



The Clarksville Presbyterian

First Presbyterian Church Clarksville, Texas

Oldest Protestant Church In Texas
Established 1833

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A Glimpse of Reality

One day last week I woke up very early. I walked out of my room into the courtyard of the small fort I'm stationed at and peeked over the wall to see if there was any danger around. My particular fort happens to be deep in enemy territory. Seeing no danger, I shuffled around until my stiff legs and feet stopped hurting so much and lit a small fire to throw together a quick breakfast. It was time to get going. Long periods of inaction in a place like this are likely to result in severe injury or death. I've been at this game long enough to know that my particular enemy is a master of ambush, a truth learned through failure rather than success. I've survived with some ugly scars that never completely stop hurting, but they remind me to always have my sword drawn, and that's exactly what I did as I set out across the disrupted landscape. The place had been perfectly beautiful once, but no more. Signs of destruction and decay everywhere I looked. Nothing untouched by my enemy. Not that I was unhappy, just observant. I've learned to accept the imperfections of the present, they give me something to work towards for the future.

I wasn't even out of site of the fort when the first ambush came, and it nearly got me. Actually, I got a decent little cut that bled off and on for the next couple of days. Didn't kill the enemy either, just ran him off. He's an old foe that I've had many battles with but I'm better at fighting him than when I was younger. Still—it was close. As the day went along I stopped at a few outposts that I knew about. They were friends in various states of injury and trial. I tried to encourage them and they tried to encourage me. I hope it helped. In the early afternoon I was tired and I came to an empty land that showed the signs of previous habitation. All I could do was pray, I was too tired to do anything else. “Heavenly Father, please restore this place and fill its homes with laughter and goodness.” I had to keep moving, there was a war council scheduled for that evening. A small group of resistance fighters were getting together to discuss upcoming actions and I needed to be there. I got to the meeting place early so I spent the time in weapons training. Anything new I learn can be passed on to other fighters.

The other members arrived at the building chosen for the occasion. Everyone made it which was a blessing. The enemy always tries to stop those kinds of meetings. We were a small group. Not much to look at, but everything has to start somewhere. Some plans were presented, some concerns voiced, decisions made, and then a brief time of prayer before we all walked back out the door, swords drawn, into the war. I hung around with another fighter for a short while after the meeting. We had a few things to discuss with each other about our individual efforts in the resistance. The sun was starting to get lower in the west by then so we both started back to our own forts to get some rest before the next day's battles.

That's what happened to me last Tuesday. To the unknowing observer however, it probably didn't look a whole lot like what I have described. In fact, it probably looked more like this....

I woke up at 5:30 and stumbled around my living room and kitchen on a sore foot trying to stretch out limbs and rub the sleep out of my eyes. Then I went through the morning routine of getting out the coffee filter, coffee grounds, and pouring twelve cups of water into Mr. Coffee. I sat in the recliner and proceeded to read a few chapters from the book of Amos before checking the news on the computer. A link at the bottom of one of the articles beckoned beckoned me to “check out these hot pictures!” of some female celebrity or another. Of course I knew enough not to follow that link, but suddenly I felt a surge of rebellion in my flesh and found myself struggling to keep my mind from heading down the roads of lust. It was a pretty good battle for a few minutes but thankfully ended well.

Even so, for the next couple of days it would suddenly surge up again without warning and I'd have to fight it back down by taking it straight to God for both confession and help. I have found sexual temptation to be an enemy that won't die. Diligence is always necessary.

By mid-morning I was on my way to Clarksville. There are a lot of beautiful sights along the way, but of course there's a fair share of imperfection as well. Decaying buildings, junked machinery, dead trees, a whole lot of road-kill, and saddest of all, I occasionally see people who are suffering from the ravages of time, disease, or injury. No perfect vistas. When I got to town I made several visits and phone calls to people who were home-bound or otherwise unable to come to church on Sundays. We talked and prayed and remembered our hope for the future. After the visits I went back to the church and spent some time praying in the sanctuary. I just asked that God would fill that historic building once again with the sounds of laughter, singing, and loving adoration for our creator.

There was a meeting of the session scheduled for that evening at 5:30 and I still had some time before it started so I spent it in Bible study for the coming Sunday's sermon. When the meeting time came, I walked over to the CE building next to the office and joined the small group for a discussion about the budget, the building's needs, and the future of the church. After we had finished, I went and grabbed a bite to eat with John (the moderator of the session) so we could discuss some of the ministry decisions each of us were wrestling with, and finally I drove back home to my family in Quitman. That's it. Not too exciting on the surface. So why was I so exhausted by the time I arrived at home? Because, despite the very normal appearance of my day, I had actually spent a day in all-out battle! I know that because of this...

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Ephesians 6:10-12 ESV

Sure my second description of the events of last Tuesday may *seem* like the more accurate account, but I wonder—is it really? The Apostle Paul doesn't hesitate to describe the life of the early Christians as warfare and yet it is likely that, like myself, their days were most often spent in what a casual observer could only describe as “normal activities.”

Now some of you might be asking, “Okay Aaron, I get the metaphor but why do you have to be so melodramatic about it all? Aren't you just living in a dream world to make your life more interesting?” In answer to that I would say “No,” and here's why....the Bible itself has warned us not to be fooled into thinking that the “reality” I experience is the *real* reality. It is only a *shadow land* as C.S. Lewis put it, while a very real cosmic battle is taking place all around us and we are all a part of it whether we are aware of it or not.

Remembering that we are in a war keeps us on our spiritual toes. It's why church attendance is so serious. It's why Christians read bible stories to their children before bed even when they are exhausted. It's why families pray before meals. It's why we should choose investment in people over investment in the stock market. It's why we need to be willing to fellowship with those who might not be our favorite people but who are nonetheless our fellow soldiers. It's why we can care very little about whether we have the newest technologies or the latest fashions. It's why godly parents should always be looking for opportunities to illustrate biblical

truth to their children through the actions of our everyday lives. Life is short on the battlefield and we should use our time well.

So now I would like to encourage you the reader to look at your life (if you aren't doing so already) as one that is involved in the epic of cosmic upheaval that we call "the gospel of Jesus Christ." Don't just go to work, go to war! Don't just sit passively in a church pew, join your Savior in his great battle against Satan! And please don't forget that your presence is an encouragement to others in the battle. At times it can be a lonely call to follow Christ, and your presence does more than you know. I leave you with this quote and a question to consider...Will you give up your life to join the rebellion?

"In the upper world hell once rebelled against heaven. But in this world heaven is rebelling against hell."
G.K. Chesterton

Hymnal Donations

The following additional Hymnal Donations have been received.

Cathy Simpson Fiorini and Alex Simpson

In Memory of Mary Crawford Simpson and Michael Alexander Simpson

John & Nancy Nichols and Jack & Diann Arnold

In Memory of J. T. Arnold and In Honor of Daphne Arnold

Sammy and Lou Ella Humphrey

In memory of Tom and Lura Evetts

Lois West Morton

In Memory of All the Wests in the Past

Lisa Jamison Humphrey

In Memory of Jo-Jo Rains Jamison

Georgia Scott Dorrrough

In Memory of Dick Wren, L. H. Scott, Rudy Dorrrough, Inez Price and Janet Price Butts

Jack and Lou Allen Walton

In Memory of Alice Joyce and Bob Adair and In Honor of Donna Allen Robinson

Leslie and Sam Hocker

In Memory of Mary Ann Lennox Hocker

The Dick Wren Family

In Memory of Richard Dean (Dick) Wren, Sr.

Neil Wren Sparkman and Family

In Memory of Richard Dean (Dick) Wren, Sr.

Kelsey and Faye Goodman

In Memory of Ruby Goodman

Kelsey and Faye Goodman

In Memory of Robert Stroud

Report from Mozambique by Tracy Evans



Our last shipment of powdered milk lasted us longer than we expected because we lost around 200 babies this last hunger season. You may have heard about the massive flooding in Mozambique. That resulted in a lot of water-borne diseases. That, plus a very virulent, drug resistant malaria has been challenging. My staff as well, have been hit hard. Half of us have malaria at any given time. Our nurse practitioner has had it 6 times in the last 6 months.

The good news is that we're starting a new pre-school. Many children can't go to school because they are caring for the baby brothers and sisters while their parents work in the fields. With a pre-school program we can look after the little ones so that their big bros and sises can go to school. We focus on their developmental skills, to catch the little ones up with their physical, emotional, intellectual and social milestones. We're pouring the foundation for the pre-school now.

Next month we're starting new public health programs and a palliative care program for the dying in the more remote tribal villages. We're doing some professional soccer camps for the youth, beginning in two weeks. And we're starting a physical therapy program for the handicapped children. Last month we were finally able to dig a new well. That means more,



drinkable water, which is like liquid life in Africa. This will enable us to bring new staff on board and expand the existing programs (we need more staff to help)!

The other programs are doing well: the kindergarten, high school, adult literacy program, farming, prison rehab. work and village community centers are stable and growing.



I've enclosed one of my all-time favorite photos of little Mateus (Matthew). He was one of triplets, all born pre-mature. The other two did not survive. Mateus has done well. And we found extended family in another province who adopted him when his mom died. We were sad to see him go but he is now with loving family members.

So there you have it, "the latest". Your assistance over these past few years has saved the lives of these babies, who are now pre-schoolers. We love our work. All of our staff are volunteers - because we love being able to make such an enormous difference in so many lives. Thank you, from us all!

I will be spending the remaining \$35,000 on milk next month, to stock up for the next several months. We must wait until the last moment to buy because its shelf life is short (because of the milk's fat content).

JULY 2014

Hosts for Luncheon are
Nancy and Bill Rains

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 Judy Hinkle Dean Wren	2	3 Donna Robinson	4 Holiday	5
6 Ella Ruth Wallace	7	8	9	10	11	12 Macie Rains
13 Monthly Luncheon	14	15 John Carter	16 Jaden Goodwin	17	18 Jason Shoulders	19 Duane Dodson
20	21	22 Carolyn Buzbee	23	24 Sarah Malone Sadie Vander Schaaf	25 Joyce Lynn Ward James Millikan	26
27	28 Chris Evetts	29	30	31		

AUGUST 2014

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1 Beverly Jamison Haley	2
3 Bruce McClannahan	4 Charles McClannahan	5	6	7	8	9 Leigh Igo
10 Monthly Luncheon Laura Millikan	11 Henry Shoulders	12 Daphne Arnold	13 Lisa Humphrey	14	15	16 Jacy Robinson
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27 Bill Sparkman	28 Kelly Shoulders	29 Catherine Lee Goodwin	30 Dana McLendon

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

P. O. Box 732

Clarksville, Texas 75426

Return Service Requested