

# Christians in the World

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## Faith with roots in the midst of storms

August 29, 2014

Can you deal with one more post on the mustard seed? We were discussing biblical individuals with great faith such as Daniel, Shadrack, Meshack and Abendigo. One verse caught my attention. I am sure I have read it dozens of times before. The verses are Daniel 3: 16-18.

The men are about to be thrown into a fiery furnace and they tell the king that if God chooses to save them so be it, but if God chooses not to, that is alright too, and they will not stop worshiping him. This was not total courage, but a mustard seed of faith.



These were young men, and they must have been scared to death (sorry for the pun). They were not SURE God would save them. Their faith allowed them to know God could if He chose to, but what if God chose not to ... hmm. I have always thought that faith must be all or nothing. You know, faith that God *will* answer my prayers. Or that if you think He might not, then your faith is lacking; the whole move the mountain thing.

We're never told we need to have the faith of a full grown tree, with branches and leaves and bird nests. We're told we need faith the size of a mustard seed. That's very little faith, and it doesn't seem enough.

Revelation came to me while at the beach. A storm came in, and the wind blew, bending the limbs of the trees, snapping some off, scattering leaves, pummeling our camper with rain and rocking us with wind. What happens to my little mustard seed out there in the storm? It flies around like crazy, landing here only to be blown there, and then shifted somewhere else.

But let this tiny seed sprout roots. Hmm. Just like the trees that were bent almost double in some cases, my roots would hold me fast. THAT'S THE LESSON! I don't need branches necessarily to have faith. But I do need my mustard seed to have roots!

I need to know why I believe and who I believe in, and then those roots will hold me fast when adversity comes. So am I moving mountains yet? Well, I pulled a few weeds yesterday. If I am living in God's will, whatever mountains arise in front of me, He will help me tunnel through, if my mustard seed has roots.

So in my prayer journal this week I have added the need to grow roots. Not sure how I am going to measure this, but when the next big storm comes along, I'll find out how I'm doing and I'll let you know.

*Regina*

# Feeling threatened? Pull yourself through it!

July 30, 2014

Recently a friend told me a story from his childhood where he was certain he was going to die within the next breath or two. It made me laugh and is worth passing on. I am certain my reaction would not have been the same, but see for yourself.

The friend's mother frequently took him to visit an aunt who had several large Rottweiler dogs. One dog in particular seemed to have a grudge against my friend. One day he found himself trapped in a room with the snarling dog. The dog paced closer, baring his teeth, nostrils flaring. My friend backed away slowly – right into a corner.

The dog's breath felt hot on his skin, and knew it would only be seconds before the animal attacked and most likely killed him. He did the only thing he could think of. He shoved his hand into the dog's mouth and grabbed the beast's tongue. He pulled. The dog gagged and tried to pull away. My friend pulled back. They remained in a tug-of-war.

Eventually the dog's tongue slid free, and the animal quickly raced away. My friend never saw the dog again.

After I stopped laughing (I can see my friend doing this) I got to thinking about Satan, and how he likes to back us into those proverbial corners. What do I do in response, when I fear that within seconds Satan will win? Do I fight his intentions to harm me or do I cower?

I need to follow my friend's example and grab the enemy by the tongue and pull.

Ignoring a threat doesn't make it go away. If you happen by Satan or one of his thugs today, pull out your bible. I hear God's word leaves a nasty taste in their mouths.

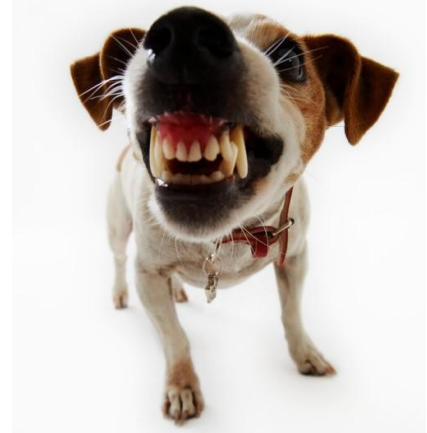
*Regina*

## Picture perfect

July 22, 2014

I have a friend who goes to great lengths to create the perfect photo. Recently he stood on top of his truck, eager to catch the sun at just the right point as its rays crossed the river. He framed the photo with a tree limb, and off to the side, a white bench faced the water.

An elderly man wandered into the scene. He ambled toward the bench, pulled out a cloth and proceeded to dust the wood. The picture my friend had envisioned was now ruined. Obviously the man would soon sit and enjoy the sun. However, after completing his dusting, the man moved on. He passed several more benches, never stopping to clean any of them.



My friend got his perfect picture and I was left wondering about the man. What was it about this bench? Why didn't he sit? Was he psychotic or missing someone he loved? To my writer's mind, the man became the picture. His story ached to be captured in words, just as my friend's scene ached to be shared via the marvel of digital photography.

I probably will never know the man's story, but I found myself praying for him. I asked God to ease his burden, lighten his load, and give meaning to his day. Perhaps God will send another Christian writer to that spot someday, and that person will take the man's arm and they will sit on the bench. The man will share his story. He will tell of a strange day when suddenly he felt the hand of God on his shoulder.

While praying I felt like my grandchildren. They don't know if I will say yes, but they ask anyway, hoping. I don't know if God honors prayers like mine to a strange man I know nothing about, but I pray anyway, hoping God will smile on my request.

*Has something impacted your heart recently, touched the fiber of your humanity and caused you to appeal to God for grace? Need is all around us, among those we know, and those we don't. Pray for someone you don't know today.*

*Regina*

## When God seems far away

July 14, 2014

You're troubled, so you pray. But all you hear in reply is silence, a silence so deafening it drowns out every thought but this: God isn't listening. You feel abandoned by God. Is this you?

Some days during my prayer time the joy of the Lord fills me, and at other times He is silent. I know God is here – but where?? I don't like those days. I read a story about a girl named Agnes. From the time she was young she was on fire for the Lord. She left her home and became a missionary. She gave Him everything. And then He left her. At least that's how it felt to her.

She said: "I utter words, but my prayer of union is not there any longer."

I have felt like that too, as though suddenly God has chosen to fly off to another planet, or go somewhere with tropical breezes and leave me to cope alone. Not having the feeling of God at my side is frightening, and I wonder if prayer is worth it.

Agnes still worked, still served, still smiled. But she said her smile was, "a cloak that covers everything." That inner darkness continued for nearly 50 years. God was just absent. Agnes is Mother Teresa. Few knew of her secret pain, and no one would have guessed that she lacked the feeling of God's hand in

Was God absent from Agnes? Is God absent from me? Absolutely not!

There is a term "spiritual gluttony," that defines a condition where God is merely a means to fulfill a desire to feel warm spiritual energy. I am afraid I am guilty of spiritual gluttony. I expect to "feel" the

comforting touch of God each time I pray, but by doing so I am reducing my faith. *God is here if I feel Him or not.* Prayer is about faith. It will serve me well to remember this.

What was the longest you went before getting an answer to your prayer, or at least one you could understand? or What was the longest you went before "feeling" God with you? I'd love to hear from you on this.

*Regina*

## Do you have enough to eat?

July 2, 2014

When the gardening bug hit, my husband made me several raised-garden boxes. They allow me to plant and harvest without having to call for help to get back off the ground.

Each spring I plant my crops, and I tend and water them with great anticipation of the vegetables to come. I am never disappointed. Tomato bushes yield tomatoes; pepper plants produce yummy peppers, and so on.

There is this intrinsic satisfaction in producing my own food, be it very small in amount. My husband and I also have our favorite strawberry, blackberry, and blueberry patches in the area where we pick the ripe fruits and turn them into jams, fruit roll-ups, and pies for the winter.



I am mindful of the millions who are hungry every day. I try not to eat more than I need, and not to waste food, but this is hard. I also remember to thank God for the food He has given me. I believe Americans live in the place closest to Heaven, with our diversity and bounty. God provides for His children, and our country was founded on the Christian faith.

I am also reminded of the Jewish nation and their destruction because their dependence in God was replaced by self-sufficiency and idolatry. Are we Americans destined for the same fate? Is hunger and lack of freedom of worship in our future?

In my prayer journal I have Thursdays designated as the day to pray for my country, for resurrection of Christian values in America, and for my family, as yet unborn who may bear the results of my generation's spiritual wandering.

When your stomach is full, remember it is not you who provides the harvest.

*Regina*