THE LORD’S STRENGTH

He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. Luke 1:51 (KJV)

 It is surprising how weak we really are. When we recognize our weakness, the weakness itself will often bring us to a humble state. I think that is why we are taught that in our weakness we are made strong. Nevertheless, we think we are strong enough to handle most situations that we face. It is just that we do not anticipate most of the situations that we find ourselves in. I want to share some of the real life story of Hannah Whitall Smith. She and her husband Robert were raised in very strict Quaker homes. When they married they searched for their own religious identity in the Lord. They were led away from the Quakers but still had a deep desire for God’s spirit in their lives. They began to raise a family and over the years had seven children.

 In 1874 Hannah Whitall Smith wrote “The Secret of a Happy Life.” She was forty-three years old when she wrote the book. She was a housewife. Hannah was one who must have truly known the strength of the Lord. Of her seven children, her oldest died at the age of five with a fever, the next child died at the age of fourteen with typhoid fever, another child died prematurely, and then her youngest child died at age eleven with scarlet fever. That was not the end of her grief. Of the remaining children, one leaves her husband and children and goes off to Europe with her art teacher who she finally marries. Another child denies her faith in God and the third child claimed to lose his faith.

 Hannah’s trials were not confined to her children. Her husband Robert suffered from several nervous breakdowns. He was not very good in business and finally went bankrupt. He would probably be diagnosed as bi-polar today but in the late 1800’s there was no real diagnoses for his super high’s and low’s. There were times when he was a very effective preacher and other times when he was in the sanatorium. Later he was a salesman for her father’s business that kept him out of town for long periods of time and he became unfaithful to Hannah.

 In another book “Every-day Religion” she wrote, “Trouble and sorrow, therefore are not our curse, but one of our most cherished rights….Why should we allow ourselves to be so needlessly unhappy with thinking that our trouble is one which God has no part?” It is my understanding that these were lines that she wrote as her seventy-one year old husband was sneaking off to visit a girl-friend, as one daughter was on an escapade in Italy with an art teacher, and as her second daughter was beginning to date the atheist Bertrand Russell.

 How strong is God?

Yours in Christ,

Brother Randy Burtram