

The rowdiest men, two drunks hauled in an hour earlier, had finally succumbed to drunken slumber in the cell at the end of the hall. The playing cards had ceased being slapped down by three men awaiting trials in an adjoining cell. In the quietness of the night, Pastor Hancock sat on his bunk reading in the Psalms, something he had done for the last two hours. The Bible he had received from a deputy who attended another church in town, but knew of Pastor Hancock's ministry and of his character. This deputy had also seen that the pastor had been isolated in his own cell and had not been kept in the holding tank with the other men. The deputy had also let him know that his arraignment was to be at nine in the morning.

The pastor knew that his friend David Ryker would already be at the church, organizing the people for the long battle ahead. How long the battle would take, he had no idea. Deep in his heart he knew he could be here for months. Had he prepared the people well enough for this time? All kinds of thoughts floated through his mind. *At least David is there, and Lee, he thought.*

He had prepared earlier in his ministry for jail, knowing that sooner or later his beliefs would clash with some bureaucrat, necessitating his incarceration. The preparation had come by visiting other men of God who had been wrongly accused of illegal conduct – “Political Prisoners”, he had called them. The two times he had been to Russia and had spoken to pastors who had been imprisoned there for half their lives weighed heavily on his mind. And why had these men been torn from their homes and ministries? It was only because they had become unpopular with secular officials.

The pastor took his pencil and paper and wrote the names of every member of his church. Each time he finished writing the name of an individual or family, he stopped and called them out to God in prayer. After he wrote Lee's name, he prayed for the Lord to strengthen the young man and thanked the Lord for Lee's abilities and talents which had complemented his own ministry so well. He concluded his prayer time by worshipping and praising God for being close to him here in jail.

In the quiet hours of the night, when the lights of the hall had been turned out, a tired, rather coarse, Alabama preacher's voice lifted into the air and filled the jail.

*He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater.  
He sendeth more strength when the labors increase.  
Through added affliction, He addeth His mercy.  
Through multiplied trials; His multiplied peace.*

*When we have exhausted our store of endurance,  
When our strength has failed, 'ere the day is half done,  
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources,  
Our Father's full giving is only begun.*

*His love has no limit; His grace has no measure  
His power has no boundaries known to man.  
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus –  
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.*

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“Hello?”

“Hello. May I speak with Laura, please?”

“One moment, please,” said a voice similar to his friend’s voice, but slightly deeper.

Lee heard in the background, “Lem, it’s for you.” “Thanks, Mom.”

“Hello, this is Laura.”

“Who in the world is Lem?”

“Oh, hi Lee.... That’s a long story.”

“You can tell me another time. I have real bad news, Laura.”

“What is it? She sensed an urgent edge in his voice.

“My pastor has been arrested, the ministries’ records have been seized, and there’s a warrant out for my arrest, also.”

“Lee, if you’re kidding me, I don’t think it’s very funny.”

“Laura,” his voice broke, “I’d kid you about a lot of things, but not something as serious as this.”

“What has happened?” The tone of Laura’s voice sounded an alarm to her mother as she joined her daughter on the couch.

“I don’t know how to explain...”

“Just tell me,” she said softly into the receiver.

He explained to her the events of the day and about the meeting that had just taken place at the church. When he finished, a relief came over him in just being able to tell someone about his troubles.

“What are you going to do, Lee?”

“Dr. Ryker told me to leave town early in the morning and be gone at least until we can get several more preachers here to find out exactly what is going on. I have one on the church member’s cars. I guess I need to go to the law library, since I have to do something productive with myself.”

Laura still wished to relieve her mind of all doubt and responded with a rigid tone. “Lee, you’re really not kidding? This had better not be a joke, or I’ll get very angry.”

The silence at the other end of the line told her all she needed to know. She thought she heard a whispered “no”, but could not be sure.

“I’m sorry for the accusation, but it is hard to fully believe a person who kids around as much as you do.”

“That’s the price I pay for having fun, I guess.”

“This is just so bizarre. I have never heard of anything like this before. What time are you planning on being in Indy in the morning?”

“Probably around seven....”

“The library doesn’t open until nine. Do you know where Bob Evan’s is on the by-pass out by the airport?”

“Yes.”

“Meet me there at seven and we’ll go over everything. Perhaps I can get Judge Jones to help on this. By the way, I just got off the phone leading Nancy Jones to the Lord.”

“Laura, that’s great.” There was a renewed excitement to his voice.

“It wasn’t very difficult. Judge Jones told me that he accepted Christ as Savior yesterday before the hearing when Justice Sallenger took him through the Roman’s Road. I lead Nancy through the same Scriptures, and she accepted Christ over the phone.”

“*Congratulations. I needed some good new right now.*”

“Lee?”

“*Yes?*”

“If you need to talk anytime tonight, I have a phone next to my bed. Call me.”

“*Thanks. You’re a good friend, Laura. Good-bye.*”

“Bye, Lee.”

Laura hung up the phone and explained the situation to her mother, and the two of them went down on their knees in front of the couch and joined their hearts together in prayer for Lee’s protection and for his church and pastor. As her mother prayed aloud, Laura silently thanked God for her new friend who seemed so close to her after such a short time of knowing him. Her mind wandered to her own pastor, Rev. Turner. She knew her pastor to be one of the most intelligent men she had ever known. Perhaps he would be able to help in this situation. Even though the events of the day had exhausted mentally and physically, she knew it would be difficult going to sleep with this on her mind. In just a few moments, she poured her heart out to God in prayer.

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“*VelDeggio.....*”

“Hello, Joe. Senator Allen. Got a minute?”

“*I was just about to close up shop and go home, Senator. It’s been a tough day. What may I do for you?*”

“I’ve got a church Day Care raided by the police and Welfare authorities and a jailed pastor. How’s that for starters?”

“*I’m listening.*” The *beep* of the newsman’s laptop computer was heard over the phone, as was the intermittent clicking sounds of fingers rapidly tapping the keyboard.

“I have Anna Hyde-White of the State Welfare Department here with me. I’ll let her give you all the details. Here she is.”

“Joe, it seems that the Emmaus Bible Church has been abusing children in its Day Care since it opened last month. Allegations are wide-spread, from physical abuse, neglect, mental cruelty, mental abuse, and even a case of sexual abuse has been reported.”

“*Facts, Anna. Give me names.*” He continued typing.

The pastor of the church is Robert Hancock. He was arrested this afternoon at the Day Care. He is now in the Montgomery County Jail, awaiting arraignment for charges of mental abuse and sexual abuse.”

“*Must be pretty serious if he’s already in jail....*”

“Definitely.... No bail amount has been set because he refuses to be processed. They have witnesses and doctor’s reports to back up the allegations. The Day Care records – what few were actually kept – have been seized so an investigation can begin by questioning all the other parents and children. Also, the head of the Day Care, a Lee Jackson, has yet to be apprehended, but a warrant will be served tomorrow.”

“*What else?*”

“You didn’t hear of this from me, OK?”

“*Right....*” Joe rolled his eyes. *Rookies*, he thought.

“Call Sheriff Tresh or Prosecutor Riley.... I’ll give you their numbers.”

“*How about a quote from you office...?*”

“But you didn’t hear this from me.”

“*After I hear about it from on of them, I’ll logically call your office to get a statement. Wouldn’t it be easier if you told me now, while I’ve got you on the phone?*”

“Oh, right. Just say that I knew this would happen sooner or later. These church Day Cares have been on their own too long without state regulation. Something like this was bound to happen without proper state supervision. When will the legislature wake up to the fact that we need a law passed before this happen again and again?”

“*Pretty hot stuff, Anna....*”

“Thanks. Here are those numbers.” She dictated them over the phone. “Here’s Gary.”

“Thanks for you help, Joe. Can you handle it from here?”

“*Sure. What’s you interest in all this, Senator?*”

“Just helping a friend....”

“*Right....*” A smile crossed the newsman’s lips. *You never do anything unless it helps yourself*; he wanted to say, but only thought to himself. “*Thanks for the tip.*”

Senator Allen placed the receiver down knowing that VelDeggio would come through with the story. This would be the first article he would refer to at the first committee meeting on the new Day Care bill he would be introducing sometime next week.

“So, it’s that easy?” Anna placed her arms around the senator’s neck.

“It is when you have the contacts.” His hands felt her waist.

“I’m thoroughly impressed, Senator.”

“You should be, and will be”

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Joe VelDeggio typed well into the night. His deadline was midnight, but on certain occasions his editor extended it and left room in the paper for an article that would scoop the other papers. The front page editor already liked the preliminary copy well enough to move another article farther back in the paper and replace it with Joe’s. The headline people were already done with their part – a headline that would catch people’s attention and sell papers. He pulled the floppy disk out of his computer and handed it to the editor. He could still be home by one o’clock, if he hurried.