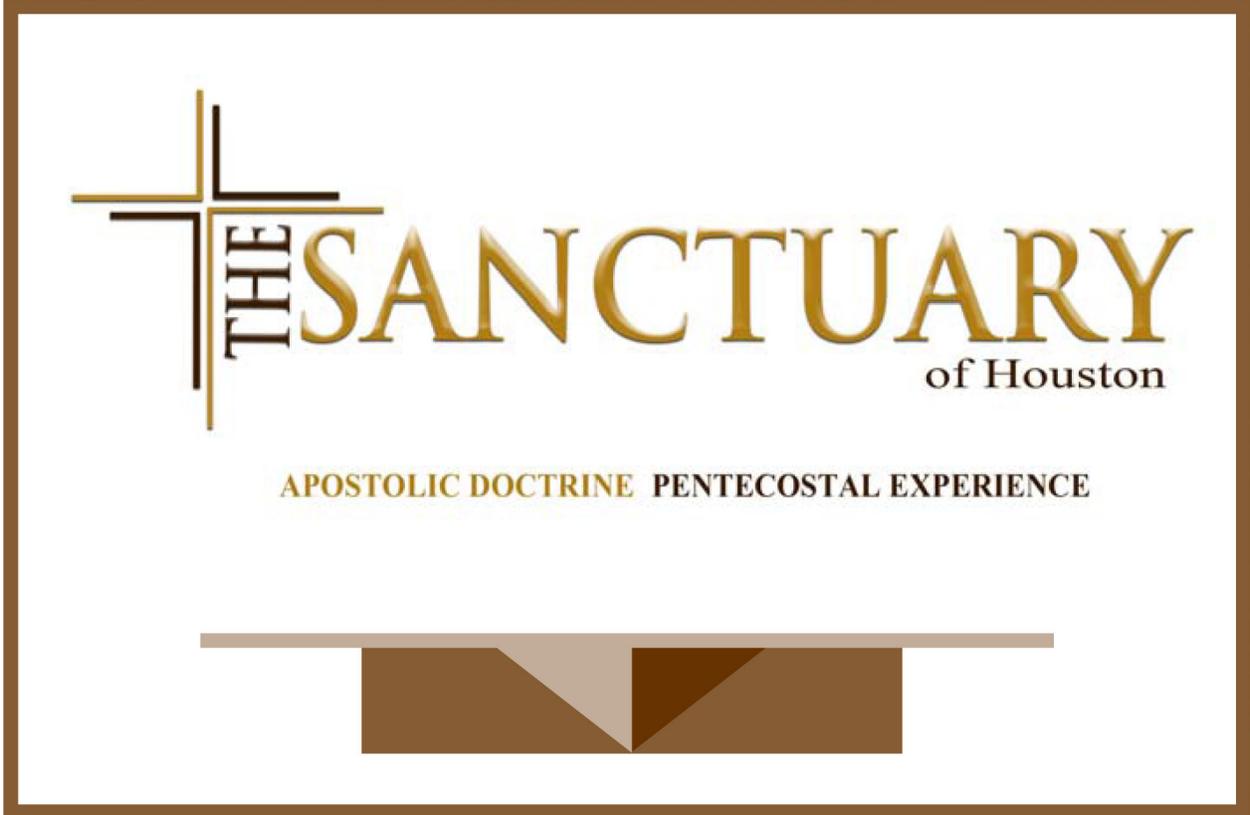




*Come Home*

 **THE SANCTUARY**  
of Houston

**APOSTOLIC DOCTRINE PENTECOSTAL EXPERIENCE**



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# FORWARD

Everyone is important and special here at The Sanctuary of Houston! Jesus considered humanity so important that He died for all of us. We could never discount one single soul because of the awesome price that was paid on Calvary. This was done by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ on behalf of everyone.

So we not only reach out to all people but especially to everyone who has ever been a part of this church. You are considered family. As in all families there are special times to laugh, rejoice and even cry with each other. A family will also grieve when one of its members has been hurt or estranged. It's the same way here.

This book was given to you because we love you. We miss you, and things at home have not been the same without you. We do not condemn or judge you for anything you have done or are doing. We just want you to come home, and let's see what Jesus will do in your life. If there is anything we can do as a church or that I can do as a pastor to make your journey home happen, please call me and let's talk.

On behalf of the saints of The Sanctuary of Houston, my wife joins me in giving you a personal invitation to "Come Home".

**We Love You!**  
**Pastor and Sister J.J. Bourn, Jr.**

## Introduction

I don't know what her name is, where she lived, or what she looked like. I just know I want to meet her someday when we're gathered around the throne. I want to know how it felt. How did it feel to be so important that Jesus would take the time to answer her prayer at the most pressing time of His life on this earth? How did it feel to know that her need was so special, that He would literally take time out while dying to answer her request?

The lady I am talking about was not popular. She was not a household name in Bible days neither is she mentioned in the scripture. Yet in Heaven she was known! Her petitions were not just heard but they were answered! He didn't send an angel to take care of this task...He carefully handled it Himself. This lady commanded the attention of God Himself, and the amazing thing about it was she was no different than you or I.

I want to know when she first brought it up. When was the first time she asked Him? How many times did she ask? How desperate was she when she asked?

I hope I have not confused you...stick with me. I have something life changing to show you. It is so awesome and it just may be the very thing that will change your life! This is something God has revealed to me and trusted me with. However, it is not a secret. Much to the contrary, it is the very opposite! He has given me insight on something close to His heart; on one condition and that is that I share it with you.

## **The Last Thing He Did**

First of all I want to say “thank you” for reading this. It is obvious you have made it through the introduction because you are now here reading this! I am reaching to some very special people. I am so grateful to whoever gave you this book to read. I am blessed with some tremendous help from people who share the same burden as I do. You see, I feel God has given me a revelation in His Word that is so vital in the lives of so many people...just like you! It is a revelation that can literally change your life once you see the depth of love Jesus truly has for you.

However, I ask one favor of you. Please read this publication in its entirety! It is relatively short in its design because I know your time is valuable, and I felt I could share this with you in an expedient manner.

The setting I will be taking you to is Calvary. I have some basic foundational statements I need to share with you. These statements will help you grasp the importance of something so incredible...yet overlooked...about what happened that day. My focus is going to be on the only conversation between the condemned men at Calvary.

The day they crucified Jesus at Calvary, there were two malefactors who were also going to be crucified that day. Historians feel very strongly that these men were not just your common criminals but part of the same conspiracy that Barabbas was a part of.

Calvary was not a pretty sight. It was very unsightly. It was very inhumane how they treated

criminals to be executed under Roman law. It was a very slow agonizing death that was made public. People tormented the criminals as the life slipped from them.

Death did not come from the nails that were driven into the flesh and bone of the prisoners. It would come from the inability to breath because of how they were suspended by their arms. The whole point in nailing their feet to the cross was to give them a way to push their bodies up and gasp for another breath of precious air.

It is noted that many people would sometimes last for days hanging in this position. What agony it must have been to push yourself up on the bones and tissue that the nails had gone through. What agony it must have been as it continued to rip and tear the flesh and muscle as they struggled to survive.

During this time at Calvary, because of the up coming feast, there could be no prisoners on the cross. The soldiers would end up breaking the legs of the other two criminals to speed up the process of dying. They would not last the rest of the day. Jesus died before this method was used on Him. It was also told by the prophets that His bones would not be broken.

If the task of breathing was this difficult, you can just imagine the effort it would take to speak. There wasn't very much said between the trio of men on the crosses, and it is easy to see why.

However, there is one conversation chronicled between the three of them that day. This conversation sheds some light on what I want to share with you.

The sign over Jesus' head proclaimed Him to be "King of the Jews" in three languages. It was making fun of the true role He really fulfilled. It was done in jest and sarcasm rather than respect and honor.

Soldiers could be heard in the crowd chiding Jesus to come down off the cross and save Himself if He truly was the King of the Jews. So sick and twisted was the mind of one of the condemned men, that He joined the crowd in tormenting Jesus. As he himself is suffering and dying the same agonizing death as Jesus, the Bible says he "railed" on Jesus, telling Him, "If thou be Christ, save thyself and us."

This drew a response from the criminal on the opposite side of Jesus. In Jesus' defense he said, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss."

What I want to know is - what did He know? Why did he ask if this man feared God? Why was there a reason to fear God? He knew something, and the only way to know something is to have learned something. So, who taught him, and what did they teach him? This young man had obviously grown up like many in his day. He learned from the writings of the Torah and was taught from the scrolls of the prophet Isaiah.

Had his mother taught him these things in their home while he grew up? He knew Messiah would be coming, and he knew he would be led like a lamb to slaughter. He knew the Messiah would have stripes, and His blood would be shed. This would be their King and Savior.

It did not take long on the cross to see the difference in how these men were treated. Neither criminal had a crown of thorns or a sign over their heads declaring them into a fictitious role. They had not suffered a vicious beating that left stripes bleeding on

their backs. There were so many differences between this man and the two criminals. Their beards had not been plucked and their faces were not swollen. As all of these things began to add up, this young man realized who the man in the middle really was. This was the One they had waited on for years.

There was almost a panic in his words when he asked the other if he had no fear of God. Here they were living the last few hours of life knowing that death would soon come for them. And one of them had the nerve to chide a man he knew nothing about, had never met, and had obviously overlooked a fact his partner has already noticed. There was no legitimacy to the charges and Jesus had done nothing wrong. He clearly pointed it out in his rebuke saying, "He hath done nothing amiss."

So not only was this chiding wrong and cruel, but he tells him in so many words, "You would not do this, if you realized whom you were talking to. Is there no fear? Doesn't it scare you to realize we will soon leave this life as we have known it? And we will face the *One* you are making fun of."

Notice how his focus changes and the man in the middle is now included in the conversation. He shows his undoubting faith and belief of who Jesus is when he poses this request, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."

He did not ask to go with Him; he simply asked Him to remember him when he got there. He has been tried, judged, and found guilty of his crime. Now the sentence was being carried out as according to Roman law. He had even admitted that he and his partner deserved the justice that was being delivered. He had no intention of asking the King of Glory for any mercy or any favors. He

just had one small request, would you just “remember me” when you get there?

He was not prepared for the response Jesus gave him. “Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.” Jesus was promising more than a memory; He was promising an experience!

Do you realize there is a thief roaming the hills of our promise that knows more about mercy and grace than we can even comprehend? You know why? Because he is there and we are still here! He has come into the knowledge and understanding of the mercy we cannot comprehend, a place he did not deserve to go, but yet he has been there the better part of the last 2000 years waiting on time to end.

## **The Prayers Of An Unseen Mother**

Now I bring you back to the house of this young man's mother. I have no idea where she lived. I don't know if she was widowed and alone, or perhaps her husband was still alive and as much a role in teaching him the things of God as his mother.

It was no doubt a very common home in the standards of that day. Nothing fancy, but nice. The decor perhaps wouldn't appeal to most of us, yet it offered a warm atmosphere. It was here in this home somewhere in Jerusalem that this little gray-haired mother did all the right things she knew to do in raising this child. She invested in him, taught him and helped him understand the matters of the Law. She helped cultivate a love in his young heart for Jehovah God. She helped put an expectancy in his heart for Messiah to come. She instilled anticipation and a yearning for Messiah. She quoted often or read from the book of Isaiah concerning the arrival of Messiah. She told him the things to look for, what He would have to go through, and whom He would go through this for! This young man was taught to look for the coming of the Savior of the Jewish nation. As an adult, he changed from the direction his mother started him in. He was leading a life of crime or at least that is the way the Romans looked at it. Anyway you look at it, he was wrong. He had admitted in deserving death.

Can you imagine how this made his mother feel? She did all the things she thought were the right things to do. She molded and shaped this young man's life. Now he had turned away from everything he was ever

taught.

I believe this young man was a backslider of sorts. Not in the same way we walk away from grace but in alignment with the Old Testament and the Jewish law. Can you hear this worried mother? Can you see the desperation on her face as she pleads with God for the life of her son?

He had been wayward before, but now he had a death sentence hanging over him. She knew the end of his life would be soon. She wanted to plead his case to the Lord but probably didn't even know what to ask the Lord to do for her. All the nights she had no idea where her son was, yet she kept praying for him. She prayed for his safety, no doubt, and that he would come back into the faith. But now he had committed a crime that was proven in a courtroom and justice was going to be administered.

What she didn't realize was that at the same time the courts were judging her son, hearings were taking place in the "Hall of Justice" in Pilot's court. Her prayers were being heard as *He* stood accused in Pilot's court. While *He* was tied to the whipping post, *He* could not pull Himself away from the agonizing wails of a mother desperate for a miracle for her son. As *He* staggered up the worn, dusty trail that lead to Calvary, the prayers of a broken-hearted mother were heard every step of the way, not begging for her son's life but for his soul.

*"God, please don't let my son die lost and estranged from you. God, do whatever must be done that his soul might be spared."*

All the way up that road as people spat on Him, guards shoved Him, and people derided Him, He heard the prayers of a broken-hearted mother pleading for the soul of her wayward, backslidden son.

Now after thousands of years of man being bound and sin un-reconciled, the price was only minutes from being paid.

The account of that day in the Gospels is a very sobering story. Yet it had to be done. The angels told Mary that His purpose for coming into this world was to *"save His people from their sins."*

And now after thousands of years, the Messianic seed had traveled through the Old Testament, had arrived, and was fulfilling the purpose He came for. With His feet standing in generations present, one of His blood soaked hands reaching into generations past, and the other hand oozing and dripping blood in generations future, Jesus was dying for billions and billions of people. Mercy was busy keeping the debt collectors of humanity at bay and paying off the mortgage of sin as the last drops of blood would drain from His body.

While He gave Himself for the task He came to do, and redeeming the souls of humanity, His last act before dying was to reach out to a backslider. He was reaching for "one" while He was dying for billions. He was answering the prayer of a graying, elderly mother.

Don't try and tell that thief on the cross that Jesus won't go out of His way for just ONE. He loves the wayward. He never stopped caring and never stopped loving. If He could take the time to reach out to one in the most important hours of His life on this earth while dying at Calvary, then wouldn't I be safe to tell you today He is never too busy for YOU?

Doesn't this do something to you to realize the message He was sending us? Backsliders mean so much to Him that He would make this His last action before giving up the ghost to reach out to ONE backslider. Not just any backslider, but one who had murdered, stolen, and was paying for his crime. Not just someone who had gotten a little cold and indifferent. He was not a son of one of his disciples or the son of a close friend like Martha or Mary. This was an unnamed, unseen, unmentioned little woman, yet we know the boy knew something. We know historically who taught children these things. He used His last action in His earthly life to reach ONE backslider. Can you tell me just one thing He would not do to reach one? I seriously doubt you can think of anything. Taking a pause at Calvary to reach this young man minimizes anything else we could think of. What this means is: *He will stop at nothing to reach the wayward and backslidden.*

## **The First Thing He Did**

What would be the appropriate welcome you could think of to give a risen Savior? We would roll out the red carpet with trumpets sounding and all the pomp we could manage to give the King of all the ages.

However, His entrance back into our world after taking the keys to death and hell, and being in the grave for three days was almost uneventful. Yes, the stone was rolled back, but there was no one there to witness that. He emerged from the tomb where they laid Him with no welcoming committee.

Even in emerging from the grave, He was on His way somewhere. There was unfinished business that needed to be taken care of. Jesus was on a mission; He had a purpose in mind and a compassion driving Him. Yes, the resurrection marked a victory for all of humanity: past, present, and future. This task would not affect the entire world directly, yet the results of what He did would affect and shake the world.

He arose on a mission looking for Simon Peter. There was unfinished business that needed taken care of. Think of that for a moment...a man who denied knowing Jesus in His presence three times, cursed to further drive the point home, and now he becomes the object of search for the risen Savior! He was not looking for him because He was angry at him. He sought him out to let him know everything was okay and that Simon was forgiven.

Even before he was found, Jesus made sure the message got to Simon by way of angelic messengers telling Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and

Salome, in Mark 16:7, "But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you."

Can you comprehend how special Simon must have felt knowing the Angel singled his name out? He had failed the Lord so miserably but remained special enough to become the object of Jesus' first quest after rising from the dead.

The first person to see Jesus was Mary Magdalene while in the garden. She did not recognize Him and thought He was the gardener by mistake. The second sighting is said to be the men on the road to Emmaus. These men walked and talked with Jesus and did not realize who He was until He vanished in front of them. After this happened, they went back to Jerusalem and found the other disciples to tell them Jesus was risen from the dead, and they also give us a peek at "mercy at work." In Luke 24:34, the Bible says, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon."

This means somewhere between the garden and the road to Emmaus that Jesus found Simon Peter. Mercy went seeking misery and found it despondent and alone. There had to be an overwhelming feeling of failure that Peter felt for letting Jesus down. After three years of Jesus pouring Himself into this man, when the heat got turned on, Simon had turned His back on Jesus while His was being pushed towards the cross.

We have no record of what was said and no witness of Simon's response. You know why? It was too personal; it was something private between Jesus and Simon. He had failed Him publicly something he had a reputation for doing. Jesus also had called him a devil and it was overheard and reported to us in the gospels.

Yet when Simon was at his lowest point, had backslid and walked away from Jesus, He did not humiliate or berate him. He went looking for Simon first thing after rising from the dead for the sake of billions and for the sin of humanity. Rising triumphantly from the grave, marking a new dawn in the hope of humanity, Jesus goes looking for one lonely disciple who had failed and denied Him. He was too important to Jesus to allow the events three days prior to drive a wedge between the two of them. Jesus had a purpose for Simon, and He was not going to let him slip through the cracks.

Out of all the things Jesus could have done first thing after rising from the dead, He goes looking for a backslidden disciple who was at the lowest point of his life just to let him know He loved and forgave him.

## **ARE YOU SEEING IT YET?**

Are you seeing it yet? Jesus was showing us something very important that means so much to Him! The last thing He did at Calvary was to reach a backslider, and the first thing He did after rising from the dead was to reach a backslidden disciple!

This is not by accident; it is truly the heartbeat of Jesus. He loves the person that has backslidden and strayed away from Him. He loves that person so much, if they have walked away, He will go looking for them! And He will find them! His love and mercy will reach further down to them than they can ever reach up to Him.

YOU are important to the Lord! As you can see by the precedence He has already set, He will stop at nothing to reach someone who has slipped and lost his or her way. He will look for you, and He always finds who ever He looks for.

The choice is yours! He will not violate a person's will. He is, and will always be, a gentleman. Isn't that amazing, considering that He commands control over the most powerful forces on earth? One word from Him will calm the worst storm and bring a peace. And yet He will not force anything on you; it has to be your choice to let God have control in your life.

Look...there is a lot at stake here! The most important thing in the world is for you to be right with God! I don't know you personally but God does. Even though we are not acquainted, I have an incredible burden for you! God has placed a burden on my heart for backslidden people who have forsaken their walk with the Lord.

It is so hard for me to put into words what I truly want to say to you. God is using this publication to reach people in the same shape as you might be right now. He has let me hear His heartbeat and feel His pulse as He thinks about YOU! I would do anything in this world to see a person who has strayed come back home.

Can I give you something to think about? What do you think God is thinking right now as you read this? What do you think goes through His mind as you have brushed tears away and felt His tug? The excitement over a person who has strayed and yet desires to come back home has to overwhelm the Master! And yet it is "your call." It is not His decision. I cannot comprehend the pain He must endure for a person He has invested so much in and then they stray. That is rejection all in itself, but then to feel conviction all over again, to realize it is Jesus, to wipe the tears streaming down your face away, and to turn away from His voice...that has got to hurt! The first time around was hard enough, but now the second time He feels the cool icy winds of rejection. It is almost more than He can bear.

Perhaps you feel you have really blown it and why would God or anyone else take you seriously in your desire to change. Friend, I have "Good News" for you! God takes EVERYONE seriously as many times as you get serious with Him. So what if you have prayed through 67 times in the last couple of years. Let's make it 68!!

"YOU ARE VERY SPECIAL," and there is nothing God would hold back from you! He wants to make you happy and fulfilled in your life. Who do you think that is using a gentle breeze to blow you a kiss, waves at you through the trees blowing in the wind, greeting you with a beautiful sunrise in the morning, and winks at you

through a sunset in the evening? There is not a day that goes by the Lord does not reach for you. It is through the smallest things. The billboard that reminds you of something; the songs on the radio you once sang in church; the dessert you now order in a restaurant that your prayer warrior grandmother used to make. Take nothing for granted, my friend, these are the ever so tender hand of God reaching for you!

I know what some of you are thinking. It is, "Why would Jesus want me back?" That's simple...because He loves you and has never stopped loving you the whole time you have been away.

Your dream ended up becoming your nightmare and nothing turned out like you thought it would. Now you have the realization that those around you were really right when they tried talking you out of leaving. You traded your robes for rags and peace for turmoil.

The road to failure is paved with shattered dreams and lies of utopia...truths that were nothing but deception. Your world has crumbled and nothing has worked out like you thought it would. So, my question to you is, "Why would you believe the enemy now when that is the same voice that promised you everything and delivered nothing?" Now he tells you God won't take you back or the church won't believe you're serious and that nobody cares. Why believe the enemy on that when nothing else he has said was true?

Jesus called him the *father of lies* meaning he is the daddy of all lies! Think about it for a moment. When the enemy lies to us he is not mandated to prove anything. His negative influence is taken at face value. Yet when God speaks to us, we feel everything needs to be proven and confirmed.

Do you think something is wrong with this picture?  
You can trust God at His Word. He will not let you down!

## **MENDING THE FENCE**

You were very good at what you did for the Lord. Perhaps it was teaching a Sunday school class, singing solos with the choir, working with the audio/visual systems, or maybe you played an instrument in church. I have heard people air out their frustrations feeling what they did was not appreciated or respected, and some even felt taken advantage of.

I just know for a fact that we in leadership, many times without meaning it, can be insensitive and not realize how we have made you feel. Can I do something right now? Can I ask you a very important question? Would you forgive us? I apologize on behalf of every pastor, minister, department head, board member, secretary, administrative assistant, saint, and any other position of leadership. Could you find it in your heart to forgive us, and let's bury this right here and now? I am truly sorry for anything any of us has ever done that offended you or made you feel you were not important to us. That certainly is not how we feel, but somehow it may have been accidentally communicated thus offending you.

I am very aware of the fact that we are all responsible for our own actions, so I am in no way making an excuse for you walking away from God. I do feel there are contributors to a person's decision to make such a mistake. Please know that anything done on our side to contribute to such a decision was unintentional.

It could also be a wrong perception on your part. But whatever the case, we want nothing standing between you and an altar of repentance. You are too

important, and your talents are of so much value. Please do not let something like a misunderstanding keep you from reconciling. We do not think for one second that we are faultless or blameless in people becoming injured and hurt.

I want you to know my apology to you is very sincere, and it is my desire to see you reconciled with God. There is nothing more important than your soul. I feel every pastor and leader in the world would share my passion for your soul and would apologize personally if they realized how badly they hurt you. I have no way to bring this person to you for that so I ask you to please accept my apology on their behalf. We love you and want to see God do some really beautiful things in your life.

Can I point something else out to you? I do realize there are hypocrites in our churches. There *are* double standards and yet sometimes it is only but a perception on your part yet it seems so very real. In spite of all of the faults of people just like me that hurt people just like you, this Gospel is still the TRUTH!

It still takes a book of Acts experience to go to heaven. In spite of what you may have been through and regardless whose fault it is, God's word has not changed, and it still takes the same things to be saved. The Gospel has not changed and the message is still the same. The insensitive carnal action of flesh has nothing to do with invalidating the Gospel. It will never change; just the same as God will never change. His Word will not change.

That's good!! Because the Word tells us His mercy is renewed daily which means we have a whole new batch of mercy today in case you think you used it all up

yesterday. I know my time with you is just about up. Soon you will lay this book down and the jury of your mind will convene, weigh the evidence, pass judgment, and determine if you will act on what you have read today.

We have never stopped praying for you, or loving you.  
We are here for you! Home is closer than you think.

Come Back Home!  
We Miss You!  
We Love You!

Pastor and Sister J.J. Bourn, Jr.

The Sanctuary of Houston  
Houston, TX.

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