

Eden Restored!

Today at the *Alive at Five*, an early morning prayer meeting at Christchurch, one of the more faithful attendees, Bob Eden was praying. He was telling the Lord how he enjoyed singing “Thank you, Lord for saving my soul....” Soon into his thanksgiving, he became a little emotional as he said, “Lord, I just wish everybody in the world could feel what I’m feeling when I talk with You.” I asked Bob if I could share a little of his testimony with you.

Bob was reared in an old fashioned Baptist preacher’s family in Kansas. For the past few years he and his wife, a good Methodist girl (whom I had the privilege to baptize by immersion) have been some of our most faithful members. Here’s the astounding truth that a casual observer would not know. Bob was out of church for twenty years before joining our church. Although Bob is in his sixties, he has grown in grace tremendously just in the short time I have been honored to be called his pastor. To use a play on his name, Bob has truly experienced an “Eden (as in the garden of God) restored.” What were the tools God used to restore our dear brother?

1. He witnessed Christianity on display.

His father was a faithful minister of the Gospel. His mother was a saint. Of his siblings still alive, Charlotte and Ruth survive. I often hate using the term “survive” when we read the obituary at a funeral. It is though we are saying, these are the ones that are left, but they are just hanging on. However Ruth and Charlotte, and if I may add our own Rhonda (his niece) and Bob’s wife, Pat whom I pastor, are not just survivors; they are “overcomers.” They are still living the vibrant Christian life that was vital to Bob’s restoration. These overcomers are still praying for Bob!

Our former pastor, the late Dr. Jack Hyles use to say, “We don’t need more Christians; we need more Christians to live like Christians and if we have more Christians living like Christians, we would have more Christians.” This came from a man categorized by many as the outstanding soul-winner of the 20th Century. Francis said, “Preach the Gospel always, when necessary use words.” Please don’t think of these quotes as being disparaging of the verbal witness. We believe adamantly in the verbal witness, “*Let the redeemed of the LORD say so...*” (Psalm 107:2). I love the words of an old preacher’s wife who struggled in times past with people (some of whom were her own children) not responding to her verbal witness. She told one of her sons, “For those we cannot win to the Lord, we have to just “love them in” the rest of the way.” Bob witnessed first hand true Christianity. Keep in mind - you are the best Christian somebody knows. The life of Christ lived out is an argument that says more than the most polished homiletically, hermeneutically, exegetically crafted piece of work we, by our human ability, can devise.

2. He was recipient of answered prayer.

As those of us who have godly mothers can testify, Bob’s mom never gave up on her wayward son and never stopped praying for him. Recently, Bob told me, “He could still feel his mother’s prayers.” After all these years her words given to God were not only remembered by God, but in a good way “haunt” our dear brother. George Mueller had a prayer list that was found after he died. It is estimated that of men he was praying for to be saved, 66 gave their hearts to Christ years after his decease. Yes, prayers live beyond our lives! So, if anyone reading these words is becoming discouraged, please remember to pray on. Prayer changes things! Prayer changes people! The Lord Jesus said in Mark 11:22-24: “...*Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever*

he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."

3. He was confronted.

Matthew 18:15 says, *"Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother."* Then the Bible says, *"Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins"* (James 5:20). Bob said to me that he was saved all those years and knew he was saved and also knew he needed to be right with his Lord. I love what he said to me about a trip that he and his niece Rhonda took, "She preached to me all the way up there and all the way back. She reminded me so much of my mother."

If we meet with our loved ones needing to be right with God, just to argue our points, forget about it. The Bible says, *"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations (debate or argument)"* (Romans 14:1). Our confrontation must be anchored in love and sweetened with a speech that bespeaks the same. Colossians 4:6 explains perfectly: *"Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."* Salt, when used as seasoning cuts the bitter and makes that which we ingest more palatable. How many have wanted to regurgitate what we have "forced on them" because we did so with venomous assault? Let us be echoes of Calvary love that prays forgiveness and mercy on the parties giving offense. Remember, *"Charity (God's love) suffereth long, and is kind..."* (I Corinthians 13:4).

4. He was under the influence of the sure effect of the Word of God.

The Bible calls itself, *"...a more sure word of prop (II Peter 1:19)*. Since Bob's rededication, he has often reminded me of the power of the Word of God and encourages me to keep up the work of preaching it!

God says of the Word: *"So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it"* (Isaiah 55:11). Isaiah also said it's application is gradual but effectual: *"But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little..."* (Isaiah 28:13). Sometimes we don't always see instant results, but this is where the power of God's Word will take over when our words fail. Personally speaking as a minister of the Word, Bob has been an encourager to me to keep on keeping on! II Timothy 4:2 says, *"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."* Let us continue, fellow preachers and teachers, to *"...labour in the word and doctrine"* (I Timothy 5:17). It takes work, but the dividends are eternal!

5. He was introduced to a loving Church.

What if our church had not had open arms? What if our people were divided off in little cliques, with a "just us four and no more" attitude. Jesus said, *"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another"* (John 13:35). An important ingredient to restoration is a loving, welcoming church. People respond in an atmosphere where they sense they are loved and wanted. On this I congratulate Christchurch. You are a loving flock and I count it an honor of a lifetime to be addressed as "pastor" by such a wonderful group of people.

6. Bob began doing first things first.

I return to Bob's early morning prayer: "Lord, I just wish everybody in the world could feel what I'm feeling when I talk with You." Feelings do not bring us closer to the Lord. However, when we get closer to the Lord, feelings come! So for all skeptics who keep disagreeing with the Christian experience, I say to you, "Better felt than telt." Jesus said to the backsliders at Ephesus, "*Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works...*" (Revelation 2:4,5). From what we can see in Scripture, feelings follow the return in heart. The Bible also says, "*Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established*" (Proverbs 16:3).

What a blessing to observe my dear friend and now thankfully church member begin to do the first things in his Bible, in his witness and in faithful church attendance. And now he feels better. You will too. The Garden of Eden is a paradise man lost in the fall. But paradise can be restored. It was for this preacher's kid (myself) and for another preacher's kid (Bob) and for any kid or layman alike. Your "Eden will be restored. Just come back to God!

- Pastor Pope -

[Back to Pastor's Word#39;s Word](#)