

APRIL-MAY 2025

# Glory Magazine

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## BUNNIES OR LAMBS?

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BY AL TUCKER





## BUNNIES OR LAMBS?



The Easter Holiday is upon us... but what should we be celebrating? A bunny with a basket full of eggs (which doesn't make sense) or a lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world? Over the years, the world has been increasing its agendas, and Christians are hard-pressed to find a stuffed lamb in the box stores, let alone items with a cross on it. Why? As the traditions of men continue, the true meaning of the holy day (what *holiday* means) is watered down for mass consumption of products, chocolates, and toys. When we do things according to the traditions of men, we can become familiar, not seeking the truth of the matter. That familiarity can cause one to forget the reason the tradition began in the first place (if they're not diligent).

The word *Easter* is also curious when it comes to the true meaning of the celebration over death, hell, and the grave. Easter is a pre-Christian Old English word derived from the pagan goddess Eostre (Ostara), which means *rising dawn*. The folklore goddess of spring and fertility, she was said to be the namesake of the Anglo-Saxon calendar month Eosturmonath (now translated *Paschal Month*). In more modern times, Eostre was associated with hares. However,

there is no current evidence other than Venerable Bede, an 8th-century monk, who wrote about her in *The Reckoning of Time*. There are no archaeological findings of her existence, and it seems she was not worshipped until his book. His writings were the catalyst for the celebration of the Paschal Lamb to be named Easter because it coincided with the rise of Christianity and was also a spring event. The King James Version of the Bible mentions "Easter" only once in Acts 12:4. However, it is a mistranslation of the Greek word "Pascha," which means *Passover*, the Paschal Sacrifice of the Lamb.

Are we too "familiar" with the "tradition" of Easter (bunnies, colored eggs, baskets full of candy, and family gatherings with no reverence)? Or is it time we resurrect its true meaning—the celebration of God offering His only Son, the Paschal Lamb—and live a life teaching others and honoring what God did to save us from sin? From ourselves? I pray we celebrate this most joyous of occasions with our families and choose to focus on the latter.

Blessings and honor,  
*Angela Errett*



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*That I may publish with the voice  
of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy  
wondrous works. Psalm 26:7*

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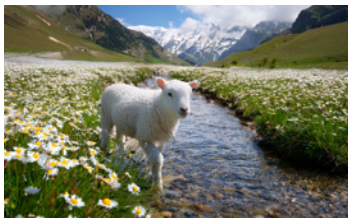
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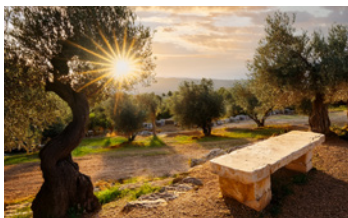
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*Content in each issue is inspired. We do not know what will be on the pages until it is completed.*



by Bob Jacobus

# *Easter* *Is Not A Rerun*





## Author's Prelude

*Sometimes, it helps to understand the genesis of an essay to appreciate the full context. Today, God knows that there are many weary Saints still marching but are pretty much out of gas. This composition is to encourage and remind those of their Captain, even the Captain of the Host, who began the great march 2000 years ago. For the soldier, each holiday on the Christian calendar is at risk of becoming just another thing we do...a rerun. They are not!*



Every spring, Easter is celebrated as a holiday. To some, it is the celebration of new life, a new spring. To others, it's just a rerun of the previous years' traditions. To those who truly understand the myth, legend, and reality of the Christ, it is a profound time of introspection, reflection, and renewal of purpose. It is most certainly not a rerun.

As a child, Easter is viewed as a spring holiday. Schools are normally closed, so it was, and is, a welcome week off. A trip to the distant home of a grandparent or maybe grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins all meet at your house for a big meal and lots of good times. Perhaps a child's view is not far off. There are the basic elements of joy, renewed family ties and relationships, the practice of long-standing traditions, and most certainly not a copy or rerun of the preceding year's activities.

To some, Easter is the time to celebrate the new cycle of life that emerges annually with the daffodils. It is just a convenient time to take a deep breath and get some fresh air to them. Everybody else's perspective is just tolerated or ignored. Indeed, it is a beautiful time of the year and soothes the natural man's need to be connected to the world in which he lives. However, vigilance is the order of the day. You see terrible turmoil and other conditions occur in this time frame without regard for human needs or traditions, most certainly not a standard rerun.


Many religions and worldview-specific groups that are not Christian have traditions and practices that coincide with Easter, even some that cohabit. Ironically, the celebration we now call Easter was hijacked by pagans when Christianity was made a state religion in the Roman Empire. Some of the Easter practices were also repurposed. Year in and year out, the same practice on the same relative dates. Routine religious activities are habits without life...yes, reruns. People yearn for more.

In the annals of human history, few figures have stirred the hearts and minds of people like Jesus Christ. Revered by billions as the Son of God and the Savior of humanity, Jesus' life and legacy are enshrined in myth, legend, and historical reality. Titles of Jesus in the Bible point towards the unification of the myth, legend, and reality merging on the Cross of Calvary and in the tomb of the Resurrection. Three would be the Son of Man, the Lamb of God, and the King of Kings.

The title "Son of Man" appears frequently in the Gospels, and Jesus Himself uses it to refer to His mission and identity. In mythological terms, this title evokes the image of a divine being who bridges the gap between heaven and earth. According to ancient Jewish tradition, the "Son of Man" was a messianic figure prophesied to bring salvation and establish God's kingdom on earth. This archetype resonates with humanity's







“THE NEXT DAY JOHN SEETH  
JESUS COMING UNTO HIM,  
AND SAITH, BEHOLD THE  
LAMB OF GOD, WHICH  
TAKETH AWAY THE SIN OF  
THE WORLD.”

JOHN 1:29 (KJV)

age-old yearning for a redeemer who transcends the mundane and ushers in a new era of righteousness.

Legends surrounding the “Son of Man” amplify this mythic dimension. Stories of Jesus performing miracles, healing the sick, and resurrecting the dead have been passed down through generations, imbuing the historical figure with an aura of the supernatural. These legendary accounts serve not only to inspire faith but also to underscore the belief in a divine intervention in human affairs embodied in the person of Jesus Christ.

While myths and legends paint a broad and often symbolic picture, historical reality anchors Jesus in a specific time and place. The title “Lamb of God” is deeply rooted in the historical and cultural context of first-century Judea. This designation reflects Jesus’ role as the sacrificial lamb, an idea central to Jewish Passover traditions. Jesus’ crucifixion is seen as the ultimate sacrifice, fulfilling the prophetic imagery of a lamb led to slaughter for the redemption of mankind’s sins.

Historical records, both biblical and extra-biblical, provide evidence of Jesus’ life and death. Roman historians such as Tacitus and Jewish sources like Josephus corroborate the existence of Jesus and His crucifixion under Pontius Pilate. These accounts lend credence to the historical reality of the “Lamb of God,” whose sacrificial act is commemorated by Christians worldwide through the Eucharist and other sacred rituals.

The interplay between myth and reality in the figure of Jesus is exemplified in the title “Lamb of God.” While the historical facts of Jesus’ crucifixion are well-documented, the theological interpretation of this event is steeped in mythic and symbolic language. The notion of a divine being sacrificing Himself for humanity’s salvation transcends ordinary historical events. It enters the realm of profound spiritual truth.

The title “King of Kings” elevates Jesus to a position of supreme authority and divine rulership. This designation is both a theological assertion and a reflection of the



early Christian community's belief in Jesus' ultimate sovereignty. In mythic terms, the "King of Kings" echoes ancient narratives of divine kingship, in places gods and demigods rule with absolute power and benevolence.

Legends of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances and His promise to return as the triumphant ruler further solidify the "King of Kings" imagery. These stories underscore the belief in Jesus' ongoing presence and ultimate victory over evil. The theological implications of this title are vast, influencing Christian eschatology and the understanding of Christ's role in the cosmic order.

Historically, Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God was radical and subversive, challenging the political and religious authorities of His time. The early Christian community's faith in Jesus as the "King of Kings" provided hope and resilience in the face of persecution and adversity. Eschatologically, this title points to a future reality where Jesus reigns supreme, fulfilling the promises of a new heaven and a new earth.

Christ's myth, legend, and reality are inextricably interwoven, each aspect enriching the understanding of who Jesus is and what He represents. The titles "Son of Man," "Lamb of God," and "King of Kings" encapsulate the multifaceted nature of His identity, drawing from mythological archetypes, legendary narratives, and historical events. Together, they paint a portrait of a figure who transcends time and space, embodying the profound hope and divine mystery at the heart of the Christian faith.

In contemplating the relation of myth, legend, and reality in the life of Christ, one is invited to journey beyond the confines of history and enter a realm where the human and divine converge. In this sacred space, that the enduring legacy of Jesus continues to inspire, challenge, and transform the world. At Easter, the living, dynamic, time of year, people can renew the heritage of a believer and follower of Christ. *It is never a rerun.*

“THESE SHALL MAKE WAR  
WITH THE LAMB, AND THE  
LAMB SHALL OVERCOME  
THEM: FOR HE IS LORD OF  
LORDS, AND KING OF KINGS:  
AND THEY THAT ARE WITH  
HIM ARE CALLED, AND  
CHOSEN, AND FAITHFUL.”

REVELATION 17:14 (KJV)



Cross with crown of thorns: Text to Image AI Illustration



# Refuse To Partner With A Thief



“

**YOUR PRIDE CAN BRING YOU DOWN. HUMILITY  
WILL BRING YOU HONOR. YOU ARE YOUR OWN  
WORST ENEMY IF YOU TAKE PART IN A CRIME. YOU  
WILL NOT BE ABLE TO TELL THE TRUTH EVEN WHEN  
PEOPLE THREATEN YOU. FEAR CAN BE A TRAP, BUT  
IF YOU TRUST IN THE LORD, YOU WILL BE SAFE.**

**PROVERBS 29:23-25 (ERV)**

**YOUR FATHER IS THE DEVIL. YOU BELONG TO HIM.  
YOU WANT TO DO WHAT HE WANTS. HE WAS  
A MURDERER FROM THE BEGINNING. HE WAS  
ALWAYS AGAINST THE TRUTH. THERE IS NO TRUTH  
IN HIM. HE IS LIKE THE LIES HE TELLS. YES, THE  
DEVIL IS A LIAR. HE IS THE FATHER OF LIES.**

**JOHN 8:44 (ERV)**

**H**ow many reading this have heard the phrase, “The devil is a liar.” It’s not just something said in jest; it is the truth revealed by Jesus to the Pharisees in the Book of John. The devil is the originator of deceit and lies. The Bible also elaborates that the ‘flesh,’ humanity’s sinful nature, is the enemy of God (see Romans 8:3). The inner character and motivations of a man, or the ‘heart of a man,’ reveals the untrustworthy desires of a person (see Jeremiah 17:9). God alone is Truth. Many still do not want to hear the truth and remain deceived as to who is really their father by denying the God of Truth, submitting to Him, and believing in the salvation He offers for their souls to live in eternity.

## ***PRIDE AND ITS FALL***

Pride has been present in our societies since the fall of man and is very evident in our culture today in more ways than one. I am not talking about a healthy dose of pride for accomplishing something or rejoicing over an event. I am referring to that state of insolence, such as having an unreasonable, ostentatious belief in one’s self-importance and having contempt for others who disagree with them. Such a spirit of desire being raised up and perceived as “truth” will only cause the one under its deception to be laid low or humiliated.



## ***HUMILITY BRINGS HONOR***

Humility, on the other hand, conditions the spirit of a man to understand truth. A man under pride will never digress from his perception of a situation; however, a man operating in humility understands he must discipline himself to align his spirit with the spirit of Truth. What is truth? Every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God (see Matthew 4:4). Jesus even told Pilate this in John 18 verse 37, before he asked, “What is truth?” (See John 18:37-38)

**“PILATE THEREFORE SAID UNTO HIM, ART THOU A KING THEN? JESUS ANSWERED, THOU SAYEST THAT I AM A KING. TO THIS END WAS I BORN, AND FOR THIS CAUSE CAME I INTO THE WORLD, THAT I SHOULD BEAR WITNESS UNTO THE TRUTH. EVERY ONE THAT IS OF THE TRUTH HEARETH MY VOICE. PILATE SAITH UNTO HIM, WHAT IS TRUTH? AND WHEN HE HAD SAID THIS, HE WENT OUT AGAIN UNTO THE JEWS, AND SAITH UNTO THEM, I FIND IN HIM NO FAULT AT ALL.”**

JOHN 18:37-38 (KJV)

## ***THE ENEMY WITHIN***

When a person takes part in a crime, they have become their own worst enemy. So, who is their father again? Yep, not the Lord, but the one they are in league with. Again, none of us are perfect, but a righteous man will repent of his guilt and get up again when they’ve messed up. However, an unrighteous man will connive, lie, and actively pursue avenues to cover up the crime, even resorting to anarchy to avoid the truth. This type of what I’ll call “possession” blinds the host from reality, let alone seeing that their actions are beyond human reasoning and do not line up with anything other than the deceiver.

## ***TRUTH ALLUDES THE LIAR***

While under this influence, a person will do whatever it takes to avoid paying the penalty for their deception. Even under extreme threat and placed under oath, to tell the truth, they refuse. The curse is upon them, and they are compelled to protect their lies because of the spirit they serve. So, they participated in the lie, but because of the lie, they concealed the lie. Self-preservation is a contributing motivation instead of revealing the truth, repenting, serving the penalty, and living in freedom from deceit.

## ***DON'T FALL FOR THE TRAP***

Fear and anxiety can cause people to do strange things. Fear of what people will think is a strong motivator for

bad behavior. We can all relate when it comes to lying or deception, i.e., telling only half-truths. Even Abraham lied about Sarah being his sister. However, when deception brings debilitating fear, another level of the curse arises if it is not dealt with. It sets in motion a level of difficulty which has torment and temptation associated with it. Many sins can become options through the lens of fear. When people fear man more than God’s justice, they are entrapped by the deceivers’ snare and are destroyed.

**“THERE IS NO FEAR IN LOVE; BUT PERFECT LOVE CASTETH OUT FEAR: BECAUSE FEAR HATH TORMENT. HE THAT FEARETH IS NOT MADE PERFECT IN LOVE.”**

1 JOHN 4:18 (KJV)

## ***TRUST IN THE LORD***

We began with pride and humility. Suppose someone exalts themselves or ideas by bloviating and making themselves appear more important than they are. In that case, they’ll eventually be exposed for their deception and, as the Lord puts it, “shall be abased.” However, if people humble themselves, honor will come upon them.

Next, the enemy within can bring guilt if we partner with the thief, and our ears will not receive the truth. Peter even partnered with the adversary by not agreeing with the truth that Jesus revealed about events that would unfold. Three times, he disagreed and looked at the events to come from a human, sinful nature. Peter was unable to receive the truth that Jesus would suffer and die and rise on the third day. Jesus did not sway from what the Father had revealed to Him (see Matthew 16:21-24) because He can only speak Truth. To make truth foremost in our thoughts, we must delight in the Word day and night to know what the Lord says about a thing. Those who don’t partner with the Lord, do not receive the Holy Spirit, hasten destruction willfully, and hate their own souls.

Finally, we should not be slaves to fear, especially regarding man. Our duty as Kingdom citizens is to emulate our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus died so that those who believe in Him, even if they must serve a sentence here in the physical, would be made righteous through HIS sacrifice. Their rebirth in the Spirit would save them from the second death: no life with the Lord in Spirit. When we put our full faith and trust in the Lord for protection, supply, and salvation, and partner with His instructions, we shall escape the snare and be delivered into His glorious light. *If God be for me, who can come against me!*




A large, gnarled olive tree dominates the left side of the frame. The sun is positioned behind the tree's canopy, creating a brilliant starburst effect with rays of light radiating outwards. The ground is covered in dry, golden-brown leaves and small green plants. In the background, other olive trees and distant hills are visible under a hazy sky.

by Jason DePoy

# He Arose, Now *Arise*





**A**s a young boy, I can remember feverishly rubbing my face raw with a face cloth in an effort to erase the freckles that were so prominently staring back at me in the mirror. I can also remember envying all the boys in school who could spike their hair to stand up. As a kid with frizzy, curly hair, it just wasn't possible until my mom reverse-engineered a perm to straighten my hair so

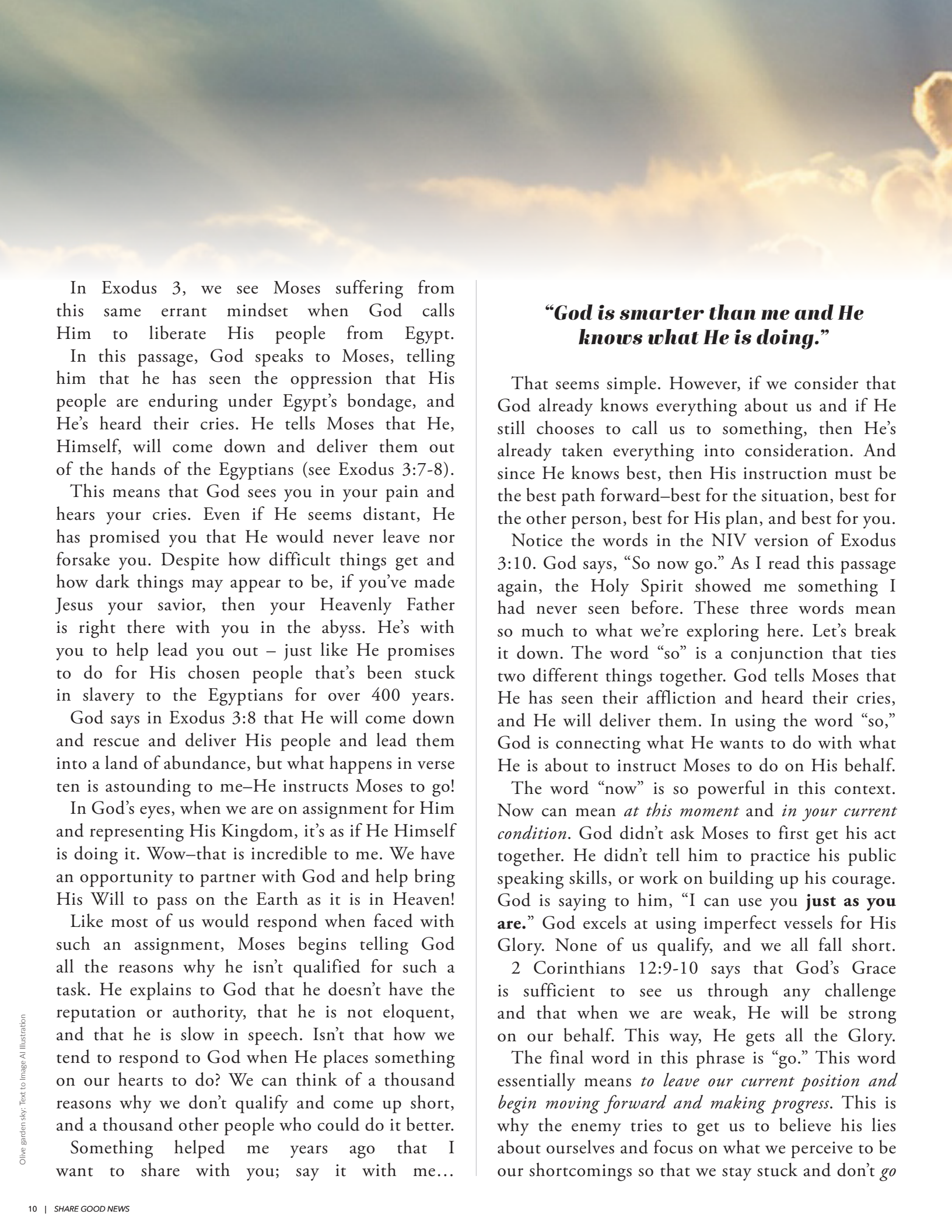
I, too, could sport the spike.

Why do we always envy others and wish we looked like them, had what they have, or could do what they can do?

It may not have been freckles or frizzy hair that made you feel inferior and insignificant, but perhaps something else did.

I believe it's a tactic of the adversary to keep us distracted and derail us from fulfilling God's call on our life.





In Exodus 3, we see Moses suffering from this same errant mindset when God calls Him to liberate His people from Egypt.

In this passage, God speaks to Moses, telling him that he has seen the oppression that His people are enduring under Egypt's bondage, and He's heard their cries. He tells Moses that He, Himself, will come down and deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians (see Exodus 3:7-8).

This means that God sees you in your pain and hears your cries. Even if He seems distant, He has promised you that He would never leave nor forsake you. Despite how difficult things get and how dark things may appear to be, if you've made Jesus your savior, then your Heavenly Father is right there with you in the abyss. He's with you to help lead you out – just like He promises to do for His chosen people that's been stuck in slavery to the Egyptians for over 400 years.

God says in Exodus 3:8 that He will come down and rescue and deliver His people and lead them into a land of abundance, but what happens in verse ten is astounding to me—He instructs Moses to go!

In God's eyes, when we are on assignment for Him and representing His Kingdom, it's as if He Himself is doing it. Wow—that is incredible to me. We have an opportunity to partner with God and help bring His Will to pass on the Earth as it is in Heaven!

Like most of us would respond when faced with such an assignment, Moses begins telling God all the reasons why he isn't qualified for such a task. He explains to God that he doesn't have the reputation or authority, that he is not eloquent, and that he is slow in speech. Isn't that how we tend to respond to God when He places something on our hearts to do? We can think of a thousand reasons why we don't qualify and come up short, and a thousand other people who could do it better.

Something helped me years ago that I want to share with you; say it with me...

### ***“God is smarter than me and He knows what He is doing.”***

That seems simple. However, if we consider that God already knows everything about us and if He still chooses to call us to something, then He's already taken everything into consideration. And since He knows best, then His instruction must be the best path forward—best for the situation, best for the other person, best for His plan, and best for you.

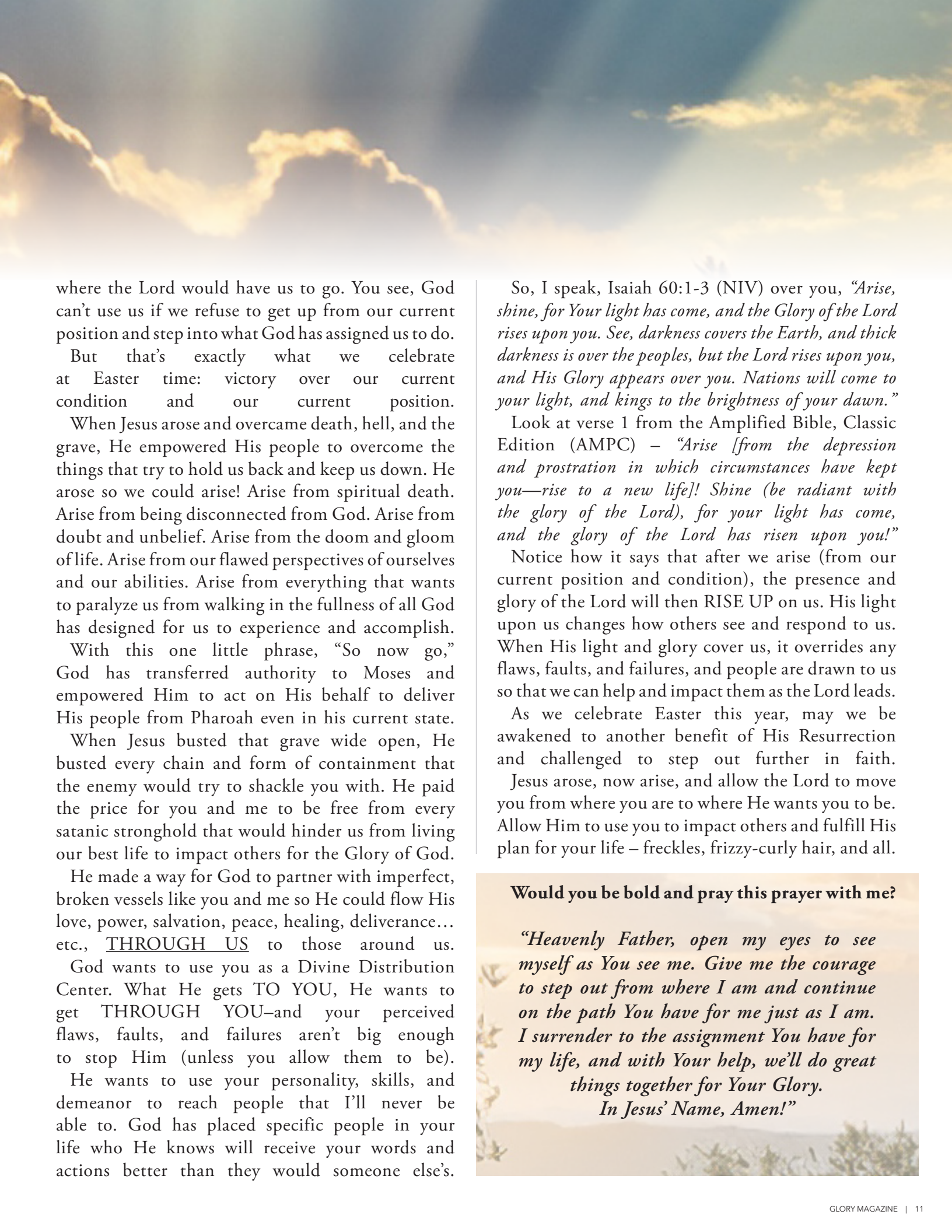
Notice the words in the NIV version of Exodus 3:10. God says, “So now go.” As I read this passage again, the Holy Spirit showed me something I had never seen before. These three words mean so much to what we're exploring here. Let's break it down. The word “so” is a conjunction that ties two different things together. God tells Moses that He has seen their affliction and heard their cries, and He will deliver them. In using the word “so,” God is connecting what He wants to do with what He is about to instruct Moses to do on His behalf.

The word “now” is so powerful in this context. Now can mean *at this moment* and *in your current condition*. God didn't ask Moses to first get his act together. He didn't tell him to practice his public speaking skills, or work on building up his courage. God is saying to him, “I can use you **just as you are.**” God excels at using imperfect vessels for His Glory. None of us qualify, and we all fall short.

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 says that God's Grace is sufficient to see us through any challenge and that when we are weak, He will be strong on our behalf. This way, He gets all the Glory.

The final word in this phrase is “go.” This word essentially means *to leave our current position and begin moving forward and making progress*. This is why the enemy tries to get us to believe his lies about ourselves and focus on what we perceive to be our shortcomings so that we stay stuck and don't go





where the Lord would have us to go. You see, God can't use us if we refuse to get up from our current position and step into what God has assigned us to do.

But that's exactly what we celebrate at Easter time: victory over our current condition and our current position.

When Jesus arose and overcame death, hell, and the grave, He empowered His people to overcome the things that try to hold us back and keep us down. He arose so we could arise! Arise from spiritual death. Arise from being disconnected from God. Arise from doubt and unbelief. Arise from the doom and gloom of life. Arise from our flawed perspectives of ourselves and our abilities. Arise from everything that wants to paralyze us from walking in the fullness of all God has designed for us to experience and accomplish.

With this one little phrase, "So now go," God has transferred authority to Moses and empowered Him to act on His behalf to deliver His people from Pharaoh even in his current state.

When Jesus busted that grave wide open, He busted every chain and form of containment that the enemy would try to shackle you with. He paid the price for you and me to be free from every satanic stronghold that would hinder us from living our best life to impact others for the Glory of God.

He made a way for God to partner with imperfect, broken vessels like you and me so He could flow His love, power, salvation, peace, healing, deliverance... etc., THROUGH US to those around us.

God wants to use you as a Divine Distribution Center. What He gets TO YOU, He wants to get THROUGH YOU—and your perceived flaws, faults, and failures aren't big enough to stop Him (unless you allow them to be).

He wants to use your personality, skills, and demeanor to reach people that I'll never be able to. God has placed specific people in your life who He knows will receive your words and actions better than they would someone else's.

So, I speak, Isaiah 60:1-3 (NIV) over you, "*Arise, shine, for Your light has come, and the Glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the Earth, and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you, and His Glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.*"

Look at verse 1 from the Amplified Bible, Classic Edition (AMPC) – "*Arise [from the depression and prostration in which circumstances have kept you—rise to a new life]! Shine (be radiant with the glory of the Lord), for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you!*"

Notice how it says that after we arise (from our current position and condition), the presence and glory of the Lord will then RISE UP on us. His light upon us changes how others see and respond to us. When His light and glory cover us, it overrides any flaws, faults, and failures, and people are drawn to us so that we can help and impact them as the Lord leads.

As we celebrate Easter this year, may we be awakened to another benefit of His Resurrection and challenged to step out further in faith.

Jesus arose, now arise, and allow the Lord to move you from where you are to where He wants you to be. Allow Him to use you to impact others and fulfill His plan for your life – freckles, frizzy-curly hair, and all.

**Would you be bold and pray this prayer with me?**

*"Heavenly Father, open my eyes to see myself as You see me. Give me the courage to step out from where I am and continue on the path You have for me just as I am. I surrender to the assignment You have for my life, and with Your help, we'll do great things together for Your Glory.*

*In Jesus' Name, Amen!"*



# REVEALING God's Glory

By Al Tucker

“THE LORD HIMSELF WATCHES OVER YOU! **The Lord stands as your protective shade.**”

*Psalms 121:5 (NLT)*



l-r: Lone Oak, Kincheloe Rd., Harrison County; Mountain Farm, Red House, Maryland



My last testimony was about something rare in today's world, extravagant love. Essentially, it was about loving others much more than we love ourselves. You may remember the story of my Auntie Beat and Uncle Arthur, who were very poor people but loved their nephews so much that they made our encounters very special in how they spoiled us. Or maybe you remember the story of Mary, who poured out an extremely expensive perfume upon Jesus' feet and wiped them dry with her hair. His disciples were aghast at what they believed to be an incredibly foolish act. But Jesus, who was only days away from being arrested, flogged, scourged, scorned, and crucified, hailed Mary's extravagance and exclaimed,

*“Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me”* (Matthew 26:10 RSV). If you read my entire previous testimony, you know I shared with you about how I learned that I needed to start loving God and others more extravagantly.

This testimony further explores extravagant love by focusing on how God lavishes love on us and what we can learn to enhance our walk with Jesus. As I write this, one of God's glorious gifts is exploding around us. Here in north-central West Virginia, winter's dullness and frigid weather give way to His gift of spring with its welcomed profusion of color, the sweet smell of blossoming shrubs and trees, and the melodies of songbirds galore. As spring captures our consciousness, we realize it is more than just a season of warmer

Photos: © Backyard Photography, Alan Tucker





# “TO EVERYTHING THERE IS A SEASON, A time for every purpose under heaven”

*Ecclesiastes 3:1 (NKJV)*

weather; it is a season of renewal, excitement, and hope. I find God’s timing of spring’s rebirth as pure perfection. Spring comes precisely when we need it. I could spend several testimonies on how spring blesses my life. Still, my focus this time is on an ever-faithful and abundantly loving God, our blessing creator.

I love that Easter falls during nature’s season of rebirth. I often think that God purposely timed the awakening of His creation here on earth by sending His Son to drive out the darkness of the world. The symmetry of warm sunlight stimulating rebirth in the natural world and God’s eternal light offering hope and salvation to mankind is fascinating. However, what is more significant to me is the concept of light overcoming darkness, an essential theme throughout the Bible. It symbolizes how God spiritually enlightens our hearts, minds, and,



Above: Grandview New River Gorge National Park, Raleigh County; Early Blooming Magnolia, Lewis County

in essence, our entire being. How important is this concept of light for us? Jesus answered this question best: “*Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness but have the light of life”* (John 8:12 NKJV).





From top: Crab  
Apple Blossoms;  
Tulip Beauty;  
Apple Blossoms



Jesus didn't just show up on earth by happenstance. It was Godly inspired, planned, and enacted for one reason: Our Father loves us so much that He wanted to redeem us from the darkness of sin for Himself. Please reread that and ponder it for a moment. I'll make it easy for you and rewrite it. WE are celebrating Easter for one reason: Our Father loves us so much that He wanted to redeem us from the darkness of sin for Himself. That might sound familiar. In John 3:16, the Apostle expresses it much better than I, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"* (John 3:16 NKJV). We've seen and heard that verse so many times; to some, it might seem stale, even moot. But it is the most extravagantly loving statement ever recorded to the born-again Christian. It is the only reason Easter exists, not for painted eggs for children to find, Easter bonnets or any other finery, or for family gatherings around a good meal, but solely to provide mankind God's path to salvation.



Christ Crucified, Gloucester Cathedral, England

**"FOR GOD, WHO SAID,  
"Let light shine out of  
darkness," MADE HIS  
LIGHT SHINE IN OUR HEARTS  
TO GIVE US THE LIGHT OF  
THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S  
GLORY DISPLAYED IN THE  
FACE OF CHRIST."  
2 Corinthians 4:6 (NIV)**

It is hard for me to get my mind around that God loves you and me so much that He would put His only Son through such a torturous death so we could live through Him (see 1 John 4:9). Add to that Jesus' overwhelming desire to please His Father by bearing our sins on the cross so we could become a Child of God. Jesus, who knew no sin, did have some second thoughts in the Garden of Gethsemane, though. He prayed, *"My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will"* (Matthew 26:39 ESV). Thankfully for us, Jesus loved His Father unconditionally and always did what pleased Him (see John 8:29). So, Jesus willingly completed God's plan





Above: Canaan Crosses, Goshen Road, Upshur County; Below: Stained Glass, Chapel Hill UMC, Buckhannon

Photos: © Backyard Photography, Alan Tucker

for our Salvation by dying on that cross. Three days later, angels would roll away the stone of darkness, allowing Jesus' eternal light to shine forth on that first Easter morning. **He is Risen, He is Risen, He is Risen indeed!** Today and this coming Easter morning, His light still shines forth, inviting everyone to come to the foot of the cross to be washed in His blood and set free!

I accepted His invitation when I was seventy and have been bathed in His extravagant love ever since. That was twelve years ago, and it was the start of my spiritual journey, my walk with Jesus. That's when I picked up my cross to follow Him. I didn't know what that meant back then, nor did I know where we were going. When I say "we," I mean Jesus and me. Prior to that day, at the foot of the cross, I followed my selfish worldly desires. However, it didn't take long before I realized something had changed, as my old ways no longer seemed relevant. I began thirsting for something new, a new purpose. I would eventually learn that something, that purpose, was all about bringing glory to God. I didn't understand it initially, but I knew following Him was where I needed to head. One of the first scripture verses that touched my heart is 2 Peter 3:18 (pictured right).

As Peter instructed, I learned early in my walk that I needed to dedicate the rest of my life to growing in grace and knowledge of Jesus for the sole purpose of bringing glory to God the Father. But how do you get started?



**“BUT GROW IN THE GRACE AND KNOWLEDGE OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.”**

***2 Peter 3:18 (NIV)***



In the book 1 Corinthians, Paul talks about new Christians being infants who are spiritually immature (see 1 Corinthians 3:1-3). Wisdom doesn't come upon us all at once; that's why he says we should first be fed milk, just as any infant. I quickly learned that meant beginning with the basics of the Gospel. Here are two examples from the Gospels that were so important for me to learn. Jesus tells us to listen with OPEN HEARTS so we will receive more revelation (see Mark 4:25). He tells us to obey Him just as He sought only to fulfill the desire of His Father that sent Him (see John 5:30). Looking back, I now know the reason for the need to understand the Gospels, which is if you are going to walk with Jesus, you first need to know and then obey His commands. You can't be about doing your own thing anymore. I discovered that I needed to let His light and truth guide me, and I chose to do so. FYI, you can only follow Him by choosing to do so, and He knows if you make that choice. You can fool others and yourself, but you can't fool Jesus. He knows our hearts better than anyone.

Jesus talked about letting the seeds of understanding fall on fertile ground and let it be watered and tended so we eventually begin producing fruit ourselves. The same applies to new Christians, just like a garden, which takes time to grow and produce. There are no shortcuts; at least for me, there weren't. I realized I needed to start digging deeper into scripture, spending more time in prayer, participating in Bible studies, not only attending church regularly but paying attention more, joining other Christians in good works for the needy, using my gifts and talents for others, etc., all for God's glory.

So, here I am, twelve years later, still trying to mature in my faith with the sole purpose of trying to bring glory to God, and I wouldn't have it any other way. I can't imagine being more blessed and grateful for the journey I have been on! Looking back, I realize I was like Paul indicated; I was an infant who was happy knowing that "Jesus loves me, yes I know for the Bible tells me so." While I still love that children's song and can still hear my mum singing it to me, I now realize I didn't have a clue how much God truly loved me. I wish I could explain how great His faithfulness is, how expansive His love is, how boundless His grace is, and how abundant His mercies are. I could more easily explain the universe and its intricacies than the endless limits of God's character and nature. It is enough for me to know that the Father would willingly sacrifice His Son, who also obediently

bore my sins on the cross, to realize he loves me completely. And fortunately, we have scripture to give us an inkling of the endless limits of His love and mercy. For example:

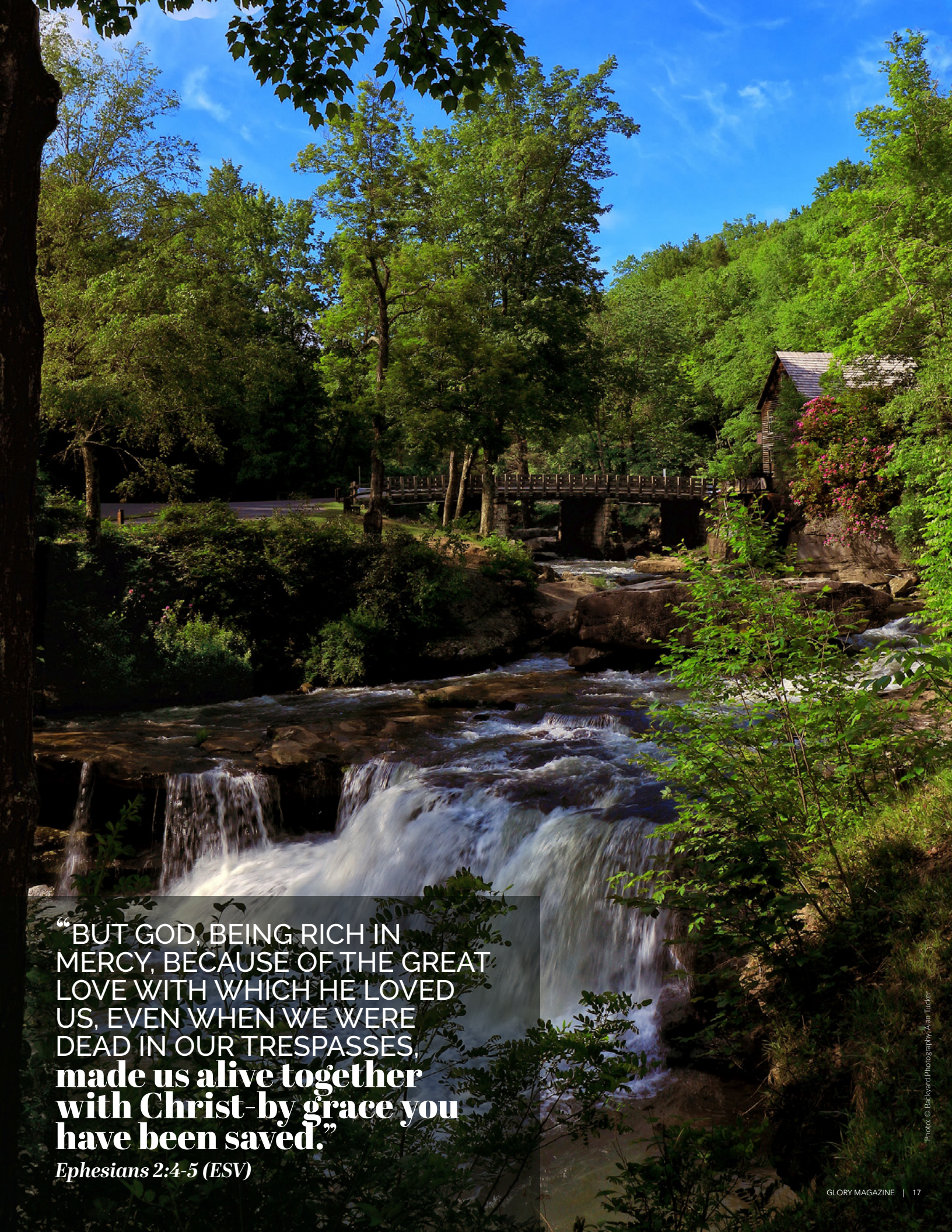
**“THE FAITHFUL LOVE OF  
THE LORD NEVER ENDS! His  
mercies never cease.  
Great is his faithfulness;  
HIS MERCIES BEGIN AFRESH  
EACH MORNING.”**

***Lamentations 3:22-23 (NLT)***

His love and mercy earnestly began once I committed my life to Jesus. I can also look back on my life before that time and realize that the Lord was watching over me and stood beside me as my protective shade. You will note that I modified Psalm 125:5 (my opening scripture) to apply it to myself. I wouldn't be here writing this now if He had not been shielding me from harm, both physical and worldly. I believe my meeting a girl named Liva in 1963 was divinely appointed. He knew I needed a strong Christian woman in my life to steer me in the right direction. Over the past twelve years, I have experienced my fair share of His love and mercies that have allowed Him to work through me as I serve Him. There have been many times when I would not have made it without Him carrying me across the finish line. I'll share my most recent challenging experience of leaning on His protective shade.

Last August, the Band of Brothers again undertook our Help Us Help Kids annual Christmas project to bless disadvantaged kids and needy families. It is a project I love and have been blessed to lead for ten years. I didn't know if I was up to it again as I had felt so lethargic over the summer, requiring frequent naps. At the time, I put it down to the extremely hot summer, which kept me from being active. However, I thought with all the tremendous help we get from volunteers and the fact we have so many generous donors year after year, I could take on the leadership role again, and we could reach our \$45,000 goal. It didn't take long before I realized I only had enough energy to work on the project and nothing else. Usually, I could work in my garden, take photography trips across the state, go fishing,





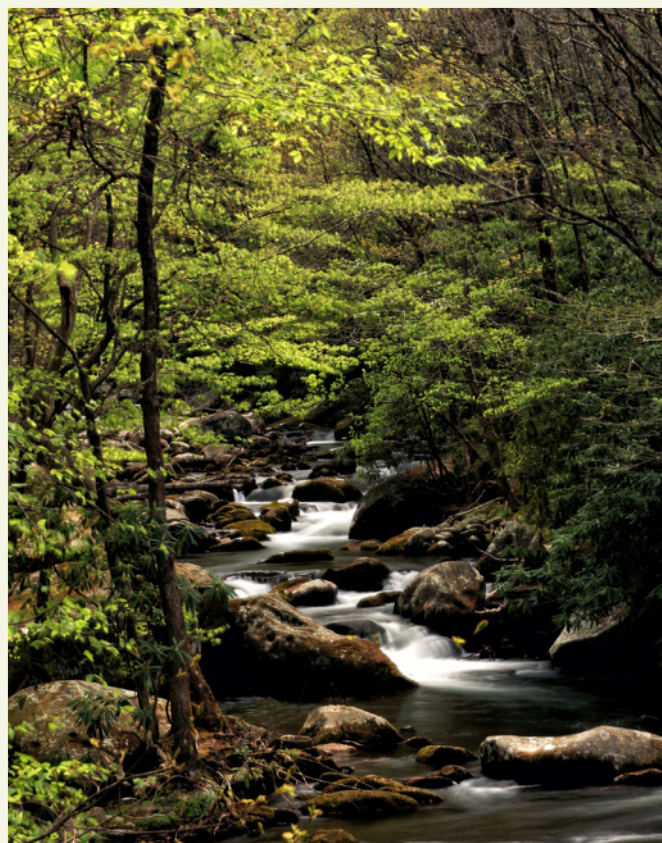
**“BUT GOD, BEING RICH IN  
MERCY, BECAUSE OF THE GREAT  
LOVE WITH WHICH HE LOVED  
US, EVEN WHEN WE WERE  
DEAD IN OUR TRESPASSES,  
made us alive together  
with Christ—by grace you  
have been saved.”**

*Ephesians 2:4-5 (ESV)*





Pocahontas County back road



Great Smoky Mountain stream, TN

and live an active lifestyle while still actively working on our project. As I got into October and November, exhaustion and fatigue made things extremely difficult. But I kept pressing on, as did my brothers. December is still a blur as I also dealt with COVID on top of my exhaustion. We raised \$60,000 because God had touched so many generous hearts. It was humbling for us to pass all that loving support on to those who needed it.

Along came January; my goal now was to take a couple months off to rest and recover. In mid-January, I had a regularly scheduled cardiologist appointment. I shared my story of exhaustion and the need to constantly nap. He said let's do a stress test. It was planned for March 27th. I was told to take it easy till then. Then on Tuesday, February 25th, I would go to St. Joseph's Cardiac Care Clinic for my biweekly workout; nothing strenuous, though, while I was waiting for my stress test. About three-quarters through the session, I began perspiring, which was rare, and I had some mild chest pain when I finished. The nurse took my blood pressure, and it was significantly elevated. Off to the ER in a wheelchair I went, with me mildly protesting all the way. It was almost 11:00 a.m. at that point. The ER waiting room was packed, but I was quickly rolled into triage. In a short time, I went back for an EKG and X-rays. Then, I went back to the ER waiting room, where I remained sitting in the hard wheelchair until 8:49 p.m. when I was wheeled back to the ER itself. From 11 a.m. that morning, the waiting room remained packed with people coming and going. Watching the scene of ill people, I prayed for them and asked for the Lord's protective shade to shield me from all the flu that surrounded me.

When I returned to the main ER area, I was put in a room (with walls) and was so thankful to be out of that uncomfortable wheelchair. I quickly got checked out and learned that I would require a stress test first thing in the morning. It was a long night, which was made longer by my buzzer to the nurse not working. I had to wait until I heard some noise and then shouted. At about 7:00 a.m., after very little sleep, I was lying there feeling a little sorry for myself, having some chest pain and lightheadedness, and wondering what the plan for the day would be. It was time to pray again. I said a little prayer for strength for Liva and myself. I did say that I was feeling a little isolated and alone and asked for reassurance that all would go well. I also acknowledged that I was okay with whatever His plan was. I had no



sooner finished my prayer—maybe thirty seconds—and the door opened. A lovely young lady with a beautiful smile said, “Hi, Mr. Tucker, my name is Angel. I will be your nurse taking care of you today.” After doing a few things like listening to my chest and taking my BP, she was off to get me a new buzzer. She had no sooner left the room when there was a slight knock on the door. A security guard said a pastor friend was here to see me. He was on his way to a breakfast meeting but wanted to stop by to say a prayer to get me through the day. He was there and was gone in a minute or two. How amazing! After my prayer asking for reassurance and in almost no time, His protective shade engulfed me in the form of two angels. I knew I was ready for whatever lay ahead and knew that I needed to take the focus off myself and pray for others who needed His shade, too. Did everything go smoothly from there? No, but I had no worries as I had God’s reassurance and a slew of prayer warriors lifting me up.

At about 9:30 a.m., I was taken to the stress test area. As I was getting prepped, it was abruptly cancelled as I had taken a medication the night before, which could negatively impact the test results. I go back to my ER room, hoping to have some breakfast. Wrong; as I went into waiting mode again while the doctors talked, I was told there was a chance I would retake the test in the afternoon. At about 3:00 p.m., it was decided the stress test was off for the day but on for the next morning. Around 5:00 p.m., I learned I would go upstairs as soon as a room was ready. I asked if I was going to get a meal. The ER is not set up for in-hospital patients, so no food was ordered. As soon as Angel learned about it, she came in and said she would go to the cafeteria and get me something, which actually tasted pretty good. What an “angel” Angel was! I couldn’t have asked for better care. I eventually made it to a room upstairs with a much more comfortable bed. The following day, I finally went for my stress test and echocardiogram. I flunked my test, and blockages were visible. I was told I would need a cardiac catheterization for further assessment. The procedure took place Wednesday, March 5th, at United Hospital Center in Bridgeport, where I had two stents put in. All went well, and I was discharged the next day.

Wow, God’s protective shade is amazing. From last August until now, He has used so many people to help, pray for, care for, and heal me. Also, from the moment I prayed for His mercy in the emergency room, and immediately an Angel walked into my

room, followed by a pastor friend who came to pray for me, my countenance changed on the spot. My worry disappeared, and I began focusing on others, trying to help their day as I knew I was in good hands, His.

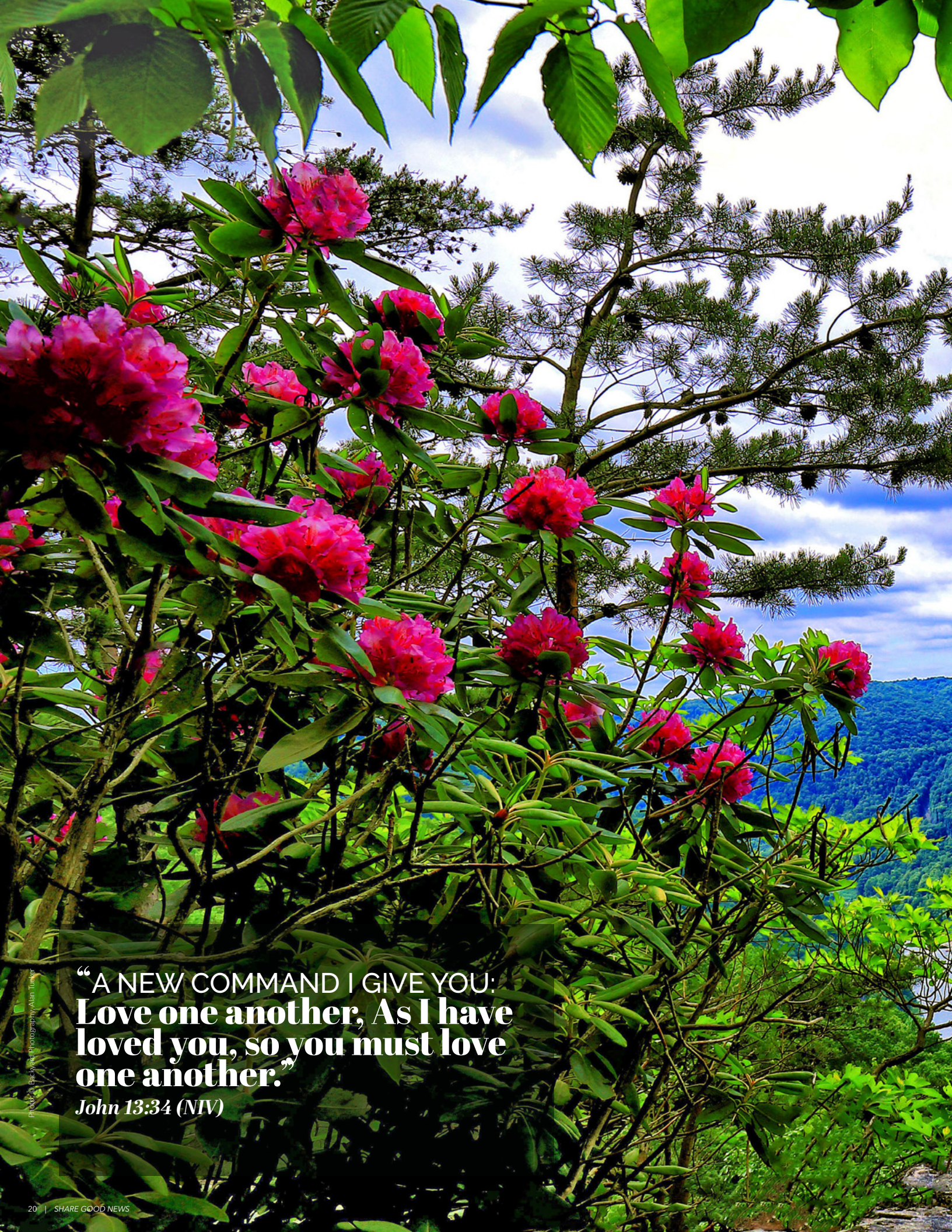
I am happy to report that my energy has returned, and I no longer need those one-to-two-hour naps every day to get by. My wife remarked the other day, “You aren’t taking naps like you used to.” Why? Because God’s protective shade got me through a lengthy, difficult stretch and brought healing to my physical heart and wisdom to my spiritual heart. I have learned that God’s protective shade is just one aspect of His extravagant love. I’ve also learned that one way to extravagantly love others, as Jesus commands, is to extend His protective shade to others. We do that by showing kindness, lending a helping hand, showing compassion, and making a difference in others’ lives. If we look around, so many people need kindness; we can be God’s branch of shade to those in need. Thank you, Jesus, for illuminating your command to me one more time: *“Love one another, As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”*

Would you like to experience God’s protective shade? It is just one of His many blessings, like joy, peace, forgiveness, and eternal life, that He provides to those who accept His invitation for Salvation. What better time than Easter to invite Him into your heart? Maybe you were saved but have fallen away. What better time to invite Him back into your heart and start delving into the basics of the Gospel? Maybe you haven’t totally fallen away, but you’ve allowed your personal desires to replace His. What better time than today to let Him start shining through you again?



Seneca Rocks, Pendleton County

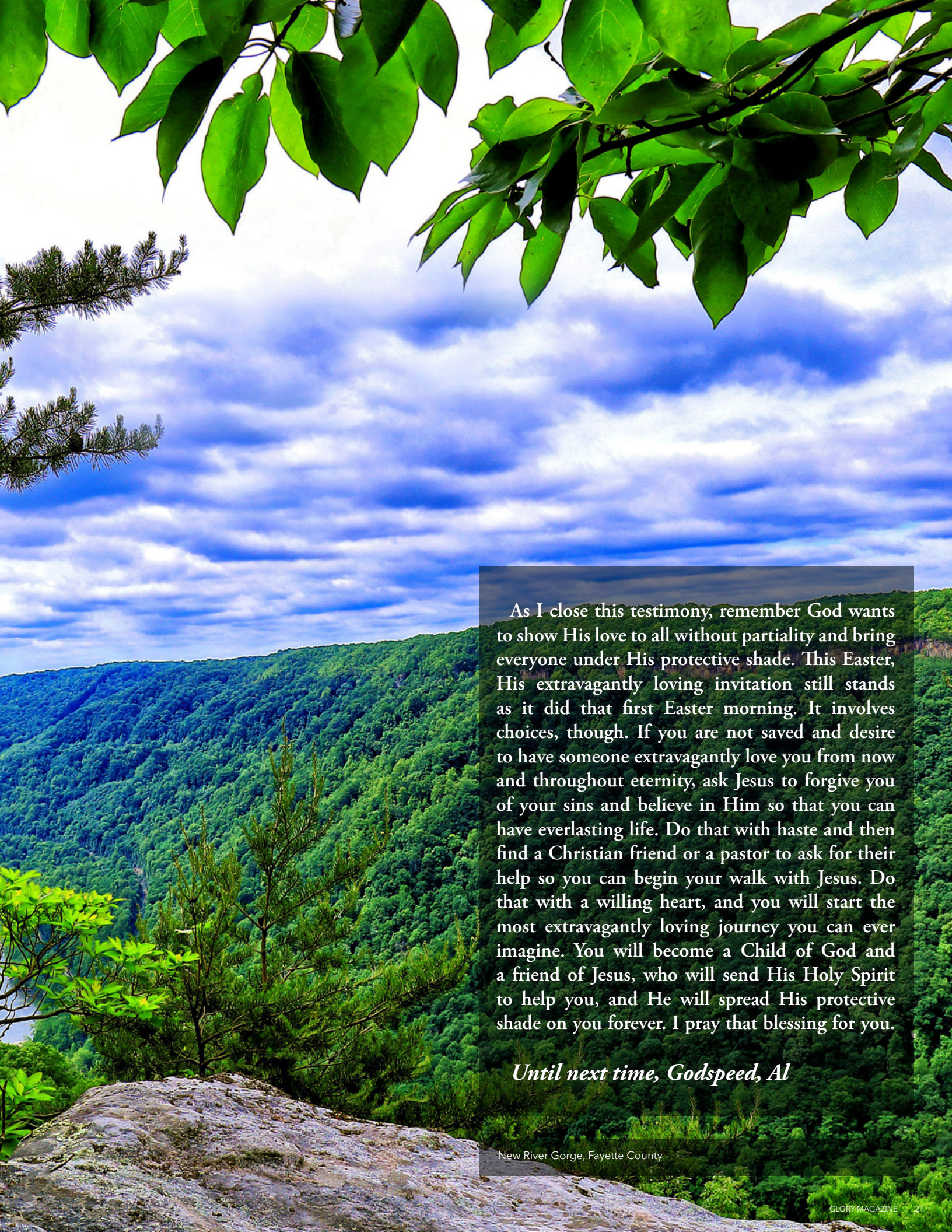




“A NEW COMMAND I GIVE YOU:  
**Love one another, As I have  
loved you, so you must love  
one another.**”

*John 13:34 (NIV)*





As I close this testimony, remember God wants to show His love to all without partiality and bring everyone under His protective shade. This Easter, His extravagantly loving invitation still stands as it did that first Easter morning. It involves choices, though. If you are not saved and desire to have someone extravagantly love you from now and throughout eternity, ask Jesus to forgive you of your sins and believe in Him so that you can have everlasting life. Do that with haste and then find a Christian friend or a pastor to ask for their help so you can begin your walk with Jesus. Do that with a willing heart, and you will start the most extravagantly loving journey you can ever imagine. You will become a Child of God and a friend of Jesus, who will send His Holy Spirit to help you, and He will spread His protective shade on you forever. I pray that blessing for you.

*Until next time, Godspeed, Al*

New River Gorge, Fayette County



# HE IS RISEN

"BLESSED BE THE GOD  
AND FATHER OF OUR  
LORD JESUS CHRIST,  
WHICH ACCORDING TO HIS  
ABUNDANT MERCY HATH  
BEGOTTEN US AGAIN UNTO  
A LIVELY HOPE BY THE  
RESURRECTION OF JESUS  
CHRIST FROM THE DEAD"

1 PETER 1:3 (KJV)

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