

# Bound to come some trouble

by Paul E. Hamilton

*“All praise to the God and Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the Father of all compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.”*

*- 2 Corinthians 1:2-3*

Two weeks ago, Mrs. D. came through the doors of Bread of Life Outreach with tears in her eyes. She is a grandmother who is raising her two young grandchildren because of the death of her daughter. Appearing discouraged, Mrs. D. sat down with Jamie to share about the drama that was unfolding before her. Mrs. D's eighteen year old son had returned home from Arizona where he had unsuccessfully tried to start his own business. He decided to enroll in a construction training program which required him to purchase some starter tools. Because he did not have the funds for the starter tools, he made the decision to earn the money for the tools by working at a part time job.

To you and I, this kind of “get up and go” attitude is honorable - but to the State of Missouri, there are no rewards for this kind of determination. Living on a meager Social Security check, Mrs. D. received food stamps to help her make ends meet. After the State of Missouri learned that her son was living with her and working part-time, Mrs. D.'s food stamp allotment was cut drastically to \$15.00 a month. The money that the son was trying to earn for the required starter tools, was now expected to be used to feed his mother. Mrs. D. was devastated because she did not know how she was going to feed her two grandchildren or how her son was going to pay for his tools. The government programs that we expect will help people, only bring dependency and disillusionment. Mrs. D. was coming to us for help.

It is stories from families like Mrs. D. that break our heart. The welfare system is set up to reward bad behavior and punish good behavior. People who's children reach college age are punished when they decide to better themselves through education. Their medical benefits are cut off and their incomes, both full and part time, are used against the entire household. At the same time, if these young adults make a choice to live a reckless and purposeless life, the household is rewarded with

extra income and medical insurance. Week after week, we talk with people who have households full of children over the age of eighteen who aren't going to college or aren't working. What incentives do they have to better themselves? The welfare system of our country is a trap meant to keep families poor and enslaved.

Jamie and I can fully identify with what Mrs. D. and her family is going through. In fact, in the twenty years that we have been married, we have dealt with this exact situation twice and are glad to be away from the enduring trap of the welfare system. We are blessed that God has not only brought us through the financial problems, but difficulties and pain on all sides. We have been homeless and slept in our car. We've had two children born stillborn. We've had to deal with the sickness and death of a parent. We have a child with special needs, dealt with unemployment, divorce, single parenting, mental illness, runaway children, and more. I don't talk about these things to boast about everything that we've been through, but to acknowledge that God has been there with us each and every step of the way. Both Jamie and I learned a lot while in Bible college, but we have learned far more from the journey that the Lord has taken us on. Many times I feel like the Apostle Paul who writes in 2 Corinthians 12: 7-10 (Message Bible):

*“Because of the extravagance of those revelations, and so I wouldn't get a big head, I was given the gift of a handicap to keep me in constant touch with my limitations. At first, I didn't think of it as a gift, and begged God to remove it. Satan's angel did his best to get me down; what he in fact did was push me to my knees. No danger then of walking around high and mighty! At first, I did not think of it as a gift, and begged God to remove it. Three times I did that, and then He told me, My Grace is enough; it's all you need. My Strength comes into its own in your weakness. Once I heard that, I was glad to let it happen. I quit focusing on the handicap and began appreciating the gift. It was a case of Christ's strength moving in my own weakness. Now I take limitations in stride, and with good cheer, these limitations that cut me down to size -- abuse, accidents, opposition, bad breaks. I just let Christ take over! And so the weaker I get, the stronger He becomes.”*

These verses, along with the one at the beginning of this letter, help me to realize that the things that attack me and my family are not meant to destroy me. In fact, they are meant to help me in helping others. Each time I go through some tragedy, such as finding out that I have diabetes or

dealing with the death of my mother, God has always been faithful AND has provided me with the knowledge, grace, and mercy to help others as they experience similar problems. Now, I don't claim to be anyone special and God doesn't like me better than other people! I've just discovered the secret behind the trouble that pops up in my life. I have to be honest with you and say that I usually don't remember this fact at the onset of these troubles, but usually sometime in the midst of trouble, God sweetly whispers into my ear " My Grace is enough; it's all you need. My Strength comes into its own in your weakness." That is when I remember that it is God who provides us with ALL comfort so that we can provide comfort to others in their times of trouble.

This is the basis of Hole in the Roof Ministry Center and its various ministry outreaches. As you read last month in our ministry proposal, we want to help people find freedom, empowerment, and success in their lives. God has and continues to do so much for our family and we want to provide that same comfort and compassion to those who are in need as God has given to us. The same can be said for you. No matter what you have been through and no matter where life has taken you, there is someone who can be helped by you. It could be a child who is struggling in school who needs someone to tutor and befriend them. It could be a single mother who needs the sympathetic yet experienced ear of another mother. It could be a man who doesn't know how to be a father. Don't let what troubles come your way rob you of the blessing of helping someone in need.