

February 01
CRISIS OPENS THE DOOR
Bill Griffin
01-20-2002

Before the September 11 attack and tragedy in our country, it was almost impossible to get anyone to listen to someone trying to tell them about God and Jesus. Neither did they listen to that small voice inside that was God Himself trying to speak to them.

The hope of the people was centered in their financial statements or jobs. How well the stock market was doing was the topic of coffee break discussions at the good jobs Americans enjoyed. Now the market is down and the talk has shifted to the 'hope' that it will get back to where it once was.

Is there any guarantee that what we hope for will come to pass? It depends on where our hope is centered. There are no guarantees in the physical things of this world but we continue to hang on to them. How can we change?

Crisis opens the door to our spirits it seems. It is a shame that God has to bring crisis into our lives to get our attention. In the midst of tragedy, most people recognize their need for God. A few will sincerely turn to God and seek His help, His refuge, and His strength. Too many though make false pretenses of turning to God. For a short time they seem to be looking and wanting to find Him. When God does not act in a

way that is in accordance with their wants, they soon slip back to the old hope in things that can not sustain them.

If we are going to seek God and grace, we must accept the plan He will put forth for us. Hope is not a thing or an event; it is a person, Jesus Christ.

Ps 91:1-2 --- He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. [2] I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.

Jeremiah 29:11-13 -- For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. [12] Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. [13] You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

Wouldn't it be great if America would take these two verses to heart and claim them for their hope every day - even when things are going good instead of having to wait until CRISIS OPENS THE DOOR?

Each of us has to make a choice in this lifetime - "Where will I spend eternity?"

February 02
MIRROR IMAGES
Bill Griffin
Alaska Mission Trip
07-19-2002

I wish I could describe all the beauty my eyes saw this past week in Alaska. We were in Chugiak just outside Anchorage with mountains all around us. Even though the altitude was not as high as the Rockies in Denver, there was snow speckled all around the tops. When the clouds were scattered and settled on the mountains, it was just beautiful. Then the sun would break through and everything was crystal clear - no smog or manmade hindrances anywhere.

One evening when our work was done and supper completed, we all crawled into the vehicles and drove to Eagle River Visitors Site in the Chugach State Park. To get there we traveled a paved road up the river valley; a narrow valley with glaciers in the end. We could see Crow Pass, part of the original Iditarod Trail used for mail delivery between Anchorage and Nome, a thousand miles away.

We walked the path to an observation deck at a spot on the river which had been dammed up by beavers. We saw ducks and a beaver lodge but no beavers came out to welcome us at 8:00 pm. We hoped to see a moose or a bear [from a distance, not up close and personal] but no such luck. Neither was out wandering around at this time.

I did notice though that the distant mountains were casting a reflection in the pond. It was like seeing a mirror image. I did manage to get some photos of this and if you are not specifically looking for the ripples on the water, you could not tell which image was the real thing. I hope to post some of the photos to my web site shortly and share them with those who care to peek.

I thought of my relationship to Christ when I saw the mirror. I know that to be the 'light of the world' here and now, I have to be a reflection of Him. He is the light, not me. Like the sun and moon, the moon has no light of its own but looks like a light because it reflects the light from the sun. I also know that there is coming a day when the mirror will become even more real. I pray that I do nothing to tarnish the image or smudge the mirror.

1 John 3:2 -- Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

February 03
THE BILGE PUMP
Bill Griffin
Alaska Mission Trip
07-08-2002

In just a few days I will be on a cruise ship in the Gulf of Alaska, God willing. God has blessed me to be a part of a mission group to Anchorage to work on a church - finishing up on construction and also landscaping. To take advantage of the trip, most of us are traveling a couple of days early to go visiting and site seeing in the area. That includes a one day

cruise from Seward to the Kenai Fjords area with its glaciers.

I have been on the riverboats of Savannah and New Orleans but never anything as large as a cruise ship. There is one thing common with all of them though - if you keep the water out, they will stay afloat. To make sure water stays out these ships have bilge pumps to pump any stray water back. Barring a huge crack in the hull, the

bilge pump should handle what comes over the rail or through a small crack. If the pump fails or no one turns it on, then the water continues to accumulate until the weight inside is too much for the ship to carry and it begins to sink.

As I thought of the cruise, I thought about how sin gets into our lives. Very seldom do we just open our soul and invite Satan in full force. We usually start with a small crack or what Satan manages to get over our guard rail. Like the ship, if we fail to pump, then the sin continues to accumulate until we break under the load. As the old hymn says: "I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore".

Like the ship, Christians have a built-in bilge pump. We call HIM 'the Holy Spirit'. When sin begins to slip in, if I turn HIM on, he pumps it right back out. If I do not hit the switch, I

am the one who will be laden and struggling to overcome the extra burden and sin does become a burden. Look at the way David described himself when he was carrying around his sins:

Ps 31:10 -- For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing; my strength fails because of my iniquity, and my bones waste away.

It seems in my own life that I continue to be slow on the switch. It is not God's fault. HE has provided the pump and made the promise: **1 John 1:9 -- If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

Do you have the pump working in your life? Don't delay when the switch needs to be turned on. GOD IS FAITHFUL.

February 04
ALASKAN BLACK FLIES
Bill Griffin
Alaska Mission Trip
07-12-2002

I was warned about the mosquitoes - the state bird of Alaska but no one told me about the black flies. They must undoubtedly be the Alaskan equivalent of the North Carolina gnats.

We had just finished dinner and wanted to visit Exit Glacier in Chugach National Park, Kenai National Forest in Seward since it is one of those you can drive to visit. After parking the vehicles in the lot, we started on the seven tenths mile trail to walk out to the glacier itself. As we walked along the creek bank to get to the glacier, we walked right into them.

I was straggling along behind and I noticed a couple of the men in our group snatch off their caps and start swatting. Then the ladies started swinging. Then I caught up to the spot. The black flies were worse than the gnats. You did not open your mouth to yell.

I immediately thought of a tale I read about called 'Circle Flies' that I will share since it was a humorous situation after it was over.

Pesky little devils they were!
Circle Flies

A farmer got pulled over by a state trooper for speeding. The trooper started to lecture the farmer about his speed, and in general began to

throw his weight around to try to make the farmer uncomfortable.

Finally, the trooper got around to writing out the ticket, and as he was doing that he kept swatting at some flies that were buzzing around his head. The farmer said, "Having some problems with circle flies there, are ya?"

The trooper stopped writing the ticket and said, "Well, yeah, if that's what they are, but I never heard of circle flies."

So the farmer says, "Well, circle flies are common on farms. See, they're called circle flies because they're almost always found circling around the back end of a horse."

The trooper says, "Oh," and goes back to writing the ticket. Then after a minute he stops and says, "Hey...wait a minute, are you trying to call me a horse's behind?"

The farmer says, "Oh no, officer. I have too much respect for law enforcement and police officers to even think about calling you a horse's behind."

The trooper says, "Well, that's a good thing," and goes back to writing the ticket.

After a long pause the farmer says, "Hard to fool them flies though".

February 05
ON THE MOUNTAIN
Bill Griffin
Alaska Mission Trip
07-12-2002

It was cool on Friday when we began to gather in the parking lot to go find a place for breakfast. Seward, Alaska, hemmed in on three sides by mountains and the Resurrection Bay lapping at the shore on the other. As I stood outside my room and looked at the mountains behind the motel, I saw the clouds gathered around the top. My mind began to visualize Moses standing in the cloud on the top listening as God spoke to him. I also thought of what it might have been like if I was one of those around the base of the mountain listening and watching.

There is a song now called "I CAN ONLY IMAGINE" and that is what I ask myself.

Would I have been one of those who wanted a God I could see and touch? Would I have helped to create the golden calf? Why should Moses have the only God there on the mountaintop? Would I have seen the lightning and heard the thunderous

voice of God and let the envy for Moses fill my soul and want my own God?

Or would I have been filled with reverence and awe that the God of the universe was so close that I could see and hear His glory? Would I have sat at the base of the mountain as Joshua did, waiting on Moses to return and share the wondrous message he had just received.

I can only imagine.

Today we do not have to send a representative to the top of the mountain as the Israelites did. We have access to the mountain of God through the trail of blood left for us by His only Son, Jesus. Where Moses stood, I can now stand! The throne of grace is available to me through prayer but when I stand at the foot of the mountain looking up at the top shrouded in clouds:

I can only imagine.

February 06
LOOKING FOR SIGNS
Bill Griffin
Alaska Mission Trip
07-13-2002

One of the things we did on our trip to Alaska was to take one of the tour boats to the glaciers. We roused ourselves out of bed and drove into Seward for breakfast and then the tour.

As we started out on Resurrection Bay, the boat captain kept a running dialog with us about all the things around us. Right in Seward itself, a bald eagle had landed on the beach. Just as he told us and everyone turned to that side of the boat with cameras and videos, it took flight coming right over our boat. Other items were called to our attention: mountain names, sawmills, campsites, small landlocked glaciers, and wildlife.

I noticed as we continued that all eyes on the boat were running back and forth from the water to the mountainous shore and the islands

around us looking for anything of interest. When something was noted, everyone either moved to that side of the boat or turned to view it, cameras flashing and videos whirring.

Wouldn't it be great if we made as much effort watching for Christ? As we kept the cameras and videos at the ready and full of film, are we as prepared for His return?

I do not want to be as the five virgins that were unprepared. I should be even more vigilant since His return will be greater than anything I could ever see on a tour boat.

Matt 25:13 -- "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.

Titus 2:13-14 -- looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

February 07
HOLGATE GLACIER
Bill Griffin
Alaska Mission Trip
07-13-2002

It was something to see when we approached it. Holgate Glacier is a damn of ice coming out of the crevice of two mountain peaks and extending to the water's edge. This glacier is hundreds of years old and has been receding for the past few years - probably due to the global warming scientists are concerned about. Other glaciers in the Alaska area are also receding.

Before we got to the glacier though, we began to see the chunks of ice in the bay moving away from the glacier and out toward the Pacific. The boat scraped against them as we continued our approach. We could hear a crack and see a chunk of ice fall off into the water now and then. To see it in July knowing how hot it was in North Carolina was amazing. Just to know that it is the handiwork of God is even more amazing.

I thought of how Satan chips at our lives. He wants to break us up and watch us float away. He knows that as the chunks of ice get farther away from the glacier, they will dissolve and melt. If he can get us away from God, we too, dissolve in our usefulness and service to Him.

While I may not melt, I am away from the protection of the Almighty. I am now a small chunk in the pond and Satan can now push me around from hither to yon.

I know that if the ice chunks could float back upstream and get up against the glacier mass, it would become fused together. Watch two ice cubes sometimes if you don't believe me.

When I fall away, I can battle the stream and return to the Almighty. When I am fused with Him, nothing is big enough to push me anywhere. Like the eaglets that rest under the wings of their parents, I can rest in the protection of the Almighty.

Ps 91:4-6 -- 4 He shall cover you with His feathers, And under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler.

5 You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, Nor of the arrow that flies by day, 6 Nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, Nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday.

February 08
SHOPPING FOR GOD
Bill Griffin
Alaska Mission Trip
07-14-2002

Birchwood Community Church, Chugiak, Alaska sounds like a small one room church in the backwoods of nowhere but were we surprised. It was really an existing three story structure with an addition being built to the side. We were housed in the Sunday school rooms in the existing building on air mattresses with sleeping bags. The basement was equipped with a kitchen and dining area and we planned to use it. To accommodate our group in Alaska, some of the ladies were given cooking assignments and they had to go grocery shopping.

I thought of them as they were off shopping, buying some of this and some of that, a little of this and a little of that, trying to decide what to cook for 16 people with varying tastes for breakfast, lunch, and supper; a dollars worth of this, a sack full of that. They were very happy when they knew we would be cooking salmon on the grill outside for a couple of meals.

I have to admit though; the ladies were committed to furnishing us with meals and snacks to sustain us during our working hours.

How far do we go to be committed to Christ?

Wilbur Rees referred to it this way:

I would like to buy \$3 worth of God please, not enough to explode my soul or disturb my sleep, but just enough to equal a cup of warm milk or a snooze in the sunshine. I don't want enough of Him to make me love a black man or pick beets with a migrant. I want ecstasy, not transformation; I want the warmth of the womb, not a new birth. I want a pound of the Eternal in a paper sack. I would like to buy \$3 worth of God, please.

That's it. Our inner "self" doesn't want to dump God entirely, just keep Him at a comfortable distance. Three dollars of Him is sufficient. A sack full, nothing more. Just

enough to keep my guilt level below the threshold of pain; just enough to guarantee escape from eternal flames. But certainly not enough to make me nervous - to start pushing around my prejudices or nit-picking at my lifestyle. Enough is enough!

Our commitment should stand the test when God begins to make demands on us. It is He who sustains us.

Col 1:17-18 -- And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. 18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

February 09
WORK ASSIGNMENTS
Bill Griffin
Alaska Mission Trip
07-15-2002

When we were given our work assignments yesterday, I was assigned to a team to install partitions in the ladies shower and rest room. There were about six partitions needing to be placed along with their doors. Somehow I just knew I would get latrine duty - stuck in the toilet.

As we started gathering tools and supplies for this undertaking, another guy from the church who was like the general contractor said no - no - no! We could not do these on the tile floors and walls. The heating pipes were installed in the concrete floors and without the specific plans and layouts, we might drill into them. He told us that some that were already installed in the men's room would have to be removed and reinstalled.

We were reassigned to hang the doors where the frames had been hung and plumbed and painted. This too seemed like a good job. It would keep me away from sheetrock which does not

like me. When we pulled a sheet or two of sheathing off the stack of doors, I noticed we had not been handed a gravy job. The doors were solid core oak and it took two men to lift them - and there were three stacks! Some of these doors had to be carried up to the second floor to be hung. Needless to say when our work day was finished, the four of us were WHUPPED!

There were many laborious tasks and our entire team was involved in them. We were not the only ones whipped and dragging but all throughout the day I heard the sounds of laughter from one group or the other at different times. No one complained about their job. No one complained about their being there. I knew that every person on this mission trip was living up to the challenge issued by Paul long ago:

Col 3:22-24 -- And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.

February 10
THE DOOR PUZZLE
Bill Griffin
Alaska Mission Trip
07-15-2002

When we uncovered the doors to be hung in the new building, we were told that each door was numbered and that number had to match the waiting frames. These frames had also been marked with a magic marker and the corresponding number. The hardware for the doors was also marked as we found later.

We decided to take all the doors to their perspective locations and then find the hardware and hang them. No problem. We had a drawing showing the first and second floor layout and the rooms and their door numbers were noted.

We grabbed the first door off the stack and headed to its location per our drawing. Surprise! It wasn't there. My team started looking at the drawing and we started looking around for our door number. We finally found it on the opposite side of the building. OK, fluke. We grabbed the next door and off we went; same story - different door. By jawing and scratching over the drawing, we finally found the next door. We thought we had it figured out. It looked like our drawing had been reversed since if we looked from the bottom side they seemed to be in the right location. Ok, so now we have it. Next door - the entire numbering system is scrapped because it did not fit anywhere. We decided carrying those heavy doors around while we looked for its home was not the way to go. We scrounged up a buggie that would hold about five doors and away

we went, marking new numbers on the drawing as we found them while we pushed the buggie from location to location. [Some of the ladies actually accused us of walking around pushing the buggie to keep from having to work. We were really shocked and hurt! Me?]

Satan wants to keep us confused and burdened. If he can make my life like the door puzzle and my burdens as heavy as the doors themselves, he succeeds. Just as my drawing lied to me, Satan is the father of lies. I have to fight to overcome the burdens and puzzles he places before me.

We had to go to plan A, B, and C to get organized for placing the doors where they went. With God, there is only one plan, Plan A, no contingencies. Not two sons, only one. No alternate job if the cross did not work out. No second Calvary. His plan:

Eph 1:3-6 -- Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

February 11
FISHING IN ALASKA
Bill Griffin
Alaska Mission Trip
07-15-2002

The construction project at the church here in Chugiak, Alaska has been in progress for over

two years. A partnership was formed with the North Carolina Baptist Association and many

churches have sponsored mission teams to go and work on the construction as finances and materials became available. It has really been a work of faith.

I thought of the construction project Christ has been involved with for two thousand years. He said he was going to prepare a place for me. I thought of how He is even now gathering people to be inhabitants since He is no longer here in person. Just as this body will go out to find converts, these converts will fill those vacancies. We must be about our task though. Christ called us to be "fishers of men".

Matthew and Mark [yes, their real names] left our group yesterday to go fishing for salmon. Even though they had a good time, they caught nothing. Almost like fishing in NC huh! I did not inquire but was it the person, technique, or the bait?

Jesus called us to be fishers of men but how many of us can say that we have ever caught

anything for the cause of Christ? Is it our person that never picks up our fishing equipment to even cast a line? Is it our technique we fear by proclaiming we can not talk to people, especially strangers? Or is it the bait we are using; our programs, our watered down gospel, or the feel good do nothing philosophy so many churches have adopted?

I heard a black preacher describe how we should be fishing as well as I have ever heard it put. We need to:

**Take the line of the Gospel
Put Jesus on the hook
Let the Holy Ghost cast it
And let God reel them in!**

We need to get the human equation out of our fishing and return to the basics - fishing for men.

February 12
TRAVEL IN ALASKA
Bill Griffin
Alaska Mission Trip
07-16-2002

Alaska is a beautiful, rugged country with most of the habitation on the southern coast and the panhandle. Alaska only has 600,000 people and Anchorage has 260,000 of them. Their highway system only goes to Hwy 9. If you want to go above Fairbanks or out to the west, you have to take a small charter plane or dog sled. Alaska has more privately owned planes and more pilots than any other state in the union. Hood Lake in Anchorage, located next to the airport, is the busiest float plane lake in the world with 804 flights in or out per day.

One of the big winter events in Alaska is the Iditarod Dog Sled race. There is a plaque statue on 4th Street in Anchorage that marks the spot where the race starts. This was once a 1,000 mile mail run from Anchorage to Nome and is still a route if one wants to make it by dog sled or snowmobile in the winter.

It is hard for me to realize there is an area of our country that has this much wilderness. I am used to a paved road at every block and even the dirt roads are graveled and two-way. If I want to jump in my truck and travel

to Georgia or far away, there is a super highway. Not so in Alaska.

I try to imagine what it was like during the time of Christ when transportation was two good feet or a donkey. Far countries might be on the shipping routes if one could afford passage. As far as I can tell, Jesus only rode twice in His life on land - the trip to Egypt and the ride into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. This did not deter Him from being about the Father's business. Other than a couple of boat rides across the Sea of Galilee Jesus walked everywhere He went.

I realize we have to have better transportation today since the world is more populated and we have to do business around the world in a hurry. But how much do I have to hurry where I am? Will I walk around the block to invite a new arrival to church? Am I willing to walk an area in a new subdivision to share the Gospel with others? Can I put aside my want of comfort to make sure the Father's business is carried out? What am I doing with the talent God gave me? I do not want to hear Him say:

Matt 25:28 - So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents.

February 13
WHO PUT IT IN MOTION
Bill Griffin
Alaska Mission Trip
07-16-2002

It is quite different to sit on a set of steps at 5:00 am and see the sun shining through the trees. Not just daylight but actual brilliance which can not be looked upon directly. If I can not look with my eyes at just one of the created stars, what brilliance must accompany the Creator Himself! Just think, Moses was only allowed to see His backside, Isaiah was struck down with His brilliance, His Shekinah glory.

It is the same in the evening. As we drove from Anchorage to Seward last Thursday, sunglasses were almost a requirement at 10:00 pm. I had to lower the sun visor to knock off the shining rays of the sun.

As we drove and during the week, there would be times when the sun broke through a section of clouds on the mountains and it was as if God was pulling back a curtain and looking through at us. What an awesome feeling.

How does it all know when and how to fit together? I know all the scientific reasons -

earth's axis and the rotation around the sun - but who or what put it into motion? How did it start its rotation? Smart scientists try to tell us of a big bang - atom splitting - happening. I personally can not swallow that line of reasoning. How did the atom get there? I like the description in the Psalms myself:

Ps 74:16-17 -- 16 The day is Yours, the night also is Yours; You have prepared the light and the sun. 17 You have set all the borders of the earth; You have made summer and winter.

I wonder how our scientists are going to answer when the question is presented to them that God asked of Job.

Job 38:19-21 -- 19 "Where is the way to the dwelling of light? And darkness, where is its place, 20 That you may take it to its territory, That you may know the paths to its home? 21 Do you know it, because you were born then, Or because the number of your days is great?

February 14
MY VALENTINE
02-15-95
Bill Griffin

I should have written this before Valentine's Day but sometimes we get caught up in things and forget or just not take the time. Most of us men think we can do all things alone, but any real man with an ounce of common sense knows there is no substitute for support, encouragement or a pit crew.

I would like to mention my support crew. Her name is Sarah and she is like so many other wives who do not hear the words "I Love You" enough.

*Willie Nelson sings a song that says:
"Maybe I should have told you..."*

*Bette Midler sings another that says:
"It must have been cold there in my shadow..."*

These two reflect how easy it is to take someone for granted. I wish I could say I never take Sarah for granted, but I would be telling a lie. I do try to remember how each of the two songs finish up though when I think of my wife.

*"You were always on my mind."
"You are the wind beneath my*

wings."

The book of Proverbs, 31:10-12 describes a Godly wife. It also describes my Sarah.

"A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies. Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. She brings him good, not harm all the days of her life."

We are not creatures meant to live alone. Of all God's activity in creation, man alone, was the only comment "Not Good." God Himself made man a helpmate, from his own body.

For over thirty years, Sarah has been my support, my pit crew, even when I did not acknowledge that I needed support. If I had to make the choice again tomorrow, I would once again ask her to marry me. This time, she would probably smarten up and tell me "No way Hosea. Why should I stand by you through all the trouble I wouldn't have if I stay single?"

To each of you, I admonish you to take a special moment today to tell your mate, or someone close to you just how much you really do love them. Don't take them for granted.

February 15
WONDERFULLY MADE
Bill Griffin
10-03-2000

The submarine is one of those feats of man that to me is a wonder. I don't pretend to understand all I know about the technology used to pressurize the inside. I do know that the inside air pressure must match the outside pressure of the ocean mass or the submarine will collapse like an aluminum coke can under the handle of the crusher used to flatten.

The pressure is tremendous when you think of the depth one of these machines can attain; miles - into the deepest parts of the ocean. Even with modern subs and technology, there is still a point where the sub can go no deeper. It would virtually crush itself.

What is amazing is that when you look out of the sub at even this depth, there is a little fish! When the sub has to stop, the fish continues on deeper. No matter what man has accomplished, when

we look at what God has made and designed, our efforts are kindergarten. God made the fish with the ability to go to the deepest ocean and not have to worry about crushing itself. Neither does it need an artificial air supply.

If God made the fish with these capabilities; what about you? Ever thought about how you were made? With all the abilities and the brain that is the greatest computer ever made, look at how David describes you.

Ps 139:14 -- I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.

Can you praise Him right now for the way He made you? No! Don't look at your infirmities or shortcomings to make a decision. God did not make any mistakes. You are what He wants you to be. You just may not be done yet.

February 16
MONEY CAN'T BUY YOUR FUTURE
Bill Griffin
01-13-97

A story is told of a rich old man with a miserable disposition. One day he visited a rabbi, who led him to a window.

"Look out there," he said, and the rich man looked into the street.

"What do you see?" asked the rabbi.

"I see men, women, and children," answered the rich man.

Again the rabbi took him by the hand and this time led him to a mirror.

"Now what do you see?" asked the rabbi.

"Now I see myself," the rich man replied.

Then the rabbi said, "Behold, in the window there is glass, and in the mirror there is glass. But the glass of the mirror is covered with a little silver, and no sooner is the silver added than you cease to see others, but see only yourself."

Just as this man stopped seeing others when silver came before his eyes, we too, can let money cloud our vision of God. Money can bring us to the point we no longer see Him, but only ourselves.

Our world is on a course to accept a 'cashless' society in the next few years. Then, as now, money can not buy some of the things we need for our lives to be fruitful and satisfying. Money will buy a bed, but not rest; food but not satisfaction, luxury, but not contentment. A house can be bought but a home has to be built. We can buy all types of sedatives across the counter at the nearest drug store. They may bring pain relief but not a Savior.

What we can not purchase, God offers free of charge. The difference between dollars and sense are two very different things. Jesus gives us a good perspective and priority on both and the influence they should have in our lives.

February 17
MYSTERIES
Bill Griffin
10-03-2000

Most of us like a good mystery story or book. We must because the bookstores are full of all kinds. Even the TV is saturated with mystery programs. "Murder She Wrote". "Diagnosis Murder", etc. [That is the only two I can think of - you can tell I watch a lot of local TV]

There is a mystery that dwells in all our homes. The mystery of the 'washing machine and the socks'. Drop in eight pairs and watch it spit back six pairs and a new pair of different colors. Where did the other two go? It is still a mystery to me. I always keep the extras, hoping that with the next washing, one or two of them will show up.

A few years ago my brother moved from Georgia to North Carolina and he and his wife lived with us for a couple of months while trying to get settled. When George started packing to move, one of my mischievous streaks hit me. I had a sack full of one pair socks. I took those and placed one inside of another to make them look like a set and I sneaked them into his sock drawer. He was forever trying to figure out how he got all

the mismatches. [I think it finally dawned on him that he had been had].

There is also mystery in our personal spiritual lives. Who is God and how can I understand Him? What is His will for my life? How can one God be three Persons? Who is the Holy Spirit? The answer to each of these questions is about as broad as it is long. There are many explanations for each and if I am asked tomorrow, would probably give you a different answer than I did yesterday. Jesus summed it all up pretty well when He described the Holy Spirit in John.

John 3:8 -- "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

God is not required and does not have to explain Himself to us but He did in His Word. We have to search and be willing to be lead as a leaf in the wind by the Holy Spirit. We need to follow His lead and He will take the things of Christ and teach them to us. If we never spend time in God's Word, how can we ever expect Him to be anything but a mystery?

February 18
POWER OF ATTORNEY
Bill Griffin
09-21-2000

Most OF us use the phrase "In Jesus' name" as a common ending to our prayers. Sometimes I don't think we really understand what we are saying. We take it lightly, a ritual we feel we have to follow. When Jesus gave the privilege to His followers in John 14, He did not give it lightly. He gave it with the full authority of the Father.

A few months ago, my mother-in-law wanted to have a "Power of Attorney" issued to allow one of her daughters to have "full authority" to act on her behalf if she became incapacitated. The person named in the power of attorney has the same authority as the person that issued it.

That is how this privilege is classified. Jesus was given a Power of Attorney from the Father. This allows Him to act and do with the same authority as the Father. Just as Jesus would

pray or do the same things the Father would do, the phrase on the end of our prayer should be asking and praying for the very same thing Jesus would if He were here in person. We are not to use it as just a clause and think we have our prayer covered.

If our prayer is not in line with Christ and the Father, can we really expect an answer? None is promised if it is outside the will of God. Ask yourself, "Am I personally in the will of God in my life?" If my answer is no, I must make changes before I can ask for anyone else. Then I must ask; "Will it glorify the Father in the Son?"

John 14: 13-14... And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

February 19
PREPARE TO MEET AN ANGRY GOD
Bill Griffin
11-12-2000

It is easy for groups or various religions to believe that God is a God of love and would not send anyone to hell. Even those practicing lifestyles contrary to God's Word are calling on the entire world to practice toleration. They think that because God is shown as a God of love, He will be forgiving. As these groups raise their voices to be heard, our government is doing everything it can to pacify them. Abortion laws. Same sex partner rights. Same sex marriage. New hate crime laws [even though all crimes are already covered] but now to have an extra reason to enforce.

As much as I have to agree that God is a loving God, I also admit that God is also a God of wrath and judgement. Over 585 times in the Old Testament the wrath of God against sin is mentioned. The countries of Israel and Judah, which were inhabited by God's chosen people saw first hand God's wrath. I personally feel that our country, which was founded by a people

searching for a place to worship God as individuals separate from the state church in England, is approaching a day when they hear as Israel heard:

Amos 4:12 - therefore this is what I will do to you Israel, and because I will do this to you, PREPARE TO MEET YOUR GOD, O ISRAEL.

This was not a meeting of love. It was a day of wrath and God described it a few verses later.

Amos 5:18-20 - [18] Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end is it for you? the day of the LORD is darkness, and not light. [19] AS IF A MAN DID FLEE FROM A LION, AND A BEAR MET HIM; OR WENT INTO THE HOUSE, AND LEANED HIS HAND ON THE WALL, AND A SERPENT BIT HIM. [20] Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light? Even very dark, and no brightness in it?

There is only one ray of light shining through the darkness of sin and we can step into

it and be part of it. This light is Christ. He called Himself the Light of the World and beckoned "Whosoever will" to come to the shelter

of His light. Are you inside this light of safety? If not, then prepare to meet an ANGRY GOD!

February 20
PROTECTING FROM DANGER
Bill Griffin
07-10-2000

A few days ago as I was walking, I noticed a small bird in front of me hopping along and pretending not to be able to fly. The bird did this for probably a half a block before finally flying off to the side of a parking lot. I figure I passed a nest somewhere and the bird was protecting her young. She was not big enough to fight so she was doing the next best thing - offering her self.

I also noticed this same scenario while watching a few minutes of a TV program the other day about the grizzlies and the wildlife, which share their common areas. I think it was a mama moose with a young one. When the mama realized a grizzly was near, she ushered the young one into the bushes and then went to face the grizzly alone. Knowing she could not defeat the grizzly, she moved around enough to keep the grizzly from getting her. She, too, was willing to offer her self to protect her offspring.

Isn't it funny how God built this selflessness into nature. He really built it into us also since we are prone to be very protective of our babies. Most of us would do reckless and foolish things to protect a young one.

Where did we all get these traits? Think about it! God demonstrated this very trait to us. He cares for us just like a child. [Ps 91:4... He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.] Like a mother hen that takes her chicks under her wings when danger threatens, God longs to gather us under His wings.

God also was willing to sacrifice to save us. [Rom 8:32... He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?] God knew we needed to be protected from the danger of the evil one (the roaring lion) so He sacrificed His Son that we now may be hidden in Him.

February 21
SHINING BRIGHTER IN THE DARK
Bill Griffin
12-16-2000

Have you ever driven in one of those dark foggy nights when you can see no further than the beam of the headlights? Last night was just such a night here in Gastonia as my wife and I were returning home from going out to eat with our son for his birthday.

About a half mile from my house is a cell tower that has a blinking light on top due to the proximity of our small local airport. On most nights you have to be fairly close to see the light blink because there are other lights around and the night is not so dark. The moon and stars and house lights help to illuminate the darkness. Last night was different. Because of the clouds and fog, no other light was shining. The blink was like one of those airport floodlights as it blinked out into the darkness.

I thought about how the darkness of sin in our world compared. The darker it is, the more one small light stands out in it. That is why Jesus admonished us to "let our light shine, don't hide it". We are in a world that is darker

in sin than at any other time in history I believe as the final days of God's wrath approaches.

Believers do have a hope though in this dark world.

Isaiah 9:1-2 -- [1] Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. [2] The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the Shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

Not the star as the story goes - but the true Source of Light. John tells us we are to "walk in the light, as He is the light". We are not to walk in darkness. Darkness equals fear. Light means safety. If we are walking in the light, WHOM SHALL WE FEAR?

February 22
SIGNS IN THE HEAVENS
Bill Griffin
01-23-2000

Last week we were able to observe one of those phenomenon of the heavens, an eclipse of the moon. We are quick to look for any sign in the heavens - a comet trail, an eclipse of the moon, an eclipse of the sun or any star closer than it has been in twenty years. What are we hoping to see? A sign? A prophecy? Gloom and doom or glory revealed? Would we recognize it or accept it if we saw it?

The birth of Christ was shrouded in almost as much mystery as His mysterious Second Coming. His birth was foretold but then just as now, no one was looking. No one, that is, except a group of astrologers from Persia. They saw His star appear. Why no one else? We think of the star and depict it as being terribly bright and hanging low in the skies guiding the Wise Men to Jerusalem. If that had been its appearance, everyone would have stopped what he or she was

doing and would have followed it. We would have today!

What made this star visible to this group of men and not to the rest of the world? Did it rise in a direction different from the rest of the heavens? Did the Holy Spirit speak to their hearts and tell them to follow? Maybe while looking at this anomaly, they searched their scrolls and discovered the prophecy of their own countryman:

Num 24:12-17... And Balaam said unto Balak, Spake I not also to thy messengers which thou sentest unto me, saying... I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel...

The star presented no stir. IN fact, the biggest stir was created by a traveling caravan from the East easing into town just as the sun

was coming up. A bigger stir presented itself when they asked, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews, for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him?"

Just as His first coming was a surprise, His Second Coming will be just as big a surprise to a world not expecting or looking for Him. Instead of obscurity though, this time He will be coming on clouds of Glory. Instead of just a few seeing Him though, the entire world will see Him at the same time.

Matt 24:27... For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

Rev 1:7... Behold, he cometh with clouds; and EVERY EYE shall see him...

There is one more event coming between His first appearance and His second. It too, will be seen by only a few. This event is called the 'rapture'. Only those who are true believers will hear the voice and trumpet from heaven calling the Bride to her Husband.

1Thes 4:16-17... 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.

Which event will you be witnessing? Only you can make the choice.

February 23
SMALL CRACKS
Bill Griffin
09-21-2000

Have you ever had a mouse to get into the house and watched it disappear through a crack when you were chasing it? I ran one into the bathroom one night and it went into the toe area of the vanity and disappeared. When I got down to look, it had entered a crack that I could not slide a credit card into.

When the boys were young, we came in one day and a large blacksnake was in our kitchen. When I reached down to pick it up to take it outside, it disappeared under the cabinet. How, I will never understand. I would have had a tough time sliding a piece of paper through the joint where it disappeared.

I understand that mice and snakes can flatten themselves to almost nothing. It is part of their makeup. Snakes will chase mice and if the mouse goes through a crack, the snake will follow. Nature, the way God set it up.

There is another that can and will slip into the smallest of cracks. His name is Satan. Look at how Peter describes him.

1 Pet 5:8 - Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

He looks for the smallest crack in our spiritual armor to infiltrate our lives. Satan's worst fear is a Christian kneeling and praying. He may not be able to devour our lives, but he can reek havoc. He knows he can not have us but if he can get us disoriented and out of the will of God, he has an ineffective Christian and he will settle for that.

The only way to totally seal a physical crack is to caulk with a sealant. The way to seal a spiritual crack is to allow the Holy Spirit to caulk with the Word of God. Jesus defeated the devil with the Word in the desert and it has worked well ever since. Are you sealing the cracks in your life? The labor and materials to do so are free of charge.

February 24
TEMPTATIONS AND CHOICES
5/15/2000
Bill Griffin

Most of us are aware of the temptations of Christ that Satan placed before Him in the desert. Three times he tried to get Christ to give in to the things of the flesh and the world. Forty days of hunger and he tempts Him to "turn the stones to bread". High on a pinnacle, he tempts Him about His faith: "if you are the Son of God". The riches of the world and the power they would bring round out the temptations but Jesus did not give an inch to Satan. Knowing he was defeated for the moment, Luke tells us that Satan "left Him until an opportune time".

Most of us have used the phrase "when I get an opportunity". This is usually our way of putting something off until it suites us or fits into our schedule better. Satan took Christ on face to face when he thought Christ would be weak coming from the desert and at that time, He had no ministry. He wanted to stop Him before He could get started. When that failed, Satan began to plan and scheme for an "opportune" time. It took him three years but he finally made it. The opportune time came at Golgotha.

Betrayed by the people He came to visit, beaten beyond recognition, deprived of sleep or rest all night, whipped, loss of blood, body shock, and now nailed to the cross with the last moments of His life in sight, Jesus was at His weakest physically. At this moment, Satan works his deception and trickery because he believes NOW is the "opportune time." Not openly this time

because he knows there is still some fight in Christ. First, he uses the religious leaders who tempted, "He saved others, let Him save Himself IF He is the Christ." When Jesus would not rise to the challenge and ignored their taunts, Satan moved to the men on the adjacent crosses. One challenged "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself". Still Jesus did not answer but found a way to pray for them from the cross itself. His thoughts were not of saving himself but saving mankind. The final barb came with the cry of "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself AND us."

It would have been so easy for Jesus to save Himself and those around the cross that day. No doubt there would have been one heck of a revival to break out if He had stepped off the cross. But Jesus knew his time was short and there was a choice to make. He could save Himself or man but not both. There was never a contingency plan if this one failed. From the cross at the point of death, He looked down at those standing there, the soldiers, the religious leaders, the crucifiers, and the followers and made His choice. Satan's temptations were strong but Christ's love for mankind was stronger so again Satan lost to the Son of God who chose the Father's plan.

What temptations are you facing today? Will you make the same choice, to follow the Father's plan, to follow Christ? Or will you allow Satan to find an "opportune" time in your life?

February 25
THE FOG
Bill Griffin
0-29-2000

There was a movie a few years ago called "The Fog" and I thought I was in a remake or sequel the other morning. The fog of the early morning was so thick it looked like I could just roll the window down, stick my arm out the window, and scoop a fistful out of the air. It was like soup and visibility was almost non-existent.

The fog is a temporary weather condition and as the sun begins to shine, it usually burns away the fog very quickly.

The fog reminded me of how Satan uses sin in our lives. He is able to disguise or hide sin in a way that we cannot see what is going on around us. Sin keeps us in a fog. It is only when we allow the light of God to return to our lives that the fog begins to lift.

James says our lives are like this fog. It is a mist. James 4:14 - What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

Since our lives are so temporary, we should not live it in a fog. We need to be walking in the light as John admonishes us and only then can we burn away the sin that keeps us deceived.

I John 1:7-8 -- But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

February 26
THE MERCY BOW
Bill Griffin
07-09-2000

As I started out on my evening walk, I noticed a portion of a rainbow under the clouds looking out toward the plains and Kansas. Since it was in front of me and I could see for a long way, I began to think about the rainbow story and Noah.

God had just extracted justice from the world at that time but He had saved Noah and his family. It was just after the flood waters receded that God met with Noah and made the promise:

[Gen 9:13-15... I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.]

The covenant God made with the earth demonstrates the grace with which He deals with His people. The rainbow became a symbol of God's grace and His mercy. We should remember this promise every time we see a rainbow but I bet the

first thoughts of most of us are: "I wonder if there really is a pot of gold?" It is gold, okay, but not the kind we are looking for. It is the kind God knows we need.

It is funny that we only see the rainbow three times in the Scriptures. Each time, it is symbolizing the majesty and mercy and grace of God.

Rev 4:3... And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

Rev 10:1... And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire:

John has described the uncountable number of people around the throne of God in Heaven and in describing the throne, he describes the rainbow 'around' the throne. Where better to enjoy God's grace.

Could the other 'angel' with the rainbow upon His head be Christ Himself? Who else played such a part in our salvation and deliverance? All the mercy and grace we need is contained in Him.

February 27
THE TUNNEL
Bill Griffin
01-19-2000

All of us from time to time talk about hoping to see the light at the end of the tunnel. We joke about the light we see being a train coming toward us. A few miles west of Denver on I-70 is a tunnel 1.7 miles through where headlights are a must. The tunnel in itself is a feat since it was cut through a mountain and passes underneath the Continental Divide. Since the tunnel is divided, you can not see a light coming at you but as you come to the end and burst out the other side of the mountain, the light and scenery is majestic. Popping out overlooking a valley with a blue lake and small town nestled between the lake and the mountains on the other side gives a wonderful glimpse of the glory of the Rockie Mountains with their peaks reaching toward heaven and capped with snow.

It has been said that the road to glory passes through a tunnel, a tunnel of suffering. We get a view of this from the scriptures when Christ was telling His disciples of the suffering

He was soon to face. He also told them that some of them would live to see His glory. Peter, James, and John were the privileged ones chosen to climb Mount Hermon with Him. While there, the Shekinah glory of God was shown to them through Christ. They saw Christ in a way they had never seen Him before as they traveled the dusty roads of Galilee and Judeah. John said later, "We have seen His Glory". Peter too declared, "We are eyewitnesses of His Majesty".

The disciples were given a glimpse of the light at the end of the tunnel. The light is the 'glory' on the other side. Jesus invites all of us to enter this tunnel with Him. It is small though and we may have to stoop to enter, or leave everything behind to squeeze through. It is not a tunnel around suffering, but through it. If we keep our eyes on the light though, we will look forward to the destination and forget trying to find a detour. It is the joy we find on the mountaintop that gives us the strength to endure

our crosses as we walk through our valleys each day.

1 Pet 4:12-13... Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened

unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

February 28
TRUTH - ABSOLUTE
Bill Griffin
10-01-2000

Our children and young people in college today are being taught that there is no 'Absolute Truth'. By scientific and logical methods, our teachers and politicians can explain anything to their satisfaction and make the statement about no absolute truth.

As we make our way into the new millennium, we see more and more of the values we old timers have being discounted and tossed aside. I hate to think what our world will be like in twenty years [if God allows it to continue that long.]

There is a Truth that is absolute whether man believes it or not. Paul described it this way in the book of Romans -- [7:18 -- For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing:

By this we can determine that all are sinners and this condemns all. Because of this, we all need to know God's grace and salvation. God's greatest gift of these has come in the form of His only Son. Only God's Son could make the statement that epitomizes what truth is all about.

John 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, THE TRUTH, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

To know absolute truth, we must know CHRIST. He did not say He was a truth, He said He was THE truth. We all need to share this absolute with others around us who are hearing the lie of Satan.

February 29
TUFF ROADS
Bill Griffin
02-22-2000

Last Thursday was a mess as the snowstorm came in across the Rockies and started dumping the white stuff everywhere. It was one of those that with the right temperature, as it hit the ground and pavement, it froze and immediately became SLICK. It took me an hour and fifteen minutes to travel the seven miles back to my motel - on a four-lane city street.

As I sat in traffic and moved along like a herd of turtles, I thought about how much life was like this road. First, we forget about all the good days when the roads are clear and we travel merrily along. It is only when trials or tragedies hit that we look around and begin to bemoan the mess we are in. We forget that there will even be better days ahead again. We look and blame everyone or everything around us for the predicament we have encountered. Just like we blame all the other drivers because we can't keep moving.

Some were slipping and sliding as they encountered the few hills along the way. Some were spinning and turning completely around in the road but going nowhere-but into the gutter. We let our lives slip and spin out of control like driving on snow and ice when we take our

eyes off the road and lose focus of what is or may be ahead. The things happening around us distract us and before we know it, we are in the middle of the mess.

Sometimes we have to have others help by giving us a push to get out of the ditch or we have to call a tow truck. I look at this in the light of our needing those who come along in our lives offering encouragement, love, understanding and care. They are the messengers God sends to help us out of the ditch. If for some reason we are in too far or too deep, He sends the tow truck, Jesus. We do not try to tell the tow truck driver how to get us out, we just plead with sad eyes and say "please help me." Then we have to trust Him to do the job He was sent to do - find and rescue the lost sheep.

Luke 15:4.. What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

In a rut? Spinning out of control? Bogged down? Call for your tow now. You don't even have to have coins to put in the pay phone. He's on line and listening always.
