



Echoes of Grace

MY WOUNDS DON'T  
**HEAL**  
LIKE THEY USED TO

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# MY WOUNDS DON'T HEAL LIKE THEY USED TO

Sometime after 1 a.m., April 4, 2013, Sergeant Terry Hughes heard the ringing of an alarm. His alarm was connected to a military-grade motion detector hidden a mile away in the kitchen of the Pine Tree camp near Rome, Maine. Jamming his pickup into gear he raced for the camp. Parking quietly, he ran for the dining hall and looked carefully in the window. A balding man with the hint of some eyebrows moved stealthily inside peering through decades-old glasses at more items to stuff in a bulging backpack. Then he headed for the door. Stepping outside, the burglar's eyes filled with the blinding light from Sergeant Hughes' flashlight. A .357 Magnum revolver was pointed at his head and the words, "Get on the ground!" thundered in his ears.

Not long after the April 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster in Russia, Christopher Thomas Knight quietly stepped off a trail in northern Maine and vanished. No one called the police. No one came looking for

him. Friends assumed he'd headed off to New York City or Texas or maybe he'd died.

Chris tried living off the land. But road-killed birds and berries make a meager diet. Soon corn and vegetables began to disappear from gardens along his route. But Chris said, "I wanted more than vegetables. It took a while to overcome my scruples. I was always scared when stealing. Always."

## HOME

It took a couple of years, but somewhere in the late 1980s he settled down at a campsite near the 30-mile-long shores of Maine's North Pond area. Surrounded by nearly 300 camps and many cabins in woods crisscrossed with dirt roads and traversed by hunters, Chris found a spot a few hundred yards from some homes. Other than a couple of words addressed to a hiker in the mid 1990s, Chris didn't speak to another human being for 27 years.

Buried in a dense forest of maple, elm and hemlock and partially hidden by massive car-sized boulders, Chris fashioned a bedroom-sized home. These weren't luxurious quarters nestled in among the mice and mosquitoes, but they were expensive—very expensive. Every move he took, each decision he made was calculated to keep him concealed. Why? From the Land's End jeans on his legs to the Columbia jacket keeping him warm—everything but his glasses belonged to someone else. Every cut of meat he cooked was stolen from

a freezer and prepared over flames from pilfered propane. The complicated military histories and Tom Clancy novels that filled the frozen hours of Maine nights were stuffed into stolen backpacks and read by stolen flashlights under stolen tarps. Each theft came with its own hefty price tag of fear and guilt.

Moving mostly at night, Chris hopped from boulder to boulder and watched the ground to avoid snapping dead twigs. There had to be no pattern on the ground, no beaten trail into his woodland hideout—and there wasn't. No detail could be forgotten, and so Chris meticulously painted his shiny stolen garbage cans a dull green. Even wood clothespins were painted darker colors to stop any reflection of light. One yellow shovel was neatly covered in a black bag.

## NO PLEASURE

The burglaries, more than 40 every year for 27 years amounted to well over 1,000 total. You'd think it would get easier on his conscience, but it never did. Each time he'd watch the property carefully for cars, lights, smoke from the fire, or any sign of people in residence. He'd never touch a place with anyone home. Then, "it was usually 1 or 2 a.m. I'd go in, hit the cabinets, the refrigerator. In and out. My heart rate was soaring. It was not a comfortable act. I took no pleasure in it, none at all, and I wanted it over as quickly as possible."

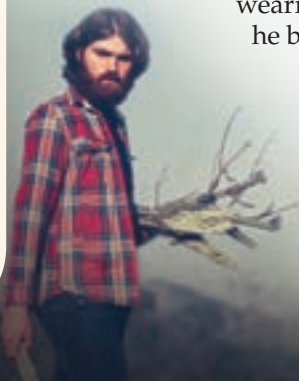
Then each time, as the severe and blustery Maine

winters closed in, Chris hunkered down. With the first snows covering the ground in early November until large patches of barren ground drove back the snow in early April—Chris stayed hidden. Filling Rubbermaid containers with food and setting mouse traps to stop the mice from stealing his stolen stores, he hunkered down in triple stuffed L. L. Bean sleeping bags. Chris trained his body to wake in the early morning hours when he needed to get up before the seductive sleep of hypothermia locked him in its eternal grip. He never allowed himself the warmth of even a small fire; everything had to be cooked over a two-burner propane stove. Any open flame gives off smoke that drifts upward past the camouflaged tarps and above the thick tangle of hemlock branches, like a little gray flag marking a dirty secret below.

As a young man, Chris said he “was lord of the woods. I ruled the land I walked upon. I was tough and clever.” But age and the sugar and alcohol binges

he used to fatten up for winter were wearing him down. Every camp he burglarized was checked for a better pair of glasses.

But none had the right prescription for his worsening vision. For 10 years he lived in an increasingly blurry fog. Sores on his arm



troubled Chris, who said, “My wounds don’t heal like they used to.” He feared diabetes had come through binging on stolen candy.

Now Chris is in prison, locked in a loud, colorful, crude world where he longs for one thing he’s lost—the stillness. Locked in jail, Chris didn’t let his mother visit. As he put it, “Look at me. I’m in my prison clothes. That’s not how I was raised. I couldn’t face her.”

## THE STILLNESS OF PEACE

Do you, too, long for the stillness of peace? You haven’t committed over 1,000 burglaries for food and camping gear and neither have I. But you may have wounds that haven’t healed—wounds in your conscience, a longing for meaning, guilt that is normally drowned out by the rush found in a loud, colorful and trivial world. There’s a way out that doesn’t involve the barrel of a .357 Magnum. The Bible tells about the Lord Jesus Christ: **“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed”** (Isaiah 53:5). His love for you, for me and for Chris was so deep that He was willing to be punished for the sin that we have committed. He was willing to pay the penalty that we deserved to heal the wounds brought on by our own sin.

Chris hid from his mom and every other human being in an attempt to find that stillness. But fear

lurked under every dead branch and guilt behind each stolen hamburger patty. All that time the God who made Chris was watching over him in mercy. He let a giant shelf mushroom grow that Chris watched with pleasure. God kept him from freezing during the bitter Maine winter. And God provided the stars that Chris enjoyed sparkling overhead as he drifted on the stillness of the nearby lake.

But God has provided more than starlight—He's given spiritual light. He gave Chris, and you, His Word the Bible. Have you read it? Chris didn't. He stole *National Geographic*, *People*, *Glamour* and books galore—but never the Bible. "I can't claim a belief system," he says. Maybe Chris hid himself from that spiritual light because he said, "I stole. I was a thief. I repeatedly stole over many years. I knew it was wrong. Knew it was wrong, felt guilty about it every time, yet continued to do it." If Chris had opened a Bible, he could have read, **"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us"** (Titus 3:5).

Will you repent? Will you receive God's love as a gift? Will you allow the stillness of His presence to drive out the guilt, fear and sin? He tells you, **"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).

Find out more about that care and love in *Somebody Cares*.



# SOMEBODY CARES

The boy thought he could live by his own rules and be happy. So instead of serving his time as a soldier during the Civil War, he left the military without permission. He was caught and convicted of desertion. He then faced a sentence of death before a firing squad at Davenport Barracks, Iowa.

One winter night, as the minutes passed before his scheduled execution, someone intervened on the boy's behalf. Indiana Congressman Schuyler Colfax went to the White House to plead for him. The congressman told the boy's story to President Abraham Lincoln.

The president listened patiently and said, "Some of my generals complain that I impair discipline by my frequent pardons and reprieves, but it rests me, after a day's hard work, that I can find some excuse for saving some poor fellow's life, and I shall go to bed happy tonight as I think how joyous the signing of this name will make himself, his family and friends."

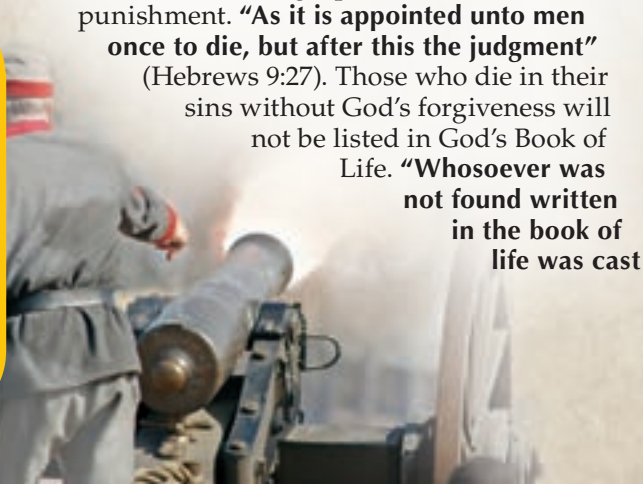
Even though the boy was guilty, he escaped the

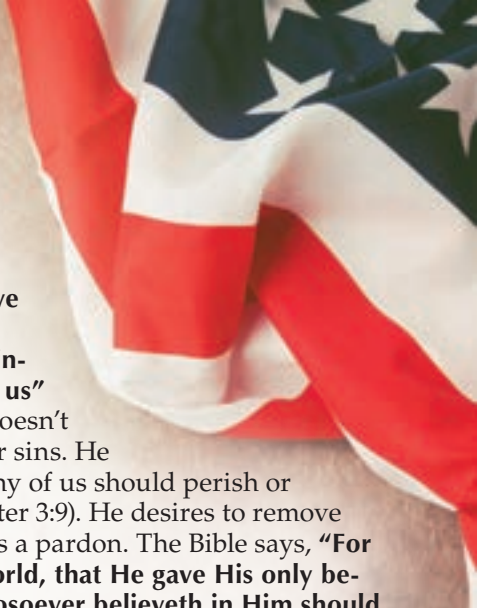
punishment of the firing squad. He lived because somebody cared. Somebody cared enough to intervene on his behalf, and somebody cared enough to give him a second chance.

## CARE SHOWN TO US

Like the young soldier in this story, we sometimes think we can live by our own rules and be happy. We expect to live the way we want without any consequences. But according to the Bible, we are all guilty in the sight of God. We are guilty of sin. **“The scripture hath concluded all under sin”** (Galatians 3:22). Like deserters, we have tried to run away from God and live outside His family. We break His commandments, and we fail to live up to His standards (Romans 3:23).

Because of our sin, we face something that is far worse than a firing squad. We face eternal punishment. **“As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment”** (Hebrews 9:27). Those who die in their sins without God’s forgiveness will not be listed in God’s Book of Life. **“Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast**






into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:15).

Thankfully, somebody cared for us and stepped in to save us. **"God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"** (Romans 5:8). God doesn't want us to die in our sins. He is not willing that any of us should perish or be condemned (2 Peter 3:9). He desires to remove our guilt and give us a pardon. The Bible says, **"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).

Have you responded to God's love for you? Have you accepted His forgiveness and His free gift of everlasting life? If not, you can do so today and escape punishment. God stands ready, right now, to remove your guilt and give you a new life. These wonderful blessings are yours for the asking. As the Bible says, **"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"** (Romans 10:13).

God's love gives us a permanent home and family—not just relief from punishment. Find out more in *Pity for Orphans*. 

# Pity for **ORPHANS**

Around the world, children who have lost their parents are placed in orphanages. Most of these orphanages are understaffed, overcrowded, undersupplied and just plain unhappy. The lives of children in orphanages are generally full of grief, pain and insecurity.

In a very real sense, the whole world is an orphanage, and every person either is or has been a spiritual orphan. They are spiritual orphans because they don't know the abiding love of God the Father in their lives. Without having a sense of the love of God, their lives fill up with grief, pain and insecurity too.

In this sad condition, God has taken pity on them and has made a way that spiritual orphans, all the world around, can come to Him and be made His children forever.

## **A LASTING RELATIONSHIP**

In order to bring sinners into a lasting relationship with Himself, He sent His Son, the Lord

Jesus Christ, all the way to the cross where He gave His life as the one sacrifice for sin. When a sinner believes on the name of Jesus, their sins are washed away, and the Holy Spirit indwells them. The Holy Spirit sheds His love in their hearts, making them know God as their loving Father. Through faith in Christ, they become one of His children forever.

When God has such pity for poor spiritual orphans and is so ready to welcome them into His family, isn't it a shame when anyone says "no" to His offer of grace and instead turns Him away?

Someday God will welcome each one into heaven who has his or her faith in the Lord Jesus. Heaven is where they will never again part from His love. The Lord Jesus told His followers, **"In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go**



**and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:2-3).**

Heaven must be an utterly wonderful place, because the Lord Jesus has gone and “prepared” it, and all He has done in the past and all He will do in the future is nothing short of wonderful!

But those who refuse God’s offer of grace, when they pass out of this world, will have only the darkness and loneliness of hell to look forward to. Oh, there will be plenty of people in hell, but they will be lonely people, because there won’t be any loving friendship or good will found in the entire place. Those things are God’s gifts which He gives to us in this life, but when it comes to eternity, they are reserved for heaven alone.

When an orphan is adopted into a loving family, a future full of disappointment and bitterness is avoided. When a soul is adopted into God’s family, they avoid much grief caused by sin in this life, but they also avoid the pains of hell in the life to come.

The blessings God has reserved for those who believe on His Son are immense and long lasting. I don’t want to live without them, and I hope you don’t either. Won’t you believe on the name of Jesus that you might be adopted into God’s family and become one of His children forever? Thank God, He has pity for poor spiritual orphans and welcomes them into His family when they hear the gospel and believe in the Lord Jesus.



# *The Joyful Message*

*It is a joyful message  
That God now sends to you,  
Repentance and forgiveness —  
How old, yet ever new.*

*It is a joyful message  
That Christ for you has died,  
That He who once was buried  
Is risen and glorified.*

*It is a joyful message —  
For you His blood was shed,  
For you He bore the judgment  
And suffered in your stead.*

*It is a joyful message,  
So full of grace and love;  
It comes from highest heaven —  
From God's own heart above.*

*It is a joyful message:  
Today, oh, hear His voice —  
The voice of Jesus calling:  
Repent! Receive! Rejoice!*



## ECHOES OF GRACE

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*“He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of  
God hath not life” (1 John 5:12).*

