

JACKIE CAPORASO
10552 SE 151ST STREET
SUMMERFIELD FL 34491
PH.352-288-5257
EMAIL- jackiecaporaso@gmail.com

First Love

NO.240

PATMOS

Today, the Greek island of Patmos, one of the smallest Greek islands in the Aegean Sea, is a beautiful resort famous for its religious past. It has become a place of pilgrimage and has been declared a “holy island” by the Greek government in 1983.

It was in the first century that the apostle John was banished to this island and it was not quite a resort at that time. Some say that it was not really an “Alcatraz” but it was a quarry mine of the Roman Empire, home to many political and religious prisoners and slaves.

The apostle John suffered long at the hands of the Romans who were tired of hearing him preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They tried to kill him in various atrocious ways, but each time the Lord protected him and miraculously kept him from death. Finally, they decided that if they could not kill this man they would banish him to this seemingly God-forsaken island of Patmos. John was well over 90 years of age at time.

The Lord was not finished with His beloved apostle for it was when John found himself in that isolated place that his soul and spirit opened up to the voices from heaven that beckoned him, “Come up hither!” The Lord had chosen this place for John the Beloved. Rome may have claimed John as its prisoner, but in reality John was the prisoner of Jesus Christ and soon he would experience the greatest visitation of his life.

So it is, when God has us in the cleft of the Rock, in a dry place all alone, that we hear His voice the

clearest and that we are prepared to receive His truth. When we are satisfied with our status quo, we do not want to change a thing but growth is change. God is the only One who never changes.

WHERE JOHN WAS ON THAT DAY

“I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet...”
(Rev.1: 9-10)

This is not only the introduction to chapter one, it is the introduction to the entire vision. John had been banished to Patmos by the Roman Emperor but he knew that in reality, he had been sent there by God for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.

John found himself transported by the Spirit, above the realm of time into the “Day of the Lord”. And what he saw was amazing, wonderful and terrible all at the same time. The heavens were opened to him and he was witnessing all the things that were happening in the realm of eternity before they were made visible in the earth.

WRITE TO MY BELOVED BRIDE

Jesus had kept John through many trials even through the agony of “boiling oil” as history records. John was the apostle closest to Jesus' heart

so it might have been why Jesus chose him for this very special task. John had felt the power of God's love and he could best relate to the great love of Jesus for His bride, His church.

Now, the resurrected Lord Jesus was sending a clear word to His Bride. She was so near and dear to His heart. As Paul wrote, she is the mother of us all. *"But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all."* (Gal.4: 26) She is the one He chose to birth the sons in His image. As Mary, she is blessed among women!

Jesus began to dictate His letter to John. *"To the angel of the church at Ephesus write..."* (Rev.2: 1a) He addressed it to the one who could explain it to her- her angel. Because the Lord's word is Spirit, when we hear from Him, it is communicated through the angels. They are His messengers to us. It was an angel who carried the entire vision to John. He introduced himself as *"...thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them who keep the sayings of this book..."* (Rev. 22: 9b) There are yet many things to be revealed about the angels.

Then the Lord began to praise His church for her labors, her patience and discernment. Although it was addressed to a specific group of the time, it covers the church as a whole. She had stood strong in the faith. She had not fainted in the face of the adversary. She was worthy in so many way but there was a catch. *"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."* (Rev.2: 4)

She is His chosen and this is a serious matter of the heart. It can keep her from eating of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God. This tree of life is Christ within. Eating of that tree is partaking of the living word that heals us body and soul, and overcomes death.

Paul wrote, *"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity (love) I am become as sounding brass, or tinkling cymbal. Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I*

have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity (love) I am nothing." (I Cor.13: 1-2)

Jesus desires our "first love." He will not play second fiddle. Jesus wants the love that responds to His heart. For that purpose He is changing our hearts of stone and replacing them with hearts to love Him. *"And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: that they may walk in my statutes, and keep my ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God."* (Eze. 11: 19-20)

His bride will desire to birth the sons He has in His loins. The sons in His likeness. The sons who love truth and true righteousness. Hannah, whose name means "grace," was exceedingly distressed because she was barren. She cried out to God to give her a son.

She did not want this son for herself, she wanted to give him for the service of the temple. God gave her the son who grew up to be the prophet Samuel. Hannah is a type of the true bride who will bear the sons who will do God's perfect will. His bride is not looking to this divine union selfishly; she wants a Manchild to give to the Father. This is first love.

The Christ being formed within us must be nurtured above all else. The Holy Spirit is changing the desires of our hearts and we are coming to this first love. It is for the love of Jesus that we are bearing this son.

A very dear sister in the Lord has been prompted by the Spirit to write the testimony of her life. From her very young days, Lucille was in awe of the One who died on the cross for her sins. She fell in love with Him and longed to follow Him. Led by the love in her heart she felt to join an order of nuns and live a life dedicated to Him. The book details the many hardships that she endured in the convent and out of the convent. Her journey was filled with painful trials, even imprisonments, but the thing that kept her going was the love for Jesus that swelled within her heart.

Jesus warned, *“In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”* (Jn.16: 33b) God looks upon the heart and when His children offer Him their love, He does not turn them away. He receives them and begins to correct them to bring them unto maturity (perfection).

OUR JOURNEY TO PURIFICATION HAS BEGUN

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you. But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.” (I Pet.4: 12-13) Today these words of Peter are ringing loud and clear.

We do not all go through the same kind of sufferings. There are sufferings that we bring upon ourselves by the deeds of the flesh; then we reap what we sow. We will also suffer when others rise against us because of who we are in Christ; these sufferings we offer unto the Lord and know that He will give us *“...beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.”* (Isa.61: 3) Indeed, the overcomers are subjected daily to sufferings that are made to order for their purification and to show forth His glory.

The Lord uses the sufferings that this life put us through daily to bring about our transformation. It was during the seven years that I took care of my husband while he suffered from dementia that the Lord taught me many things of eternal value. Among other things I learned that as much as I loved my husband and took good care of him, feelings of resentment toward him in this situation could still creep into my heart.

My love for him had its limits. Flesh was still strong. It took just about the full seven years of his sufferings to work true love in my heart. Truly the Lord works ALL THINGS to the good of those who love Him. Some teach that we can choose to love or to forgive as the case may be; that could do for a

start. However, it is only when God works His love into our hearts through the fires of suffering that we truly possess it.

John saw Jesus with *“...feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace...”* (Rev.1: 15a) Brass speaks of the law. Fine brass is the law fulfilled. Jesus walked through the fire all the way to the cross. He did not just pray and the Law was fulfilled, He took it all the way to the cross.

Does this mean that now we are free from the Law and because grace abounds we will not suffer? Or does it mean that we can sin and God will look away? As Paul said, *“God forbid!”*

THE LAW OF SIN AND DEATH AND OUR ADVOCATE

Let's take a quick look at what the Law means to us today. The Lord spoke this to Ezekiel, *“The soul that sinneth, it shall die.”* (Eze.18: 20) God's word is law and it does not change. God declared that a soul or a man that sins is worthy of death. This is the penalty of the law.

Jesus unmistakably declared that He did not come to abolish the Law; He came to fulfill the Law. *“For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”* (Matt.5: 18) There could be no clearer words.

When Jesus spoke of the Law, He was not only speaking of the ten commandments; He was talking about the Word of God. The Psalmist tells us that it is the Law of the Lord that converts the soul. The Law of Moses reveals sin and this is the beginning of our conversion, but it is by every Word that God speaks that we live and work out our full salvation with fear and trembling.

“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the judgments of the Lord

are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.” (Ps.19: 7-10)

We could build many sermons on these lines alone. Indeed the Word of the Lord is perfect altogether. The soul can never be converted on good morals and good works. These puff up the ego and work contrary to the good of the soul. Paul simply declared, *“knowledge puffeth up!”*

At this point, one might say, “In Christ we are no longer under the Law. We are under grace!” This is true...IN CHRIST we are no longer under the Law of sin and death. We are under grace, but one must understand what this all really means.

The same question had come up to Paul and he emphatically responded, *“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead in sin, live any longer therein? What then? Shall we sin, because we are no longer under the law, but under grace?” (Rom.6: 1,2,15)*

As long as there is sin, the law of sin and death is at work revealing sin. When we sin, we come into judgment. This judgment is not pending until after we die and we meet our Judge in the great beyond...no...when we sin, we come face to face with the judgment of the law. We must recognize our sin and face the consequences.

However John explains, *“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an ADVOCATE with the Father, Jesus Christ THE RIGHTEOUS. And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” (1 Jn. 2: 1-2)*

Because we have not yet been fully delivered from our sin nature, we still sin. Because there are sins that we are not yet aware of, until we walk in the full light, we are subject to sin. When this happens, the law taps our shoulders and shows us the sin. We immediately come into judgment by the law, but we

find that we have our personal ADVOCATE with us.

An advocate is one who pleads and argues for a cause. A supporter and a defender- an intercessor. This is the role that Jesus Christ the Righteous takes up for us when we sin. So John explains, we must not sin but if we should, we have One who will defend our cause to the Father. He is Jesus Christ the Righteous.

He is the One who has taken away the penalty of the Law for us. Hallelujah! We are not sentenced to death again. When the woman taken in adultery faced her accuser, Jesus came as her advocate and pleaded her cause. Then He told the woman, *“Woman where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.” (Jn. 8: 10-11)*

What a wonderful advocate! Jesus Christ the Righteous pleads our cause and defends us daily as we still sin and the law accuses us. Thank you Father for the Law and for our Advocate. May this be in force until all is fulfilled and everyone is free from the nature of sin!

By the Law another part of my sinful nature is exposed, I repent and Christ makes me free. As long as we are still subject to sin, we need the Law. But by faith we have an advocate with the Father. This is true grace. Thank you Jesus. Your grace is more than sufficient; it is marvelous! It is walking us through the fire of purification and all the way to perfection!

Indeed the Law of the Lord is perfect, it converts the soul. It rejoices the heart. It enlightens the eyes. It warns us of perils. It gives us great reward. Each time our Beloved sends us His word whether by dream or by whispering in our ear, we reap all these things on our journey to full salvation or perfection.

IN THE MIDST OF PARADISE

“To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.” (Rev.2: 7b) There is a place which is the

“paradise” of God. It is not a geographical place; it is a level of life. As we learn the things of spirit through the things that are made, we see that there are many dimensions of life. Life is all around us in the plant kingdom and the animal kingdom. There are being that the naked eye cannot see such as microbes and the like. There are beings in the depth of the sea that have never been discovered.

Scientists are looking to find life outside of this planet, but so far have not found any sign of it anywhere. Life is God and He has chosen the earth to plant His life. One could say that this is where His paradise can be found. Indeed, God's paradise has to do with His life. God's paradise is ruled by the “tree of life” which is found in the midst of it.

A tree in the language of spirit speaks of a planting in the earth. That gives us a clue that this paradise with the tree of life is found in the earth. The earth speaks of the son of man creation. It is all found within each one of us but only God can open it to us. When our soul turns to the Lord, He opens the way into His garden- His paradise. It is when our soul has rekindled her love for truth and righteousness that we begin to enter into the true peace of God.

We have been there from time to time. We have tasted of the good things to come, but somehow we have always managed to slip out. Jesus promised that the day would come when His sheep will go no more out.

It is when our soul enters within this place of peace that we find the tree of life right at our fingertips. We can pick of its many fruit in any season and at any time. The tree does not come to us, we have to go to the tree. The way is guarded by the flaming swords. This is why it is the overcomer who receives this reward.

When through the Spirit, we overcome our carnal thinking and ways, even in the smallest ways, God gives us to eat of the tree of life. It is all done little by little, line upon line. Each day, we are sure to be faced with decisions in the seemingly smallest things. But these are all part of our training in

Christ. It is then that we have to choose to let go our pride or our so-called dignity and choose to follow the ways of the Spirit over the ways of our flesh. This is how we enter the paradise of God and begin to eat of the tree of life.

THE SECOND DEATH

It is in Jesus' love letters to His church that we find the first mention of this “second death.” Here the Lord lets us know that this second death hurts. This was written to Smyrna, a church that had gone through a great measure of overcoming.

This church had done good works and had passed through much tribulation, The Smyrna church had learned to discern false apostles. She was a church that had suffered and where some had even been cast into prison. She had been called to suffer unto death for the Word of God. All of her “self” must die for she is His bride, His true church.

This is what this church had to face in order to escape any of the “second death.” She had to totally “die to self.” She had to lay her life down unto death. Her name was Smyrna which means “myrrh”. This was the expensive balm that was in the woman's alabaster box when she kissed and anointed His feet as she wept.

Smyrna depicts the calling of the church to lay her life down for the love of Jesus. This means that each one of us must choose to follow His Spirit and not the appetites of the soul for recognition and worldly ambition. The Lord has endowed each one of His called out with an anointing that the soul would love to show off. The soul yearns to build something worldly with the beautiful revelations that God has given her and call it the work of God.

This is Christianity in the world today. It is the product of religious souls. But the true church must die to these ambitions. Jesus was tempted of the devil in the same way, but He set His face to do the Father's will and go to the cross. His church is the bride who will lay her life down for the love of Jesus. As a result, she will not be hurt of the second death.

What is death? Isaiah writes, “ *But your iniquities have separated between you and your God and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.*” (Isa.59: 2) Death is separation from God for God is the only source of life. It is separation from the realm of life that we have known and possessed. The World Book Encyclopedia defines it as “The ending of life.” The Bible tells us that Death is our enemy. It is the last enemy to be conquered.

The first death is found in the Book of Genesis when God told Adam and Eve that they could eat of every tree found in the garden, “*But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt die.*” (Gen.2: 17)

They evidently did not die physically on that day but something happened to them. They no longer possessed the quality of life that they had previously known. From that time on, death had entered their beings and each day brought them closer to their grave. The form of life that they now possessed was “death.” They had descended from the higher realm of life into bodies of death. As Paul cried out, “*O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*” (Rom.7: 24)

These bodies are our first death. They demand a lot of care. They get hungry and dirty. They get sick, they get wounded, they can hurt terribly. They get old, weak and feeble and in the end they corrupt and stink in the grave. This is the first death. Paul answers his question, who shall deliver me? “*I thank my God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*” (Vs.25a)

In Adam, we all come through this death. We are not dead because we continue to sin, we continue to sin because we are dead. Jesus offers us a way out. He is the only One who can do this. Some scientists are working on what is called “cryonics” which is the preservation of humans at very low temperatures in the hope that they might some day be recovered and brought back to life by using highly advanced future technology. In their foolish pride, they are rejecting the only way to life and immortality which is found in Jesus Christ.

It is certain that all men have died in Adam. When we are born into these bodies, we are born into the bodies of this Adam death. However we read that “*It is appointed unto all men once to die..*” (Heb.9: 27a) This is not speaking of the first death in Adam but of another death that must take place in order to take us out of this first death.

It was death that took Adam out of the realm of life that he first enjoyed and it is through death that we enter into the new life that is ours in Christ. We must “die” to this death in order to find our new life in Christ. How can this be done? The writer explains, “*So Christ was once offered to bear the sins (death) of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*” (Heb.9: 28)

In the Old Testament, the only way to atone for sins was by offering animal sacrifices such as bulls, goats and doves. But now God no longer accept these, the only acceptable sacrifice is the one offered by Jesus Christ. On the cross, Jesus took upon Himself the sin of the world. He took upon Himself the death of the Adam creation.

When we offer Christ as our sacrifice for sin, we identify with His death and receive full forgiveness for our sins. He then sends us His Spirit who walks us through the actual dying of our sin nature that we might enter into His life. This is the full salvation that we are looking for. We no longer look for Him to be offered as the sacrifice for our sins, we look for Him to take us into resurrection life. This is our full salvation.

To receive this we go through the death of our old nature. As we follow the Holy Spirit daily, He leads us into this death. More and more we find that the things we used to love have no more appeal for us and so on. The more we die to our old nature, the closer we are to our full salvation. This is how the death of the cross works in us. It is not easy but it is a lot better than the “second death” that Jesus was talking about.

Jesus told the Smyrna church to repent and not get hurt of the “second death.” Why would a church

that had stood and suffered for the word of God be in danger of the second death? The truth is that Jesus will not be denied. The Father will not renege on His promise to the Son. *“Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.”* (Ps.2: 8)

Jesus will have His beautiful bride and He will receive His complete inheritance in the saints and in the heathens too. For this reason, all that is of the first Adam must go through the fire of death.

The second death is defined by the Bible. *“And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.”* (Rev. 20: 14) There is the way of the cross with Christ and there is the way of the lake of fire but all must go through death by fire that the Christ of God may come in to His full inheritance.

*“Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, **reserved unto fire** against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.(Adam's creation)”* (II Pet.3: 6-7) *“Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and **the elements** shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”* (II Pet.3: 12-13)

The first world is the world that men established in the earth before Noah. The heavens and the earth that then was do not only refer to the planet earth and its atmosphere, it also speaks of the earthly creatures and what they built and established in the earth. The Bible refers to earthly men as “the earth” and their minds as “the heavens.”

This is an important key to understanding the word by the Spirit. We must not reject this just because some have used it carelessly. Just as we cannot reject dreams as the word of God just because they have been used by fortune tellers. The works of men were then destroyed by water but God saved the

seed of human and animal life through Noah. This time, the works of men will not be destroyed by water but by fire. God has made a way. Through Jesus Christ, God is saving His creation only this time it is by fire. Nothing of the old will be left. All things will become new.

The fire has already been ignited. The old is being swallowed up and the new has to come. So we are looking for and hastening the day of God. Even though the elements are melting away with fervent heat.

This word “elements” is found in just two places in the Bible. Paul told the church that *“Even though when we were children, we were in bondage under the **ELEMENTS** of the world.”* (Gal.3: 3) And again *“But now, after ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly **ELEMENTS**, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?”* (Vs.9)

The Greek dictionary of Strong's concordance defines the word “elements” as “orderly arrangements.” The elements in these verses speak of the arrangements or laws that men have set in place to govern or rule men's civilizations.

This encompasses all forms of men's governments, societies, corporations, and organizations. These are the things that are dissolved by the fire of God. History has already proven this, as great civilizations of the past have fallen and disappeared. We see it still taking place today as systems that men have established are losing their value and power.

In Christ, we are led to embrace the death of the cross each day. This is the fire we go through. It is painful but not hurtful. Paul speaks of the day of fire that will burn even that which has been built upon the foundation of Christ but has issued from man's minds. *“Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day of fire shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.”* (I Cor.3: 13)

There is no escaping God's fire. The day is not future; it is right now. We are in that day. Every time

that we turn away from the cross to do our own thing...we suffer loss by fire. This process will continue until nothing of the old Adam man remains. Jesus finished the work on the cross and it is coming to pass in our lives.

The lake of fire and brimstone consumes all that is not written in the book of life- the devil (the serpent in the carnal mind) the false prophet (the lie) and the beast (all that man has set up in the world)- The church will overcome all of them through the death of the cross or through the fire of the second death. All that is not in the Book of Life will burn as wood, hay and stubble in the fire.

THE WRATH OF GOD

A dear brother in the Lord sends this, "But here is my question for you. Paul taught that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himselfnot.....imputing to them their sins".....then Paul says (you) "be reconciled to God".

If the wrath of God was poured out on Jesus on the cross.....how is it that Revelation speaks of it coming on the earth.....even on believers, whom God "has already reconciled to Himself". Admittedly, folks in the long run have to accept that reconciliation.....but it is hard to "reconcile" the wrath of God being poured out on Jesus AND then in the future being poured out on unbelievers on the earth."

The answer is simple. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." (Rom. 1: 18) God is set to destroy all that is of the sin nature. On the cross, Jesus was the perfect sacrifice for the sin of the world. Not as the bulls and goats sacrifices that atoned for sin temporarily because men would sin again, but the sacrifice of Jesus does away with sin and the sin nature.

This is what has been happening ever since Calvary. We are now at the end of the age when the full harvest is coming in. All seeds that have been planted in the earth are coming to fruition. Some good and some evil; all are being revealed. Men who have held the truth but have walked after their

own desires are facing the wrath of God. This is what Paul is saying. Some have known the truth but have not embraced it. Some have built their own ministries with it and have devised their own programs.

They have chosen to walk according to their own ways and not humbly with their God. "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6: 8)

The wrath of God sounds terrible, but actually it is good because it is the fire that removes all that offends and that keeps us in the realm of death. Yes, there are still many who are suffering in the fire and many who will still suffer, but in the end, all will praise God for His deliverance.

We can see in our own lives how the fires that we have been suffering are bringing us closer to the truth. It is through the fire that we find the peace of God that passeth understanding, even the joy unspeakable and full of glory.

It is when we find Christ in us as our hope of glory that He begins the work of bringing us into Himself. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." (II Cor. 5: 17-19)

Our Father looks upon the heart. If we are deceived in some area but our hearts are sincere before God, He will bring us back to Himself. He may let us err for a time but only to reveal to us that His ways are not our ways. We are reconciled to God in Christ and we are to bring those who are sent to us to the same hope of reconciliation. This is awesome!

Because of His love, *Jackie Caporaso*