

Becky Allison

V

***A CHRISTIAN
TRANSSEXUAL'S JOURNEY
INTO WOMANHOOD***

Becky Allison

By the Grace of God

ANSWERED PRAYERS

by Rebecca Anne Allison

Up on the watershed, standing at the fork in the road, you can stand there and agonize ‘till your agony’s your heaviest load...’
Watershed by Emily Saliers

DO NOT WORRY ABOUT YOUR LIFE, WHAT YOU WILL EAT OR DRINK; OR ABOUT YOUR BODY, WHAT YOU WILL WEAR. IS NOT LIFE MORE IMPORTANT THAN FOOD, AND THE BODY MORE IMPORTANT THAN CLOTHES? (*Matthew 6:25 NIV*)

Can you relate to the agony described in the song? At some time we have agonized, often unnecessarily, over crossdressing: Am I the only person who does this? Why can’t I stop? What if my family finds out? Should I tell them? Will they reject me? Will I lose my job? We have asked these questions many times.

Jesus told his followers, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you... Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” When He spoke these words, He already knew the agony of torture and crucifixion was only a few hours away. Surely the suffering in our lives cannot be compared with His experience. We who believe in Him should know His peace. And yet the crossdresser who is a Christian often goes through the most severe agony. We must have resolution of this spiritual conflict or we will be miserable all our lives.

When I began dressing in my mother’s clothes, I was still full of the innocence of childhood. I quickly learned, however, the need for keeping my dressing secret from others. The secrecy over the following years created a sense of guilt as I enjoyed the “forbidden fruit.”

My guilt was made worse when I discovered *Deuteronomy 22:5*:

THE WOMAN SHALL NOT WEAR THAT WHICH PERTAINETH TO A MAN, NEITHER SHALL A MAN PUT ON A WOMAN’S GARMENT; FOR ALL THAT DO SO ARE ABOMINATION TO THE LORD THY GOD.

I didn’t know the meaning of the word “abomination”, but it appeared to be completely undesirable.

Since I trusted my life to Christ, the Lord has changed me in many ways over the years. When I let Him have control, He dealt with my quick temper, my impatience, my selfishness, and many other faults. I still struggle with all these things, but Christ gives me the power to overcome them day by day.

So when I prayed, “Lord, please take away from me this burden — this ‘sin’ — of cross-dressing”, I expected a prompt and positive answer. I claimed the promise of *I Corinthians 10:13*:

NO TEMPTATION HAS SEIZED YOU EXCEPT WHAT IS COMMON TO MAN.
AND GOD IS FAITHFUL; HE WILL NOT LET YOU BE TEMPTED BEYOND
WHAT YOU CAN BEAR. BUT WHEN YOU ARE TEMPTED, HE WILL ALSO
PROVIDE A WAY OUT, SO YOU CAN STAND UP UNDER IT.

Oh, how I prayed and prayed for “a way out”.

It never came.

I believed my prayer based on *I Corinthians 10:13* had not been answered. I could only think of two possible reasons: 1) the verse was not true; or 2) God did not hear or answer my prayer because I did not belong to Him. Neither possibility was acceptable in view of my past spiritual experience.

Now after many years, God has given me an answer — not what I expected, but beautifully simple. The third possibility regarding *I Corinthians 10:13* is this: Deliverance from temptation to sin is not necessary when the activity in question is not a sin!

Look again at *Deuteronomy*. It is a summary of the law given by God to the Israelites and discussed in detail in the books of *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, and *Numbers*. It contains not only the Ten Commandments, but a great variety of specific requirements described in *Deuteronomy 6:1* as “the statutes and the ordinances”. These statutes and ordinances cover matters as diverse as religious festivals, forbidden foods, slavery, and the conduct of war; yes, and the wearing of clothing of the opposite sex. Crossdressing in Old Testament times was a practice associated with priests and priestesses in the pagan temples of the Canaanites. This worship of false gods was why it was called an “abomination”.

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What did Jesus say about the Old Testament law? Look at *Matthew 5:17-18*:

THINK NOT THAT I AM COME TO DESTROY THE LAW, OR THE PROPHETS;
I AM NOT COME TO DESTROY, BUT TO FULFILL. FOR I SAY UNTO YOU,
TILL HEAVEN AND EARTH PASS, ONE JOT OR ONE TITTLE (we might
paraphrase one dotted “i” or one crossed “t”) SHALL IN NO WAY
PASS FROM THE LAW, TILL ALL BE FULFILLED.

Jesus came to fulfill the law, which He did through His perfect, sinless life; His sacrificial death; and His resurrection. He had authority to redefine the law to reflect the loving nature of God. This is how He summarized the Ten Commandments:

“LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND WITH ALL
YOUR SOUL AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.” THIS IS THE FIRST AND
GREATEST COMMANDMENT. AND THE SECOND IS LIKE IT: “LOVE YOUR
NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.” ALL THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS HANG ON
THESE TWO COMMANDMENTS. (*Matthew 22:37-40*)

Both these great commandments were already recorded in the Old Testament law (*Deuteronomy 6:5, Leviticus 19:18*), but together they summarize the relationships of a Christian to God and to other persons.

In the New Testament we see the law as redefined by Jesus. Certain parts of it are made even more demanding; for example, an attitude of hatred is equivalent to murder, and an attitude of lust is equal to adultery. This is understandable in view of Jesus’s definition of the Commandments, since hatred and lust reflect the absence of love in our lives. By expanding the meaning of the law, Jesus made even more clear its true purpose: to show mankind the impossibility of satisfying God by keeping all His commandments on our own power. When we realize we cannot earn God’s favor, we are ready to ask Him for mercy and accept His free gift of Jesus Christ.

The other part of the law, the statutes and ordinances, which distinguished the Israelites from their pagan neighbors, has served its purpose and been replaced by the new covenant of Christ. The first century Jewish believers called “Judaizers” mistakenly thought Gentiles would first have to become converts to Judaism and obey all the ceremonial laws, including circumcision. Paul devoted the letter to the *Galatians* to an explanation of how Jesus made such laws irrelevant.

So, some parts of the Old Testament law were preserved and expanded by

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Jesus' new law of love, while other parts were rendered irrelevant. How do we separate the one from the other? The answer lies in the two Great Commandments: any action or attitude showing failure to love God, or failure to love my neighbor, is sinful. Other actions, which made the Israelites a unique and different nation, are irrelevant. Circumcision is no longer required; "unclean" foods may be eaten.

Crossdressing in our culture has nothing to do with worship of pagan gods. It does not inhibit my love for God, or my love for my neighbor. When I am dressed I can feel close to God and praise Him for making me the way I am. I am a complete person and I am at peace. Since our crossdressing does not violate the Great Commandments, *Deuteronomy 22:5* has become irrelevant for us. We can be free from agony and guilt and we can know "the peace that passes all understanding" (*Philippians 4:7*). How wonderful it is to finally know this peace in Jesus Christ.

Rebecca Anne Allison
Grace and Lace
September 9, 1992
and
February 13, 1993

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THE GIFT GOES ON

by Rebecca Anne Allison

THE LORD GOD HAS GIVEN ME AN INSTRUCTED TONGUE,
TO KNOW THE WORD THAT SUSTAINS THE WEARY.
HE WAKENS ME MORNING BY MORNING,
WAKENS MY EAR TO LISTEN WITH UNDERSTANDING. — *Isaiah 50: 4*

How do you answer the “why” question? Even if no one has asked you why you crossdress, the day will come when you must find answers for yourself. “Why ask why?” may be a good excuse to have a beer, but it is inadequate as an explanation for the uniqueness of our lives.

I will not list all the suggested environmental and biologic causes for transgendered behavior. No scientific proof supports any of these suggestions. Environmental causes are all inadequate. For any given suggestion, there are too many “false negatives” (persons who are crossdressers but were never exposed to the environmental factor) and “false positives” (persons who were exposed to the factor but never became crossdressers). Furthermore, environmental conditioning produces learned behavior patterns, and learned behavior can be “unlearned” through techniques such as aversion therapy. Do you know of anyone cured by aversion therapy? I thought not.

A biologic explanation may yet be found through genetic research. The difficulty here lies in the lack of any demonstrable inheritance pattern. Dominant, recessive, X-linked, Y-linked, or variable penetrance patterns have not been found. Perhaps other biologic, not necessarily genetic, causes will be discovered. Such a biologic cause would help to explain the marked similarities in the life pattern of so many of us.

With this discovery, if it occurs, some of us may find our curiosity is satisfied. A biologic cause – very well. “I crossdress because I *am* a crossdresser.” Enough said. I’m special; I’m one of the few four-leaf clovers in the field. Even some of our community’s leading writers will say, “Some things just ARE,” and be content.

I can’t be content. I’m like the little child who drives daddy to distraction by asking “why?” to daddy’s repeated explanations of this world’s phenomena.

If there is a biologic cause for crossdressing – why? and why ME???

I am a Christian, as I discussed in my previous article, and I approach life's questions from a Christian viewpoint. If you disagree – read on anyway! It's unlikely you will be offended, and you may find some provocative thoughts. Some of these thoughts were inspired by a marvelous article in *Tapestry* #52, "The Gift," by Janice Van Cleve. For the many whose reading does not extend so far into the past, these points are worth repeating.

Our God is all powerful, the creator and sustainer of the universe; yet He is also the creator and sustainer of each individual person, and His attitude toward us is one of infinite love.

I HAVE LOVED YOU WITH AN EVERLASTING LOVE; I HAVE DRAWN YOU
WITH LOVING KINDNESS. (*Jeremiah 31:3*)

Out of love, God made each of us unique and gave us attributes which differ greatly from person to person. My gifts are not identical to yours, so by complementing one another, we can work efficiently for the common good. Paul, in *1 Corinthians 12*, likened the differing gifts to the functions of the different body parts such as the hand, foot, eye, and ear.

What gifts do we mean? The list begins in *1 Corinthians 12*; teaching, preaching, healing, helping others, and administrative abilities, among others. Certainly artistic and musical talent are God's gifts, as are a keen intellect and communication ability (*Isaiah 50:4*).

But the list of gifts goes far beyond special talents. Look at Paul's description of his gift in *2 Corinthians 12:7*:

TO KEEP ME FROM BECOMING CONCEITED . . . THERE WAS GIVEN ME A
THORN IN MY FLESH, A MESSENGER OF SATAN, TO TORMENT ME. THREE
TIMES I PLEADED WITH THE LORD TO TAKE IT AWAY FROM ME. BUT HE
SAID TO ME, "MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR YOU, FOR MY POWER IS
MADE PERFECT IN WEAKNESS."

What is he saying? Paul's "thorn" was some sort of physical defect which was a constant discomfort to him. The point is, even though such a defect might be seen as a torment from Satan, Paul regarded it as a gift from God!

How can a good, loving God give His beloved child such a gift? This seems to contradict Jesus's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount:

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“IF YOU WHO ARE EVIL KNOW HOW TO GIVE GOOD GIFTS TO YOUR CHILDREN, HOW MUCH MORE WILL YOUR FATHER IN HEAVEN GIVE GOOD GIFTS TO THOSE WHO ASK HIM!” (*Matthew 7:11*).

But as we look more closely, we gain insight into God’s reasons for bestowing these gifts: *Every gift is given for a purpose*. When a gift is used for a right purpose, everyone benefits: both the recipient of the gift and other persons who are influenced by the recipient. Ultimately, the gift honors God and brings the recipient into closer harmony with God. Our gifts are to be *used*, not rejected or hidden. When we use our gifts, God will bless our actions in ways which may or may not be apparent to us.

Now we are finally ready to give an answer to the “why” question: Why do we crossdress?

We crossdress because it is an internal part of our nature; created in us by God. It is one of His good gifts to us, and is to be used for its intended purpose.

It should be obvious that crossdressing is an integral part of our nature. We did not choose it, no more than we chose to be brown eyed or right handed. We cannot successfully reject it. Its basic and permanent quality is not difficult to acknowledge.

But is it God’s gift to a few special persons – or is it, as some would have us believe, “a sinful perversion”? If it were sinful, many of us would have experienced deliverance from it over the years. A great many sincere prayers for such deliverance have been offered. The desire for feminine expression remains within us as intense as ever despite these prayers. As I discussed in my last article, we can therefore conclude that crossdressing is not sinful and is part of God’s plan for our lives. God gives only good gifts to His children. What reassurance we gain from that knowledge!

So what should we do with our special gift? In the parable of the differing gifts (*Luke 19:11-27*), Jesus plainly stated we are to make use of our gifts, to be productive in the service of the Lord. We are not to hide our gift or suppress it by denying its existence. This means that full self-acceptance is not only possible, it is essential for our continued growth.

We can learn much from our gift. We can be especially sensitive to women’s concerns in our male dominated society. We can even work as our male selves toward relieving injustices toward women, professionally and personally,

wherever they occur. Beyond gender inequity, we can overcome all kinds of prejudice and discrimination in our own lives. We will be sensitive to bigotry in any form.

In the religious realm, being transgendered is a dreadful state in the view of many persons. Our gift enables us to see the hypocrisy evident in those who would deny us access to God, while showing a rigid lack of compassion or love for those they cannot understand. We will let our lives be guided by love, and we will not be defeated by the condemnation of the modern day Pharisee.

One of the most important uses of our gift is to help others who are similarly gifted.

TO KNOW THE WORD THAT SUSTAINS THE WEARY (*Isaiah 50:4*)

So many, like me such a short time ago, need to hear the message: you are not sick, you are not perverted, and you are not alone. We have no idea how many lonely sisters still have not heard.

Can we go even farther? Can we use our gift to enlighten society – to destroy the rigid and artificial barriers of gender? Such an outcome was forecast by Virginia Prince in *The Death of Gender*, but it is still a future hope. For now we depend on our boldest leaders to carry through the media our message that we are also persons of worth and dignity. I wonder if one day I too may find the freedom to say, “You have worked and lived alongside me. You have seen my life and appreciate the results of my efforts. Now know there is even more to my life. Understand these traits that have shaped me into a caring and sensitive friend. Learn from me – and never again feel the same way about us.”

Is it too much to dream?

WITH GOD, ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE. (*Mark 10:27*)

Rebecca Anne Allison
The Grace and Lace Letter
November 13, 1992

SELF-DISCOVERY

by Rebecca (Becky) Allison, MD

This is the fifth issue of Grace and Lace Letter to which I have contributed. It will be my most intensely personal article. The personal revelations are appropriate, even necessary, in view of the changes which have occurred in my life over the last two years.

Perhaps you long time readers have noticed a slight change in the focus of this publication. In the past, it was sent as a letter to Christian crossdressers; but the most recent issues have been directed, as on our front page, to our entire community, or as Lee would abbreviate it, “CD/TG/TS”.

Why the change? Because in the past, Lee and her other contributors have had no background to relate to transsexuals. They had the “CD/TG” covered quite well; but they didn’t have a writer who could speak to the particular spiritual concerns of the transsexual persons.

Now they have one.

I want to share with you the events which led to my acceptance of my transsexualism. Next to my own personal relationship with Jesus Christ, this acceptance is the most basic and profound experience of my life. It has caused the reordering of all my life’s plans and priorities. Perhaps my story will encourage and strengthen others in the same position.

I have known from earliest memories I didn’t fit in. I was never “one of the guys”. As I remarked in group therapy, “I feel as though my whole life has been an out-of body experience.” And from my teen years, I have been aware of the reason for my difference. And I was frightened, because I could imagine even then the enormous life changes which would result from admitting transsexualism. I simply wasn’t prepared to make such fundamental changes.

So when I read in the medical school library the statement — I believe it was in Benjamin’s text — “anyone who has had a sexual experience as a male cannot be transsexual,” I was almost relieved. “So I am a crossdresser,” I thought, “and I can experience this part of myself and retain a ‘normal’ life.” I didn’t realize Benjamin’s statement was totally erroneous.

For two decades I persuaded myself, “I can crossdress once or twice a year at out of town conventions.” I married, fathered a son, and became well

established in my profession.

And I was miserable. I changed practice locations half a dozen times, looking for peace and fulfillment.

As I related in *Answered Prayers*, I experienced great inner turmoil and prayed for deliverance from my transgendered nature. I could never understand how God would let me remain in such a dilemma. Finally He gave me a reassurance of His love for me as He created me. As I studied scriptures, I realized the verses quoted to condemn transgendered persons did not relate at all to our situations: they have been replaced by Jesus's new covenant of love.

So I found some peace and self acceptance. But I remained nervous and unhappy over my family situation. And with good reason: when I finally shared my story with my spouse, it was met with as much resistance as I had feared. The subsequent months were a tedious drama, in which it seemed every scene had to be played in sequence, until the inevitable separation. Only now that we know we will have separate lives can we finally speak as friends.

The drive toward fuller acceptance of my true self intensified. Like a hyperbolic curve, it increased slowly, almost imperceptibly at first, but accelerated and reached an "elbow" where the slope rose like a rocket. My whole life, waking and sleeping, revolved around Becky.

In seeking out others like myself, I met Lee Frances. Surely it was God's direction, not coincidence, that brought together two transgendered Christians living within five miles of each other.

The more I talked with others in the gender community, hearing their life stories, I became aware of distinct differences in the pattern of their lives. Many were secure in their identity as men with a strong feminine side, finding expression of their personality with temporary assumption of a woman's appearance. And they were happy to return to their male persona afterwards.

Was I supposed to feel that way? I didn't. Every few hours of feminine expression intensified the need for more. I never wanted to give it up.

Others had a different pattern. They told me of years of frustration, dissatisfaction, and depression before finally finding peace. I listened to them and thought of the old Roberta Flack song, *Telling My Whole Life With Your Words*. Because they were describing my life exactly.

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And, of course, these persons were transsexual.

With fascination and fear I realized: I don't want to look like a woman part of the time. I want to – I must – BE a woman forever, as I feel I already am. And yes, that means I do not want to be a man. Never again.

Over months of thought, prayer, and therapy, I came to understand: this is nothing new. This is who I always have been. When viewed in this context, my whole life makes sense.

But what implications did this new understanding have for my spiritual life? I had gone through such a struggle to be confident that God accepted me and loved me as a crossdresser; did I have to start over and reconcile my transsexualism with my Christianity?

The verses usually quoted with regard to crossdressing (*Deuteronomy 22:5* and *I Corinthians 6:9*) might be used in reference to transsexualism only by someone with no understanding of the situation. Neither I, nor any other transsexual person with whom I have spoken, consider ourselves a “man in a woman's garment” or “effeminate”. I am not a man. I am a woman behaving appropriately for my gender.

How do I know I am a woman? I have the anatomy of a man. But just as surely as I know my anatomy, I know my soul - my spirit. And I have the soul of a woman. I did not arrive at this knowledge hastily. It comes from hours of study, prayerful meditation, and prayer. And I know I have the assurance of the Holy Spirit and the peace that passes all understanding.

And what of the argument, “You should not alter the body God gave you”? Does this apply to cleft palates, congenital heart disease, or even big noses? Who believes it is a sin to correct a ventricular septal defect? And so what is the difference with an unwanted part of the anatomy? Why can we not view our anatomy as a birth defect? In my opinion it is exactly that.

The part of me which is eternal is my spirit, not my body. The body is temporal and so, if my eternal spirit and my mortal body are in irreconcilable conflict, I may alter my body to resolve the conflict.

In summary, I can find no scriptural reference to transsexualism. I must rely on the guidance of the Holy Spirit to show me God's will in such a circumstance. He has done so, and I know His peace.

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So I have accepted my womanhood, even with the implications for total change in every relationship in my life. My marriage is gone; my career will survive, but I will start over one more time. And I have never been more excited about life. In less than one year, I hope to be living and working full time as Dr. Rebecca Allison.

I hope, in subsequent issues of this letter, to keep you aware of God's working in my life as I continue this greatest adventure imaginable. I pray you will be touched and blessed also.

Rebecca (Becky) Allison
Grace and Lace
August, 1993

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STRENGTH THROUGH WEAKNESS

by Rebecca (Becky) Allison, MD

If my life is broken when given to Jesus, it is because pieces will feed a multitude, while a loaf will satisfy only a little lad.”
-Women's Devotional Bible Page 1084

In a small Southern state capital, society seems to automatically bestow status according to profession. Bankers and attorneys, business executives and architects...and, of course, physicians. While others struggle for years to earn the respect of their colleagues, the physician has immediate respect on beginning a practice. Who you are is defined by what you do.

Once, not too long ago, I had this respect. But it has quickly disappeared. For I have clearly become “not one of the group”. I don’t fit the mold anymore.

The word has been spread. I don’t know who started it; it doesn’t matter. All my colleagues have heard I am “having a sex change.” I am having to discuss it with friends and acquaintances much more often...that is, the ones who are willing to listen.

Some persons handle my disclosures by simply withdrawing. They no longer stop me in the hallway to talk; they avoid my table at lunch. Without openly rejecting me, they have silently done so. I am learning to deal with this rejection. Those who have known the person I appeared to be in the past have the right to disassociate from the person they see me becoming.

Still I find it a new and humbling experience. In many areas of my life, such as scholastic achievements and professional skills, I have become accustomed to success in the traditional sense, as the world defines it.

But while I was enjoying the external success, I experienced constant inner turmoil, knowing the real and gentle person within was unable to find release; unable to experience life as... herself.

What now? All has turned upside down. Soon I will be faced with demands that will require me to leave my position of security. Perhaps later, some external success will return to my new life; but it is certainly vanishing now. And yet my inner life is becoming orderly and peaceful. My Lord, through His Holy Spirit, is bringing me peace through the rough months of transition.

God does not view success as men do. Throughout the Bible we are reminded that He looks at our hearts rather than our degrees, neighborhoods, or bank accounts.

Accounts of victory in the face of rejection abound in Scripture. Consider the personal and family losses sustained by Job; the scorn and rejection of Hosea by his wife; and the imprisonment of Jeremiah. King David experienced rejection from his wife Michal. When the Ark of the Covenant was returned to Jerusalem, David led the parade with dancing and shouting. His wife considered this unbecoming for a man of his position, and she “despised him in her heart”. (2 Samuel 6:16)

Paul gave up a career full of great promise as a Pharisee in order to humble himself before Jesus. He endured prison, beatings, stonings, ridicule, physical infirmity, and ultimately execution. He prayed for deliverance from his difficulties; and the Lord responded in this way:

“MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR YOU, FOR MY POWER IS MADE PERFECT IN WEAKNESS.”

Paul concluded,

THAT IS WHY, FOR CHRIST’S SAKE, I DELIGHT IN WEAKNESSES, IN INSULTS, IN HARDSHIPS, IN PERSECUTIONS, IN DIFFICULTIES. FOR WHEN I AM WEAK, THEN I AM STRONG. (2 Corinthians 12:10)

Jesus experienced rejection so much more profound than I will ever know. He associated Himself with sinners and common people, declining the status with the Jewish community which could have been His. His brilliant teaching could have established Him, in time, as a leading rabbi. Imagine the Jews saying, “How could he throw away such a promising career?”

But He chose to live in harmony with His nature: to love and minister to all persons. The poor, outcasts, lepers, the “street people”...these needed Him, and they knew it. The affluent Sadducees and Pharisees thought He was sinful to visit and sit down to eat with “sinners”. But He replied, “IT IS NOT THE HEALTHY WHO NEED A DOCTOR, BUT THE SICK.” (Matthew 9:12)

My Lord has allowed me to experience the rejection of men. My intellect and my skills will not be enough to sustain me through the next few months and years. I know now, I must depend on Him for all things. Only He is constant in His love. Only He will never let me down. I can go to Him with

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humility now. I have hurts and deep wounds; so does He. As the song says,

*And Jesus said, "Come to the water; stand by my side.
I know you are thirsty. You won't be denied.
I felt every teardrop, when in darkness you cried.
And I strove to remind you, that for those tears I died."*

His blood...His agony and death... and His glorious triumph over it all are more real to me now than they have ever been. And my willingness to share what He has done for me is greater than ever. I finally have a testimony. In the past I felt vaguely uncomfortable around persons who said, "The Lord got me through such a trial," because I couldn't relate to them. I had had no such trials of my own. But now I have. And He is more than able to sustain me.

In my new found weakness I can finally feel His strength.

And there will come a time when I am strengthened enough to minister to those who have hurt as I have. One who has experienced the same rejection can be a source of strength and support. If I can know I helped someone navigate this course, it will all be worthwhile.

Rebecca (Becky) Allison
Grace and Lace Letter
November, 1993

ONE DAY AT A TIME

by Rebecca Anne Allison

THIS IS THE DAY THE LORD HAS MADE; LET US REJOICE AND BE
GLAD IN IT. *Psalm 118: 24*

Salvation – the process by which the all powerful God who created the universe reaches out in love to experience fellowship with humankind – can be considered in three tenses: past, present, and future.

In the past, God acted in history to compensate for the mistakes we humans made in the exercise of our own free will. God entered recorded history as a flesh-and-blood person: Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus experienced our humanity, but lived a life in perfect harmony with God. He allowed himself to be killed as a sacrifice in our place, so we might experience forgiveness from God for our selfish and unloving ways. By His resurrection, He proved His Godly nature and power over death. These events really happened! Many will never believe them. But for us who do — our salvation occurred at the time of our belief. This event, in our individual past histories, marks our salvation from the penalty of sin, which is eternal separation from God.

In the future, we Christians understand there will be further intervention by God in human affairs. Jesus Christ will return — no one knows when — but whenever and however He chooses to do so, He will remain with us and we will experience perfect joy and peace. In our new life with God, freed from the imperfections of this body (think about THAT) we will have salvation from the very presence of sin.

In the meantime, however, we must live in this world. Salvation in the present tense is a continuing, day to day process. No, we don't have to "get saved" repeatedly. God had the power to save us, and he has the power to keep us saved forever. We rely on God, in the present, to save us from the power of sin in our lives. When we sin, we do not lose our salvation; we lose the joy of fellowship with God and the abundant blessings He wants to give us. We may fall into patterns of anger, contempt, or hatred; failure to consider the feelings or needs of others; treating others as objects to be used. We transgendered persons, who are naturally introspective, are at risk to develop a self-absorption which can become selfishness to an unhealthy degree. When we exclude everything but "self" from our thoughts and plans, we have placed ourselves back under the power of sin.

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Day to day living, which concentrates on God in a positive manner, allows us to experience his love and freedom from sin's power. We let him speak to us, through His word and as we pray. He will show us enough guidance — in His word He calls it giving us “light” — for our present circumstance. If we follow this guidance and act accordingly, He will give us further guidance. If not, we step off into the darkness and can lose contact with God. Eventually we must return to the light. This is the “present tense” of our salvation.

Do you remember the old Jimmy Durante television show? When Jimmy closed each episode — after he said, “Good night, Mrs. Calabash, wherever you are,” — he walked off stage using a series of spotlights. On the darkened stage, one light would appear. He stepped into it, then another light appeared. One step at a time... he finally reached his goal.

We must live life one step, one day, at a time.

Imagine you are traveling by passenger train across the American west. You can already picture your destination. How great it will be to finally arrive! Bands will be playing; the sun will shine; and everyone will welcome you with open arms. As your train takes the scenic route, you pass through the Tetons and Jackson Hole, the Colorado Rockies, and the Canyonlands. You can glimpse the Grand Canyon as the train heads west to the coast. But you never notice any of this magnificent land. You are too focused on your destination.

What preoccupies us on our life's journey?

“When I can pass in public — that will be IT!”

“When my wife understands — that will be IT!”

Or the big one:

“When I finally get SRS – that will definitely be IT!”

Listen, ladies: that will not be IT. Life will still go on.

Life is a journey — not just a one-time destination. Setting goals is good and wise, but not so much we cannot experience the pleasure and joy in everyday life. This is what is meant by salvation in the present tense, one day at a time. Our Lord is ready to bless us in rich and surprising ways, if we remain open to receive it!

Rebecca Anne Allison

The Grace and Lace Letter, May 15, 1994

SACRIFICE
by Rebecca Anne Allison

THE COMMANDER WENT TO PAUL AND ASKED, “TELL ME, ARE YOU A ROMAN CITIZEN?” “YES, I AM,” HE ANSWERED. THEN THE COMMANDER SAID, “I HAD TO PAY A BIG PRICE FOR MY CITIZENSHIP.” “BUT I WAS BORN A CITIZEN,” PAUL REPLIED. —*Acts 22: 27-28*

Well, it’s working. I think.

For six months now I have spent every moment of every day as the person I was meant to be.

It’s called “the real life test.” Once a person comes to terms with her (or his) transsexualism and decides to take action, the difficulties have just begun. With a “big price” we obtain our citizenship in our true gender.

Those who compile statistics say that 90 per cent of persons who begin this journey never see it through to completion, if completion is defined as sex reassignment surgery. Some are content with making a full change except for surgery. Others find they can resolve their conflicts in another manner, and return to their birth gender. For some, the sacrifice is simply too great.

Let me tell you some things I’ve learned about sacrifice.

I began by giving up a professional position which, if I had kept it, would have guaranteed me financial security and a comfortable early retirement. I gave it up voluntarily. I was under no legal obligation to do so, but certain of my colleagues were extremely uncomfortable with my changes. To stay at my position would have placed us all in a constant conflict. So I left, to allow them the normalcy they sought and to lessen my own stress.

At this writing, after six months, I still do not have a job.

I gave up home. For nearly all my life I lived in the same small Southern state. I went to college and professional school there. I know persons in every large town and most of the small ones. But I thought I would have a better chance for a new life if I started over in a new city, a new state. Now I have become accustomed to hearing the news of my adopted home; but I miss knowing the news of my old home.

By the Grace of God

I gave up friends. Before I left home, I tried every way I could to make them understand. But hardly anyone can understand, and they only see my change through the way it affects them.

I try to tell them, "I'm still the same person. We can still have a friendship as before." Perhaps when more time has passed it will be possible. But not now; now they speak of me as if I had died. They can only dwell on the past and their memories of perceived good times.

Those good times in the past were uncomfortable times for me, just as these times are uncomfortable for them. I must give them time now to arrive at their own level of understanding.

I have lost family. Perhaps not forever, but certainly for now. I will not discuss these losses, but they are the most painful.

The losses accumulate. Sometimes they are very discouraging. Where are you, Lord? Do you hear me? Do you understand?

YOUR ATTITUDE SHOULD BE THE SAME AS THAT OF CHRIST JESUS; WHO, BEING IN THE FORM OF GOD, DID NOT CONSIDER EQUALITY WITH GOD SOMETHING TO BE GRASPED, BUT MADE HIMSELF NOTHING, TAKING THE VERY NATURE OF A SERVANT, BEING MADE IN HUMAN LIKENESS. AND BEING FOUND IN APPEARANCE AS A MAN, HE HUMBLED HIMSELF AND BECAME OBEDIENT TO DEATH – EVEN DEATH ON A CROSS!

(Philippians 2: 5-8)

YES, MY CHILD. I DO HEAR YOU. AND I REALLY DO UNDERSTAND.

Jesus endured great loss to gain the victory for me. I should keep my thoughts on His example and remember my gains rather than my losses.

I have gained new friends. One of the joys of my new life is the laughter and love around this apartment. I have found several other persons in circumstances similar to mine, and we spend a great deal of time together. We are all fortunate to blend in well in our neighborhood and have made friends among the neighbors.

A wide range of ages exists in our little group, but I am the oldest, and the one with the most time at home. So I find myself doing much of the cooking and car pooling. They help with the housecleaning (I cook, they clean - an excellent arrangement).

Naturally, they have nicknamed me “Mom”. In return I have given them the names of the “Brady Bunch” girls. Together, we keep the loneliness away and strengthen each other.

I have gained great confidence. In job interviews, in my night classes, in church, everywhere I am more relaxed and confident than ever before. The blessing of finally being myself has given another depth of meaning to Jesus’ words in *John 8:32*, “THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE.” How free I do feel.

I have gained patience. At first I thought I would have a job again in just a couple of months. Being unemployed for such a long time gives me empathy for the many people I know who are in the same circumstance. I have learned to keep busy, but leave the outcome to the Lord.

I have gained a great blessing from helping others with no thought of return. Recently our church held a “field day” for disabled persons, similar to the Special Olympics. I volunteered to spend time with these wonderful people and help encourage them to give their best efforts. The expressions of joy on their faces as they completed the obstacle course or the relay races blessed us all. Surely this is something Jesus would have done also.

My gains are helping to offset my losses. I know God will sustain me through this difficult time. In His timetable I will find my work, my home, even the final completion of my change.

HE GIVES STRENGTH TO THE WEARY AND INCREASES THE POWER OF THE WEAK. THOSE WHO HOPE IN THE LORD WILL RENEW THEIR STRENGTH. THEY WILL SOAR ON WINGS LIKE EAGLES; THEY WILL RUN AND NOT GROW WEARY, THEY WILL WALK AND NOT FAINT. (*Isaiah 40: 29, 31*)

Rebecca Ann Allison
Grace and Lace Letter
September 1994

REST

by Rebecca Anne Allison

GOD SHALL WIPE AWAY ALL TEARS FROM THEIR EYES; AND THERE SHALL BE NO MORE DEATH, NEITHER SORROW, NOR CRYING, NEITHER SHALL THERE BE ANY MORE PAIN; FOR THE FORMER THINGS ARE PASSED AWAY. — *Revelation 21:4*

The view from the balcony of my apartment is so tranquil. I sit in my mother's old dining room chair and drink my morning coffee as I look at the ducks on the small body of water, bounded by eucalyptus and palm trees.

“Wack, wack”; waddle, waddle. Duck society is so simple. When I walk down to the path, they swim up to the bank waiting for my bread crumbs. Life is easy for these ducks. But I don't envy them. They don't know the joy of resting, because they have never done anything else.

After months of letters, résumés, and interviews, I finally found the right situation for a fresh start in my profession. It required me to move to a Western state, but would allow me to do the work I have been trained to do. I am absolutely convinced it was the answer to my prayers.

The tedious paperwork which always precedes such a move would take until early November. This would allow for some necessary business in the meantime.

I left Georgia at the end of September, driving west. Three days later I arrived in my new home. I had only a few days to move in, and unpack my boxes, before catching a flight to Wisconsin.

Evaluations from therapists and physicians had already been sent; all was in order. After an office examination, I was admitted to the hospital and underwent sex reassignment surgery.

The surgery and recovery were without complications. Eventually I was discharged and flew back to my new home. Thanks to the prayers of so many persons, and the diligent care of a good friend, I have regained my strength.

I will begin my new job soon. Until then, I have enjoyed the opportunity to recuperate slowly.

For a few weeks I, too, have been able to rest. It is the first time in over two years. Since I started plans for my transition, a great deal of time has been spent in “sorrow, and crying, and pain.” The majority of transsexual persons who make this change in midlife would say the same.

There is the pain of realizing that this conflict will never leave; it must be accepted if there is ever a hope for peace.

There is the crying which comes from sharing the pain with loved ones, knowing they have not had years to cope with it and reach an understanding; watching them withdraw with their own pain.

There is the sorrow of severing friendships with those who misunderstand; often losing one’s life’s work and starting over; sometimes even moving far from home.

I experienced all these things. How could I possibly continue my transition, in the face of such adversity?

I could never have begun, much less completed, a transition, without assurance that my Lord understood and allowed this to happen in my life. This assurance did not come easily.

In previous issues of this letter, I have written of the anguish of doubt, of wondering why this was happening to me. I prayed for years for my gender conflict to be taken away. Instead, it intensified more and more.

I finally came to realize the truth: my gender conflict was similar to any other birth defect. Like a cleft palate, or a deformed heart, I was born with it.

It was not “God’s will” for me to have this incurable condition. Instead, God gives me the strength to cope with it, and in His time He gives a solution.

I didn’t understand the solution. For years I thought my solution would be to be freed from my transsexualism. You may recall the column in which I discussed *1 Corinthians 10:13*.

God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out, so that you can stand up under it.

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“A way out.” Even during my transition, I could not see it. There was no way out. Unless I could change my body to fit my spirit, I would never know peace.

As my transition progressed, I had more and more assurance of God’s guidance and protection. I approached the surgery with calm confidence, believing God would guide my physician.

On the night before the operation, I spent a great deal of time in prayer. As usual, I didn’t plan my words, but just let them flow from the heart. That is why, without even realizing what I was saying, I found myself praying:

“Lord, thank you for giving me a way out of this conflict that has plagued my life for so long.” And then I realized what I had said, and I cried for joy.

He had answered the prayer I had prayed all those years! He gives the surgeon skill and knowledge to repair other birth defects, and mine is no different. For me, a healing had already been taking place, and the surgery was just another step in the healing.

As time passes, He is even healing my relationships. Some friends and family have realized the truth of my conflict and its resolution, and have resumed contact with me.

I have been searching for a church in my new home, and I believe I have found the right one. Last Sunday two events during the service made me come to this conclusion.

One was the sermon itself, which was taken from *James 4:14-15*.

Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.”

Even this dilemma of transsexualism had its solution, and I reached it by seeking God’s will. Don’t take my experience and automatically assume it will be yours. Perhaps you can resolve your dilemma in another way. If so, God will reveal your own “way out”.

However, if you find your direction involves a complete and lasting change, then trust Him to guide your every step. You will always be glad you did.

Becky Allison

I said there were two events which drew me to my new church home. The second was one of the worship choruses. It was not in the hymn book, and so the words were displayed on a large video screen to aid the congregation.

As we came to the refrain, I knew He had led me there that day.

*God will make a way
Where there seems to be no way.
He has ways I cannot see,
He will make a way for me...*

Yes. Thank you, Lord.

Rebecca Anne Allison
Grace and Lace Letter
December 15, 1994

PLAY IT AS IT LAYS

by Rebecca Anne Allison

Hear now the parable of the talents.

A man going on a journey called his servants and entrusted his property to them.

To the first he said, “Here is five hundred thousand dollars. Invest it exactly as follows: one hundred thousand in Consolidated Camels, two hundred thousand in First Jerusalem Savings and Loan, and two hundred thousand in Galilean Fishing Enterprises. You will enjoy riches and live a life of ease.”

To the second he said, “Here is fifty thousand dollars. It isn’t enough for a life of ease, but it will get you started in your own business. If you work hard, you will survive and perhaps even prosper a little.”

To the third he said, “Here is five hundred dollars. It’s your severance pay. You will live your life outside the shelter of my blessings. You will, however, still have to gaze upon these others, the ones for whom life may be easy or hard, but is always normal.”

“You will envy them for their normal lives, because yours will never be like theirs. And yet you must attempt to be normal. It will be in vain, for you are not normal as they are. But woe to you if you attempt to accept or embrace abnormality! Other men – normal men – will reject you and cast you into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

STOP!

This is not at all what Jesus said in the parable of the talents. I think, however, that it is what many of us believe.

We see those few who live in the fine houses and drive the fine cars. They seem to lead charmed lives. We think, “I could be just like them – if I hadn’t had this lifelong burden of gender identity conflict.”

We see the much larger number of ordinary working people, and we identify with them. Perhaps we have been quite successful in our transition, and we blend into society in our proper gender. Yes, we appear to fit in. But to ourselves

we think, if these people knew my past, they would reject me. For I am not normal like them.”

Too often we see ourselves as outcasts – in our own eyes, and more importantly, in the eyes of God. “God does know my past, and He knows I am not normal. Therefore God has rejected me.”

Well, now. Just who says you are not “normal”? Is it God? Or is it Satan, laying the guilt on you to defeat you?

Who created you? God did, you say. Yes, He did. And did He create within you a conflict between the person you appeared to be and the person you knew you were in your heart? Or was this just something you chose to do on your own?

Chose? No, I didn’t choose it, you say. I know I have had it as long as I can remember. I think I was born with it. On this point, science would agree with you. Transsexualism is biological, not a learned behavior.

Listen to these verses:

BEFORE I FORMED YOU IN THE WOMB, I KNEW YOU. (*Jeremiah 1:5*)

WOE TO HIM WHO QUARRELS WITH HIS MAKER, TO HIM WHO IS BUT A POTSDHERD AMONG THE POTSDHERDS ON THE GROUND. DOES THE CLAY SAY TO THE POTTER, “WHAT ARE YOU MAKING?” DOES YOUR WORK SAY, “HE HAS NO HANDS?” WOE TO HIM WHO SAYS TO HIS FATHER, “WHAT HAVE YOU BEGOTTEN?” OR TO HIS MOTHER, “WHAT HAVE YOU BROUGHT TO BIRTH?” (*Isaiah 45:10*)

God made us just the way we are. We may feel deformed, like a broken potsherd. But in his plan, we are just as He intended. We are beautiful in his eyes.

God wants us to deal with our inner conflict. He will give us the strength to deal with it. Almost certainly, He will not simply remove the conflict; He will guide us to its resolution. That resolution for us is to become congruent in body and spirit.

The cliché from the language of golf is “play it as it lays.” We don’t go back to the tee and start the round over. We have to play out of the rough.

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We don't ask Him to let us start our lives over with no conflict. We have to deal with our lives as He created us.

God doesn't reject us; He never did. Neither will most of our friends, if they see His beauty and love in us.

So now let us redo our paraphrase of the parable of the talents.

A man going on a journey called his servants and entrusted his property to them.

To the first he said, "You will enjoy the riches of life. Just remember, to whom much is given, much is required. I expect you to use your blessings to bring my love to others. I will give you the power to do so."

To the second he said, "You will not have an easy life, but through hard work you will realize satisfaction and success. I will give you the power to bear the toil of daily life."

To the third he said, "I love you as much as my other servants. But I am giving you a different burden. This burden will handicap you for years, and will require great strength and patience to overcome.

"But this burden is the gift I give you. Do not bury it. Take it, accept it, and use it to find fulfillment in your life.

"I, your Lord and master, will give you the power to resolve your burden and live the life I intended for you. When you have done so, you will know My joy and peace. Your life will be sweeter than ever as you know completeness; as you realize that you are – and have always been – normal, as all My other beloved servants."

Rebecca Anne Allison
Grace and Lace Letter
April, 1995

The Christian Love Letter
Issue #2-1999

THE WAY WE WEREN'T

by Becky Allison

Looking back from the viewpoint of today, the events of the past two years often seem a blur. Never would I want to experience again those final months of living in that other role, which seems so strange to me now.

Why then, after successful transition and surgery, after establishing a wonderful new life and career in a city unburdened by my past...why do I stare into the mirror some mornings and think, If I could go back, what would it be like?

If I could go back. What a curious idea. I couldn't go back, if I did want to do so. The pain of separation from friends and family remains in their memories also. Life has changed for all of us.

A few persons who make a complete gender transition are fortunate enough to retain the support of their loved ones. My experience tells me, however, that most are like myself. We spent years constructing elaborate past lives, often making more entanglements in a vain attempt to prevent our own future happiness!

Some entanglements, such as occupations which are stereotypical of our birth gender, can be dissolved with only economic consequences. Alas, we go much farther. In our efforts to be "normal", we reason that marriage and a family will resolve these conflicting feelings.

We do love these persons whom we involve in our lives. So, when finally the imperative to transition overwhelms our will to remain in our past lives, we may be burdened with guilt over the effects of our actions.

This was the situation I faced. Surely I could have denied my own needs and remained in my old relationship. At least no one else would have been hurt. I imagine a blissful family, parents and children together, joining with our extended family for special occasions. Now I have marred that perfect picture. What a dreadful, selfish person I must be!

What's wrong with this picture?

First, it depicts a situation that didn't exist. Each passing year – each pass-

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ing month – put further strain on my relationships. The futility of trying to succeed in my birth gender was becoming obvious. Even before my disclosure, the effects of secrecy and denial were being felt. We trapped ourselves inside our private walls of isolation by the refusal by both parties to discuss vital, serious topics.

Second, it disregards the future and overestimates our will power. How foolish we are to continue in a toxic relationship. If we know without doubt that transsexualism is our life's reality, it is best to be open and honest with our self, the Lord, and others. Even if this means the severing of a relationship, the pain is still less for everyone than the chronic misery of living in the wrong role.

We imagine a past much more pleasant than it truly was. The song, *The Way We Were*, from the movie of the same name, captures this sentiment:

*Memories
May be beautiful, and yet
What's too painful to remember
We simply choose to forget;
For it's the laughter
We will remember
Whenever we remember
The way we were.*

How, then, should we deal with the past and its hurts?

First: Be honest, even if it hurts. As a young adult, I thought I was acting in good faith by entering into a marriage and beginning a family. Indeed, God took my actions and brought about some very positive results. But I was wrong to deny the conflict I already knew existed. It is not “wrong” to be transsexual; it is a birth condition over which I had no control. It is wrong to act without seeking God's guidance. This I did; and for this I have prayed for forgiveness.

Second: Commit your past mistakes to the Lord. Jesus paid the price for my sins, past, present, and future. I can go to Him with my guilt and leave it at the cross. If He forgives me, surely I can forgive myself. He will show me how to make amends to those hurt by my actions. How wonderful to be free from the guilt of the past, to know the cleansing of forgiveness!

Third: Learn your lessons well. If one relationship has ended, don't be quick

Becky Allison

to jump into another which will entangle you again. Learn to be secure without reinforcement from others; don't fear loneliness; and trust Christ to be your best friend, who knows your deepest secrets and loves you still. Take positive action in the future and don't be afraid of the criticism of others. Those who don't understand will try to tell you how sinful you are. The only voice you should hear convicting you of sin is the Holy Spirit. If God is for us, who can be against us?

Finally: Get on with your life, and don't torment yourself. The best way to let others see that you are free of past regrets is to live a life of fulfillment and joy. Truly, my life's dreams are coming true. I praise God for allowing me to have the life I always wanted. I will not spoil this life He has granted me by longing for the painful past.

BUT ONE THING I DO: FORGETTING WHAT IS BEHIND AND STRAINING
TOWARD WHAT IS AHEAD, I PRESS ON TOWARD THE GOAL TO WIN THE
PRIZE FOR WHICH GOD HAS CALLED ME HEAVENWARD IN CHRIST JESUS.
(Philippians 3: 13-14)

Becky Allison
Grace & Lace Letter
September, 1995

DISCLOSURE

by Becky Allison

THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE. —*John 8:32*

But does it always?

The guys from my Bible study group were gathered in the den, cheering or groaning according to their team preference. Not I. Liberated from the burden of watching football, I joined our hostess and the other women over coffee in the kitchen.

In a group of formerly married women, the conversation often turns to the demise of the marriage. I listened with sympathy, careful to avoid using certain words in my replies, particularly “husband.”

“Construct a past history,” I have heard it advised for persons who have undergone gender transition. “Know what you will say about your periods, your hysterectomy, your husband and children.”

I can’t do it. Building such a fabrication is an active falsehood. I was married, but I didn’t have a husband; so I refer to my “ex” and my “former spouse,” and I use the pronoun “they” rather than “he.”

Is this a passive falsehood – lying by omission? Is it always necessary to tell all my past history, to “out” myself? I say it is not. I don’t deny my past if asked, but I don’t always volunteer it either.

The Bible tells us that, early in His ministry, Jesus withheld some information about himself.

HE DROVE OUT MANY DEMONS, BUT HE WOULD NOT LET THE DEMONS
SPEAK BECAUSE THEY KNEW WHO HE WAS. (*Mark 1:34*)

This does not mean that I equate my human circumstances with Jesus’s divinity. I do believe that His actions serve as an example to be prudent about our disclosures.

People perceive me to be a woman. Guess what: they are right. I am! My past history is, in almost all circumstances, irrelevant to my present life. In

a similar way, people look at a recovered alcoholic but perceive that person to be sober. It is not necessary for either one of us to publicize past events that may cause distress and confusion to persons who know us superficially.

I did not transition in my former home, but moved to another state. I have chosen to disclose to a few close friends and co-workers, all of whom have received the news with acceptance.

If someone special enters my life, of course that person will have to know. It would be totally wrong to withhold anything from one who loves me.

I have chosen to blend into society as an ordinary woman. I spend most of my time dealing with persons who are not in good physical health. They don't have to be accepting and understanding, and it's my calling to care for them with all my skills and empathy. They trust me. Most would still trust themselves to my care if they knew everything; but some would not.

Perhaps even writing this column puts me at risk. If so, it is a risk I must take. I would consider it hypocrisy to discuss a subject such as this anonymously.

Many of my friends have chosen to be completely open about their transition, accepting the risk of discrimination and rejection. In the long run, this may be the best and most truthful option.

Which course is correct? Do we "lie by omission"? Some have called it "blending into the woodwork." Is it really just living in a gigantic closet?

Neither course is inherently wrong, and my plans may be inappropriate for you. I suggest each of us seek guidance from the Holy Spirit for our actions.

If we choose to blend in quietly, we must also be prepared for the possibility of being "outed" by persons or events we can't control. The proper course then is the truthful one, acknowledging without shame or guilt. Our friends and colleagues will still respect the person they have known.

LET YOUR CONVERSATION BE ALWAYS FULL OF GRACE, SEASONED WITH
SALT, SO THAT YOU MAY KNOW HOW TO ANSWER EVERYONE.
(Colossians 4:6)

Salt adds flavor and preserves freshness. If we eat food without salt, we may find it unpleasant and offensive. If our speech is "seasoned with salt" it means

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our words are well chosen to have a pleasant, positive effect on the listener. We will try to avoid an offensive, confrontational attitude.

Whether we choose to be open about our gender transition, or to avoid declaring it to the general public, our motive should be guided by Christ's love in our hearts.

SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE, WE WILL IN ALL THINGS GROW UP INTO HIM WHO IS THE HEAD, THAT IS, CHRIST. FROM HIM THE WHOLE BODY, JOINED AND HELD TOGETHER BY EVERY SUPPORTING LIGAMENT, GROWS AND BUILDS ITSELF UP IN LOVE, AS EACH PART DOES ITS WORK.
Ephesians 4:15-16

Becky Allison
Grace & Lace Letter
Spring, 1996

SHARE IT OR BEAR IT

by Rebecca Allison

THERE IS NOTHING CONCEALED THAT WILL NOT BE DISCLOSED, OR
HIDDEN THAT WILL NOT BE MADE KNOWN. —*Matthew 10:26*

I study the two photographs in the warm light of an October afternoon. The subject is the same, but they are separated by over twenty years of time.

In the first photograph, a toddler sits atop the shoulders of a young man. His short legs straddle his father's neck, and Daddy holds both the child's hands in his own. The expression on the boy's face is of happy excitement.

The father's head is turned to look back at his son. His clothing and hair-style reflect the mid 1970s. His expression captivates me even now; the love for the little boy mixed with a sadness hard to define.

I will protect my son from all harm, he once thought. No matter what happens, I will never let him be hurt.

The images and ideas in my mind will remain there forever. He will never know my anguish. No one will ever know.

The boy grew, strong and intelligent. His father tried to be there for him always. Sometimes a physician's schedule interfered, but he would always break away early to be there in the audience for the graduation, or in the stands for the game. He surrounded his son with other children of his peers, and the privileged youth enjoyed as stress-free a childhood as his parents could provide.

The father knew he should teach the child tolerance and acceptance for everyone; but leadership had never been one of the father's strong traits. It was more natural to go along passively with the instruction the child received in school and in church.

Ah yes, church. The church gave such easy answers to the father's earnest questions.

"Just turn it over to the Lord. Confess how you have sinned. He will forgive you and heal you."

By the Grace of God

Well yes, the father thought. This works. I have trusted Christ with my whole life, and I have asked Him to heal me of my selfishness, my language, my envy. He really does heal.

So why, when I have prayed for years for healing from THIS, does it not happen?

“Your faith is weak. Pray for strength. If you truly believe, you will be delivered from all your burdens.”

He really believed he could be healed. He believed it so much that he never shared his burden with his son; not even, for many years, with his wife.

“Healing”, as he defined it, as a relief from the terrible inner conflict, never occurred.

The young man went away to college. He was strong and independent. His own faith was firmly grounded in the fundamental principles he had been taught over the years. The inner strife which so plagued his father was incomprehensible to him.

The father had prayed for strength to “be there” for his son. Now the time had come when his son was grown.

The long anticipated, long dreaded talk finally took place. I know you can’t really understand, the father said. You need to know how I have prayed over this. God has not answered my prayer as I had requested. He is answering it in a different way. He is allowing me to change my life in drastic ways to relieve this conflict. This is what I must do to find peace.

The son’s words were heartbreaking. “You raised me to believe that certain things were right and others were not. How do you expect me to react when you bring me such news?”

That talk occurred over three years ago. I have never seen my son again. My letters go unanswered.

I carried much too heavy a burden on my own shoulders. If only I had known. If only someone had told me what I am telling you:

The burden of being transgendered will never go away. If you hold it inside, it will wear you down. Your best course is to share the burden. Share it with

your family. The longer you wait, the less likely they will accept.

Share it with your children while they are young. Teach them that difficult questions do not have easy answers. Sometimes acceptance is necessary when understanding fails. Teach them before they develop the prejudices of the privileged; before they lose the ability to empathize with those whose concerns they do not share.

Above all: share the burden with your Lord. Give it to Him. Do not come to Him with a preconceived idea of what He will do with your burden. It may be that He will take it away. More likely, He will take it up with you and enable you to bear it.

The second photograph shows the young man grown tall and handsome. In his tuxedo he looks quite capable of being the strong husband he became on that day last summer.

Perhaps one day I will see him again. Until then, I have these words for comfort:

COME TO ME, ALL YOU WHO ARE WEARY AND BURDENED, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST. TAKE MY YOKE UPON YOU AND LEARN FROM ME; FOR I AM GENTLE AND HUMBLE IN HEART, AND YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. FOR MY YOKE IS EASY AND MY BURDEN IS LIGHT. (*Matthew 11:29*)

Rebecca Allison
Grace & Lace Letter International
November, 1996

CHOICES

by Rebecca Allison

THIS DAY I CALL HEAVEN AND EARTH AS WITNESSES AGAINST YOU THAT I HAVE SET BEFORE YOU LIFE AND DEATH, BLESSINGS AND CURSES. NOW CHOOSE LIFE, SO THAT YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN MAY LIVE. —*Deuteronomy 30:19*

How many times have you heard it said – or said it yourself?

“I had no choice! I had to make my transition.” So many transsexual persons reach a point in their lives when they feel they cannot continue to live unless they change their bodies to reflect their inner identity.

Why does this happen? Why do we wait until our lives reach a point of crisis before making decisions we should have made years ago?

Do we truly have no choice?

I believe it is incorrect – at least in part – to make such a statement. God has created us with intellect, and with the capability to make choices based on our acquired knowledge.

AND THE LORD GOD COMMANDED THE MAN, “YOU ARE FREE TO EAT FROM ANY TREE IN THE GARDEN; BUT YOU MUST NOT EAT FROM THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL, FOR WHEN YOU EAT OF IT YOU WILL SURELY DIE. (*Genesis 2: 16-17*)

God created humankind in His image. One feature of God’s image is the capacity for choice. God chose to share that capacity with us. If He had not, we would be automatons. We would lack free will and we would lack the ability to respond lovingly to God. How thankful we should be for choice!

Here are several things I have learned regarding choice.

First: each day is filled with choices. A secular musician has written a song which contains the phrase: “*If you choose not to decide, you still have made a choice.*” We cannot allow fear or timidity to keep us from choosing our direction for each day.

Next: some choices are better than others. God admonishes His people to

consider life and death, and to make the better choice of life. We might ask how we know which choice is the better one in all circumstances. For this God has given us His Holy Spirit as a guide. If we seek God's will, the Spirit will reveal it at the proper time.

Closely tied to the reality of "better" and "worse" choices is the idea that some aspects of our lives are not changeable by choice. This idea has critical importance for transsexual persons, as I will discuss.

Finally: choices have consequences. Each life choice we make leads us down one direction. A favorite inspirational card by Mary Engelbreit shows a child walking down a path which has divided. The road sign on her segment says "Your Life". The other road sign says "No Longer An Option". We may never know the consequences which would have resulted from any choice not taken.

How do we apply these principles to our lives as transsexuals?

We do not have a choice whether to be transsexual. This lesson is hard to learn and is responsible for much unhappiness and years of living in frustration. We try to suppress or eliminate an essential element of our identity, rather than accepting it as part of God's plan for our lives.

The choice for us is what to do about the fact that we are transsexual. Most of us did not choose wisely in our youth. We made the choice to ignore or suppress our transgendered identity, because we lacked an understanding of this identity and its permanent character.

We accepted by default the opinion, so prevalent among persons not transgendered, that we could remove this identity from our lives. Whether by our own will power, or by prayer to be free from what we were told was "sin", we chose to deny our reality.

Only after long, difficult years did we finally realize that our identity would not change. By then we had made other choices which complicated our lives greatly. We formed families whom we truly loved. Alas, for many of us, our families loved the façade we constructed, the person we pretended to be. They could not accept these new life discoveries we were making.

Ultimately we faced this choice: do we continue to deny our identity, for the sake of those who expect us to remain unchanged; or do we accept our reality and plan the rest of our lives accordingly?

By the Grace of God

This is the choice which drove us to despair, often to depression, sometimes even to suicidal thoughts. We were experiencing the consequences of our earlier choices. There is no resolution of this choice without causing discomfort for ourselves and others. Still, a choice must be made.

By accepting our reality and being honest with ourselves and others, we begin a healing process. As we trust God to guide us, He can bring us peace in ourselves and healing in our relationships. If our loved ones will share this trust, God will even give them peace despite difficult circumstances – circumstances which our loved ones did not choose either.

To claim that we have no choice in regard to our actions is demeaning. It diminishes us and fails to give credit to God for creating a people who can choose to identify with God, to love as God loves. It implies that we are not responsible for the results of our actions. This is not so.

We can choose.

We should choose wisely and “choose life” with the guidance of God’s Holy Spirit.

We should take into account our past choices, right and wrong, and learn from the consequences of these choices.

We can take responsibility for our actions and accept the consequences of our present and future choices.

Some consequences still are painful; some we do not understand. But we move on, trusting God who

...CHOSE US IN HIM BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD.

(Ephesians 1:4)

Rebecca Allison
Grace & Lace Letter International
Easter, 1997

I'M NOT ONE OF THEM

by *Becky Allison*

TO SOME WHO WERE CONFIDENT OF THEIR OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS AND LOOKED DOWN ON EVERYBODY ELSE, JESUS TOLD THIS PARABLE:

“TWO MEN WENT UP TO THE TEMPLE TO PRAY, ONE A PHARISEE AND THE OTHER A TAX COLLECTOR.

“THE PHARISEE STOOD UP AND PRAYED ABOUT HIMSELF: ‘GOD, I THANK YOU THAT I AM NOT LIKE OTHER MEN – ROBBERS, EVILDOERS, ADULTERERS – OR EVEN LIKE THIS TAX COLLECTOR. I FAST TWICE A WEEK AND GIVE A TENTH OF ALL I GET.’

“BUT THE TAX COLLECTOR STOOD AT A DISTANCE. HE WOULD NOT EVEN LOOK UP TO HEAVEN, BUT BEAT HIS BREST AND SAID, ‘GOD, HAVE MERCY ON ME, A SINNER.’

“I TELL YOU THAT THIS MAN, RATHER THAN THE OTHER, WENT HOME JUSTIFIED BEFORE GOD. FOR EVERYONE WHO EXALTS HIMSELF WILL BE HUMBLED, AND HE WHO HUMBLER HIMSELF WILL BE EXALTED.”

– *LUKE 18: 9-14*

From the time I became a participant in transgender community activities, I have heard many variations on this theme. It's natural to try and improve our own position by comparing ourselves favorably with others. This subject, however, seemed to be an especially sensitive one. Once I established a site on the Internet and began to receive e-mail from other transgendered Christians, I observed the same bias repeatedly.

“I certainly do not have anything in common with homosexuals.”

“I find the gay life totally repugnant and unacceptable to me.”

“I do not consider the Biblical statements concerning crossdressing as having relevance under the New Covenant, in contrast to the clear condemnation of homosexuality.”

Dear sisters and brothers, do we really understand the implications of these statements?

By the Grace of God

Understand: I never had a “gay” experience either. Before transitioning, I had no desire to be with a man. And by no means did I transition in order to experience sex with a man. Transition is about identity, not about sexual behavior except as a secondary effect of the identity.

So, I could also make the statement that I find male-with-male sex an idea that is, TO ME at least, “repugnant”. But I have never been in that circumstance as have my friends who are gay. I hear these friends tell me, “I did not choose to be attracted to persons of my sex. I have prayed to be ‘healed’ and healing has not come. I believe in my heart that God has allowed this in my life.” And that sounds very familiar; it’s the same line of reasoning I used in describing my transsexualism.

How can I ask anyone to accept me as a transsexual and then deny the same acceptance to someone else? It strikes me as at best hypocrisy, and at worst the attitude of the unforgiving servant displayed in *Matthew 18*:

...A MAN WHO OWED HIM TEN THOUSAND TALENTS WAS BROUGHT TO HIM. SINCE HE WAS NOT ABLE TO PAY, THE MASTER ORDERED THAT HE AND HIS WIFE AND HIS CHILDREN AND ALL THAT HE HAD BE SOLD TO REPAY THE DEBT.

THE SERVANT FELL ON HIS KNEES BEFORE HIM. “BE PATIENT WITH ME,” HE BEGGED, “AND I WILL PAY BACK EVERYTHING.” THE SERVANT’S MASTER TOOK PITY ON HIM, CANCELED THE DEBT AND LET HIM GO.

BUT WHEN THAT SERVANT WENT OUT, HE FOUND ONE OF HIS FELLOW SERVANTS WHO OWED HIM A HUNDRED DENARII. HE GRABBED HIM AND BEGAN TO CHOKE HIM. “PAY BACK WHAT YOU OWE ME!” HE DEMANDED.

...THEN THE MASTER CALLED THE SERVANT IN. “YOU WICKED SERVANT,” HE SAID, “I CANCELED ALL THAT DEBT OF YOURS BECAUSE YOU BEGGED ME TO. SHOULDN’T YOU HAVE HAD MERCY ON YOUR FELLOW SERVANT JUST AS I HAD ON YOU?”

Now, do not think I am condoning promiscuity. I do not. I believe promiscuity demeans the love relationship and reduces human beings to the level of objects to be used for gratification. But one does not have to be homosexual to be promiscuous. Heterosexual promiscuity is just as much of a sin.

Now, what is “the gay life”? Do you mean promiscuity, the bar and bath

house scene? No, I don't condone that. I could agree with you on the word "unacceptable" for that.

But just as there is no "transsexual lifestyle", there is no one "gay lifestyle" applicable to all. I know same-sex couples who have been monogamous and faithful and loving for many years. Many are Christian. They have been driven out of their fundamentalist churches, and thankfully have found acceptance in some of the liberal mainstream churches such as my adopted Episcopal denomination. They have their personal salvation experiences, their experienced epiphanies with the Holy Spirit just as we do.

One of the revelations of my transition is the way God has opened my eyes to this reality. Yes, it goes against traditional church teachings. No, I can't explain the proscriptions against homosexuality in *Leviticus* any better than I can explain those against crossdressing in *Deuteronomy*. I know I don't live under that law; I live under the new covenant of love.

No, I can't explain Paul's views in *Romans 1*. Here is where I get into deep water, but I must trust the *agape* love of God, not the statement of one man who clearly loved the Lord Jesus but also clearly had a problem with women as well as with homosexuals; and I am trying to interpret his statements by the measuring stick of Christ's unchanging love. I am going to state that there are some things about our Bible that I do not understand, but with the faith of a little child I am going to recite from *First John*, "God is love."

If God is love, then God isn't anti-love. God isn't hate. God is acceptance. If we ask to be changed, perhaps God will change us. In this one area of my life, transsexualism, God didn't change me. In the same way God hasn't changed my homosexual friends. I accept that and I accept them in His love.

I believe with all my heart that God can use us transgendered persons to illustrate His love and acceptance of all persons who receive Him. But if we do not love one another, or love others in similar circumstances, how can we expect our witness to be believed?

A NEW COMMAND I GIVE YOU: LOVE ONE ANOTHER. AS I HAVE LOVED YOU, SO YOU MUST LOVE ONE ANOTHER. BY THIS ALL MEN WILL KNOW THAT YOU ARE MY DISCIPLES, IF YOU HAVE LOVE ONE FOR ANOTHER.
(*John 13: 34-35*)

Becky Allison

Grace & Lace Letter International Issue #3, 1997

WHAT HAVE WE TO FEAR

by Becky Allison

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn't serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people will not feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not in just some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we're liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

—Marianne Williamson, A Return To Love, Chapter 7

In my life I have been afraid of many things. A great number of my fears centered around my knowledge that I was not like the other boys in my town. I lived in fear of social ridicule and physical violence. I feared rejection by my parents if they knew my feelings. The fear produced in me a sense of shame, so that no matter what I achieved in my education, I felt unworthy of praise – even unworthy of love.

If they only knew...they would not love me. I tried to structure my life so no one would ever know how unhappy I was.

But God knew. God had to know the contents of my heart. God was aware that I believed I should have been female, not male.

Sometimes I wondered if God cared. My prayers to be made “normal” went unanswered – and my fear grew.

As an adult I feared the disruption of my marriage. I feared professional and economic losses, ostracism by friends and colleagues, loss of my position in a conservative church.

The knowledge in my heart grew stronger. It had a name – transsexualism. The day came when the need to be true to my heart overcame my fears.

In that day I discovered the love of my God is greater than any fear. I gave my fears to God and experienced His love in a greater measure than ever before.

The things I feared were not resolved favorably. In fact, most of them happened just as I had feared. But God's love sustained me through my losses and created love in me to reach out to others who shared this experience.

All through God's Word we see it: "Fear not. Do not be afraid." God knows our tendency to let circumstances terrify us. And yes, God definitely does care.

...THE WAVES BROKE OVER THE BOAT, SO THAT IT WAS NEARLY SWAMPED. JESUS WAS IN THE STERN, SLEEPING ON A CUSHION. THE DISCIPLES WOKE HIM AND SAID TO HIM, "TEACHER, DON'T YOU CARE IF WE DROWN?"

HE GOT UP, REBUKED THE WIND AND SAID TO THE WAVES, "QUIET! BE STILL!" THEN THE WIND DIED DOWN AND IT WAS COMPLETELY CALM.

HE SAID TO HIS DISCIPLES, "WHY ARE YOU SO AFRAID? DO YOU STILL HAVE NO FAITH?" (*Mark 4:37-40*)

Christ calms my inner storms, even though outside the waters may still be rough. I am not promised an easy journey; I am promised God's presence all along the way.

WHEN YOU PASS THROUGH THE WATERS, I WILL BE WITH YOU...WHEN YOU WALK THROUGH THE FIRE, YOU WILL NOT BE BURNED.
(*Isaiah 43:2*)

I still have to walk through the fire. But I have the love and protection of my God to sustain me.

You see, the antidote to fear is love. We could even say that fear is the opposite of love. When we fear, we are saying to God, "I am not trusting in your love."

What have we to fear? In the Old Testament, the "fear of the Lord" referred to the reverence in which we hold God – holy, separate, almost inaccessible. Such a reverential awe helped the ancient Israelite mind understand the majesty and greatness of God.

But in Jesus Christ we have God the accessible. "Love the Lord your God," He said. He is our guide for this love. His selfless love bought my freedom from sin and fear.

By the Grace of God

What have we to fear? Persons who claim to speak for God may reject us. That which they have not experienced, they do not understand, so they condemn us. But our God does not condemn us. Our God loves us with an infinite love which He places into our hearts to love others as He loves us.

WHO SHALL SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF CHRIST? SHALL TROUBLE OR HARDSHIP OR PERSECUTION OR FAMINE OR NAKEDNESS OR DANGER OR SWORD?

NO, IN ALL THESE THINGS WE ARE MORE THAN CONQUERORS THROUGH HIM WHO LOVED US. (*Romans 8:35, 37*)

This love enables us to have the courage to live our lives in truth and without fear. Nothing can happen to us that will separate us from God's love. Given this ultimate assurance, we can live day by day on a higher plane of existence.

What have we to fear? If we have given our lives to God through Jesus Christ, we have no need to fear. He will always be with us. He will never leave or forsake us.

THERE IS NO FEAR IN LOVE. BUT PERFECT LOVE DRIVES OUT FEAR, BECAUSE FEAR HAS TO DO WITH PUNISHMENT. THE ONE WHO FEARS IS NOT MADE PERFECT IN LOVE. (*1 John 4: 18*)

What have we to fear?

Perfect love drives out fear.

Becky Allison
Grace & Lace Letter International
Easter, 1998

GOD DON'T MAKE NO JUNK!

by Becky Allison

BEFORE I FORMED YOU IN THE WOMB I KNEW YOU, BEFORE YOU WERE BORN I SET YOU APART. —*Jeremiah 1:5*

“I know I’m somebody ‘Cause God don’t make no junk.” —*Ethel Waters*

Is biology destiny?

Transsexual Christians often hear the argument raised against changing their bodies: “God created you to be a man (or a woman) and that is how you will always be; how you should remain.”

Prior to my transition, I was in counseling with a Christian psychologist. He had known me for years; we had taught classes together, and he knew I was sincere in my faith and my desire to follow God’s will. But here I was, telling him how I had the mind and identity of a woman. It was difficult for him to accept.

“I just can’t believe,” he told me, “that God would make such a mistake.”

I was ready for this. It was a concept I had struggled with already. “What would you say,” I answered him, “if I told you I don’t think it is a mistake.”

He was speechless for a moment as this idea sank in. He had never considered that God would create a person with the body of one sex and the mind of the other. The understanding of this idea allowed him to accept the reality of my transsexualism.

God does not make mistakes, but people have always tried to explain those persons who are different from the norm. Sometimes the explanations involve punishment for sin.

HIS DISCIPLES ASKED HIM, “RABBI, WHO SINNED, THIS MAN OR HIS PARENTS, THAT HE WAS BORN BLIND?”

“NEITHER THIS MAN NOR HIS PARENTS SINNED,” JESUS SAID, “BUT THIS HAPPENED SO THAT THE WORK OF GOD MIGHT BE DISPLAYED IN HIS LIFE.” (*John 9:2-3*)

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“Birth defects” are very familiar to me as a physician. I see persons who were born with abnormal openings between the chambers of the heart. Other persons have clefts in the upper lip and palate, or other severe facial deformities. They are not due to sin, and neither are the group of abnormalities seen in persons who are physically intersexed.

We live in a time when surgical correction is possible for all these defects. No one who examines the facts in a loving spirit would prohibit any of these persons from obtaining surgery. Modern medical knowledge is one of God’s gifts to our age.

Why is transsexualism not regarded in the same way? I suspect it is because the defect with which we are born is not visible, and because it involves the greatest subject of taboo in Western civilization – the subject of sex.

There is strong evidence from current research which indicates differences in male and female brain structure, and some studies are showing that transsexual persons often have brain structure resembling the sex with which they identify. This physical evidence confirms what we have known all our lives – that our transsexualism is not a choice, it is a biologic trait we cannot “cure.”

Since the structure of the brain cannot be changed, the only way to achieve congruity is to change the body. In our age these changes are possible with medical and surgical advances.

But as Christians, are we free to pursue these changes? Or must we remain as we were born?

I can find nothing to indicate that we must remain so – neither in Scripture (Jesus did heal the blind man, after all) or in the parallel experiences of other medical conditions.

A Christian transsexual person who has made life decisions which involve other persons – marriage and children – faces the decision whether to pursue change or to remain in the family relationship. Perhaps God will give this person the strength to remain in the relationship. Many persons have done so during the years their children are young.

But this choice is made for the sake of one’s family, not because God wills us to remain forever unfulfilled. For most of us there comes a time, years later, when the decision must be faced again.

Becky Allison

The “WORK OF GOD CAN BE DISPLAYED” (*John 9:3*) in our lives as we deal with this decision. We can trust God and rely on His grace to sustain us through the difficulties of a transition few people ever have to face. God has not promised to remove the difficulties, but to be with us through them.

WHEN YOU PASS THROUGH THE WATERS, I WILL BE WITH YOU; AND
WHEN YOU PASS THROUGH THE RIVERS, THEY WILL NOT SWEEP OVER
YOU. WHEN YOU WALK THROUGH THE FIRE, YOU WILL NOT BE BURNED;
THE FLAMES WILL NOT SET YOU ABLAZE. (*Isaiah 43:2*)

He is with us. But we will pass through the waters; we will walk through the fire.

Jeremiah knew that God had created him and had a plan for his life. It must have been hard to see sometimes. Jeremiah preached God’s message to Judah for forty years, and no one paid any attention to him. He was rejected by the prosperous, “religious” ruling class. He was imprisoned and placed in solitary confinement. Despite despair and depression, he maintained his faith in God to deliver him.

By today’s standards, Jeremiah would have been a nuisance and a failure. We may feel the same way about our lives. I believe that by accepting our transsexualism as God’s plan for our lives, and acting appropriately to resolve the dilemma, we can show the work of God in our lives and receive His blessings and grace.

Becky Allison
Grace & Lace Letter International
Fall, 1998

By the Grace of God

WORK IT OUT

by Becky Allison

CONTINUE TO WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING, FOR IT IS GOD WHO WORKS IN YOU TO WILL AND TO ACT ACCORDING TO HIS GOOD PURPOSE.

—Philippians 2: 12-13

One of my favorite fables is the story of the father and son who were traveling with their donkey. On the way they met several fellow travelers.

“How foolish,” the first traveler laughed. “Such a strong beast, and you are exhausting yourselves by walking beside him instead of letting him carry you.”

The father thought about that and found it reasonable, so he placed his son atop the donkey as they continued.

The next person they met reproached the youth. “How can you ride while your aged father must walk?”

“He is right, Father,” said the boy. “Change places with me. I’ll walk.”

Again they encountered a traveler ready to give advice. “You could make much better time if you both rode the beast.”

The donkey was not fond of this suggestion, but kept on walking until they met a man who said, “How cruel you are to the poor creature! It’s you who should be carrying him instead.”

When they reached their destination, they found their hosts doubled over with laughter at the sight of the man and boy, struggling under the load on their shoulders: a thoroughly confused donkey.

There seems to be no shortage of persons who would tell us everything we are doing wrong in our lives. Some of the most self-assured are those who claim to know the will of God for other persons.

These are actual excerpts from letters to me from persons who have been my friends in past years:

“You are being deceived and are in need of healing. I will not be a part of your deception.

“You cannot deny that your actions are contrary to centuries of church tradition. (Note: This makes me wonder about the medieval Church’s position on transsexuals.)

“This seems so contrary to the will of God.”

Readers of my *Grace and Lace* columns over the years will recognize my personal struggle with these issues. These concerns took years for me to confront, understand, and accept; but others have based their opinion of me on superficial contemplation and an automatic acceptance of a status quo based on law, not on love.

I don’t know, dear friend, what God wants you to do with your life. I have my hands full understanding what God wants me to do with my life.

This much I do know: my God is a God of love. That love was manifested perfectly in Jesus Christ, and I can find direction for my life by allowing God to transform me into a person who manifests Christ’s love.

“I cannot be free to love others if I am living a life of untruth and personal deception. For years I tried to do just this, ignoring the pain and despair.

“If you look for truth, you may find comfort in the end: if you look for comfort you will not get either comfort or truth – only soft soap and wishful thinking to begin with and, in the end, despair.” –*C. S. Lewis*

The search for truth is an end unto itself, not a means to comfort. I regard it as a lifelong quest. By choosing for my Master and my exemplary goal Jesus, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, I am setting the direction of my life in favor of love, not the harsh, inflexible rule of law.

Victor Hugo’s masterpiece, *Les Miserables*, illustrates so well the difference between love and legalism. Inspector Javert had devoted his career to the pursuit and punishment of lawbreakers, with no regard for an individual’s circumstances. He cared nothing for the souls and feelings of those he persecuted, in his zeal to follow the letter of the law.

Javert’s lifelong nemesis, Jean Valjean, served nineteen years in a terrible prison for the crime of stealing a loaf of bread. Hardened by years of prison,

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the newly paroled Valjean committed a theft from a compassionate, loving man of God. The bishop not only forgave Valjean for the theft, but gave him more of his valuable possessions. "I have redeemed you from sin and darkness," he told Valjean. "Now you belong to God."

The experience of unconditional love transformed the tough criminal into a loving, giving man whose life forever after was lived to pass on God's love to others. Even when he had the opportunity to destroy his nemesis Javert, he refused to harm the inspector. Finally, at the end of his life, Javert recognized the moral bankruptcy of his rigid legalism, and understood that Valjean had found the truth.

God's love transforms you and me also. We see the effects of this transformation in our lives as we love one another as Christ loved us.

As I am free to love you in God's name, I can allow you the freedom to work out your own relationship with God. My duty is simply to follow God's will as exemplified in Christ, as Simon Peter learned:

WHEN PETER SAW (THE DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED), HE ASKED,
"LORD, WHAT ABOUT HIM?"

JESUS ANSWERED, "IF I WANT HIM TO REMAIN ALIVE UNTIL I RETURN,
WHAT IS THAT TO YOU? YOU MUST FOLLOW ME." (*John 21: 21-22*)

As you communicate with God through prayer and the Word, may you find the path He chooses for you – a path perhaps different from mine or anyone else's in its specifics, but sharing the common bond of God's love.

Becky Allison
The Christian Love Letter
#3, 1999

WHAT'S IN A DATE?

by Becky Allison

ONE DAY IS WITH THE LORD AS A THOUSAND YEARS, AND A THOUSAND YEARS AS ONE DAY. —2 Peter 3:8

Christmas seems overshadowed this year by the anticipation of what will occur a week later, as the calendar turns from the year 1999 to the year 2000.

Isn't it an interesting time to be alive? How do you plan to celebrate the holiday? Many hotels, cruise ships, concerts and parties have been completely booked for months or years. From the Eiffel Tower to the Concorde, from the Pyramids to Machu Picchu, the super-rich will ring in the new millennium in style.

At the other end of the spectrum are the survivalists. They have been building up supplies of water, nonperishable food, blankets and ammunition. Some have picked out their refuge far away from the city, and there they plan to sit out what they believe to be the social disaster as computers fail worldwide and order breaks down. Never mind that most of our business and government institutions have long been ready for the date change; these people are prepared for doomsday.

A separate group, not sharing the exact same philosophy as the survivalists, but with some points of similarity, are those who see religious significance in the year 2000. This seems to be a specific date on which they can hang their expectations for the Rapture.

This word, "rapture," comes from the same root as the word "raptor" and means "to take away suddenly." Christ, in the accounts recorded in the Gospels, does not mention such an occurrence; but the apostle Paul makes it a central part of his teaching on the Last Days.

BEHOLD, I SHOW YOU A MYSTERY: WE SHALL NOT ALL SLEEP, BUT WE SHALL ALL BE CHANGED, IN A MOMENT, IN THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE, AT THE LAST TRUMP: FOR THE TRUMPET SHALL SOUND, AND THE DEAD SHALL BE RAISED INCORRUPTIBLE, AND WE SHALL BE CHANGED.
(1 Corinthians 15:51-52)

FOR THIS WE SAY UNTO YOU BY THE WORD OF THE LORD, THAT WE WHICH ARE ALIVE AND REMAIN UNTO THE COMING OF THE LORD SHALL

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NOT PRECEDE THEM WHICH ARE ASLEEP. FOR THE LORD HIMSELF SHALL DESCEND FROM HEAVEN WITH A SHOUT, WITH THE VOICE OF THE ARCHANGEL, AND WITH THE TRUMP OF GOD; AND THE DEAD IN CHRIST SHALL RISE FIRST. THEN WE WHICH ARE ALIVE AND REMAIN SHALL BE CAUGHT UP TOGETHER WITH THEM IN THE CLOUDS TO MEET THE LORD IN THE AIR, AND SO SHALL WE EVER BE WITH THE LORD.

(1 Thessalonians 4:15-17)

A very elaborate theology has grown around these teachings and those of the apostle John in the book of *Revelation*. Authors such as Hal Lindsey have expanded on these passages and developed modern explanations for these ancient mysteries. In the last few years many books and movies have dealt with the “end of the world” scenarios, and the series of fictionalized stories describing the Rapture, and the tribulation which follows, have become best sellers.

These authors have not specified the date on which they believe these events will take place, but some of their readers and followers have become convinced that the turn of the clock to the year 2000 will be the beginning of the end.

I'd like to examine this “millennial fever” a bit further. Please know that it is not my intention to disparage any theology. I know that many people hold the Rapture and related teachings as one of their most cherished beliefs. There was a time when I did myself. I could quote you Dr. Scofield's seven dispensations and tell you how each of the seven churches in *Revelation, chapters 2 and 3*, related to one of those dispensations. My copy of *The Late Great Planet Earth* came apart at the seams from constant use. In fact, I did experience a personal spiritual re-awakening in the 1970s as a result of studying *There's A New World Coming*, and for that I will always be grateful to Hal Lindsey.

But as we grow older, and events occur in our lives which are unexplainable by easy answers, we learn that some things we were certain of can no longer be taken at face value. The further on I go, the less I know.

Here is what I believe. I am a Christian. Nothing that has happened in my life has shaken my belief in the goodness and love of God, and in the reality that God's love is perfectly personified in Jesus of Nazareth. I want that kind of love – the love of Jesus Christ – in my life, and so I have made a commitment to becoming as like Christ as possible. I know my human limitations, and so I trust God to create this Christ-likeness in me. This is the

experience which some call “salvation” or a “personal relationship,” and I have no problem with those terms, but I see it in terms of a conscious daily commitment to live in this loving way through the help and guidance of God.

That’s it! That is the essence of my belief. God is love. Jesus manifested God’s love perfectly. Jesus’s life of love becomes my life of love as I depend daily upon God to direct my thoughts and actions.

Sometimes this seems too easy. I know some of you will consider it overly simplistic. But it is so liberating, so in touch with the truth just to give all the rest to God and let Him worry about who’s right and who’s not. I try not to judge anyone else, just as I don’t expect any other human to judge me. God is our judge, and your relationship with God is strictly between you and God.

Do I believe God is in control of human history? Absolutely. But how He chooses to exercise that control is not for me to know. He may bring history to a close prior to this New Year, or He may not do so for another thousand years. I don’t know, and I don’t need to know.

As a result, I don’t think it is productive to dwell on dates and times and try to predict the future. What good can come of it? Shouldn’t we be living our lives in love every day, regardless of when and how God chooses to bring a close to human history? How would your life be different if you knew for a fact the world would end at midnight on December 31?

One of my former ministers in the Baptist church made a statement I’ve always remembered. He said, “When Christ returns, He is not going to give bonus points to the people who guessed the date right.”

Here are some things Jesus did have to say regarding his return:

OF THAT DAY AND HOUR KNOWETH NO MAN, NO NOT THE ANGELS OF HEAVEN, BUT MY FATHER ONLY. (*Matthew 24:36*)

IT IS NOT FOR YOU TO KNOW THE TIMES OR THE SEASONS, WHICH THE FATHER HATH PUT IN HIS OWN POWER. (*Acts 1:7*)

In addition, there are some rather compelling secular reasons why we should not worry about the approaching turn of the calendar.

For one thing, there are twenty-four different time zones on our planet. The

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new year begins at the International Date Line in the Pacific Ocean and spreads to the west. In which of these time zones will the end occur? A partial Rapture, hour by hour, is stretching the limits of even the strongest millennial believer.

An even more compelling reason is this: the modern calendar did not come into existence until 525 A.D. In that year a Scythian monk in Rome, Dionysius Exiguus, was preparing new tables for determining the date of Easter, and he decided to abandon the calendar in use at the time, which used as a starting year the first year of the reign of Emperor Diocletian (our year 284). Dionysius decided to calculate the year of the birth of Jesus, based on the following data:

Luke 3:1 - Jesus was baptized in the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius; *Luke 3:23* – Jesus was about 30 years old at his baptism.

Using this and other data available to him, he calculated the probable year of Jesus's birth as occurring in the 753rd year since the founding of the Roman empire, which he redesignated the year 1.

Subsequent scholarship, however, has proven Dionysius's dates incorrect. For example, we know that King Herod the Great was still alive when Jesus was born. Historians are rather certain that Herod died in the year we now designate as 4 B.C., from the writings of the historian Flavius Josephus as well as known astronomical data. So the year of Jesus's birth was most likely 4 or 5 B.C., according to our Dionysian calendar.

Therefore, the two-thousandth anniversary of Christ's birth has come and gone a few years ago, with no fanfare and certainly no cataclysmic events. Somehow I believe He wants it that way.

How are you spending your New Year's Eve? I hope to be with good friends, enjoying a quiet evening with little fanfare of our own, as we anticipate another year of life and love.

I wish as much for you this Christmas season. May you focus on the love which came down from heaven to us, showing us the way, the truth, the life.

Happy holidays, dear friends.

Becky Allison
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CHEEKS

by Becky Allison

YOU HAVE HEARD THAT IT WAS SAID, ‘EYE FOR EYE, AND TOOTH FOR TOOTH.’ BUT I TELL YOU, DO NOT RESIST AN EVIL PERSON. IF SOMEONE STRIKES YOU ON THE RIGHT CHEEK, TURN TO HIM THE OTHER ALSO. —*Matthew 5: 38-39*

The e-mail message was from an anonymous source and was titled simply “Stand Before God.” I’ve seen these before, I sighed to myself, and clicked it to open.

“Dear Becky,

You have a very interesting Web site. I see that you are interested in spiritual things. How will you feel when one day you stand before God and say, ‘I didn’t like the way you created me, so I changed it to what I wanted’?

Have a nice day.”

The sarcastic, superficial tone of the note was so irritating, as I’m sure it was intended. I should have deleted it without another thought. If it had been a serious, polite inquiry, I would have given a serious response.

I would have said,

“Thank you for writing. Please understand that this is a subject about which I have spent much time in thought and prayer over many years. I also wondered about the morality of changing my body.

I thought of other body deformities – birth defects, visible and invisible. Do we say to children with facial deformities or congenital heart disease, ‘God doesn’t make mistakes, so you should remain the way you were created?’ Of course not.

How, then, is my condition different? Is it because you cannot see my birth defect? Do you simply disbelieve me when I tell you there was a discrepancy between my body and my mind, present from my earliest memory and which I did not choose? Do you

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think I'm lying or misinformed? I have lived in this body for decades and I can tell you that it was not my choice to have this discrepancy.

I agree that God does not make mistakes. I believe God allowed this discrepancy in my life for reasons I do not comprehend, but God also gave me the way to resolve the problem. I believe God loves me even though some of those who claim to speak for God do not love or respect me.

I realize that your life experience is not like mine. I know that you cannot comprehend this birth defect I am describing, any more than I can understand what it is like to be color blind, for example. But that doesn't make my problem any less real.

So, let me offer this hope that we can accept one another's differences and take comfort in our shared faith in a loving God."

That's what I would have said to a polite inquiry.

Instead, I was much more brief.

I sat down and typed,

"When I stand before God, I will give thanks that my life was under the control of a loving God and not an anonymous, superficial, clueless bigot."

And I sat and looked at what I had written. It was a quick, reflexive response and it did not reflect a loving or forgiving spirit. I passed my mouse away from the "send" button and hit "delete" instead.

Jesus gave us many teachings which are not easy or natural to follow. "Turning the other cheek" is surely one of those. It's natural to react to attacks from others in a defensive way, or even a counterattack. It takes much more strength to accept the blow silently. Indeed, I am not sure we can consistently respond to an antagonist with peace and love. I think it was only by allowing Christ's love to overcome my hostility that I could delete that reply.

Transsexual people have experienced antagonism and hostility from many sources: often from loved family members, close friends, or from well meaning but misinformed fellow Christians. What would it mean to "turn the other

cheek” to these people? Often they do not want to engage in dialogue with us. The only response they will honor on our part is a denial of our transsexualism, a return to the previous birth-gender condition. We know that such a return is not going to result in happiness or peace for anyone. This is not, should not be, our response.

I would suggest that we consider what happens physically when we literally “turn the other cheek.” We end up looking at the situation from a different perspective – a different point of view. Perhaps “turning the other cheek” is a metaphor for getting a fresh perspective on the situation.

For example, if a dear Christian friend from my past cannot comprehend or accept what has happened in my life, perhaps I can ask God to show me the perspective which my friend sees when he looks at me. I will still know it’s a misinformed position, but at least I will be able to empathize a bit better with him. Then, instead of continuing to plead or argue with my friend, I will realize that the only way I can persuade him of the truth of my life is to go ahead and live my life in a loving way. After time has passed, he may see God’s love still at work in me and may be more accepting.

A different perspective brings balance to our understanding. Love – the love of God as manifest in Christ – can empower us to respond to our antagonists in wisdom and love. By our example we will do more to cause others to accept us than by any argument.

There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

WE LOVE, BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US. (*1 John 4:19*)

Becky Allison
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