

# FROM VENGEANCE THROUGH VISION TO VICTORY

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Thirteen was an important year in my life. I'd lived those 13 years in submission to fear of people caused by two early-childhood assaults. At 13 I tried to throw off fear, with the result that I became angry and vengeful instead. I knew that "perfect love casts out fear" (2 John 4:18), but perfect love on this earth is hard to find.

Also at 13, I watched my two grandfathers interacting in our home. One was a retired missionary who'd lived to help others in Jesus' name. The other was a self-centered run-about who'd caused a great deal of pain. As I looked at those two men, I realized that there stood my heredity. I had both of those men in me, and I could decide which one I wanted to emulate. I thought about the Biblical Golden Rule, "Do unto other as you would have them do unto you," (Matthew 7:12), and I chose the missionary.

A few months later, our little Devore church held a revival. On July 1, 1951, at the morning service, my little brother raised his hand to invite Jesus into his heart as Lord of his life. He admitted much later that it was accidental, but that evening, my sister and I did the same on purpose. None of us really understood what we were doing. We followed our decisions with baptism, and we learned how much God will honor even an ignorant, half-hearted commitment to Him. That was an important day—my spiritual birthday—the day I started my relationship with Jesus Christ. But this relationship, like any other, needs attention.

What do I do with this relationship each and every day of my life? Do I nurture my love for Jesus and His love for me with Bible study and prayer, or do I take it for granted and let it fend for itself? Do I stand by my commitment to Him, or do I, in weakness, turn away and ignore Him? Do I make my decisions selfishly, or do I depend upon Him for guidance and direction?

Jesus was the dearest friend I had through junior high and high school, and my goat, Nancy Caprice, was my closest natural confidant. Social contacts were difficult for me because of the suppressed fear and aggressive vengeance in my personality. Those factors often kept people from believing that I even knew Jesus at all. If I gave up the vengeance, the fear threatened to overwhelm me again, and I fought that. I seemed to be on a carrousel of confusion in dealing with people. My college years were characterized by a series of broken engagements. I couldn't follow through on a commitment to a person because I felt I could trust no one but my friend Jesus.

When Roger asked me to marry him my first year of teaching, I knew I'd met someone I could trust—someone strong enough to handle the negative emotions within me. But that wasn't an easy position to put him in either.

I didn't enter marriage without an awful lot of prayer and Bible study. I outlined I Corinthians 13, the love chapter, especially verses four and five, and studied it carefully. I prayed constantly, "Lord, can I love this man this way?"

“Love is patient, kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud, never haughty or selfish or rude. Love does not demand its own way. It is not irritable or touchy. It does not hold grudges and will hardly even notice when others do it wrong.” (TLB)

Even with all my Bible study and prayer, it still took a lot of effort to love Roger as the Bible instructed me to love him. Throughout my marriage I tried to nurture both my commitments—to Christ and to Roger. Sometimes I did okay, and sometimes when my negative emotions surfaced, I wanted to deny that I even had those commitments, but I stayed with the one to Roger for over 54 years until death parted us. And my commitment to my Lord is stronger than it ever was.

Sometimes it’s hard to remember that we are to “forget...the past and look...forward to what lies ahead.” (Philippians 3:13) I thank God for His forgiveness and his guidance, and I remain thankful that Roger was also forgiving. Remembering Philippians 4:8 always kept me on track—“Whatever things are true...honest...just...pure...lovely...of good report, if there be any virtue... (or) praise, think on these things.” A good recipe for happiness.

Roger and I were both teaching school when we married. I loved teaching science. People so often put Christianity at odds with science, and I enjoyed being able to introduce my students to God through His creation. The Bible says, “I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made,” (Psalm 139:14) and the study of anatomy and physiology certainly proves that.

I started raising Nubian dairy goats our first year of marriage, 1961. In 1965, my Hallcienda Nulah was AMGRA/ADGA National Champion, and the wins kept coming through the next 13 years creating ten GCH/MCH Hallcienda Nubians and ten more incomplete champions. I had just over 54 years with Roger, and it will soon be 55 years with Nubians. My relationship with both changed through the years as God changed my priorities. In the ’70s I added Pygmies, and Roger tried his hand with Saanens.

My work with goats took me into the political arena of the goat world. Because of the distrust of people still harbored within me, I didn’t handle that aspect of goating very well, although I have met and learned to love a lot of trustworthy people through the goats. God has even used trusted goat friends to help me overcome negative emotions of fear, anger, and vengeance. They have been replaced with compassion and understanding. Praise God!

The goats also taught me a lot about how God deals with us. I often pray before breeding. I learned the importance of specific prayer when I bred Nubian GCH Cleopatra back to her GCH sire, Naja Goliath—Hall’s Doll. As I walked Cleo to the buck barn, I prayed, “Please, God, a beautiful red buck!” The Bible tells us “Ask and it shall be given you” (Matthew 7:7), but within a year I realized I should have asked for a beautiful, red, FERTILE buck. Only once did I pray for a show win. It didn’t seem right to ask for something that so many other people also wanted.

By 1971, I realized that I should verbalize my dependence on God in my goat-breeding program. I inscribed inside my notebook of registration papers, “Hallcienda Nubian Herd belongs to Jesus with the prayer that, as herdsman, I will understand and obey His instructions.” God honored that step in cementing my relationship with Him, and GCH Hallcienda Frosty Marvin was conceived a few months after I wrote that statement. Breeders of all breeds knew of Marvin, and Hallcienda became a very well-known name. Authoring a few goat books, dozens of articles, and teaching about goats in colleges and universities increased my name recognition.

Ah, but pride crept in, and I began to deny Him subtly by taking credit for myself. I forgot to give God the glory for the success my Nubian and Pygmy herds were enjoying. I forgot to mention that the good eye I had for seeing quality animals came from God. I neglected to say

that He was indeed the breeder of those fine Hallicienda animals. And, as the Bible says, “Pride goes before destruction” (Proverb 16:18). Within a few years, my lovely Nubians had nearly been wiped out by the PI<sub>3</sub> virus followed by non-symptomatic CAEV, followed by cougar attacks in which they used “surplus killing” to destroy 90% of my flocks and herds between 1994 and 1998 with occasional attacks still occurring. I’ve wept a lot of tears—tears of loss and repentance.

But God never takes away without replacing. In my case, my early Nubian losses were replaced by a son who was sent into my care after almost 19 years of marriage. I immediately recognized the Divine touch that brought about my pregnancy, and I never once doubted that God was miraculously blessing me richly through my son.

I spent my pregnancy walking my Pygmy goats to pasture and reading the Bible while they grazed. I read about other mothers who waited many years before being given a late son to raise—Sarah and Isaac (Genesis 18:8-15 & 21: 1-7), Hannah and Samuel (I Samuel 1:2-28), Manoah’s wife and Samson (Judges 13), and Elizabeth and John (Luke 1:5-66).

I’m not saying that having a first child after the age of 40 isn’t an adjustment, and I’m not saying that having some strange undiagnosed maladies threaten my lifestyle is easy, but I have relied more on God and His Word than I ever did before. And life is a joy because I know, without a doubt, that no matter what the circumstances, God holds me in His protective hands. His love and protection have supported me through two hip replacement surgeries and an elbow replacement after some friendly Nubian kids tripped me.

After all, He promised that “All things work together for good for those who love the Lord and are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). And with Paul I can say that “I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13). Through Him I can be the mother I should be, the wife I need to be, and even yet raise the beautiful Nubian and Pygmy goats that He and I both love. I have to admit that the slowness age brings is a delightful change. God also blessed me with seven fiction books—gifts from Him because until 2012 I had been unable to write fiction. Such beautiful gifts!

Even to the end, God is ever faithful, and he brought my husband into His fold just three weeks before Roger succumbed to pancreatic cancer. That one thing made my life worthwhile even if I hadn’t been blessed with numerous successes in several life arenas.

I Praise Him!



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