple of hours every day. I'm careful though. If my daughter saw me talking to an empty chair, she'd either have a

nervous breakdown or send me off to the funny farm.'

The preacher was deeply moved by the story and encouraged the old man to continue on the journey.

Then he prayed with him, and returned to the church. Two nights later the daughter called to tell the preacher that her daddy

had died that afternoon. Did he die in peace?' he asked. Yes, when I left the house about two o'clock, he called me over to his bedside, told me he loved me and kissed me on the cheek.

When I got back from the store an hour later, I found him. But there was something strange about his death. Apparently, just before Daddy died, he leaned over and rested his head on the chair beside the bed. What do you make of that?'

The preacher wiped a tear from his eye and said, 'I wish we could all go like that.

**Hebrews 4:15-16** *For we have not an High Priest [Jesus Christ] which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. **Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.***

We have a High Priest who feels with us. The word "touched" means to sympathize, feel, and suffer with.

—Continued on Page 10—