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June 01  
MAN'S LOSTNESS  
Bill Griffin  
1996

God has told us for centuries that the fundamental problem with man is his heart. There is something twisted, almost demonic, within the heart of man. God calls this problem 'sin'. There are two definitions found for sin. The first one has the concept of "missing the mark". Can you picture an archer with his bow and arrow trying to hit a bulls-eye but missing it? The second is "one who deliberately steps aside in violation of something he knows to be right."

It began in the Garden of Eden with man enjoying all the benefits of a loving God. In expressing his freedom though, he rejected the authority of God. He chose to become 'like God'. In effect, man became a sinner.

The first chapter of Romans gives us a good look at man's fall. Paul reminds us that until we understand the heart of man, we can never understand justification by faith.

In our present state we are not sinners because we transgress; we are transgressors because we are already sinners. This is so not merely in the violation of law but in the disposition of the heart. In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ made this clear: Lust is adultery even if it never passes beyond the look of

desire. Hateful anger is murder even if we do not spill blood or take a life. Materialism is a form of lust of the eyes even if one is not rich. All these are true because the seat of sin is in the heart and the will, not just in the action.

Even our pride manipulates our sin. While we may not violate all of the commandments, we are generally proud of the ones we keep, and therefore, have no sympathy for those who violate areas where we ourselves are virtuous. The drunkard will often boast of his charity; the immoral man is thankful he is not a liar; the gossip flatters himself that he is not a thief. No wonder the Bible says:

*Jer 17:9...The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*

Man is not just unethical, he is lost and dead. If man is only lost in guilt, what I have told you is bad news. But man is lost in sin, and our great privilege is to tell him that we have a Savior. The biggest difference between Christ and ethical and moral teachers who have been deified by man is that those moralists came to make bad people good; Jesus came to make dead people alive.

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June 02  
MARRED VESSELS  
Bill Griffin  
1996

Have you ever wondered why God chose you to carry His treasure? Containers made of clay. Clay, that's right. We were created from the dust of the earth and scientists have proven that the make-up of our bodies is the same as ... 'dirt'. He did not choose pewter, silver, or exquisite crystal vessels to be admired. He did not intend to set us on a shelf away from involvement.

God chose lopsided vessels.

Jeremiah saw the potter reshape a marred vessel into a useful one (Jer. 18:1-4). When our sins act against His purpose, God seeks to create a new vessel. However, He is not a tyrant forcing us to conform to His molding. Repeated resistance to His molding makes the clay less pliable. He also does not break us to pieces and throw us away. He does reshape and remold, removing only pieces of clay that will not conform.

Think about the area outside the potter's window. Probably covered with broken pottery. The cracked pieces of clay are fragments of vessels that might have been.

Marred by sin, we have no glory. Only when God's presence fills us, will our vessels radiate with His power.

Complaining about the size, shape, or use of your vessel are an affront to God.

*Rom 9:20-21...But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'" Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?*

God does not mold inferior vessels. You are unique.

We should all agree with writer Minnie Sanders as she states:

I KNOW THERE IS WORK FOR EVERYONE TO DO,  
AND USUALLY WE LEAVE IT FOR ONLY A FEW,  
BUT NOW I HEAR, I HEAR YOUR CALL!  
IN YOUR SERVICE LORD, I'LL GIVE MY ALL.  
SO MOLD ME, LORD. RESHAPE MY LIFE.  
WHEN I'M IN CONTROL, I CREATE STRIFE.  
NOW, I'M READY TO DO WHATEVER I CAN.  
YES, MOLD ME LORD, ACCORDING TO YOUR PLAN.

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June 03  
NONE LIKE THEE  
Bill Griffin  
1996

Have you ever been to a 'carnival' or 'fair' and witnessed the 'shell game'? The hawkers would all be nimble fingered in moving the shells around. Gullible spectators paid their money to try to guess which shell hid the illusive pea. They were almost always wrong. The hand was quicker than the eye, and the people who attempted to play that game usually lost what they had wagered.

With much more serious consequences, some of us wager our lives on the shells we believe contain the treasure. We pay the price that is demanded in the naive hope that this time we have

outguessed the one who tempts us into the game. We may not do anything really dishonest or immoral. We may simply shuttle from one idol to another, trading away our youth's golden dreams for tarnished things and eventually finding the thrones at which we have been worshiping are empty.

One throne stands waiting. No guessing games. The Lord is able. He will give us a new beginning. No shell hides the shining hope that He so lovingly extends. With God there is no slight of hand. He waits to give us life both abundant and eternal.

There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none  
beside thee:

neither is there any rock like our God. 1 Samuel  
2:2

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June 04  
NON WORRY DAYS  
Bill Griffin  
1996

*Sufficient unto the day is the evil  
thereof...Matthew 6:34*

Have you ever been transferred or moved  
to a strange city where neither you nor your mate  
knows anyone? To leave behind wonderful friends,  
cozy homes, jobs loved. Even your furniture may  
look strange in the uncomfortable surroundings.  
Depression may be just around the corner.

We need to learn that there are THREE  
days in the week about which we are never to  
worry.

One is yesterday. Yesterday with its  
cares and worries, its pains and aches, its  
mistakes and failures has passed forever beyond  
our recall. It was ours; now it is God's.

The second is tomorrow. Tomorrow with all  
its possible blunders, its burdens, its dangers,  
and promises, is as far removed from us as its

dead sister yesterday. Tomorrow is also God's,  
because it is still in His keeping.

There is left for us one day in the week.  
TODAY! Anyone can carry the burdens or resist the  
temptations of one day. It is only when we add  
the burdens of those two eternities, yesterday  
and tomorrow, that we break under the pressure of  
daily living. It isn't the experiences of today  
that bring frustration. It is the remorse for  
what happened yesterday, and the fear of what  
tomorrow might bring. These are God's days. Let's  
leave them to Him.

We should remember that each day we live  
in the Lord's name He will not give us more than  
we can handle.

TODAY we need to give Him thanks for His  
blessed assurance.

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June 05  
PERSEVERING  
Bill Griffin  
12-25-95

Have you ever watched a Daddy teach a child to  
ride a bicycle? I think of this today since it is  
Christmas morning. He does not force the child.  
He can not pedal the bike for them. He can not  
ride it for them. What he knows about riding, he  
can only tell them.

He deals with his children as free spirits.  
They must be free to stumble and fall. The father  
can not prevent all of the scrapes and abrasions.  
The father leaves them free, but guards them with  
all the love and power within his ability. He  
stands near in case of an emergency, but he still  
must allow them to develop their own maturity and  
decisions. At every fall, he is there to  
encourage the little one to dust off the dirt,  
climb back on and go again.

I think of the old saying that once you learn  
to ride a bicycle, you never forget how. [Maybe  
harder for the old legs to pump the pedals, but  
not forgotten.] To learn to ride requires  
perseverance. Not just a saying one but a doing  
one. The experience is one that no one can take.

Our salvation is like learning to ride. It  
can not be lost. It is not based on my feelings

but on Christ's redemptive work. It also does not  
depend on my own ability to "hold out". It is  
based on the fact that Christ gave it to me and  
it is guaranteed by the Father.

*John 10:27-29....[27] My sheep hear my  
voice, and I know them, and they follow me: [28]  
And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall  
never perish, neither shall any man pluck them  
out of my hand. [29] My Father, which gave them  
to me, is greater than all; and no man is able to  
pluck them out of my Father's hand.*

Living the Christian life is the same  
way. God stands near His children to assist them  
when they stumble and fall. He waits patiently  
for us to grow to maturity. God's seed remains in  
us, but He stays in the background, keeping watch  
over His own born-again children and helping them  
to persevere. That is what could make one such as  
Paul state:

*"Who shall separate us from the love of  
Christ?"... [Romans 8:38]*

His answer was that no one nor anything  
could sever the believer from the Father's love  
revealed in His Son.

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June 06  
PRAISE GOD'S NAME  
Bill Griffin  
1996

I grew up on a dirt farm in North Georgia -  
Six acres of rocks, stumps, and hard work.  
Farming is a life that is harder than most folks  
realize. The work is from dawn to dark, exposed  
to the cold of winter and the heat of summer.  
Each family member had to learn to share the work  
load early in life. As the oldest male in the  
family at age 10, I had to learn first. Hard work  
and wit was needed to outwit crop diseases,  
insects, and fickle weather.

There came a time though when I could do  
no more. I had to step back and let God take  
over. God sends the sunshine and rain. God tells  
the seed when to spring forth with a new shoot.  
God gives the increase. Finally, comes the  
harvest; and we had to concentrate our energies

on gathering and preserving what God had  
provided.

*Joel 2:26 ... And ye shall eat in plenty,  
and be satisfied, and praise the name of  
the LORD your God, that hath dealt  
wondrously with you: and my people shall  
never be ashamed.*

Joel was probably speaking to people who  
lived close to the soil, with his imagery of  
pastures and cattle, fruit trees and wheat, soil  
and rain. Had Joel lived in our day, he might  
have referred to computers, telephones, and  
electronic copiers to remind us to praise God in  
all our work, no matter what we do. Praise God  
today for allowing you to be His co-worker.

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June 07

RISKING  
Bill Griffin  
1996

*Two seeds lay side by side in the fertile spring soil.*

*The first seed said, "I want to grow! I want to send my roots deep into the soil beneath me, and thrust my sprouts through the earth's crust above me... I want to unfurl my tender buds like banners to announce the arrival of spring ... I want to feel the warmth of the sun on my face and the blessing of the morning dew on my petals!"*

*And so it grew.*

*The second seed said, "I am afraid. If I send my roots into the ground below, I don't know what I will encounter in the dark. If I push my way through the hard soil above me I may damage my delicate sprouts ... what if I let my buds open and a snail tries to eat them? And if I were to open my blossoms, a small child may pull me from the ground. No, it is much better for me to wait until it is safe."*

*And so it waited.*

*A yard hen scratching around in the early spring ground for food found the waiting seed and promptly ate it.*

**MORAL OF THE STORY**

Those of us who refuse to risk and grow get swallowed up by life. [ Story by Patty Hansen]

Are you like the first or second seed? Do you forget the Light that is shining to guide your footsteps? Has the darkness gripped you and robbed you of all your peace and joy?

Are you afraid to share the Christ you have in your heart? Are you willing to risk hurt feelings to tell others of the hope that is within you? Think of the greater risk if you don't!

*Ezek 33:8-9... [8] When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you will surely die,' and you do not speak out to dissuade him from his ways, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. [9] But if you do warn the wicked man to turn from his ways and he does not do so, he will die for his sin, but you will have saved yourself.*

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June 08  
FATHER'S DAY  
Author: unknown

- I took them to school but not to church.
  - I taught them to drink but not of the living water.
  - I enrolled them in Little League but not Sunday school.
  - I showed them how to fish but not be fishers of men.
  - I made the Lord's Day a holiday, rather than a holy day.
  - I provided money for them, much of which belonged to the Lord and should have been returned to Him.
  - I proved to them that I thought that man could live by bread alone, rather than by every word which proceeds out of the mouth of God.
  - I taught them the Church was full of hypocrites and made the greater hypocrite of them and me.
  - I gave them a color television but provided no Bible.
  - I handed them the keys to the car but did not give unto them the keys of the kingdom of God;.
  - I taught them how to make a living but failed to bring them to Christ who alone can make a life.
  - I introduced them to Hank Aaron, Roger Stauback and Pete Maravich but never once did I introduce them to Jesus.
- God, I pray that other fathers will profit from my mistakes.

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June 09  
SLAVES OF CHRIST  
Bill Griffin  
1996

*Romans 6:16 . . . Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?*

When I first started with Ma Bell, I was an installer. Nothing struck fear into my heart quicker than to be crawling under a house and stick my head into a cobweb. I just knew there was a BIG - BIG spider on its way to get me and carry me off to a corner. The flailing about of the arms and the spitting was a quick ruse to make him think I was bigger than he was. Visions of the movie, *The Fly*, would crowd into my mind.

When I was a child a large spider built a web below the eaves of our house. It was the

largest spider I had ever seen. Once I saw a fly become entangled in the web. The fly struggled bravely to escape and managed to free all but one leg. It beat its wings, it tugged at the web but could not get free. The spider hurried across the web and pounced upon the fly.

Sin is like that! We can free ourselves bravely from most sins, but if we are held by only one persistent temptation, we will be a slave to sin. The Scripture says that the wages of sin are death. We need to radically change our allegiance, become the slaves of Christ, totally committed to Him. He frees us from the old web of sin, and we find joy in serving Him.

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June 10  
THE BEST LAID PLANS

I know you have all heard the expression: "The best laid plans of mice and men, often go astray." Let me share one with you.

The plans had been made - the route surveyed. All we needed now was to implement. Our task was to place a new fiber cable across I-485 in Charlotte by attaching it to an existing fiber cable. No problem! We had the cable attached to the last pole before I-485 and slack pulled off the reel and ready to go.

The Highway Patrol cars arrived and blocked traffic in both directions. We grabbed a rope on one side and hurried across to the other to hook it to the lashing machine. The rope was attached to a winch truck which we were going to use to pull the machine across. We had a bucket of bolts tied on to the machine for weight to hold it down on the strand so it would spin and work correctly. And away we gooooo!

We had just started over the first set of lanes when the machine started skipping. STOP!!!! Now we are in a predicament. We try to pull the lasher back to the pole about 60 feet away. As it comes backward, the wire begins to bunch up under the machine. Now, we can not go back, nor can we go forward. We barely had the lasher back to the edge of the Interstate so we had to release the traffic. Visualize if you will; 35 feet in the

air, a lasher hung on the cable with one rope hanging to the ground. No way to go.

We surveyed the situation and decided our only chance was to try to get our bucket truck to it to take it down. We had to unload the reel of fiber cable on the side of the road and get down onto the interstate. We pulled up under the machine, set up the vehicle, and stretched it out. We had the tallest man in the bucket, stretched out, and he could just reach the machine. We did get it down, took it back to the pole and had to start over. We were thankful the Highway Patrol did not desert us. We abandoned the bucket of bolts and just put one of our biggest technicians on the end of a rope holding the lasher down. We also abandoned the winch truck and proceeded to pull the machine by hand. Two pulling outward, one pulling downward, one keeping the cable in front of the lasher, myself throwing the cable over the side of the bridge to keep the slack in front of the machine and not tangled up. Success at last.

When we as Christians try to make our own plans, they too, have a way of going astray. We need to constantly be reminded that God should be the one to give us directions.

*Prov 3:6 -- In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*

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June 11  
THUMPING MELONS  
Bill Griffin  
1996

Have you ever noticed people buying melons at a market or grocery store? They will hold a small melon up to their ears and thump on it. Larger melons they just roll about and thump. Makes you wonder what they expect to hear.

*An old man was asked one day about it.*

*"Son", he said, "I've been doing this for 40 years. All I know is that if you just pick it up and put it in your cart, everybody looks at you like you're crazy."*

The thumping is the way most folks try to determine if the melon is ripe. I am glad God does not use a thumping system to determine if I am ripe [or mature]. He does not have to thump

me to know me. The Bible tells me He knew me before I started growing. Before I became part of the vine, He knew me. Look at the words of the Psalmist:

*Ps 139:14-16...[14] I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. [15] My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. [16] Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.*

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June 12  
TRUE RELIGION  
Bill Griffin  
1996

Jesus never intended that religion do the damage to people that it has. It is horrible how many religious leaders have persecuted and even had people tortured for their beliefs. Even God respects people's freedom, and faith is a gift. People must believe freely. The function of religious leaders is to set an example, to draw people to God by their own deep faith and by the beauty of their personal lives, not intimidate people into extreme observance. That is not religion. That mocks true religion.

True religion comes from the heart. It is a deep relationship with God, and should bring peace and joy and love to people, not fear and guilt and meanness. And worship has meaning only when it is free. God is not honored by worship that is forced under threat of sin or penalty. Nor is God honored by subservient obedience to religious laws without love present. God is pleased only by the free expression of the soul that truly loves him. Anything less is counterfeit and serves only the short-term needs of religious institutions.

Customs, practices, and traditions can become a serious obstacle to real growth in the love of God. If people take religious leaders too seriously, they become rigid in their thinking and afraid to think for themselves, and must always refer decisions to the clergy. Even as adults they will still cling to the religious practices of their childhood, and when even ceremonies and mere customs change they panic, because they have been lead to believe these things were their faith. With that kind of mentality all growth stops, because growth means change and holiness means an ever-deepening understanding of God and what He expects of each one of us. If a person is not open to the inspirations of the Spirit, because it goes beyond what clergy allows him, then even the Holy Spirit cannot work in him and he remains stunted. What is worse, he frustrates the work that God wants to accomplish in him. That's why the prophets of old were such great men. They had the boldness to see beyond the limitations of human religious traditions and provide guidance to God's people. They had the courage to break out

of the sterile rigidity of religious forms,  
incurring wrath and even death in many cases.  
Are you worshiping God "In Spirit and in  
Truth?", or are you letting traditions and

customs stand between you and a personal  
relationship?

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June 13  
WHO WILL BE JESUS  
Bill Griffin  
1996

We forget so often that we are to represent  
Christ here on earth. When we see one who needs a  
touch of the Master, do we respond as Isaiah and  
say, "Here am I, send me".

Jesus is God's Word of love, spoken into  
the world. Jesus left us a new commandment that  
will identify us as His disciple.

"Love one another as I have loved  
you". . . John 13:34.

The Thirteenth Chapter of 1st Corinthians  
has been defined the love chapter and gives us  
details of how we are to act toward others. Love  
is patient and kind toward irritating people.  
Love never belittles another's good qualities or  
boasts. Love is courteous even when others are  
rude to you. Love is angry at sin and never at  
personal slights. Love does not hold a grudge  
against those that hurt you. It never gossips.  
Where is the risk in loving others? The risk is  
within ourselves. We are responsible for moving

away from repeating comfortable, religious jargon  
to being God's word of love.

When you meet one hurting due to the  
death of a loved one, do you become the voice of  
Christ to offer comfort, understanding, and maybe  
just an ear? There is no hurt like the loss of  
one who has occupied a place in our hearts. Only  
Christ can replace the hole that is now there.

How do you react to the one who has long  
sold herself for love in so many one night stands  
she can no longer count them? Now she is seeking  
love for herself. A love that will be more than a  
one night stand. A love that will be everlasting.  
Do you offer the love of Christ through yourself?

Or have we forgotten what it is like to  
be separated from the love of God? I think the  
problem with Christians sometimes is the fact  
they have forgotten what it was like to be  
'lost'. We need to pray for God to burden our  
hearts for His people and then give us a  
monstrous love to share as He leads them to us.

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June 14  
WORSHIP ONLY GOD  
Bill Griffin  
1996

Daniel 3:18 . . . "But even if He does  
not, let it be known to you, that we are not  
going to serve your gods or worship the golden  
image that you have set up."

Anyone would do all that is possible to  
escape being thrown into a raging fire. Young  
Daniel and his friends certainly did not want  
that kind of punishment. They decided, however,  
that it was better to be lowered into a roaring  
fire than to worship any god other than their  
God.

That Bible story sounds too good to be  
true. The young men were true heroes. When we

read the story we wonder if we would be that  
brave before we would bow down and worship idols.

Worshiping only God is just as hard for  
us as it was for Daniel and his friends. Our  
idols may not be golden images, but, rather, gold  
jewelry or a car or certain clothes which can  
become more important to us than God. The idols  
may have changed, but the problem is the same.

It's hard to make God our first priority  
all the time. That's the reason it is wise to  
talk to God frequently about the problem. Tell  
Him what other things have become too important  
to you.

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June 15  
GIVING BLOOD  
Bill Griffin  
1996

About every three months, the Red Cross comes  
to our office at Southstream Blvd. They set up  
their lab in the conference room to take blood  
from BellSouth volunteers. All of us realize that  
this may be the closest we come to helping to  
save a life. It is because of this fact that we  
give willingly of our life-bloods supply.

Think with me for a moment though. I only  
give a pint at a time. I am not quite ready to  
empty myself of all my blood just yet. But Christ  
did!

I might for a member of my family but I am  
not so sure about strangers.  
Christ did!

Jesus didn't just give a pint of blood, He  
gave all he had.

When I give blood, they make me lie down  
on a gurney so I will be comfortable.

They hung Christ on a tree in an upright  
position with His weight suspended  
between His hands and His feet.

They make one puncture in my arm and use one  
needle to withdraw the blood.

They made many punctures in the body of  
Christ. A whip opened His back by slicing  
to the bone. A crown of thorns opened  
many wounds in His head. They drove nails  
in His feet and hands. A sword finally  
pierced His side.

When I am finished, they make me sit at a  
table for a few minutes while they give me  
liquids and some type of crackers. They do not  
want me to pass out or become sick.

When Christ mentioned His thirst, they  
gave him vinegar soaked into a rag on the  
end of a stick.

I give one pint of blood to help one person  
somewhere. My body re-manufactures new blood to  
replace that which I gave.

Christ gave every ounce of blood in His  
body to help ALL mankind everywhere. He  
rose from the dead that His blood may  
redeem all people.

Grace - God's riches at Christ's expense.

*In Him we have redemption through His  
blood, the forgiveness of sins... [Ephesians 1:7]*

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June 16  
THE CREATOR

Bill Griffin  
1996

Some people feel they do not need to go to church, that they can "worship God" anywhere and anytime. Down at the river on their boat, at the beach, in the mountains, at a trout stream, or under a tree. I don't agree with them. I think we need the interaction with other people of God to understand and worship Him fully. The evidence of God is surely visible in His creation however.

What is the most impressive nature phenomenon you have ever seen? Think about it. How did you feel when you first saw it?

For me, it was the Atlantic Ocean when I was about nineteen years old. The first sight of that awesome body of water brought a gasp to my

lips then and still does every time I return to the beach.

But it was the thought of how it got there that affected me the most. To know that the water is allowed to come only so close and no further brings to mind the Scripture:

Which doeth great things past finding out [Job 9:10].

How did it get there? It is not a feat of man such as a dam across a river. No dam could contain this water. It is a work of God and God alone. His creation is '*fearfully and wonderfully made*'.

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June 17  
BEING DISCHARGED  
Bill Griffin  
1996

*2 Tim 2:3... Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.*

When I was being discharged from the Army in 1964 at Fort Bragg, I was given a set of processing orders. These orders prepared me for the transition from military life to civilian life. Turning in uniforms and equipment, taking physicals, getting shots updated, and talking to recruiters who tried to get me to re-enlist. I walked around for two weeks carrying a clipboard and no one ever asked what I was doing or where I was going.

I knew the exact date I was to be discharged. My orders specified it. I knew when my military service would be finished and I would be going home. I looked forward to it. I knew it would be an 'Honorable' discharge. I knew a time of homecoming was waiting.

Homecoming - When I got to be reunited with my family for a time of fellowship, laughter, and catching up.

Because I am a soldier of Christ, as Paul calls us, I have another discharge coming. There are some differences though. I do not know when my service here is going to be completed. I also have no idea of my discharge date. There will only be one type discharge accepted: 'Honorable'.

Just as I had to make preparations in the Army, I now have to make preparations. I have to place my faith and trust in the One who said He could keep me; that One who "started a good work in me and will complete it". I must live each day as if there would be no tomorrow. What would I do different today if I knew Christ was going to return tomorrow, or today?

When I am finally discharged, there will be another homecoming; only this one will be more glorious than any I have ever attended. When we are gathered together this time, I know we will never be separated again.

Have you made preparations for your discharge? Will it be 'Honorable'?

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June 18  
THE LORD -- MY ROCK  
Bill Griffin  
08/31/96

*Ps 18:2... The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.*

Edward Hale once said: Never bear more than one kind of trouble at a time. Some people bear three -- all they have had, all they have now, and all they expect to have.

As God's children, we are not immune to troubles. We do not have answers for all the tragedies that happen to us.

I lost two younger brothers to automobile wrecks [both just 16 and 17 years of age], a younger sister to pneumonia, and a younger brother to suicide many years ago. We read of a missionary's wife and children killed in Africa by a man the mission had befriended. Just a little while back, more than two hundred young

soldiers, many of them Christians, died when an explosive-filled truck was driven by a suicidal fanatic into their barracks. [In the name of Allah]

Why does God sometimes seem to answer our prayers and at others, He seems to be nowhere around when we feel we need Him most? The Bible does not promise that we will never have suffering or disappointment. Even our Lord Himself said that "*in the world you will have tribulation*". What the Bible does promise is that God will be with us in whatever experiences we encounter. He knows what is going on in our lives and loves us and that He can make something good out of even our bleakest problems.

We need to learn to place our troubles at His feet. Christ promised: "*Place your burdens upon Me, and I will give you rest*".

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June 19  
IN THE SILENCE  
Bill Griffin  
1996

God works in silence. We do not hear the sun rise. We do not hear the dew fall. We do not hear the seasons change. Sometimes we too, need to work in silence. It may be our most helpful ministry just to be a companion and let someone else talk. Sometimes we do not have to say a word to bring comfort to someone who is hurting.

We need to keep in mind that while we have noises around us, we do not feel quite so alone. It is when the silence comes that we begin to be filled with apprehension and tense thoughts. Silence threatens us because we must face ourselves but in the silence we must learn to think creatively and sensitively.

We must learn to trust God to use a silent touch or smile to help us communicate when silence is needed. Silence often speaks more eloquently than words.

Look at how Solomon puts it:  
*Eccl 4:6... Better one handful with tranquility than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind.*

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June 20  
GOD ACCEPTS ME, NOT MY GIFT  
Bill Griffin  
1996

Have you ever given someone something and the first thing they ask is "Why"? All of us have. Sometimes our response wants to be "Do I have to have a reason"? Sometimes we give just because we love.

When our boys were little, they would stop along the way and pick all kinds of wild flowers and weeds and bring them home to their mama. Daisies. Dandelions. Ragweeds. Clover. Anything with a blossom or flower. They wanted to please her and give her a reason for loving them.

We try to give God reasons for loving us. When we offer our goodness to the Lord, the bouquet becomes like those scraggly daisies and dandelions.

It is at just those times that the Lord speaks to us with the awareness that He accepts us, not what we offer. As Isaiah has so aptly put it in chapter 64:6...

*All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.*

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June 21  
THE HEAD OF THE BODY  
Bill Griffin  
1996

*Col 2:19... He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.*

Growing up on a farm had its advantages. I can finally look back and see that without some of the lessons of life it taught me, I would be quite dull. I can see how Jesus was able to look around Him and see farmers everywhere and apply simple life to a story.

One of the things I remember well is the Sunday chicken dinners. Not store bought Holly Farm type but 'mama pick out the one you want and we will start from scratch' type. We had to raise chickens to enjoy the dinners.

We did not have a chicken house so when mama picked one out, we had to chase it down and catch it. This sometimes turned into an exciting

chore. That chicken would lead us through all kinds of obstacles. Sooner or later though, the chicken could not evade all three of us and would lose its life that we might enjoy fried chicken or chicken and dumplings.

On a farm, an ax separated the chicken and its head. The chicken would then be allowed to flop around in the yard until all life was gone. The body and head of that chicken reminds me of the body and head of Christ. If the head of the church [Christ] is cut off from the body, we too, flop and flounder around before finally dying.

The chicken could not help giving up its head but the church can. We need to keep ourselves focused on just who is the head of the Church. It is not a pastor, nor a deacon, nor a teacher. I know none of them who have given their lives for the church. Only Christ.

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June 22  
STEPPING IN THE LIGHT  
Bill Griffin  
08-15-96

*How beautiful to walk in the steps of the Savior, Stepping in the light... E. E. Hewitt*

We sing this old hymn in church sometimes and it takes me back to childhood days on the farm in North Georgia. Not a flatland farm as we think of farms and large fields being plowed with tractors. Small cleared areas in the foothills. Trees cut and stumps burned and pulled. A half acre field was a big garden spot. Totally surrounded by hills and hollows and forests.

When I would have to be out at night for whatever reason, I can remember making the turn in the old dirt road and seeing the light from

the window peeking through the trees. By keeping my eyes on the light, I could make a bee-line for the house. That light was my guide.

I have another guide and light now that I am older and the farm is just a memory in the recesses of my mind. This light is the Light of the World. It is now my spiritual lantern. It is up to me to follow in the light of His example, to "walk in the steps of the Savior".

The beautiful thing about this light is that anyone can follow. All those who want to come to this light can do so freely. NO ONE WILL BE DENIED.

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June 23  
TOUGH MEDICINES  
Bill Griffin  
08/24/96

When I was growing up on the farm, getting sick was something I just didn't want to do. My mother could come up with some of the most awful smelling and tasting stuff I ever tried to get past my taste buds. UUUUGGGGG! Some of it, we even had to go out into the woods and pick or dig ourselves; 'Jerusalem Oak Seed', 'Sassafras', 'Elderberry', 'Home-made cough medicine [100% white lightening whiskey with peppermint sticks

dissolved for flavor]'. All were mama's very own home remedies. Disgusting color and texture. Horrific smell. Knowing then it was going to taste even worse than the sight or smell but mama insisting, "It's good for you -- you'll feel better". Sure, when I got over the effects of the medicine. I can not believe even now that something that seemed so bad could actually be good for me.

Looking back at these events in my life that I consider curses or punishment, I am reminded that the Apostle Paul considered such as trivial. He had endured beatings, stoning, left for dead, shipwrecked, mocked and yet he considered it all trivial. They were unimportant when compared to the outcome of following Christ and he could make this statement while in a Roman prison:

*Phil 3:7... But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.*

How do you view your problems? Are they all counted as loss in light of God's purposes or do you dread them as I did the medicines? Even when your problems have you blinded and you can not see what lies ahead, God is ready to make His grace available to you. Every trouble will become a channel for His blessings. It is when we are at our weakest as Paul was that God can whisper in our ear: "My grace is sufficient for you"!

June 24

### **THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST**

1 Peter 1:16-17 ...[16] We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. [17] For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

## **THOSE INVOLVED IN HIS COMING**

Peter here refers to the Transfiguration of Christ on the mount (Matt. 17: 1-5), which was a type of His Second coming.

Moses was a type of the "resurrection saints", and Elijah of those who shall be "translated without dying". Peter, James and John were a type of the Jewish Remnant that shall see Him when He comes, and the remaining disciples at the foot of the mount, unable to cast the demon out of the boy, of those professed followers of Jesus who shall be left behind at the Rapture, and who shall be powerless to cast the demons out of the demon-possessed people of that period.

## **TWO STAGES OF THE SECOND COMING**

He will come first into the region of our atmosphere, and the "dead in Christ" and the "living saints" shall be "caught up" to meet Him "IN THE AIR". Then after the risen and translated saints have been judged and rewarded for their works, and they, as the Church, the Bride of Christ, have been married to Him, He will come with them to the earth and land on the Mount of Olives, the place from whence He ascended. "And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south".[Zech, 14:4]. The First Stage of His Return is called "THE RAPTURE"; the Second Stage -- "THE REVELATION". The time between the two Stages is not less than seven years, and is occupied in the heavens by the "JUDGMENT OF BELIEVERS FOR WORKS", and on the earth by "THE GREAT TRIBULATION".

## **THE RAPTURE**

The Rapture is described in I Thess. 4:16-17.

16 For the Lord HIMSELF will come down from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the DEAD IN CHRIST will rise first.

17 After that, we who are still ALIVE AND ARE LEFT will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord IN THE AIR. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

From this we see that the Rapture will be twofold.

1. The Resurrection of the "DEAD IN CHRIST".
2. The Translation of the "LIVING SAINTS".

The twofold character of "THE RAPTURE" is revealed by Christ to Martha when He was about to raise her brother Lazarus. He said to her, "I am the "Resurrection and the Life", he that believeth in Me, though he were dead yet shall he LIVE (First Resurrection Saints); and whosoever LIVETH (is alive when I come back) and believeth in Me shall NEVER DIE. (John 11:25,26)

Paul also emphasizes this twofold character in his chapter on the resurrection. 1 Cor 15:51-55

51 Listen, I tell you a Mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the

last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53 For the corruptible (the dead in Christ) must put on incorruption, and the mortal (the living saints) with immortality.

54 When the corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true:

"DEATH HAS BEEN SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY."

"WHERE, O DEATH, IS YOUR VICTORY?"

WHERE, O DEATH, IS YOUR STING?"

The last two lines refer only to those who are "changed without dying", for it is only those who will not die who can shout --

"O DEATH, WHERE IS THY STING?"

O GRAVE, WHERE IS THY VICTORY?"

Bill Griffin  
09-01-96

Can you remember when you were in grammar and maybe high school? For some of us, it may be too far back to try to stretch a memory with the elastic about gone. I do remember that one of the first things to take place then was to 'call the roll'. Everyone had to answer "here" or "present" when their name was called. That was the only way your physical presence could be accepted.

In my company today when we go to conferences or mandatory meetings, they pass around a tablet or sheet and we have to write down our names, social security numbers and titles. Failure to do so means you were not present and you are most likely to get to sit through another session of the same boring presentation. I have learned to look for the sign up sheet first thing and get that part out of the way first.

No matter what type of system you may have had or still have, there is one more roll call that each of us must make. Some of us have already been 'signed up' on the sign in sheet.

Our names were entered in the Lamb's Book of Life the minute we accepted Him. At the moment of death or rapture now, we immediately go to be with Him. In His presence. As Paul said, "Absent from the body, home with the Lord".

For those who have not accepted Christ as the atonement for their sins, there will be an actual roll call. Look at what the Bible says in Revelation 20:

[12] And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life.... [15] If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Is your name on the sign in sheet or will you have to stand before the Throne of God and answer the roll call of the lost? It is not too late if you are reading this. Find the sign in sheet today and you can bypass this final roll call for those destined for hell.

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June 26  
STUBBING TOES  
Bill Griffin  
10-16-96

*Ps 91:11-12... [11] For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; [12] they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.*

One of the things I remember quite well when I was growing up in the country was "stubbing my toes". I never wore shoes in the summer and sometimes while walking along, I would manage to hit a rock or sometimes just a level spot and knock the end of a toe off. OWEEE, did it ever hurt! With the skin scrubbed off and the toe jammed, misery followed for a while.

Didn't learn me anything though. I still didn't like to wear shoes.

When I read these verses, I thought of those lazy hazy days of summer. Those times I stubbed my toes were so insignificant in my growing up [unless all that skin and meat I knocked off caused me to be so short]. I also thought of how God is still involved in the insignificant things in our lives. If he knows every sparrow and every hair on our heads, it is not beyond Him to know all of our needs. As minor as those needs are, He is still involved with each of them. He gives knowing what is best for me, not what I think is best. Thank goodness.

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June 27  
WE HAVEN'T SEEN ANYTHING YET  
Bill Griffin  
11-18-96

All of us remember how we anticipate Christmas morning. After a night of almost never going to sleep and then waking up early, we know there will be gifts to open. Some we think we knew, others we have no idea what the package contained. Oh! we have thoughts or ideas because we have asked or have been asked about what we might need or want. Maybe we even make a Christmas wish list.

By thinking and guessing and shaking, we try to picture the gifts that would be ours.

an you imagine or picture the gifts God has in store for us? We get a few ideas from our Heavenly Shopping Catalog, the Bible. No pain! No tears! Peace at the throne of God. A place built just for me. A new city. A tree of life in the midst. No sin. A street of gold [not like the following]

*Determined to 'take it with him' when he died, a very rich man prayed until finally the Lord gave in. There was one condition: he could bring only one suitcase of his wealth. The rich man decided to fill the case with gold bullion.*

*The day came when God called him home. St. Peter greeted him, but told him he couldn't bring his suitcase. "Oh, but I have an agreement with God", the man explained.*

*"That's unusual", said St. Peter. "Mind if I take a look"?*

*The man opened the suitcase to reveal the shining gold bullion.*

*St. Peter was amazed. "Why in the world would you bring pavement"?*

Everything we can possibly put on a heavenly wish list. BUT ALL THIS IS NOTHING! Look at what God promises.

*1 Corinthians 2:9... But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.*

I stand amazed when I think of this. My mind can not conceive anything more beautiful than an Easter sunrise at the beach. The beautiful blossoming of the earth in the springtime as new life bursts forth. Even the radiant colors of the leaves as they turn in the fall and God puts them to sleep for the winter. A winter snow of white that covers all that is ugly to the human eyes.

June 28  
RUNNING WITH THE IN CROWD  
Bill Griffin  
11-30-96

Most of us start developing standards and values when we are at an early stage in life. I can remember when my boys started developing their own. We would go to the mall together and because I did not dress to fit their standards, (plaid bermuda shorts, tee shirt, tennis shoes and socks), they did not want to be seen with me. It suited them if I walked on one side of the mall while they hung out on the other. If I should happen to pass them, I was not to act like I recognized them (in their long hair, flowery loud big legged bermudas, tee shirts [outside the pants], and shoes with no socks). They wanted me to stay at arm's length but close enough if they should need something [money, etc].

We are like that with God. When His standards do not meet with my ideas, I want to

keep Him at arms length. I want Him to be near if I need Him, but it is like I am embarrassed to have Him walk along beside me. I don't want people to see His standards in me. I want to be like the crowd. IN!

Jesus warned us against such actions. When I find myself being pulled by the world's ways, I remember His warnings:

*Matt 6:24... "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.*

*Matt 12:30... "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.*

WHICH CROWD ARE YOU RUNNING WITH?

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June 29  
EVERYONE'S LIGHT  
Bill Griffin  
11-30-96

When most of us hear the word 'light' we immediately think of the physical light; that which is visible and not dark.

There are many definitions of 'light' found in the dictionary and each gives insight into how we see this single word.

1. Physical illumination.
2. Mental or spiritual illumination.
3. The power of vision; perception by eyesight.
4. Point of view, aspect.
5. One who is noteworthy or eminent; a model.

Physical light is important to our well-being and so is intellectual light. This light determines how we make choices and decisions; how we establish priorities in our life.

Of all the definitions of light though, spiritual light is the most important for mankind. It determines where he will spend eternity.

As we study, we can see how Christ fulfills each of these definitions and affects our lives.

*John 9:1-5... [1] As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. [2] His disciples*

*asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" [3] "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. [4] As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. [5] While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."*

He is the visible light. The first item of creation was light. Did God need light to see? No! Since day and night are the same to Him. He created light that man might see His Glory. He illuminates the way to God. Here He heals a blind man and teaches a spiritual truth at the same time.

He is our key example. God continues to try to conform us to the image of His Son. He is our example of how to live at peace with man and with God.

He is our spiritual light. When we accept Him, we receive the fullness of Him. His peace, His rest, His truth, His guidance through His Holy Spirit. He illuminates all of our spiritual being.

Are you allowing Him to be the light of your life today?

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June 30  
A CONTRITE HEART  
Bill Griffin  
1995

I heard a parable type story the other day that I will probably remember for a long time:

A wealthy man, who was very sick, was determined not to die. When he recognized the Angel of Death near his bed, he cried out, "I'll do anything not to die. Anything!"

The angel took him to a huge place full of lighted candles of all sizes and of varying brightness. The angel explained that each candle represented a human life. Their sizes corresponded to human achievements and stations in life, while their flames showed how well the person they represented had served God.

"Notice how some of the shortest candles give the brightest light," the angel said.

"But where is my candle?" the dying man asked.

The angel pointed toward one of the tallest candles. Yet atop it guttered only a tiny flicker of flame.

"At the end of another year," the angel asked, "do you think your candle would give more light?"

The man wept. "I don't deserve another year. I've done so little."

"Your contrition has just earned you another year," the angel said. "Use it well."

*"...A broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."*

*...Psalm 51:17*

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