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THE BAPTIST HERITAGE

MARCH 20, 2005

Home, Beyond the River

The telephone calls seem to come more frequently with the passage of the years. Even when anticipated, somehow the message is never expected. From the day of a person's birth, every family member and friend touched by that life understands that some day death will bring a separation, but acknowledging that such event is a universal fact is not really the same as apprehending the application of that fact on an individual basis to one's self. One is not required to possess the wisdom of Solomon to comprehend that there is for each of us "a time to be born, and a time to die." [Ecclesiastes 3:2] There is, indeed, "no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war." [8:8] ["And . . . it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Hebrews 9:27] The day of that appointment is waiting for you; and it certainly is approaching for me. While it is difficult for either you or me to think about it, someday somebody will be making exactly the same kind of a call to our friends and family. Perhaps, this is why the older we become, the more solemnly we receive these calls.

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this and that

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Another Gap In The Ranks

Of the joys of living, few surpass that of friendship. I believe the man who needs both hands to count his friends is a fortunate man indeed. Job, the wealthiest man in his day, respected as a counselor and benefactor, and honored as a leader seemingly found, in the time of his deepest distress, that he could number only three men as "friends." Therefore, we value true friends as irreplaceable treasure. Word came recently that Dr. Bill Barbry has moved his residency to "the land beyond the river." I am grateful to have been able to call him my friend.

—Pastor Manley

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BEYOND THE RIVER

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What a wonderful change in my life has been wrought

Since Jesus came into my heart!

I have light in my soul for which long I have sought,

Since Jesus came into my heart!

I have ceased from my wanderings and going astray,

Since Jesus came into my heart!

And my sins, which were many, are all washed away,

Since Jesus came into my heart!

There's a light in the valley of death now for me,

Since Jesus came into my heart!

And the gates of the City beyond I can see,

Since Jesus came into my heart!

I shall go there to dwell in that City, I know,

Since Jesus came into my heart!

And I'm happy, so happy, as onward I go,

Since Jesus came into my heart!

Since Jesus came into my heart,

Since Jesus came into my heart

Floods of joy o'er my soul like the sea billows roll,

Since Jesus came into my heart!

R. H. McDaniel penned the words; but Bill Barbry lived them.

Dr. Bill Barbry, gracious friend, caring husband, devoted father, faithful preacher, loyal pastor, fervent evangelist, soul-winner *extraordinaire*, and a premier prayer warrior—a simple man of God has crossed Jordan to his eternal Home beyond the river. If you have accepted the LORD Jesus Christ as your Saviour, as Bro. Bill did, or if you will do so right now, then you will meet him there. I will be pleased to introduce you to him just over Jordan, inside the Eastern Gate, when the roll is called up yonder.

—Pastor Manley

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*BEYOND THE RIVER**(Continued from page 21)*

The rich man in hell was no parable to him; it was the reality he was trying to keep folks away from.

He preached on many topics and found sermon ideas wherever he was. Once, many years ago, after hearing his friend, Dr. Lee Roberson, preach a particularly stirring message, Bill Barbry gave Dr. Lee \$5. When Dr. Roberson asked him what the money was for, Dr. Bill said, "For your sermon tonight, I might like to use it sometime; so I thought I would buy it." Bro. Bill had attended Tennessee Temple College and enjoyed teasing Dr. Roberson. After having Dr. Lee preach in Fort Smith, Bro. Bill asked him if he still believed in storehouse tithing. When Dr. Roberson assured him that he did, Bro. Bill said, "I figured you did, so I had the treasurer take out your tithe from the love offering. The receipt is in the envelope."

My favorite of all his sermons was the night he picked up the hymnbook and without having prepared to—well, let me tell it as it happened. I led the singing that night and finished with the song "Since Jesus Came Into My Heart." When I turned to walk to my chair to make room for him to come to preach, I noticed that he was emotional. He laid down his Bible and brought the hymnal with him to the pulpit. That night he sang and preached as he wept his way, phrase by phrase, verse by verse, through the wonderful changes, the precious joys, and the sweet hope that had come into his life "*since Jesus came into his heart.*" That was the crowning message of all his messages. I wish I had what he said to share with you, but it was preached unrecorded by earthly records. Apply the song, if you are saved, to your life—phrase by phrase and verse by verse—it still preaches that way to me every time I hear it.

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Youthful minds never seem to contemplate the end of life; the inevitability of death does not seem to register—perhaps, that is why the telephone calls only seem to come more frequently with the passage of the years. In our earlier years, our parents received the same type of notification about friends and family of theirs, but even our accompanying them on their trips to the wakes, visitations, viewings, and funerals did not seriously register with us. It is only as we begin to realize that we ourselves are not immune to the universal touch that we attach weight to the calls by taking them in such a personal way.

I have made these calls myself, and so I always feel an immediate empathy with the person accepting the onerous assignment of the notification of family and friends of one now deceased. Conveying the same sorrow-inducing information time after time is wearing physically and draining emotionally. Repeating the details six dozen times never makes it easier than delivering the announcement the first time; in fact, it grows harder and more straining. After four decades standing before congregations and informing the church of the death of a member or friend, I have developed a practice of making such an announcement as the opening comments in the first service following such a passing. It is better for me when I am to say it once than to repeat the information to person after person as each arrives at the church.

By now, you have guessed properly that I am writing this soon after having my telephone summon me to one more such message. Dr. Bill Clark, the pastor of the First Baptist Church in Bridgeview Illinois, called to inform me that Dr. Bill Barbry now resides in his *Home, Beyond the*

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*BEYOND THE RIVER**(Continued from page 3)*

River. A friendship exceeding four decades has been put on hold, interrupted until the time of reunion that will come when I too move over There. I just finished the same task myself as I made the call to my wife to let her know that the preacher who united us in marriage had gone Home.

In the fall of 1963, I introduced Dr. Clark to Bro. Bill and those two men formed a unique friendship that was a joy to behold; and now the sad task had fallen to him to inform me that Bro. Bill was Home. Dr. Clark and his wife, whom Bro. Bill spoke of as if she were an adopted daughter, would be soon on his way to the funeral. We sorrowed together in our loss of a friend and mentor, but not as those who have no hope.

Bro. Bill arrived in Fort Smith, Arkansas, in the late summer of 1962 to preach a revival for a group of Baptists that had withdrawn from the local Association in fellowship with the Southern Baptist Convention over the issue of the growing theological liberalism in the education institutions affiliated with the convention. The publication by Broadman Press of Professor Ralph Elliott's commentary on Genesis that denied the authenticity of the historicity of the first three chapters was one of the events that motivated their action. Those individuals had contacted Dr. Bob Jones Jr. requesting a referral to someone who could help them organize an independent Baptist church in Fort Smith. They called me the day I graduated from Bob Jones University asking me to consider doing exactly that. In June of 1962, I met with them and the congregation and I agreed to work together until we could call a man to come as pastor.

Within a few weeks, we extended the invitation to a pas-

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earnestly and fervently for his family. They owe much to his prayer life.

His family and his friends have been left by Bro. Bill, but I know that he expects them to prepare to join him soon. He delighted in preaching about the reunion coming in Heaven. May he not be disappointed because you do not receive the LORD Jesus Christ as your Saviour.

Bro. Bill loved to preach. His favorite topics were Heaven, prayer, and Hell. I think that his sermons on prayer were those that were my favorites to hear him preach. I heard Dr. John Rice preach his famous sermon on prayer several times, and he could not hold a candle to Bill Barbry on the subject. He was passionate in his belief that "Christians had not because they asked not." Prayer was not a practice connected with Christianity; in his view, it was the essence of Christianity itself. He could not fathom a home where the husband and wife spoke of love but did not speak to each other and he could not believe that Christians did want to speak to their Heavenly Father. I loved to hear him preach on prayer.

He believed in preaching, as he said, "Heaven sweet and hell hot." Somehow, he was the only person who could sing the chorus, "Heaven is a wonderful place," and make it sound like a hymn. He delighted in taking his congregation through a gate of (one) pearl for a walk on the streets of gold along the river of life and walk right up to gather round the Throne of God with the saints of ages past. Sometimes he would call the roll and march the saints waiting in glory past for review. Heaven seemed more tangible after Bill Barbry described it. Hell was fire and brimstone in all his sermons. A place prepared for the devil and his angels was not a place anyone would wish to enter after hearing Bro. Bill describe it.

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he called the pastor and told him that he was giving him the typewriter. That way, he explained, he could no longer be angry with the preacher for not returning the typewriter. He explained that the aggravation over the value of a loaned typewriter was not worth losing the joy of trying to serve God. "So now I never loan anything to anyone; I give to the LORD. If something is returned, I just have it to give away again." Oscar was quite a man.

Since Jo and Bro. Bill married, we have visited together and shared conversations on the telephone, but I was not in and out of their home as I was with Bill and Cleo. It must have been very difficult for Jo to step into the whirlwind that life with Bill Barbry surely was. Bill and Cleo had grown into a merger while Jo, as it were, had to board a moving train. I know her grief at this loss of her husband is great. Her own health is not good and, as you think of her, remember her in prayer. Jo's children have lost both their father and stepfather—two men who left a legacy of faith and service that calls those children to follow diligently—the greater the legacy, the more the responsibility.

Dr. Bill's three children and those stepchildren have lost a friend as well as a father. His son, Billy, his daughters, Deborah and Martha, their spouses, and their respective families have a heritage in their mother and their father of which to be thankful and possess a standard that is a high calling. They will also need prayer. His son has himself experienced some serious health problems in recent years. The several grandchildren have been given a precious Christian legacy to cherish and to uphold. As Dr. Clark could also bear witness, I know by the experience of presence that Bill Barbry loved his children and prayed

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tor from the Atlanta, Georgia, area to come to conduct an extended meeting. During those days of his preaching the congregation grew to appreciate him and, on the Sunday following the meeting, accepted my recommendation to call Bill Barbry as the pastor.

I met Dr. Barbry for the first time at the Fort Smith airport. The 1962 Fort Smith airport was certainly nothing to "write home about." I had become acquainted with the couple who operated the snack area—the *circumstances of that introduction is a story for another time*—and I talked with them and enjoyed one of her excellent sandwiches as I watched through the window for him and his older daughter, Deborah, (who came with him to be the pianist for the meetings) to disembark from the Frontier DC-3 [still the best aircraft that I ever flew aboard]. I remember taking note that he had a remarkable first impression resemblance to Dr. Billy Graham; and, surely enough, someone walked up and asked if he were Dr. Graham. Through the following years as we walked through [real] airports in different cities, I often heard him say to some one approaching him with a familiar look in the eyes, *before they asked the question*: "No, I am not he." I sometimes wondered if the person knew who the "he" was that he was not.

I gathered their luggage, steered them to my car, discovered they were not ready to eat a meal, and delivered them to their room at the Holiday Inn where I had fruit and soft drinks waiting. Dr. Barbry instructed his daughter to wait in the room and asked me to show him the area of town where I had been visiting. Within a very brief time, we crossed the city and were knocking on those doors where I thought I had made good contacts

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*BEYOND THE RIVER**(Continued from page 5)*

with families that were prospects for the church.

Between the time that we left his daughter and when we arrived at the first door, Bro. Bill and I shared the first of multiplied seasons of prayer. I scarcely think of using that term “seasons of prayer” for the times of prayer that I have shared with hundreds of other preachers. Yet, it comes quite naturally in thinking of the periods that we knelt together and approached the Throne of Grace. Bro. Bill seemed to believe that it was his responsibility to approach the God of Heaven with his request for orders or to deliver his report—much as a servant to his master or as a soldier to his captain. I do not think I ever heard him speak of “daily devotions”; his resort to Scripture and to praying was more frequent than *daily*. His conversation might suddenly include the Father even while it did not exclude me. Particularly in the early years of our friendship, I felt he came mighty close to “praying without ceasing.”

By the time we returned to the motel, collected his daughter, and drove to the storefront where the congregation was meeting, we had met and talked with individuals who had made a profession of faith and promised to be in the services that very night to walk the aisle. Until the terrible ravaging Alzheimer’s stole his mind and dignity, he continued this pattern in sunshine and in rain, in season and out of season, in Arkansas, Georgia, Missouri, Illinois, Florida, Texas, Maine, Nevada, and a number of other states—in major cities and in insignificant rural communities. He was probably the most effective and consistent soul-winner that I ever met.

That night was the first time that I introduced him to any congregation. I said that we had only met that

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the beauty shop today.” As I say, Bro. Bill nearly quit the ministry that night.

As I wrote, Ms. Barbry was gentle and soft spoken—generally. I only recall knowing of her being agitated one time. Bro. Bill and I had post office boxes with close numbers. Once I found his telephone bill had been mistakenly placed in my box; not wishing to keep his mail overnight, I stopped by their house and finding that Bro. Bill had not yet arrived, I left the envelope for him with her. As I walked back to my car, I heard a rather loud “A hundred and . . .” The next morning, Bro. Barbry asked me not to take any more mail to the house. I believed there was wisdom in that request.

When Cleo died after a long hard battle with cancer, Bro. Bill was lost. She had been a part of his strength in such a manner that almost no one understood. She was not a church leader—public speaking was not something she ever attempted to my knowledge. Hers was entirely an “off-the-platform-out-of-sight-wife-and-mother” support that went undetected by most, whether family or friends. Without her, Bill Barbry was not able to be Bill Barbry. After time, he would marry the widow of an old friend. Jo is a gracious lady; actually, I met her and her husband, Oscar, before I met Bill Barbry. Oscar was a successful businessman, dynamic entrepreneur, and dedicated Christian. He was generous to the cause of Christ and, often I felt that he was misused. Shortly after I met him, he told me that the way to handle those who abuse generosity was to give. He told me of a pastor who borrowed an office typewriter from him; months passed and it was not returned. Oscar said that every day when he entered the office, he thought of that typewriter. Finally,

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*BEYOND THE RIVER**(Continued from page 17)*

ment would have been due, Bro. Bill was driving a new Buick. He then had two victories—a bigger car than the Oldsmobile and had gone ninety days without a car payment.

Mrs. Barbry was a gentle, mild, generally soft-spoken woman, the mother of a son and two daughters. I had my own apartment, but I was as welcome at her table as her own children and treated graciously. I never heard anyone ever speak of her in a reproachful way. Even so, I recall the day she nearly caused Bro. Bill to quit the ministry. Dr. Barbry was mentored, almost adopted, by Dr. John R. Rice. In many ways, Bro. Bill patterned his life by the standards he learned from Dr. Rice. Dr. John R. Rice and his brother Dr. Bill Rice were great men, and I am grateful for the association that I was privileged to have with both. John R. Rice was noted for his strong views on the submission of wives to husbands, no pants on women, and women not cutting their hair. He even wrote a pamphlet, Bobbed Hair, Bossy Wives, and Women Preachers that was never circulated much, but became nonetheless his most famous work. Dr. Barbry advocated strongly that women should not cut their hair—long hair was, after all, their glory. In a banquet meeting, he addressed the issue and made the statement that his wife had not cut her hair since they were married. I was a young unmarried preacher at the time but I knew her hair was not long enough for his statement to be true. My grandmother had long hair—she was barely over five feet and her hair unrolled from its topknot fell down to trail on the floor behind her. When Bro. Bill sat down beside Mrs. Barbry, just across from me, I hear her whisper, “Daddy, everyone knows I cut my hair. Why, I was at

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day and I really did not know much of his biography that I could use to present him; but I had spent the greater part of a day with him and, I continued, “I believe I am introducing this congregation to a man of God.” It was my privilege to repeat that introduction to a number of congregations over the years. By the end of that first series of services, the congregation was prepared to ask him to come, and he was willing to leave a great church and come to the storefront mission work that we had begun. After his arrival on the field, we worked together for some months in a transition, and then I moved on to plant a church in Missouri. We briefly labored together as a team (including Dr. Clark) again and shared preaching visits many times in the years after I left Arkansas.

The day that he and his family moved to Fort Smith, I cautioned him about the new radar that the city police were using on the particular street that he would be taking if he chose to stop by the Post Office on his way home. When he returned to the church after lunch, he had a speeding ticket to show me. I called Captain Ewing and pled for mercy. Ewing met Bill at the court and interceded with the judge, and the Captain and Bill became friends. That was a good thing, because Dr. Barbry always had a tendency to be in a hurry.

Many remembrances of him return today. I value them all, even the memory of a span of years when there was a breach in our fellowship. The event is not a good memory; but bad events can produce good memories, by the grace of God. One day in 1969 after I rejoined his staff, he abruptly terminated our relationship without explanation. The months that followed were dark and unpleasant to experience. His action resulted in my wife,

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*BEYOND THE RIVER**(Continued from page 7)*

our son, and I being [in the modern term] without income and made homeless. My wife and son stayed first with her parents and then with mine; I lived out of our car as I sought for a place to locate. Friends helped and, eventually, Julie was employed as a nurse and I as an *environmental engineer* [a.k.a. "janitor"]. I came to the understanding over the months that I could become bitter [Hebrews 12:15] over a perceived wrong, or I could accept this transaction in the fashion of Joseph [Genesis 50:20]. Wrestling it through, I determined to leave the matter in the hands of the Father and, as best I could, to give the matter a burial. After awhile, I no longer even visited the gravesite.

Those months out of [fulltime] ministry proved among the most beneficial schooling for me; I privately referred to them as my seminary time. I preached where I could and studied the office of the pastor and the duties of the pastorate with a passion never before known. When the Chief Shepherd made His next assignment for me, I had a changed philosophy of ministry in place, ready to apply. Without traveling too far afield, may I generalize and say that from that time I determined to approach the work of the pastor from the focal point of the *pew* rather than from that of the *pulpit*. By training, by example, and by nature, I had been "shepherd centered" in practice rather than "sheep considerate." "I had the message to deliver and "they" should receive it; why do they not grow as they ought?—had been my underlying mode. After my sabbatical, I thought more about what the sheep were facing in their daily existence and what their level of nutrition, exercise, and preventive care ought to be in order that the sheep might be-

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fore I go buy the Chevrolet. So what will you take?" inquired Bro. Bill—there was a principle at stake. He could not bring himself to pay the asked price; that would, I presumed, take all the fun out of the horse-trading for Bro. Bill. The salesman said that Bro. Bill should go buy the Chevy. (I guess he thought that Bro. Bill was just making it all up.) Bill Barbry said nothing, just turned, and walked out. It was easy to know where he was headed. We returned to the church and drove in my car to the Chevrolet dealership. Bill Barbry "walked in and drove out" as the old television commercial said he could. We left my car and returned to the Olds dealership. When we pulled on the lot, the salesman came up laughing—he thought that Bro. Bill had pulled a great joke on him—test driving the Impala. Bill had to show him the bill of sale before he believed that Bro. Bill had actually bought the car. "Now, you know, I mean what I say," was the last thing the salesman heard from Bill Barbry that day—through the car window as we drove away in Bill's new car. The man was, nonetheless, later led to a profession of faith by Bro. Bill.

However, what I have written thus far does not reveal the real drama or the greater humor. I thought we were returning to get my car, as we pulled away from the Olds dealership, but not so. "Now, we have to go home and you and I have to tell Cleo that we bought a new car today," was his announcement. Arriving at the home, it rapidly became apparent that the wife of Bill Barbry had no idea that her husband was buying a new car that day. Again, the only "persuader" was the bill of sale. However, the story is not over. Bill was never satisfied with that Impala and forty-five days later, coincidentally when the first pay-

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American sport of 'Rassling. Not the foolishness of this era, by any means—this foolishness was of another era. Every city of size in the land had a championship belt that the local 'rasslers thumped on one another every week in a grown-up version of "King of the Hill." From his encounter with this family on, every thing he did, he did for "the Belt." Whether we played ping-pong or spit watermelon seeds, Bill was going to have "the Belt." He simply did not know how to do something less than whole-hearted.

As if it were this morning, I recall one long ago day when we began our activities by preparing to paint a room in the old furniture store we were using for services. We talked or we prayed while we worked—that was his pattern. That morning, his mind was on trading cars. No one ever approached car trading with the passion of Bro. Bill. We had been scouting the market for a week or so—the 1963 models were just about to enter the showrooms and he was convinced that the time was ripe to wrap up a great deal on a 1962. Bro. Bill had narrowed the market to two possibilities, but he had his eye on a particular Oldsmobile. Dark color, slick design, rich interior, and the beauty also had the one essential, a super V-8. After negotiations the day before, Bro. Bill and the salesman were only \$200 apart on the purchase. The longer we worked that morning; the more he talked. The more he talked; the better that car seemed. By ten o'clock, he was feverish to complete the deal. In our paint-splattered clothes, we walked over to the dealership. Bro. Bill said he was ready to buy and asked the salesman if he were ready to sell. "Where are you going to meet me on the price? I wanted to check with you be-

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come what maturing sheep ought to be.

It is not that I brilliantly predated the contemporary realignment of "need-meeting" ministries—in reality a dissipation of biblical stewardship—it is that I began to consider how every aspect of my ministry was primarily to be directed at the spiritual maturing of the individual members of the flock placed in my care. I realized that the pastor will give account as one trusted with the watchcare of the souls to whom he ministers. Focus group directed ministry is not a work led by the Holy Spirit—it is trusting in the arm of the flesh and is guaranteed to be a failure, regardless of temporary apparent success. As a pastor, I am not commissioned to supply the felt-needs of the attendees; instead, I am charged to bring believers to the measure of Christ. Therefore, I "redesigned" my ministry to fulfill that responsibility. This required systematic teaching of doctrine, consistent loving reproof of wrong, faithful gentle correction of direction and action, and continual instruction in righteousness. [2 Timothy 3:16] I needed to learn to preach the word—this cannot be understood to mean anything but expository preaching, being instant in season, out of season—just faithfully plodding along regardless of visual consequences, and I needed to acquire the ability to reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine—that requires the capacity to apply the word of God to the home, the work place, and every where my people move and have their being. [2 Timothy 4:2] Without those months of being in the pew, I would never have received a truly empathetic compassion for those in my pews. I believe God, as He had for Joseph, indeed, meant even this difficult time for my good.

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*BEYOND THE RIVER**(Continued from page 9)*

I certainly do not wish to convey that this insight or these lessons came to me either easily or quickly. The agonizing months turned into years of struggle before I approached any degree of victory, and the conclusion was entirely a work of grace. All injuries received, whether as an inflicted blow or sustained in the struggles of warfare, leave scars; and those particular scars become the crux of new struggles. Predating batting helmets, kneepads, or training wheels, I have an assortment of scars ranging from encounters with necessary surgical procedures, inopportunities placed rusty nails, improperly used tools, unfriendly dogs, and unfamiliar endeavors of a varied sort. For a good many of these scars, I can recall their arrival. Some of the events connected with acquisition of these marks were unpleasant and some were approaching the humorous. In the course of *this reckless living*, I have come to possess some broken bones. Having an internal weather prognosticator (highly accurate, I might add) is not as appealing as it might seem. The accompanying arthritis and neuralgia reduce the fun. The rain falling outside tonight was announced by my right ankle and the two dozen or so foot bones crushed thirty-five years ago before the storm moved into the area, but those bones are protesting the precipitation strenuously as I write. I could focus on the stupidity of the careless character that caused that injury —And if I were to do so, perhaps the exercise would embitter me. I might even have a desire enter my heart that he might have had something happen to him that would have evened the score. OR—I can choose to remember the special mercy of God in overriding the Emergency Room doctors' and the orthopedist's initial impulse to perform major sur-

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the men invited him and me to go squirrel hunting the next morning. When I asked what time, he said whenever Bro. Barbry said. Bill said that we needed to go early and to just tell him when and he would be ready. "Four sounds good," I suggested. Bill said to come back for him at six. It was a chilly, foggy, fall morning as we moved from the cornfield into the woods. We had barely entered the trees when I saw, in a fork of a tall oak some twenty yards away, a raccoon hunkered down watching us. I pointed him out to Bro. Bill and our host, who told Bill to shoot it. Bill aimed and fired. The coon never moved. Twenty-one rounds later, that coon leaned slowly to the right and toppled out of the tree. After the first half dozen shots, it was principle for Bill Barbry and side-splitting laughter for the host and me. The host thought the coon might have succumbed to old age during the previous night and the air of passing shots finally unbalanced it, or that Bro. Bill filled the coon with so much lead that he was forced to fall. I suggested that the poor thing had been shot *at* so many times that he had suffered a heart attack, fell out of the tree, and died upon impact. We examined the body of the deceased and found that he had no marks upon him except for a small abrasion on his head. Any coroner's jury would have ruled "death from unknown causes" on the first ballot; but Bill was convinced that he shot the coon squarely between the eyes with the first shot—that scratch mark was testimony to his marksmanship.

Bill Barbry, as I already said, was never half-hearted in anything that he did. He always "went for the Belt." Somewhere along the way, Bro. Bill led to the LORD a man and his family that were connected with the great

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*BEYOND THE RIVER**(Continued from page 13)*

That night, by the time the meal arrived, the three of us had resumed conversation as if we were still seated in Cleo's kitchen eating our peanut butter and crackers after the last Sunday night service. I later wondered what those who observed us concluded. The meal opened with uncontrollable grief and ended with uncontainable laughter. We certainly could not have gone unnoticed or un-discussed.

From that day, until Alzheimer's stole his dignity and his mind, we had a special friendship. Perhaps, it was never quite what it might have been without those intervening years of breach; but it seems that it also may have been more mature and more special than otherwise it would have been. I preached several revivals for him through the years and he spoke from my pulpit for me. We spent hours talking via Alexander Graham Bell's greatly altered invention. Our last conversation was only days before he was confined to a home for Alzheimer's patients and from which he never left. Dr. Bill Barbry was not a half-hearted man. What he did, he did body, soul, and spirit. If he had been uncompromising in the breaking of fellowship, he was devoted in the restoring of the fellowship.

As the situation always is when one we know dies, memories surge through my thoughts faster than my fingers are capable of typing them down. Some, while they force my heavy heart to smile would doubtless have no suggestion of meaning to others at all. The time when he fired twenty-two rifle rounds, reloading in the process, at a coon before the critter fell from the tree probably has little significance to my readers. Bro. Bill was preaching a revival for me. The night before, one of

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gery. After signing the necessary papers for an emergency operation (which included as a slight possibility of a permanently fixed—as in *non-moveable*—ankle or worse) and being given medication to sleep, I was awakened by my regular doctor, who had returned to town unexpectedly and, unnecessarily, coming by the hospital, took charge and cancelled the surgery. I occasionally limp, endure a little discomfort, and “spectate” rather than participate in sports—but I have my own flesh and bone all the way to the end of my toes. *AND*—I recall the multiplied kindnesses that others did for me during that period. *MORE IMPORTANTLY*—I, even now, marvel at the change in ministry that the LORD of the Harvest began in that time frame and through that event.

What I am suggesting is that scars and broken bones come as the normal consequence of living in the flesh among those who live in the flesh. Either I will resent the scars and broken bones, growing bitter in the process, or I can accept them as a happening that was turned to my good by the Father and served to make me better. I can regulate the memories (and I have the responsibility to do so) that arise when I see or touch the scars. Therefore, though I have digressed a little, I have not lost the purpose. I cannot leave this memory of the breach between Bro. Bill and me without sharing the whole story and that includes a wonderful conclusion.

Years transpired with very limited and most chilled contact with Dr. Barbry from that day I was sent from his presence in disfavor without knowing why, feeling disgraced and embarrassed. Sometime after I had finally settled in my heart that the issue should be left for the Judgment Seat and that I could quit reliving the difficult

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day in my mind, one afternoon the telephone rang. As I answered the call, I was surprised to recognize the voice of Dr. Barbry asking if I would see him. Unable to think of anything else to say, I agreed, believing that he was calling from Fort Smith, and asked when and where. He said, "In twenty minutes, wherever you say." I picked up Bro. Bill and his wife, Cleo, at a local motel and we drove to a restaurant, since they had not eaten. Little was said on the way and I felt a heaviness weighing the conversation. When the waiter left after taking our order, Dr. Barbry began weeping almost immediately.

Those who only knew him from a distance likely would have envisioned him as a harsh, heavy handed, even cold person; but those who knew him well, knew him as among the tenderhearted of men. While I was therefore not surprised to see him cry, I had no idea of why he would be crying. I surmised a thousand reasons in the few moments that I sat in the embarrassing silence. As he regained composure, he told me only a few days had passed since he had learned that he was wrong in summarily ending our association. Bro. Bill named an individual (a close, long time friend of his) and said that man had come to him to confess that he had lied all those years ago when he had come to Dr. Barbry with what Bro. Bill simply termed terrible things against me. With his wife seated beside him, Bill Barbry wept intensely as he admitted that he had taken the charges as fact without checking with me because he trusted the man. He asked for forgiveness. By then, tears were not exclusively his.

I shared with him how I had come, by the working of the Holy Spirit in me, to view the situation and how, I

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believed, that the hand of God had been involved to mean it for good. Because of the long preparation in my heart by the Spirit, forgiveness was simple to acknowledge because I had forgiven him already—all he had to do was to claim it. Until he did ask to receive forgiveness, it is true that the forgiveness was never active or applied to him nor did it change my relationship to him, but the forgiveness was already in place waiting for that day. Moreover, again, in that day itself, I learned another spiritual lesson through the hurt of years ago that helped me to understand in a new light the offer of salvation in Christ to an unbeliever and the provision for forgiveness of the transgressions of a believer.

He did not tell me what the man had said those years ago and I never asked. That part of the equation was not important then and is surely not important today. I did not know the reason the day it caused the breach to happen, and I had no desire to know that day when the severed fellowship was renewed. In times of weakness, my carnal nature has offered many suggestions; but when my new nature controls, I have no curiosity at all. *[That it is possible for a prominent "elder" on the West Coast to convince Baptist preachers that regeneration exterminates the old nature is evidence of slick salesmanship or ignorant customers—or both!]* That man had indeed caused the breach; but the break was between Bro. Bill and me. With our fellowship restored, that man was unimportant, as he no longer held any relationship to our fellowship. The man himself never approached me; a few years ago, I was told that he had died. Whatever remains to be settled on his part or on my part is settled or it will be settled at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

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