ISSUE # 5 - CHRIST THE HEALER

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Category: The Main Issue

Two thousand years ago Jesus Christ paid the price for 1) your eternal life and 2) your health. Those are two of the reasons He went to the cross. You have heard, perhaps, that He was killed by the Romans. But Jesus laid down His life freely. He could have called a legion of angels to come to His rescue, but that would have defeated His objective. He came for this very purpose...the CROSS.

Why?

He did it for you. You have to see that. If someone died in order to save your life when you were an infant, wouldn't you want to know about it? Wouldn't you demand to know all the details? Like.....

who was he?..... where did he come from?..... what was his name?..... why did he do it?..... what did he save me from?

Well, someone did die for you. That is the truth. It really happened.

Why wouldn't you want to know about it? Why shouldn't you demand to know the details? Like..... who was He?..... where did He come from?..... what was His name?..... why did He do it?..... what did He save me from?s

Really, why wouldn't you want to know?

Again, He died to save you from the penalty of your sins, and He died to save you from sickness and disease and infirmity and poverty.

The price has been paid. In full. True, you may never appropriate the wonderful gifts Jesus paid for on your behalf. You may die in sickness and enter into an eternity of remorse. Nonetheless, the price has been paid, and deliverance from sin and sickness is yours for the receiving.

This fifth edition of The Main Issue is about the healing and health of your body. As you read this paper you will be amazed to discover the outstanding things God has done in 'hopeless' cases. You will see just how awesome your Creator is. And you will have a deeper insight into His love for you.

But first I want to again challenge you..... Why wouldn't you want to know about the One who laid down His life on your behalf?

Is it simply that you don't believe it? Or..... could it be you are ashamed to identify with Christ? You sense, perhaps, that you will lose the approval of friends and loved ones if you acknowledge Jesus as the One who saved you. And you're probably right.

I once heard a story of a young lady who, as an infant, was saved from fire by her mother. The child was uninjured but Mother's face was horribly disfigured, so much so that she always hid when her daughter brought friends home. One day Mother was taken by surprise. The daughter walked through the door unexpectedly from college with a few friends when Mother was halfway up the stairs. For a few seconds Mother found herself staring at her daughter's friends' horrified faces and then she darted out of sight. "Who was that?!" the friends asked. "Oh, that's just the maid," the embarrassed daughter replied.

I invite you to read about that disfigured Person who hung by three nails on a Roman cross two thousand years ago on your behalf.

There is a solution for that sickness or infirmity in your body. There is a connection between your healing and the cross of Christ. Scattered throughout this paper are a number of mini-lessons for your perusal. These lessons are digestible, helpful and inspiring, knowledge to the uninformed, hope to the hopeless.

LESSON # 1

IT IS GOD'S WILL TO HEAL YOU

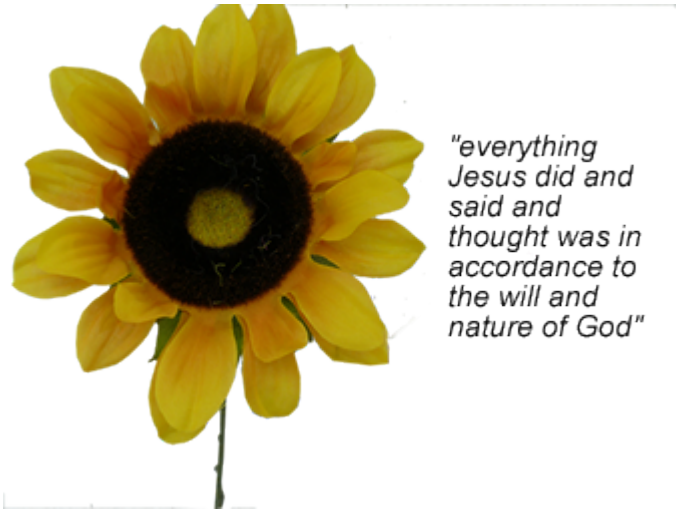
A non-Christian from a Hindu nation once said something like this: "I cannot understand God. He is so superior to me. The only way I could possibly comprehend God is if He became a man as I am. Only then could I understand God."

This man did not know that that is exactly what happened. God became a man through the body and obedience of a young virgin who was told, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you." They named the baby "Jesus." Jesus was called "Immanuel" which means "God with us." We can better understand the nature and will of God by studying the life and teachings of Jesus because.....

JESUS CHRIST WAS THE EXACT EXPRESSION OF THE WILL OF GOD. In otherwords, everything Jesus did and said and thought was in accordance to the will and nature of God. It is very important to realize this because we can then safely determine the will of God by studing the life of Christ. Is it God's will to heal you? Simply investigate the life of Christ (the expression of the will of God) to determine for yourself.

Jesus did not, could not, live contrary to God, for He was Himself God (God the Son). He said, "I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." To know if it is God's will to heal, simply examine His life.

Scripture reveals that great multitudes followed after Jesus in the hopes of being healed. He healed many on many occasions. A study into the life of Christ on earth proves beyond a doubt that it is the will of God to heal.



LESSON # 2

CHRIST HEALED ALL WHO CAME TO HIM

It is important to know that Christ healed EVERY person that came to Him. If Scripture recorded even one instance whereby Jesus refused to heal someone, many would thereby conclude that God does not want to heal ME. Yes, He wants to heal him and her, this person and that, but I don't think He really wants to heal ME. To dispel such a notion, let us investigate the Bible.

Luke 4:40: Now when the sun was setting, all those who had anyone sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and He laid His hands on EVERY ONE of them and healed them.
Matthew 8:16: He (Jesus)..... healed ALL who were sick.

Matthew 4:24: His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him ALL sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; AND HE HEALED THEM.

Nowhere in Scripture can it be found where Jesus refused to heal. REMEMBER THAT JESUS' LIFE ON EARTH WAS THE EXPRESSION OF THE WILL OF GOD. He came not to do His own will but the will of the Father who sent Him. It is safe to assume God will not refuse anyone who comes to Him for healing.

"He (Jesus) .... healed ALL who were sick."

LESSON # 3

JESUS HAS POWER OVER ALL SICKNESS AND INFIRMITIES

You do not have to be concerned about God's ability to heal your particular problem(s).

Matthew 15:30,31: Great multitudes came to Him, having with them those that were LAME, BLIND, MUTE, MAIMED and many others; and they laid them down at Jesus' feet, and He healed them. So the multitude marveled when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel.

Mark 3:10: He healed many, so that as many as had afflictions pressed about Him to touch Him. Jesus healed lepers and raised the dead. No matter how serious your ailment, it is not too much for Jesus. Jesus said, "With God all things are possible."

LESSON # 4

GOD DOESN'T CHANGE

It is important to know God doesn't change. Why? Because if He were to change once in a while you might conclude that possibly God NO LONGER wants to heal. You could think, Okay, Jesus is the exact expression of the will of God, and Jesus healed all who came to Him, but how do I know God hasn't changed over the centuries. After all, I have changed over the years, and so have the people I know. Maybe God has changed also and no longer wants to heal.

We have our moods, up today, down tomorrow. We mature, change opinions, and are affected by those around us. But does God change?

One who is perfect has no need to change, does not change, cannot change. God declares (Malachi 3:6), "For I am the Lord, I DO NOT CHANGE." James wrote (James 1:17), "the Father of lights, with whom is NO VARIATION." The Bible declares that Jesus is "THE SAME YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND FOREVER."

Since it was God's will to heal two thousand years ago, and since God does not change, we can safely conclude it is the will of God to heal today. That should be an abundance of encouragement for those afflicted.

JOHN G. LAKE

John Lake is one of the heroes of the faith. A hero of the faith is one who has done exploits, not by his own ability and strength, but by faith in God. Lake is an example of what can be accomplished by anyone having childlike trust in God.

Born in St. Mary, Ontario in 1870, having died in Spokane, Washington in 1935, much of his 65 year life was an adventure in God, touching many thousands of people, the last being the population of Spokane where he and his healing team witnessed over 100,000 confirmed healings.
Lake was moved by passion. He wrote, “The desire to proclaim the message of Christ and to demonstrate His power to save and bless grew in my soul, until my life was swayed by this overwhelming passion.” He longed to point wandering and lost humanity to Christ.

In 1907 John left his successful insurance business, determined to live by faith that Christ would somehow meet his needs, and since he and his wife had seven children, indeed much faith was required. He proclaimed to God, “I am through forever with everything in life but the proclamation and demonstration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.” From that moment he never mentioned a need to anyone; he was wholly dependent upon God to support him.

A few years later we find John Lake, his wife and children on a ship to Africa where God had called

him. Jesus provided the fare through an anonymous donor but now the family was about to land on a strange continent and they hadn't a penny. Before landing, it was required to show the immigration officer they possessed $125. Just when the officer came aboard at Cape Town, South Africa, a fellow passenger tapped Lake on the shoulder and gave him $200.

But where will they live? How will they get to their destination, Johannesburg? Once ashore, a woman approached Lake and said, "God told me to meet this boat, and there would be upon it an American missionary with a family of nine, consisting of two adults and seven children, and that I was to give them a home." That is often how Lake lived, by day-to-day miracles.

After affecting South Africa mightily with many tangible demonstrations of the power of God, he returned to the States in 1912 and founded his famous Healing Rooms in Spokane. Here he taught people to be cured by the power of God. Thousands came from all over the States and other countries to be healed. He boldly placed an ad in the local paper offering a reward to any person who would sit for a time under his ministry and fail to receive a healing. No reward was ever claimed.

How did it all start, this potent ministry that turned so many to Christ the healer? Lake tells the story in his book, Adventures in God:

No one can understand the tremendous hold the revelation of Jesus as a present-day Healer took on my life, and what it meant to me, unless they first understand my environment.

I was one of 16 children. Our parents were strong, vigorous, healthy people. My mother died at the age of 75, and my father still lives at the time of this writing and is 77.

Before my knowledge and experience of the Lord as our Healer, we buried eight members of the family. A strange train of sickness, resulting in death, had followed the family. For 32 years some member of our family was an invalid. During this long period, our home was never without the shadow of sickness.

As I think back over my boyhood and young manhood, there comes to mind remembrances like a nightmare: sickness, doctors, nurses, hospitals, hearses, funerals, graveyards, and tombstones; a sorrowing household; a brokenhearted mother and grief-stricken father, struggling to forget the sorrows of the past in order to assist the living members of the family who needed their love and care.

When Christ was revealed to us as our Healer, my brother – who had been an invalid for 22 years, upon whom Father had spent a fortune for unavailing medical assistance – was dying. He bled incessantly from his kidneys and was kept alive through the assimilation of blood-creating foods which produced blood almost as fast as it flowed from his person. I have never known any man to suffer so extremely and for so long as he did.

A sister, 33 years of age, was then dying with five cancers in her left breast. Before being turned away to die, she had been operated on five times at a large hospital in Detroit, Michigan, by a

German surgeon of repute. After the operations, four other “heads” developed, making five cancers in all.

Another sister lay dying of an issue of blood. Day by day, her life blood flowed away until she was in the very throes of death.

In my own life and circumstances, there were similar conditions. I had married and established my own home; but very soon after our marriage, the same train of conditions that had followed my fathers family seemed to appear in mine. My wife became an invalid from heart disease and tuberculosis. She would lose her heart action and lapse into unconsciousness. Sometimes I would find her lying unconscious on the floor or in her bed, having been suddenly stricken.

Stronger and stronger stimulants became necessary to revive her heart until we were using nitroglycerine tablets in a final, heroic effort to stimulate the action of her heart.

After these heart swells, she would remain in a semi-paralytic state for weeks (the result of over-stimulation, the physicians said).

But suddenly, in the midst of the deepest darkness, when baffled physicians stood back and acknowledged their inability to help, when the cloud of darkness and death was again over the family – the message of one godly minister, great enough and true enough to God to proclaim the whole truth of God, brought the light of God to our souls!

We took our dying brother to a Healing Home in Chicago, where prayer was offered for him with the laying on of hands. He received an instant healing and arose from his deathbed a well man. He walked four miles, returned home, and took a partnership in our father’s business.

Great joy and marvelous hope sprang up in our hearts! A real manifestation of the healing power of God was before us. We quickly arranged to take our sister who suffered from cancers, to the same Healing Home. We had to take her there on a stretcher. As we carried her into the healing meeting she was speaking within her soul, Others may be healed because they are so good, but I fear healing is not for me. It seemed more than her soul could grasp.

But after listening from her cot to the preaching and teaching of the Word of God on healing through Jesus Christ, hope sprang up in her soul. She was prayed for and hands were laid on her. As the prayer of faith rose to God, the power of God descended upon her, thrilling her being. Her pain instantly vanished! The swelling disappeared gradually. The large core cancer turned black and in a few days fell out. The smaller ones disappeared. The mutilated breast began to re-grow, and it became a perfect breast again.

How our hearts thrilled! Words alone cannot tell this story! A new faith sprang up within us. If God could heal our dying brother and our dying sister, causing cancers to disappear, He could heal anything or anybody!

Then our sister with the issue of blood began to look to God for her healing. She and her husband were devout Christians; and although they prayed, their prayers seemed unanswered for a time. Then one night I received a telephone call and was told that if I wished to see her in this life, I must come to her bedside at once.

Upon arriving, I found that death was already upon her. She had passed in unconsciousness. Her body was cold. No pulse was discernable. Our parents knelt, weeping, beside her bed, and her husband knelt at the foot of the bed in sorrow. Her baby lay in his crib.

A great cry to God, such as had never before come from my soul, went up to God. She must not die! I would not have it! Had not Christ died for her? Had not God's healing power been manifested for the others, and should she not likewise be healed?

No words of mine can convey to another soul the cry that was in my heart and flame of hatred for death and sickness that the Spirit of God had stirred within me. The very wrath of God seemed to possess my soul!

After telephoning and telegraphing some believing friends for assistance in prayer, we called on God. I rebuked the power of death in the name of Jesus Christ. In less than an hour, we rejoiced to see the evidence of returning life. My sister was thoroughly healed! Five days later she came to my father's home and joined the family for Christmas dinner.

My wife, who had been slowly dying for years, suffering untold agonies, was the last of the four to receive God's healing touch. But, oh, before God's power came upon her, I realized as never before the character of consecration God was asking, and what a Christian should give to God.

Day by day, death silently stole over her. Then the final hours came. A brother minister who was present walked over and stood at her bedside. Then returning to me with tears in his eyes, he said, "Be reconciled to let your wife die."

I thought of my babies. I thought of her whom I loved as my own soul, and a flame burned in my heart. I felt as if God had been insulted by such a suggestion! Yet I had many things to learn.

In the midst of my soul-storm I returned home, picked up my Bible from the mantelpiece, and threw it on the table. If ever God caused a man's Bible to open to a message his soul needed, surely He did it then for me.

The Book opened at the 10th chapter of Acts, and my eyes fell on the 38th verse which read, God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the DEVIL; for God was with him.

Like a flash from the blue, these words pierced my heart: Oppressed of the devil! So, God was not the author of sickness! And the people whom Jesus healed had not been made sick by God!

Hastily taking a reference to another portion of the Word, I read the words of Jesus in Luke 13:16:

Ought not this woman..... whom SATAN HATH BOUND, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond? Once again Jesus attributed sickness to the devil.

What a faith sprang up in my heart! What a flame of knowledge concerning the Word of God and the ministry of Jesus went over my soul! I saw as never before why Jesus healed the sick. He was doing the will of His Father; and in doing His Father's will, He was destroying the works of the devil. (Heb. 2:14)

I said in my soul, This work of the devil – this destruction of my wife's life – in the name of Jesus Christ shall cease, for Christ died and Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses.
We decided on 9:30 a.m. as the time when prayer would be offered for my wife's recovery. Again, I telephoned and telegraphed friends to join me in prayer.

At 9:30 I knelt at her deathbed and called on the living God. The power of God came upon her, thrilling her from head to feet. Her paralysis left, her heart became normal, her cough ceased, her breathing became regular, and her temperature became normal. The power of God was flowing through her, seemingly as blood flows through veins.

As l prayed, I heard a sound from her lips – not the sound of weakness as before, but a strong clear voice. She cried out. "Praise God. I am healed!" With that, she caught hold of the bed clothing, threw it back, and in a moment was standing on the floor.

What a day! Will I ever forget it? The power of God thrilled our souls, and the joy of God possessed our hearts because of her recovery.

The news spread throughout the city, the state, and the nation. Newspapers discussed it and our home became a center of inquiry. People traveled great distances to see and talk with her. She was flooded with letters.

A new light dawned in our souls. The church had diligently taught us that the days of miracles had passed; and believing this, eight members of the family had been permitted to die. But now, with the light of truth flashing in our hearts, we saw that as a lie, no doubt invented by the devil and diligently heralded as truth by the church, thus robbing mankind of its rightful inheritance through the blood of Jesus.

People came to our home, saying, "Since God has healed you, surely He will heal us. Pray for us." We were forced into it. God answered, and many were healed.

Many years have passed since then, but no day has gone by in which God has not answered prayer. I have devoted my life, day and night, to this ministry, and people have been healed – not by ones and twos, nor by hundreds, or even by thousands, but by tens of thousands.

In due time, God called me to South Africa where I witnessed a manifestation of the healing power of God such as the world perhaps has not seen since the days of the apostles.

Christian men were baptized in the Holy Ghost, went forth in the mighty power of God, proclaiming the name of Jesus and laying hands on the sick. And the sick were healed! Sinners, witnessing these evidences of the power of God, cried out in gladness and gave themselves to the service of God.

Like it was in the days of Jesus: There was great joy in that city – and that nation. (Acts 8:8)
Finally, God brought me to Spokane, where we have ministered to hundreds of sick persons each week. The city is filled with the praises of God because of the blessed manifestations of God's power everywhere. People have come from as far as 5,000 miles away for healing. Some have cabled from halfway 'round the world, asking for prayer, and God has graciously answered.

Ministers and churches throughout the land have seen that, although the church has taught that the days of miracles only belonged to the times of the apostles, that statement was a falsehood. They have seen that the healing power of God is as available to the honest soul today as it was in the days of Christ on the earth. The gifts and callings of God are without repentance, and Jesus is the Healer still.

"John Lake is one of the heroes of the faith."

"he and his healing team witnessed over 100,000 confirmed healings"

"She must not die! I would not have it!"

LESSON # 5

JESUS HAS NEVER STOPPED HEALING PEOPLE

Jesus never stopped healing people after He ascended to heaven where He rules the universe at the right hand of His Father. But He does it DIFFERENTLY. Now He heals THROUGH HIS PEOPLE, those converted to Him (born-again Christians). As a matter of fact, He told His disciples they would

do even greater works than He had done IN HIS NAME.

Jesus gave Christians authority to use His name. A comparative would be a man giving another power of attorney to do his business. Power of attorney is a legal expression that means a second party has been entrusted by the first party with all the authority of the first party. The second party can now withdraw money from an account, make purchases, sell property, etc., just as if he were himself the first party.

Jesus has given Christians power of attorney to operate on His behalf. A Christian prays for an individual and, if he/she has sufficient faith, Jesus will ensure that what is prayed for will come to pass. (It is true most Christians do not operate in such a realm, but that does not nullify the fact of it.)

That Jesus heals through His disciples is attested to in Scripture. Paul healed all that were sick on the island of Melita. The fame of the apostles was so widespread that people laid their sick along the road where Peter was to walk so that his shadow would fall on them. Acts 5:16 declares, "A multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and THEY WERE ALL HEALED."

Multitudes today are healed because a Christian has prayed for them.

LESSON # 6

YOU MUST KNOW IT IS GOD'S WILL TO HEAL YOU

We can only expect God to do what He wants to do. What good is it to ask God to do that which is contrary to His will and nature? But once you are convinced it is God's will to heal you, it is a big step closer to being healed. Now you have something to set your faith on.

THE ASSURANCE THAT IT IS GOD'S WILL TO HEAL YOU IS THE SEED THAT WILL EVENTUALLY BRING YOUR HEALING if that seed is amply watered and cultivated. Jesus called His word 'seed.' He explained when the seed falls into good ground, it will produce a harvest. What is good ground? Jesus taught good ground is the one who hears the word of God AND UNDERSTANDS. When you understand (know) that God's word declares it is the will of God to heal you, that understanding will eventually bring forth a good crop (the healing of your body).
Many people would tell you God does not want to heal that problem in your body. Others would say maybe He does and maybe He doesn't.

On this important matter I can only repeat what I have already stated. To know the will of God, we look to Jesus. Jesus was God in the flesh (Immanuel, God with us). He said He came to do the will of His Father (God the Father). So it comes to this: who will you believe? Will you believe the clear teaching of the Bible? Will you accept the example of Christ Himself? Or will you heed the words of

another?

There are other proofs in the Bible that healing is the will of God, some we will touch on in other lessons. But these confirmations will only benefit those who accept the Bible as true.

"To know the will of God, we look to Jesus"

LESSON # 7

IT IS MAN'S FAITH IN GOD THAT BRINGS HEALING

God, generally, does not heal except through man's faith in Him. Jesus said to a woman who was sick, "According to your faith let it be to you." He said to another, "Your faith has made you well." To a Roman centurion He declared, "As you have believed..."

"According to your faith let it be to you." These words He would say to you. IT WILL NOT BE DONE TO YOU LESS THAN YOUR FAITH. AND IT WILL NOT BE DONE TO YOU MORE THAN YOUR FAITH. But ACCORDING TO. Your faith in God moves God to work in your behalf. To what extent? "According to your faith." It takes more faith to believe for healing of cancer than for the flu. Many have faith to be healed of the flu, but not many have sufficient faith to believe for healing of cancer. What can one do who has a serious ailment?

Faith can be increased. How? By the reading of the Word, by prayer, by fasting, by a deep conversion to Christ. Faith can grow and grow until it is sufficient to bring the required healing.

LESSON # 8

FAITH FOR YOUR HEALING MAY COME FROM ANOTHER

Obviously you do not have faith for the healing of your body. If you do not trust God for salvation, you will not trust Him for anything else. But there is still hope.

The faith for the healing of your body could conceivably come from someone else, a Christian who will intercede on your behalf. (To intercede simply means to petition God on behalf of another.)

A Roman soldier asked Jesus to heal his servant and Jesus did so without even seeing the servant. That is intercession.

Perhaps it is easier to pray for the healing of a non-Christian than the healing of a Christian. Why? Because God expects the Christian to be healed by his/her own faith. It seems personal faith is necessary when men are capable of it. However, the Lord may respond to the prayer of intercession on your behalf.

Most people have faith in something. But faith in someone or something other than God is useless. It is faith IN GOD that gets the job done. Having faith in God is having faith IN WHAT HE HAS SAID. He recorded His word in Holy Scripture. We look into the Bible to see what God has to say on the subject of healing (or whatever) and that is where we place our trust.

You will not be healed except by someone's faith in the integrity of God's Word, your faith or that of another.

LESSON # 9

YOU ARE SICK BECAUSE OF SIN

The Bible says, "As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin."

When sin came, death came with it. Sin is the taxi, death is the passenger. Since sickness is simply the first stage of death, we can conclude sickness entered the world by sin. Sin is the taxi, sickness (which if not dealt with will lead to death) is the passenger.

If no one had ever sinned, no one would ever have been ill. Not so much as a headache or a pimple. The Bible declares, "the wages of sin is death." There is a connection between that sickness in your body and sin (yours or that of another.)

LESSON # 10

SOME SICKNESS ARE CAUSED BY THE DEVIL

You may not even believe there is a devil, but to take that position would force you to disclaim the Bible altogether. Why? Because the Bible speaks often of the devil. Listen to this: "that through death (the death of the cross) He (Jesus) might destroy him who had the power of death, THAT IS, THE DEVIL." (Hebr. 2:14)

A woman had a daughter who was “severely demon-possessed.” She came to Jesus and “her daughter was healed that very hour.” This girl’s sickness was caused by a demon.

Some people are channels of healing that are NOT Christians, who do not heal in the name of Jesus. How can this be? It is really simple. If the devil can afflict a person with sickness, he can also withdraw that sickness at will. The non-Christian person laying hands on another may think that the power of healing comes from within him/herself, not knowing that a demon is cooperating by withdrawing a particular sickness. Why would a demon do such a thing? The answer is.....

Deception. The enemy is the master of deception. He is drawing that person into a trap. That 'healer' begins to expound a different gospel. He and the one being healed might think, "Who needs Jesus?"

LESSON #11

YOU ARE PAYING FOR YOUR ILLNESS THE SECOND TIME

A Christian told of an experience while in the hospital from a wound during the war. He had bought a package of cigarettes and later read on the back of the package that the cigarettes had been paid for by the Red Cross and not to be resold. Now the soldier was really ticked. He was paying for something already paid for.

The price of your healing has been paid for by the Lord Jesus Christ. Your suffering is paying the price of your sickness again, the second time. It need not be.

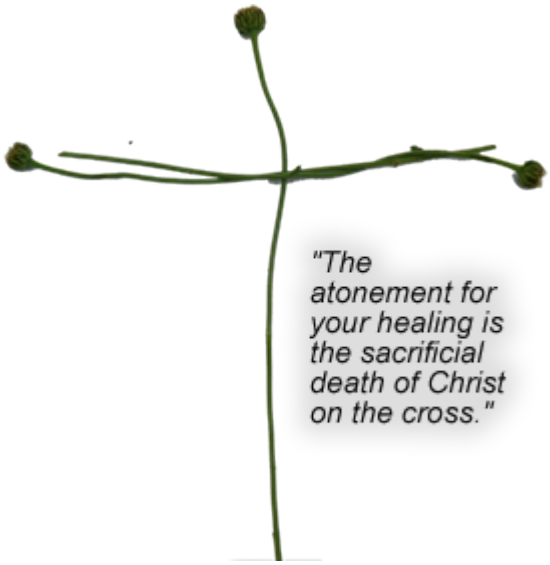
LESSON # 12

YOUR HEALING IS IN THE ATONEMENT

Atonement means reparation or payment in full. The atonement for your healing is the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross. Hundreds of years previous to the cross the prophet Isaiah wrote in the Old Testament: “Surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows..... He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and BY HIS STRIPES WE ARE HEALED.”

Now let’s jump to the New Testament, to Matthew 8:16,17: “They brought to him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, THAT IT MIGHT BE FULFILLED which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: 'He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.' ” Do you see the connection? Isaiah said that our (mankind’s) sickness have been paid for by the sacrificial crucifixion. Matthew concurs that the healing miracles of Christ were, as Isaiah has said, a result of the cross. In other words, if you took away the cross Jesus would not heal. He healed sickness and disease because the price of those sicknesses and diseases were paid in full (by the crucifixion that was soon to come).

You see, just as Christ CAN AND WILL forgive your sins because of the atonement (because the price for your sins have been paid), likewise Jesus CAN AND WILL heal your body, through your faith in Him, because of the same atonement.



LESSON # 13

HEALING IS A LEGAL RIGHT FOR EVERY CHRISTIAN

Before the American civil war, a black person was held in slavery under a tyrannical system in certain states until such time as his freedome was paid for. When payment was made he had equal access to the laws of the land. With such payment he became redeemed, free, a citizen. He now had legal rights.

Likewise a child of God has legal rights, for those rights have been bought and paid for. He can LEGALLY request, and even claim, healing. Healing is HIS.
Now a redeemed slave may still live like a slave (as often happened). He may still have a slave mentality and never claim his privileges. Or he may never have been told of his rights. However, none of these would negate the fact that those rights are his, his by the fact of the payment made on his behalf.

Many Christians are often like that. THEY STILL HAVE A SLAVE MENTALITY concerning their health. They do not realize their rights to divine healing and health. They have not learned TO APPROPRIATE WHAT HAS BEEN WON FOR THEM. Or they do not understand they have legal access to the healing power of their God.

LESSON # 14

A NON-CHRISTIAN HAS NO LEGAL RIGHT TO HEALING

Although Christ paid in full the price for your health and healing, you have no legal right to claim it. You are still in slavery to “the god of this age (satan).” You, as of yet, have not been redeemed. Not that you couldn’t be if you so chose but, because of deception, you have not entered into God’s many blessings.

You think, perhaps, your life is richer and more exciting without Christ, but in fact it is paltry and boring in comparison. Yours is a dead-end street, and it's time to make a U-turn. As stated before, the door, the only door, into God’s blessings is Jesus Christ. Until you accept Christ as Lord and Savior, you have no legal right to healing.

"You are still in slavery to 'the god of this age'".

LESSON # 15

THE ENEMY OF HEALING IS UNBELIEF

The Bible gives an account of a man who brought his child to the Lord's disciples for deliverance because he was "an epileptic and suffers severely." But the disciples couldn't do it. So the man brought his son to Jesus who "rebuked the demon, and he came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour."

The disciples asked Jesus, "Why could we not cast him out?"

And Jesus replied, "BECAUSE OF YOUR UNBELIEF."

The same happens today. Christians pray for a person to be healed and often the person is as sick as ever. Why? Jesus would answer, "Because of your unbelief."

Othe people may give a different answer. Like, "I guess God just didn't want to heal him/her for

some reason." Or, "Maybe this isn't God's time to heal."

But the problem is not God's unwillingness to heal, but rather unbelief in the Christian's heart. The enemy of healing is unbelief.

LESSON # 16

UNBELIEF CAN BE DEALT WITH

One does not have to remain in unbelief. Unbelief can be changed into faith.
You see, there is power in God's Word (the Bible). God's Word is a spiritual force. It changes people and it changes situations.

It's all a matter of diet. We have been told we are what we eat. This is also true spiritually. What we read, hear and say determines what we will be. Changing your diet changes you. Set the newspaper aside, turn off the T.V. and enter into the Word. You will see in a very short time that you are changing. Faith will rise in your heart. The Bible says, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

LESSON # 17

JESUS LONGS TO HEAL YOU

Jesus wants you healed more than you want yourself healed. Why? Because He loves you more than you love yourself.

Jesus is compassionate. Not just compassionate to others – your neighbor, relative, friend – but He is compassionate toward you. He doesn't just tolerate you – HE LOVES YOU! I mean, He REALLY loves you. The proof of that love is Calvary.

You have to know that Jesus not only died for the whole world, but He died for YOU, that you might be saved - spiritually and physically. Paul wrote to the Galatians, "the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me." Paul realized Christ not only died for the entire world, but Christ died for him PERSONALLY. You can likewise say, "The Son of God loved ME and gave Himself for ME." Because IT'S TRUE!

QUESTIONS ? ? ? ?

Questions are a neat invention. They make your thinking machine go into overdrive, stir the

imagination, compel conclusions. Sometimes questions are thorny. They can make you face reality, take a look at yourself, probe hidden sentiments.

I have some questions for you. Pointed, pertinent, challenging questions to ask yourself. And answer yourself. These questions are between you and you. I think they will help you see where you're at, confront extremely important issues, sort out your feelings and opinions, get things in proper perspective, get to know yourself.

I CHALLENGE YOU to give these questions serious consideration. AND ANSWER THEM.
Choose A, B, or C. A=Yes, B=No, C=I don't know.

It won't be easy, but you owe it to yourself. Force yourself to come to a conclusion. Do you have the courage? Do you accept my challenge?

DO I WANT TRUTH?

A. Don't be too quick to choose YES. Think about it. Have you not yet found certain truth because you didn't want it or because truth is difficult to find? Has truth avoided you all these years or have you avoided truth? Have you searched for it, craved it, demanded it? Do you REALLY want truth?

B. NO would be the most honest answer for most. Truth is, and truth can be found. A child says, "Mother, I can't find my math book," and Mother replies, "You could if you wanted it bad enough." So it is with truth. If you said, "God, I can't find truth," God could reply, "You could if you wanted it bad enough."

If you do not want truth you will never find it. And if you don't find truth you will be in trouble. Jesus said, "The truth will make you free." Only truth brings freedom.

C. Perhaps you don't know if you really want truth. If only you could know what truth is you could decide if you wanted it. Will truth help me or harm me? Will it solve my problems or add to them? Will it make me happy or sad? How much does it cost?

"I CHALLENGE YOU"

"Jesus said the truth will make you free."

DO YOU THINK THE BIBLE IS ACCURATE?

A. This question might be a problem. If you say YES you are condemning yourself. Because if you believe the Bible then why do you not obey it? The Bible states explicitly, over and over again, that you are a sinner and only Christ can cleanse you of your sins. If you agree the Bible is accurate your condemnation will be the greater. You are saying, in effect, “Yes, I believe Christ can cleanse me of my many sins, but still I reject His offer. Thanks, Jesus, but no thanks.”

On the other hand, saying YES could solve your problem. You might think, “If the Bible IS accurate and what it says about Jesus IS true, why DON’T I accept Christ?” Accepting Christ is the only wise and logical conclusion.

B. If you say NO you would, if you wanted to be true to yourself, have to answer some more questions. Like: Where do I go from here? Where is truth? What book, what man, what religion will lead me to truth? Is there hope for a better life or should I be content with what I have?

There is much evidence that the Bible is a supernatural book. Issue number two of The Main Issue, “The Bible: just another book?,” gives much evidence of its supernatural qualities. Certainly no other book compares. To check NO means you have refuted all this evidence.

C. Perhaps you think it will be safer to say, "I don’t know." But notice that the question is, “Do you THINK the Bible is accurate?” and not, “Are you CONVINCED the Bible is accurate?”

You see, even if you think there is a POSSIBILITY the Bible is accurate, you would owe it to yourself to check it out. If you thought you MIGHT have left the front door unlocked before you went to bed, would you not get up to check it? If you thought you MIGHT have left your cash and credit cards at home, would you not check your wallet before ordering a meal? If you thought the brakes of your car MIGHT be faulty, would you not have them inspected? But now we are talking about your eternal future. If you think that the Bible MIGHT be true, shouldn’t you look into it further?

QUESTIONS ? ? ?

DO I BELIEVE WHAT JESUS SAID?

(This question is, of course, only applicable to the one convinced of the accuracy of the Bible.)

A. If you check YES, you will have to ask yourself why you have not responded to His Words. Jesus claimed to be God. He claimed to have authority to forgive your sins. He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." In other words, you cannot make it to heaven without Him.

B. If you say NO, you are calling Jesus a liar.

C. So perhaps you will say I DON'T KNOW. But Jesus demands an answer. He will not let you get away with an I DON'T KNOW. If a friend invites you for a coffee, failure to respond would be considered a refusal. So it is with Jesus. Failure to respond is considered a refusal.

Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do you say I am?" He required an answer from them and He requires an answer from every person. An I DON'T KNOW will not suffice.

IF I KNEW I WAS GOING TO DIE IN ONE HOUR WOULD I ACCEPT CHRIST?

A. If you say YES, then why do you not accept Him now? You might think if you only had one hour to live you would have nothng to lose. But how do you know you have even one hour to live?

You do not know the hour, the day or even the year you will die. Many will die between the time of this writing and the time of you reading it. You have no guarantee of another tomorrow.

Death often comes unexpected. That's why people buy life insurance; they wouldn't bother if they knew they would live to be a hundred. Death has respect for no person. It attacks old and young,

strong and feeble, wise and unwise. One day it will get you.

B. If you say NO, God will not give up on you. The Bible says, "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." His mercy is unbelievable. Just because you reject Him, He will not reject you. As long as you have breath, He will continue to woo you unto Himself. But as Richard wrote in the last issue of The Main Issue, THERE IS NO REDEEMER ON THE OTHER SIDE OF DEATH.

C. If you say I DON'T KNOW it means that, although you are not convinced, you think there is at least a POSSIBILITY that Christ is who He declares to be in the Bible. Because your eternal future is in question, would it not be wise to pray about it?

"But how," you may ask, "can I pray to a God I am not sure exists?" I can only say that people have testified praying something like this..... Jesus, if You really do exist, if You are who the Bible says You are, please show me"..... and God has answered those prayers. Give it a try.

"WHAT IS TRUTH?"

Jesus is standing before Pontius Pilate. Pilate asks Jesus, "What is truth?" Pilate undoubtedly asked himself that same question before, "What is truth?" It was the wrong question. The question should have been, "WHO is truth?" Pilate didn't know that truth is a person. Imagine. Here is a man looking Truth in the eye and asking Truth, "What is truth?" I once had a similar experience.

I was searching for truth, and I mean, desperately. Something in this world had to make sense. Surely there was more to life than this. Life seemed so futile, barren. What's it all about? What's the purpose of it all? I ached to know truth.

One Sunday morning I was at mass (I used to be a catholic) with my wife and small children. It was boring as usual and my eyes wandered. I was staring at the crucifix at the front of the church behind the altar (a crucifix is an image of Jesus hanging on a cross) when the Holy Spirit came upon me. I was transfixed, staring at the image of Jesus, tears streaming down my face, and the Spirit of God spoke to me, "Don't you GET it?" And I replied, "No, I don't get it." Like Pilate, I was staring at Truth (an image of Jesus) and didn't recognize this was the truth my heart ached for. "Don't you GET it?" that voice spoke inside me again and again. My answer was the same, "No, I don't get it. I don't understand." And then I said, "Don't give up on me, God! Don't give up on me!" I was afraid God

would run out of patience, and I knew I needed Him to find truth. The experience passed, but God never gave up on me.

Shortly thereafter I was handed a tract, The Four Spiritual Laws, pointing to Christ. “THE HOLY SPIRIT TOLD ME TO GIVE THIS TO LARRY,” the person said, singling me out of the group. Wow!..... that was something I never heard before. Maybe now I will find truth.

But the tract only spoke of Jesus. This was nothing new! I heard about Jesus all of my life! I concluded that God was toying with my emotions, and I became as bitter as vinegar. I flew into a rage and called God dirty names. I wanted truth so desperately, and He was playing games with me. He was mean and spiteful and I hated Him! “And I will never repent!” I yelled at Him, and I turned my back on him. Forever.

Forever was less than a day. The Spirit of God kept saying, “Give Jesus a chance. Give Jesus a chance.” Could Jesus really be the truth I was hungering for? “Okay,” I thought. I was miserable, and anything had to be better than this.

So I committed my life to Jesus. I gave myself to Him the best I could. But that wasn’t enough. The Spirit seemed to say, “Now RECEIVE Jesus.” So I did. I received Him as my Lord and Savior, and that was the turning point of my life. That was February, 1972. I was born again that day, “born of the Spirit” just like Jesus taught.

I learned that knowing ABOUT the truth isn’t the same as KNOWING the truth. I knew ABOUT Jesus, how He was born of a virgin and went to the cross to pay for man’s sins. But I never knew Him personally. I was not His disciple. I had never RECEIVED Him.

I searched for truth because I wanted it. Searching for truth is really a search for Jesus. God says in the Bible, “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” Pilate would have found truth (Truth) if only he wanted it enough.

THAT AMAZING BIBLE!

Harold Hill writes about his involvement with NASA’s 1960’s project to send a man to the moon in his book How To Live Like a King’s Kid. Scientists had to calculate where the sun and moon, different planets, comets, asteroids, etc. would be in the upcoming years in order to plan safe flight routes. This was done by tracing the paths of certain comets, etc. back through the centuries. Hill writes, “As they ran the computer measurement back and forth over the centuries, it came to a halt. The computer stopped and put up a red flag; which meant that there was something wrong either with the information fed into the computer or with the results as compared to the standards." The computers discovered that there was a day missing somewhere in the past. Somehow, a full day just disappeared.

The scientists were baffled. How can a day just disappear? One fellow related an Old Testament story he had learned in Sunday School as a child. Thousands of years ago, Joshua was about to defeat the enemy's army but was running out of daylight. He prayed that God would extend the day and God obliged. "And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies..... So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day." (Joshua 10:13)

The poor guy got laughed at but the scientists checked it out as they had no other possible explanation. Going back thousands of years to the time of Joshua's battle, they found that there was indeed almost a full day missing. Almost. Twenty-three hours and twenty minutes to be exact. Now the Bible said, "ABOUT a whole day." Where did the other forty minutes go? The same fellow remembered another Old Testament account whereby the sun actually went backwards. It is found in 2Kings, chapter 20.

Hezekiah was about to die and he pleaded with God to extend his life. God heard his prayer and sent His prophet Isaiah to inform Hezekiah that he would be healed in three days and his life was to be extended 15 years. Hezekiah asked for a sign to confirm Isaiah's promise; he wanted God to move the shadow of the sun dial backwards ten degrees. God obliged. Ten degrees is exactly forty minutes! The scientists had accounted for their missing day.

Actually, the year, month and day of these two Biblical events was calculated long before the computer was invented. AYale university professor, Dr. C.A. Trotten completed his brilliant mathematical work in 1890 and entered them in his book, Joshua's Longest Day. His calculations were based on counting lunations and moon eclipses. Like the NASA experimenters, Trotten's calculations proves again that:

The Bible is indeed an incredible book.

"How can a day just disappear?"

"So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven"

AZUSA

It happened in a small, dingy warehouse on Azusa Street in Los Angeles between the years 1906 and 1909. A revival seldom witnessed since the time of Christ's walk on earth settled on the U.S. western coast. Azusa Street is its recognized nucleus.

A revival is a move of God upon the lives of people in a manner far above the norm. Revivals have occured intermittently throughout the centuries. Some could be termed minor, others major. The Azusa Street revival was major.

For three and a half years services were held three times a day, morning, afternoon and night. The Spirit of God came and many found a new life through Jesus Christ. The world would never again be the same. Scores and scores of millions of people, from that day to this, have secured their eternal salvation through the lingering repercussions of that great revival.

From Azusa the flame was fanned to other parts of the world. Today in our own city a number of Pentecostal assemblies, fruit of the Azusa Revival, testify to the impact it has made on Canada, and most nations have been likewise spiritually affected.

God demonstrated His love and power in various tangible ways. Few men of our day have tasted the power of God in such a dynamic way as those Azusa Street saints. When the power of God fell in their meetings they wanted nothing more than to bathe in the presence of the living God, to linger in that grand and glorious presence which words cannot describe. Such power! Such might! Such glory! Such joy! Such peace!

Azusa was birthed in prayer. God raised up certain prayer warriors to do spiritual battle, a prerequisite to any move of the Lord, great or small. One such warrior was Frank Bartleman, a true soldier of God. One of Bartleman's compatriots wrote of him, "The pressure of the Divine presence is sometimes so great upon him that food has no attraction for him, and sometimes he possibly errs on the line of abstinence. Hence his appearance frequently indicates weakness, if not emaciation. God has committed to him, in large degree, the ministry of intercession."

Bartleman describes in his writings his urgency to pray: "By this time the spirit of intercession had so possessed me that I prayed almost day and night. I fasted much also, until my wife almost despaired of my life at times. The sorrow of the Lord had gripped me. I was in the Garden with Him. The 'travail of His soul' had fallen in a measure on me."

"I determined not to eat or sleep until victory came, so I fasted and prayed all one day. That night the Lord broke forth in power..... I could not preach for the presence of God. The glory played on my face like a hot sun bath. God spoke that night. The altar was full until after midnight with earnest seekers."

The great San Francisco earthquake helped turn men's attention toward God. Sinners were struck with such conviction that they had to either flee or repent. At times it seemed there was a definite

invisible line whereby if one crossed over he immediately entered into the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Many penetrated the kingdom of God under this conviction of sin and received the new life promised by Jesus to any who would come to Him.

Azusa was considered the center of the revival, but the Spirit of God manifested His power in different locations. Bartleman writes of meetings at Eighth and Maple: "The Spirit was mightily manifest from the very first meeting. He was given complete control. The atmosphere was terrible for sinners and backsliders. One had to get right in order to remain..... For some days we could do little but lay before the Lord in prayer..... The atmosphere was almost too sacred and holy to attempt to minister in..... God came so wonderfully near us the very atmosphere of heaven seemed to surround us. Such a divine 'height of glory" was upon us we could only lie on our faces. For a long time we could hardly remain seated even. All would be on their faces on the floor, sometimes during the whole service. I was seldom able to keep from lying full length on the floor on my face..... Every night the power of God was powerfully with us. It was glorious. The Lord seemed almost visible, He was so real."

When God moved, as always, He came "with healing in his wings." Bent bodies were straightened. Cancerous tumors disappeared. Bartleman writes, "The walls were soon covered with crutches and canes of those who were miraculously healed." The mighty works of the early church were witnessed again as the Lord Jesus Christ manifested His power and love through obedient servants.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit were manifested in a way strange to the Christian community of that time, but not unlike what the early church experienced soon after the death and resurrection of Christ. Let's go back to that time:

Christ gave His disciples a commission that, in fact, they were unable to carry out. The commission was to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to their generation. But how could they? Had not their Master just been crucified by the powerful Roman government? And was it not their own religious leaders who instigated the crucifixion? The disciples were just plain scared. They had no heart or courage to preach Christ.

But Jesus had promised He Himself would baptize them in the "fire and power" of the Holy Spirit, thus endowing them with the power to do the job, to preach the gospel to the world. The Holy Spirit descended upon 120 saints in an upper room somewhere in Jerusalem on the feast day of Pentecost. These disciples began to speak in other languages, languages they were not familiar with. They received other gifts as well, as did other believers who were likewise baptized in the Holy Spirit. And most important, they received power to give witness to Christ.

Immediately they preached to crowds with great boldness. Imprisonments and beatings didn't slow them. Conviction of sin was heavy upon those hearing the gospel. Healings from all sorts of sickness and infirmities were daily happenings. Multitudes were saved from the penalty of their sins, rescued from satan's realm.

But eventually the church, through carelessness or disobedience or deception or whatever, came to lose the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit and entered into what is referred to as the Dark Ages. For the most part, these unique gifts of the Holy Spirit remained lost through the centuries. Until Azusa.

At Azusa, saints again were baptized in the Holy Spirit, just like early church saints, and received the mysterious gift of tongues and other gifts that lay dormant, for the most part, over the centuries. (These saints often met opposition, even hostility, from the Christian community.) Most important came the enthusiasm and power of the Holy Spirit to preach Christ and to take authority over sickness and disease.

Sadly, much of Azusa street fervor and power has dissipated, just as the early church had come to lose its fervor and power. Even so, however, it still remains that most of the work accomplished for the kingdom of God is done so by saints who have been baptized, by Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit.

The wonder of the Azusa Street Revival is perhaps best described by Bartleman himself: “I would rather live six months at that time – than fifty years of ordinary life.”

"One such warrior was Frank Bartleman"

"The Spirit of God came and many found a new life through Jesus Christ."

"The spirit of intercession had so possessed me that I prayed almost day and night

"The Holy spirit descended upon 120 saints in an upper room somewhere in Jerusalem"

"For some days we could do little but lay before the Lord in prayer"

YOU AND US

You do not see the battle for your eternal future. There is a veil and you cannot see it. There are many persons involved in this day-to-day warfare, one group tugging you this way, the other that way. You have often felt this tug-of-war to the point you sometimes thought you were becoming unglued. You sense it, but cannot see it.

So I am going to pull back the veil and give you a glimpse.

On the one side of the battle for your eternal soul is satan, "the ruler of this age." He is ruthless, he has no ethics, his biggest weapon is deception. Under him are multitudes of demons. These demons are ugly, hateful creatures, invisible but real nonetheless. And then there are the people around you, going the same direction, blind to the battle for their own souls, pawns of the devil they do not believe exist, applying heavy peer pressure to go where they are going, do what they are doing, be what they are being. This army of darkness is tugging you toward hell.

You are all in a race, a mad race to destruction. Deceived and foolish, proud and determined, dazzled by neon lights, hypnotized by the frenzied pace, obsessed with religions and rituals, mesmerized by noise and violence, lives sacrificed to the profession of accumulating and hoarding, ears refusing to hear, minds insulated against reason and reality, short-sighted, impatient, unreasonable, the race of madness goes on. Day after day. Year after year.

On the other side is the Holy Spirit wanting to draw you into the kingdom of God. The Holy Spirit is all-powerful but limited by the free will God gave you when He made you. The Spirit's nature is to persuade, not coerce. Aiding Him is a myriad of angels – unseen, powerful, active. And then there are Christians, not the ones in heaven but the ones still here on earth. The weakness is in this group.

We who have been redeemed have been given the responsibility to reach you for Christ, to rescue

you from what the Bible calls "darkness." We who have been, “delivered…from the power of darkness and…translated into the kingdom of his dear Son” have been given a ministry, “the ministry of reconciliation” (the task of bringing you to God). It is the prayers of Christians that determine the degree of power the Holy Spirit releases on your behalf. If we do not pray and tell you about God's salvation (Jesus), you will never be set free from the hold satan has on your life. There is no one so evil that they could not be prayed into the kingdom of God (though some would take much prayer indeed). Sadly, we Christians have done, and are doing, a much less than satisfactory job.

Though Jesus taught us in His Word that your soul is more valuable than all the treasures this world contains, your soul (your soul is the person who lives in your body) nonetheless is often down our list of priorities. I mean, way down. Your eternal future probably comes after a nice house, an expensive car, an impressive church building, hobbies, vacations, entertainment, things like that.

Now I know that us Christians say we care (what else could we say?) and think we care, but the way we spend our money and time reveals that this is not so. I am ashamed to tell you these things, but I have determined from the start to speak the truth, as I see it, in The Main Issue.

You may think Christians go to heaven because they are good and non-Christians go to hell because they are bad. This is simply not true! No one has ever made it up there by being good. No one. Faith in Christ is what gets us there.

You are supposed to sin. The Bible calls you “the children of disobedience.” It is your nature to sin because you do not have the Spirit of God dwelling within you.

But we do! We have been enlightened. We have tasted the things of the kingdom of God. We have been touched by the Master. We know the value of your soul. Your sin is rejecting Christ and our sin is not caring enough.

We know we are but pilgrims here on earth and our real home awaits us in heaven. But we live as if this is where we are to settle down. Jesus told us plainly not to lay up treasures on earth, but we do so with relish. We unashamedly disobey this clear directive from the One we call “Lord, Lord.” Christ entrusted to us the awesome responsibility of preaching His gospel to you and the entire world, but you would be amazed at how lightly we take this charge in spite of the fact we claim to love Him so. The Bible teaches if we do not warn you of the certain tragedy you are walking into, your blood will be upon our hands; but if we do warn you your blood will not be on our hands. This is plain language, and yet the import of it gets lost in our affection for things. We in this city have the resources to send missionaries and the printed gospel into virtually every nation of the world. Many of these nations (unlike our own) are hungry for the gospel, especially Third World nations and those recently released from communism. But unfortunately we Christians have distorted priorities. Most of our money and endeavors and energy is for us and not for you.

Now I speak generally. Christianity of every age has always had heroes of the faith who would not hesitate to lay down their life for the gospel. I could tell you of a young fellow who stood on a picnic

table downtown preaching Christ to whoever would listen, not to be silenced by a group of youth who were threatening to throw him in the lake. I could tell you of a friend who parked her car to converse with a young prostitute and assure her that Jesus loves her. I could tell you of families that left job and home to go to other nations to tell of Jesus and demonstrate the love of God. I could speak of evangelists who sacrifice so much to preach the gospel. Yes, I know personally heroes of the faith.

The battle for the souls of men is not casual business. The contrary is so. What soldier does not pay a price for going to war? Every time a soldier strikes out against enemy territory the enemy, logically, retaliates. The Christian soldier will find him/herself in predicaments that would have never been experienced had he stayed out of the battle for souls. Souls do not come cheap.

And you are so hard to reach. You have been programmed by the enemy of your soul (satan), to resist the gospel. You avoid the one who wants to share Christ with you. Or you put up your defenses – your religion or prejudices or self-righteousness. You keep going back to your T.V. and newspapers and books and religious leaders, etc. to be further indoctrinated. It is so tempting to give up on you and let you go your way.

Having said that, however, does not excuse us Christians from doing what Jesus told us to do. The alternative to obedience is disobedience. We could pray for your salvation, but generally we do not. We could better finance the great commission (the commandment of Christ to reach the lost is expensive). We could search diligently for that one who would welcome the gospel, but do not. We Christians are disobedient, not always but often, not everyone but most.

If you were to be our judge you would doubtless find us guilty of a grave injustice. But no, you are not our judge and never will be. But I for one would rather face you as you lashed out at me from your eternal home of torment ("How could you fail to warn me of this hellish torment!? You knew all the time where I was heading but you didn't care! My spouse and older children are with me in this hellish pit. We are in agony! You could have made the difference. But you didn'tcare! How could you just watch us go to hell without even trying to reach us! How could you!? How could you!? How could you!?") than to face Jesus. You see, we will have to give an account to Jesus for our life on earth. Knowing I let Him down after He gave me His all – that would make it a horrible experience.

But in fact your blood is not on my hands nor on those involved in this paper (nor anyone else who has made an attempt to warn you). Five times we have placed The Main Issue, each containing the gospel of Jesus Christ in your mailbox. To this day you have resisted Jesus, the only One who ever died for you, the only One who has the power to forgive your sins.

So, in brief, that is a glimpse into the battle over your soul. Hopefully it will cause you to start talking to Jesus. Hopefully you will run, not walk, into His protective arms.

The conflict over your eternal future goes on. But one day your life will be forever established. The tug-of-war you feel but cannot see will be over, you will be someone's eternal prize, the victory

forever determined. I wish you well.

" Faith in Christ is
what gets us
there.'"

"Our sin is not caring enough."

TEEN PROBE

S-T-R-A-I-G-H-T T-A-L-K T-O T-E-E-N-S

This is the story of a ferocious teen-age hood. It is the story of Jesus Christ and His far reaching, all-encompassing love. It is the story of Nicky Cruz and Jesus embracing each other's life.

This account is taken from the book RUN BABY RUN by Nicky Cruz with permission from Jove Publications, New york, N.Y.

My early childhood was filled with fear and resentment. The large family meant that there was very little individual attention given to each child. I resented Papa and Mama and was afraid of the sorcery that took place each night.

The summer before I started school Papa locked me in the pigeon house. It was late in the evening and he had caught me stealing money out of Mama's purse. I tried to run but he reached out and grabbed me by the back of the neck. "You can't run, baby. You're going to have to pay the price for stealing."

"I hate you," I shouted.

He grabbed me off the ground, shaking me in front of him. "I'll teach you to talk to your Papa like

that," he bit out. Putting me under his arm like a sack of grain he strode across the dark yard to the pigeon house. I heard him fumbling with the lock as he opened the door. "Inside," he snarled. "You can stay in there with the birds until you learn your lesson."

He shoved me through the door and slammed it behind me, leaving me in total blackness. I heard the lock snap into place and Papa's muffled voice came through the cracks in the walls. "And no supper." I heard his footsteps fade into the distance back toward the house.

I was petrified with fear. Hammering my fists against the door, I kicked it frantically, shouting and screaming. Suddenly the shack was filled with the sound of wildly flapping wings as the frightened birds slammed against my body. I threw my hands over my face and screamed hysterically as the birds smashed against the walls and ferociously pecked at my face and neck. I collapsed to the filthy floor burying my head in my arms trying to protect my eyes and shut out the sound of the flapping wings overhead.

PAGE NINETEEN.....

It seemed like an eternity before the door opened and Papa yanked me to my feet and dragged me into the yard. "Next time you'll remember not to steal and sass back when you're caught," he said harshly. "Now wash up and go to bed."

I cried myself to sleep that night, dreaming of the fluttering birds that slammed against my body.

My resentment against Papa and Mama carried over the next year when I started school. I hated all authority. Then, when I was 8 years old, I turned against my parents completely. It was a hot summer afternoon and Mama and several other mediums were sitting at the big table in the living room drinking coffee. I had grown tired of playing with my brother and entered the room bouncing a small ball on the floor and catching it in my hand. One of the mediums said to Mama, "Your Nicky's a cute boy. He looks just like you. I know you must be very proud of him."

Mama looked hard at me and began to sway in her chair, rocking back and forth. Here eyes rolled back into her head until only the whites showed. She held her arms straight out in front of her across the top of the table. Her fingers stiffened and quivered as she slowly raised her arms above her head and began to speak in a sing-song tone of voice ... "This...not...my...son. No, not Nicky. He never been mine. He child of greatest of all witches. Lucifer. No, not mine...no, not mine...Son of Satan, child of Devil."

I dropped the ball and it bounced across the room. I slowly backed up against the wall while Mama continued in her trance, her voice rising and falling as she chanted. "No, not mine, not mine...hand of Lucifer upon his life...finger of Satan touch his life...finger of Satan touch his soul...mark of beast on his heart...No, not mine...no, not mine."

I watched as the tears coursed down her cheeks. Suddenly, she turned to me with eyes wide and in

a shrieking voice cried: “Get out, DEVIL! Get away from me. Leave me, DEVIL. Away! Away! Away!”

I was petrified with fear. I ran to my room and threw myself on my bed. The thoughts flowed through my mind like rivers churning down a narrow canyon. “Not her child...child of Satan...not love me...No one cares.”

Then the tears came and I began to scream and wail. The pain in my chest was unbearable and I pounded my fists against the bed until I was exhausted.

PAGE TWENTY-ONE.....

Inside the house I could hear the laughter as my father’s deep bass voice joined with the women. I knew they were still laughing at me.

The waves of hate flooded over me again. The tears coursed down my face and once more I began to scream. “I hate you, Mama! I hate you! I hate you! I hate you!” My voice echoed against the emptiness under the house.

Reaching a stage of complete emotional climax I collapsed on my back in the dirt and rolled over and over, the dust covering my body. Exhausted, I closed my eyes and wept until I fell into a tortured sleep.

The sun had already sunk into the western sea when I awoke and crept out from under the porch. Sand still gritted between my teeth and my body was caked with grime. The frogs and crickets were chirping and the dew felt damp and cool against my bare feet.

Papa opened the back door and a shaft of yellow light fell on me as I stood at the foot of the steps. “Pig!” he shouted. “What you been doing under that house so long? Look at you. We don’t want no pigs around here. Go clean up and come for supper.”

I obeyed. But as I washed my body under the pump, I knew I would hate forever. I knew I would never love again...never. Fear, dirt, and hate for the Son of Satan. I had started to run.

PAGE THIRTY-SEVEN.....

A life motivated by hate and fear has no room for anyone but self. I hated everyone including Frank. He represented authority. And when he began to object to my being out of school and staying out late at night, I made up my mind to leave.

“Nicky,” he said, “New York is a jungle. The people who live here live by the law of the jungle. Only the tough survive. You really haven’t seen what it's like, Nicky. I’ve been here for five years and I know. This place is crawling with prostitutes, junkies, winos and killers. Those guys out there, they’ll kill you. And no one will even know you’re dead until some junkie stumbles over your rotting body

under a pile of trash."

Frank was right. But I couldn't stay here. He was insisting I go back to school and I knew I would have to make it on my own.

PAGE THIRTY-NINE.....

A room was going to cost money and I didn't have a penny. It was almost 10 p.m. and the winter wind was freezing cold. I shrank back into the shadows of the alley and saw people passing by on the sidewalk. I pulled the switchblade out of my pocket and pressed the button. The blade snapped open with a soft click. I pressed the tip against the palm of my hand. My hand was shaking as I tried to imagine just how I would perform the robbery. Would it be best to pull them into the alley? Should I go ahead and stab them or just scare them? What if they yelled?...

My thoughts were interrupted by two people talking at the entrance of the alley. An old wino had stopped a young man in his late teens who was carrying a huge sack of groceries. The old man was begging him for a dime to buy a cup of coffee. I listened as the young man tried to get away telling the wino he didn't have any money.

The thought ran through my mind that the old man probably had a pocket full of money he had begged and stolen. He wouldn't dare scream for help if I robbed him. As soon as the boy left I'd pull him into the alley and take it from him.

The young man was putting his grocery sack on the sidewalk. He fished into his pocket until he found a coin. The old man mumbled and shuffled away.

"Damn," I thought to myself. "Now what will I do?"

Just then the boy tipped over his sack of groceries. A couple of apples rolled onto the sidewalk. He bent to pick them up and I pulled him into the alley and smashed him up against the wall. Both of us were scared to death but I had the advantage of surprise. He was petrified with fear as I held my knife in front of his face.

"I don't want to hurt you, but I need money. I'm desperate. Give it to me. Now! Quick! All you got before I kill you."

My hand was shaking so badly I was afraid I would drop the knife.

"Please. Please. Take it all. Don't kill me," the boy pleaded. He pulled out his billfold and tried to hand it to me. He dropped it and I kicked it down the alley. "Take off," I said. "Run, man, run! And if you stop running for two blocks, you're a dead man."

He looked at me, eyes wide with horror, and started to run. He tripped over his groceries and sprawled on the pavement at the mouth of the alley. Scrambling to his feet, he tripped again as he

half crawled, half ran down the sidewalk. As soon as he turned the corner, I grabbed the wallet and sprinted down the alley. Emerging in the darkness on De Kalb, I vaulted the chain link fence surrounding the park and ran through the high grass into the trees! Squatting behind an embankment, I paused to catch my breath and let my pounding heart settle down. Opening the wallet I counted out $19. It felt good to hold the bills in my hand. I tossed the wallet into the high grass and counted the money again before folding it and put it into my pocket.

Not bad, I thought. The gangs are killing hobos for less than a dollar and I get nineteen on my first try. This isn't going so be so bad after all.

PAGE FIFTY-TWO.....

I could feel the blood tingling in my veins as I imagined what was ahead. The gigs, the girls. But most of all, the fights. I wouldn't have to fight by myself any more. I could hurt as much as I wanted to and not have to be hurt back. My heart began to beat faster. Maybe I'll get a chance to really stab someone. I could almost visualize the blood flowing across my hands and dripping down on the street. I made swinging motions with my hands as I walked, pretending I had a knife and jabbing and slashing at imaginary figures in the dark. I had told Carlos I would let him know in three days. But I had already made up my mind. All I wanted was for someone to give me a switchblade and a gun.

Two nights later I was back at the gig. I walked in and Carlos met me at the door. "Hey, Nicky, you're just in time. We got another boy who wants to join the Mau Maus. You want to watch the initiation?"

I had no idea what an initiation was but wanted to watch. Carlos continued, "But maybe you came to tell us you don't want to join, eh?"

"No," I countered. "I came to tell you I'm ready to join. I want to fight. I think I'm just as tough as anyone else and a better fighter than most of these other guys."

"Good," said Carlos. "You can watch and then it will be your turn. We have two ways to find out if you're chicken. Either you stand still while five of our toughest guys beat you up, or you stand against the wall waiting for the knife. If you run from either, we don't let you join the gang. This kid says he's tough. Let's see how tough he really is. Then we'll see if you're that tough."

I looked across the room and saw the other boy. He was about 13 years old with pimples on his face and a long shock of black hair that fell down over his eyes. He was small and skinny and his arms hung stiffly by his sides. He was wearing a white, long-sleeved shirt that was soiled on the front and pulled out around his belt.

There were about 40 boys and girls eagerly awaiting the show. Carlos was in charge. He told everyone to clear the floor and they all lined up along the walls. The young boy was told to stand with his back against a bare wall. Carlos stood in front of him with an open switchblade in his hand. The silver blade glistened in the dim light.

“I’m going to turn and walk twenty steps toward that other wall,” he said. “You stand right where you are. You say you’re a tough kid. Well, we’re going to find out just how tough. When I get to twenty, I’m going to turn and throw this knife. If you flinch or duck, you’re chicken. If you don’t, even if the knife sticks you, you’re a tough kid and you can join the Mau Maus. Got it?”

The small boy nodded.

“Now, one other thing,” said Carlos, holding the knife in the face of the youngster. “If you turn chicken while I’m walking away counting, all you got to do is holler. But you better not even stick your nose around here any more. If you do, we’ll cut those big ears off and make you eat ’em and then dig your belly button out with a beer opener and let you bleed to death.”

The boys and girls started to laugh and clap. “Go, man, go!” they shouted at Carlos. Carlos turned his back to the boy and started slowly across the room. He held the long glimmering knife by the point of the blade, his arm in front of him bent at the elbow, the knife in front of his face.

“One...two...three...” The crowd began to shout and jeer. “Get him, Carlos! Stick it through his eye! Make him bleed, baby, make him bleed!”

The young boy was cowering against the wall, much like a mouse trapped by a tiger. He was trying desperately to be brave. His arms were rigid at his sides, his hands balled into tiny fists with his knuckles showing white against the skin. His face was drained of color and his eyes were wide with fright.

“Eleven...twelve...thirteen...” Carlos counted loudly as he paced off the distance. The tension mounted as the boys and girls jeered and cried out for blood.

“Nineteen...twenty.” Slowly Carlos turned and pulled his right hand back toward his ear, holding the knife by the tip of its needle sharp blade. The crowd of kids was wild in their frenzy calling for blood. Just as he snapped the knife forward, the little boy bent over, throwing his arms around his head screaming, “No! No!” The knife thudded into the wall just inches from where his head had been.

“Chicken!...chicken!...chicken!” the crowd roared.

Carlos was angry. The corners of his mouth grew tight and his eyes narrowed. “Grab him,” he hissed. Two boys moved from each side of the room and grabbed the cowering child by his arms and slammed him back against the wall,

Carlos moved across the room and stood in front of the shaking form. “Chicken!” he spat out. “Chicken! I knew you were a coward from the first time I saw you. I ought to kill you.”

Again the kids in the room picked up the theme. “Kill him! Kill the dirty chicken!”

“You know what we do to chickens?” said Carlos. The boy looked up at him trying to move his mouth but no sound was coming out.

“I’ll tell you what we do to chickens,” said Carlos. “We clip their wings so that they can’t fly no more.”

He snatched the knife out of the wall. “Stretch him out!” he said.

Before the boy could move, the two boys yanked his arms straight out from his body, spread eagle. Moving so fast you could hardly follow his hand, Carlos brought the knife up in a fast vicious thrust and jabbed it almost to the hilt into the child’s armpit. The boy jerked and screamed in pain. The blood gushed out and quickly flooded his white shirt with a crimson red.

Pulling the knife out of the boy’s flesh, he flipped it into his other hand. “See man,” he leered, viciously thrusting the knife upward again into the other armpit, “I’m left handed too.”

The two boys turned loose and the child collapsed to the floor, his arms across his chest, his hands clutching pitifully at his punctured flesh. He was screaming and gagging, rolling on the floor. His shirt was almost completely covered with bright red blood.

“Get him out of here,” snapped Carlos. Two boys came forward and yanked him to his feet. The boy threw back his head and screamed out in agony as they jerked his arms. Carlos clapped his hand across his mouth and the screaming stopped. The boy’s eyes, wide with horror, peered across the top of the hand.“Go home, chicken! If I hear you scream one more time or if you squeal on us, I’ll cut your tongue out too. Got it?” As he spoke he held up the switchblade, the silver blade dripping blood down over the white mother-of-pearl handle. “Got it?” he repeated.

The child nodded.

The boys pulled him across the floor and out onto the sidewalk. The gang of kids in the room shouted as he left, "Go home, chicken!"

Carlos turned. “Who’s next?” he said...looking straight at me. The crowd grew quiet.

PAGE SEVENTY-NINE.....

The next night more than 100 Mau Maus gathered at the candy store in Hell Burner turf. Willie the Butch was there with more than 50 of his boys and we marched together down the middle of the street toward the candy store in Phantom Lord turf.

Charlie Cortez, one of the Mau Maus, had been high on heroin for the last week and tonight was in a mood for fighting. When we got to the candy store he snatched the door open and grabbed one of the Phantom Lords who tried to break and run. He slashed at him with his knife but missed and shoved him backward toward me.

I was laughing. This was my kind of odds – about 150 to 15. I swung at the stumbling boy with a heavy lead pipe with a huge joint on one end. He screamed in pain as the pipe smashed across his shoulder. As he crumpled to the sidewalk I hit him again, this time on the back of the head. He

dropped heavily on the concrete as the blood seeped through a deep gash.

“Come on,” someone screamed, “let’s burn this whole turf.” The boys scattered. Some of them headed into the candy store and the others surged into a pool hall next door. I got caught in the wave and was carried into the candy store. I still had my pipe in my hand and was swinging out at everything. The windows had already been broken and I could see the manager of the store huddling underneath the counter trying to protect himself. The boys had gone wild. They were tearing up everything. Someone turned over the juke box and I was on top of it with my pipe, smashing it to pieces. Others were behind the counter ripping the cabinets off the walls, breaking glasses and dishes. Someone cleaned out the cash register and then two of the boys heaved it through the broken plate glass window.

I ran into the street, my face covered with blood from a piece of flying glass. I was running up and down the street smashing my pipe against car windshields.

About fifty boys were inside the pool hall. They had turned over the pool tables and broken the cue sticks. Now they were back out on the street throwing pool balls at all the shops across the street.

A gang of boys had stopped a car in the middle of the street and were climbing all over it, jumping up and down on the hood and the roof until it was bent beyond shape. Everyone was laughing and shouting and destroying.

Sirens wailed as police cars converged from both ends of the street. Ordinarily, this would act as a signal for the boys to break and run. But the riot fever had taken control and we no longer cared.

A squad car worked its way to the middle of the block but the patrolmen were unable to get their doors open as the boys surged around the car, pummeling it with broken bottles, bricks and clubs as they smashed out the headlights and shattered the windows. The policemen, trapped inside, tried to call out on their radio for help, but we clambered onto the top of the car and snatched the antenna off. One of the boys kicked at the siren until it came loose and fell into the street.

More police cars screeched to a halt at the end of the block. It was bedlam. More than 150 boys were fighting, shouting, overturning cars, breaking glass. Policemen waded into the seething, screaming mob slashing out with their billy clubs. I saw Charlie struggling with two cops in the center off the street. I ran to help him but heard gunfire and knew it was time to beat it.

PAGE ONE HUNDRED AND THREE.....

Dr. John sat silently for a long time before starting the car and pulling out on the road. “I don’t know, Nicky,” he said, “I just don’t know.”

The trip back was misery. The rain was pelting the car without mercy. Dr. John drove silently. I was lost in thought. I hated going back to the city. I dreaded the thought of going back to jail. I couldn’t

stand to be caged like a wild animal.

The rain quit but the sun had already gone down as we drove past the hundreds of blocks of towering, grimy apartments. I felt like I was sinking into a pit. I wanted to get out and run. But instead of turning toward the jail, Dr. John slowed down and turned on Lafayette toward the Ft. Greene project.

“Ain’t you taking me to jail?” I asked, puzzled.

“No, I have the prerogative of locking you up or turning you loose. I don’t think jail will do you any good.”

“What do you mean, Doc, you think I’m hopeless?” I laughed.

He pulled his car up at the corner of Lafayette and Ft. Greene Place. “That’s exactly right, Nicky. I’ve worked with kids like you for years. I used to live in the ghetto. But I’ve never seen a kid as hard, cold, and savage as you. You haven’t responded to a thing I’ve said. You hate everyone and you’re afraid of anyone that threatens your security.”

I opened the door and got out. “Well, you can go to hell, Doc. I don’t need you or nobody.”
“Nicky,” he said, as I started to walk away from the car. “I’ll give it to you straight. You’re doomed. There’s no hope for you. And unless you change you’re on a one way street to jail, the electric chair, and hell.”

“Yeah? Well, I’ll see you there,” I said.

“Where?” he said.

“In hell, man,” I said laughing.

He shook his head and drove off into the night. I tried to keep laughing but the sound died in my throat.

PAGE ONE HUNDRED AND ELEVEN.....

The skinny man walked over to me and stuck out his hand. “Nicky, my name is David Wilkerson. I’m a preacher from Pennsylvania.”

I just stared at him and said, “Go to hell, preacher.”

“You don’t like me, Nicky,” he said, "but I feel different about you. I love you. And not only that, I’ve come to tell you about Jesus who loves you, too.”

I felt like a trapped animal about to be caged. Behind me was the crowd. In front of me was the smiling face of this skinny man talking about love. No one loved me. No one ever had. As I stood there my mind raced back to that time so many years ago when I had heard my mother say, “I don’t

love Nicky." I thought, "If your own mother doesn't love you then no one loves you – or ever will."

The preacher just stood there, smiling, with his hand stuck out. I always prided myself on not being afraid. But I was afraid. Deeply afraid that this man was going to put me in a cage. He was going to take away my friends. He was going to upset everything and because of this I hated him.

"You come near me, Preacher, and I'll kill you," I said, shrinking back toward the protection of the crowd. I was afraid, and I didn't know how to deal with it.

The fear overwhelmed me. I was close to panic. I snarled at him and turned and walked back through the crowd. "This man's a Communist, boys," I shouted. "Leave him alone. He's a Communist."

I didn't know what a Communist was, but I knew it was something everyone was supposed to be against. I was running, and I knew it. But I couldn't fight this kind of approach. If he had come at me with a knife, I would have fought him. If he had come begging and pleading; I would have laughed at him and kicked him in the teeth. But he came saying, "I love you." And I had never come up against this kind of approach before.

PAGE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIVE.....

I slumped down in my chair. All around me the pandemonium continued. Israel was standing up looking backward. He was shouting, "Hey! Cool it! Let's hear what the preacher has to say."

The Mau Maus sat down. Israel continued to shout for quiet. The noise died. Like a fog moving in from the sea the silence swept toward the back of the room and then up into the balconies. Again, that deathly hush hung over the arena.

Something was happening to me. I was remembering. I remembered my childhood. I remembered the hate for my mother. I remembered the first days in New York when I ran like a wild animal set free from a cage. It was as though I were sitting in a movie and my actions were flashing in front of my eyes. I saw the girls...the lust...the sex. I saw the stabbings...the hurt...the hatred. It was almost more than I could stand. I was completely oblivious to what was going on around me. All I could do was remember. And the more I remembered the greater the feelings of guilt and shame. I was afraid to open my eyes for fear someone would be able to look inside and see what I was seeing. It was repulsive.

Wilkerson was speaking again. He said something about repenting for your sins. I was under the influence of a power a million times stronger than any drug. I was not responsible for my movements, actions or words. It was as though I had been caught in a wild torrent of a rampaging river. I was powerless to resist. I didn't understand what was taking place within me. I only knew the fear was gone.

Beside me I heard Israel blow his nose. Behind me I heard people crying. Something was sweeping

through that massive arena like the wind moving through the tops of the trees. Even the curtains on the side of the auditorium began to move and rustle as if stirred by a mysterious breath.

Wilkerson was speaking again. “He’s here! He’s in this room. He’s come especially for you. If you want your life changed, now is the time.” Then he shouted with authority: “Stand up! Those who will receive Jesus Christ and be changed – stand up! Come forward!”

I felt Israel stand to his feet. “Boys, I’m going up. Who’s with me?”

I was on my feet. I turned to the gang and waved them on with my hand. “Let’s go.” There was a spontaneous movement out of the chairs and toward the front. More than 25 of the Mau Maus responded. Behind us about 30 boys from other gangs followed our example.

PAGE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SEVEN.....

Then Wilkerson came in. “All right, fellows,” he said, “kneel down right here on the floor.”

I thought he was crazy. I never had knelt down in front of anyone. But an invisible force pressed down on me. I felt my knees buckling. I couldn’t remain erect. It was as though a giant hand were pushing me downward until my knees hit the floor.

The touch of the hard floor brought me back to reality. It was summer. It was time for the rumbles. I opened my eyes and thought to myself, “What’re you doing here?” Israel was beside me, weeping loudly. In the midst of all this tension I giggled.

“Hey, Israel, you’re bugging me with that crying.” Israel looked up and smiled through the tears. But as we booked at each other I had a strange sensation. I felt the tears welling up in my eyes and suddenly they spilled over the sides and dripped down my cheeks. I was crying. For the first time since I cried my heart out under the house in Puerto Rico – I was crying.

Israel and I were both on our knees, side by side, with tears streaming down our faces, yet laughing at the same time. It was an indescribably exotic feeling.

Tears and laughter. I was happy, yet I was crying. Something was taking place in my life that I had absolutely no control over...and I was happy about it.

Suddenly I felt Wilkerson’s hand on my head. He was praying – praying for me. The tears flowed more freely as I bowed my head and the shame and repentance and the wonderful joy of salvation mixed their ingredients in my soul.

“Go on, Nicky,” Wilkerson said, “Go ahead and cry. Pour it out to God. Call on Him.”

I opened my mouth but the words that came out were not mine. “O God, if you love me, come into my life. I’m tired of running. Come into my life and change me. Please change me.”That’s all it was. But I felt myself being picked up and swept heavenward.

Marijuana! Sex! Blood! All the sadistic, immoral thrills of a million lifetimes put together could not begin to equal what I felt. I was literally baptized with love.

After the emotional crisis passed, Wilkerson quoted some Scripture to us. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." (2 Cor. 5:17).

It made sense. For the first time in my life it made sense. I had become new. I was Nicky and yet I was not Nicky. The old way of life had disappeared. It was as though I had died to the old way - and yet I was alive in a new kind of way.

Happiness. Joy. Gladness. Release. Relief. Freedom. Wonderful, wonderful freedom. I had stopped running.

All my fear was gone. All my anxieties were gone. All my hatred was gone. I was in love with God...with Jesus Christ...and with those around me. I even loved myself. The hatred I'd had for myself had turned to love. I suddenly realized that the reason I had treated myself in such a shoddy way was I didn't really love myself as God intended for me to love myself.

Israel and I embraced. The tears running down our faces and wetting each other's shirts. I loved him. He was my brother.

Wilkerson had stepped out but was now back in the room. I loved him, too. That skinny, grinning preacher I had spit on just a few weeks before – I loved him.

PAGE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-NINE.....

Late that night I climbed my steps to my room as a new person. It was a little after 11:00 p.m. which was early for me – but I was anxious to get back to my room. There was no more need to run. The streets had no appeal to me. I had no more need to be recognized as the gang leader. I had no more fear of the night.

I went to the closet and took off my Mau Mau jacket and shoes and put them in a bag. "No more," I thought to myself. "No longer will I need these." I reached up to the shelf and took down my revolver. By force of habit I started to put the shells in the magazine so I could sleep with the gun on my night stand. But suddenly I remembered. Jesus loves me. He will protect me. I took the bullets and placed them back in the small box and put the gun back on the shelf. In the morning I would turn it into the police.

I walked by the mirror. I couldn't believe what I saw. There was a light coming from my face I had never seen before. I smiled at myself. "Hey, Nicky. Look how handsome you are. Too bad you have to give up all the girls now that you are so handsome." I broke out laughing at the irony of it all. But I was happy. The burden of fear was gone. I could laugh.

I knelt beside the bed and threw my head back. "Jesus...." Nothing else came out. "Jesus...." And

finally the words came. “Thank you, Jesus...thank you.”

That night, for the first time in my memory, I put my head on my pillow and slept nine beautiful hours. No tossing on the bed. No fear of sounds outside my room. The nightmares were gone.

From the time of his conversion to Christ Nicky Cruz has spent his life reaching others for Jesus. RUN BABY RUN is available in Christian bookstores.