

Faith Things Happen

- There was an article in the paper some time ago that told of contact lenses being developed when fighter pilots were shot down in World War II and it was discovered that the plexiglass often embedded in their eyes did not cause infection or damage.
- The late Dr. Roy Plunkett, at twenty seven years of age, accidentally discovered Teflon while trying to develop a new refrigerant. It changed the way people cooked and became a multimillion-dollar product used in the chemical industry as well as in the home.
- Rubber vulcanization was discovered in 1839 when Charles Goodyear, a Connecticut hardware merchant accidentally dropped a mixture of rubber and sulfur into a fire.
- Alexander Graham Bell discovered the telephone while trying to develop a hearing aid for his wife and Thomas Edison discovered the phonograph while working on an entirely different project.
- Kellogg's Corn Flakes were discovered when someone accidentally left boiled wheat in a baking pan overnight and paper towels came into existence when a toilet paper machine got out of whack and started putting out too many layers of tissue.
- A while back there was an article in the newspaper about a garbage truck driver, Craig Randall of Peabody, Massachusetts. He picked up a bag of garbage and it contained a Wendy's soft drink cup worth \$200,000.

Happenings like these just give us more assurance that the God of Heaven and the maker and owner of all still works in human lives. He is working with us in our labor, our leisure and at times, even in our dumb mistakes and wanderings. He cares more than we know.

When Gideon was threshing wheat by a winepress, doing what he could with what he had, he got a visitation from heaven and was on his way to a destiny that was far beyond his fondest dreams. He was elevated from poverty to a deliverer of his people. (Judges. 6:11) We never know when the Lord is going to change the tide in our lives. Saul was looking for his father's asses and the next thing he knew he was being anointed for kingship. (1 Sam. 9:3)

When Joseph was sold into Egypt by his brothers and month after month of imprisonment and bondage followed; the great miracle of God and good arriving on the scene simultaneously happened. When the struggle was over and he was elevated from a felon to the second highest level in government, his summation of the ordeal was, "...Fear not, for I am in God's place. But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save such people alive. Now fear not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them." (Genesis 50:19 & 21 KJV)

The Apostle Paul, with a lifetime of suffering and sacrifice proclaimed right in the middle of his hurt, "... We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." (Roman 8:28) He also said that, "... I reckon that the sufferings of

the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." (Roman 8:18)

One of the most dangerous things that can happen to a growing Christian is for him or her to be removed from their wilderness or trial before the proper time.

There was a wine company that used to advertise on television very frequently. Their motto was, "We will sell no wine before its time." If good wine takes time, you can bet the farm that you and I are not going to get a three-minute microwave treatment from the Lord and be on our way. I am finding that getting older really has some great advantages when it comes to strong faith. As we look back over the years we can count over and over again what miracles the Lord of Heaven has performed in the circumstances of our lives. The situation that we find ourselves in at this moment is just one of the ingredients that God is using to perform His miracles. Miracles that will give us our necessary boost, strengthen our faith and also spill over into the lives of others.

Some time ago I was talking to a ninety-year-old lady who lives in a very depressed neighborhood and has confronted three robbers, on separate occasions, alone in her own home. She said she stood her ground (without a gun) in the name of Jesus and the robbers fled. She told of reading her Bible through seventeen times. I thought, my God this woman has the faith and boldness to stare down a rattlesnake. When I hung up the phone I was charged with a new level of believing. With every heartbeat, God, in his way, is developing us, with all of our flaws, into his masterpiece. The scriptures teach that: "The path of the just is as a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." (Proverbs 4:18) They also proclaim that, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord." (Psalms 37:23) We used to sing the old chorus in church, "Every day with Jesus, is sweeter than the day before ...", and if our believing is really right that statement is true. He is working things out, and He is working them out well, even as we speak.

LIVES THAT ARE RADICALLY CHANGED

A few months ago Candy Barr, at age 70 died. She was famous for her life as a stripper, porn star, going to prison, shooting her husband, driving getaway cars, drugs and about everything else you can think of pertaining to the wild side of life. She was linked with Jack Ruby the night club owner who shot President Kennedy's alleged assassin, Harvey Oswald. She was also romantically connected with Los Vegas gangster Mickey Cohen.

But there is another side to her life. In the late seventies, after about 25 years of her running wild, I picked up the morning newspaper and there on the front page was a picture of an older and much different looking lady in a wheelchair. It was Candy Barr and the headline read, "She Turned From Drugs To Jesus". The article went on to tell a little of her life story, how a bullet from the jealous wife of one of her clients had severed her spinal cord and paralyzed her from the waist down. Then it told how she was preaching the gospel.

Some time ago there was a story in the news of David Berkowitz. He was known as The Son of Sam, a serial killer, who in 1976 and 77 stalked the streets of New York City killing six people in cold blood and paralyzing the area with fear. He was arrested, convicted and sentenced to 365 years in prison. This newspaper article told of his conversion to the Lord and how he was preaching on public access television in the same city through which he sent horror.

When someone really knows the Jesus of the Bible, stories like these are not surprising. They just keep surfacing over the years and over our lifetime. We learn that not only little sins can be forgiven ... we learn that all sins can be forgiven.

A television commentator speaking about Larry King, the talk show host, said "He treats the great people average and the average people great". That has to be a God characteristic; he levels the playing field for all. Jesus knows that greatness lies within all and he longs to bring it out. He recognizes your hidden abilities and the longings, desires and dreams in your heart.

Candy Barr and David Berkowitz did what we all have to do in order to be genuinely clean and motivated. When we repent; when we really get serious about the wretched life that we have lived and turn our sins and failures over to a loving and forgiving Lord a transformation takes place that is inexplicable to the world. The agony, the suffering, and the shedding of the blood from the Savior's veins and arteries is the one agent that will make all things new.

This man of men that walked the streets of pain, bondage, evil, guilt, sin, frustration, death and sickness is alive and well and His arms are open to all that dare to make a step of faith in His direction. It doesn't matter if you stole a piece of bubble gum when you were a child or if you are in the depths of unmentionable wickedness with no way to go but up; this Lord of the Bible is awake every second both day and night and is longing for your return to your childhood purity. You can have a radical change and you can have it this very day!

WE HAVE ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY

In a rerun of the late Ann Landers favorite letters is the following classic:

Dear Ann Landers:

A few days ago, my best friend died. He was my teacher, my idol, my symbol of strength and protection. He was also my father.

Last year on my 17th birthday, I obtained my driver's license. Three weeks later, I had a minor accident. I was scared to death of what my father would say when the police called him. I wasn't hurt, but I had a few scratches and was dazed by the impact.

The moment he saw me, he hugged me and tried to calm my ragged nerves. I kept repeating, "I'll never drive again". He said, "Oh, yes you will. In fact, you are going to drive me home."

Then he told me about Thomas Alva Edison and how he made the first electric light bulb. After seven years of hard work and experimentation. Edison handed the precious bulb to his laboratory assistant to put away. The assistant accidentally dropped it. Of course, the bulb broke into a thousand pieces. Edison went to work on the second bulb. After he had completed it, he handed it to his assistant again, to prove that he had confidence in him. I knew how the assistant must have felt when I was behind the wheel of that car, driving my dad home.

This was only one of the lessons I learned from this remarkable man. I am thankful to have had him for eighteen years. I hope you will find room in your column for my letter. Perhaps after reading it, the lucky ones who still have a dad will appreciate him a little more.

- A Loving Daughter

Some years ago, the God of Heaven placed something precious in your hands and in mine. It was life. Whether we want to admit it or not ... we dropped it and it broke into a thousand pieces. We still drop it. Most of us need forgiveness not too long after our day is in progress. The good news is, we can have it. Why should we carry a load of guilt? Why should we live without the proper restraints that the Holy Spirit from Heaven places upon us.

A few years ago a radio station in Texas publicized the finding of J.R. Richards, the great fastball pitcher for the Houston Astros. At the time he was broke and living under a bridge. He went from on top in the big leagues to on bottom under the big bridge; a very common happening in our everyday world. I am sure that as J.R. lay under that bridge and listened to the traffic roaring by in the wee hours of the morning his mind wandered back to happier days.

It is so important for us to remember that things can go bad and they can go bad fast if we do not develop a strong and positive faith.

Only Jesus knows the disciplines that you and I need in our everyday existence. When He speaks, the peace that passes all understanding floods our being. He will satisfy our hunger with His multiplying hands. When we finally realize that every breath of air, every crumb of bread and every drop of water comes from His supply; we will then have the eternal security for which we so strongly desire. We must know that it is he that "Opens thy hand and satisfies the desire of every living thing." (Ps. 145:16) He always stands ready to give; at least one more opportunity.

We not only received the gift of life and the gift of eternal life when we were reborn; we received an awesome responsibility of doing God's labor.

Roy Angel was the senior pastor of Central Baptist Church, in Miami, Florida from 1936 until his retirement in 1962. He was a precious man of God that was gifted in his ability to both speak and write for the Lord. In his book, "Baskets Of Silver", Broadman Press, Nashville, TN, he relates this story:

"...In a little village in France after World War, a detachment of soldiers had been left as occupational troops to keep order in town. Time hung heavy on their hands. One day they decided to help the villagers restore their bombed homes and city. They started on the church. It was a big job, for the church had received a direct hit. They worked joyously and cheerfully, cleaning up debris, putting back the windows, and rebuilding the pews. Amid the debris they found a marble statue of Christ. It was badly broken, but they managed to cement it together and set it up in the niche in the wall. But search as they would, they could not find the hands of the statue of Christ. And so when they had finished arranging the statue in its place, a moment of inspiration came to one of them. He made a placard and hung it on the statue. These simple words were printed on it, "He has no hands but yours".

When I read these words, I can't really say that they make me feel good. When we really take inventory of our lives and we survey our labors that really count in the end, most of us come up too short. It makes me want to change. You and I are endued with a very heavy load ... we must perform His labor.

BRACING FOR THE ATTACK!

Earl Campbell, the hall of fame running back for the Houston Oilers and the New Orleans Saints, in 1989 after four years of retirement from football was doing fine. One day while riding down the highway he was attacked by fear and anxiety. This giant of a man that seemed to have everything going for him was suddenly rendered helpless, panicked with fear and unable to even leave his home.

After months of agony and being examined by doctors and psychiatrists, Earl found that what was happening to him was also happening to millions of others in America. He found that this condition can cause irrational fear, dizziness, rapid heartbeats, shortness of breath, trembling, hot flashes or chills, abdominal problems, loss of confidence and depression. It can also trigger substance abuse problems. It is a horror of hell that is spreading over our nation like a gas fed forest fire.

Our Bible teaches that there is a spirit of fear; a demon that will get in our face and do unbelievable acts to destroy our lives. It also teaches that there is a Holy Spirit from God that gives us power and power to spare to defeat these attackers. The scriptures say, "Jesus of Nazareth went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil." (Acts 10:38 KJV)

There is a storm on the horizon of your life and mine. Things are coming over the hill that are horrifying if we should see them in the spirit. I don't know what Earl Campbell knows about the spirit world, but I do know that an attack of the devil is much more powerful than the hit of an NFL linebacker. When these demons from Hades get into a life; only suffering and hell can follow. Fear and torment are not on the daily menu of the victorious Christian. Hell and all of its fury cannot and will not dominate the lives of real believers. When our hearts are right, when we know that our sins are forgiven, when we are filled with the Holy Ghost; we have the power. We have the power to walk through the blackest darkness that hell itself can cast upon us. We can brace for the attack and we can attack back. We can and do have the power over all evil. Jesus himself proclaimed, "I beheld satan as lightening fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy that nothing shall by any means hurt you." (Luke 10:18 & 19)

ALL WRAPPED UP

What is on your mind? The Apostle Paul, writing from the very depths of his soul and inspired by the Holy Spirit, penned these words: "... having your loins girt about with truth". (Ephesians 6:14)

Our loins represent our reproduction capacity. How is our mind running this machine that will make us productive soul winners? We all have our number one. Something or somebody is dominating our thought time. Our spiritual reproduction is directly related to what we are wrapped up with in our thoughts. There are thousands of subjects with which we can waste our time and energy. Many are not really bad, but what is their value when placed on the eternal menu?

I was reading where Charles Cook, from San Francisco, for eighteen years dreamed and worked on his experimental airplane. The article said, "He took little bits of Styrofoam, glass fiber and wood and painstakingly crafted them into an airplane, spurning manufactured kits to build each piece his own way ...". And then on its maiden flight crashed into flames killing Charles and his dream. The article went on to tell how he died doing what he loved to do.

I think we could all write a better script to the ending of a person's life. What good is a dream that crashes and burns you to ashes? Things could have ended much better. He could have listened to the ones who had built and studied thousands of planes. He could have followed the directions of an expert and still be flying his dream ... but he did it his way.

Frank Sinatra and Elvis Presley both sold hundreds of thousands of recordings of a song entitled, "I Did It My Way" and we can see lives in every age group that are still echoing this philosophy. It may not sound real bad, but when we place it in the proper perspective ... it is real bad. We have a Lord. We do not know how to live and we will never know how to live. We need directions for every millisecond of our lives. The last two words Frank uttered before going into eternity were, "I'm losing." I hope he was talking about his life here on earth and not his eternal home.

We are as helpless as newborns when it comes to knowing our future. Our Bibles say, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle.." (Psalm 32:8 & 9 KJV)

The wisest of the wise men wrote, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." (Proverbs 3:6 KJV)

So, we can be wrapped up in the right stuff. We can get all wrapped up in the Lord where permanent failure becomes an impossibility and happiness is for certain.

GIVING FAITH

If you happened to know of two people that were retiring next week and you had to choose which one's shoes in which to walk, who's would you choose if one had never gave any money to the Lord's work but saved one million dollars; or would you choose the next one who had not saved a dime but had given one million dollars over the years to the Lord's work?

It would take a real giver about one tenth of a second to make this decision. Anyone that gives knows that it brings benefits like no other activity can bring. I believe that giving puts money in your pocket, health in your body and comfort in your soul. Giving will make new friends, keep old ones, and give you good health so you might outlive them all. I well remember the first time that I gave blood. At that time I was underweight, a little frail and I sure did not feel that I had any blood to spare. The girl that was about to draw the blood from my arm started telling me how underweight and sickly she was before she started giving blood. She was a picture of health; she believed, and convinced me, that her health came from giving blood.

There was a story in our local newspaper just before Christmas that was a perfect example of what happens when someone just opens up and gives.

Rene Robinson, an artist from Atlanta was here in Tampa buying groceries at a local Sweet Bay market. As the clerk, Rebecca Harmon, was checking her out Renee was suddenly horrified because she realized she did not have enough money with her to pay the bill. She started removing groceries from the belt but Rebecca stopped her and continued to finish the checkout. The total came to \$100 and Renee had \$90. Rebecca reached for her pocketbook under the counter, retrieved \$10 and told Renee to be on her way. The next evening Renee was in a local Walmart being checked out and was sharing her story with the clerk. The lady that was next in line, who was listening, rolled her eyes and said, "Things like that always happen to other people; it has sure never happens to me." Renee said she decided to put the "Sweet Bay" on her. She told the clerk to check her out and she would pay her bill too.

She not only paid her bill but she followed her to the bus stop across the parking lot and gave her her cell phone number and offered to help with whatever need she could.

It doesn't stop here. Renee headed back to Rebecca's store to pay her the \$10 back and to give her a big fat tip.

When she arrived she told the store manager what had happened and he gave Rebecca a fifty dollar gift certificate and entered her name in the "Spirit of Santa Award" contest sponsored by the Florida Retail Federation.

It gets better. Unknowing, she won and they sent a professional Santa through Rebecca's line. When she started ringing him up, it happened again; Santa was short of money too. Rebecca reached for her pocketbook but this time Santa stopped her, reached in his pocket and gave her the money to pay the bill, \$500 in cash, a \$750 gift certificate and a gift certificate for Rebecca and her family to spend three days at Dayton Beach.

I believe that giving will bring a blessing no matter if it is a pint of blood, a piece of cake or as in this case, a ten-dollar bill. Jesus looks into the eyes of the very poor, the very rich and all of us that are in between. He sees our needs and our longings; with his thundering words of unlimited power he says, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down and shaken together, and running over ..." (Luke 6:38)

Giving makes you feel better, look better and act better. It is good medicine for whatever ailment you may have. It is a step of faith that will give you a knowing that something is going to come back and it is going to come back good. I feel sorry for stingy people. They miss so much and have a miserable existence. Their every need is never met. Mahatma Gandhi said, "Not even God would appear unto a hungry man except in the form of bread." If we will be honest with ourselves we will admit that needs keep coming over the hill. And it isn't always money. Rich people have just as many needs as poor people; different at times but they are just as, or sometimes more important. A real giver knows that every crumb of bread, every drop of water and every breath of life giving oxygen comes from the hand of our Heavenly Father.

Place your hand on your heart. If things are going right, it will pulsate about seventy times over the next sixty seconds. Do we have control of this little wonder of wonders that will outwork anything that man can make? No. It is controlled by the one that made all. The man that saved a million dollars over a lifetime would give it all just to keep this little machine going only a few more minutes when the end is coming. I don't believe in buying the blessings of the Lord, but I can't help but think he favors those who favor him. I do know that I am on his side and I want to learn a little more about being a good giver. We all do. We all know that giving faith is the generator that will energize and light every area of our lives! Right now, this is my day off and I am working the wee hours of the morning. Do you think I am doing this for anything other than a blessing that I will need in the future? It is my simple way of giving so that I may be a blessing to others and that my needs will be met as they come down the pike. You cannot find a better deal! Giving faith will detonate your dynamite and secure your future like no financial arrangement that any professional can prepare. You can start at any level and set any goal you wish. Giving helps us to stretch ourselves and is one of God's answers to the gambling urge. Even our Bibles challenge us in this area. The scriptures scream out, "Try it! Let me prove it to you! Your crops will be large, for I will guard them from insects and plagues. Your grapes won't shrivel away before they ripen", says the Lord almighty. "And all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a land sparkling with happiness. These are the promises of the Lord Almighty." (Mal 3:10 & 11 Living Bible)

This is God's "lottery" and you win every time. You can stand in the rain and not get wet easier than you can give to the Lord and not be blessed. The givers are the livers; and I want to be lined up on

their side of the ball! Giving faith will revolutionize our lives and knock out poverty forever; don't miss out on this weapon of weapons!

IN REVIEW

It is so easy to forget. Let's go over the high points of the things we just discussed. To stay positive is a very tough job. We must learn to keep on reprogramming ... over and over and over again.

- Number one ... Something great can happen. It may happen while you are in terrible trouble or while digging through the garbage. A miracle can come our way at any moment and under all conditions. Stay in your trial until you are prepared for the promotion! The God of Heaven is looking over your shoulder.
- Number two ... Radical change is the order of the day when we deal with Jesus. He can and will turn it around. He can make a miracle in the heart of a murderer and make a porn star precious. He knows how to treat average people great!
- Number three ... Failure only opens the door for another try. Edison had confidence in his laboratory assistant and God has confidence in you. Shake off that mistake or bad decision and go at it one more time.
- Number four ... Don't go from the big leagues to the big bridge. Don't let fear come in when you can fill that space with the Holy Ghost.
- Number five ... Our hands are His hands. There are some very important tasks that are going undone. We can start right where we are and change our world by changing our activities.
- Number six ... Get wrapped up in the right stuff. Don't build a dream out of garbage that will crash into flames. Don't be a loser in the end. We can do it His way.
- Number six: Remember that the givers are the liver. Let us turn our penny ante life loose and receive the King's allowance. It just may be a little better than what we are used to. Let us be a spark in the land that is sparkling with happiness!

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father ... please teach me to live ... the good life; the life that you have designed for me to develop and enjoy. Give me wisdom and understanding. Forgive all of my failures, shortcomings and sins. Help me to have that clean feeling that seems to have eroded with time. Jesus just be my Lord
... all of the time and every day.

Amen