



Hearts of Love

Tom & Debbie Tillman "to touch the world for Jesus Christ"

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Hearts of Love is a non-profit ministry, dedicated to spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ whenever and wherever we find open doors. Our first priority is to glorify God and lead whomever possible to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Please pray for us faithfully. We need your prayer, and we appreciate it more than we could ever say. Please consider us an extension of your ministry in this world, and support us with your prayer as such.

***May God richly
bless you!***

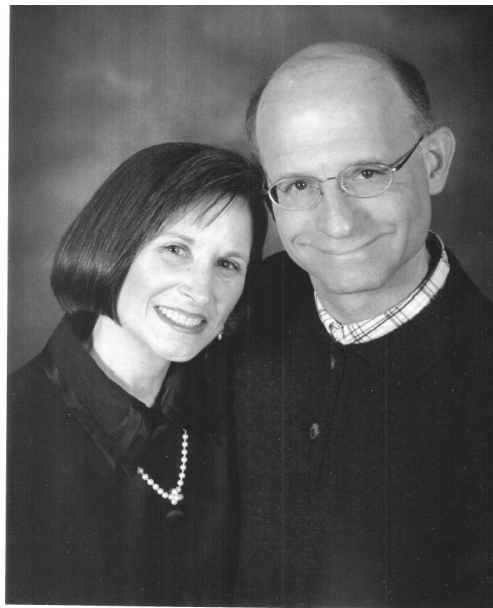
Tom & Debbie

The Gift of . . . Failure?

Can my failures actually be gifts? It's a strange question at this time of year when we are all about gift giving and receiving. However, I (Debbie) hope to impart a gift to you, dear ones, that is the result of one of my failures. It was Tom's suggestion and, although I wasn't excited to let the world know about my failure, the Lord impressed upon me to see it as His gift to me which could also be a gift that others would benefit from. So, here goes!

I recently had a delightful little conversation with a small boy about 3 years old. He and his mom were walking toward the grocery store that Tom and I were also entering. The cute little guy wanted to know my name and asked me a couple other questions before his mom sweetly told him to let me go do my shopping. I started to catch up to Tom but remembered that I had some tracts from our church in my purse so I turned around and handed one to her with an invitation to visit our church which was just down the road. She thanked me, and I waved to her son.

A few days later, I pulled into a parking spot at another grocery store. As I got out of the car, a friendly woman was loading her groceries into her car and remarked with a smile on her face that she liked the license plate on our car (EBNESR). Oh, I said with a return smile, it has nothing to do with Ebenezer Scrooge! She laughed and remarked it was good to know that at this time of the year. I then turned and, as I walked toward the store, I thought to myself, you should go back and tell her the meaning of your license plate and give her a



For a child will be born to us, a son will be give to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called

***WONDERFUL
COUNSELOR
MIGHTY GOD
ETERNAL FATHER
PRINCE OF PEACE***

Isaiah 9:6

tract! But, I was on a mission to rush into the store and to get home – *it was my mission*, not God's mission.

The reason we have that license plate is because some years back, after my car was rear-ended and totaled and Tom blew out the transmission on his car, we were in a tough spot but God, Who is always faithful, impressed it upon a fine man's heart to give us his used Saab. In the Old Testament, the Prophet, Samuel, erected a stone memorial to commemorate God's never ending faithfulness in all things; he called those stones: Ebenezer, which means, 'stone of help.' God is always our Rock of Ages, the ever-faithful one who will never let His children out of His sight and His care. We have transferred that license plate to every car we've owned since then for the very reason that it opens doors of conversation and opportunity!

It hit me like a ton of bricks on the way home – my agenda, my selfishness, my silence was the same as denying Christ! I had selfishly kept the most priceless gift of God's grace and mercy to myself when a very clear opportunity with a very friendly person had been offered to me; how could I have done such a thing?! ?

Horrified, I cried as I told Tom what I had done, and he very tenderly exhorted me saying, 'God is Sovereign; He is in complete control of all things at all times in all places and His will is being accomplished perfectly at all times. In Isaiah, He said: *'Remember this, and shew yourselves men: bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors. ⁹ Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, ¹⁰ Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure'* Isaiah 46:8. Tom emphasized that this seeming failure was all part of God's plan: He will redeem this experience over and over again until He comes; you might never again let pass by an opportunity to share the Gospel. Let Him encourage you; He is far more interested in what He is doing IN you than He is in what is happening around you. Always just allow Him to do, in you, all that He plans, every day until He comes for us.' I believe God will continuously use that experience for His good purposes in my life, knowing our

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God bless you!

time is short as we are in the last days, as my heart was pricked with conviction and fresh purpose to be alert and steadfast as God's ambassador.

Over the next few days, I prayed for that woman, and God, as always, enveloped me with His peace and assurance that He was still in the process of transforming me into the woman I really want to be, the woman He called and created me to be. He doesn't need me to be perfect but He does need me to be a yielded vessel for His plans and purposes, and that is what I always want to be.

I know that God never wastes any experience in our lives; His purpose is to teach us, to grow us and to strengthen us. However, the enemy of our souls wants to constantly throw our shortcomings back at us in an attempt to defeat us, to derail us from God's path and rob us of God's grace and mercy. As I have pondered that parking lot experience, God has met me with His gracious loving arms through Tom and His eternal truth from Scripture.

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God reminded me of two scriptures that have remained ingrained in me for most of my Christian life:

“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good, to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”

Romans 8:28... and, as Joseph said to his brothers, *“And as for you, you meant evil against me but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.”* Gen 50:20

The “gift” I have received as a result of my parking lot failure is a greater sense of purpose and awareness of needs because I want to be poured out and used up for God. I pray that I will always have His eternal perspective and am not so fixated on my agenda. The gift of knowing that He will go before me in every situation, and empower me to be His useful vessel, is calming and reassuring.

As we move through the Christmas season and another new year approaches, we want to remind you of the gift of God, Jesus, the Word Who became flesh and dwelt among us, the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. God

sent His Son, His indescribable gift to us, to redeem us and be glorified in, and through, us. I want my life to reflect the light of His immense love, and you probably want the same. But, because we are frail and sometimes fickle humans, we may fail to accurately reflect His character. Determine, with me, to let those failures be used by God to ignite us to press into Him, drawing close to Him in prayer and His Word, allowing failure to result in God’s gift to further transform us into the men and women He called and created us to be. In doing so, our lives can be gifts to those God places in our path as we extend His love to them.

We will leave you with this final verse, *“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same (employ it in serving) one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”* 1 Peter 4:10 His presence is our most valued present, and we pray He is yours, as well.

Enjoy a blessed and Merry Christmas!

Want more of Tom’s teaching?

Join us every Sunday morning from 9:30—10:40 Tom teaches ‘The New Bereans’ class, a great group of Saints at Grand View Baptist Church on the corner of Hwy 213 and Leland Road. 14855 S. Leland Rd.

Beavercreek, OR 97004

Be sure to stay for the main service! This is our home church and we know you will feel right at home also. Tom is currently taking us through the Book of Revelation in our class. If you can’t join us in person, you can find every week’s notes and many of past teaching on our website:

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