



Hearts of Love

Tom & Debbie Tillman "to touch the world for Jesus Christ"

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Hearts of Love is a non-profit ministry, dedicated to spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ whenever and wherever we find open doors. Our first priority is to glorify God and lead whomever possible to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Please pray for us faithfully. We need your prayer, and we appreciate it more than we could ever say. Please consider us an extension of your ministry in this world, and support us with your prayer as such.

***May God richly
bless you!***

Tom & Debbie

Christmas, Cranberries and Trials

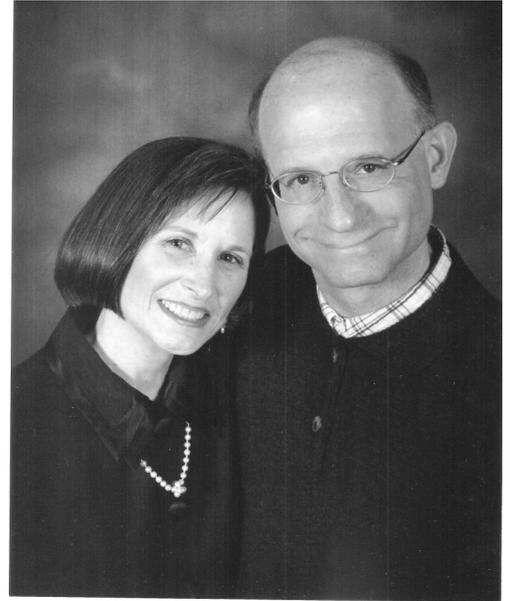
November and December means Thanksgiving and Christmas. We are reminded to be thankful to God for all the ways He has blessed us through the years. As individual children of God, we of His True Church, the greatest, most unimaginably wonderful gifts He has given each of us are: before He laid the foundation of the World, He chose and elected each and every one of us for Himself; then, at His exact, planned moment, He gave each of us, individually, His unspeakable gifts of 1) Repentance, 2) Faith to believe, and 3) Eternal Life; nothing in all of time and eternity could ever compare with those three. And, in order to make, possible His three gifts to us, He sent His Son into the World, which we celebrate at Christmas, Who willingly allowed Himself to be crucified in full payment for all our sin, which we celebrate on Resurrection Sunday.

Other things we enjoy during this time of year are turkey, ham and cranberries.

When I make cranberry sauce, I carefully select a bag of fresh cranberries; when I cook them, I use half the called-for sugar and a little uncalled-for salt. Then, instead of cooking them in water, I use pure cranberry juice which makes them so very much richer and more flavorful. Before I start, I carefully examine all the berries, removing any that are starting to rot as well as any which are merely starting to become soft and squishey; a few rotting berries can ruin the entire batch.

This time, as I was going through all the berries, an important realization came to me...

If you've read what I written, over the years, you'll perhaps have recognized a couple of things... first, I often write to that which God is working to teach me at any given time while secondly, you'll've noticed that I might, in your opinion, offer too much information. To the first, I could write non-stop for 20 years and not adequately cover all that God is working to teach me because I'm often a slow learner. As to the second, trying to force myself to



Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name IMMANUEL... God with us. Isa 7:14 For a child will be born to us, a son will be give to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called

***WONDERFUL
COUNSELOR
MIGHTY GOD
ETERNAL FATHER
PRINCE OF PEACE
Isaiah 9:6***

be open and honest is the only way I'm able to keep myself in check; when my whole life exploded, 30-some years ago, I really was at the bottom; I determined that the only way I was ever going to make it through the toughest, next first few weeks, months and years, was to force myself to be completely open and honest with anyone and everyone so, I developed the habit of being willing to offer up more 'openness' than might, sometimes, be necessary but for me, it's better to err on the side of openness, rather than indulging in isolation and dishonesty.

I've been told that I write more effectively than I speak; I can think clearly enough, to my own satisfaction, but I don't speak as well, so as to keep up with what I think; I easily say the wrong thing or fail to say the right thing. I do, however, take comfort in the fact that Paul wrote something similar about himself: *'For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.'* 2Cor 10:10 My own 'contemptibleness' might be easily enough recognized though the weighty and powerful part, perhaps, not so much... but I do try.

One of the reasons I've been so slow to learn over the years has been my choice, often, to respond to trials with

impatience and anger which brings me to trials.

Trials come from God; anything can be a trial, either having it or not having it and the degree to which something is a trial is in direct proportion to its value to me. If having my own way is most valuable to me, then every little thing that does not go my way will prove itself to be an insurmountable trial. If I cultivate patience and joy, then virtually nothing can overcome my patience and joy.

My greatest source of trial, for 56 years, has been regarding my music; that's how long I've been writing songs and singing. For most of that time, what I've done has often, seemed to me, to have been, by some people, unappreciated, unnoticed and even despised, thought of as nothing; that has been most obvious to me in the persons of 'music ministers,' and choir directors. Certainly there have been welcome exceptions, over the years, but they've seemed to me the vast minority.

Now, before you decide that I'm whining and complaining... I'm not; in fact, I'm coming to the place of actually appreciating all those individuals who've resisted me and my music.

Every one of those 'music-peoples,' I'm beginning to understand, have been

God's chosen tools in my life to chip away at the prideful edifice which has been my self-centered life. My music has been the most important part of my life, my dearest treasure... not so much, necessarily, the songs themselves, but what they represented to me: recognition, affirmation and accomplishment: the things I sought after so that I could feel important but also praise, glory and honor: the things which should only belong to God.

Trials are God's greatest gifts to us, after Salvation and Eternal Life, of course. He tells us, in James, that we should count it all joy when we encounter various trials. God causes trials in order to help us choose to be patient which, in turn enables us to become healthy and productive Christians, fully equipped for every work and every later trial.

God loves us. He wants to pour out upon us, throughout all Eternity, His unimaginable Eternal Rewards but those rewards are only 'earned' through faithful service to Him and one of the easiest, or most difficult, opportunities to gain Eternal Rewards is by our patient, joyful response to the trials He causes in our lives.

It's as if God has set before us a huge field, filled with marvelous treasures: gold, huge rubies, emeralds, sapphires and diamonds buried just under the surface and He has given us a very, very large bucket. Then, He begins to hit us with countless trials over and over and over, day in and day out. Every time we respond to any given trial, with patience and joy, He hands us a shovel and invites us to dig up the treasure under the spot where we are standing. Then, soon after, we encounter another trial, another opportunity and, if we've been faithful, another shovelful of precious treasure. We can never lose or forfeit the treasure we've already dug up, but we can miss our next opportunity. If we choose to think on these things, eventually, we begin to look forward to each trial, knowing that the Holy

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Spirit will enable us to respond in patience and joy, thus gaining another unimaginable Eternal Reward which we send ahead to the Bank of Heaven.

What I've often failed to understand is, that it's my own willingness to be impatient or angry which then causes every little thing to seem like a huge and imposing trial; if I'd choose to be patient and not respond in anger... so many of those little things, would only seem like little things; when I write it out, it doesn't seem like it should be that hard to grasp...

In Genesis, we read of someone else who held a precious treasure in his heart: his son, Isaac, but when God told Abraham to sacrifice his son, he was willing to do so but God stayed his hand so as not to sacrifice Isaac; God said: *'By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven...'* Gen 22:16

I don't know that God will ever cause my music to have any further reach, before the Rapture, but this I do know: it is not more valuable to me than is my relationship with Him; so, as far as I'm able, my desire is to offer it to Him, to not withhold it at all.

Each of us must determine what our most precious earthly treasure is; then

we must decide whether or not we are willing to offer it to God as a willing sacrifice.

When we finally decide that our most precious earthly treasure is peace and joy in our relationship with God, then most of what previously showed itself as a trial, now reveals itself as one more opportunity to rejoice in the Lord while gaining another invaluable Eternal Treasure.

Back to the cranberries: as I carefully pored over each cranberry, it's as if I heard God say: *'if you are this careful with cranberries, being certain to choose only the very best for the ones you love, do you think I would be less attentive and careful in my care of you? If every cranberry must pass through your hand, wouldn't you expect that every trial must also pass through My Hand?'*

Every trial which God causes in our lives, day in and day out, is personally chosen and handcrafted with two things held in careful balance: No trial is ever more difficult than is possible for me to withstand, in patience, but every trial is held in perfect tension, to be the most difficult possible, in any given situation, without being more difficult that I can withstand, in order to create the perfect opportunity for gaining the greatest possible Eternal Reward while causing the greatest

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amount of growth in my patient, joyful walk with the Lord.

Every day during which the Rapture does not occur is a most valuable 24 hours, given as a gift from God, during which I have the wondrous opportunity to gain unimaginable, unbelievable, incredible Eternal Rewards; this tiny slice of Eternity, living within our sin-infected dying Earthly bodies is our only, so-short, opportunity to gain those unheard-of Eternal Rewards!!

As we begin our next year, this side of Heaven, join me as I seek to train myself to see every trial, large or small, as God's special love gift to me, as He offers me free and easy access to the rewards He is offering me, the values of which, all the World's gold could not purchase even one.

You can touch the World for Jesus Christ... Please partner with us in these last days. The Harvest is Great, but the laborers are few. *Matt 9:38*



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