

On The Frontier

“For the glory of God and the furtherance of the Gospel”

What A Difference A Day Makes

by Linus A. Mathis III

One day in the life of any man or woman can bring about monumental change. A singular event can forever alter your course in life. Such events are often unexpected and sudden. Take, for instance, an auto accident. We don't plan them yet they happen. They are brief, violent and can forever change the people involved. Loss of loved ones and debilitating physical injuries painfully intrude upon us and cause us to live out our lives differently than we had planned. These things happen every day. Which is why we should savor every blessed minute, for our lives can be changed in an instant.

Ecclesiastes 9:10

Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do *it* with thy might; for *there is* no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.

That's great advice! Sometimes we get to thinking that we're invincible. But, God has a wonderful way of putting things back into perspective for us.

James 4:14

Whereas ye know not what *shall be* on the morrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

The word vapour comes from the Latin word for steam. Vapour is a diffused matter which floats in the

air and impairs its transparency. Like fog or smoke. Our lives are like smoke. We may puff up but even the most gentle "breeze" can cause us to dissipate. Life is fragile and temporal. Even the smallest of circumstances can scatter our plans and transform our existence. None of us are exempt from the frailty of life. The potential for a life changing experience lies around every corner.

I Peter 1:24, 25, 23

For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:

Aren't you glad that's not the last verse in the Bible?

Verse 25:

But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

Praise God for His magnificent Word!

Verse 23:

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

Our God is wonderful! Praise Him for His mercy and His grace!!! When you confess Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead you are saved, born again of His seed.

Notice how the word seed is used in

the phrase containing the word corruptible but not in the phrase with the word incorruptible. God did this deliberately to emphasize the incorruptibility of His seed in you. That's the new birth! It is a life changing experience, the effects of which last throughout eternity. Thank God that not every circumstance has negative impact! Surely the greatest and most satisfying experiences are those which center around God and His Son.

The following passage contains the record of a man who walked into circumstances beyond his control. One wonders how such an episode must have revised his life.

Luke 23:13-46

And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people,

Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined *him* before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him:

No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him.

I will therefore chastise him, and release *him*.

(For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.)

And they cried out all at once,

saying, Away with this *man*, and release unto us Barabbas:

(Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.)

Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them.

But they cried, saying, Crucify *him*, crucify *him*.

And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let *him* go.

And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed.

And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required.

And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will.

And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear *it* after Jesus.

What must have been going through Simon's mind? He was coming from the country. He may have been visiting another village for business or pleasure. Or he could simply have been coming out of a field, perhaps on a work break. Maybe he just traversed a local field on his way home? Whatever the case, carrying

the Lord's implement of death wasn't in his plans. He was from Cyrene, the capitol of Libya in North Africa. His home was the center of a civilized area on the coast some 11 miles south of the Mediterranean Sea and many miles from Jerusalem. Yet, that day in Jerusalem, hundreds of miles from Cyrene, Simon's life was interrupted.

Verses 27-31

And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him.

But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.

For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed *are* the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck.

Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.

For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?

Imagine the bedlam that day! How the Adversary must have contaminated the minds of the people present. You can be sure as this situation progressed all that could be done to exacerbate the melee was effected.

Verses 32-46

And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death.

And when they were come to the

place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided *him*, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.

And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar,

And saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself.

And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.

But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?

And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.

And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou

be with me in paradise.

And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.

And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.

And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.

Simon of Cyrene was drawn into the center of man's darkest day. That day they crucified and killed the Lord Jesus Christ. How that must have jolted him! There's no way that he could have been prepared for such a phenomenon. Never before or since has such a thing occurred. Yet, that day Simon found himself right in the middle of it all. Do you think this may have had a permanent effect on him? Of course it did. The Word tells us something else about this man, he was a father.

Mark 15:21,22

And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross.

And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull.

His sons are even named. In fact, the names Alexander and Rufus come up again in Scripture. The following verse is set in the context of a great riot that took place in Ephesus. Demetrius, a local silversmith, was angry at the Apostle Paul for preaching the Gospel. It seems

Demetrius earned his living by crafting idols. Consequently, he incited the other smiths to the place that the entire city was filled with confusion. Some of the believers decided to intercede as Paul was the focus of this mob anger. An individual named Alexander was there that day.

Acts 19:33

And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defence unto the people.

Was this man the son of Simon? Most scholars contend that he was. If so, Paul knew his brother and his mother.

Romans 16:13

Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.

If these two are the sons of Simon of Cyrene, we can expect that Paul knew him as well. I am hard pressed to not see this man Simon greatly changed by what happened that momentous day. I like to think this led him to a total surrender to God. Maybe it did and maybe it didn't. But, one thing is for sure, you are never the same after you meet the Lord Jesus. When his path crosses yours, extraordinary things happen. He can come into your life when your least expect it. That's when the fireworks really begin.

There was a man named Stephen. A wonderful man totally dedicated to God. A man filled with the spirit of God. A man of faith. He stood for God and His Word in the face of terror without reservation.

Acts 6:8-14; 57-59a

And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.

Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called *the synagogue* of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.

And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.

Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and *against* God.

And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon *him*, and caught him, and brought *him* to the council,

And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law:

For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.

In your leisure read this entire account. You will find the greatest overview of Old Testament history ever delivered in the words Stephen spoke that day. Sadly, his words did not cause those disputing with him to repent. Rather, they stoned him to death. What I would like you to notice at this juncture is the mind-set of Saul (later known as Paul the Apostle).

Verses 57-59a

Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,

And cast *him* out of the city, and stoned *him*: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

And they stoned Stephen, ...

Acts 8:1-3

And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.

And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed *them* to prison.

Not only was Saul bitterly opposed to Christianity, it was for him a vendetta. He thought he was doing God a service and in the name of God did horrible things to God's people. He pursued after them with unsurpassed viciousness. Years later he's found describing his former behavior to King Agrippa:

Acts 26:9-11

I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the

saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against *them*.

And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled *them* to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted *them* even unto strange cities.

What Paul (Saul) didn't know when he assayed to go to Damascus was that his path was to be intersected by the Lord himself.

Acts 9:1-22

And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: *it is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord *said* unto

him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought *him* into Damascus.

And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I *am here*, Lord.

And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for *one* called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,

And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting *his* hand on him, that he might receive his sight.

Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:

And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the

children of Israel:

For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, *even* Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

But all that heard *him* were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?

But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

Talk about a life changing experience! Its amazing how one day in a man's life can completely redirect the balance of his existence. Yet, this is the way of it. What a difference a day makes! This man

went from breathing out threatenings of slaughter to being a chosen vessel. He went from persecuting the Church of God to being known as the great Apostle Paul. His transformation was breathtaking. This is the man who received more revelation than any other in history. He is the one who recorded for us; Romans, I & II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon and Hebrews. The bulk of the New Testament. All this from a man who was previously a murderer of Christians. One encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ changed it all. So it is for anyone that crosses paths with the Lord Jesus Christ. It was certainly that way for me! I'm not the same person I was before I met Christ. Are you?

Consider Peter and the others. All changed dramatically as a result of having been with the Lord. Many of them had the wonderful honor of being with him on numerous occasions. Others, like Simon, are only recorded as having been around him once. Do you remember the singular event that changed your life? I'm sure you do. Perhaps it's the only occasion of its type you do recall. Nevertheless, every rendezvous with Christ provides us a wondrous opportunity for change. But don't fret if you can only remember one. We all get at least two!

I Thessalonians 4:14-17

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.

What a difference a day makes!

Sue's News

July 4, 2000 marks the fifth anniversary of our arrival in Alaska. A lot has transpired in those years. This August we will celebrate the third anniversary of the opening of the Teaching Center. It has been a good three years. We have seen many new faces who have come to hear the greatness of God's Word. Linus continues to hold forth the Word every Sunday morning at 11 a.m. We have recently rented another suite upstairs from the Teaching Center where Stephanie Grimes, Nicole Meier, Lydia and I take care of the children who come with their parents. It has proven to be a blessing as their parents can now sit and enjoy the teaching without distraction.

On the home front, we are kept pretty busy with the grounds (we have an acre and a half of land) and the three Alaskan Malamutes that we own. I grow flowers in our front garden and have even planted a vegetable garden out back that supplies us with delicious home-grown veggies. I've learned to "put up" jams, smoke fish and jar veggies for storage. Who would have thought a city girl like me would ever learn to do such things?

Lydia is about to enter ninth grade. Our little girl isn't so little anymore. She has grown into quite the young lady. She babysits for one of the believer's sons and does a great job of it. She is on the high school cheerleading squad (try-outs were in May) and is looking forward to that experience. She was a varsity cheerleader last year at the middle school and enjoyed it very much. She continues to do well in school and has made many good friends. She talks about going back to New York with one of the teens from here next summer to attend a teen camp. Both Linus and I think it would be great but the flight is a long one and much can happen to two teenaged girls on their first solo flight. So it's something we need to think and pray hard about.

Since our move here to Alaska we've had a few visitors. Most recently, Olga Cordero, originally from Queens who now resides in Florida, was here for a week. We had a good time fellowshiping with her and reminiscing over good times in the city. We were very blessed to have her and to show her a little of the beautiful state we live in.

Well, that's all for now. I will continue to keep you all updated on life in Alaska. I pray for you all everyday and thank God for your stand on His Word and your faithfulness.

In His love,
Sue