

Grace and Lace Letter International

Summer 1999



Who, Me? Help?

by Rachel Miller

When I began the journey to understand crossdressing, my only goal was to resolve my personal problems. I was too needy myself to help others. Many organizations, books and people aided my quest and became my therapists on the road to understanding and acceptance. As my self-development progressed, I wanted to give something back to the community that had helped me.

My wife Marsha urged me to record what we were learning on our journey because she felt it would be helpful to others who were walking a similar path. I wanted to wait because I didn't have all the answers. Then I realized that no one else did either and nothing would ever happen if I waited. So I committed to start doing what I could.

At first I worried that one person couldn't do much but then remembered the movie, "It's A Wonderful Life." George Bailey believed his life to be a failure but his guardian angel Clarence showed him the world as if he had never been born. The negative changes resulting from his absence were startling. Clarence told George that everyone's life

touches many other lives and, if you aren't around to touch them, it leaves a big hole. I was determined not to leave a hole.

Many crossdressers have serious issues ranging from obsessive/compulsive behavior to guilt and denial. Many use clothing and makeup to block out reality. Others continuously suppress their true feelings. Tragic stories of addiction, depression, suicide and other destructive activities are commonplace, so help is clearly needed.

While we probably can't become psychiatrists or social workers, we can show that we care. We can reach out in love and friendship and accept others as they are without judgment. We can show them how to express their feelings. We can encourage them to face their problems. We can be a coach, a cheerleader or a sounding board. Although we can't do everything, we can follow Helen Keller's advice --

"I am only one;
but still I am one.
I cannot do everything,
but still I can do something;
I will not refuse to do the something I can do."

Someone somewhere is trying to take the same step you just took. If you don't help them, who else can? You can help! You must help! We must all do what we can, starting now!

Rachel's community best seller, "The Bliss of Becoming One!" encourages crossdressers to integrate their feminine and masculine traits through understanding and self-acceptance. It encourages revealing our true selves to our loved ones, helping those in need in the community and educating society. Signed copies are available for \$15 postage paid from Opportunities for Improvement, P.O. Box 31475, Oakland, CA 94604.

Transgenderism, and 1 Corinthians 6:9-10

by Elisabeth Anne Kellogg

One of the verses used to condemn transgenderism is 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. In this article, we will do a thorough exegesis of the passage to determine its meaning and find how, if at all, it relates to transgenderism.

This verse is cited as saying that the effeminate will not inherit the kingdom of God. This idea is based on the King James Version's translation of the Greek *malakoi*.

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

(1 Corinthians 6:9-10, KJV)

A comparison of the King James and New International translations, however, shows that this translation is not universal.

Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

(1 Corinthians 6:9-10, NIV)

"Male prostitutes" is a lot different from "effeminate." So what is the correct translation?

Approaching this verse, I at first thought it would simply be a matter of determining the correct meaning of this one word. In retrospect, it has turned out to be more like the process of peeling an onion. This has been compounded by the fact that most commentators and translators seem to have considered this verse either too obvious (perhaps read "inconsequential") or too linguistically difficult to have put much effort into explaining and translating it.

Let us then begin to peel this onion by looking at the meaning of *malakos*. The following can be extracted from Liddell and Scott [Liddell, Henry George, and Scott, Robert, revised by Jones, Henry Stuart, A Summer 1999

Greek-English Lexicon With a Supplement, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1968), pp.1076f]:

Malakos has the basic meaning of soft.

of things subject to touch: soft.

A fresh plowed field is a "soft" field; soft, grassy meadow; soft-fleeced; a slow fire is a "soft" fire; marsh water is "soft" water; to sleep "softly" means on soft bedding; to sit "softly" means on a cushion.

of things not subject to touch: gentle; soft, mild.

"Soft" words are fair words; "soft" looks are tender, youthful looks; a "soft" scent is faint, or delicate; a "soft" climate is mild.

of persons or modes of life: soft; mild; gentle; and negatively: feeble; faint-hearted; cowardly; morally weak; lacking in self control;

"Soft" music is effeminate or tuned to a low pitch. "soft" writing style is feeble. "soft" reason is weak; loose; bodily speaking, "soft" is weakly; sick; to be ill.

There is nothing here to suggest that the meaning is "effeminate," except in the musical sense. And certainly nothing to suggest prostitution.

Looking at other scriptural references is not particularly helpful either. Outside of this verse, the word only appears twice in the Septuagint and twice in the Gospels. In Proverbs 25:15 we hear about the power of a "soft" tongue (fair speech). And in 26:22, gossip is compared to "soft" food (choice morsels). In Matthew 11:8 and Luke 7:25, John the Baptist asks the crowd if they have come to see a man in "soft" clothing (fine clothes).

The early church fathers generally believed that in this verse Paul was talking about those who were morally weak. It was only in the late middle ages that interpreters started to claim that here "soft" meant some kind of sexual sin.

One argument put forth about translating this word has to do with the meaning of "effeminate" at the time the KJV was written. In the 16th through the 18th Centuries the term "effeminate" did not mean what it means to us

today. At that time the term was applied to a class of men who were notorious womanizers. These men pursued women as a career, often living off the older rich women whom they seduced. The most famous of these was Casanova. The modern word would likely be "gigolo."

So far we have made little progress by working with the single word. It is appropriate to move to the next layer by examining the immediate verse. This passage lists ten groups of people who "will not inherit the kingdom of God." The Greek for some of these groups is well known; some other terms are difficult. All of the terms in this list are masculine plural. A point to remember about gender and number in Greek is that the feminine plural is only used for groups that are exclusively feminine. Mixed masculine and feminine groups are always referred to with the masculine plural.

Pornos, porne - A prostitute. The Greek root comes from the verb "to sell." In the New Testament, this term appears to have two closely related meanings. One is as the equivalent of the Hebrew *zanah*, as in "Tamar has been playing the harlot." (Gen 38:24) It was with sense of harlotry that the Pharisees protested that they were not illegitimate children in John 8:41. In 1 Tim 1:10 it is translated "adulterer" in the Hebrew sense when normally *moichos* is the proper term for an adulterer. Since *moichos* also appears in this list, "adulterer" is not the likely meaning. The other meaning of *pornos* is in the proper sense of a prostitute or the patron of a prostitute. Because in the New Testament, the prohibition of prostitution is paired so often with the prohibition of eating meat sacrificed to idols, it is specifically referring to temple prostitution. The NIV translation of this word as the generalized "sexually immoral" seems untenable here and in every other verse where it occurs.

Eidololatries - An idolater, a person or thing offered or dedicated to an idol.

Moichos - An adulterer or paramour.

Malakos - Soft.

Arsenokoites - A slang term, this word

only appears three times in Greek literature (here, in a commentary on this verse, and in 1 Tim 1:10). It probably meant a homosexual or a pederast. The majority of homosexuals in the Roman world were pederasts so it is difficult to determine whether it refers to the homosexuality part, the pederast part or both. In 1 Tim 1:10 it is translated as "perverts," a rather ambiguous word.

Klepton - A thief.

Pleonektes - A defrauder, greedy (in the active sense of taking what you don't deserve).

Methusos - A drunkard.

Loidoros - A reviler. A verbal abuser.

Harpax - A robber or rapist. The "extortioners" of the KJV is probably better than the "swindlers" of the NIV, for extortioners tend to use force to take what they want, rather than the indirect methods of swindlers.

This list is related to that in chapter 5 verses 9-11. There the NIV lists "the sexually immoral (prostitutes), greedy, idolaters, slanderers, drunkards, and swindlers."

The lists in 5:9-11 and 6:9-10 are bracketed by two discussions of "sexual immorality." One, in 5:1, discusses an instance of incest: "A man has his father's wife." The other, in 6:15-20, discusses joining the members of Christ's body to a prostitute. While the NIV translates both these passages as referring to "sexual immorality," the Greek refers to prostitutes. This is in obvious reference to the fact that at Corinth the worship of Aphrodite fostered prostitution in the name of religion. At one time 1,000 sacred prostitutes served her temple. This is a large number for a city of about 650,000 people. Approximately one out of every hundred women was a prostitute.

In this context, it is a little difficult to figure out what kind of "soft" people are being talked about. Many translators seem to assume the first half of the list deals with sexual sin and the second half with other kinds of sins.

At this point it helps to enlarge the context. Verses 7 and 8 provide an introduction to verses 9 and 10, where the word *adikoi* gives the pivot to connect them.

The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged?

Why not rather be cheated? Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers. Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? (1 Cor 6:7-9a, NIV)

Now we can see that this is not a random list of ten kinds of sinners, but ten groups of people who might be sued for wronging someone. How then, might we translate these groups as the victimizers of others?

The first two groups are people who purport to buy or sell something that they cannot. Prostitutes are sellers of "love." But the one kind of love they can't sell is "true love." In essence they take money for something they can't give. The relationship between the prostitute and his/her client is mutually harmful. Idolaters or those involved in idol worship, try to buy and sell favor with the gods through gifts and sacrifices. Much of religion today is still idolatry in this sense. The sellers of heaven preach a religion of obeying the law instead of telling people of the grace that God has provided through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

The next three groups are those who gain sex by force or persuasion. Adulterers are those who have illicit sex with married people. Pederasts are child molesters. Between these two "soft" may mean the seducers of unmarried people. Here is recognition of the truism: "Seduction is the subtlest form of rape." In this context, the interpretation of "soft" as being the Casanova's and Don Juan's of the world, makes sense.

The next two groups steal, either directly or by persuasion: thieves and defrauders or swindlers.

The last three groups show violence to others. Drunkards are those who become violent from alcohol. Revilers are verbal abusers. Slanders use words to harm peoples reputations. In either case, they do it out of hate. Spouse abusers, child abusers, and any who commit hate crimes would also be condemned here. Robbers and rapists use violence for gain.

So a possible translation of this passage might be:

The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged?

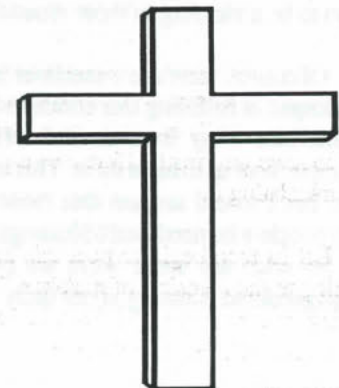
Grace and Love Letter International
Why not rather be cheated? Instead, you yourselves cheat and wrong, and you do this to your brothers! Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sellers of "love," nor the sellers of heaven, nor the seducers of the married, of the unmarried, or of children, neither thieves nor swindlers, and not those violent from drink, from hate, or for gain will inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Cor 6:7-10)

This interpretation places this passage within the main theme of 1:10-6:20 where Paul is arguing against the divisions that have grown up in the Corinthian church. "I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought." (1 Cor 1:10) "For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly?" (1 Cor 3:3) "The spiritual man makes judgements about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgement." (1 Cor 2:15) "If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgement instead of before the saints?" (1 Cor 6:1) "The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already." (1 Cor 6:7) An echo of this is in 2 Cor 12:20, "I fear that there may be quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder."

Based on modern exegesis, this verse has nothing to do with transgenderism at all. It's about the dangers of divisiveness in the church.

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Transgendered Blessing!

by Terri Main

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Mat. 5:16 KJV

There is a transgendered rights activist group called Transgendered Menace. They have done some good work advocating for our rights, but I have a small problem with their group. It's the name. Yes, I understand the point. People see us as a menace, but we aren't going away just because of that, therefore the "menace" will be around for awhile. My problem with the name from a Christian perspective is that none of us is called by God to be a menace (except maybe to Satan). I would prefer that the name be Transgendered Blessing because that is what we are called to be, a blessing.

Now, I can see the objections forming right now. You expect ME to be a blessing to THEM? Do you know how they treated me? Do you know what they said to me? Do you know how many churches threw me out? No, I don't know. I know how they treated me. I know what they said to me. I know I had to leave seven or eight churches before finding a good church that accepted me. But, you see, none of that really matters. Because whatever they did or did not do to me is irrelevant. Jesus said: "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;" (Mat 5:44 KJV) This is not optional. We are to be a blessing. It is a command. Now, unless you have a good explanation about why you disobeyed a direct order from the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, we have to start finding ways to be a blessing to those around us.

Of course, there are sometimes practical challenges in fulfilling this command. Some people turn away from us and refuse any attempts from us to bless them. This is hard to take, but I would suggest that those are the very people who need God's blessings most of all. So what are some ways we can be a Transgendered Blessing in our daily lives?

1. Let Pain Call Out to Pain. Most of us have faced painful experiences in our lives. That means that we have a natural empathy for those who are hurting. Many times those who oppose us most vigorously are those who are in the most pain. Look past the insult to the hurting soul. If you have been hurt, do not return the hurt, you would simply be adding pain to pain. Instead, go down on your knees before God for that person. Ask God to help heal that person's pain. And in the process of praying for their pain, you will be amazed to find that your pain fades as well.

2. Get Involved in the Life of Your Church. I do understand that we are all in churches representing various levels of acceptance. Some of us are open about our transsexualism. Others of us are not. So there may be some practical limits to this suggestion, but still I think there are various ways we can show forth God in our lives by our service in the local assembly. One way is by regular attendance and supporting the church financially. Another way, is to be involved, even in a small way with the normal ministries of the church. Buy a candy bar from the Sunday School kid. Bring some brownies to the bake sale. Come to mid-week services. Help clean the church. And if you have greater acceptance levels offer to teach Sunday school and take part in the various women's (or men's) ministry activities.

3. Be Friendly (Even if they are not). There was a woman in our church who was always pretty cool toward me. She said little to me and her look at me cut right through my soul. The Lord led me to make a special effort every Sunday to shake hands with her and smile. It took about three or four years, but one Sunday she stopped me in the parking lot and said, "I have to apologize to you. I really misjudged you." We are now on very good terms. She even asked me to speak to the

church Women's group once. I believe that it was due in no small part to my being obedient to God in his command for me to show myself friendly.

4. Meet the Practical Needs of Others. If you know someone is sick, can you take over a casserole for dinner? If someone's car breaks down, can you offer a ride to church or the market? If you have a skill which might help a brother or sister in the church, can you lay that skill on the altar and use it to glorify God in meeting their needs? Jesus didn't only teach the people, he fed and healed them. He met their practical needs as well as their spiritual ones.

5. Finally, and most important of all, Pray One for Another. Sometimes, we toss off a phrase like, "I guess all I can do is pray," as though this were a small thing. Prayer is powerful. Prayer unleashes God's power to work in this world. And the first place he starts working is in your heart and life. For the past couple of months our church has been having daily prayer with our families at 7:30 p.m. Each church family at that time turns off the TV, Nintendo, Radio, or Computer and spends a half hour in prayer and Bible reading. I've noticed such incredible spiritual growth in my life and my ability to help others has grown exponentially. In my prayer time, God keeps giving me ideas and direction for this and other ministries. And you know there are times when I can feel the prayers of God's people going up for me, for Emergence or for Inspiration On-Line. And when that happens it's like my batteries have been recharged and I can run a little bit longer.

No, I am not a Transgendered Menace, and I may not be a total Transgendered Blessing yet, but today I'm pledging myself to God to turn away from the first and pursue the second with all my heart.

SHALOM

Emergency Phone Numbers

When in sorrow, call John 14

When men fail you, call Psalm 27

When you wonder whether anybody cares, Psalm 34

If you want to be fruitful, call John 15

When you have sinned, call Psalm 51

When you worry, call Matthew 6:19-34

When you are in danger, call Psalm 91

When God seems far away, call Psalm 139

When your faith needs stirring, call Hebrews 11

When you are lonely and fearful, call Psalm 23

When you grow bitter and critical, call 1 Cor. 13

For Paul's secret of happiness, call Col 3:12-17

For Paul's idea of Christianity, call 2 Cor. 5:15-19

When you feel down and out, call Romans 8:31-39

When you want peace and rest, call Matt. 11:25-30

When the world seems bigger than God, call Psalm 90

When you want Christian assurance, call Romans 8:1-30

When you leave home for labor or travel, call Psalm 121

When your prayers grow narrow or selfish, call Psalm 67

For a great invention/opportunity, call Isaiah 55

When you want courage for a task, call Joshua 1

How to get along with fellow men, call Romans 12

When you think of investments/returns, call Mark 10

If you are depressed, call Psalm 27

If your pocketbook is empty, call Psalm 37

If you're losing confidence in people, call 1 Cor 13

If people seem unkind, call John 15

If discouraged about your work, call Psalm 126

Emergency numbers may be dialed direct. No operator assistance is necessary. All lines are open to Heaven 24 hours a day!

Thanks for calling, and have a GREAT day!

Just Walk Beside Me

"Don't walk too far ahead, I may not follow. . ."
Your steps are so much swifter than my own,
If I lose sight of you within the distance,
I doubt that I can continue on alone.

"Don't walk too far behind, I may not lead . . ."
I lack the strength of soul that you possess,
And if you lost your way because of me,
The both of us would face a wilderness.

"But walk beside me. . ." so that I may know
The sweet companionship your presence brings,
So may we, hand-in-hand and heart-to-heart,
Help each other on to higher things.

- Grace E. Easley

My Prayer

I would lift up my soul to Thee,
That Thou wouldst show the way;
Teach me Thy paths and let me walk
More dutifully each day.

Lead me in truth, Lord, help me know
Thy strength, and help I seek;
Pour forth Thy tender mercies,
For I am tired and weak.

My pride is wounded and I hurt,
My heart is sore with pain.
Deliver me, protect me, Lord,
I ask it in Thy name.

- Anna Lee Edwards McAlpin

MY TESTIMONY

by Billie Sue

My name is Billie Sue.

I am a Christian, a born again child of God. That is the most important thing in anybody's life.

Also, I am a transsexual woman. That means I have the soul, spirit and mind of a woman, but born with the body of a male. The commonly accepted medical reason for this condition is that a female brain developed in my little body before birth. Therefore, it is appropriate to accept myself as female.

I struggled with the transsexual question all my life. I found some Christian friends who shared this same problem and through them, I found a closeness with God—closer than I had ever been. I had been living a lie trying to live as a male and God doesn't approve of liars.

You see, I was confused and often depressed. I needed help! I asked some sisters on-line to pray for me, and I also prayed. Suddenly, one night as I was lying in bed talking to God, my mind became completely female. God revealed to me that I was born female this way for a purpose. The purpose was to minister to hurting people, not just the transgendered, but to all people. By being transsexual, I experienced the hurt, shame and feeling of unworthiness that many disabled brothers and sisters feel. That night, God took away the shame. There is no reason anymore to deny being female.

This is not the path that I would have chosen. But, I began to understand some of the hurt and shame that Jesus faced. We cannot know the full impact of the suffering of Jesus, but I got a little glimpse. I suffered enough to be loving and compassionate toward God's children who have been rejected by modern society.

Oh yes, I know that I have been rejected by the church. Years ago that would have bothered me. But, God gave me greater love than most church members. I love all of God's creation! This is the religious atmosphere that used to be part of my life and I can understand why they are so hostile toward the transgendered. However, they are my brothers and sisters. I love them and I am not going to judge them. Many are walking in the only light they have. Someday we will be in heaven together, and God will open their understanding.

We are living under grace -- under New Testament guidelines, which requires us to be led by the Holy Ghost, not some written law. There is no New Testament teaching against the transgendered. I know some will point toward the effeminate males in the scriptures, but that has no connection with the transgendered.

I cannot be considered a cross dresser. No matter what clothes I wear, whether it be a dress or men's shirt and pants, I am still a woman. The only place the Lord has required wearing a dress is in the house of the Lord. I am to recognize that I am a woman and take the place of one in the church.

I have no guilt. How about you? How is your standing with God? Today is the day of salvation, tomorrow may be too late. It does not matter what handle society has placed on you, GOD DOES LOVE YOU! He wants you to come to him and let him take your burdens. He can handle it. They are too heavy for you.

If you need help, e-mail me at: hillbillie5441@yahoo.com
God loves you and so do I!

Letters to the Editor

Dear Jane and Mary,

Is it appropriate to thank you for publishing my latest article or is it proper that I put on a cloak of mock humility and say nothing? I remember when it was a mortal sin to applaud a good choir rendition or when sister Daisy sang exceptionally well. Don't let me get started. You have helped me to reach further with the message of God's love for US!!

Aside from my article and update letter, every article in this issue rang a bell. The article by Rev. Vera I. Bourne was excellent and I'd like to reprint it in LL with your permission.

Becky had 2 good articles. She sent me both. I have used one and will use Work it Out in my next LL. Terri Main and Rachel Miller's articles were good as was Jaye's.

God bless and keep you both and continue to use you for His glory!

Love,
Lee

Summer 1999

Dear G&L,

I think your site is so wonderful. I have been a believer going on 10 years now. I too have struggled with being transgendered since I was very young and now I am 47. My wife and myself were accepted at a Christian school of ministry; however the timing was not right and I had to deal with situations at the time.

I can no longer support the organized religion sector because of all the hate and misunderstanding that there is about the transgendered and the gay/lesbian communities. At the time of one's salvation, it says in Romans 10:9&10, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you shall be saved. It does say any BUTS. Like, BUT if you are a transgendered person you will go to hell. This is what the church has to take hold of. God's love is a love that is unconditional. He takes as we are and that means no matter what we are. It is hard for most Christians to believe this little simple message. Well, that's all for now. If you can, please reply and let me know what you think.

Another Believer,
Jamie [REDACTED]

(Editors' Note: At the recent Spouses' and Partners' International Conference for Education (SPICE), we conducted a simple Sunday morning service. This could serve as a model for any gathering of Transgendered Christians. By way of explanation, the theme of this SPICE was "A Wilderness Adventure," comparing couples' efforts to cope with transgender issues to a long canoe journey in the Boundary Waters district.)

SPICE VII

Interfaith Service

Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. Be thankful to him, and bless his name. Amen.

Brothers and sisters, as we come to the end of our Wilderness Adventure we are gathered here to give God thanks and praise for his great goodness and love toward us, and in particular to thank him for all he has shown us through these last few days here at SPICE.

We are told to sing to the Lord and make a joyful noise, so let's sing something we all know:

Amazing Grace

Amazing grace!- How sweet the sound! -
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now I'm found;
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come;
It's grace that brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we first begun.

Praise God! Praise God...

(Lee then offered a song of praise, "El Shaddai.")

Because we are "different" we are tempted to think of ourselves as biological accidents, flawed, unlovely and unlovable, but God says otherwise:

A Reading from Psalm 139 (Ps. 139: 13-18)

"You created my inmost being. You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made! Your works are wonderful; I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me are written in your book before one of them came to be."

Or, to put it another way, "God don't make no junk!" And, he not only made us, he loves us!

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life." John 3:16

A Reading from the Letter of Paul to the Romans: Rom. 8:31-39

"What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all - how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charges against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died - more than that, who was raised to life - is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?....No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

That being the case, brothers and sisters, let's not allow ourselves to be tied up in systems of religious rules and social stereotypes. God is not about rules. God is about relationships. He is not some remote force. He is a loving Parent who wants only our good. He sent his son to live and die as one of us, to model his love for us. He offers his love to each of us now and always, in a relationship that is permanent. It is ours for the asking.

Personal Prayers

(aloud or silent)

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Fellowship Meal

Jesus related to us in the commonest details of our lives. Let us remember him in the sharing of this food and drink.

Closing

As our Wilderness Adventure leads us back among familiar scenes of home and work, let us carry with us what we have learned on the trail, and whenever we are lost and can't seem to find the portages, remember the Great Outfitter and look for the trail he has blazed.

May the Good Lord Bless and Keep You

May the good Lord bless and keep you, whether near or far away.

May you find that long awaited golden day today.

May your troubles all be small ones, and your fortune 10 times 10.

May the good Lord bless and keep you, till we meet again.

May you walk with sunlight shining, and a bluebird in ev'ry tree.

May there be a silver lining back of every cloud you see.

Fill your dreams with sweet tomorrows. Never mind what might have been.

May the good Lord bless and keep you till we meet again.

Jesus' Other Sheep: You!

By Lee Frances Heller

"Other sheep I have, that are not of this fold; them also must I bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd." -- John 10:16

One of our greatest difficulties is the non-acceptance of our life style by the "churches," which results in rejection of us by at least 95% of them. The only thing wrong is that they don't read all the bible. The man made legalism manifests itself in that little black book written by man whose title is "Church Discipline." It very often supersedes the bible. It has no elasticity. It is iron bound, and so are its adherents. This is why we are often asked to leave a church and branded undesirable. They are all of the flock of Jesus, and when they have negative attitudes towards us, they simply set themselves aside as keepers of the house of God and the family of God in which there is no room for us, as we are not stereotypical and don't fit.

Jesus says to them, "And other sheep I have that are not of this fold." He wants to get us all together in one field and be our shepherd. I often wonder about my daughter who was raised to be the Christian she is. She is bitterly, almost violently, against me. How in the world are we going to get along in heaven? We're both going there. We'll do just fine, as when we die we lose all manifestations of the flesh. We don't take our likes and dislikes with us. There will be no crossdressing needs. No gender dysphoria because, "For you are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew or Greek, there is neither bond or free, there is neither male or female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:26-28)

That applies to life in this world also, but imperfections in the weave of the church society fail to make it a reality. I guess that's why Jesus referred to the "the other sheep I have." Positionally, we are in the fold. Our wings are reserved for us in heaven. Each of us will be one of the heavenly host someday. It doesn't feel like it now because of the battle we have with "spiritual wickedness in high places." (Ephesians 6:12)

God loves you, and Christ died for you. He died to remove the blanket of sin you were born under. Open up your heart and life to Him and join us "other sheep." As Christ came into this world and went to His own people in this world He created and was rejected by them, the principle of rejection was made alive and real on a Spiritual level. But as many as did receive and welcome Him, He gave the authority (power, privilege, right) to become the children of God; that is, to those who believe in (adhere to, trust in, rely on) His name. John 1:11-12.

"As many as," Nowhere in the bible will you find an exception to any invitation which says, "except cd/tg/ts."

We are the OTHER sheep. We are His sheep just as much as the finest, noblest, hierarchy or member the church can offer.

The Teacup

There was a couple who used to go to England to shop in the beautiful stores. They both liked antiques and pottery and especially teacups. This was their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary.

One day in this beautiful shop they saw a beautiful teacup. They said, "May we see that? We've never seen one quite so beautiful."

As the lady handed it to them, suddenly the teacup spoke. "You don't understand," it said. "I haven't always been a teacup. There was a time when I was red and I was clay. My master took me and rolled me and patted me over and over and I yelled out, 'let me alone,' but he only smiled, 'Not yet.'"

"Then I was placed on a spinning wheel," the teacup said, "and suddenly I was spun around and around and around. Stop it! I'm getting dizzy! I screamed. But the master only nodded and said, 'Not yet.'"

"Then he put me in the oven. I never felt such heat. I wondered why he wanted to burn me, and I yelled and knocked at the door. I could see him through the opening and I could read his lips as He shook his head, 'Not yet.'"

"Finally the door opened, he put me on the shelf, and I began to cool. 'There, that's better,' I said. And he brushed and painted me all over. The fumes were horrible. I thought I would gag. 'Stop it, stop it!' I cried. He only nodded, 'Not yet.'"

"Then suddenly he put me back into the oven, not like the first one. This was twice as hot and I knew I would suffocate. I begged. I pleaded. I screamed. I cried. All the time I could see him through the opening nodding his head saying, 'Not yet.'"

"Then I knew there wasn't any hope. I would never make it. I was ready to give up. But the door opened and he took me out and placed me on the shelf. One hour later he handed me a mirror and said, 'Look at yourself. And I did. I said, 'That's not me; that couldn't be me. It's beautiful. I'm beautiful.'"

"I want you to remember, then," he said, "I know it hurts to be rolled and patted, but if I had left you alone, you'd have dried up. I know it made you dizzy to spin around on the wheel, but if I had stopped, you would have crumbled. I knew it hurt and was hot and disagreeable in the oven, but if I hadn't put you there, you would have cracked."

"I know the fumes were bad when I brushed and painted you all over, but if I hadn't done that, you never would have hardened; you would not have had any color in your life. And if I hadn't put you back in that second oven, you wouldn't survive for very long because the hardness would not have held. Now you are a finished product. You are what I had in mind when I first began with you."

God knows what He's doing (for all of us). He is the Potter, and we are His clay. He will mold us and make us, so that we may be made into a flawless piece of work to fulfill His good, pleasing, and perfect will.

"No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not tempt you beyond what you can bear..."

(1 Corinthians 10:13)

Summer 1999

God's Loving Kindness a Sunday Sermon

by Fran Estes

Kindness extended to us is something we all appreciate.

The Old Testament Book of Kings gives us a lesson this morning on Kindness. Elisha,.... one of the Old Testament prophets,.... seems to have met a wealthy woman who fed him as he traveled through Shunem one day.

She must have been a good cook,.... or had a good cook,.... or employed a good cook, because we are told that whenever he traveled though that town he would stop for a meal and eventually,.... He did that so often that he was provided a room of his own. A wonderful act of kindness extended to him.

Acts of kindness are very important because they sometimes have great power to restore others,.... Great power to encourage others,.... sometimes lifting them out of down times or depression.

In today's reading we find a step perhaps a bit higher than kindness,.... It's thoughtfulness.

Thoughtfulness is kindness,.... But more..... A really thoughtful person doesn't just do some considerate things on the impulse..... This might be kind,..... And of course that's good and that's nice,..... But really thoughtful people think about the other person,..... Think about their situation..... They go through the trouble to inquire and find out what it is that the person really needs.

Thoughtfulness involves catching what their need is,..... And then acting to fill that need..... This is more than kindness It takes more time,.... And it takes a bigger investment in the relationship of one person to another.

That's what Elisha did in our story this morning.... He went through the trouble of finding out what these hospitable people needed,..... And as we heard, it was a child,..... Her husband was old,..... So Elisha intervened to God after he searched out the exact thing she needed,.... And with God's

help,.... She bore a son a year later.

Thoughtfulness can be a powerful and healing virtue and it doesn't come naturally for most folks,..... We deepen it with practice..... If we take the time to really think about the other person,..... Our thoughtful acts then become a special form of love.

And isn't this the ultimate command of Jesus for all of us,.... Love one another as I have loved you !

What is it that motivates us to do thoughtful things for other people?..... There can be several kinds of motivations that bring people to do nice things for others..... For instance,.... they can be done for our own selfish reasons,.... They can be done to manipulate someone perhaps..... We can do kind things to set them up for something ! You know,.... Like the husband who brings home flowers for his wife when it isn't their anniversary or birthday,.... and she just knows he may have an ulterior motive in mind!

I sort of speculated on what the motivation was for the wealthy woman who provided all that kindness to Elisha.... Could it be because she knew he had influence with God?

But when we perform thoughtful acts that flow freely from our minds and hearts we are moved by the grace of God.....

If God is Love,.... And we love freely,..... With no conditions in mind,.... No payment in return in mind,..... We are allowing God to love others through us.

And this is possible,..... Because through our baptism,.... Paul reminds us this morning that we live in the newness of life We live a sacramental life,..... With the power to bring God's love and care to others.

At baptism,.... We died a kind of spiritual death! And we came out of the waters of our baptism,.... Born Again,.... Born again into a new life. A life which gives us the power and God's grace to live for others,.... To think

about others. It gives us the strength and the motivation,..... To move out of the immature stage of our development where we lived as though the entire world revolved around ME!

When our casket is brought through that church door,.... It is sprinkled with water,.... And the words of the minister remind everyone,.... See in this water a reminder of your baptism,.... When you died with Christ,.... And entered into the New Life,.... A new creation of God. You came out of your baptism water and entered into the resurrected life of Christ. This is not just a heady theological construct,.... It has real implications for our daily life.

St. Paul reminds us this morning,.... Because of our baptism,.... We must think of ourselves as living for God in Christ Jesus,.... Which of course has much to do with living for others.

This thought moves us right into our gospel for today,.... Which deals with the radical cost of being a disciple,.... A student of Jesus Christ. One who lives their life trying to follow his way.

Throughout his teachings his main concern was directed to the Little Ones. You just heard,.... If you give even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones,.... You will surely not lose your reward.....

We have heard many times,.... who these little ones are,.... They are the people in need,..... the misfits and the powerless,..... The street people perhaps,.... Those whose appearance does not turn us on,..... The marginalized,..... Those of a different orientation in life,.... Or the ones we see over and over in emergency rooms who are brought in dirty and scared and malnourished because of their addictions and neglect of their bodies..... The Little Ones,.... The misfits of our time who were the lepers of the Lord's time.

Now we need to be clear about what Jesus said,.... He didn't say you will get a reward if you do kind and thoughtful acts to those in need,.... He said,.... you will not lose your

reward..... You already have the promise of the reward.

The promise of the reward,... Heaven,... Eternal life,... However you see it or whatever you call it. It is pure gift,... Given to us with no price,... No conditions.... No payment.

One of my favorite lines from a theologian of our tradition says: You cannot win God's love,... You cannot lose God's love! And that is the mystery that seems to defy understanding.... Maybe that's why so many need to somehow justify this unconditional love of God,... by doing things to earn it.

We can't earn what is already given.... In this week's Evangelist... The weekly column by Fr. Dietzen touches on this,... He writes: "Your salvation,... Your reward,... Is not from you! It is the gift of God,... It is not from works as some may boast!"

We love because He first loved us! We do thoughtful things for others,... Because if we examine our lives,... And think about it,... We can see the multitude of things God has done for us,... And doesn't this bring us to the issue of justice? As Jesus put it: What you have received as gift,... Now give as gift!

Readings: 2Kings:4-8-12a,14-17; Rom 6:3-4, 8-11; Mt:10:37-42

The Challenge

Do you think that your tomorrow
Will be different than today?
Do you think the things you hoped for
Will come true in any way?

By the thoughts you put in action,
By the dreams you strive to reach
You can shape or form the future
By some hard-sought fact they teach.

Choose the good you want to happen
It surrounds you in the "now."
You can make or change the present
Let God's wisdom show you how!

Take the path that seems to open:
For you're walking it today!
You can even change tomorrow,
If you let God show the way!

- Roxie Lusk Smith

The Starfish



Once upon a time there was a wise man who used to go to the ocean to do his writing. He had a habit of walking on the beach before he began his work.

One day he was walking along the shore. As he looked down the beach, he saw a human figure moving like a dancer.

He smiled to himself to think of someone who would dance to the day.
So he began to walk faster to catch up.

As he got closer, he saw that it was a young man and the young man wasn't dancing, but instead he was reaching down to the shore, picking up something and very gently throwing it into the ocean.

As he got closer he called out,
"Good morning! What are you doing?"

The young man paused, looked up and replied,
"Throwing starfish in the ocean."

"I guess I should have asked,
why are you throwing starfish in the ocean?"

"The sun is up and the tide is going out.
And if I don't throw them in they'll die."

"But, young man, don't you realize that there are miles and miles of beach and starfish all along it?
You can't possibly make a difference!"

The young man listened politely.
Then bent down, picked up another starfish and threw it into the sea past the breaking waves, and said, "It made a difference for that one."

There is something very special in each and every one of us. We have all been gifted with the ability to make a difference. And if we can become aware of that gift, we gain through the strength of our visions the power to shape the future.

We must each find our starfish. And if we throw our stars wisely and well, the world will be blessed.

- Attributed to Loren Eiseley

The 23rd Psalm Updated

The Lord is my programmer,
I shall not crash.
He installed His software on the hard disk of my heart;
All of His commands are user-friendly.
His directory guides me to the right choices
For His name's sake.
Even though I scroll through the problems of life,
I will fear no bugs, for he is my backup.
His password protects me.

He prepares a menu before me in the presence of my
enemies.
His help is only a keystroke away.
Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days
of my life,
And my file will be merged with His and saved forever.

Editorial Statement

The Grace and Lace Letter is a Christian publication for transgendered persons. Our motto is "Where Charity and Love Prevail..." In keeping with our motto, we will not publish material bashing any transgendered or Christian person or group, nor will we publish any ad hominem argument. We hope to bring the message of God's unconditional love and forgiveness, as shown to us once and for all by the saving life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, to our transgendered brothers and sisters. We welcome personal testimonies, teachings from God's Holy Scriptures, prayers and poems and hymns, cartoons and humorous stories, accounts of events affecting Christian transgendered persons, and messages of hope and inspiration. Our goal is to praise and worship God and bring His healing love to His children.

Grace & Lace Letter International

A Christian publication serving spiritual needs of all crossdressers, transgendereds, transsexuals, new women, new men, significant others and family members. Your articles, letters and love offerings welcomed.

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Other sites for Transgendered Christians:

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<http://www.geocities.com/hotsprings/2776/>

<http://www.engr.ucdavis.edu/~jsdevilin/jadecath.html>

and for all GLBT Christians: 'Whosoever' Christian Magazine at:

<http://www.mindspring.com/~sagecomm/whosoever/>

The Baseball Game

Bob and the Lord stood by to observe a baseball game. The Lord's team was playing Satan's team. The Lord's team was at bat, the score was tied zero to zero and it was the bottom of the 9th inning with two outs.

They continued to watch as a batter stepped up to the plate whose name was Love. Love swung at the first pitch and hit a single, because Love never fails.

The next batter was named Faith, who also got a single because Faith works with Love.

The next batter up was named Godly wisdom. Satan wound up and threw the first pitch. Godly Wisdom looked it over and let it pass: Ball one. Three more pitches and Godly Wisdom walked, because Godly wisdom never swings at what Satan throws.

The bases were loaded. The Lord then turned to Bob and told him He was now going to bring in His star player. Up to the plate stepped Grace.

Bob said, "He sure doesn't look like much!" Satan's whole team relaxed when they saw Grace. Thinking he had won the game, Satan wound up and fired his first pitch.

To the shock of everyone, Grace hit the ball harder than anyone had ever seen. But Satan was not worried; his center fielder let very few get by.

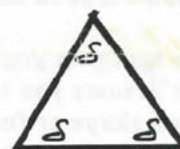
He went up for the ball, but it went right through his glove, hit him on the head and sent him crashing on the ground; then it continued over the fence for a home run! The Lord's team won.

The Lord then asked Bob if he knew why Love, Faith, and Godly Wisdom could get on base but could not win the game. Bob answered that he did not know why.

The Lord explained, "If your love, faith and wisdom had won the game you would think you had done it by yourself. Love, faith and wisdom will get you on base, but only My Grace can get you home. My Grace is the one thing Satan cannot stop!"

Amen!

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