



## Lifeline

...a prayer letter from John and Jackie

September, 1997



Dear friends,

We greet you again in Jesus' Wonderful Name!

**He said to me, "Continue."....**

Near the end of our Chantik Prayer Summit in Indonesia last month, we were all waiting on the Lord concerning His strategy for the future. I guess I was hoping for a revelation which would give us great insight into His plan. It seemed like we needed a "substantial" word from Him on what to do next in this strategy of united intercession for the Chantik people.

Some good possibilities were suggested, which might prove to be the leading of the Lord. Then, as I was waiting on Him, I heard Him in my heart quietly say one word: "Continue." That was all He said. As I pondered this, it became evident to me that God wasn't so interested in giving us new and special revelation at that time, but was speaking to the greatest need -- that we would not quit.

I guess He knows the tendency of our flesh, and the nature of spiritual warfare. Having had a great prayer summit, we could have departed with a "been there, done that" mentality, forgetting it was one step in a long walk. Or the enemy could say to us, "Where's the fruit? What you did was a waste of time and money." Or our flesh could say, "That was too hard, all the pressing through in faith to see it happen..."

So, the Lord simply said to me, "Continue."

Perhaps this is a word for you as well. When we arrived home to various trials which made us wonder if we had gotten off God's track, I again felt I had the need for a fresh revelation, a "substantial" encouragement from the Lord. After many days of struggle, the Lord seemed to say again in my heart, "Continue."

I soon found myself putting this simple word into the context of Galatians 6:7-9:

*Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."*

I have become convinced that life in Christ carries with it a blood bought covenant of blessing. We should keep pressing into Him for a blessing, even when we see little evidence of it coming. In fact, sometimes life feels cursed, like there is some force of evil overtaking us, a force that seems stronger than God's word. When I begin to feel that way, I remember Galatians 3:13: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us, that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles (all peoples of the earth) through Jesus Christ, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit."

Sometimes I read Deuteronomy 28 as a reminder of what I have been set free from in Christ. The long list in

Deuteronomy 28 describes in detail the "curse of the law". I observe there one thing: the curse clearly involves every area of our lives -- spirit, mind, emotions, health, family, work, finances, etc. When we don't rely on Christ for everything, we are under this curse (see Gal. 3:10), and it could hit any area of our lives.

I also search the Scriptures for the promises of blessing. (There are thousands of them) God's desire to bless is also spoken of in Deuteronomy 28, and the blessing also seems to clearly touch all areas of life. (Read it.) Throughout the Old Testament God expresses His promise to bless and prosper the righteous, and in the New Testament God's promised blessing expands far beyond our present lives. It says "we are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ" (Eph. 1:3) 1 Cor. 2:21.22 says, "All things are yours...and you are Christ's and Christ is God's." If we added up all of them, we'd have to agree with the little song that says, "We're blessed, we're blessed, we're blessed! We don't deserve it, but yet we are blessed!"

Actually, by the time I get through the Bible's list of promised blessings to those who love God, I realize that we live far below God's promises. Reviewing His promised blessings renews my faith, and my perseverance returns. I have learned at least three things in this search: 1) God's promised blessings carry conditions which we must fulfill -- generally that includes loving, believing, and obeying Him, and loving others. 2) Blessings do not come without trials. 3) God's way of giving blessings is through a life sown to the Spirit rather than the flesh -- on a daily basis.

The Word says "Don't grow weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest." I have come to believe that the greatest blessings for us are the spiritual ones -- salvation, eternal life. Eternity is a lot longer than seventy years on the earth! Beyond this, the greatest blessing is to see the salvation of others. With this in view, it has also become clearer to me in the Word of God that salvation is a big "package" that God had in mind -- a package that contains salvation in all areas of human life, for this life and for the one to come. Just as the curse of the law hit all areas of life resulting in poverty, sickness and death, the covenant of blessing in Christ is meant to hit every area of our lives with redemption from the curse of the law. In other words, like it was said of Abraham in Genesis 24:1: "...and the Lord had blessed him in every way." God's blessings touched everything in Abraham's life. But that was only the beginning of the blessing. The completion was that Abraham would BE a blessing! (Gen. 12:2.3). And that blessing would finally extend to all peoples of the world.

So then, we must take the limits off of what we expect God will do in our lives. As it has been said, "The future is as bright as the promises of God".

The blessing doesn't hit us suddenly, all at once -- like

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winning a lottery. No, all the grandeur of the blessing is put into His process of seedtime and harvest. The seed for the blessing is sown in the little steps of faith and obedience. The seed of His blessing is planted in our daily walk in the Spirit. Do you see the blessing on the day that you take a step of faith and obedience? Maybe. More likely, however, the blessing will come like a harvest ripened over time, and ready at the "proper time".

In the meantime, if we can't see the blessing, are we blessed? I have known one of our city pastors over many years. Without exception, whenever I see him and ask him the standard American greeting, "How are you?", he ALWAYS replies "I am blessed." I was sometimes tempted to think, "Doesn't this man ever have any problems or defeats?" Ah, but I knew he had learned the secret of living in Christ, and had learned to speak the truth. "Blessed".

God says we are blessed and called to be a blessing. And He wants us to learn to sow our lives in expectation of that blessing. We need to reach for it, pray for it, believe for it, preach it, proclaim it, expect it, fight for it, and lay hold of it. We need to sow our lives to the Spirit, with the Biblical expectation that we will be blessed in every way, that we will be a blessing, and that this blessing is strong enough to get to people in the ends of the earth! (Can God bless you enough to carry a blessing to a neighbor or to a nation!!)

The cross and the blood and name of Jesus Christ have not lost their power. Jesus died a cursed death on the cross; he endured the thorns of the cursed ground in his head. He was bruised, wounded, stripped, whipped, stabbed, spit at, rejected, accused, abused, mocked, tormented, nailed, and hung to die as a piece of cursed human flesh. It was all for us. He became a curse for us.

Jesus became a curse on behalf of our lives, our children, our bodies and souls, our finances, our churches, our cities, and all peoples, tribes and nations. He opened the way for the overwhelming blessing of the Father. His blessing for our souls means laying hold of a holy, happy life; His blessing for our bodies means laying hold of divine health. His blessing for our family means laying hold of a home full of faith, hope and love and the salvation of all our loved ones. His blessing in our finances means laying hold of deliverance from debt and poverty, prospering in order to bless others. Jesus became a curse for us so that His blessing would flow into us, through us, around us, and out to the ends of the earth.

The Lord said to me "*Continue.*" We say to you, "*Continue.*" Continue to sow seeds that please the Holy Spirit, and to continue to expect a harvest of blessing in your life and fruitfulness in being a blessing to others. At the proper time we will reap a harvest, if we do not give up.

***We are "continuing"...***

We are continuing our current humanitarian aid project of collecting medical supplies. Because of government control issues, and probable theft, we have been asked by pastor Gregori in Krivoy Rog to not send containers for the time being. The next container will go to one of several needy destinations in other nations; please pray for guidance in this.

A plan is in motion for us to return to Krivoy Rog in about two months; one of the joys will be participating in the

celebration of the completion of the new church building.

Please pray for the political situation in Ukraine. You may have followed in recent news the passing of a very restrictive religion law in Russia, which removes almost all the freedoms that have been in practice since the demise of the Soviet Union. Pastor Gregori told us that Ukraine (which hopefully you know is a separate nation from Russia) is considering a similar law now.

This law is a very serious matter for all the new churches and ministries that have begun in the last 15 years, and so please pray for the new Russian churches, as well as for the Ukrainian government. Perhaps this law could be prevented from taking effect in Ukraine. We sense the Ukrainian church has a missionary call to be a blessing in other nations. God wants her to be strengthened to carry out that task, and Satan's agenda or timing must not be the determining force there. We know God can use all circumstances for His glory, but please pray for religious freedom in Ukraine.

We are using some of our time between mission trips to work in small group settings, and are planning to start an "Experiencing God" Bible study for married couples on Sunday evenings, beginning October 19. Please pray that the Lord gives us hungry couples who really want to give their lives to God's best purposes. Jackie already has been leading this same Bible study with more than one group of women. We are looking forward to doing this together.

The fall quarter of the school of prayer has begun, with thirty-some enrolled, two classes of hungry and teachable people. Pray that each of them will live a life of prayer.

We are also following the leading of the Lord to keep serving the ministry of united prayer in the Twin Cities. There is rising concern for a prayer center in the city, and property is even being looked at for this purpose. Please pray that we will know what our part should be in this large vision of seeing hundreds of churches uniting in ongoing intercessory prayer. The expectation that this long held dream will actually take place in the Twin Cities makes my heart leap for joy!

We are in a financial "battle" for our personal needs. Though we have seen many financial miracles in outreach to the nations, and have also seen God's hand in "keeping us alive" through personal financial setbacks, we are left with a large personal deficit, and this has been a great trial to us. It has been a major reason we have had to seek the Lord again and again to find out if we are on the right track. For this reason, the simple word "*Continue*" carries much weight in our spirits, for it means, as best as we can understand, that we are to keep pursuing our purpose of mobilizing intercession and resulting mission outreaches, and to stay in the faith position for our financial needs. Jesus and His friends are our salary.

We want to thank you who have been able to support us, and we ask you again to agree with us for the Lord's provision for us. We believe he will bring us through this difficult time, and give us a testimony of His faithfulness.

So then, "*Continue.*" Continue to pray, trust and obey. Continue to seek Him and do what He shows you to do. At the proper time, we will all reap a harvest of blessing in our lives and in others, if we don't give up!

With love, ***John and Jackie***

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*Remember: for tax purposes, write checks to Prayer International, with note attached "for the Matthews"*

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