

# The Day the Chains Fell Off

The time was December of 1983. The place was the office of Jean Gibson at Fairhaven Bible Chapel. Nancy and I were attending the Discipleship Intern Training Program that Jean and William MacDonald had organized. The program began in late August of 1983 and ran through May of 1984. Each "intern" (as we were called) was required to write out his personal goals for areas of spiritual growth. Four months or so had passed. It was now December and Mr. Gibson had asked me to come for a chat in his office in order to review my goals and evaluate my progress.

"Please sit down, George," said Mr. Gibson. We exchanged a few minutes of cordial chit-chat, and then Jean began to review the goals that I had written out four months earlier. "I see that one of your goals was to 'deepen your well' in the Scriptures," he commented. "Yes, you're doing quite well academically," he added. I gloated a bit in self-glory. After making a few more comments on other goals, he said, "I see another goal was that you wanted to become a 'worshiper of God.' That is a wonderful goal." Then as he leaned over his desk and looked directly into my eyes, he asked, "So George, tell me, how many times have you made a contribution in the Lord's Supper since you have been here?"

It was like a spear going through my heart. The self-glory I had been basking in before suddenly evaporated. I felt that every eye of heaven was upon me and that I was naked and laid bare before the bar. I had no defense. The facts were as clear as the air on a cold winter night. I had made only one contribution during the proceeding four months: I had timidly called out a song. Oh yes, there were definite times when I had felt the leading of the Holy Spirit to pray or give a short meditation from the Scriptures, but. . . what would others think of me? Would I pray without making a mistake? What if I said something wrong? Surely, it wouldn't be as good as Brother Smith's contribution. The justifications were without end. I was totally consumed by the fear of man and love for self and effectively "chained to my chair" in silence.

What happened after Mr. Gibson asked me that question? It was one of those rare moments that perhaps should happen more often: I broke before God. In tears and with my head bowed in complete shame, I answered Mr. Gibson and said, "Once." I then laid my head upon his desk and wept uncontrollably.

Jean obviously was a bit startled by the fact that his simple question had extracted such a reaction from me. However, perhaps recalling Prov.12:25 -- "Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad"--he rose from his chair, came around to me, comforted me with a few good words, and gave me a few tissues to wipe my eyes. He then put his arm around me and helped me up while saying, "Look George, many young men have gone through what you're going through. However, you must get out of this 'bad rut' that you are in. This Sunday at the Breaking of Bread, I want you to worship the Lord publically. If all you do is get up and say, 'I love you, Lord,' and then sit down, that's alright. But you must make a contribution and break out of your rut."

I quickly left his office and virtually ran home and fell on my bed. I was so ashamed of myself. My fear had paralyzed me. My love for self was stronger than my love for the Lord. I had failed the Lord. Yet I confessed it all to Him while asking Him for strength and He heard me.

The next Sunday rolled around very quickly. I was seated in the Lord's Supper with love for my Lord in my heart. I was ready to worship. Yet, the old enemy was there as well saying, "You have nothing to say. You can't pray as well as Mr. Smith . . . ." However, about mid-way through the meeting there was a moment of silence. With a few drops of sweat on my brow, I arose from my chains, lifted up my heart and voice to the Lord, said five words, "Lord Jesus, I love You," and sat down. I suspect Mr. Gibson, maybe even the angels in heaven, might have chuckled a bit. But I believe the Lord was as well-pleased with those five words as He would have been with any five-minute meditation. A spiritual work was once and for all accomplished in my soul. From that moment onward the fear of man at the Lord's Supper was broken and put to death and the truth of this verse became a reality in my soul: "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7).

When was your last contribution at the Lord's Supper? Perhaps there is a young man reading this article who is struggling with this very real and very common problem, and your answer is, "It has been a long time." Dear brother, God has not given you a spirit of fear, but of power to overcome the fear of man. He has given you a spirit of love to overcome love for self so you can express your love for the Lord. He has given you a sound mind to realize that you must break out of the chains as God helped me to do.

When was your last contribution? May we all be able to say, "Last week!"