

Echoes of Grace

The Day of the
MIRACLE

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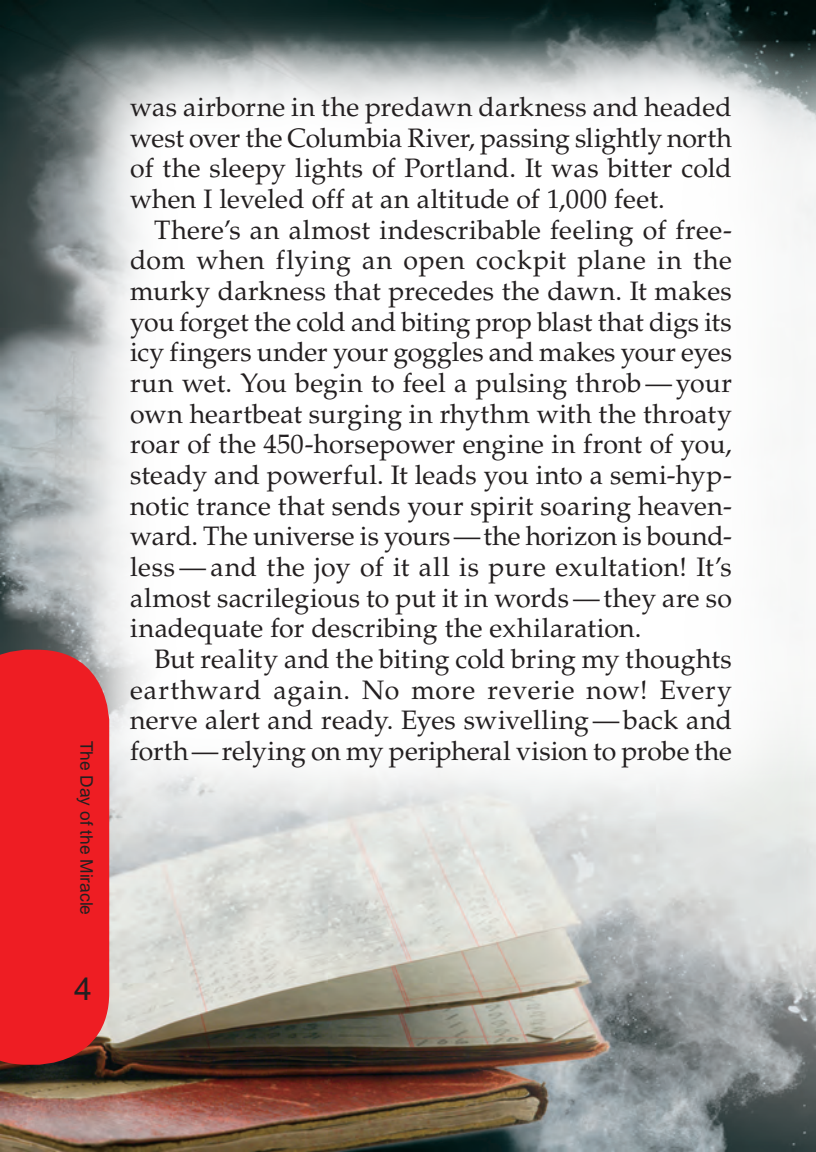
The background of the page is a dramatic, high-contrast photograph of a cloudy sky. A tall, lattice-structured power line tower stands on the right side. In the lower-left foreground, the wing and engine area of a biplane are visible, suggesting the perspective of someone flying. The overall mood is one of tension and awe.

The Day of the **MIRACLE**

There is an entry in my logbook dated June 13, 1949. This was the first day of the rest of my life—it was the day of the miracle, when I passed through the valley of the shadow of death! But the “remarks” column gives only a hint of what actually happened: It says, “Close call with Power Lines.”

I had turned my World War II military flying into a career as a crop duster with a war surplus Stearman biplane, a bank loan, and best wishes from my worried wife. This was now my second year of aerial spraying, and I was beginning to really enjoy it.

The day began like most other June days ... clear, calm and cool—ideal spraying weather. I



was airborne in the predawn darkness and headed west over the Columbia River, passing slightly north of the sleepy lights of Portland. It was bitter cold when I leveled off at an altitude of 1,000 feet.

There's an almost indescribable feeling of freedom when flying an open cockpit plane in the murky darkness that precedes the dawn. It makes you forget the cold and biting prop blast that digs its icy fingers under your goggles and makes your eyes run wet. You begin to feel a pulsing throb—your own heartbeat surging in rhythm with the throaty roar of the 450-horsepower engine in front of you, steady and powerful. It leads you into a semi-hypnotic trance that sends your spirit soaring heavenward. The universe is yours—the horizon is boundless—and the joy of it all is pure exultation! It's almost sacrilegious to put it in words—they are so inadequate for describing the exhilaration.

But reality and the biting cold bring my thoughts earthward again. No more reverie now! Every nerve alert and ready. Eyes swivelling—back and forth—relying on my peripheral vision to probe the

shadows above the trees. A firm, but light grip on the control stick, and feet planted lightly on the rudder pedals—everything under control.

Don't let it hypnotize you, I remind myself. Take it in short, quick looks—eyes front, back, then front again. Keep your head on a swivel, and make shallow turns—the trees are too close to let you dip a wing very far. Let her skid!

A few minutes of this and the sky begins paling into sunrise. “Hmm, should be running out of goop any second now.” A small bridge flashes past beneath me—the edge of the control area. But I continue the run, glancing back more often to see the instant the spray stops.

And that's when it happens! In the middle of a shallow turn my eyes sweep forward. I hit the throttle as I start to level off and climb. Something flickers at the corner of my eye, up there on the right. A quick flash of sunlight strikes the bright aluminum cables of the Bonneville power line. Swiftly my glance follows them down, right into the treetops in front of me, and in that split second I'm into them! No time to pull up over the top ... no room to go under ... I have to fly between them! Nine cables—three rows of three, each cable an inch and a half thick, and the middle row lies dead ahead of the plane. In that fractured second separating life from death, my reactions (if they actually were mine) are only automatic reflexes.

I barely have time to level the wings and head for

the open space between the top and middle rows. I'm suddenly detached from reality and someone else has control of the plane. It's as though I'm looking over my own shoulder from behind, and the huddled, paralyzed figure in the cockpit is not me. A wordless prayer engulfs me. My eyes stare in frozen fascination as those huge cables zap, zap, zap over me. Then I awake to the realization that the engine's throaty roar is still full and strong and steady. There's no explosion—no lightning bolts, no pieces falling apart. The stick is still in my hands. I'm still alive! I look back in disbelief. All nine cables are still there, stretching from tower to tower ... motionless and unbroken!

I pull up into a long climbing turn, out of the valley and into the full light of sunrise. And what a glorious sunrise! With a prayer of thanks on my trembling lips, I grab huge gulps of fresh air, turn the plane toward the airport, and try to keep my quivering feet on the rudder pedals. I'm still saying, "Thank You, God!" when I land five minutes later and roll to a stop near the hangars. I feel like jelly—bathed in icy sweat. I peel off my helmet and goggles and step out on the wing. My legs fold up like rubber bands, and I sprawl flat on the wet grass, shivering.

I lay there for a long, long time.

Several nagging questions troubled me. How far apart were those cables? How much clearance was there above and below the plane? Why didn't the

diesel fumes in the spray tank explode? I finally got some of the answers from a friend who had worked for the Bonneville Power Administration. He checked the archives and found the engineer's drawings showing a vertical gap of nearly 18 feet between each layer of cables. The Stearman in level flight measures close to 12 feet from top to bottom. That gave me three feet of clearance both above and below the plane.


All of this lay quietly in my memory for 25 years. I was content to let it rest as a minor miracle, giving God 90 percent of the credit, with the other 10 percent going to my first flight instructor who drilled into me the "swivel neck" habit by saying, "A stiff neck is the first sign of rigor mortis." If my head hadn't been turning at that precise instant, I'd never have caught that flicker of reflected sunlight—that fraction of a second's warning that enabled me to pull up and level the wings in time to go between the cables.

But one day I finished telling a friend about my miracle flight and he slowly shook his head. He was an electrical engineer for Bonneville and thoroughly familiar with power transmission. "No way, man! Even if you didn't actually touch those cables, there's no way you could come that close to them with a metal frame airplane and not turn into a fireball. That much voltage will arc across almost six feet! One set of cables, with lots of luck, maybe. But **three** sets of cables? Impossible!"

Then he took pencil and paper and drew a rectangle of four dots with a biplane centered between them. "Here you are," he said, "almost touching four cables at the same time. Why, that's about double the voltage!" The thought of what that much electricity is capable of doing stunned him into silence for a moment. Then he went on: "The only way you could have been that close and not be burned to a crisp would be if... Say, can you give me the exact day and time? I know this guy who works where the archives are kept. He might check the records on that line and see if..."


So I dig out the logbook for that year and give him the figures—June 13, 1949, at 5:05 a.m. Later his friend comes back—that section of line was shut down that morning to fix a faulty relay. The repair was completed and power restored—at 5:15 a.m.!

But for me there was another source of power at that exact moment—a constant and uninterrupted source far, far greater than anything Bonneville produces! It was that power that led me safely out of the valley of the shadow of death! God says about the angels, **"Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"** (Hebrews 1:14). While God may not have used angels to preserve my life, this Bible verse shows His intense care and love for each person who will be-



lieve on Him. It was His mercy, not my cleverness, that spared my life.

If you've ever been given a kind hug, a tender kiss, an amazing sunrise, the view of a beautiful flower or a pleasant "thank you," then you've experienced a touch of God's goodness expressed in His creation. Have you said, "Thank You, God"? Do you know Jesus Christ as your Saviour from sin as well as your Creator? Not turning to Him is a serious thing. **"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him"** (John 3:36).

God shows tremendous care for His creatures in this life, but He has even more planned for them. Find out more of His plan of salvation in *Are You Related to Royalty?* 



Are You Related to Royalty?

Are you related to royalty from the distant past? Dr. Chang, a mathematician from Yale University, would say the odds are overwhelmingly in your favor that, yes, you are related to some kings and queens of old.

Here is how he figures it. Let's use Charlemagne, a king who ruled over the large part of Europe 1200 years ago, as an example. If a generation is 30 years long, then Charlemagne lived approximately 40 generations ago.

Every time you go back a generation, the number of direct ancestors doubles. For instance, you have two parents, four grandparents, eight great-grandparents and so forth. If you carried this pattern out to the fortieth generation, you would get an almost unbelievably large num-

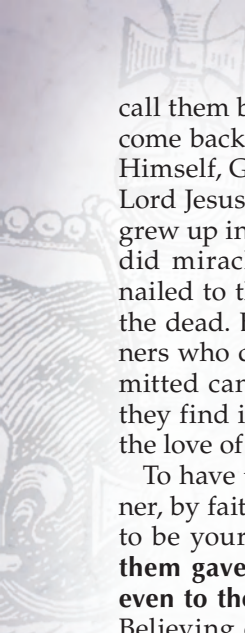
ber of over one trillion! This number would be far larger than all the people alive in Europe at the time. So Dr. Chang concludes that it's highly likely that every person living today is related to some ancient royalty.

Do you feel like the child of a king after reading this? Probably not. At least you wouldn't be able to go into some museum and ask for your share of the family jewels.

But there's another possible relationship that can make you incredibly rich. You may establish the genuineness of this beyond any shadow of doubt, and its authenticity will be upheld in the highest court. Once established, you may start enjoying the benefits immediately. Those in this relationship are assured of an inheritance of enduring wealth, which will make them incredibly happy.

It has to do with the greatest Being of the universe. He's a Being so tremendously high and mighty that all others will bow down to Him, including the most powerful kings of the earth. He created the heavens and the earth. But the human race turned away from God their Creator and fell into sin and darkness. Turning away from God, the human race turned to dishonesty, cruelty, theft, tyranny and a whole host of other sins. Now if you searched your family tree, you would find an assortment of not only kings but thieves, pick-pockets and liars.

However, even though the human race has turned away from Him, God has taken steps to



call them back and make them His own. Many have come back to Him. To call men and women back to Himself, God came to this earth in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was born in a stable, grew up in obscurity, preached to tens of thousands, did miracles of healing and then was taken and nailed to the cross. Three days later, He arose from the dead. Because of His sacrifice on the cross, sinners who deserve death for the sins they have committed can instead find life in Him. And what life they find in Him! They find the forgiveness of sins, the love of God and eternal life.

To have this relationship, you must come as a sinner, by faith, to the Lord Jesus Christ and trust Him to be your Saviour. **“As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name”** (John 1:12). Believing on His name, you become His child forever. **“Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus”** (Galatians 3:27).

How wonderful to enter into a relationship with God the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ. You can know beyond a shadow of a doubt that you are a child of a King!

Not only does God have wonderful things in store for those who simply believe Him, but He has also sent you His personal invitation to come and believe. Find out what I mean in *A Mysterious Postcard*. ◀

A Mysterious Postcard

One evening after a long day at work, I parked my car and walked to the mailbox by the street. Reaching my arm into the mailbox, I found the usual assortment of bills and advertisements. But there was one piece of mail that was not ordinary, and its strangeness caught my attention.

It was a beautiful postcard of blue water lapping onto a curving beach, with a lighthouse set in the distance and the words "IT IS TIME" printed at the top of it. I turned it over to see who it was from—maybe some friend or a relative on a seaside vacation, but the backside of the postcard was pretty much blank, except for some small print that I couldn't read without glasses. Could it be an important invitation?

I went into the house, found my glasses and read the small print. It was only a reminder of an orthodontist appointment. After momentary disappointment, it dawned on me that I had already received an invitation from the most important person in the universe. And, frankly, it far excels any other invitation a person might receive.

That invitation is found in the Bible, and it invited me to leave sin's darkness behind and come to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The Lord Jesus said, **"I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life"** (John 8:12). The Bible is like a lighthouse, pouring light into a dark, sin-filled world and showing people the way to truth and life.

How it happened, I don't know, but the light of God's grace shone in my soul, and I understood and believed that God loved me. I also understood that through the death of His Son, God did everything that was necessary to blot out my sins that I might be forgiven.

I accepted His gracious invitation to **“believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved”** (Acts 16:31). And every day since then, He has invited me to walk in His light and find new discoveries of His grace.

Someday in the not-too-distant future, it will be time to leave this world. Are you ready? Those who believe in Jesus Christ will enter into the joys of heaven. They will live in the heavenly city that has no need of the sun, because the Lord God is the light of the place. Not one person will be a stranger there, and all will live in perfect love and fellowship. How different from our world where there seems to be endless strife!

Being saved, walking with the Lord Jesus, continually finding more of His love and grace, and having the hope of eternity spent in His very presence in heaven—these are some of the things it means to have the light of life.

God wants to bless you with all these rich blessings. IT IS TIME for you, too, to see the light from God's lighthouse, the Bible, and be saved. Why continue to walk through sin's darkness another moment, when God invites you to believe in His Son and come into His marvelous light? ◀

EVERLASTING

FOR GOD SO LOVED THE
WORLD, THAT HE GAVE HIS
ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, THAT
WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH IN
HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH,
BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE.

JOHN 3:16



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*“Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”
(Romans 10:13).*

