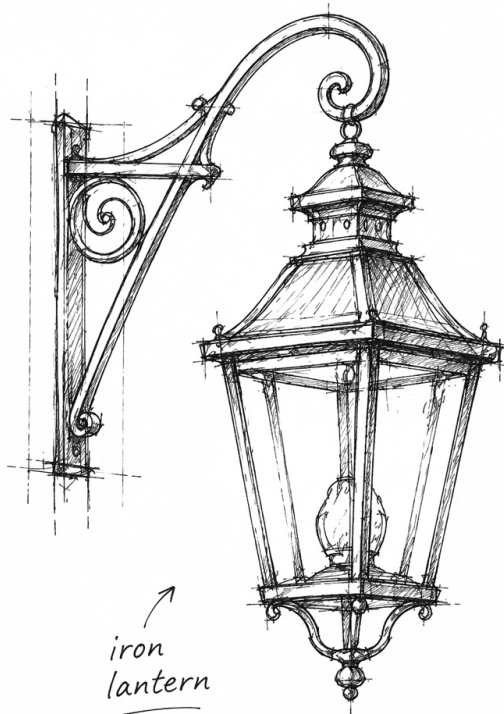


Chapter Three

THE MASTER CRAFTSMAN





THE WORK OF THE QUARRY

Scripture Focus: Luke 8:1-3 & John 20:1-18

I've written well over 20 books through the years, and would you believe that I've read each word out loud? Not just once, but over and over again until each and every word found its place. Some paragraphs come easily to me, but more often than not, a sentence or two can take hours on end before they finally sit right.

The only way I can think to describe it is as a woodworker carving a piece. It's patient work that comes slowly and steadily through quiet attention. Softening edges, refining details, sanding every rough corner until it's smooth to the touch. And when you think that it's finally complete, one more gentle pass over the surface ensures that it is.

The work of a craftsman is rarely hurried. Whether shaping wood, carving stone, or restoring something worn by time, there is patience in the process. Each cut serves a purpose. Each adjustment moves the work closer

to its intended design. What may appear unnecessary to an observer is often essential to the finished result.

The same is true of the Holy Spirit.

If God designed our heavenly home and Christ is the Cornerstone upon whom our faith rests, then the Holy Spirit is the Master Craftsman carrying out God's work within us.

And what is He preparing us for?

Certainly, He is preparing us for the home God has promised. But even now, He is doing something remarkable. He is shaping us into the likeness of Christ.

This is the ongoing work of sanctification.

Day by day, the Holy Spirit teaches, corrects, comforts, and strengthens His people. With patient care, He reveals the places where our hearts still need to surrender more fully to God.

The Spirit sees what we can't.

He uncovers pride hidden beneath good intentions. Fear disguised as wisdom. Self-reliance that competes with trust. Attitudes and desires we may never have recognized apart from His gentle conviction.

Yet every movement of the Spirit's hand is motivated by love.

He's not shaping us to become more impressive. He is shaping us to become more like Christ.

That is why faith is so important. There will be seasons when growth feels slow. Seasons when the shaping is uncomfortable. In those moments, we learn to trust the Craftsman.

This truth is beautifully illustrated in the construction of Solomon's temple. Scripture tells us that the stones were fully prepared at the quarry

*Every movement of
the Spirit's hand is
motivated by love.*

before they were brought to the building site. "No hammer, chisel or any other iron tool was heard at the temple while it was being built" (1 Kings 6:7).

Notice where the noise took place.

The cutting. The shaping. The refining.

All of it happened before the stones arrived at their final destination.

In much the same way, the Holy Spirit often does His deepest work during the difficult and confusing seasons of life. What may feel like disruption to us is often preparation in His hands. The noise of the quarry is not evidence that something has gone wrong. It is evidence that God is still at work.

Just as Abraham trusted the Architect and just as we trust the Cornerstone, we learn to trust the One who is carrying out God's work within us.

As we yield to the Holy Spirit, He gradually removes whatever hinders our fellowship with God. Little by little, our thoughts, desires, and priorities begin to change. What once held a strong grip on our hearts loses its place as Christ becomes increasingly central to our lives.

One of the most beautiful results of that work is love. Love isn't something we produce through determination alone. It's the fruit of God's work within us. As we walk with Christ and yield to the Spirit, His love begins shaping the way we think, serve, forgive, and care for others.

This is why Paul writes, "Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose" (Philippians 2:12–13).

Notice where the work begins.

It begins with God.

His Spirit working within us.

His Spirit shaping our desires.

His Spirit producing fruit that reflects the character of Christ.

Our role isn't to take the Craftsman's tools into our own hands. Our role is to trust Him, yield to His work, and follow His lead.

He knows exactly what the plan is from the beginning, and He never loses sight of that purpose.

Every lesson.

Every correction.

Every act of surrender.

Every evidence of growing love.

All of it is part of His faithful work within us.

And one day, when we finally go home, we will see that God was using every season of our lives to make us more like Christ and prepare us for the home He’s been building.

Word Study: Handiwork

In Ephesians 2:10, Paul writes: “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works...”

The Greek word translated as “handiwork” is *poiēma* (ποίημα). It refers to something carefully made by a skilled craftsman. It is the word from which we eventually get our English word “poem.”

What a beautiful picture of God’s work in our lives.

The Holy Spirit is not working without purpose. Every lesson, every act of surrender, and every season of growth is part of His careful design. Even when we cannot see what He is accomplishing, the Master Craftsman never loses sight of what He is creating.

We are not unfinished projects abandoned in the workshop. We are God’s handiwork, being shaped according to His purpose and prepared for the work He has called us to do.



Read Philippians 2:12–13. What does this passage reveal about the work God is doing within His people? Make a list of the specific ways God is described as working.

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A Quiet Strength: Mary Magdalene

The work of the Holy Spirit is often seen most clearly in a changed life.

Mary Magdalene is a beautiful example of that transformation.

When we first meet Mary in Scripture, we learn that Jesus had delivered her from seven demons (Luke 8:2). We are told very little about her life before that moment, but we are given a glimpse of the life that followed.

Everything changed when she encountered Christ.

Mary became one of His most devoted followers. She traveled with Him, supported His ministry, and remained near Him when many others turned away. When Jesus was crucified, Mary stayed close. When His body was laid in the tomb, she watched where He was placed. And when the Sabbath was over, she returned at daybreak, longing to be near the Lord she loved.

There is something beautiful about that kind of devotion.

Mary was no longer defined by who she had been. Her life had been touched by the grace of God, and that grace continued its work within her. The woman who once needed deliverance became a faithful follower of Christ.

Perhaps the most tender moment in her story comes on the morning of the resurrection. Standing outside the empty tomb, Mary wept because she believed Jesus was gone. Then the risen Lord spoke a single word:

"Mary."

In an instant, sorrow gave way to joy.

The Shepherd had called one of His own by name.

Mary's story reminds us that the Holy Spirit is still transforming lives today. No past is beyond God's redemption. No heart is beyond His reach.

The Master Craftsman continues His work, patiently shaping His people into the likeness of Christ.

And just as He did with Mary, He never loses sight of what His grace can accomplish in a surrendered life.



Faith in Action

Take a few quiet moments today to ask the Lord where He may be shaping your heart. Is there an attitude He is softening, a fear He is bringing into the light, or an area of self-reliance He is asking you to surrender?

Read Philippians 2:13 slowly: “for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.”

Then pray simply: Holy Spirit, help me trust Your work in me. Shape my heart, steady my faith, and make me more like Christ.





How does Mary Magdalene's story illustrate the work of the Master Craftsman in a person's life? What changes can you see between the woman we first meet in Luke 8 and the woman standing at the empty tomb?

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Can you think of a time when the Lord was teaching you something important, even though you didn't understand it at the time? How did that season help you grow?

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The Prayer Closet

Think of one area of your life where the pressure of the present season feels especially heavy right now. Instead of focusing only on what feels uncomfortable or uncertain, intentionally ask the Lord to help you trust what He is accomplishing beneath the surface through this process.

Father in Heaven,

Thank You for continuing Your work in my life. When I can only see the dust and noise of the present moment, help me remember that You see far beyond what I can see.

Forgive me for the times I become discouraged or impatient with the process. Teach me to trust the work of the Holy Spirit, knowing that You are using every season for Your good purpose.

Like Mary Magdalene, may my life reflect the transforming power of Your grace. Continue shaping my heart so that I become more like Christ each day.

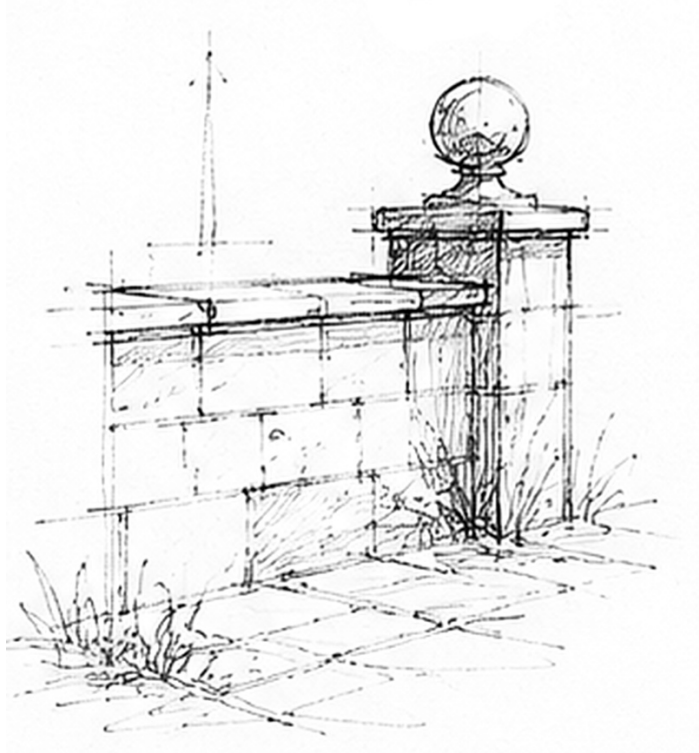
Strengthen my faith when the road feels uncertain, and remind me that You never abandon the work You have begun.

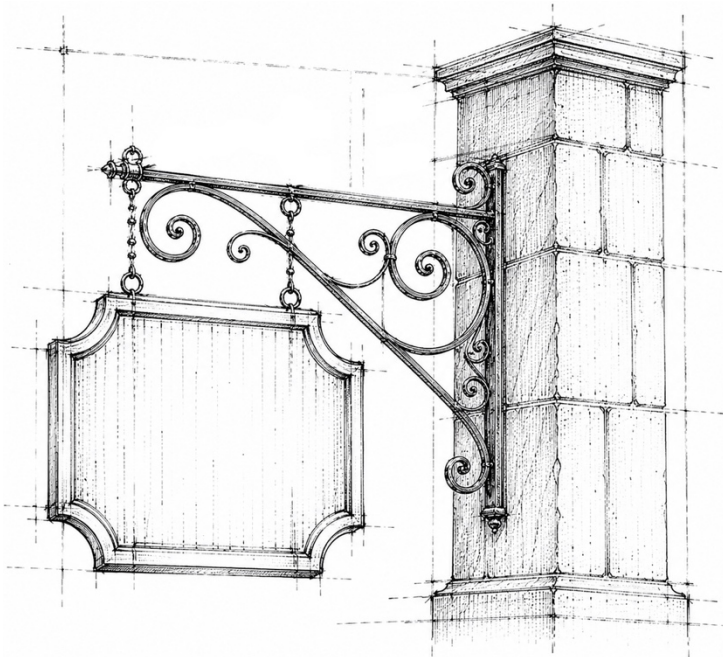
In Jesus' name, Amen.

Chapter Four



THE GATHERING OF THE STONES





GATHERED BY GRACE

Scripture Focus: Joshua 2:1-13

We all know someone who quilts, right? It's one of those crafts that finds its way into families. I dabbled in quilting myself years ago, but let me tell you, very few people quilt like my sisters, Bonnie and Kathy. They've taken this craft to a whole new level, and their sewing rooms are living proof of their passion.

Kathy has devoted more than half of her basement to her sewing room. Her longarm quilting machine alone takes up a space of about 10 feet. And the rest of the basement? It's like stepping into a miniature craft store, where every nook and cranny is bursting with charm. Then there's Bonnie. Her space is quaint, with a vintage flair that makes you linger just a little bit longer. From the moment you step into the room, you don't want to leave.

While I've pieced together a few quilts in my time, Bonnie and Kathy have each made well over a hundred quilts, pouring their time and love into them, donating most of their quilts to hospitals, veterans, and children in care.

One of their more unique projects is something they call the "Scrap Bag Challenges." Imagine getting excited about a bag of fabric scraps that most of us would toss in the trash. For just a few dollars, they buy paper bags stuffed with random and sometimes odd-looking pieces of fabric. Their challenge is to use every single scrap in the bag, with just one additional fabric of their choice.

I don't know how they do it, but somehow those mismatched, discarded pieces are skillfully arranged, stitched together, and transformed into a beautiful, intricate quilt.

It brings to mind the old saying, "One person's trash is another one's treasure." And isn't that a beautiful picture of grace?

The Lord has always seen value where others see none. He doesn't look at His people as castoffs; He sees them through the lens of redeeming love, gathering, shaping, and choosing each one with a purpose.

Across fields, hillsides, and rugged terrain, stones lie scattered across the landscape. Some rest on the surface, weathered by years of wind and rain. Others remain hidden beneath the soil, with only the smallest edge visible above the ground. To anyone passing by, they appear to be nothing more than ordinary stones scattered without purpose.

Disconnected.

Overlooked.

Left to the elements.

But the Master Craftsman sees something entirely different.

He doesn't see forgotten stones.

He sees stones chosen for a purpose.

This is the picture Peter gave us when he wrote, "As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:4–5).

He looks beyond the dirt, beyond the weathered surface, and beyond the years of neglect. He sees exactly where each stone belongs in His house, and He knows exactly when He'll reach down and gather it into His care.

This is how our journey began. We didn't find our way to Him on our own. He came looking for us.

And because He is the One who gathers us, we can trust that His work is never careless. He does not reach for us without knowing where we belong or what He intends to do in our lives.

There's comfort in that—in knowing we're not gathered by chance.

He knows us by name.

He knows our story.

He knows our need.

And He knows the purpose for which He called us.

*We didn't find our
way to Him on
our own. He came
looking for us.*

Jesus said, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit" (John 15:16).

We were all scattered stones. Separated from God and from one another, shaped by the influence of the world and marked by the effects of sin. We certainly didn't look like material fit for the dwelling place of a holy God.

Yet the Lord saw what we couldn't.

He saw what His grace could accomplish.

And the moment God's grace touches a life, everything changes. What once seemed ordinary is given an extraordinary purpose. What once appeared forgotten is gathered with care. What once seemed unfit is chosen for the dwelling He is building.

What a beautiful picture of mercy.

Throughout Scripture, we see the Lord gathering people from every background, each with a different story, yet all called by the same grace.

For some, the gathering came quickly. Their hearts were already tender when the Lord called. For others, the process took time. Some stones were buried beneath years of pain, fear, disappointment, or unbelief. Patiently

and lovingly, the Holy Spirit continued His work, loosening the grip of old surroundings while drawing them toward God.

And as grace was extended, faith took a step closer to Him.

We see this in the story of Ruth, a Moabite woman who left everything behind to follow Naomi and take refuge under the wings of Israel's God. Rahab was a prostitute living in the city of Jericho who risked her life to shelter the spies because she believed the Lord was the true God. Paul, who was once a persecutor of the church, was stopped by the risen Christ and surrendered his life to proclaim the gospel he once opposed.

Humanly speaking, their lives had little in common. Yet when God called, they believed. And because they believed, their stories became part of His greater story.

The same is true for us today.

The Christian life begins when faith responds to the call of God. We leave behind the illusion of self-sufficiency and place our trust in the One who has come looking for us.

It's a comfort to know we're not gathered by chance.

He knows us by name.

He knows our story.

He knows our need.

And He knows the purpose for which He called us.

Word Study: Gathered

In Psalm 107:3, the psalmist praises the Lord for gathering His people, "those he gathered from the lands, from east and west, from north and south."

The Hebrew word translated as "gathered" is qabats (קָבַץ). It means to collect, assemble, or bring together those who have been scattered. The word paints a picture of someone carefully drawing people into a place of belonging, safety, and purpose.

What a beautiful picture of the grace of God.

Before the Holy Spirit drew us to Himself, we were scattered and separated—far from God and far from the life He intended for us. Yet the Master Craftsman saw what His grace could accomplish. In His perfect timing, He gathered us, drew us near, and began placing us within His eternal design.

What once seemed scattered and without purpose is now being joined together into something living, lasting, and beautiful through His grace.



 Read Ephesians 2:19–22. What words or phrases in this passage describe the unity, belonging, and purpose God gives to His people? List as many as you can find.

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A Quiet Strength: Rahab

The people God gathers aren't usually the ones the world would expect.

Throughout Scripture, we see the Lord drawing people from every kind of background to Himself. Some come from places of influence. Others come from places of hardship, loss, or uncertainty.

Yet the Lord often sees what others overlook.

Rahab is a beautiful example of this truth.

When we first meet her, Rahab is living in the city of Jericho. Scripture tells us that she was a prostitute, a woman many would have quickly dismissed or judged. She was not part of the people of Israel, nor did she appear to have a place within God's unfolding plan.

But God saw what others could not see.

When the Israelite spies entered Jericho, Rahab chose to trust in the God of Israel. Though she had only recently come to know of Him, she believed what she had heard. By faith, she sheltered the spies and entrusted her future to the Lord.

What appeared to be an ordinary woman living in an unlikely place was actually someone God was drawing to Himself.

When Jericho fell, Rahab and her family were spared. She was welcomed among God's people and given a new beginning. In time, she became part of the family line through which the Messiah would come.

What a beautiful picture of grace.

Rahab was not gathered because of her reputation, influence, or accomplishments. She was gathered because she believed. The Lord took someone who seemed far away and brought her near.

Her story reminds us that God still works in the same way today. He sees those who feel overlooked, uncertain, or unworthy of His attention. By His grace, He draws them near, gives them a place among His people, and welcomes them into His greater story.

Faith in Action

Take a few quiet moments today to thank the Lord for gathering you by His grace. Read 1 Peter 2:4–5 slowly, and let the truth settle in: you are not forgotten, overlooked, or gathered by chance.

Then ask yourself: *Where have I been tempted to see myself as ordinary, unfit, or without purpose?*

Bring that place honestly before the Lord. Thank Him for choosing you, calling you, and giving your life a place in His greater purpose. Ask Him to help you bear fruit right where He has placed you.



Read Joshua 2:8–21. What risks did Rahab take when she chose to trust the God of Israel? How does the scarlet cord serve as a reminder that salvation comes through faith in God's provision rather than our own efforts?

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Can you remember a time when you became especially aware that God was drawing you to Himself? Looking back, what evidence can you see of His grace at work before you fully understood what He was doing?

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The Prayer Closet

Think of one area of your life where old wounds, past failures, or feelings of unworthiness still try to define you. Intentionally place that part of your story into the hands of God, thanking Him that His grace is greater than the soil you were gathered from.

Father in Heaven,

*Thank You for seeking me when I was far from You.
Thank You that Your grace reached into my life and
drew me near, not because of who I am or what I have
done, but because of Your great love and mercy.*

*Forgive me for the times I allow fear, shame, or doubt
to overshadow the hope I have in Christ. Like Rahab,
teach me to trust Your promises even when I cannot see
what lies ahead. Help me rest in the assurance that You
are faithful and that Your plans are always good.*

*Thank You for the patient work of the Holy Spirit,
who gathers, restores, and shapes Your people day by day.
Help me remember that no life is beyond the reach of
Your grace, and teach me to extend the same mercy to
others that You have so generously shown to me.*

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In Jesus' name, Amen.

ANSWER KEY



Chapter 3

Read Philippians 2:12–13. What does this passage reveal about the work God is doing within His people? Make a list of the specific ways God is described as working.

God is working within His people to:

- Produce the desire to do His will
- Give them the ability to do what pleases Him
- Continue His transforming work in their lives

How does Mary Magdalene's story illustrate the work of the Master Craftsman in a person's life? What changes can you see between the woman we first meet in Luke 8 and the woman standing at the empty tomb?

Mary Magdalene was transformed by Jesus. The woman once oppressed by demons became a devoted follower, remained faithful through Christ's suffering, and was among the first witnesses of His resurrection.

Can you think of a time when the Lord was teaching you something important, even though you didn't understand it at the time? How did that season help you grow?

This answer will be different for everyone.

Chapter 4

Read Ephesians 2:19–22. What words or phrases in this passage describe the unity, belonging, and purpose God gives to His people? List as many as you can find.

Possible answers include:

- Fellow citizens
- Members of God's household
- Built on the foundation
- Joined together
- A holy temple
- A dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit

Read Joshua 2:8–21. What risks did Rahab take when she chose to trust the God of Israel? How does the scarlet cord serve as a reminder that salvation comes through faith in God's provision rather than our own efforts?

Rahab risked her safety, reputation, and even her life by protecting the spies. The scarlet cord marked her home for rescue, pointing back to the Passover, when the Israelites were protected by the blood on their doorframes, and pointing forward to the blood of Christ, through whom we are saved.

Can you remember a time when you became especially aware that God was drawing you to Himself? Looking back, what evidence can you see of His grace at work before you fully understood what He was doing?

This answer will be different for everyone.