

PROPHECY — Not Perfect, Just Forgiven

By Jim Golden — Chapter Eleven

The bumper sticker read, "**Christians are not perfect, just forgiven!**" It was as if God was trying to get my attention. He was trying to lay a foundation in my life that could survive the storms of deceit and the winds of doctrine and bring me into an unbreakable relationship of total dependency on him. My mother used to say, "You should give credit where credit is due." Now my Heavenly Father was simply adding his Amen! New Years' resolutions never worked for me, before I was a Christian. I don't know what made me think that just because I was a Christian I could make them work for me now.

I think that my new found faith was being tested, not by me, but by God. It wasn't like he needed to see if it was real, but he knew I needed to see if it was. Some of my old "bros" had started coming around, telling me how slick a move I had put on everyone with the "born-again" scam I had run. I was starting to wonder if what they were saying was true. Yet deep down inside I knew I had been changed, even though many Christians might not have been convinced by the demonstration of my life.

After the phone conversation I had with Scott, I noticed that my heart began to slowly change again. I am not sure if it was my heart that was changing or if some type of spiritual "clutch" was being adjusted or rebuilt by the Spirit of God inside me. The engine in your car can be turning at 5000 rpms but if your clutch is blown or out of adjustment, your car won't go anywhere. The frustration I shared with Scott was over hating my sin and not being able to stop sinning. Whatever God was doing, it was causing my heart (engine) to transfer power to my mind (clutch) and drive my life (car) in the direction he and I really wanted to go.

Every good mechanic always test drives a car he has repaired in order to fine tune and test his repair work to be certain he has corrected the problem. In a sense, God is the same way. He will perfect that which concerns each one of us. It seemed that he wanted to make sure I knew who salvation belonged to. He had started a "good work" of salvation in me, and he didn't want me messing it up. A constant reminder of my inability to save myself was all the help God wanted or needed from me.

Things had been going fairly well. I had begun to attend a big teaching meeting, in a local high school, called T.A.G. It was taught by two young men named Larry and C.J.. Things were exciting and the meetings were growing by leaps and bounds. Their practical method of applying scriptural truths, mixed with humorous anecdotes and meaningful contemporary illustrations soon gained them a large following. They were the "talk of the town." Pastors began to entrust their youth to these men's tutelage every Tuesday night. Soon they outgrew the Maryland meeting places available to them and Pastor "Mac" opened up his 2000 person capacity church building to them for the Tuesday night meeting. It was located in the N.W. section of Washington, D.C., and because it was more accessible it wasn't long before near capacity crowds began to gather weekly.

I was in regular attendance and even ministered in the "healing room" with a young Korean man named Ché. From time to time I ministered to those desiring to receive the "baptism" of the Holy Spirit as well. I had become very proud of my spiritual prowess and stability. It was, however, just about time for God to take me on a road test.

Let no man say when he is tempted he is tempted by God...but he is rather drawn away

by his own lust and enticed. God isn't the tempter. He is the controller of our lust, when and if we will acknowledge that we are just like any other man without his protecting and enabling fruit of self-control.

It seemed that overnight I had this incredible desire to find my old friend Frank. I had made new friends but most of the relationships were more tutorial in nature. I was either teacher or student and there was very little "friendship" as I understood it.

"Hey, man, long time no see. How are things going?" Frank seemed surprised to see me again and while I suspected God had a much deeper plan than He was willing to let me in on, I could see in Frank's eyes the need to be with an old friend. "When did you get that new car bro?" Frank questioned. "About a month ago, want to take a ride?" "Sure, man, I need to go out to Olney. Have you got enough time?" Frank asked. "No problem, hop in."

As we drove out Georgia Avenue, he told me how the gang wars had affected his life. He had his beautiful "show" scooter (motorcycle) stolen and two members of a rival gang, at gunpoint, made him sign the title over to them. They threatened to kill him and rape and beat his old lady if he called the police. We both knew they were not making idle threats and anyway, he would never see his scooter again. Frank B. had finally had his fill of the wild life for awhile. As we drove along talking, I shared some of my frustrations as well. Neither of us was offering advise to the other, we were simply sharing each other's pain. The next thing I knew he had a joint (marijuana) out and we were getting high.

This didn't just happen "overnight", in all truthfulness. I had recently been entertaining thoughts about getting high. Even though I had thought of myself as being spiritually mature and stable because of my involvement with T.A.G. and my living in a household with Ché, the joy of God's salvation had slowly started disappearing again.

As we drove down the road I suddenly felt like someone who just got caught cheating on his wife. In that instant I knew how much my sin was hurting God. It wasn't the act of smoking pot that hurt him, it was my trying to find fulfillment in something other than him. Suddenly, it hit home. Christianity wasn't a religious philosophy. It was a marriage union between God and man. I was no longer to seek my gratification or fulfillment from any source but him.

The next pass of the joint found me telling Frank no, thank you, and letting him know that I felt like I was cheating on my beautiful wife (Jesus) with some "old hag" (the joint). It just wasn't worth it. "Jim, I don't know what's going on with you, man. One minute you're smokin' dope and enjoying the buzz just like old times. The next minute you're spouting all this sanctimonious Christian crap. Man, I think Christians ought to admit that they're just a bunch of hypocrites!" "No, Frank, that's not it. Christians aren't perfect, just forgiven!"