

I AM THE ONLY ONE LEFT WHO CARES!
I Kings 19:15-21

Many of us have felt what Elijah felt out in the wilderness. Things are quickly going from bad to worse and I am the only one left who cares! That was Elijah's weary response to God. It came after Elijah's momentous victory over the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. How quickly we can slide from the mountain of triumph into the valley of despond. Elijah did. Queen Jezebel was after his blood. He had fled out into the wilderness. He was hiding in a cave. God came to him in that cave and asked him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

It was a fair question. God had given him the victory over the 450 prophets of Baal. It was God who ignited the fire under the animal sacrifice and settled once and for all who was more powerful, Baal or Yahweh. Elijah was God's man, God's champion, God's ambassador. Here he was hiding in a cave. "What are you doing here, Elijah?" God asks. He could have asked, "Why are you not at the palace confronting Jezebel?" Or, "Why are you not in the marketplace telling all the people about the great victory that I gave you?" Or, "Why are you not in the sanctuary offering up your praise?"

God doesn't spell out where He expects Elijah to be, but Elijah knows what God is asking. Listen to his answer: "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the people of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thy altars, and slain thy prophets with a sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life to take it away."

In other words, everyone else has forsaken you, God. I'm the only one left who cares! Everybody else is going to pot. All the kids in my school are into sex. I'm the last 16-year-old virgin in America. (More about that later.) Everybody's getting divorced. Will we be the last married couple in the land? You can't trust anybody anymore. Everybody's out to get you. There's no use trying to make your voice heard anymore. Today's problems are too big, too complex. Besides, I'm the only one left who cares, and what can I do?

Ever have feelings like that? Let's deal with them for a few moments this morning and see if there is not some Good News.

THE WORLD IS IN PRETTY BAD SHAPE, IT IS TRUE. A shipwrecked sailor was alone on a desert island for several years. To his great relief, he spied a ship on the horizon. He built a great bonfire to catch the crew's attention. Soon the

ship was dropping anchor off the little island and a small rescue boat was lowered into the water. One solitary crewman was in the rescue boat. He was carrying an armful of newspapers. "Read these," he said to the sailor, "and decide whether you want to be rescued."

Perhaps you would agree with Ogden Nash, "Progress was once a very good idea; however, it has been going on far too long."

As humorist Robert Orben says, "You have to question any period in history in which people are saying that God is dead and Elvis is alive." (1)

Yes, the world is in pretty bad shape. But any student of history knows that it always has been.

Will Durant, the great historian, said, "When people ask me to compare the twentieth century to older civilizations, I always say the same thing: 'The situation is normal.'"

The world has always been in bad shape--ever since the species HOMO SAPIENS first appeared on the globe. Up until then, things had been pretty peaceful. But with humanity came lust and greed and resentment and malice and a host of other malevolent emotions. Our time is no better or no worse. Because people are no better or worse.

THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT WE DO NOT HAVE SOME STAGGERING PROBLEMS. We do. There is still the threat of nuclear war. In 1860 a French chemist named Marcellin Berthelot prophesied that "within a hundred years...man will know what the atom is. It is my belief that when science reaches this stage, God will come down to earth with his big ring of keys and will say to humanity, 'Gentlemen, it's closing time.'" (2) I hope the Frenchman is wrong. But there is probably more reason to be hopeful on this front than any time within the past generation.

There is still the threat posed by pollution of our natural resources and a rapidly growing world population. Such issues as the depletion of the ozone are enough to keep us all awake at night. This is a global problem and only a global approach will make a difference.

There is that old story from centuries ago about three men in a boat, none of whom could swim. When they got out to the middle of the lake one of them took out an augur and began boring a hole in the bottom of the boat. The other two shouted, "What are you doing?"

"Mind your own business," said the one with the augur. "I'm drilling this hole beneath my seat alone. It has nothing to do with you."

"But," shouted the other two men, "we are all in the same boat!"

Our world is only slowly realizing that we ARE in the same boat. Brazil wants to exploit its rain forest. That is understandable. They are a poor country. They are where we were 100 years ago. It is difficult for us to say to them, don't destroy those forests when we have paved so much farmland with asphalt and when we keep spewing toxic fumes from our factories. The protection of our environment is everyone's business, but no one wants to take the first step.

Someone noted that fifty people showed up at a meeting to protest air pollution. After the meeting they got in forty-seven cars and went home.

Until people everywhere and nations everywhere are willing to pay the price of conservation, the problems of the exploitation of the earth will remain. We need to remind ourselves of something Thomas LaMance once said, "Despite all his accomplishments," LaMance commented, "man owes his existence to a six-inch layer of topsoil and the fact that it rains." We live on a delicate planet. It is something for all of us to think about. Many people already are.

There is also the decline of values in our society. We are a sex-obsessed society. Particularly are our young people vulnerable at this point. The media do portray a world of casual, unhibited sexual pleasure. As actor Alan Alda has put it, any successful movie must feature people doing three things: destroying property, defying authority, or taking off their clothes. Who is in attendance at these movies? Mostly young people.

Did you see the studies earlier this year, however, that revealed that more and more young people are postponing sexual involvement. Young person, you are not the last sixteen-year-old virgin in America. The number is growing all the time. When you consider the bombardment of sexual messages that our young people receive each day, the amazing thing is not how many of them are promiscuous. The amazing thing is how many fine, decent young people there are. And there are lots.

Indeed, there has been somewhat of a reversal in the momentum of the so-called sexual revolution. The publication, ADVERTISING AGE, recently noted the change in the marketing by Calvin Klein. Klein has been one of the boldest advertisers in using sexual fantasies to sell their products--especially their fragrance, Obsession.

Last summer, however, they began offering a new fragrance called Eternity. And the ads, much to the surprise of Madison Avenue, featured a man, a woman, and their kids.

What can we say? When you start thinking in terms of eternity your values change. Even Calvin Klein must be aware of that!

Just as important as the decline in sexual morality among our young is the overall decline in the general character of our adults. This may be a more difficult problem to remedy.

In 1888 when Kodak came out with the first simple camera, a piece of equipment that anyone can use, they coined the slogan, "You press the button, we do the rest." Eliminated were the containers of chemicals, the heavy equipment, and the need for technical knowledge--things necessary up to that point for anyone who wanted to produce a photograph.

Since that day we have seen invention after invention that performs difficult tasks for us at a push of a button. We have come to expect many tasks to be reduced to the simple and the effortless for us, and we are perhaps justly called, "The Pushbutton Society."

I'm not certain that this attitude hasn't bred a laziness, an occasional unwillingness to struggle at some of the important things in life that will always be hard work. How do you build a solid marriage or raise well-balanced children at the push of a button?

Thoughtful people are giving serious consideration to such questions. It is a matter of serious concern. But I can report to you that there still are plenty of happy marriages in this land, plenty of honest, dependable businessmen and businesswomen, plenty of courageous civic leaders. They may not gather the attention of the press. They, indeed, are the rule rather than the exception. That is why we never hear about them.

The world is in pretty bad shape. We face some staggering problems. BUT THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO CARE. When Elijah cried out that he was the only one left in Israel who cared, God called him a liar. He showed him 7,000 persons who had not bowed down to Baal. Good people. Concerned people. Dedicated people. All they needed was someone to step out from the crowd and give them some leadership.

My friends, you and I need to recognize that in our own community and our own city and our own nation and in the world at large there are good people, concerned people, dedicated people who do care about the same problems we care about. They are waiting for someone to step out and provide some leadership.

"What are you doing here, Elijah?" Why are you hiding in this cave? Why aren't you out there making a difference?

YOU SEE, WE MUST MAKE A DIFFERENCE. We have a greater burden than any other people on earth. Some people are threatened if you say that. Often people will ask, "Why do we always talk about America's sins. Why not Russia's sins or Nicaragua's?" We must always lift up a higher standard for this land and this people. Why? Let me close with a true story.

There is a great resentment in many parts of the world against Westerners, even Western missionaries. Third world people often feel that we have exploited them or at least look down on them.

In the late 1960s Alan Redpath was visiting in Nairobi. He had been seeing Africa only through white missionary eyes. One evening he was invited to have a meal with a group of black leaders. As he listened to their perspective on the missionary story, he became increasingly frustrated until he burst out and said, "Did we do nothing right?"

Then there was a pause, and one man, Daniel Wacko by name, said, "Yes, yes. You did do something right. You gave us the standard by which to judge you. If you had not shown us the truth of Christ you would not have put yourself so badly in the dark." (3)

You see, we must care about our world because God cares. He cared enough that He gave us Jesus. We must judge ourselves according to a higher standard than other people.

Yes, the world is in pretty bad shape. It always has been. That is why God sent His Son into the world. We are the body of Christ today. "What are you doing here, Elijah?" There are people who are waiting for us to lead the way toward the kind of world God intends for this to be.

1. QUOTE

2. Quoted in THE NEW YORK TIMES, October 2, 1970

3. Ted W. Engstrom with Robert C. Larson, INTEGRITY, (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1987).

A MAN WITH A DREAM

Nehemiah 8: 1-3, 5-6, 8-10

Whether or not you are in agreement with their policies, one of the great success stories of the twentieth century has to be the establishment of the modern state of Israel. It is a story of courage and cunning, of desire and determination--millions of Jews from a multitude of nations returning to their spiritual homeland to carve out a new nation under the most trying of circumstances.

There is a parallel to that story, of course. Nearly 2,500 years ago an attempt was made to achieve the same kind of miracle. Judah had been destroyed by the Babylonians. Many of its citizens had been sent into exile. Jews were dispersed across all the known world. Jerusalem lay in ruins. It was a dark and desolate time for God's people. It is at such a time that God looks for one man or one woman with courage and conviction, and God plants a dream in a fertile heart. Such a man was Nehemiah.

Nehemiah lived in the capital city of Susa. He was cup-bearer to Artaxerxes, King of Persia. One day one of his relatives, a man named Hanani, was visiting Nehemiah. Hanani was familiar with the plight of the Jews in Jerusalem. As he shared with Nehemiah the poverty and the oppression of his people, and the disrepair and destruction of the sacred city, Nehemiah broke down and wept. He went into a time of mourning and fasting and praying over the plight of the people of Israel. And God put it into Nehemiah's heart that he was the one who must set about making a wrong situation right. You had better be careful what you pray for. God may call on you to answer your own prayers.

A dream was born in Nehemiah's heart. That is how every great work begins. A little over a century ago a Britisher by the name of Dr. David Livingstone read the words of Robert Moffatt concerning Africa: "From where I stand I can see the smoke of 10,000 villages that have never heard of Christ." A dream was born in David Livingstone's heart.

In tracing the Zambesi River to its source, Livingstone traveled 11,000 miles on foot through uncharted jungles. To spread God's Word, he suffered unbelievable dangers and hardships. Attacked by savage beasts and nearly killed, his dedication won the heart of the black man. He was fired to deep anger by the cruelty of the slave trade and became determined to crush what he called, "the open sore of the world."

In his latter years, Livingstone was racked by disease, attacked by wild animals, and often menaced by hostile tribes. Repeatedly he was robbed and abandoned by his own carriers, yet he marched on with his Bible. Henry Stanley reported that "not one man in a

million would have pushed forward as he did.” He pressed on until his body could go no farther. On May 1, 1893, he was found dead on his knees in a position of prayer, in a crude hut in the village of Ilala.¹

He had been true to his dream. Today the Christian faith is sweeping the continent of Africa. Millions of Africans are Christians today because of men and women who, like David Livingstone, gave their all to fulfill a dream God planted in their heart.

Nehemiah becomes COMMITTED to the dream God has given him. He receives permission from the king to travel to Jerusalem as its new governor. There he makes a secret inspection of the city’s walls that now lay in ruins, and he resolves that the walls shall be rebuilt.

Critics said it could never be done. Israel’s enemies were threatened by a change in the status quo. They taunted Nehemiah and tried to trap him and destroy his work. But Nehemiah would not be defeated. “I am doing a great work,” he responded to his critics, “and cannot come down.” (6:3)

Every man or woman with a great dream has faced both critics and enemies. Think of Robert Fulton’s steamboat—critics labeled it “Fulton’s Folly” and forecast a disastrous failure for it.

Think of Abraham Lincoln. Probably no politician in history had worse things said about him than Lincoln. Here’s how the Chicago Times in 1865 evaluated Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address in commenting on it the day after its delivery: “The cheek of every American must tingle with shame as he reads the silly, flat, and dish-watery utterances of a man who has been pointed out to intelligent foreigners as President of the United States.”

Perhaps the greatest compliment ever paid President Grover Cleveland was when he was put in nomination before the Democratic Convention and the orator who presented his name said, “We love him for the enemies he has made.”

Someone has noted that when a hawk is attacked by crows, he does not counter-attack. Instead, he soars higher and higher in ever widening circles until the pests leave him alone.

“I am doing a great work, ” said Nehemiah, “and can’t come down.” Accomplishment is always the best answer we can give our critics.

Nehemiah challenged the devoted Jews of the area to give, to labor, to build, to sacrifice that the walls of the city might be rebuilt. And they responded as people always respond when they are CHALLENGED with a dream greater than themselves.

Dr. Roy L. Laurin tells of a Christian businessman who was traveling in Korea. In a field by the side of the road was a young man pulling a rude plow while an old man held the handles. The businessman was amused and took a snapshot of the scene. "That is curious! I suppose these people are very poor," he said to the missionary who was interpreter and guide to the party. "Yes," was the quiet reply, "those two men happen to be Christians. When their church was being built, they were eager to give something toward it; but they had no money. So they decided to sell their one and only ox and give the proceeds to the church. This spring they are pulling the plow themselves." The businessman was silent for some moments. Then he said, "That must have been a real sacrifice." "They did not call it that," said the missionary. "They rather thought it was fortunate that they had an ox to sell."²

The people responded to Nehemiah's challenge. They responded because of their faith in God but also because of their faith in Nehemiah. They knew that Nehemiah was a man of CHARACTER. They knew that he was making even greater sacrifices than he was asking them to make. It was customary in those times for governors to live well off of the labors of their subjects. But not Nehemiah. He ate the same bread that they ate. And he worked alongside them until the dream was realized.

One is reminded of Father Damien, that gentle priest who went as a missionary to the lepers on Molakai. For several years they accepted his services of mercy; but they did not accept him. Not until that night when it was discovered that Father Damien himself had contracted leprosy did they accept him as a brother as well as a priest. The people knew Nehemiah as a man of character and of compassion.

There was a controversy among the people. Times were hard. Some of the poorer residents of Jerusalem were having to sell themselves or their sons and daughters into slavery in order to borrow money to buy food. The greedy lenders were themselves Jews. Nehemiah was enraged. Here they were undertaking this enormous dream of rebuilding the city's walls, and the wealthy were busy behind the scenes exploiting and enslaving their

poorer brothers. Nehemiah could not tolerate such evil practices, and with his power as governor he put them to a stop. He was a man of conscience and compassion and character, and the people responded to his leadership, and the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt. In the face of taunts and the threats of their enemies, in spite of the conflicts and controversies among the people themselves, the walls were rebuilt, the city was re-established, the great dream was realized.

This brings us to our Scripture lesson for the day. It is one of the most beautiful passages in all of the Bible. When the seventh month had come, the children of Israel, many of whom were still scattered in towns around Jerusalem, gathered together in one great mass in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra, the scribe, to bring the book of the law of Moses to read it to the people. Remember, most of the people had never heard the law being read. Thus, Ezra brought the law before the assembly, and he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from morning until midday, and the ears of all were attentive to the reading of the book of the law.

When he opened the book, by the way, all the people stood. That was the custom even in Jesus' time. You stood for the reading of the Word. Ezra read the sacred writings and blessed the Lord and all the people said, "Amen, Amen." They lifted up their hands and they bowed their heads, and they worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground. Ezra not only read to the people from the law, but he also sought to interpret the word so that the people could understand. And the Bible tells us that the people began to weep as the law was being read. Can't you see that taking place? It is a most moving scene. After all the hard work, all the sacrifice, all of the earnest prayers, now they had their own city and they had their sacred book, and the tears simply flowed down their faces. Now Nehemiah stands to speak to them, and he tells them not to mourn but to rejoice, for this is the Lord's day and this is the Lord's doing, and Nehemiah reminds them that the joy of the Lord is their strength. What a great day that was in the life of the people of Israel!

Can't you imagine, however, that when the festivities were ended and the crowds

were dispersed, Nehemiah went off by himself and wept tears of joy and thanksgiving. The dream was now realized, the walls were rebuilt. "Thanks be to God," Nehemiah probably prayed. Is it too much to imagine that God, in turn, was saying, "Thank you, Nehemiah?"

When Dwight L. Moody was visiting England, he heard Henry Varley say: "The world had yet to see what God can do with a man who is fully and wholly consecrated to the Holy Spirit."

Moody would later comment, "he said 'a man.' He did not say 'a great man,' nor 'a learned man,' nor a 'rich man,' but simply 'a man.' I am a man, and it lies within the man himself whether he will or will not make that entire and full consecration. I will try my utmost to be that man."

Henry Varley would not mind if we amended his words to read, "a man or a woman who is fully and wholly consecrated." Commitment, character, conscience, compassion, a deaf ear to the critics, total and complete consecration--those are the marks of the successful dreamer of every generation. What is the dream God has placed in your heart? There is still much to do in this world. May God ever supply us with Nehemiahs who see the world's needs and respond to God's call.

¹ Edmund Janss, Making the Second Half the Best Half (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1984).

² Stephen Olford, The Grace of Giving (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972).

HOLDING ON
Job 7: 1-7

In the French Alps a young student was trapped for three days on the north face of perilous "Fool's Needle" in the Mont Blanc range. He was dangling from a narrow ledge when rescue workers found him. His hands were frozen and later, on a hospital bed, he told about the harrowing ordeal. "I repeated over and over to myself," he commented, "I must hold on, I must hold on at any price."

There are times when many of us will whisper those desperate words: "I must hold on."

One time, artists were invited to paint a picture of peace. The pictures were many and varied, but the winner depicted a little bird sitting calmly on her nest, which was built on a slender branch overhanging Niagara Falls.

I hope that I do not sound too melodramatic if I say that all of us live our lives in a nest on a slender branch suspended over Niagara Falls. Sometimes the winds blow and the rains fall and that perch becomes mighty precarious.

It may be that there will come those times in all our lives when we ask, "Will the nightmare never end?" Or as Job puts it:

"When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise and the night be gone; and I am full of tossings to and fro unto the dawning of day . . . My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope."

I suspect that there are some persons in this congregation this morning who are fighting just to hold one. It may be because of a bad situation in your work or in your marriage. It may be a problem with your health or with your relationship with someone important to you. Whatever it is, there is a battle going on and you are not sure that you can endure.

What is the secret to holding on?

One clear key to holding on is to recognize that our mental attitude can clearly affect our ability to cope with life.

In "The Power of Your Subconscious Mind," Dr. Joseph Murphy writes:

"If you really want peace of mind and inner calm, you will get it. Regardless of how unjustly you have been treated, or how unfair the boss has been, or what a mean scoundrel someone has proved to be, all this makes no difference to you when you awaken to your mental and spiritual powers. You know what you want, and you will definitely refuse to let the thieves (thoughts) of

hatred, anger, hostility, and ill will rob you of peace, harmony, health, and happiness. You cease to become upset by people, conditions, news, and events by identifying your thoughts immediately with your aim in life . . .”

This is to say that we can concentrate on our problems rather than our power to overcome. When we do that, we paralyze our ability to deal with our problems.

You may know the story of the city man who went out to the country and watched a farmer who was sawing a log with long, even, measured strokes. This city fellow said impatiently, “Here, let me saw the log.” He started in with slow, measured strokes, but before long accelerated the tempo. The stroke went crooked, the saw caught.

The city man said, “I guess I didn’t do so well, after all.”

The farmer replied, “It’s because you allowed your mind to get ahead of the saw.”¹

Sometimes you and I may have a tendency to do that—to let our mind get ahead of the saw.

Corrie Ten Boom in her helpful little book, “Nestle, Don’t Wrestle” -- that title alone says a lot about coping with life--gives us one beautiful solution to our problem. She writes:

As you may know, I grew up in a clock shop. My father was a watchmaker, and I was the first woman in Holland to be licensed as a watchmaker. Our home, the Beje, was filled with the sound of ticking clocks. I still remember the old Dutch parable about the clock that had a nervous breakdown.

The little clock had just been finished by the maker, who put it on a shelf in the storeroom. Two older clocks were busy ticking away the noisy seconds next to the young clock:

“Well,” said one of the clocks to the newcomer, “so you have started out in life. I am sorry for you. If you’ll just think ahead and see how many ticks it takes to tick through one year, you will never make it. It would have been better had the maker never wound you up and set your pendulum swinging.”

“Dear me,” said the new clock. “I never thought about how many ticks I have to tick in a year.”

“Well, you’d better think about it,” the old clock said.

So the new clock began to count up the ticks. “Each second requires 2 ticks, which means 120 ticks per minute,” he calculated. “That’s 7,200 ticks per hour; 172,800 ticks per day; 1,209,600 ticks per week for 52 weeks, which make a total of 62,899,200 ticks per year. Horrors!” The clock immediately had a nervous breakdown and stopped ticking.

The clock on the other side, who had kept silent during the conversation, now spoke up. "You silly thing! Why do you listen to such words? That old grandfather clock has been unhappy for years. Nobody will buy him, and he just sits around the shop gathering dust. Since he is so unhappy, he tries to make everyone else unhappy, too."

"But," the new clock gasped, "he's right. I've got to tick almost sixty-three million ticks in a year. And they told me I might have to stay on the job for more than one hundred years. Do you know how many ticks that is? That's six billion, two hundred million ticks. I'll never make it!"

"How many ticks do you have to tick at a time?" the wise old clock asked.

"Why, only one, I guess," the new clock answered.

"There, now. That's not so hard, is it? Try it along with me. Tick, tock, tick, tock. See how easy it is? Just one tick at a time."

A light of understanding formed on the face of the clock, and he said, "I believe I can do it. Here I go." He began ticking again.

"One more thing," the wise old clock said. "Don't ever think about the next tick until you have your last tick ticked."

I understand that was seventy-five years ago, and the clock is still ticking perfectly, one tick at a time. ²

Our mental attitude is so critical. Believe that you can cope. Concentrate on your powers rather than your problems. Live life one day at a time.

In the second place, remember that you are loved.

Dennis Guersey writes:

I remember walking out of my office at a church where I once served only to see a little girl come skipping out of the church office on her way back to her classroom. Evidently, she had been sent on an errand by her day school teacher and she was reporting back to her class as ordered. The distance from the church office to her classroom was about 100 feet. As she skipped, she chanted a little saying to keep herself in step: "My mommy loves me . . . my daddy loves me . . . my teacher loves me . . . my grandma loves me . . . God loves me . . . Jesus loves me . . ." She felt loved, 100 feet worth. I continued on my way impressed with the privileged position of that little girl and how much I wished my patients felt just one-tenth of the love she felt. What a difference it would make in their lives. ³

There is a story about a missionary trying to translate the New Testament into the language of a primitive island people. That language had very few abstract words, and the translator was having trouble with many theological concepts. One of them was the word “belief,” for there was no such word in the tribe’s vocabulary. While he was wondering how to translate “Believe in Jesus and be saved,” the door of his hut was opened and a native messenger ran in. The messenger had come at top speed all the way from the other end of the island with a telegram. In his exhaustion the messenger flung himself down onto a rattan couch. As he did so, he said a single island word meaning “to lean-one’s-whole-weight-on.” “That’s it!” cried the missionary, and he translated the passage, “Lean-your-whole-weight on the Lord and be saved.”⁴

The second key to holding on is to recognize that there is someone who loves you and upon whom you can cast all of your burdens.

There is a story about Bishop Quayle, who must have had a keen sense of humor. He told of a time when he sat up late in his study, worrying over many things. Finally the Lord came to him and said, “Quayle, you go to bed. I’ll sit up the rest of the night.”

This brings us to the third key to holding on, and that is to learn how to let go. As someone has put it so beautifully: “Let go and let God.” We need to know how to release our worries, our fears, our guilt, our anger, our resentment. There are times when we need to simply let go.

Sometime back Ron Levin in Greenville, South Carolina wrote a piece for ‘Reader’s Digest’ that went like this:

The carpenter I hired to help me restore an old farmhouse had just finished up a rough first day on the job. A flat tire had made him lose an hour of work, his electric saw quit, and now his ancient pickup refused to start.

While I drove him home, he sat in stony silence. On arriving, he invited me in to meet his family. As we walked toward the front door, he paused briefly at a small tree, touching the tips of the branches with both hands.

Then, opening the door, he underwent an amazing transformation. His tanned face was wreathed in smiles, and he hugged his two small children and gave his wife a kiss.

Afterward, he walked me to the car. We passed the tree, and my curiosity got the better of me. I asked him about what I had seen him do, earlier.

“Oh, that’s my ‘trouble tree,’ ” he replied. “I know I can’t help having them on the job, but one thing’s for sure—troubles don’t belong in the house with my wife and the children. So I just hang ‘em

on the tree every night when I come home; then in the morning, I pick them up again.

“Funny thing is,” he said smilingly, “when I come out in the morning to pick them up, there aren’t nearly as many as I remember hanging up the night before.”

Many of us would profit from a tree like that.

You can make it in that little nest suspended over Niagara Falls. Maude Royden says: “I never try to explain evil. I say I have a power that can surmount it.” Jesus himself never said, I have explained the world, but he did say, I have overcome it.

Bishop Arthur J. Moore, in “Fight On! Fear Not!”, reminds us that “Christ does not take us out of the battle; He does something better. He gives us trust and triumph in the battle and promises that at the end of the struggle a friendly hand will guide us into the presence of One whose, ‘Well done, thou good and faithful servant,’ will glorify the battle scars.”

Realize that your mental attitude can affect your ability to cope. Remember that there is Someone who loves you and upon whom you can cast your burden. Learn the art of releasing your troubles. Let go and let God.

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- ¹ Norman Vincent Peale, *A Guide to Confident Living* (New York: Prentice - Hall, Inc., 1948).
 - ² Corrie Ten Boom, *Don't Wrestle, Just Nestle* (Old Tappan, N. J.: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1978).
 - ³ Dennis Guernsey, *If I'm So Free – How Come I Feel Boxed In?* (Waco: Word Books, 1978), p. 25.
 - ⁴ Pat McGeachy, *The Light Overcomes Darkness* (Nashville: The Graded Press, 1976).