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Looking for Superman II (The Hidden Blessings of Kryptonite)

Acts 14:5-19

September 9, 2007

Peter Hiett

“Superman’s Song”

-by Crash Test Dummies

Tarzan wasn't a ladies' man
He'd just come along and scoop 'em up under his arm
Like that, quick as a cat in the jungle
But Clark Kent now there was a real gent
He would not be caught sittin' around in no
Junglescape, dumb as an ape doing nothing

*Superman never made any money
For saving the world from Solomon Grundy
And sometimes I despair the world will never see
Another man like him*

Hey Bob, Supe had a straight job
Even though he could have smashed through any bank
In the United States, when he had the strength, but he would not
Folks said his family were all dead
Their planet crumbled but Superman, he forced himself
To carry on, forget Krypton, and keep going

*Superman never made any money
For saving the world from Solomon Grundy
And sometimes I despair the world will never see
Another man like him*

Tarzan was king of the jungle and Lord over all the apes
But he could hardly string together four words: "I Tarzan, You Jane."
Sometimes when Supe was stopping crimes
I'll bet that he was tempted to just quit and turn his back
On man, join Tarzan in the forest
But he stayed in the city, and kept on changing clothes
In dirty old phonebooths till his work was through
And nothing to do but go on home

Superman never made any money

*For saving the world from Solomon Grundy
And sometimes I despair the world will never see
Another man like him
Sometimes I despair the world will never see
Another man like him*

I asked Justin to play that song because this is the second part of a two-part sermon entitled, “Looking for Superman.” I want you to remember where we were two weeks ago.

[Prayer] Father, we do pray that you would give us the courage to see your heart, and that having seen your heart through the power of your Spirit, we would surrender to your heart, and that you would make us in your image. Help us to preach. In Jesus’ name, amen.

This fellow was having a rather bad day. He sat drinking a Diet Coke in one of those bars at the top of a skyscraper. Another fellow saw him and tried to cheer him up. It really annoyed the grumpy one, but finally he entered into conversation. He said, “Hey, did you know that sometimes the wind between these skyscrapers is so strong that it creates updrafts so powerful you can hardly throw anything off these buildings without it being blown right back up?”

At that he climbed out on the ledge and said, “Look, I’ll show you,” and he jumped!

. . . 80th floor, 70th floor, 60th floor . . . then sure enough, he slowed until he was blown right back up onto the ledge. “Absolutely incredible!” the second guy said. “Do you think I could do that?” And the first guy said, “Well, sure.” So this fellow jumped and fell like a rock

. . . smack onto the pavement. The first guy went back to the bar and ordered another Diet Coke. The bartender turned to someone and said, “That Clark Kent really gets nasty when he drinks.”

We laugh because deep inside, we suspect Superman is like that—like us. He may be a super man, but we bet he doesn’t have a super heart. So if Superman had a really bad day, we’d discover that the kindness of Clark Kent is just an act.

So we look for Superman, dream of Superman, but hide our hearts and guard our hearts for fear that Clark Kent is just an act, that at some point “he’ll turn his back on man, join Tarzan in the forest.”

Last time, I reminded you that Scripture refers to Jesus as the Last Adam, that is, *Eschatos* Adam—the Superman. We also pointed out that Jesus is like the heart of God in the way Clark Kent is like the heart of Superman. He is Superman in weakness.

Two thousand years ago, they were looking for Superman (the Messiah), and almost everybody missed Him or perhaps resented Him, because He looked so much like Clark Kent. So . . .

Dreaming of Superman, we crucified Clark Kent.
Dreaming of Superman, we crucified His super heart.

Well, Jesus died and rose again, and He is coming back. But we suspect He'll be different this time, just like the bumper sticker says, "Jesus is coming, and boy is he pissed!" Is He? Is He ticked? Or have your sins been atoned for? I mean, we suspect that the whole "Clark Kent humble servant bit" was just an act. We suspect that "Jesus Christ and Him crucified" is not the deepest revelation of the heart of God.

Well, make no mistake, He is coming back. And we "all must stand before the judgment seat of God." But there is no deeper revelation of God than "Jesus Christ and Him crucified." There is no deeper revelation of God than "His body broken and blood shed." He is the slaughtered Lamb on the throne—the Judgment Seat of God.

"Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever."

In Revelation 6:15, everyone on earth runs and hides in caves under the earth. They're running from Jesus! But He hasn't changed. He's still the Lamb on the throne. It doesn't say He's chasing them. You see, we think His mercy is an act or that it only runs so deep, because we think He is like us.

"Clark Kent, now there was a real gent . . ." Well, gentlemen are usually just an act. And Clark Kent was an act. I mean, Superman still had all of his powers even when he appeared as Clark Kent. Can you think of a time when Superman lost all his power? Really *lost* it?

That's a fascinating question when applied to the Superman Jesus. Philippians says that He emptied Himself ("kenosis") and took the form of a slave. Yet He still walked on water and raised the dead. He healed others but then He refused to heal Himself. In the end, He cried from the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" and then He died. And it wasn't an act. He *died*.

Have you ever watched someone die? Lose all power and control? I watched my father die . . . a couple of times. When you watch someone die, you see their heart. When Jesus died, He said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." He recited Psalm 22 ("My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"), and He surrendered His Spirit. He died, and if we saw Him die, maybe we'd believe His heart—God's heart.

Where was Jesus when He screamed, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

1. Some say it was then He descended into **hell**—Hades. (Matthew records that it was then that the tombs opened.)
2. Some say He was trapped in **our sins**. Paul writes, "He [God] made him [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin." He was the sin offering, the scapegoat. He bore (perhaps even became) our sin. To sin is to cut yourself off from light and life. It's outer darkness.
3. Some say He was in our sin, some say He descended into hell, yet we also know He was in **His body**, broken and dying on a cross.

And now fasten your seatbelts. Paul tells us that *we are* that Body—the Body of Christ. And he tells us that it was when we were dead in our "trespasses and sins" that

God made us alive together with Christ. And he tells us that we are or have been crucified with Jesus on His cross.

In I Corinthians, Paul writes:

It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam [*Eschatos* Adam, Superman] became a life-giving spirit.”

Where was Superman when He cried, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

- He had descended into your hell, your sin, your body of death. Your body of sin is like kryptonite wrapped around Superman’s neck.
- He came to die in you so you would see His heart and know His love is no act.
- He came to die in you and rise in you. Paul said, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.”

You see, the body of the Superman is rising from the dead all over this world. It’s rising from the dead and coming together.

Jesus would like you to witness His death and resurrection. Where’s Superman? In His body broken, rising from the dead and coming together.

Well, if you didn’t follow all of that, it was a review of last week’s sermon, and it’s just the introduction to the second half of our two-part sermon on small groups.

Acts 14:8-13:

Now at Lystra there was a man sitting who could not use his feet. He was crippled from birth and had never walked. He listened to Paul speaking. And Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well, said in a loud voice, “Stand upright on your feet.” And he sprang up and began walking. And when the crowds saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in Lycaonian, “The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!” Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was at the entrance to the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds.

Last time I told you that the Lystrans had a legend that Zeus and Hermes had once appeared in their valley as men. For this old couple who recognized them and received them, Zeus turned their shack into a temple of gold. For all those who didn’t receive them, they flooded the valley and drowned them on the spot.

So the Lystrans worshipped a god, but the god was Zeus. And Zeus was powerful, but Zeus had a heart just like theirs. Super powers but not a super heart or super love.

I’m concerned for the American Church. We say we worship Jesus, but if you listen closely, the Jesus we worship sounds a lot like Zeus . . . or Allah . . . or Tony

Robbins. “Be good, and you get the gold. Be bad, and God floods your valley.”

It’s partly right: God will judge. But all judgment has been given to Jesus.

Remember when Jesus told of the judgment of the sheep and goats? Those who received Him and those who didn’t? We always forget that in the next verse, He reveals that He is the Passover Lamb to be taken from the sheep or the goats. He is the slaughtered Lamb standing on the throne.

Well, I’m just saying that Superman has a super heart. The Lystrans still haven’t seen it. Have you seen it? The Lystrans still haven’t seen it, so this crowd is not the Church.

Acts 14:14-19:

But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out, “Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.” Even with these words they scarcely restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them.

You know, we love crowds. Psychologists tell us it’s because we lose ourselves in crowds, like we lose ourselves in alcohol and addictions. A crowd is an idol.

Soren Kierkegaard wrote:

Instinctively man has a tactic he uses against spirit. “Let us form a crowd!” The crowd is indeed untruth. Christ was crucified because he would have nothing to do with the crowd (even though he addressed himself to all).

Well, the crowd turns Paul into an idol. He tries to tell them that he’s not Superman; just the *body* of Superman. But the crowd saw Superman’s power. Yet the crowd still hadn’t seen Superman’s heart. Sometimes to see a heart, a body has to be broken.

Even with these words they scarcely restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them. But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead.

Now, I have reason to believe that those stones were actually kryptonite. The crowd stoned Paul with their sin. Paul was dying, and it wasn’t an act.

Do you see how bizarre this is? Superman showed up, they got power, healings, and powerful sermons, but where’s Superman now? All they could see was “body broken and blood shed.”

Why would God do this? Draw a crowd with miracles and power, and then seemingly remove the power when it's needed most?

It's like in John 6. Jesus does miracles and draws this huge crowd, only to chase them away by saying, "You must eat my flesh and drink my blood." Out of that crowd, only a small group of disciples remained.

On Palm Sunday, Jesus draws a huge crowd, but by Friday they're chanting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" They all leave except for a small group of strange women who gather around His body broken and blood shed on a cross.

And so they stoned Paul, and as he lay there broken and bleeding in the dust outside the city, I bet someone said, "He healed others. Why can't he heal himself?" And I bet Paul said, something like, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And then they watched him die.

One thing was clear. The God Paul worshipped was not like Zeus, not like Allah, not like *us*.

Where's Superman now?

. . . they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. But when the disciples gathered about him . . .

"But when the disciples . . ." What disciples? They must be brand new. They're no longer part of a crowd. They're called "disciples." "But when the disciples gathered about him"—*him*—weak, perhaps dead, body broken and blood shed, outside the city.

"But when the disciples gathered around him"—the disciples. We don't know what they did. They must have been terribly confused. Maybe they prayed; maybe they screamed and sobbed; maybe they held each other. It appears that they had no workbook, they had no program, they had no building, and they had no budget. They were just two or three gathered around the Jesus they had met in Paul and now watched dying in Paul.

They must have gathered around him like a pearl is gathered around a wound in the body of an oyster (a pearl of great price)

. . . like a temple encircles a sacrifice of love.

They must have gathered around him like those strange women who gathered around the foot of the cross.

"When the disciples gathered around him"—*around him*. They were no longer the crowd; they were the Church.

So where was Superman? He was in the broken body and shed blood of the Apostle Paul. He was in His Body the Church, gathered about.

But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up . . .

"He rose up"! I mean, that does sound like somebody else, doesn't it?

Did you know that years later Paul would write to the church in Lystra? Lystra was in the province of Galatia. In Galatians 6:17, he writes, "I bear on my body the scars,

the marks of Christ.”

But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city, and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe. When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

So what’s my point? Join a small group. At Lookout, that means agreeing to three things: grace, growth, and goofing off.

1. Pray for each other.
2. Have some kind of biblical study together.
3. Goof off together; live life together.

Basically, a small group is at least two or three disciples that gather in Jesus’ name, that is, around Jesus in their midst . . . not Zeus, Allah or Tony Robbins, but Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

At Lookout, we ask everyone who calls Lookout their church to be a part of some small group somewhere (it doesn’t have to be under our auspices). If we are not joined together in small groups or networks of intimate relationships where we disciple one another, then this big thing we call Lookout Mountain Community Church—well, I suspect it’s only a crowd, a budget, a building, a program, an institution, but not the Church.

But joined together in small groups, that worship together in a big group that is just a part of one global group . . . well, I think we begin to function as a body—the Body of Christ.

A body shares strength, but even more, it shares weakness. If we gather in the name of Zeus, Allah, or Tony Robbins, everyone tries to share their strength. If we gather in the name of Jesus, we are first and foremost called to share our weakness.

Paul writes, “I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses.” James writes, “Confess your sins one to another.” My sins are my greatest weaknesses. “Confess your sins one to another.”

Do you know why I avoid community? It’s because I know I’m a sinner. If I hang around others, I’ll sin against others and hurt others. And then I’ll have to confess my sins to those others, which is to expose my weak self to others, which is to die to my power, strength, and control—myself.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote:

In the confession of concrete sins the old man dies a painful, shameful death before the eyes of a brother. Because this humiliation is so hard, we continually scheme to avoid it. Yet in the deep mental and physical pain of humiliation before a brother we experience our rescue and salvation.

When I confess, I die or at least *admit* that I'm dead. But how can a dead thing admit it's a dead thing?

Paul says we're already dead, and Jesus says, "Apart from me, you can do nothing." So if confessing sin is a good thing in the body of a dead thing, then confessing sin is something Jesus does in me and in us—His Body.

Have you ever seen someone truly confess? They die to themselves with faith in something beyond themselves. That faith is not themselves, and the something beyond is not themselves. It is the grace of God poured out in Jesus.

"When we cry, 'Abba Father,' it's His Spirit bearing witness with our spirit." So when we confess sin, His Spirit is confessing our sin. For He has descended into us—His body of sin and death. He confesses our sin, for He has made it *His* sin. All sin is a wound on the body of Christ.

So when you confess your sins to your group, you're giving them the testimony of "Jesus Christ and Him crucified." You're letting them see Jesus die in you and rise in you . . . and even rise in them as they say, "In the name of Jesus, you're forgiven."

You know, the people I trust the most are the ones I've heard confess the most, because in them I've seen Jesus the most . . . like my friend Elaine, my wife Susan, my brother Andrew in my small group. I mean, I've heard Andrew confess his lack of faith perhaps the most, which

ironically is to *see faith* in Andrew the most. It's to see Jesus in Andrew the most, rising in Andrew the most.

So in confessing sin, I testify to Jesus in me. And in confessing sin, I call on Jesus in others.

Paul wrote, "I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ would rest on me." "Boasting of His weaknesses" *is* the power of Christ resting on him, and "boasting of his weaknesses" allows the power of Christ to flow through others to him . . . like blood, like Christ's life flowing to his body.

You know, a body is dependent on shared weakness just as much or more than it is dependent on shared strength. So if you come to your group set on sharing your strength (how much scripture you've memorized, and how deep and clever you are), you'll just weaken the body of Christ. But if you come to your group and share your weaknesses and confess your sins, you'll strengthen the body of Christ.

Paul wrote, "When I'm weak, then I'm strong."

There's far more each body part *can't* do than each body part *can* do. So when you share your weakness, you invite the body to be strong. You invite the blood to flow. You invite life to begin.

My small group always seems to get best when someone lies broken and bleeding in the middle of the room, confessing weakness or sin, and everybody else gathers around. It's then that the Body gets strong and comes to life.

It was when Paul lay broken and bleeding, and the disciples gathered round, that the Church was born, that Superman rose from the dead. He didn't just rise in Paul but in each member of the body in Lystra.

That included a lady named Lois and her daughter named Eunice and her son named Timothy. The Church in Lystra was not a weak body.

One day Paul would call Timothy his “son” and write to him saying, “Timothy, you observed my persecutions and my sufferings. The aim of our charge is love.” Surrendered weakness calls forth love. And when we love, “We’re born of God and know God.”

You see, the most powerful weapon in the arsenal of Superman Jesus is not His strength but His surrendered weakness. It’s called *grace*, and nothing is stronger than God’s grace.

He said it: “When I’m lifted up on a cross I’ll draw all men to myself.” Where and how did Jesus draw you to Himself and capture your heart? Was it with miracles and wonders like Zeus, Allah or Tony Robbins? Or was it with His body broken and bleeding for you?

His body was broken on a cross. But His body is also broken in the people in this room. He calls to you from that place: “Love me here in the last and least of these your brothers.”

He has subjected us all to kryptonite in hope—hope that we would see His heart, love Him, and live.

The Superman has a super heart. So the most powerful weapon in Superman’s arsenal is weakness that exposes His heart of love.

In the movies, Superman saved millions of bodies, but as far as I remember, he only redeemed one heart. The heart he saved was Miss Teschmacher’s. She had been Lex Luthor’s girlfriend (or prostitute). She used him, and he used her. She figured everyone had a heart like Lex Luthor and hers, until she saw Superman chained to kryptonite, saw Superman lose all his powers, which only exposed his heart . . . to her.

[Movie Clip from *Superman*]

[Superman is flailing in water, chained to kryptonite.]

Superman: “Miss Teschmacher . . . Miss Teschmacher . . . please, you can’t, you can’t just stand there . . . and let innocent people, millions of innocent people, die!”

Miss Teschmacher: “Maybe.”

Superman: “Please, please help me save them!”

Miss Teschmacher: “If I help you, will you promise to save my mother first?”

Superman: “But Lois . . . and Jimmy!”

Miss Teschmacher: “But my mother comes first. If you promise me, I’ll believe you, because you always tell the truth.”

Superman: “I promise, I promise.”

[Superman begins to sink. Miss Teschmacher jumps in the water and pulls him out. Before taking the chain from around his neck, she kisses him.]

Superman: “Why did you kiss me first?”

Miss Teschmacher: “If . . . I didn’t think you’d let me later.”

Superman: “Thank you, Miss Teschmacher.”

Miss Teschmacher: “Why is it I can’t get it on with a good guy?”

I hope you can excuse Miss Teschmacher’s vernacular. She wants to be the bride of Superman. She wants to give him a kiss. And maybe that’s what Superman wants: a kiss, “proskuneo” in Greek, “to kiss the feet,” to worship.

We are never to worship people. But we worship God in His temple made of broken people.

Well, that’s my favorite scene in all the Superman movies. Now here’s the very same scene in real life:

[Move Clip #1 from *The Passion of the Christ*]

[Mary, mother of Jesus, and John approach Jesus on the cross. Mary kisses his bloody feet while crying. Then she looks up into his face.]

[Movie Clip #2 from *The Passion of the Christ*]

[Jesus’ dead body is being taken down from the cross. Mary holds Jesus’ head and rubs the blood off his face, kissing Him on the cheek.]

He took bread and broke it saying, “This is my body broken for you. Take and eat.” In the same manner after supper, having given thanks He took the cup saying, “This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood. Drink of it, all of you.”

We invite you to come gather round body broken and blood shed. Take bread, dip it in the cup, then kiss the heart of God—consume the heart of God. Look at the people gathered round, and then ask yourself: “Where’s Superman now?”

[Singing] “Superman never made any money, saving the world from Solomon Grundy, and sometimes I despair the world will never see another man like him.” I really think the time is coming when the world will see nothing but Him.

And if you’re looking for Him now and want to find Him now, this is my suggestion: Join a small group! I really mean that, both for your sake and for my sake. If we are not connected in those kind of relationships, you’ll kill me, you’ll kill Aram, you’ll kill Frances. Why? Because we cannot give you what the body of Christ can give you.

You are the Church. You don’t need me, you don’t need Justin, you don’t need

Aram. You are two or three who gather in His name, and He is there in your midst.
That's really good news!

Relevant Texts and Quotations (from bulletin)

Sometimes when Supe was
stoppin' crimes
I bet he was tempted to just quit
and turn his back on man
Join Tarzan in the forest
But he stayed in the city
And kept on changin' clothes
in dirty old phone booths
Till his work was through,
had nothin' to do
But go on home.
Superman never made any money
Saving the world from Solomon Grundy
And sometimes I despair
the world will ever
See another man like him.
~ *Crash Test Dummies*

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. . . . It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam [“*eschatos*” man, superman] became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.
~ *1 Corinthians 12:12-13; 15:44-49*

When an attempt was made by both Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to mistreat them and to stone them, they learned of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding country, and there they continued to preach the gospel. Now at Lystra there was a man sitting who could not use his feet. He was crippled from birth and had never walked. He listened to Paul speaking. And Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well, said in a loud voice, “Stand upright on your feet.” And he sprang up and began walking. And when the crowds saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in Lycaonian, “The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!” Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was at the entrance to the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds. But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out, “Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.” Even with these words they scarcely restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them. But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead.
~ *Acts 14:5-19*

Instinctively “man” has a tactic he uses against “spirit”: Let us form a crowd!
~ *Kierkegaard*

The crowd is indeed untruth. Christ was crucified because he would have nothing to do with the crowd (even though he addressed himself to all). He did not want to form a party, an interest group, a mass movement, but wanted to be what he was, the truth, which is related to the single individual. Therefore everyone who will genuinely serve the truth is by that very fact a martyr. To win a crowd is no art; for that only untruth is needed, nonsense, and a little knowledge of human passions. But no witness to the truth dares to get involved with the crowd. His work is to be involved with all people, if possible, but always individually, speaking with each and every person on the sidewalk and on the streets—in order to split apart.
~ *Kierkegaard*

But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city, and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe. When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

~ *Acts 14:20-23*

Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium.

~ *Acts 16:1-2*

You [Timothy], however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra--which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

~ *2 Timothy 3:10-13*

Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

~ *Colossians 3:9-14*

Traditional accountability may actually serve to cement a person's commitment to making life work on his terms, in his strength. If a person successfully memorizes the verses or loses the weight or stops watching questionable TV programs because of an accountability partner, might it not deliver a deadly message? I can manage my sin and struggle by being held accountable and being faithful to a few crucial disciplines. The names and faces of a dozen men come to my mind—men who exercised extraordinary discipline and commitment in such activities as memorizing chapters of scripture, arising before dawn to pray, faithfully witnessing to co-workers a certain number of times per month. The common denominator in their rigor was accountability. Some were in small groups or Bible studies. Some met with me or another man for the expressed purpose of being held accountable to one or more activity. I shudder as I think of the direction of some of their lives—marital disaster, moral failure, severe emotional chaos, relational train wrecks. I know story after story like these. The strict accountability seemed to only postpone something . . . inevitable.

~ *A counselor here at Lookout*

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.

~ *James 5:16a*

In the confession of concrete sins the old man dies a painful, shameful death before the eyes of a brother. Because this humiliation is so hard, we continually scheme to avoid it. Yet in the deep mental and physical pain of humiliation before a brother we experience our rescue and salvation.

~ *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

A first grader went on her first day to a newly integrated school at the height of the segregation storm. An anxious mother met her at the door to inquire, "How did everything go, honey?"

"Oh, Mother! You know what? A little black girl sat next to me!" In fear and trepidation, the mother expected trauma, but tried to ask calmly:

"And what happened?"

"We were both so scared that we held hands all day."

~ *James S. Hewett*

Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in

hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant? If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. . . . But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

~ 2 Corinthians 11:24-30; 12:9

There are three great humiliations of Christ: Being born as a baby, dying on a cross, His church (His present body).

~ Dorothy Sayers

And the King will answer them, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.”

~ Matthew 25:40

Human love is directed to the other person for his own sake, spiritual love loves him for Christ’s sake. Therefore, human love seeks direct contact with the other person; it loves him not as a free person but as one whom it binds to itself. It wants to gain, to capture by every means; it uses force. It desires to be irresistible, to rule.

Human love has little regard for truth. It makes the truth relative, since nothing, not even the truth, must come between it and the beloved person. Human love desires the other person, his company, his answering love, but it does not serve him. On the contrary, it continues to desire even when it seems to be serving. There are two marks, both of which are one and the same thing, that manifest the difference between spiritual and human love: Human love cannot tolerate the dissolution of a fellowship that has become false for the sake of genuine fellowship, and human love cannot love an enemy, that is, one who seriously and stubbornly resists it. Both spring from the same source: human love is by its very nature desire—desire for human community. . . . Human love makes itself an end in itself. It creates of itself an end, an idol which it worships, to which it must subject everything. It nurses and cultivates an ideal, it loves itself, and nothing else in the world. Spiritual love, however, comes from Jesus Christ. It serves him alone; it knows that it has no immediate access to other persons. . . . In other words, life together under the Word will remain sound and healthy only where it does not form itself into a movement, an order, a society, a *collegium pietatis*, but rather where it understands itself as being a part of the one, holy, catholic, Christian Church, where it shares actively and passively in the sufferings and struggles and promise of the whole Church. Every principle of selection and every separation connected with it that is not necessitated quite objectively by common work, local conditions, or family connections is of the greatest danger to a Christian community. When the way of intellectual or spiritual selection is taken the human element always insinuates itself and robs the fellowship of its spiritual power and effectiveness for the Church, drives it into sectarianism. The exclusion of the weak and insignificant, the seemingly useless people, from a Christian community may actually mean the exclusion of Christ; in the poor brother Christ is knocking at the door.

~ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

~ Matthew 5:3

**Looking for Superman II
(The Hidden Blessings of Kryptonite)**

Acts 14:5-19

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