

The eEncourager chapter one

Of Glimps and Glimpses

It was a gorgeous summer day in Atlanta, one of those very rare Georgia days with low humidity, refreshing breezes, and Gulf-water-blue skies. And our family had tickets to a Braves game! We had settled into our seats in time for the National Anthem, and our patriot hearts were stirred with the presentation of the Stars and Stripes. All eyes then fixed on the guest of honor who threw the first pitch, which was followed, of course, by spontaneous cheering and applause. What glorious emotions! You can take me out to the “*One, two, three strikes - You’re out!*” ballgame anytime!

Suddenly above the beautiful manicured field of perfectly mown bent grasses, there appeared a giant blimp! One of our precious little ones, whose identity shall remain a secret, for whatever reason had not yet conquered the terrible phonic “B-L,” and blurted out, “*Look, daddy, it’s the **glimp!***”

Now, to see a blimp from an adult perspective, spoiled somewhat by sophisticated scientific understanding, is to miss the sheer joy of a child’s innocent view. Such grandeur! Such mystery! Such wonder! Such awe! Behold, the Glimp! No matter how many times it appears, high and resting on nothing, it has a way all of its own of stretching our faith and filling us afresh with hope!

As we study the Life of Jesus, we are given by God’s Word and Spirit such glorious glimpses that can inspire and transform us. One of my favorites is Jesus’ trip with his family to the temple where, as we see in Luke 2, he struck up such conversations with the mature and learned that their minds were seized with awe, as if they had a child’s first view of a blimp!

“Where did this kid get this knowledge?! Where did he come from?! Who has been his Teacher?! How does he know such deep things?! How is it possible for one so young to have such a grasp

of eternal truths?! And whose turn is it, ah-hmm, to try to field HIS questions?!"

It is our tendency to run quickly to our personal, oft-times warmed-over God, places of identifying Him. Because we believe we know Him well, we would respond with great confidence, "He is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. He is Eternal Life. He is the Way and the Truth. He is from the beginning, and made all things by the Word of His power. He was in the Garden of Eden when our original parents fell into sin. He was with Noah in the ark and Abraham in the brush, and He made covenants with them. He knew the Law of Moses because He gave the same to Moses! He was David's best friend! He was there to welcome the Hebrew brothers into the fiery furnace! He is Yeshua Messiah, our Risen Redeemer!"

We would be correct on all points, but we would miss our Father's main point. The glimpses of our Savior in Scripture, like this one of Jesus' wisdom at such an early age, are intended mostly to emphasize **how** he lived and **how** we are to live by faith in Him. Father wants us to know all the above, and so much more of Christ, Who is our Life, but He primarily wants us to see Jesus the Way and the method we call **Grace** by which Christ lived and breathed. The world around us is dying to know – *If the Christian life really works, how does it really work?*

When my dad retired the first time from the Gospel ministry, he returned with Mom to their home in Chattanooga. They prayed and the Lord directed them to lock arms with the believers at the historic First Presbyterian Church (PCA). When then pastor Ben Haden contracted cancer, he needed a driver to take him frequently to Birmingham and back for treatments, which were successful. Dad became Ben's chauffeur and friend.

I had met a man near Macon years before, who had lost his wife and three children in a tragic auto accident. He told me about his deep and suicidal depression, and how he quit his job and shut everyone, including his own mother out of his life. He lived in darkness and squalor for many months, longing for death. One day his mother drove over and pushed her way into his filthy

place. She pled with him to get up and eat, to try to live again. He could not. As she was leaving, she chanced to turn on his little television set. Through tear-filled eyes she set the channel on anything that had clear audio. She left, giving up all hope for her son.

Several hours later, he awoke to a soothing masculine voice coming through his TV. The man was telling a story of God's grace, and he masterfully interwove the strong love of Jesus that took Him all the way to His cruel death on the Cross, and could transform anyone who would call on the Name of the Lord.

And from his hopeless place on that grimy carpet, he did call, and the Lord did hear and answer his sinner's prayer. He fell back to sleep in the first semblance of peace he had experienced in several years. The next morning he lifted his emaciated body, washed his face and opened his thick dust-filled curtains. And the voice reappeared. He was fully attentive and took note that it was a pastor named Ben Haden on a show called "*Changed Lives*." And the man's life had been changed – forever.

When I met him, he had a new job in a Christian bookstore, a new wife, **and** new children! In my eyes he was a modern-day kind of Job, and I hugged him as my brother, determining to tell the story to my dad's new friend, Ben. It was that very Ben that my daddy was taking to and from cancer treatments, and, of course, I wanted to know what it was like to be with Ben Haden for hours and hours!

"Dad, please tell me. I cannot even imagine what it must be like. How incredible to be with Ben, and for him to call you his friend!"

Now, over the years, my godly father received from the Lord many profound sayings, from thousands of hours of Bible study, ministry and especially compassionate visitation, which I look forward to sharing in his honor. But on that day he simply replied:

"I listen mostly."

In this moment, please listen to the Voice of Jesus. He taught His disciples, "*My sheep hear My Voice*," and we must, despite our

awe or doubt or fear, hear and understand this Scripture to be **literal**.

If we were only physical beings, of course, we would expect to hear Him with our ears. But we are much more than human bodies! We are human **beings**, and the crux of being made “in the image of” God, “Who is Spirit,” is that we are composed of both spirit and matter. Therefore, we are able to hear and know spiritual things spiritually by faith in Jesus Christ. For more on our human makeup, I recommend the poetic words of the wisest man who ever lived (Ecclesiastes 12, esp. vs. 6-7).

As we study the Gospels and the Epistles, we listen mostly, and **we get glimpses of how Jesus depended completely on the Father**. We see that **He relied totally on the Father**. We read and realize that **He did nothing and said nothing that was not from the Father, Who literally was His Life**.

Listen to Jesus’ appeal to Philip (John 14:9-11, ESV):

*“Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? **10** Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? **[Even] The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does His works. 11** Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works [of the Father through me - implied] themselves.”*

Just a few years later the apostle Paul echoes those incredibly revealing words of Jesus, as he reprovcs and teaches the believers at Galatia (2:20):

*“I have been crucified with Christ. **It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me**. And the life I now live in the flesh [my body], I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”*

Do you see the Glimp! Can you hear the Echo! It is “**not I, but Christ!**” Young Jesus astounded the Temple elders, **but it was the Father in and through Him doing the astounding!**

Did you notice in the tension-filled story (Luke 2: 41-52) how **long** Jesus was there, inquiring and teaching them?! Three days! Ding, ding, ding, red flags, giant sky-sailing blimps! Three days! Jonah! The tomb! There must be some amazing **glimpse** of life and death here! We can't afford to miss it!

*"Mom, dad, I'm really sorry, but I **MUST** be about my Father's Business!"*

*"Wait, buddy, what **Business** is that?! I am really trying to be patient with you, Jesus - to teach you **my trade**. You are going to be a **great** carpenter one day - **if** you can keep from being so easily distracted."*

*"Oh, dear Papa Joe, you have **no idea** all that I am going to do with just a couple of pieces of wood."*