



Grace Snap Shot

"Viewing life through the lens of God's grace!"



Christian Hill

Written by Art Henkel (for the many who struggle in their attempt to live the Christian life)

I was trying so hard to climb up Christian Hill, to please my Heavenly Father. I had my personal hiking manual in hand and attempted to follow every instruction. I even submitted the 'Ten Laws of the Hiker' to memory. I knew enough not to hike alone so I made sure that I had others to journey with. The combination of my hard work, knowledge and skills which I had gleaned from various training sessions, assured me of achieving my goal. Oh, and if I got into any real trouble, I knew the Lord was there to help me. With a song in my heart and great determination, I set out.

It wasn't long into my climb that I began to realize it was going to be much harder than I had anticipated. I experienced constant changing terrain underneath my feet and unannounced shifts in weather. There were times that I didn't get along with my fellow hikers and even though I carried my manual, I didn't always make use of it. Sometimes I even took the wrong trail only to find it resulted in a dead end. It was at those times that I felt like such a fool and so distant from God. With great shame I'd apologize and ask the Lord to come and help me be a better hiker.

What started out being an exiting adventure, now seemed like an endless, numbing struggle. The smell of my human sweat became a far too familiar scent. I found myself rarely singing the song of my heart. Instead it was replaced with heavy breathing as my lungs expanded to take in air. At times my footing would slip from underneath me and I would fall, and each time it would be a little bit harder to get back up. A lot of the hikers that I had started out with had already given up and there were moments that even I wondered if this climb was doable. Still I would carry on, hoping to reach the summit.

As I continued to pursue my quest, something very unexpected happened. I was just about to attempt to climb a rock face when I heard in the distance, the sound of singing. I couldn't recognize the tune but it was sweet and seemed full of life. Out of curiosity I turned from the rock face and began to walk towards the intriguing melody. As I cut through the thick forest the music got louder in my ear and I could feel my heart begin to beat stronger. It was as if I was hearing something that I had longed for but couldn't identify. It seemed just beyond this tree.

With my hands on the branches, I pulled them to the side, out of my way. As I stepped forward, I found myself standing on the very edge of a great cliff. I suddenly stopped and clung onto the branches of the tree, so I wouldn't fall over. As I gazed down to my right I could see the valley floor where I had come from. Somehow it didn't seem that far away. But when I looked up to my left, my eyes followed the edge of the cliff where I had yet to journey, it seemed to be endless. My heart sunk as I began to realize how far I hadn't gone. But then there was the music.

It took a moment for me to realize that I was exposed to a brilliant, warm light that was penetrating from what I can only describe as some kind of remarkable sky lift. That's where the singing was coming from. I stood there amazed as right in front of my eyes, this crystal clear capsule hovered far above the earth. It was not attached to anything, no cables were in sight. It seemed to have its own source of power.

As I viewed the capsule I could see that the name 'Jesus' was engraved just above what looked like a doorway. I stood there amazed as I peered inside and saw many people of all kinds, singing and dancing together. The light seemed to come from within them. They smiled at me and began to motion for me to join them. It was so inviting but I didn't know how to get to them.

Just then, a young woman appeared at the doorway of the capsule. "Come and join us friend, come and join us. We are heading to the summit." I explained to her that I didn't know how to get to the capsule. She smiled and gave this response, "My name is Grace and I'm here to help you. You must enter through this doorway. If you'll follow my instructions, you'll soon be with us. What you need to do is let go of all things and jump off the cliff. But don't worry I'll catch you with my arms." With that being said, she reached out her arms, waiting for my response.

What was I to do? Up until now my entire climb had been based on my well intended hard work and effort. Here, she was asking me to give that all up, and trust completely on her ability to catch me. I knew deep inside, that I couldn't have it both ways. It was one or the other. It was time to decide. Feeling the pull of what I had known, yet the hope of what was in front of me, I could feel my fingers begin to release the branches of the tree. There I stood at the edge of the cliff, nothing between me and Grace but a leap of faith. I stared straight into her eyes and she whispered with assurance, "Trust me." With complete abandonment, I pushed off of the cliff, holding on to nothing. There was no turning back.

I cannot describe the sensation of being suspended between the old and the new. What was and what is. As the wind flew past me I suddenly felt someone grasping my arms and pulling me up. As I opened my eyes, there was Grace, smiling at me with confidence as she lifted me into the doorway marked 'Jesus.' As I entered the capsule the singing suddenly stopped for just a moment as everyone turned to me and in unison said, "Welcome, we've been waiting for you." As quickly as the singing had stopped, it began again, and I found myself joining in, singing a brand new heart song of thankfulness. I had never experienced such peace. It rushed through every fiber of my being. I finally felt at rest.

Without any effort the capsule continued its way to the summit, carrying all who were within it. As I looked out down below I could see thousands upon thousands of hikers struggling to ascend Christian Hill, just as I had. With great passion in my heart I desired for them to experience the freedom which I now knew. I found myself along with all my fellow travelers, motioning to them, "Come and join us." Some hikers wouldn't look up to see us. Others ignored us. Yet there were many who like me, took the jump. And every time Grace was there.

My fellow hikers stop your struggle. Abandon all things and take the jump.