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Unable to Get Along

In the early 1980's my grandparents, along with a few other people, bought a large piece of land in the Smokey Mountains and began selling mountain lots. A well house was put in to feed the water; roads were created and named; street signs were put up to mark the roads; a few strategically placed "Sharp Curve Blow Horn" signs and water run offs were placed along the roads. When I was in my late teens I spent three weeks with my grandfather working on the first cabin that was built on the mountain after the land was purchased. My parents bought a lot and a few years later built a small cabin to live in over the summer month with my two youngest brothers. Other relatives built cabins and spent time on the mountain as well. Over the next few years a number of cabins popped up here and there on the mountain.

Some folks bought lots but soon stopped making payments on the property so my grandparents would take the lots back. Some folks built cabins hoping to spend a lot of time in them but then quickly realized they were never able to use them because of other obligations. My grandparents bought a few of those cabins and resold them or began renting them out. Things just kind of moved along over the years. There was peace on the mountain and it was a wonderful place to visit throughout the years.

But that was then and this is now. As you can only imagine, a lot has happened over the last thirty five years. It has been interesting to observe the changes that have taken place and to learn what is presently taking place on the mountain.

The "my cabin is bigger than your cabin" crowd has shown up. There are a few large rental cabins now spread around the mountain. The "know-it-alls" have moved in along with those "hard to get along with" folks. The thief has visited numerous times and it sounds like unkindness is now reigning as king. There are disputes over water and wells. There are arguments over who can and cannot access roads that were once open to all. One beautiful two story cabin is now "land locked" because the original road to the cabin went through the edge of someone else's property. No surrounding lot owner is will to grant access to the cabin so the cabin sits empty. Funny thing, it is presently owned by a lawyer.

There is a homeowners association that has regular meetings. I understand those have turned heated and many owners no longer desire to attend. There are insults and put downs flying every which way on the mountain now. Some who live on the mountain year round never bother to pay their association fees. They just ignore them as if to say, "I dare you to do something about it". What was once a peaceful place is now in turmoil and disharmony.

Why do I tell you all of this? This is a pretty good picture of just how things progress when ungodly people attempt to get along. No wonder Jesus prayed this to His Father, "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me." John 17:20-21

When God's people get along with one another, it sticks out in stark contrast to the darkness and evil now found on a mountain top in the Smokey Mountains. God's people work out their differences with love and patience, sharing and caring, kindness and fairness. They realize they are laying up treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:20), and not in the perishing cabins on earth. They recognize the importance of treating other the way you want to be treated (Matthew 7:12) and Jesus' clear teaching on loving one's neighbor as yourself (Mark 12:31).

I am certain the story I have told you has been and will be (Lord willing) repeated time and time again on other mountain tops. Let's make sure we are getting along within God's house and within our own homes and neighborhoods. Rest assured, no piece of mountain property or any other property is worth the loss of one's soul.

STACY

"Behold, I Thought"

by Jim Lee

When Naaman, captain of the army of Aram, was stricken with leprosy, he came to the prophet Elisha to be healed. However, he almost squandered his chance to be rid of his disease because the method that Elisha prescribed to him to be cleansed was not what he was expecting.

"Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, 'Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh will be restored to you and you will be clean.' But Naaman was furious and went away and said, 'Behold, I thought, "He will surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper." Are not Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?' So he turned and went away in a rage" (2 Kings 5:10-12).

Afterward, Naaman's servants convinced him to do what the prophet told him to do (2 Kings 5:13). When he did it, he was healed (v. 14).

Unfortunately, many today are like Naaman. Though they are afflicted with a fatal disease (sin – Rom. 3:23; 6:23), they reject God's remedy because it is not what they thought. (See the words of the prophet Isaiah – Is. 55:8-9).

How do we become cleansed of our sins? Consider the example of the Jews on the day of Pentecost. They did not presume to know the answer. Instead they asked, "*Brethren, what shall we do?*" (Acts 2:37). Many today presume/think that they can be cleansed of their sin and become a Christian by faith alone, by praying the "sinner's prayer," by just being a good person, etc. But the Jews on Pentecost did not make such assumptions. So what were they told to do? "*Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 2:38).

Though many in the denominational world either ignore or minimize the importance of baptism, the Scriptures teach that baptism precedes forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16), provides us with salvation (Mark 16:16; 1 Pet. 3:21), and puts us into Christ (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27).

Rather than presuming/thinking to know what to do to be saved, we should simply do what the Scriptures teach (Acts 23:1; 26:9).

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