

211. A Place Called Home

By Arland Steen

I want you to take a little trip with me in your imagination.

I want you to go back with me in your mind to the 1930's.

It's Depression time and we are in the rolling hills of Virginia.

And we see a large, white farmhouse, country in its architecture.

There's an old porch out front of the house. It's ten o'clock at night. It's dark.

There are no noises of any city to be heard anywhere. Only the peaceful song of crickets ushers in the night.

The lights in the house begin to be extinguished. One light. Two lights. Three lights. Four lights. And soon the entire house is darkened. And in the silence and cool of the night, you hear these words ...

The Closing From The Walton's

"Good night, John Boy."

And other voices follow.

"Good night, Elizabeth."

"Good night, Jim Bob."

"Good night, Mary Ellen."

"Good night, Jason."

"Good night, Ben."

"Good night, John."

So, *The Walton's* comes to another end as the credits begin to roll.

How many of you know that picture? How many of you can remember watching that when it was on television?

That scene that was used to close so many of those episodes paints a picture, somewhat foreign to many of our minds today in a fast-paced society where relationships and fellowship tends to be somewhat surface at best in many cases. It paints a picture that speaks of a rich, deep quality of relationship. It portrays a picture of what I think home and family is meant to be. And in the light of that scene and the feeling it creates, I want to talk to you about the value of home.

People have a need and a capacity to belong in a place that reminds them of home and this need is universal. *Home* is a word that strikes a universal chord according to one writer referring back to the Civil War.

In the early spring of 1863, the Union and Confederate armies lay encamped along the Rappahanuck River near Fredericksburg - the Union army on the northern bank, the Confederate on the southern bank.

In the evenings, when there was a lull in the fighting, the soldiers of both armies would sing their favorite songs. On the Union side, the band would play *We Are Coming, Father Abraham* or *The Girl I Left Behind* or *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*. And the Union soldiers would raise a great cheer.

And on the Confederate side, the band would play *The Bonnie Blue Flag*, *My Maryland* or *Dixie*. And then the Confederate soldiers would raise a great cheer.

At length the band on the northern side played *Home Sweet Home* and when it was finished BOTH ARMIES sent up a great cheer. *Home Sweet Home* struck a universal chord, which knew no union or succession, no North and no South.

I share this to bring you to a point. No matter where you are, there is something in the heart of people that is warmed and cheered and encouraged, to have a place that's called HOME. Where you feel like you belong, and you feel like you're a part of something very special and precious. Consider this: Home is not just a place you go when you have a need; it is a place you also go in order to be the *answer* to a need.

Paul experienced family love and comfort. Some overzealous Jews had seen him in the Jewish temple and began to beat him physically. An uproar ensued and the Roman soldiers ended up arresting Paul and putting him in chains. When they discovered he was a Roman citizen, they released him from his bonds and took him to the Sanhedrin. Then some of the Jews bound themselves together by an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. So now he has a price on his head. When the Romans discovered this plot, they sent him to the governor Felix at night.

The governor waited to hear his accusers testify against him. They did by lying about Paul. Felix himself had ulterior motives about Paul and kept him hostage in prison for two years waiting for Paul to pay a bribe in order to be freed from prison. He refused to pay.

He stayed there until Festus succeeded Felix as governor. Festus also used Paul as bait to gain favor among the Jews. It was at this point that Paul realized he would not be treated fairly there, so he appealed to Caesar.

Before he went, though, he was summoned to testify before King Agrippa, who had come to town to welcome Festus as the new governor. Then, he finally set sail for Rome, only to survive a horrendous storm at sea. They made it to the island of Malta where Paul was immediately bitten by a snake while gathering wood. He survived that and is now again at sea on his way to stand before Caesar in Rome.

Acts 28:13-15: *We came to Puteoli where we found brethren and were invited to stay with them seven days.* This was right after there was talk of throwing him overboard the ship because he was a prisoner. Verse 15 then continues, *And from there, when the brethren heard about us, they came to meet us...when Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage.* Notice they didn't preach to Paul here. He just received family love and comfort from them.

Paul told us later how bad it was for him.

2 Corinthians 1:8, *We were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life.*

But notice where his focus was during this time.

2 Corinthians 7:4, *I am filled with comfort. I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation.*

How could this be? He did not have his eyes on himself. He was looking to be a blessing.

2 Corinthians 7:5: *Our bodies had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. Outside were conflicts and inside were fears.*

There is nothing wrong admitting a need so long as you don't exalt the need as being final authority.

It is possible to be in denial thinking you are in faith.

Faith is not pretending things don't exist.

Faith acknowledges challenges but also acknowledges there is a greater power in God that is able and willing to overcome the challenge.

Notice the next verse.

2 Corinthians 7:6, *NEVERTHELESS! God is God of the Nevertheless. Nevertheless, God who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus.*

How did God comfort Paul during this time of personal hardship? This time it wasn't by the teaching of the word, or the manifest power of God. No, it was by the coming of a man with whom he had relationship.

I hope Living Well Church provides the comfort, familiarity and community that reminds you of home.