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Thou Art the Man!

957-A

Series: God's Living Legends II

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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Thou Art the Man!

It is inherent in the nature of man. Apart from God, man's natural bent is to see how close he can come to the edge of the cliff without falling off. Apart from God, man's natural bent is to see how close he can come to breaking the law without getting caught. Apart from God, man's natural bent is to see how much he can eat without getting sick; how much he can drink without getting drunk; how much he can take without being counted a thief; how much he can bend the truth without being counted a liar; how much he can bend the rules without being counted an offender.

He doesn't want to go to jail, but he wants to drive as fast as he can without getting a ticket. He doesn't want to be considered immoral, but he wants to go as far as society will allow him to go without being branded a fool.

And it starts out early. You watch a small child, and you will see a portrait of guarded obedience. Tell them not to play in the street and just watch them hug the curb. Then watch, as they now and then stick one foot into the street to see if you're watching, or if you are, if you will do anything about it.

Tell them not to ride their bikes on Main Street, and see how close to Main Street they'll get. Tell them not to play near the water, and see how close to the water they'll get. Tell them not to eat two cookies and watch them eat one, then one and a third, then one and a half, and on and on it goes.

Unfortunately, it is the nature of man to see how close to the edge he can get without falling off. We'll pay just enough taxes to keep from being called a tax dodger. We'll drive just as fast as we can without being called a speeder. The law may say 55 mph, but if most people are getting by with 60 mph, we'll go 60 mph, or maybe 61 mph or 62 mph, just to test the waters.

The strange thing is, that instead of basing our decisions upon what the law itself says, or what authority itself says, we base our decisions on how far we think we can go without being caught; or if there is a speed trap on this road, we'll slow down there, or avoid that street. If the boss is in a bad mood, we'll show up for work on time. It's utterly amazing how many people who are supposed to be at work at 7:00 am, show up at 6:59. It is an

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art form to see how near to the limit we can go and still survive.

Let's see how close we can get to the edge of any kind of authority and not fall off the cliff; that is the nature of man. The sad thing is that this philosophy becomes even more devastating in the spiritual realm. We try to see how far we can push God. We bend His will just a little to see if He'll notice. Then we wait to see *if there are any visible, tangible consequences*. If there are not, we feel comfortable pushing Him just a little further, then waiting to see what happens. No discipline? Then we can obviously push a little more. And what we are quick to forget is the clear admonition of Scripture, "not to tempt the Lord our God."

What we also forget is the three-fold nature of the discipline of God.

First, we forget that God's discipline is not usually immediate. God usually allows time between the offense and the punishment to see if we will come to our senses, acknowledge our sins, and repent simply because we realize it is wrong.

Secondly, we forget that God's discipline is sometimes spiritual. In other words, God sometimes takes spiritual benefits from us in response to physical violations, and we are not even sensitive enough to realize that the power is gone so we assume that God has ignored what we have done.

And finally, we forget that God has invoked a law of sowing and reaping on mankind; therefore, He often just lets us alone to reap the results of our own wrong choices, rather than sending thunderbolts from heaven to astonish us and awaken us.

We forget those principles, and wrongfully assume that if there is not immediate evident consequences, we got by with it, and thus it must not be so bad after all. We may lie and not get caught. We may court immorality, and no one seems to know. We may break the law, and no one notices. We may cease spending time with God, honoring God, living for God and we may seem to get by without any major circumstantial catastrophe; in fact, things may even seem to be going better. They may actually be going better circumstantially, because when you are out of the will of God, Satan will often leave you alone. Why declare war on an ally?

The problem is that all we are doing is digging a hole for ourselves to fall into. The question shouldn't be how close can

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we get to the edge of God's will without falling off; the question should be how close to the center of the will of God can we get, so we will never even come close to missing it?

But that is not the nature of man. The nature of man is to gauge what is acceptable or not by whether or not it produces immediate consequences. Sooner or later, however, there is a knock on the door, or the ring of the phone, or the pricking of the conscience, or the arm of a friend on your shoulder, and God quietly, either through people, His Word, or circumstances, says to you, "I am talking to you; listen." Suddenly, at that moment, all of your excuses fade into nothingness. Suddenly, you realize, God does know; He has been watching. There are consequences. It is of that moment, and to that response that we address ourselves in this study as we return to the life of our Living Legend, a man after God's own heart, a man named David.

Our man David, you recall, has gradually slipped from the ranks of the obedient, and as is always the case with sin, he is now even blinded to what he has done. What he has done is commit adultery and then murder the husband of the woman he defiled. In the process he lied, deceived, connived, and ultimately caused the death of hundreds of innocent men besides the one he was so unjustifiably out to get. Unfortunately, sin often spreads and takes in a wider circle than we intend. Innocent people often get hurt. Now David, the example of integrity, has become David, the example of hypocrisy. He still wears the crown; still commands the nation. He is still their spiritual leader. There have been no physical, tangible consequences up to this point. There may have been a little scuttlebutt around the palace, a few rumors here and there, but King David just assumed himself to be above all that. So here was God's man, breaking God's laws, and it seems he is going scot-free.

But alas, God's silence is only temporary. He has given the king chance after chance to catch himself, to see himself as God sees him and repent. But to no avail. So now we come to the confrontation between God and David, a confrontation that simply had to take place.

When the Clock Says "T-Minus Zero".

David has sinned the most grievous of sins and apparently not gotten caught. If you're looking at it from the perspective of this life, it would appear that God's man can be immoral, lie, and

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murder; and the consequences are incidental. But in heaven, a totally different scenario is taking place. From the moment the first sin took place until the moment of repentance, a grieved, broken-hearted God has been patiently waiting for His child to humble himself and cry out for forgiveness. God's silence is not a sign of His approval. His silence is a sign rather of His great patience. But even the patience of God has its limits. And because of His great love for His children, eventually, He must take sterner measures to apprehend us, awaken us, and alert us to what we have done.

Our first clue in this story to God's awareness of David's great sins is found in II Samuel 11:27. It is there that we begin reading,

But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.

(II Samuel 11:27 NKJV)

I wonder sometimes if some of us shouldn't have a plaque made to hang over the desk or table where we spend time with God that reads, "But the thing David had done displeased the Lord." Then I wonder if every morning before we humble ourselves to worship, if we shouldn't quietly make a list of the things we know we have thought or said or done contrary to God's perfect will, and then substitute our name for David's and pray, "Lord, this thing I have done has displeased my Lord" and ask forgiveness. Would that not at least assure us of at least 24 hours at a stretch before we were confronted with our disobedience?

This passage reminds us certainly of several things:

1- Sin does not go unnoticed by God.

2- The absence of visible discipline in no way means that God approves.

3- The very hairs of our head are numbered. God is aware of all of our sins from the seemingly insignificant to the obviously blatant excesses.

4- God does not sit by unemotionally when we continue to sin. He did not simply notice David's disobedience like a computer keeping tabs in a cold, totally objective fashion. God was displeased the way a parent is displeased when his child breaks his heart. It literally means, "The thing that David had done was evil in the sight of God." God had studied it carefully, been grieved over it, and construed it to be an outright violation of His plan and His purpose.

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On earth, the inference was, "All's well that end's well." In heaven, however, the clock said, "T-Minus zero and holding." God had reached His saturation point. Now His patience would be overridden by His great love for David...a love that knew that if David's sin were not immediately dealt with, David would be finished as a spiritual leader. So because His great patience now succumbs to His great love, God must act. It is David's Moment of Truth. God is about to get personal. He is about to tap King D on the shoulder and say, "Young man, I'm talking to you." Here will be the greatest test of all of the man we have come to so love. Once confronted, will he crawl and justify himself like Saul? Or will he fall to his knees and repent? *There is the real measure of a man or woman after God's own heart!*

Maybe you can relate to this incident in David's life more clearly than you would like to even admit. Maybe you can recall a time in your life when you gradually drifted off course in your pilgrimage and, little by little, defied God and defiled His principles, soon accepting as natural violations you would have condemned in others but weeks before. Maybe you allowed yourself to get involved in immorality, or in an unethical business deal, or into some form of bondage to drugs, alcohol, or even the occult. And maybe, like David, the absence of any immediate tangible discipline lulled you into believing there would be no consequences.

Then it happened. Maybe a friend tapped you on the shoulder, and said, "I love you, but you've got to own up to what you are doing." Or maybe you were listening to a sermon or a lesson or a tape or a broadcast and the Word of God just jumped out at you and said, "That's you!" Or maybe the sky suddenly turned dark with an unthinkable tragedy and you suddenly were awakened to the fact that *there were consequences after all*. Regardless of *how* it happened, that was your moment of truth. You knew at that instant, that either you must own up to your sin or you were in open, unthinkable defiance of the Word of God and the Will of God.

It is even possible that you are in that exact spot in your life right now. Suddenly the veil is being lifted from your eyes; suddenly the light is beginning to dawn; suddenly the darkness, the bitterness, the evil of what you have done or are doing has dawned on you, and you are stricken with either grief or fear. It is possible that someone is in David's shoes right now. At any

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rate, God was not going to let David go one second more without a warning. It was “T-Minus zero for David.”

So in verse one of chapter twelve we read this simple statement:

And the LORD sent Nathan to David. (II Samuel 12:1a NKJV)

Whales, Chickens, and Arresting Illustrations

Now ours is a creative God. The very word “creation” only exists because of Him. And we can learn so much from watching the variety of ways He approaches His children to get them to own up to what they have done. You can see it so clearly throughout the whole of Scripture.

Exhibit “A”. Once upon a time, there was a man named Jonah. It seems that God had a revival meetin’ planned in a city a good ways down the road, and the preacher He had lined up for the meetin’ was none other than the Rev. Joe. So He tapped him on the shoulder and handed him a ticket to Ninevah. Joe, you recall, however, wasn’t totally enamored with the idea. To him, the thought of giving those Ninevan hypocrites another chance just didn’t seem worth the trouble. So he up and signed up for a Mediterranean cruise instead. And with every mile that boat chugged away, Mr. Jonah was one mile further from the will of God.

But our blessed God is a creative God. God knew the story would seem a bit fishy, but He also knew it would make a whale of an illustration, so He decided to go overboard to prove His point. You know the story. Jonah the runaway became lunch meat for a ferocious fish, and were it not for the grace of God, it would have been lights out for our escaping evangelist. But God wasn’t through with Jonah yet, so our king-sized floating jail got indigestion, lost his lunch, and Jonah ended up on the bank, shaking the water out of his ears like a wet pup, and looking for the next train to Ninevah. God has His ways.

Exhibit “B”. God’s man Peter has been the spokesman for the inside circle of God’s Corps of potential leadership. Whenever there was a lull in the conversation, Pete would up and fill in the space with a few well-chosen or not so well-chosen words. He was their leader. But Jesus knew that Peter was about to come into the greatest test of his young life as a Christian. So he warns him, “Before the cock crows, Peter, you will deny me three times.” Sure enough, after his compadres all forsake the Lord and flee for the

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hills, Peter hangs tough and follows the Lord, endangering his very life in the process.

But soon the heat gets too high, and Peter, when confronted, denies that he so much as knew this man Jesus. Finally, in a burst of self-defense, he curses and denies His Lord. Just then the cock crows, and suddenly, Peter's heart was broken. Why? Because a creative God has just used a noisy chicken to touch the heart of one of His children.

He used burning bushes, blinding lights, donkeys, cows, fish, fig trees, and storms. He used raging prophets. He used quiet friends. He used fire and brimstone. He used the gentle look of the Master. He used the Word. He used the elements. He used animals. He used whatever was right for the moment, to touch the heart of that one who somehow had lost sight of the reality of godliness. God has his ways. They are personal, and they are perfect. If you and I were to stop and write down the different methods God has used throughout the years to get our attention, we would still be here next week.

But perhaps the most effective way that God has to teach and to touch is the parable, that third party kind of story that just happens to be about you. Don't ever minimize the effectiveness of this tool when you are trying to get someone else's attention. Your children, for instance, may not instantly relate to what they have done wrong, but if you tell them a story about someone else who has violated the same principles, and they become irate at that make-believe fool, then you superimpose their sin over that story, suddenly their eyes begin to open, and conviction begins to take place. The power of the parable. Never underestimate it.

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Such was the tool our creative God chose to use on this occasion. So our passage goes on:

Then the LORD sent Nathan to David. And he came to him, and said to him: "There were two men in one city, one rich and the other poor. [Interesting story.]

The rich man had exceedingly many flocks and herds. [He had cattle everywhere.]

But the poor man had nothing, except one little ewe lamb which he had bought and nourished; and it grew up together with him and with his children. It ate of his own food and drank from his own cup and lay in his bosom; and it was

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like a daughter to him. [It was all that he had and he loved it with all of his heart.]

And a traveler came to the rich man, who refused to take from his own flock and from his own herd to prepare one for the wayfaring man who had come to him; but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him."

[Literal translation, David blew his top!] So David's anger was greatly aroused against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this shall surely die!

And he shall restore fourfold for the lamb, because he did this thing and because he had no pity."

Then Nathan said to David, "[Guess what Dave?] You are the man! Thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul.

I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your keeping, and gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if that had been too little, I also would have given you much more!

Why have you despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon. [You didn't even do it yourself.]

Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.'

Thus says the LORD: 'Behold, I will raise up adversity against you from your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun.

(II Samuel 12:1-11 NKJV)

God has His ways. God has His ways, indeed. In this case, it all happened like this:

King David was spending the afternoon lounging around watching the afternoon soaps with his latest bride, one Bathsheba by name, when the phone rings, and it's the downstairs butler on the line. "Mr. Nathan, the prophet is here to see you, your majesty," the butler crisply reports, "shall I send him in?"

"Sure, send him in," David quickly responds, "I'll be right down. Guess 'ole Nathan needs a little counsel on how the

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fighting against the Ammonites might be affecting our reputation or something. Always glad to talk to Nathan, he must have muttered. “You go on watching the tube, Bathsey, I’ll be right back.” (Incidentally, some of those details are not in the original text.)

David arrives in the sitting room, and the wise prophet is ushered in. Nathan, you remember, was the man who was so amenable to helping David build a house for God, that is, until God and told him He had a better plan. In comes Nathan, and sure enough, he apparently had a spiritual situation that required the counsel of a wise and stable leader like our king.

Without so much as a wasted greeting, Nathan begins to unfold a story of what appears to be a potential injustice between one of the nation’s more affluent ranchers and one of David’s poorest constituency.

The story went like this: “David, we’ve got this guy who has everything the world could offer. He has flocks and herds so numerous no one knows for sure how many he has. The other character in this story is a poor little nobody who only has one ewe lamb. That’s all. This lamb, needless to say, was his life. He had taken the lamb from nothing, nourished it, loved it, and cared for it like a daughter.

But a total stranger comes along, and the rich man has a need for some kind of animal to use to make lamb chops for the hungry tourist. The rich man decides not to use any of his own flock, but instead, he takes the one ewe lamb that belongs to the poor man, slaughters it, and uses it to feed the stranger.”

David did not so much as wait to be asked why this story was being related to him. So obvious was the infraction, so grievous the crime, David became red with anger, and in a virtual rage demanded that justice be done. First, the rich man was to restore to the poor man four times the value of the lamb (the implication was that no price could be just compensation for the hurt he had received). Then the rich man, having made restitution, was to be put to death. No trial, no jury, no arguments. Death was the sentence; and the judgment was based on this amazing conclusion, “*He had no pity.*”

Now God had David where He wanted him. David had custom-designed a noose for his own hanging. Over a stolen ewe lamb, he had erupted in a rage of self-righteous anger. Imagine, someone

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who had it all, taking the only thing someone else had. Imagine the injustice of it all.

Isn't God's timing incredible? You can just sense the atmosphere of judgment as David pronounces the sentence of doom on anyone who would dare to be so pitiless. Then, having allowed the king himself to relate the punishment to the principle, Nathan simply fills in the blanks, and tells the irate monarch who the offender is.

"Thou art the man!"

(II Samuel 12:7 KJV)

David, old boy, I'm, talking about you! Thou art the man, and God has a message for you, David. It is this: "When I called you, you were nothing, a nobody. I took you and made you king, and again and again, I delivered you from the likes of Saul. I gave you everything you asked for, and if that were not enough, I would have given you even more, had you asked." (There you have the reminder of God's grace.)

"Then, David, why have you despised the Word of God?" asks Nathan. You say, whoa, that's a strong indictment. When did David despise the Word? When he ignored it. When he violated it. When he made light of it. When he refused to hear it. (There you have the reminder of God's grief.)

Now, David, here's the reminder of God's complaint.

You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon. (II Samuel 12:9b NKJV)

David, you weren't even man enough to do it yourself and face the consequences. You used God's enemies to slay God's man so God's king could have another man's wife. Interesting. God left out no details. God does not look at sin generally. Once His blood has covered you, and you become accountable to obey, He looks at your sins specifically. I love to pray and ask God to forgive me for my insensitive nature. That's easier than specifically asking Him to forgive me for the rude things I said to Joe Smith last Thursday. I like to think God is so busy, He didn't really take note of that particular incident. I like to think a general covering of attitudes will do. Not so. God looked David straight in the eye through Nathan and reiterated the specific sins, the specific people, and then He gives the specific consequences: constant warfare, strife within his own family; his own wives would be taken in public the way he took Bathsheba in private. The punishment would fit the

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crime. David must pay for what he has done. More about that in our next study.

Those Three Little Words God Waits For

But the key to this story is found in verse 13. There we read:

So David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD."
And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die.

However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also who is born to you shall surely die." (II Samuel 12:13,14 NKJV)

Here is the key. *Once David realized what he had done, he bowed before a Holy God and repented.* He did not say, "I have sinned against Uriah," though indeed he had. He did not say, "I have sinned against Bathsheba," though indeed he had. He said, "I have sinned against the Lord." "I have sinned!" — those three little words God loves! That is the first step down the road to repentance...to see your sin as a sin against the heart of a holy God. Once again, God looks on the heart, and God knew that David's grief was sincere. And in an amazing foretaste of the mercy He has offered us, He promises that God has put away David's sin, and the result is "David will not be put to death."

However, the consequences must go on. And one consequence I am sure David had not had time to consider was the one mentioned in verse 14.

The child that is born to you shall surely die.

(II Samuel 12:14 NKJV)

The baby that came from your immoral relationship with Bathsheba will be sacrificed on the altar of justice, David. That child must die because of your sins. And oh, the power in the reason God gave him. Because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme; for this reason, the child must die (not only because of what you did, David, but because of how what you did affects the reputation of God).

Next time we gather together to study the life of David, we will look at the issue of the consequences of sowing and reaping, at the amazing portrait of God's grace demonstrated by His covenant with David, at God's precious mercy in sending Solomon, and at the next national crisis that saw David the king become David the

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warrior again.

But for now, as we close, let's take one last look at what has transpired in this amazing chapter. God, who knows that His children love to see just how far they can push Him when there are no evident consequences, has finally let the clock of His patience run down to T-Minus zero. There was no more time to ignore what David had done, while waiting for him to come to his senses. So a loving God, who is the very essence of creativity, a God who uses the likes of whales, chickens, and arresting illustrations, sends his man Nathan with a powerful parable about a man who has it all, but risks it all to take what was not his. When our self-righteous King erupts in anger over the apparent injustice of it all, Nathan, the agreeable prophet who was ready to build a house for God just because David suggested it, now filled with the courage that comes from being armed with the Word of God, looks King David in the eye, ready for whatever responses might be his, and says, "David, thou art the man!"

And praise God, beneath that crust of sin there still beats in the heart of God's man, a man after God's heart. He repents. God forgives him and allows him to continue to reign, but outlines certain serious consequences that are commensurate with the seriousness of the crime.

What is so amazing to me about this story is the intensity of God's love for David. You and I would have scratched him off our list, anointed a new king, and sent him out to be unmercifully murdered the way he murdered Uriah. But isn't it great that we aren't God? Isn't it a shame we demand judgment of others that is so much more grievous than what we expect God to use on us? As we mentioned at the first of this series, God wasn't finished with David yet. He still had a work for him to do. And God knew that the David He had now had a much more sensitive heart than the David He had before. This David had tasted of the bitterness of separation from God and been restored by God's mercy. He understood God's love, God's compassion, and God's forgiveness. Now God would pick him up and though scars would remain to remind him of God's grace, a new David with a new sense of compassion now sat on the throne of Israel.

The second thing that is so amazing is God's incredible timing. He knew exactly the moment, exactly the story, exactly the place when David would set himself up to see himself as he was. God

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waited until exactly the right moment, and then He confronted His man with the reality of his sin.

Thou art the man! David, Thou art the man!!

One word from God, “Thou art the man!” One word from David, “I have sinned against the Lord.” And the entire course of David’s life turned Godward once again.

Perhaps in the course of this lesson God has quietly spoken to you about an area of obvious rebellion in your life that you have chosen to pretend does not really exist. You have condemned it in others, but have accepted it in your own life as though God had given you the right to violate His laws without ultimate consequences. Maybe the power is gone; the joy is gone; the peace is gone; and you are just now beginning to realize why.

If God is saying to you, today, thou art the man; thou art the woman, who has trampled underfoot My holiness; I beg you to respond as David did. No excuses. No explanations. No justifications. Just a single I have sinned against the Lord will do. If God has used David’s story to convict you the way He used Nathan’s story to convict David, then just take this moment to humble yourself before your God and ask His forgiveness. There may well be consequences. That’s part of the plan. But the fellowship, the relationship, the power that has vanished can be restored. And you can be God’s man or God’s woman again.

Maybe you’ve deceived yourself the way David did into thinking that because there have been no visible, tangible consequences so far, that God has ignored what you’re doing. Not so, Beloved. He is calling you by name. He is calling your sins to your attention specifically, even as He did David’s and He is saying, as He did to David, “Thou art the man!”

If you are the man or the woman God is speaking to, I beg you, do not pretend you do not hear. He has been patient. Now the clock says, “T-Minus zero”, and God is asking you to own up and face up and repent. Art thou the man? Art thou the woman? If so, it is not too late.

QUIETLY YET THE MASTER COMES

Quietly yet the Master comes
And into our presence He steals,
Again and again we’ve ignored His Word
And ignored the hurt that He feels.

Thou Art the Man!

Like David of old, we've broken his heart
Yet still He's standing by
In love to echo, "I forgive
Thou shalt not surely die."

But we like blinded fools refuse
To hear the Master's call,
And so enmeshed in sin are we
We hear no voice at all.

But so creative is our Lord
That He will find a way
He'll stand before us somehow
And in that precious day.

He will but look into our eyes
As only Jesus can,
And filled with His arresting love
He'll say, "Thou art the man".

That's all He'll do; and then He'll wait
The next move will be ours,
And what may be but seconds
Will seem like hours and hours.

As our lives hang in the balance
Our whole future in God's plan
Resting on our answer when He says,
"Behold, Thou art the man!"

We know what He is after
We have seen it in His Word.
He simply wants to hear us say,
"I've sinned against the LORD"

Oh, what blessed sweet acceptance
As He sweeps away our sin
And in perfect love rejoices,
"My child is home again!"

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