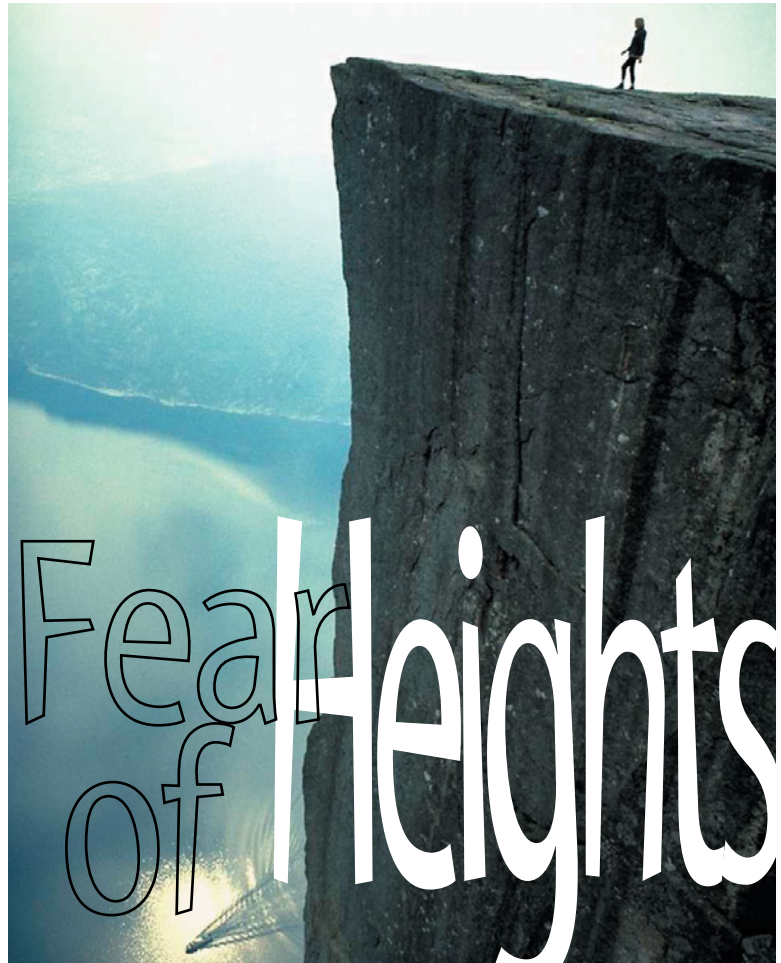


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The hail storm was the worst we have experienced in thirteen years. Hail stones the size of golf balls can inflict substantial damage, but we apparently emerged from the other side of the storm unscathed—until, that is, I went up on the roof.

Out of eight roof vents, six had been damaged. The resilient plastic of their construction, rendered brittle and fragile by the sun, was left vulnerable to the icy onslaught of the hail storm. The missiles had punched gaping holes in the vents, leaving the attic spaces below exposed to weather. Indeed, during a subsequent storm, rain found its way into the attic, through the insulation and drywall, and into a ceiling light fixture. This was not a good thing.

So it was clear that the resident handyman would have to strap on his tools and affect some repairs.

The problem was, ever since that regrettable accident in which I had come crashing down onto the deck when the ladder had slipped out from beneath me, certain situations at heights left me with a queasy gizzard. I easily repaired the damaged vent atop the garage; at only one story up, and with an easy slope to the roof, the job was performed without incident. But when I moved to the very peak of the house—three

*Teach me to do the thing that pleaseth Thee;  
Thou art my God, in Thee I live and move;  
Oh, let Thy loving Spirit lead me forth  
Into the land of righteousness and love.*

*Thy love the law and impulse of my soul,  
Thy righteousness its fitness and its plea,  
Thy loving Spirit mercy's sweet control  
To make me liker, draw me nearer Thee.*

*My highest hope to be where, Lord, Thou art,  
To lose myself in Thee my richest gain,  
To do Thy will the habit of my heart,  
To grieve the Spirit my severest pain.*

*Thy smile my sunshine, all my peace from thence,  
From self alone what could that peace destroy?  
Thy joy my sorrow at the least offence,  
My sorrow that I am not more Thy joy.*

*(John S.B. Monsell)*

stories high, with a sharper pitch to the roof—I suddenly rediscovered a wet, perspiring fear of heights. My dizzying perspective reeled before my sweat-streaked eyes. The roof may as well have been covered in ice, rather than gravel-coated shingles; I imagined that there was no way I could make the necessary repairs without plummeting to my death.

## Regained Courage

My first solution was to tie a rope around my waist, but I soon realized that in the process of arresting my fall (if it did that at all), the rope would surely do uncomfortable damage to my rather substantial girth. This would not be a good thing.

Next I tried hiring a professional who was *not* afraid of heights. But either they wouldn't give me the time of day, or they asked too many dollars in payment for it. So I was back to doing the repairs on my own.

After a little research I discovered that I could purchase a professional quality “fall arrest” harness for less than the price of hiring the job out. Saturday last I tied one end of the rope to the trunk of a strong oak tree, and the other end to the D-ring on the front of the odd contraption strapped around my person. Within just a few minutes I had regained what little courage I had once had. With only nominal sweating from the pores I was able to affect the necessary repairs, and return to family and *terra firma* without injury.

## A Continued Salvation

Generally speaking, in earthly, human terms the closer we are to the ground the safer we are. Climb the sheer face of a cliff, and you are in danger. Dance on the peak of a high roof, and you are in danger. Keep your feet on the ground and chances are good that you won't fall off. In Spiritual terms, however, the closer we are to the ground the more at risk we are, and the higher we climb the safer we are. The more closely, more intimately we cling to Christ during our daily walk, the more safe, the more *whole* we will be.

Then you will say on that day,  
“I will give thanks to You, O Lord;  
For although You were angry with me,

Your anger is turned away,  
And You comfort me.  
“Behold, God is my salvation,  
I will trust and not be afraid;  
For the Lord God is my strength and song,  
And He has become my salvation.”  
Therefore you will joyously draw water  
From the springs of salvation.  
And in that day you will say,  
“Give thanks to the Lord, call on His name.  
Make known His deeds among the peoples;  
Make them remember that His name is  
exalted.”

(Isaiah 12:1-4)

What is so very hard for some Christians to lay hold of is the concept of *continuing* salvation—the salvation of process that follows the salvation event. The mortal spirit yearns for independence, self-sufficiency, so the ingrained human response—after God, in Christ, saves us for eternal life with Him—is, “Okay, thank You very much. Appreciate it. I luv ya, man. Now leave me alone.”

But we are not just saved for something, but *from* something, and part of what we are being saved from is still there, needing regular attention.

## Teetering on the Brink

If we were teetering on the lip of the Grand Canyon, on the brink of plummeting to our death, and a stranger happened along at just the right moment to grab hold and save us, our gratitude would certainly be effusive. We would grab his hand, thank him, pledge to him our firstborn, maybe even open our wallet for a reward, or at least buy him dinner. But chances are good that at the end of the day we would part company, never to see each other again.

In spiritual terms we are standing on the lip of the precipice when God comes along and snatches us to safety. Through Christ, God saves us from a certain, horrible death by giving us life in Him. In physical terms, however, our entire life is a walk along that precipice. Even after God's dramatic moment of salvation, the rest of our life will need His attention. Clearly what is called for is

not just a quick thank-you, but an ongoing relationship.

Because the quality of the process that follows does not change the effectiveness of the salvation event, many do not bother to pursue it. We have been saved from the fall, *fait accompli*. But the full experience of salvation includes a relationship with God that is daily invigorated by our communion with Him.

Our words of praise come from Him. Our determination to rise and meet each new day comes from Him. When we feel sad or lonely, He is the one who comforts and offers companionship. When tragedy strikes, it is He who pulls us out from our self-destructive spiral. When everyone else has fled, He remains.

Because we have nurtured the relationship, we are aware of His presence, and we gain strength. But if we have not pursued the relationship God offers, though we are “saved” we are left feeling alone and neglected. We have not laid the groundwork to enjoy His ongoing work of salvation. And though we will never plummet to our eternal destruction, we may spend our earthly lives teetering on the brink.

Christ's death on the cross saved us from eternal death. That is done. Accomplished once and for all. But we still require a Spiritual “fall arrest” harness during the process of sanctification. That Spiritual harness is our daily communion with God—His counsel, His strength, His assurance—holding us secure and confident as we travel the precipice.

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High  
Will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.  
I will say to the Lord, “My refuge and my fortress,  
My God, in whom I trust!”  
For it is He who delivers you from the snare of the trapper  
And from the deadly pestilence.  
He will cover you with His pinions,  
And under His wings you may seek refuge;  
His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark.  
You will not be afraid of the terror by night,  
Or of the arrow that flies by day;  
Of the pestilence that stalks in darkness,  
Or of the destruction that lays waste at noon.

(Psalm 91:1-6)