

From Black & White To Shades of Gray

**At times I think and believe in
Black & White or absolute;
Other times, in
Shades of Gray or relative;
Whatever I think and believe –
Whether uncertain or resolute,
The verse and rhyme contained
Herein is somewhere in between.**

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“Hard Times Come to Us All”

(Based on Dylan’s “A Hard Rain...”)

Oh, **where have you been, my oldest one?**

Where were you child, when I was gone?

Did you wonder if I would ever return?

Do you know that I tried...but it was turned?

With every reason to consider rejection

To know that we care, and on reflection

The past, the pain; a time to bemoan

But rhythm and notes, music and tone:

Resound a turn; (a) new day has dawned.

CHORUS

But it’s hard

And it’s hard

And it’s hard

And it’s hard

Hard times come to us all.

Oh, **what have you learned, my second one;**

disorders, dysfunctions, deliri-um?

So bring it on home and figure it out:

pawns played-out on boards of denial,

a house of cards, of hate and beguile;

guilt and shame, jaded intuition;

severance family for paid tuition.

Where does she go? Whom can she trust?

How does she live, when love is a bust?

CHORUS

Oh, where will you be, my brown-eyed son?

Your will, your right: a way to run?

You’ve lived with pain, the past medication;

the hurt that comes from utter rejection.

To shoulder the weight, to carry infection of:

love so lost in the death that keeps dying;

one so bereft; a child still crying;

a boy so quiet in the midst of shouting;

and in spite of it all, he is still trying....

CHORUS

Oh, how do you dream, my blue-eyed son?
How do you cope when day is done?
Ponder the reason of why recurring....
This drama, you call it, the ranting a-stirring.
This youngest is set to empty the nest.
So fly boy fly; far away but fast!
A breath of fresh air, a wind at last.
As the others are learning to live after dying,
to love after lying, and to hope after crying.

CHORUS

INTERLUDE (change key)

Oh, where will you go, all and one; (when)
the battles are over, the war be done?
Where do you turn when times get tough
Where do rest when life is rough:
Play your music, and don't stop learning
Keep on trying, and don't stop dreaming.
Gather your rosebuds while you may (of)
those not destroyed, those not disdained, those not discarded—but those that
remain—
of flowers & fragrance, the healing of pain.

CHORUS

About “Hard Times Come to Us All”

Inspired by Bob Dylan’s song, “A Hard Rains Gonna Fall”; my version uses the simple (simplest) chord progression, strummed or picked, and the original’s general solo-guitar folk-rhythm with a title and the refrain “hard times come to us all”.

VERSE 1 - “**Where have you been?** (in these many years)”: Expressing some sentiment over our very long separation, I try to suggest that we never lost our desire-concern for him (them) and identification with emotional pain that occurs in such circumstances. The last two lines, referencing music, relates to my son’s musical background; the trumpet signaling that the relationship has been renewed.

VERSE 2 - “**What have you learned?** (of your family dynamics): The use of “disorders, ...” in line 2 applies to her studies in psychology—with the possibility of the choice of studies having to do with the family dynamics. The next several lines describe this family experience—with particular attention to the line “severance kept for paid tuition”; that she continue to sever family relationships as a condition for financial support. Finally, and before-beyond all the learning is the simple need-want for love and trust.

VERSE 3 - “**Where will you be?**” (having been rejected...) to be alone, or to even runaway): Alludes to years of prescribed psychotropic medication along with the pain of rejection (within his family). Love is certainly lost in the “death that keeps dying” (or what I call divorce where the children are separated from parent and extended family among other consequences and costs). But knowing more about him (than the others at this time), the statements are more definitive—some details from his past and present that he and others have relayed.

VERSE 4 - “**How do you dream?**” (as a way of escaping what he calls “the drama”): Knowing the least about him, my statements are more suggestive of this last one *in this nest*; wanting or needing to fly away...while taking lessons from the others that are already learning of life beyond....

VERSE 5 - “**Where will you go?**” (if or when the controls-pressures have been lifted—or, at least, have lessened). “Gather your rosebuds while you may” referring to poem by similar name; the appeal is to try to enjoy life in spite of all that has happened (or is happening still). There is a deeper and personal message in this request and reference to flowers, for which I will not elaborate at this time.

(Return)

“A Fall Day”

It is nearing end of summer heat.
The pools are closing, the schools are opening,
And days are shortening while lights stay glowing,
And coolness felt in wind ah blowing.

A fall day is welcomed to break the staleness
Of humid air that hangs on low and
Clings to body denying cool,
Be gone you summer tempest foe
And welcome friend of winter snow.

A fall day is here to invigorate.
The soul to run, and leap, and celebrate
Though leaves of green are soon to be
A chore for some to rake and bag;
Yet interim serve as nature splendor.

A fall day is bright with colors of
Red, orange, yellow and other
The trees cascade across the hills
Leaves rich Mosaic before the wither
Attached to tree or down ground yonder

A fall day is charged by electricity for
Distant drums of band ah marching
Of whistles blowing and calls resounding;
And balls in air from kick or throw,
The crack of tackles, the cheer of patrons,

A fall day is marked by hunting:
Turkey, deer, and dove and critters;
With bow compounded, and gun set triggered,
And camouflage garbed to add effect;
Confuse the rascals while perched on stand.

A fall day is blown by shot of
Artic winds from northern regions;
Be gone you remnant of autumn season,
Prepare for blistering, frigid temps.
The warm is minor the Sun preempted,
A fall day is ended.

About the verse: "A Fall Day"

Fall is my favorite season. Only a minor change in the temperature and humidity will bring a degree of energy to my body, mind and its senses.

The body, tired of the stale and sometimes oppressive heat, is exuberated by the milder air; the mind is given a fresh sense of almost newness to the year and beyond; and the senses are generally overwhelmed by the beauty of the trees and the grass that sometimes changes from green to golden.

Memories of this season include the must-dreaded and seemingly futile chore of racking leaves. Those dastardly leaves seem to multiply even after falling to the ground and, much thanks to advent of plastic bags, required the continuing bagging and compressing of these dying organic tree ornaments amongst branches, pine cones, and the occasional droppings of some animal.

Still, the leaves offer a view of utter and unprecedented beauty for which we, as one of the created, travel long distances to observe, photograph, paint and otherwise absorb in full splendor. Whether from a local vista or from more distant locations of the Blue Ridge, the "mosaic" offered by the hardwoods are even more majestic than the endless variations of tensile and lights that line our way months later.

Marching bands and football are very much a part of the "Fall Day" in my *neck of the woods*. This echo of percussion and occasional blast of the brass are often heard on a given week or game night from local high school or college campus. As intended with the leading regiment of an army drum corps, these distant sounds create somewhat of a foreboding of legions on the march to victory.

Hunting is potentially a second favorite pastime (for the patron) to football; though fishing is certainty worth mentioning. Much attention is given to the regulated weapon, species, and other rules that have transformed a once-necessity to a sport of some kind. The distant sounds, this time rifle fire, give similar notions of impending battle although occurring as more of a skirmish than a full scale invasion; still, it is enough to send the deer running and the rest of us ready.

At last the season ends by the *artic winds from northern regions*; but the truth-of-the-matter is that our winter is generally mild with only occasional sub-zero weather; yet, to us only one such occurrence is enough to complain and give due to the spring that waits ever so near.

(Return)

“In As Much”

In as much as I have tried
 To understand the question “why”;
 I cannot find an answer
 Or complete a response
 To the meaning of life, living, death, and all
In as much as I have tried
 The miracle of birth: from Creator to created;
 From conception comes forth life
 To brighten yet a world dark and grim
 With rays of hope to shades of strife
In as much as I have tried
 Our purpose for living:
 A mix of struggle and of ease;
 The desire of taking and the aim of giving;
 The ascent of growing and the descent of dying
In as much as I have tried
 The end of dying and parting of the soul:
 The sorrow, grief, celebration and relief;
 That what was is no longer so,
 Only certain the once is no longer whole.
In as much as I have tried
 Truth and deception, favor and dislike
 War and peace, weakness and might,
 The Sun and rain, the good and bad
 Elation and depression, the sane and the mad
I alone cannot begin to find clarity in
 Life, living, dying and it all;
 The frustration and confusion passes from
 Trying to hoping that some day and on that day,
 I will know and understand completely;
Who knows and understands?
Who guards the answer and holds response?
The Creator of the created, Lord of us all;
In Him to place my failures in as much
That my trying...will pass to faith,
 Less the fall

About the verse: “In As Much”

“In As Much” is the overture of recurring effort to understand life’s difficult issues of *life, living, death, and all* – or the universal question, “What is life?”

In my limited experience, the beginning of life marks one vivid opportunity to ponder this universal question; and to embrace the product of conception as a reason for further hope, but a cause of further strife. Though life brings reason for hope it also bring cause for strife as the will of that life will invariably conflict with the will of another. Life is neither all hope nor all strife, but is mixture of each that ebb and flow through the seasons of our life. On the fringe of a severe storm, like a hurricane, arrives a clear and brilliant sky – to bask in one, we must endure the other.

Struggle and ease, giving and taking, growing and dying are each examples of similar matters to ponder in addressing the universal question. Even the Wisdom of Solomon was not sufficient to render a complete and confirmed reason; but only to instruct us on a response that may lead to resolve and result over time. As with Paul, the will may desire one thing but the Spirit will desire the opposite; hence, a continuum of strife and hope as ideally the later takes precedence over the former.

As conception and birth produce this opportunity, so too does dying and death – each end of the physical cycle that should be among the deepest causes for reflection. The duality of hope and strife will again emerge in death although with various degrees of each. For the young who die, full of much life and potential, strife will likely dominate the process of grieving with charges rather than questions of “Why?” For the older or suffering, hope will emerge much sooner as the process brings much consternation in the midst of certain, but not yet final, death. Bittersweet may be the common description for this process of grieving, but *celebration and relief* seems peculiar if not perverted in the minds and view of each most of us. Though perplexed by our thoughts and reaction, the once certain outcome is that *what was, is no longer so* and our lives have lost a portion of life.

Of course, the great oppositions of living must occur between life and death, but each and all lead to further certainty that our effort to understand does not fully appreciate. In the strife of the recurring opportunity, the hope of eventually understanding rests in our faith that God is the keeper and the giver of that which eludes us – the meaning of life which comes not through our effort but by faith in him, less we fall.

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“Call Me Daddy”

Call me daddy some distant time –
 When word first formed from child to Dad,
 And set the making of daddy proud
 To be daddy to the child
Call me daddy some needed time –
 When word is heard from child to Dad,
 And quick response from daddy near
 To rescue child from moment fear
Call me daddy some recent time –
 Said from another child to another Dad,
 And brings to mind the longing word
 That once meant me instead.
Call me daddy some longing time –
 When the word no longer from child to Dad,
 That distance and isolation have caused
 The child to lose all sense of word
How my heart aches for this word –
 But that child is forever certain
 That daddy remains a word,
 No matter how long deferred.
Daddy, daddy, a thousand times daddy –
 A sweet sound to my ears,
 A celebration for my heart,
 A heavenly image to my mind
Call me daddy another time –
 When time and place will allow
 The freedom to use this word
 Without restraint, but full assured
Call me daddy forever time –
 That long deferred will still remind
 That I am daddy and you are child.
 What God ordained will never end!
A promise is only made,
But a covenant, it will stay.
The course that has fallen us;
 Until that day, you call me daddy, again.

About the verse: “Call Me Daddy”

This verse is an anthem for the title of “Daddy”. Though “Mommy” or some similar description of the mother is often the first formed words of a child, “Daddy” is equally important and has value for both the child and the adult that last for many years to come – especially if such acknowledgements and relationships withstand long periods of absence between child and parent.

The *distant time* describes these long periods as a parent recalls such endearing terms; the *needed time* is of course one of those moments when the child cries out for help – and the parent is quick to respond as a parent should do and maybe once did. The *recent time* and verse therein is the hearing of this word by a child addressing someone else; though it may very well serve to remind others that they too are, or were once called “Daddy”.

If the “once called ‘Daddy’” were a *longing time*, has the child (or now adult) forgotten this word and this relationship? Perhaps distance and isolation have been so severe that the relationship is irrevocable; the hope, however, is that child has not forgotten the word and the relationship. This hope is built on the continued, and possibly increased, value of both word and relationships by the absence, the memory, and the recollection. Mostly, the hope is built on a covenant made very early in the child’s life – a promise to be a “Daddy”! This covenant alone is enough to sustain hope, stay the relationship, and hear this word yet again.

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“Mourning Star”

Twinkle, Twinkle little star
How I wonder who you are?
Father, Daddy, Papa, Man
Show me, teach me that I can.
Live my life that I may see,
The child in you is the child in me.

Twinkle, Twinkle little star
It seems that you are very far:
Distant from my childhood play;
“Goodnight, sleep well” you use to say;
So long the time when held me close,
And showed me that your love was most

Twinkle, Twinkle little star
Do the stars see him as I see them?
Does he think of me and remember when?
He was with me and was my friend.
I pray just now that these stars will be
An Image of him, a reflection on me

Twinkle, Twinkle little star
I think I hear him on the phone
But can I say beyond the tears
Of memories of yesteryears
Where have you gone, why did you leave?
My need to hold, my want to cleave

Twinkle, Twinkle little star
They are confused and well deceived
But someday I hope for unity
To overrule by immunity
Of the need to hold and cleave to
The children of which I too conceived

About the verse: “A Star for Him and for Them”

Of course, this verse is based on the age-old rhyme of “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” but is written from the viewpoint of children to their father. Continued from the previous verse, “Call Me Daddy”, this verse could almost be a reply in the sense that the children long to see their father.

In an attempt to think and speak as a child, the verse is in keeping with the simple and sincere words of a child but possibly dabbles into some detail not typical of a child or young person’s thinking. For example, a child or young person may not recognize *the child in you* or in their father; but easily identifies with abrupt and radical changes that occur when the daddy is not longer involved or present in their lives. Once more, the child recognizes forms or means of love to include bedtime stories, hugs and kisses. Young people are able to understand additional forms although most would not substitute for time, attention, and affection.

I’m not sure if a child is able to ponder the question of his father’s love (his thoughts and remembrances of them), but certainly is able to remember and reflect on their times together if age or frequency allows. An innate or natural desire may supersede these conditions of age and frequency such that the child imagines and even desires, if just out of curiosity, to meet or have contact with the parent.

Finally, the parent responds to the stars (or God) for this first and only time; perhaps he is communicating with them on some level and even knows or senses his children’s requests and condition. Underscoring this vital contact between the two, and expression of love in some form, the father prays for matters that have kept them apart to be lifted or removed such that the relationship or unity may begin again.

Parenting represents a responsibility of parents to their children that should be given the highest respect and encouragement; yet sadly, such a vital duty or key role in our society has been discouraged and, even worse, has been the center of much satire and ridicule. This general stigma is not just excluded to fathers, but the prevailing condition applies to the de-valuing of the parental role in general.

God help those who parent your precious little ones and give them wisdom, guidance and above all, an unlimited depth of love.

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“Shroud of Mist”

The early morn I storm head-long, the drive from home to work.
Like other days of dim light haze, a dense low fog surrounds the car;
Protect me far, as a shroud of mist.

My lights seem pale to further shine beyond the narrow way,
To cut the thick, a bog of quick, an airy swamp of wet;
Hang this, you awful mist, who blocks my view of what I miss.

But as I go this beaten path of which blind-folded might avail,
The traffic low the speed so slow, the narrow road ahead;
And little sight, ahead that might, given reason to impede.

The average speed to traverse this path would for the trip improve,
The time to travel, about an hour, cruising to the tunes;
But now the distance, is every more, than what I usually fly

Still for the trip, I must admit that even slow is something quick
To jog the mind, a kind of trance, hypnotic in this limited view;
The fog enwombs me, protects and guards me, blind as I may be.

A cloud of bliss, a heaven mist, that comforts me instead,
A kind of armor, a force-field dormer, above my window shield;
Once eerie sight, a maligned blight, has now become a might.

That wraps my frame and sings refrain and lulls me to a state,
Of grandeur strength, than all the length of other ones in route;
Dismiss the slow, increase the flow, of distance now to go.

A far-off doubt, a mid-length flout, a blur of amber lens;
It quickly yields, and sways to side my force to reckon with.
Do not challenge not this force-de-tour, the mist from which
Emerge the stir, of one convinced of Shroud of Mist.

About the verse: “Shroud of Mist”

“Shroud of Mist” is a name given to an early morning fog – a name that emanates from the imagination that the fog is a shield or covering of protection and power rather than a hindrance to my visibility.

Driving in a snow could probably equate to this dual impression: on the one hand, the snow poses a visibility and drivability risk; but on the other hand it creates somewhat of a tranquil moment if the road is clear, the traffic minimal, and the visibility adequate. During one of the few drives through a snow, my experience was rather tranquil as the fall flakes illuminated against a dark background and formed an image like I imagine traveling through outer space. But what is imagination built on imagination?

Though my immediate reaction to the fog is the expected annoyance, the attitude gradually shifts to one of acceptance and reliance; again, the fog becomes my protection and power. For the few vehicles that pass by, as *amber lights*, a sense of invincibility prevails. In this relationship, the lifting of the fog would pose a much greater risk by exposing me to the hazards of driving – I am without my armor, the Shroud of Mist.

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“Children & Parents - Lost & Found”

To count my blessings does take time
For God has shed his grace on me;
Still help the Children Lost for now
Soon find them in the best of state.
Father that I use to be
When by decision placed in role;
Of parent to the Children Found
From places dark my Father knows.
But on the way, the role was held
In strong contempt to gain the edge
By parent to the Children Best
To change the truth to something less
And should reaction be in kind
To fight with might to pass the edge
By parent to the Children Least
And risk the chance of further harm
The effort made to be content
Is eased by other little ones
Of children to the Parent Most
A source of love transcends my hope
That brings forth beauty refined through time
By her devotion and heart to bear
Of Children to the Parent Lost
With wisdom wrought in younger years
Help us all in the hearts that hurt
To overcome from blessings flow
Of Parent to the Children Lost
Of Children to the Parent Lost
From Father high to Father low

That when the moment finally comes
Let sweetness take the bitterness
Of Children Lost to Children Found
Of Parent Lost to Parent Found
Of Father High to resound,
That Love conquers all...

About the verse: “Children & Parents - Lost & Found”

“Children & Parents - Lost & Found” is a lamentation for break-up and separation of families due to death, divorce, or other extraordinary reasons. This separation does not include seasonal separation that might occur because of parental job responsibilities and commitments (although the absence can still be difficult and damaging), but refers to long-term separation that could be prevented or at least mitigated by the parents or guardian in the best interest of the children.

Without delving into the statistics for the causes or the details of the effects, the social malady of broken and separated families is widespread and the effects damaging for generations to come. The children growing up without two participating and cooperating parents is a national tragedy with blame pointing to our legal and social systems regarding the sanctity of marriage. Such circumstances rarely benefit the children – as most are caught in the middle of custody, child support and other issues.

In this verse, a father laments that once-position to his children is no longer – the children are lost. On the realization that he is blessed despite the circumstances, his desire is that his children are well and will soon be re-united with him. Following the usual trends of such divorce cases, the mother or *parent to the children best*, was granted custody; in this process or court case, truth gave way to *something less* in the exercise of *strong contempt*.

On analysis of the case, the question of similar tactics applied by the father would seem to cause further harm to the children. Faced with the dilemma of long-term separation and court-driven action, the father seeks contentment through a relationship with other children – in hope that he can continue to love both his natural children and those whom God puts in his charge or contact. Further contentment is found in re-marriage and a second-chance to be a step-father to his wife’s children or *children of the parent most*.

Ironically, his wife is also the victim of a broken family – a past which enables her to be most sensitive and knowing of a child’s needs and requirements and, as he hopes, to his own natural children when the opportunity is presented.

In this sad but pervasive condition of many children, his prayer is that Godly love will replace the longstanding separation and distance that has marked such relationships; and that *children lost* and *parent lost* will be found together and inseparable. Love conquers all!

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“A Weeping Willow to Remind”

Memory serves me well, the Weeping Willow of childhood days:
Marked the spot of Grandmother's home, East Gadsden way;
Shadowed earth beneath her limbs, and remnants of her living birth;
Flower of her hanging limbs, the foliage of her vibrant stem;
Beneath the Weeping Willow, a speckled pink and blends of green

Why to you weep, are you sad, will you change and be glad?
Flower of your youth still grows and blossoms each and every year;
Limbs though drooped remain in tact to hold you firm and sure;
Whether storm, wind, snow, heat, all elements, yet still steadfast;
Silhouette fall of grief and woe but why, I do not know

Reflecting on the memory, a Willow seen along my way;
The questions of my childhood dreams give way to adult thought.
Perhaps the Willow is not sad at all, or otherwise considered
As remembered in her stance and by her name; but rather, is an
Irony that below her appearance is just as glad as other similarity

She struggled like all other kind, she given birth and carried vine.
Generations sway within her view, and others stop and give her due.
Credit her for life and youth and they and offspring further score.
Weep not of sad or otherwise bereaved, but Weep of life and youth;
Tears of joy beneath her limbs are speckled pink, blends of green

Descriptions of her further still, a perfect head of silver hair;
Adorned with other supplements stored in her purse or put away
In day or night, at work or play, down stairs or down town or anyway;
Well put-together, impressed was I of eloquence and dignity.
Weep or laugh aloud, your beauty will always stay with me.

About the verse: “A Weeping Willow to Remind”

“A Weeping Willow to Remind” associates a Weeping Willow to my Grandmother: her home had a Weeping Willow in the front yard; a Weeping Willow often reminds me of her, her character and our time together.

A Weeping Willow is a beautiful, unique tree that probably went long unappreciated or noticed until after my grandmother passed way – this tree became the one symbol of her memory simply by association to her yard and then her. Addressing the attributes of the tree, the child question is posed: Why are you sad?

I wonder if the same question could be ask of the tree if it had a different name...say, “Downing Willow” or “Waterfall Willow”. Well, *if a rose would smell as sweet by any other name*, than perhaps the willow could be ask the same question by any other given name. But, in the memory of my childhood, the question was probably considered on more than one occasion – and has remained in a question at the formation of this verse.

Carrying my imagination further, a reply to the question could be that the tree is not sad at all; on the contrary, it is beautiful, green, and healthy. In this somewhat ode, the tree is exalted for the fruit it has bore, the safe harbor to birds and other critters, and the embellishments to the landscape.

She, whether the tree or my grandmother, weathered the storms (of life or season) and had many admirers; once more, she has offspring that re-invigorate her and give her purpose in these elder years. Thus, the flowers and foliage beneath her limbs are tears of joy (not sadness) over the legacy that she has produced from seed, to full bloom, to aging wood.

In the last paragraph, the transition is complete with the description entirely of grandmother: hair of silver, always dressed neatly, and always practicing economy (evidently, a lifelong practice fostered in her childhood during the Depression). Sometimes she and her daughter would laugh until they cried; and to catch them at the end of this marathon, I might think they might be sad – but I guess I was wrong about the Weeping Willow and about them.

(Return)

“Deceived, Deceit, Deceiver, and Deception”

Near the beginning of the Word, in time once recorded,
The first of our kind, created in God's image;
Though blessed in their shift and endowed with perfection,
Yet **Deceived** by the serpent to consume that forbidden

So **Deceit** first began in the Garden of Eden,
But produced such a fold as to carry forth in number;
From the one to the brother, from the brother to the father,
And the spouse to his partner and the parent to the child.

Can the reason be discovered for this act of utter guile?
Preconceived and deliberate, in simple word, a lie;
That is void of any love, consideration, or the like;
With full intention to violate, confuse and defile.

The innocence of the one who has well entrusted
On the basis of what was thought to be truthfulness.
As the **Deceiver**, well intentioned as the most
Dangerous member of society, is a carrier of ruthless

Acts of betrayal of the best affections of human nature;
On a stage that is set with a background of charity;
Playing on sympathy, and more than a charlatan
Of persuasion as the lesser or wanting beyond disparity,

That performs to the audience with stellar improvisation and
Gains their attention, approval, applause, and ovation;
To degree for by which the audience will indulge and allow this
Version of truth as a final rendition – that is largely the

Desire to believe what they want to believe using
A limited form of the senses called perception
To the point of acceptance, commitment and conviction –
Enough to cast doubt of **Deception's** mere existence

About the verse: “Deceived, Deceit, Deceiver, and Deception”

“Deceived, Deceit, Deceiver, and Deception” is by title, several forms of the basic word that describes the act of purposely misleading by representing a lie rather than the truth. As with other writing, the inspiration begins with a thought fostered by news or information, and develops into verse.

The news of late has pertained to the recent Holocaust-related events held in the former concentration camp, Auschwitz. In one interview, a historian described images of the unfit (for labor) being led into gas chambers – deceived into believing that they were going to receive showers. Stories of similar human tragedy, although not on similar scale, are common to the news – and are often rooted in deception in one form or another.

In the first act (of deception), the serpent entices Adam and Eve to partake in the fruit; thus began deception, the fall of man, and the aftermath and continuing practice of deceit – even in families and other relationships seemingly of love. Though the question for such acts go unanswered or undetermined; yet, the full intention is unquestionably wrong (to violate), and aimed to control (by confusion) and to ultimately hurt or perpetuate such practices (to defile).

Inspired by the quote below, by George Crabbe, the next two segments identify the lethality of such acts and their perpetrators – who leverage the *affections of our nature as the most dangerous members of society*.

But the danger is often disguised under a cloak of charity whereby the control and power are achieved by a seemingly innocuous, frail, and needy source – someone to be pitied or in need of sympathy and understanding. At this moment, the *Big, Bad Wolf* posing as a grandmother comes to mind in “Little Red Riding Hood” – a story leading to potentially fatal deception.

Deceivers are the most dangerous members of society. They trifle with the best affections of our nature, and violate the most sacred obligations.

- George Crabbe, English poet (1754 - 1832)

Often in the context of deception, the adage is applied that *we are not actually deceived, but deceive ourselves*. Using the analogy of theater, deception is presented with the full splendor to captivate and enthrall the audience. As with an actor whose ability and talents transcend the very fact of his acting to point of accepting that he is the character, so too does deception render the deceived unaware of dubious intentions and, furthermore, the very existence of deception at all.

(Return)

“Stinker to Thinker & More”

A child was born unto a home;
Small, frail stinker of not so health
Beneath the skin, a weak, timid breather –
Determined though, and sure to win
Death will not conquer, but for measure
Of therapy, drugs and mostly prayers;
That by the light of morning next
He'll blow his air again and again.

His parents more than doting now,
Spend hour on hour in anxiousness.
Concern and fear – it may be his last
Hour or breath, whichever first
Vigil over sleeping child;
Wonder if he'll ever be
A boy as others before him
God simply help him through the dark.

And so he did exceed the night,
Amazing grace to conquer fright;
Not only dark but much, much more
Reserved for him and laid in store.
To breathe as well as other ones
And strengthen body, blood, and lungs.
From one so frail, a little Stinker;
To one toward health, a growing Thinker

Thinker takes a central theme

Knowledge the enabling:

Though quiet and reserved by nature

His mind and soul aloud with splendor

Of books, and words and games of brilliance;

And crafts, models, and kits for intelligence –

An insatiable appetite for reading

When standing, laying, sitting or leaning.

Yes, he played liked the other ones

And indulged in children's fun

Hide-in-seek, freeze-tag, and exercise

Became possible instead of only thinkable;

And activity that may have been limited before

Became less and less limited such that even sports

Like baseball, wrestling, tennis, and track

And so much more

In his youth, the thinker was a double-edged sword;

Having both will and the way, his once-limited status

Served only as a memory – that the ability

From which some may be deprived at first,

Can be overcome beyond birth;

That the encumbrances that may reduce,

Can be hurdled and out produced –

And, yes so much more

About the verse: “Stinker to Thinker & More”

“Stinker to Thinker & More” is a tribute to my brother: born with asthma and related health conditions, he had his share of struggles and obstacles in early childhood; but was able to overcome many of the early physical problems with maturity, medication and a lot of prayer.

In fact, his health and physical ability so improved through his teen years that sports became routine – which was not possible much earlier in his childhood. Between infancy and his later teens, he indulged himself in growing his mind and establishing himself as a “thinker” among his classmates.

The use of “stinker” relates to the common use of word for toddlers during those years – similar to “rug-rat”, “carpet-crawler”, and any other common, endearing terms for this age group. To use “stinker” as a description in this verse was to relate my infant brother as any other baby – though having some additional needs and health conditions of a serious nature.

By much care and prayer, he made it through these early, critical years into childhood; and though still limited in his activity, found many ways to still test the patience of his parents and send him to the hospital for a mishap or experiment that went bad. In all, the hospital or similar medical establishments was a much-frequented place for him.

When not receiving medical attention, he found much interest in books, games, models and the like. From the “Tom Swift” and “Hardy Boys” series, he quickly advanced to the *big league* – although sometimes side-tracked by “Mad” or some other *rag* of similar content. One or the other, these items consumed much of his energy and time; from a combination of that given and that nurtured, his mind grew in knowledge and intellect.

Speaking of “league”, his physical limitations were gradually overcome and, as a teen, he played organized baseball. Later in high school, he wrestled, joined a swim team, and did some laps around the track. Not satisfied yet, he continued to push the limits in college through ROTC and other activities of less-official or authorized status – his endeavors would have tested in the best of mind and body. These physical objectives possibly climaxed with a marathon in his 30’s; although, his exploits may not yet be over...stay tuned.

Recently, I came across a brief biography on Wilma Rudolph: born with crippling health problems, she was given little chance of survival, much less the ability to walk; yet, she was enabled in both counts and eventually became a world class Olympic runner. The story reminded of my own brother’s plight as a child.

(Return)

“The Slam-Door Spider”

An uncommon species if not unfamiliar,
But still as potent to all who encounter
A web of deception is a common occurrence;
To entice its victim by appearing as a victim

A spider of two legs that walks upright
Behavior by name is Slam-Door, out-of-sight.
A response to the world all guilty of something;
Inciting her anger, promoting her fight

In the depth of her heart, she is not at fault
For any such causes of anger that wrought.
Isolation from all, overlooking her lies;
Than nodding their heads, and breathing a sigh

Slam-Door while young in the nest
Account for this habit of nature regress.
By leading its prey, innocence the lure;
Sting convoluted by an image of pure.

Poison is not first an evident sign
Attached to daughters by mother inclined.
To reign over male, passive, and unspoken;
His vices enough, but promises broken.

She seems noble in her nest full of splendor;
But on the other, she overflows with venom galore:
First serve the male with his pleasing delight;
Than bite off his head and consume all his might.

Slam-Door spider middle-age in the nest;
Pass on the symptom that leads to success;
Bear-Down on the young and impress all control;
Vanquish the male and disband all his soul.

From her nest or her lair, her will takes its toll
On the young who shake at the sight of her coil.
The plight is too much for the innocent who would follow;
The might of the male they long for the morrow.

I am
Restrained by the law to engage their well being;
I am
Constrained by her will and rage at his seeing;
I fear
Even footprints of the young that travel down ill-path,
Toward the land of dysfunction of generations past

Slam-Door spider now aged in the nest
Embroided with disgust why the young have all left;
Walls all seething with bitter guile;
Pray for the prey yet be defiled.

To tarry from the nest has never been her desire;
Observe that this place is where to retire;
Her image will burn as her anger in time –
A reflection of her mother, a portrait of disdain
Epilogue inscribed in the ill-colored walls –
The poison inflicted in the essence of her fall.

About the verse: “The Slam-Door Spider”

The title of this verse is a play on the species of the Trapdoor Spider: a spider that lays in wait beneath the camouflage of a makeshift door and emerges quickly to capture its victim. The similarity between the Trapdoor and figurative spider (Slam-door) is in the element of illusion (or deception) followed by the immediate, lethal result. The association or reference of the two is one of convenience: the figurative spider slams a figurative door to elude or escape potential discovery of its true nature; as with the Trapdoor spider, the door is a deception that is used to lead or take its victim into the lair.

The true nature of the Slam-Door is an obsession for power and control, pursued through treacherousness and scheming, and cloaked by the appearance as a victim. This appearance or deception, lethality dressed in innocence, can be effective in convincing the most discerning that she is a victim; however, the deception may gradually dissipate as the true nature surfaces through observation and experience. On such a discovery, the spider will *slam the door* or take flight while still continuing to spin its web of deception as a disposed victim. Those no longer convinced by her schemes are left *nodding their heads, and breathing a sigh*.

The figurative spider is far more lethal than her natural counterpart: not only does she have the element of disguise, but her appetite for power and control is accomplished through an arsenal of weapons to include anger, fury, accusations, shame, lies, and threats of abandonment – this is her poison! As with the generation before, she will try to pass down this behavior for control using all of these weapons as necessary – the end justifies the means!

But in deceiving or poisoning others, she also deceives or poisons herself. The *slamming of the door*, as the proverb would have it, has the dual effect of both escape and isolation, evasive and invasive consequences. Disguise and deception has an end and, at the least, the slam door spider will suffer by the continuing revelation of her true nature among those closest to her. Yes, some may not escape her trap, and as a consequence, will fall prey as both an object of her control and reflection of her essence, her true nature.

(Return)

“If I were a..., I would attend you”

If I were a bird, I would fly whatever distance
Not influenced by the flock, unrestrained by any other.
With ear acute to the persons, places and things of low;
Where you might walk or sit or talk –
There, I would perch myself and whistle a melody
Of beauty and richness to hear and attend you

If I were a cloud, I would drift aloft on an endless sky
Independent of the wind, kept intact by all other.
With touch sensitive to the persons, places and things below;
Where you might walk or sit or talk –
There, I would descend as a fog, cover and envelope
With a mist and coolness to feel and attend you

If I were the moon, I would place and position my light
Unattended by the season, unblocked by all other
With eye acute to the persons, places and things below;
Where you might walk or sit or talk –
There, I would extend a beam, to surround and illuminate
From silhouettes and shadows to see and attend you

Of course, I am not any of these things; but
Whatever I imagine or as I actually am,
I would still attend you.

About the verse: “If I were a..., I would attend you”

On occasion, I imagine being a bird or some other airborne or natural object that has the capability to fly, drift or permeate over much distance; and to have some independence and stealth to hear, feel and see that which cannot be reached by me alone and at present.

While it may seem far fetched to imagine yourself as a bird or any of the other things, the notion has probably been shared by most whom at one time or another feel stymied by their natural, situational, personal limitations. From the youngest of minds to the young at heart, the thought of “morphing” into another thing, whether animate or inanimate, can bring a moment of pleasure and excitement.

On an occasional flight, as the aircraft is positioned above some clouds, the thickness and texture of the stilled band of moisture gives some appearance to large, rolling cascades of snow – as though you could step out of the plane and walk for miles atop this stuff...or get lost in for that matter. Yes, with age comes the disappearance of imagination of the type; but isn't it nice to just step back and re-visit this practice of what may have been common in childhood, if just for a moment?

Though I have put-away some childish things, the imagination remains a infrequent but still useful practice if just to do what I am called to do as and adult:

To Attend You.

(Return)

“Looking In from With-Out”

What must it be like without?
...A thing held far from reach.
Whether too distant or evasive, it
Is not contained or controlled

A cultch, a grasp, a hold of any kind,
Seems near unlikely or even impossible;
But for the ounce of possibility or even cause
To believe that such might be held, however brief

The question of curiosity, wanting or even need,
Is without a complete answer, basis or justification;
Except to the mind, heart, and will of the one without
That which is seen, smelled, heard or breathed

The child who stands by picture window with
Stillness only true of sleeping hour;
And looking in at toy or candy,
Or something else that is desired, if only a moment

The teen looking in from a distance while
Couple walk along their way enjoined –
Though only for a brief season, but seemingly
Happy enjoying youth's adventure together

The man or woman of mid-life status with
Hopes and dreams of fading possibility –
Maybe if for a moment, or forever, would
Be the difference between living and existing

Looking in from without leaves little room
For contentment in the blessings and gifts;
Caring and praying for the real needs of those
Who possibly are without and may not yet have
Reason, cause, or time, or hope to be looking in;
Or even thinking about it!

About the verse: “Looking In from Without”

To imagine myself as being in need is not as easy as those who are truly in need. The whole basis for need seems to be relative with reference to culture, society, family, and the media; yet, in the final analysis, the human needs should be fairly similar: that which is needed to sustain life and nothing more.

Affluence and material fulfillment has two sides in regard to the question of needs:

1. It changes our basis for needs with the scale shifting in proportion to the sum of our material possession – *the more we have, the more we want, and the more we need...*
2. It affords more opportunity and resources to give to others who are less fortunate or have apparent needs; but the matter must go further to the heart that compels one to give. If the resources are available, but the heart is not conditioned, the needs will not be apparent or of concern; or the needs may be rationalized as *the fate of those whose feet are slipping*.

The trends of our society indicate that, on average, we have more possession than generations past; but have achieved such a status on extreme levels of debt. In effect, we are fooling ourselves with the illusion that our consuming power is a measure of our earning potential...but it is not, of course. The quest for which I have embarked leaves no end in sight but, instead, a continuing insatiability – more and more is better, but I am not yet there. I am the one *looking in* with wanting and envy – but should be content and even thankful without reliance on the things as the source of my content.

Those who might be considered needy, or actually are, should be *looking in*; but are not yet part of the quest or entrapped in materialism – they are too busy just trying to survive if even the possessing the reason, cause, time or hope to do so. Can they even think about such apparent needs when life is at stake?

Father, help me in the state that I am in; set me free from the bondage of materialism – the envy and coveting that renders me unsatisfied and ill-content, on a quest with an unattainable or never ending objective of more and more. Help me not to put value in these things *for which moth and rust will destroy*; but in the eternal things.

(Return)

“A Sun, A Shade of Tree”

Sun
Searing and
Boiling and
Blistering
Hot

A Shade,
Of Tree is most valued
At times when sun is greatly bearing
On Earth below, no shadow leering from other than
The one soul searing in steamy air and brightest glaring
From beneath its limbs, the tree may offer
The slightest drop in heat thereafter
As though the sun in clouds
Has fallen or
Seen the
Day and
Now is
Slumping
Whatever
Beauty
The tree
Does render
Is largely
Due to sweet
Surrender of
Soul from Sun to
Shade, age to age, the tree remains the same of green and leafy
Of branched and mossy, whether short or tall, a shade aloft-e
Now to value all the more

About the verse: “A Sun, A Shade of Tree”

The boiling sun is sometimes more than the soul can bear; but thanks given to God for the timeless and everlasting comfort found in the shade of a tree.

How often and how many a tree we pass in the day (or night) without considering its natural value of shade? The tree is the longest-existing and least-expensive form of relief from the sun and heat.

And what better way to illustrate this relief than by words framed of like silhouette – complete with sun above and the shade below.

(Return)

“The Vastness of the Smallest (Yet discovered)”

While reading by a pond one day
Attention turned another way
To focus on the lowest point
Aside my feet and to left at bay
Why, I cannot quite explain
Except that for a moment plain
The vastness of the smallest ground
Became a world unto its own
And there I saw a crawling bug
A shell of black, red, and other
Appearance ant or something else
I cannot tell from simple knowledge
It marched along, in broken cadence
Treaded over and under with every effort
From where it came I do not know
Except to say with vigor so
Around its path a mix of matter
Of fallen seeds, and nuts and branches
I'm sure much more than eye does notice
First glance of smallest in its vastness
Perhaps a closer look would offer
Much more in store to scribe in verse
Expand the value of this coffer
To add the more to something terse
The moment, though plain, a time to muse
Of detail for which I could only imagine
Some inner parts of a crawling bug
The outer world around its path
The eggs from which it must have came
The journey on, its aftermath
Of much I have not yet described
Nor can remember as if to try
Save only for another day to look intent, then reply

About the verse: “The Vastness of the Smallest”

My immediate impulse on sight of the bug was its mechanized motion and apparent determination – with the surrounding area (of dirt and such) almost incidental. Admitted in the verse, and to repeat, the moment is described without detail and depth. But the impulse was obviously enough to write about and is perhaps one of those instances where the idea (and its expression) far exceeds the written account in terms of my thoughts and the details of the bug and plot of ground.

Attention to a bug is common – since most of us encounter them from time to time with spontaneity of averting or destroying the pestilence. But given my mindset at the time, perhaps absorbed in the subject matter of a book, the impression was vivid enough to the least out something on paper.

Maybe this attempt was not about the bug at all – but maybe about trying to force something on paper – even when the effort does not render the intended outcome. Whatever the real purpose or intention, my effort must be counted for something if just to bore the reader with trivialities and blandness. Maybe the next such approach will be more productive or redeeming.

(Return)

“Unhealed, Still Long After the Blow”

When young in size and mind and soul
 It must have been some misadventure
 When armed with hatchet from a camper
 And brandished blade from leather scabbard
At will, my might, I swung at tree
 Not sure of permit or consult
 Just for the sake of satisfaction
 The motion and the end result
The strike though light, but still a blow
 And from the edge did sap a-flow
 The impact rippled up my arm
 The metal to the bark did harm
Enough to sink beneath the bark
 And cut so deep as to remind
 That misadventure not in kind
 Except to flay and fell for leisure
But shortly after several blows
 Tiresome came instead of pleasure
 Excitement once but now near boredom
 Long before the downing tree-dome
Passed were years and younger thoughts
 Of misadventures such as this one
 But on a day in passing tree-dome
 Occurred to me, of blade incision
While glad to see the tree still standing
 Taller now if memory serves me
 Distinctly though remains of blow
 Brandished blade from scabbard show
The sink was not as fresh or clear
 But still the blow enough to sear
 And steady pour this clear emission
 The sap to flow, season to season
At a glance, it seemed like tears
 This flow of sap from distant years
 If so could I than years' pretend
 The tears though still will amend
A thoughtless blow of will expended
 Or thoughtless since that misadventure
 Whatever cause(s), I must conclude
 Unhealed still long after the blow

About the verse: “Unhealed, Still Long After the Blow”

I do recall having chopped at a tree or two – just for the pleasure of swinging a hatchet or ax. In this recollection was some attention to the senses: the impact and effect of a solid blow; the somewhat associated odor to a soft or hard-wood; and the images of flying chips amidst a developing breach of bark and layer. From the lasting senses comes the image of my handy-work of leisure (and occasionally occupational) chopping – and its consequential effect on the log, tree or otherwise work at hand.

As an introduction to this verse, the childlike perspective (and motivation) is a fantasy of woodsmen, pioneers or something of that kind; made complete with the hatchet in hand, one might take on the very personality of Paul Bunyan or Daniel Boone. If only I could throw the hatchet and split a tree in half like Fess Parker; but I'd settle for just making it stick in the back. Dash all the fantasies man, I just want to swing a blade and do some damage. And so I did....

The end result is not only the gratification of the moment but a much later (years later) return to the *scene of the crime*. On return (to the chopped tree), I discover not just the remnant or scar but the fact that this scar in fact is still an open wound that is “unhealed, still long after the blow”. Returning to my childlike mindset as well, the oozing sap is imagined to be tears. The initial notion of these tears is that the tree is still hurt (or unhealed); but could the tears also indicate that the tree is rejoicing because of my return? I am not sure altogether, but consider the obvious cut – as an “end result” in the leisure of my childhood but its lasting effect and implications in adulthood.

(Return)

“A Stone Wall (along the trail)”

A stone on stone, a wall I found
In mass and weight no less I think
Have crossed by path in passing years
And here I stand at base and marvel
Of sheer mass and I so afraid

The image here before my sight
Physical with limits seen is
Not the stones that block my life
But serves instead to remind
Indomitable wall of different kind

Of such a wall long persistent
To block the path of life I take
With justice, mercy non-existent
Of God's endowment, promise kept
The wall is utter degradation

Authority without a conscience
Laws established with a process
Protocol enforced but not respected
Pretense charged de facto truth
This all engenders indignation



*But can't you see that this wall is no different than the image before your eyes?
It may seem daunting and ever firm but not a hindrance to my will and plan
Respect it for the purpose served with limits too that can't possess
The path I chose is well prepared, now wait my child - be not afraid*

*You think it will block or degrade the path I chose
I knew the wall before a wall, the stones from rock that I created
And cut and formed was all well known to serve my will and plan
You speak of promises as though some doubt has entered mind
And left a void of faithlessness, despair – even indignation*

*Indignation is not from me but comes from other, the evil one
Who knows the doubt within your mind and plays his song to remind
Of all you earned and well deserve is lost by wall so well preserved
My promise made is promise kept and that's enough to offer you
Now take this cup of overflowing, the bread of life you don't deserve*

*Why be shocked by fallen world, the sin of man, deceit and all
Did I not tell you long ago inclined is nature to be so
Possessed of serving only self and curse the one who offers peace
My will perverted by the choice of man to run his life increased
But flowers fall and so do walls, the promises made I will complete*

About the verse: “A Stone Wall (along the trail)”

A recent venture on nearby bicycle trails brought me to a stone wall. With some casual interest in using the wall as an object for writing, I took a picture. Initial attempts at forming some verse however did not provide anything that I considered unique or true to my feelings. Coincidence with the attention to this wall has been a meta-physical or figurative wall in my life – in the path or journey that I follow. This particular wall, like that in the photograph, is imposing and seemingly impervious to any might that I could muster alone.

Yes, other walls may have existed or occurred, but to my recollection, nothing as daunting and impregnable as this wall – as though it is built of many stones hewn from such rock with an endless line and height...that surrounds and paralyzes. The irony of my attempt to write about the wall is that I have struggled to the level of *hitting-a-wall* and landing flat, a bit shaken, but with the unexplained determination to dust myself off while waiting for more inspiration and motivation.

The verse is presented from two characters: in the first four stanzas, I am associating the physical wall (as pictured) with the meta-physical wall to describe how the one seems impregnable while the other indomitable; the later stanzas are a reply from God – at least a reply that I think might be in keeping with God’s word. The combination of the two offers both the sinners grievance and God’s reply. Somewhat like a Psalm or even the book of Job, the two viewpoints are the complaint or plea of the sinner followed by God’s answer to the meaning and application of justice.

I describe an injustice (in my opinion) along with the natural consequences or outcome of indignation. God’s reply in both reassuring and chastising: his plans (for me) have not been changed or altered by “the stone wall” but, on the contrary, have been carried on by providence; the consequences of the so-called injustice (indignation...) are not from God and therefore, are sin. The certain, but sometimes forgotten, truth is that justice is from God alone who grants mercy and saves by grace through Christ.

A fallen world and the depravity of all men are the dual effect for reminding the sinner of his underserved position and the dire need for God’s grace. As God chastens those whom he loves, an understanding (and reminder) of the chasm between God and man is develops to strengthen our faith.

(Return)

“In Times of Trouble, Where do you go?”

Trouble comes in many forms
From daily chore to life long plight
But offers us the basic need
To turn our hearts to Him instead

When do you stand on some formed basis?
Or do you fly or run away?
Last of all, you fight for life or death
In times of trouble, where do you go?

For Job was told in book of five
That all mankind is born to trouble –
As sparks fly upward, man is lowered
To state for which he should appeal

Is man able to forget his trouble?
As Joseph sold in slavery –
Much prayer and time then did allow
That trouble spawned meant for good.

In times of trouble, do you consider?
The worker of miracles that cannot be counted,
And wonders that cannot be fathomed
With power to sets-up kings and depose them
Giving wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning,
A stronghold and a helper to the fatherless
And keeps you safe in his dwelling,
Hidden in the shelter of his tabernacle,
And set you high upon a rock.
To surround you with songs of deliverance

In Times of Trouble, let me go to your arms

About the verse, “In Times of Trouble, Where do you go?”

The inspiration for this writing comes from scripture and a few lines from a contemporary Christian song (see below). A fundamental question no doubt, the answer relies largely on our understanding with the action depending on faith.

*Though the day be laced with trouble
Be the stone on which I stumble
Strait into the arms, where you remain*
- Jennifer Knapp, Kansas

if only we could understand who God is – his power and love and all – the answer might be easy; and only if our faith was strong, the action would be to go to him. Lacking understanding, we are certain to respond in other ways, taking flight or fight, the human response is...well, human! When understanding does begin to register, faith begins to grow (*faith comes from hearing and hearing from the word of God*).

To understand is much more than the scholastic exercise of reading and dissecting the scriptures – it is embracing all as the word of God made living by his Holy Spirit (*spiritual things understood through the Spirit*). In this understanding – beyond human comprehension – action is staged to fall, “stumble” but otherwise land into the arms of God, the cross of Christ.

Of course, action does not avert trouble or the consequences of trouble – it does however lead to forgiveness and love over other human reactions of ultimate destruction to include alienation (from God and others), bitterness, unforgiveness, and anything else that separate us from God. So trouble, as it comes, leads to one of two choices or reactions: moving away from our master or toward him.

In God’s certain and consistent love, chastening is his action to turn and restore us unto him. Though we may run (as Jonah did in the Old Testament), yet God’s desire for us does not; hence, we will be ultimately brought unto him through *hook or crook*.

When trouble comes – as trouble comes – where will you go....but to God.

(Return)

To be Blessed – so as to be a Blessing

What is “to be blessed” – so as “to be a blessing”?

Is “blessed” to have what we want – all that we can possess?

So after I have fulfilled this want or counted all that I possess,

I can proclaim to myself, to you, and to God, that “I am blessed”

“Blessed” is not about our want or what we possess;
But about finding contentment in what we have been given;
Still more, the “blessed” wait,
The want to forsake,
And patience to partake,
So as “to be a blessing”

What is “to be blessed” – so as “to be a blessing”?

Is “blessed” to be better-off than most – more than my *neighbor* –

So that I can live without much envy, without much jealousy?

And proclaim to myself, to you, and to God, that “I am blessed”

“Blessed” is not about challenging, competing or comparing;
But about finding compassion in what we have been given;
Still more, the “blessed” share,
No despairing over comparing,
With giving for a living,
So as “to be a blessing”

What is “to be blessed” – so as “to be a blessing”?

Is “blessed” to be free to do what I want to – to fulfill my senses –

So that I can bask in the sun and pursue a life of fun?

And proclaim to myself, to you, and to God, that “I am blessed”

“Blessed” is not about the fulfillment of my senses;
But about finding providence in what we have been given;
Still more, the “blessed” yield,
God’s will – not my will,
And sweet surrender
So as “to be a blessing”

“To be blessed” – so as “to be a blessing”

Is more than I can describe in words; but far more,

Is a condition of the heart that waits, that shares and yields –

So as “to be a blessing” and, thus “to be blessed”

About the verse: “To be Blessed – so as to be a Blessing”

This event leading to this verse was a discipleship Bible study at Cokesbury Methodist Church in Charleston. Our instructor and pastor, Charles, was covering the Old Testament and ask us to write a poem with similar title.

When I thought about “blessed” (or to be blessed), my impulse was that “blessed” may be attached to or associated with the things we value. If we value security and our security depends on our economic status, then we may associate “blessed” with income or other measures of economic security. Similar areas may be health, love and acceptance, and so on.

Our notions or view of “blessed” may find a basis from the Bible – and support the associations as described above. For instance, Proverbs describes wealth and “blessed” in association; but for the few verses or stories that support this or similar associations, the vast number do not really equate “blessed” with earthly possession or otherwise, with things.

Some verses speak of “blessed” as actually giving a blessing (and in turn, being blessed); other verses refer to faithfulness toward or obedience to God as “blessed”; still others describe a character like that of Christ who mourn, or suffer, or bring peace as “blessed”. All in all, the scripture seem to describe “blessed” on a spiritual plane – rather than material or worldly. The “blessed” is really associated and analogous with giving – rather than getting or receiving.

On this condition of “blessed” is the final line of verse (on the prior page), “to be a blessing” is “to be blessed”; not possession, or power, or freedom to satisfy our personal desires. No, “blessed” is about being like Christ...being a blessing to others – even those for which we find it difficult.

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Tomorrow (is more than the day after today)

Tomorrow is more than the day after today;
For tomorrow could surprise us beyond
What we can say prior to that day, or
What can be understood on this day?
Still, tomorrow is more than the day after today –
It is the future if only for the day, a day.

Tomorrow may bring sunshine in the form of a ray
That starts as a minute inkling of light that
Pierces the dark turning dim into day,
And reminds me that tomorrow has become today.
Still, tomorrow is more than the day after today –
It is ray of sunshine that lights our way.

Tomorrow may bring rain whether by trickle or by a deluge: claps of thunder,
Flashes of lightning that causes us to shudder with intrigue and even dazzle.
Cast on dryness, the rain with sheen that causes everything to appear new.
Much that may exist would never have been noticed if not for the rain
To unveil the otherwise unknowns however good or bad and cause
Reflection, consequence, condition, and cleansing at the same time

Tomorrow may bring nothing more than a continuation of today
Immeasurable difference from the day before or the day after... rather blasé
A mast ship on the ocean with neither wind nor current to drive away
Certain weather for the day is no less different than yesterday.
The monotony of it all – how long will it stay? God speed to wash away the
Doldrums by weather whether storm or wind, gale, and spray.

Yesterday, I did not give much thought to today; but tomorrow...it is a new dawn!
That offers hope that my ship will speed along with trimmed sail; dauntless to the
storm or stale of yesterday and leaving aft today; pressing forward for distant
land beyond the morrow. By chance that in my travel and on this route that we
meet at port or sea, know that the helm of my ship will be my Lord who has never
failed me...and whom I promise will never fail you for all tomorrows that be.

About the verse: Tomorrow (is more than the day after today)

Who can forget – or fail to recognize – the wistful tune in “Annie”: “The sun will come up tomorrow, *bet your bottom dollar...*”; “Tomorrow, tomorrow, there’s always tomorrow, it’s only a day a way”.

With such childlike anticipation, I wrote this verse; the anticipation of tomorrow albeit the possibility of nothing new – or the Doldrums. On the other hand, tomorrow can bring the worst of news or conditions – that might leave us with the desire that it was still yesterday. One day you can be working or enjoying your family, and the next day be arrested as an alleged felon; one day you can be helping parent your children, and the next day being helped into a police car for trying to help your children. We don’t know what tomorrow will bring whether it be *a bitter winter or a warm spring*.

Even the doldrums (or being bored) has its benefit; after all, it could be worse...it could be much worse. Tomorrow may bring the whimsical; where the arrival of rain may be an inconvenience or interrupt plans, but the rain is much needed to mitigate a summer drought and prospect of fire. Finally, there are the storms that magnify our sense of helplessness and, afterward, should render an added degree of thankfulness and gratitude should we (and ours) be intact. With the mixed feelings at the onset is also the mixed outcome of the rain: the mild rain bringing light to all things by reflection; but the deluge, clatter and wind bringing an aftermath of disruption and destruction. The rain can be sweet, so soft a trickle; but the rain can be fierce with unrelenting purpose and irreparable damage.

With mixed feelings about mixed rains, there is that sensation of *calm after the storm*; that should lead us further to the anticipation about tomorrow. The mystery of the rain is that it offers a bit of soul-cleansing but re-establishing the earth, yes; but also those formed from the earth. This dropping from the heavens may work mildly on our soul or it may be brutal; it may render change ever so slowly and subtly; or it may press us for a radical movement.

Using the metaphor of a tall ship, “Tomorrow...” captures the unpredictable and uncertainty of a seafaring life in the days of yore. After the storm however – and with sparing of my ship, my sails – is the proclamation of the Lord at the helm. Perhaps like those on Pilgrim’s Rock is the momentary relief that “we made it.”; and now, let us give thanks and trust by faith in the venture before us. ..and for you.

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Trail of the Broken C

The legend of the broken C
Has overlooked the facts you see;
Of how the trail could not commit
The brokenness of money spent;
Of how the C was first conceived
A gift to one so dearly pleased;
And love was with the well-intended
Along this trail from start to ended.

How did the C become so broken
Internal damage as was spoken?
And marred if not a blunt force made
Would have to happen after played.
Yes, at the start the C was loaded
Packed with care incased in packing;
Insured as well for money spent
And class as "fragile" as was meant.

And further still did Dell extend
A warrant for its fit and function.
The trail was planned at every step
The C was gift with all intention
Of ending with the well deserved
Child of one so well preserved;
But, Oh this trail marked by tears
The breaking burden, the loss of years.

C was not broken along the trail,
Or at the start when well received.
The truth is it could not have happened,
But child is once-again deceived:
The abject blow that broke the C
Was made from one so close at hand
A history of the same behavior
Breaks the C to sour the favor.

A legend of the broken C
Is deeply rooted in favor kept
Of good intentions from the start
But outcome marred by vague deception
The truth – so sad – is C in question
Was broken at the end reception
The saga thus will never end
At Bitter Root and Anger Bend



About the verse: “Trail of the Broken C”

Only with the addition of the illustration is the “C” understood to be a computer. The backdrop of this verse is a recent attempt to send one of my children a graduation gift. Purchased, packaged and preserved for shipment; the computer purportedly was received with both a broken shell or casing, and a damaged internal drive. Naturally, I was upset with the fact that my child was upset; and what’s more, his testimony on the matter suggesting that I intentional damaged the computer before sending it.

Having written on this matter before, I am well prepared to defend the certainty that the computer was not damaged during shipment: insured, packaged and classed as “fragile”; the possibility for damage – particularly if the parcel had no apparent damage – would be virtually impossible considering the described damage. No, the “legend” lends strongly to another cause for the “broken C”; that the damage did not occur along the “trail” – or even at the start – but after receipt at the end – before delivered to my child.

The “trail” is too trodden to think of any other course; the C was broken at end – along “Bitter Root” and “Anger Bend”.

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