

## Winter 2008-2009

We trust that Jesus, our sufficiency, has been more than enough during this extremely interesting season of global “uncertainty.” It is, for sure, a period of “unrest” for some, maybe even most, but a time of hope and opportunity for those willing to believe that God is somehow, in the realm of His sovereignty, using it for good. Some would scoff at the idea that the present “crisis” could be for the good of anyone, especially considering the consequence if a solution remains unachievable in the short term. I have spoken to a variety of men who have lived through similar times; and, almost to a man, they agree that what we face today is unique in that we have never been here before. Maybe comparable events have occurred, but nothing exactly like the circumstances we face today. It is for this reason that the word “unprecedented” is so often used by the media, for even the men and women who are supposedly “in the know” will tell you (if they are honest) that they really don’t know. Allen Greenspan served as chairman of the Federal Reserve from 1987 to 2006, and at one time, although unpopular with some (maybe many), was where the buck stopped when it came to decision-making relating to “proper” economic policy. His words of late are that he never dreamed we could be where we are today. Why would he make such a statement? He thought safeguards were in place that would forever insulate us from our present predicament. Yes, there can be no doubt that things are less than predictable.

It is undeniable that times such as these allow the light of the truth to expose the total unreliability of error. Therefore, it has become obvious that a democracy is no stronger than the moral fiber of its leaders. The truth of the Scriptures confirms that we take on the character of those we follow, those we deem capable of leading when the going gets tough. This is brought out vividly in 1 Samuel 17, where Saul’s lack of courage found fertile soil in the hearts of his men of war. Instead of becoming warriors, they became cowards; and God exposed their lack of courage, to Saul’s demise. One thing is certain: A prideful and self centered leader will meet his doom, not just some of the time, but every time. For our nation to learn this principle may be more costly than we could imagine. But the good news is that the gospel spreads very efficiently during times of uncertainty. Have you been praying for revival? I have, along with a hoard of other believers who desire to see this nation walk in truth. Hence, could we be witnessing the Lord’s answer to our petitions? Would it not be just like God to allow something of this magnitude to touch the world without the unredeemed realizing what is transpiring?! We as believers, who have been granted the ability to view life from a different frame of reference (Ephesians 2:6), and, therefore, observe God’s hand at work, should be very excited about the possibilities of what could be. So have nothing to do with passivity, doubt, timidity, or complacency; by living each day, in fact, every moment, by Christ’s indwelling presence, which is always more than enough.

From what has already been expressed in this newsletter, it is obvious that it is time for the redeemed, through faith, to unleash Christ’s life on a world so in need of something real. Kim and I, along with Rick and Donna Underhill, believe that good things lie ahead as we plan for the future. Rick wrote the next portion of this newsletter (Ministry News), and I was very much encouraged by what it communicated concerning his heart and where he sees the Lord taking us. (Thanks Rick!) If after reading it you would like to be a part of what he is addressing, I am certain he (and Donna) would enjoy hearing from you.

### Ministry News

In our Statement of Philosophy, we summarize why The Hill (B.A.S.I.C. Training) exists (this Statement of Philosophy is posted on our website if you are interested in reading it in its entirety).

As a result of believing that the essence of the Christian life is intimacy with Jesus Christ, our primary interest is nurturing people in the faith, so they, in turn, can be used to nurture others in the faith. Thus, we believe that as a ministry we exist for the purpose of disciple making (2 Timothy 2:2). We trust that the teaching of the Scriptures—along with worship, prayer, and fellowship—can be used of God to bring hungry hearts to a fullness of the knowledge of the Son of God (Hebrews 13:15; Ephesians 5:19-20).

Organizationally, we have never scheduled meetings on The Hill for the sake of activity, but rather to serve as a spiritual arm of the home and church, not a substitute for them. As we continue alongside you in the sharing of His life, we are becoming increasingly aware of a spiritual shift within this country. It is this shift that has kindled a fire within us to further encourage believers to stand in the gap during times such as these.

The shift within every aspect of American life is that we can no longer assume the individuals we come in contact with (even in some Christian circles) believe that absolute truth exists, and that it exists in the Person of Jesus Christ. Because the vast majority of people who study here have a great desire to know Jesus' heart, our goal is to make this facility, and ourselves, more available in the days ahead. Side by side with those interested in being involved, we are going to become more deliberate, learning how to specifically state (verbally communicate) what we have learned from God's letter to man.

Some of you are already aware that the 2009 Men's Retreat has been extended into a four-day opportunity, and our annual Youth Summer Camp, Fall Retreat, and Romans weekend will continue to play active roles in equipping all who come our way. But we desire to offer something radically different—a Discipleship Retreat that will contain specific times of instruction where we learn to state, in our own words, what we are gleaned together. Now is the time for us to shift into the next expression of life on The Hill—an even more deliberate equipping of the saints so they might give every person an answer as to why they believe (1 Peter 3:15). This is where we will start for the coming year and see where the Lord takes us from there. It will be a great challenge, but very rewarding!

Here is what we need you to do: Contact us if you would like to be a part of the Discipleship Retreat. We will need table discussion leaders, kitchen help, and more. However, mostly what we need are hearts who want to know Christ as their life and, in turn, make Him known to others.

On our website you will find the dates, along with a brief explanation of upcoming events. If you are interested, you can register online, direct your questions to Rick and Donna Underhill at 270-437-4172, or email them at [administrator@lifeonthehill.org](mailto:administrator@lifeonthehill.org).

### **Events to Consider Attending on The Hill**

**January 13, 2009** Tuesday night Bible study begins at 7:00 pm. Predestination, Election, Foreknowledge, God's Sovereignty, the Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart, the Believer's Chosenness, as well as other related topics, will be covered in as much detail as possible. Each topic will be recorded and made available individually as completed. **January 16-18, 2009** Annual winter Youth Retreat **April 30-May 3, 2009** Annual Men's Retreat for husbands, fathers, their sons, and single men of all ages **July 5-11, 2009** Annual Summer Camp for youth (ages 13-18) **August 7-8, 2009** Annual Romans Retreat—note the change of date from previous years **September 4-6, 2009** Discipleship Retreat—instruction in verbalizing what we believe

**October 16-18, 2009** Annual Fall Retreat for men and women (singles, couples, and older children)

We completed our study of the book of Isaiah, and the CD's are now ready. The commentary should be available in February.

### **A Word of Thanks**

It seems we are running out of ways, without sounding redundant, to say "Thank You"; but we will never be short of appreciation, gratitude, and thankfulness for your faithful support, encouragement, and, most importantly, your hearts. From all indications, 2009 could be a less than normal year economically; so please know that we are, and will continue to be, praying for you. One of the most humbling events of our day is going to the post office and receiving contributions from individuals like yourselves—who, we realize, have paid a huge price, both in time and effort, to be able to support us as you do. Therefore, we never take for granted a single cent that is directed to this ministry. I say this to let you know that, hopefully, we would never allow your contributions to serve as an opportunity to live a lifestyle of wastefulness or excessiveness. In fact, our plans are to streamline our budget, even to a greater degree, for 2009. Thank you for entrusting us with such a generous portion of God's resources placed within your care.

### **THOUGHTS FROM THE HILL**

The present state of affairs in our land has caused many to reexamine their priorities. Therefore, what is presented here should serve as a wonderful reminder that, when all crutches, props, and idols fail, Jesus alone is enough. Paul confirms this truth in Philippians 4:12, for whether it be getting along with humble means or living in prosperity, being filled or going hungry, having abundance or suffering need, the adequacy of Christ's presence remains supreme.

In Jeremiah's day (586 BC), the Jews were exiled to Babylon. They not only lost their homes, but their land as well due to worshipping the gods of the Gentiles. Isaiah (who prophesied before Jeremiah came on the scene) spoke of the futility of trusting in anyone or anything other than Jehovah, the God of the Hebrew people. However, the Jews disregarded his words and spent seventy years as a subjugated people in Babylon. When the Medo-Persian Empire (under the leadership of Cyrus) overthrew Babylon (Daniel 5), the Jews were allowed to return to their homeland. Interestingly, while in Babylon, they learned an irrefutable truth—that no idol or so-called god can hold a light to the God of the Jews. After all, He allowed them to return in the exact year prophesied by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 25:11), a prophecy stated several years before the fact.

Obviously, God, who is sovereign, is also uncompromisingly faithful to His promises—the one thing we need to realize during times such as these. Therefore, the following should bring much encouragement, knowing that the God of yesterday is the God of today. What follows also confirms that, just as God never changes, neither does the total ineptitude (lack of wisdom and understanding) of the unredeemed.

**Is. 41:5** *The coastlands have seen and are afraid; The ends of the earth tremble; They have drawn near and have come.*

**Isaiah 41:5-7** describes the futility of idolatry, for the response of the idol worshippers to Cyrus' imminent advance would be anything but one of confidence. Why? The Gentile nations would experience fear and trembling, the standard reaction when man's trust has been misdirected. If their idols were so superior, why had they failed to warn these nations ahead of time concerning this impending danger?

**Is. 41:6** *Each one helps his neighbor, And says to his brother, "Be strong!"* Their encouragement to their neighbor to "Be strong!" would be empty words which would fall on darkened minds. Therefore, their only alternative (in their estimation at least) would be to muster more confidence in their incompetent idols.

**Is. 41:7** *So the craftsman encourages the smelter, And he who smooths metal with the hammer encourages him who beats the anvil, Saying of the soldering, "It is good"; And he fastens it with nails, That it should not totter.*

Instead of repenting and trusting Jehovah for deliverance, these idolatrous nations would place their trust in additional idols built by man's hands—the more the merrier. They would make sure that each idol looked "good" and would not totter. But totter they would when Cyrus arrived. Can you believe the depths of the foolishness entertained by the ungodly?

(The following verses describe the ease with which Cyrus overthrew these wicked nations—success which could be explained in terms of Jehovah alone.)

**Is. 45:1** *Thus says the Lord to Cyrus His anointed, Whom I have taken by the right hand, To subdue nations before him, And to loose the loins of kings; To open doors before him so that gates will not be shut:*

Cyrus was God's *anointed* in that he would be the man whom God would use to overthrow *nations* and free His people, Israel. Jehovah would clear the way for *Cyrus*, for his enemies would be easily conquered, a fact which is recorded repeatedly in the historical record from Cyrus' day.

**Is. 45:2** *"I will go before you and make the rough places smooth; I will shatter the doors of bronze, and cut through their iron bars.*

God would *make the rough places smooth* for Cyrus in that he would face little resistance from the nations he desired to conquer. Even secular history from this period records that Cyrus took cities that other kings found impossible to infiltrate. With this in mind, it makes the phrase, "I will shatter the doors of bronze, and cut through their iron bars," quite interesting; for it points to Babylon, a city that was fortified beyond comprehension. One historian recorded that Babylon was a city possessing 100 gates of brass. From Daniel 5, it is obvious that the Medo-Persian Empire overthrew Babylon without resistance.

**Is. 45:4** *"For the sake of Jacob My servant, And Israel My chosen one, I have also called you by your name; I have given you a title of honor Though you have not known Me.*

God called Cyrus by his name (some 150 years before his time) and gave him a *title of honor* for Israel's sake, the nation of *Israel* being God's *servant*, God's *chosen one*. God had prophesied through Jeremiah that the Jews would be in *Babylon for seventy years* (Jeremiah 25:11).

Therefore, through God's assistance, Cyrus was allowed to overthrow the Babylonians so the Jews might return to their homeland after exactly seventy years. Jehovah did all of this even though Cyrus did *not know* Him, as confirmed by the last phrase of Isaiah 45:4. Cyrus also possessed a free will to choose as he pleased. Truly, God is sovereign!

**Is. 45:5** *"I am the Lord, and there is no other; Besides Me there is no God. I will gird you, though you have not known Me;*

Jehovah again states that no God exists besides Himself. He also reiterates that He had granted power to Cyrus even though he had *not known* Him.

**Is. 45:6** *That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun That there is no one besides Me. I am the Lord, and there is no other,*

Jehovah also granted power to Cyrus so all the nations might know that He alone is God. However, when you consider what transpired subsequent to Cyrus' rise to prominence, you find that the nations continued to reject the God of the Jews. How then is this apparent contradiction reconciled? Through Cyrus, the Jews were allowed to return to their land. As a result, the Messiah would later be born, crucified, resurrected, taken up to the Father, and return at the Second Coming. It will be in conjunction with the events surrounding the Second Coming that all nations (on the earth at that time) will believe that no God exists besides Jehovah—fulfilling precisely the prophecy of Isaiah 45:6. Apparent contradiction resolved!

**Is. 45:8** *"Drip down, O heavens, from above, And let the clouds pour down righteousness; Let the earth open up and salvation bear fruit, And righteousness spring up with it. I, the Lord, have created it.*

God's ability to raise up Cyrus, for the purpose of ultimately bringing *salvation* through the Messiah, Jesus Christ, greatly affects the future state of the *heavens* and *earth*. In association with Jesus' reign in Jerusalem, the *heavens* and *earth* will be richly blessed as they bask in their ultimate fulfillment. They will have looked forward to this future blessing for some time (read Romans 8:19-22); for in conjunction with the Second Coming and reign of Christ, the *heavens* and *earth* will be renovated for the purpose of accommodating the truth present in the Messiah (read Isaiah 65:17 and Psalm 85:11-12). What a wonderful sight for the redeemed to behold throughout the Millennium!

With the above in mind, we can rest assured that Jehovah is very much in control of our present affairs, even if more "bad" news should emerge on the horizon. The believer's responsibility is clear: To allow Jesus' presence within to bring honor to His unrivaled name (Philippians 1:19-21). A wonderful adventure awaits all who would dare to live as such. Shalom.

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