

FROM THE DESK OF THE ELDER

Picture Quote Book Included

Written by

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CHAPTER I — JOURNEY, TRIAL & PURPOSE

STORY ONE

The Long Road

Inspired by "A Walk Through Carolina"

The old man walked slowly.

Not because he could not walk fast.

Because he had learned there was wisdom in taking his time.

The gravel road stretched for miles through the Carolina countryside.

Pine trees lined both sides of the road.

The morning air carried the smell of dew and earth.

Years earlier he would have hurried down that road.

He would have been chasing success.

Chasing approval.

Chasing answers.

But age had taught him something.

Many of the things he once chased were never worth catching.

He stopped beside a weathered fence and looked toward the horizon.

The sun was beginning to rise.

Golden light spilled across the fields.

He smiled.

Life had not gone the way he planned.

There had been victories.

There had been failures.

There had been seasons when he questioned God.

There had been nights when sleep never came.

There had been people he loved who were no longer here.

Yet somehow...

God had remained faithful through every season.

The old man tapped his walking staff against the dirt road.

Then he whispered:

"Lord, I still don't understand all of it."

The breeze moved through the trees.

No answer came.

At least not the kind he expected.

Instead, a thought settled gently upon his heart.

You were never meant to understand all of it.

You were only meant to trust Me through it.

The old man laughed softly.

After all these years...

The lesson was still the same.

Faith.

Trust.

Obedience.

One step at a time.

He looked down the road once more.

There were still miles ahead.

But he was no longer concerned about reaching the end.

Because he finally understood something.

The road itself was part of God's blessing.

Every lesson.

Every struggle.

Every victory.

Every loss.

God had used them all.

The old man adjusted his coat.

Lifted his staff.

And continued walking.

Not because he knew where the road ended.

But because he knew who was walking with him.

REFLECTION

Purpose is rarely discovered in comfort.

More often it is revealed through endurance.

The road that seems difficult today may be preparing you for the life God has already prepared tomorrow.

ELDER KING LATHAM

"Moving into your purpose is not going to always be popular. There may be physical pain, there may be emotional distress, but just keep on fighting. The you that you find on the other side will absolutely amaze and change your life."

Paul King Latham, Jr.

STORY TWO

The Fisherman and the Storm

Inspired by "Rowing Through The Ocean Storm"

The sea was angry that morning.

Waves crashed against the small wooden boat with enough force to make lesser men turn back.

But the fisherman kept rowing.

His hands were weathered.

His shoulders ached.

His clothes were soaked.

Yet he continued moving forward.

Not because he was fearless.

Because he had learned something many years ago.

Courage is not the absence of fear.

Courage is refusing to let fear decide your direction.

The sky above him was dark.

Heavy clouds rolled across the horizon.

The wind pushed against him from every direction.

Every stroke of the oars seemed harder than the one before.

The fisherman paused.

Just long enough to catch his breath.

He looked toward the distant shoreline.

It was barely visible now.

The storm had hidden nearly everything.

For a moment, doubt entered his mind.

Perhaps he should turn around.

Perhaps he should head back.

Perhaps this journey was too difficult.

But another voice reminded him of something he had learned through many years of living.

Every blessing worth receiving requires faith before it can be seen.

He gripped the oars again.

The storm did not become smaller.

The waves did not become calmer.

The wind did not suddenly stop.

Yet something changed.

The fisherman did.

Instead of focusing on the storm...

He focused on the direction.

Instead of measuring the size of the waves...

He remembered the size of his God.

Stroke after stroke.

Wave after wave.

Hour after hour.

The boat continued moving forward.

Then something unexpected happened.

A ray of sunlight pierced through the clouds.

Only a small opening.

Only a brief moment.

But it was enough.

The fisherman smiled.

Because he understood what many people never learn.

God does not always remove the storm.

Sometimes He sends just enough light to remind you He is still there.

The sea remained rough.

The journey remained difficult.

But hope had returned.

And hope changes everything.

By late afternoon the shoreline finally appeared.

Closer than before.

Clearer than before.

The fisherman laughed aloud.

Not because the journey had been easy.

Because he almost quit.

Had he turned around earlier...

He would never have known how close he truly was.

The boat eventually touched the shore.

The fisherman stepped onto dry land.

His legs were tired.

His hands were sore.

His clothes were still wet.

But his faith was stronger than when he began.

He looked back toward the ocean.

Toward the storm that had challenged him.

Toward the waves that had threatened him.

Toward the fear that had followed him.

Then he whispered:

"Thank You, Lord."

Not for the storm.

But for carrying him through it.

REFLECTION

Many people pray for easier circumstances.

God often provides something greater.

He provides strength.

A stronger faith is worth more than a smoother sea.

The storm may be fighting against you today, but it cannot stop what God has already ordained for tomorrow.

Keep rowing.

Keep believing.

Keep moving.

ELDER KING LATHAM

"With God as your guide, no matter how unclear your next step may seem to be, keep pressing forward and never fear. God will see you through."

Paul King Latham, Jr.

STORY THREE

The Garden After The Rain

Inspired by "Storm & Sunshine Road"

The rain had finally stopped.

For three days the sky had remained gray.

Three days of heavy clouds.

Three days of wind.

Three days of wondering when the sun would return.

The old gardener stood quietly on the edge of his property.

Mud covered the path.

Puddles reflected pieces of the morning sky.

Broken branches lay scattered across the yard.

At first glance, the storm appeared to have won.

But the gardener knew better.

Storms often leave behind things that cannot be seen immediately.

He walked slowly through the garden.

His boots sank into the soft ground.

Rows of lilies leaned beneath droplets of water.

Rose bushes shimmered beneath the first rays of sunlight.

Butterflies had already begun returning.

Birds filled the morning air with song.

Life was everywhere.

The gardener smiled.

Only a few days earlier he had worried.

The winds had been fierce.

The rain relentless.

Several times he wondered if everything he had worked so hard to build had been destroyed.

But now...

Standing in the aftermath...

He noticed something remarkable.

The flowers looked stronger.

The colors appeared brighter.

The soil seemed richer.

The roots had been watered deeply.

What felt like destruction had actually become preparation.

A young man approached from the road.

He carried a burden in his eyes.

The kind that cannot be hidden.

"Sir," the young man asked. "How do you keep going when life falls apart?"

The gardener looked toward the flowers. Then toward the young man. Finally he answered.

"Tell me something. When was the last time you saw a flower grow during a drought?"

The young man thought for a moment. "Never."

The gardener smiled. "Neither have I."

They walked together through the garden.

The old man stopped beside a rose bush.

Its petals were covered with rain.

Its fragrance filled the air.

"This rose needed the rain."

The young man looked confused. "The storm nearly destroyed it."

The gardener shook his head. "No." He pointed toward the roots hidden beneath the soil.

"The storm strengthened what you could not see."

Silence filled the space between them.

Then the gardener continued.

"Many people ask God to remove every storm."

He gently touched one of the roses.

"But some storms arrive carrying the very thing you prayed for."

The young man lowered his head.

The words found their target.

Because suddenly he understood.

The job loss.

The heartbreak.

The disappointment.

The loneliness.

Perhaps they were not punishments.

Perhaps they were preparation.

The gardener looked toward the horizon.

The sun was rising higher now.

Golden light danced across the flowers.

Butterflies floated through the air.

A red bird landed nearby.

The entire garden seemed alive.

The old man smiled once more.

"Never judge God by the weather."

The young man looked around. "What do you mean?"

The gardener laughed softly. "Sometimes the greatest blessings arrive disguised as storms."

REFLECTION

Pain has a way of convincing us that God has abandoned us.

But often He is working beneath the surface where we cannot see.

Roots grow deeper in difficult seasons.

Character develops under pressure.

Faith matures during trials.

Do not allow temporary storms to make permanent conclusions about God's faithfulness.

ELDER KING LATHAM

"Even in your loss you must search for the wisdom of God. Through His love and kindness you will find the freedom of true peace."

Paul King Latham, Jr.

STORY FOUR

The Cross At Sunrise

Inspired by "Cross of Light Over The Ocean"

The old man arrived before sunrise.

It had become a habit over the years.

Whenever life became too loud...

Whenever the weight of the world became too heavy...

Whenever questions seemed greater than answers...

He would find himself returning to the same place.

A quiet overlook above the water.

The ocean stretched endlessly before him.

The horizon separated heaven and earth.

The waves rolled in with a rhythm that seemed older than time itself.

He sat alone.

The morning air was cool.

The world was silent.

For a few moments he simply listened.

The wind. The water. The distant cry of a bird somewhere overhead.

Then he bowed his head.

Not because he had the perfect prayer.

Not because he had all the answers.

But because he knew where answers came from.

Years earlier he had approached God differently.

Back then he brought demands.

Requests.

Timetables.

Expectations.

He wanted God to explain Himself.

He wanted God to justify His methods.

He wanted God to make sense of every disappointment. Every loss. Every unanswered prayer.

But age had taught him something.

Faith is not understanding everything God does.

Faith is trusting everything God is.

The old man lifted his eyes toward the horizon.

The darkness was beginning to retreat.

The first hints of dawn appeared.

Soft gold.

Gentle orange.

A faint line of light across the water.

Then something remarkable happened.

The rising sunlight formed a brilliant reflection upon the ocean.

For a brief moment the light stretched vertically across the water.

The shape resembled a cross.

The old man's eyes filled with tears.

Not because he had never seen it before.

Because he had. Many times.

Yet every time it reminded him of the same truth.

Everything changed at the cross.

Every failure. Every mistake. Every broken promise.

Every hidden shame. Every wound. Every fear. Every sin.

The cross stood between who he had been and who God was calling him to become.

He thought about the countless people carrying burdens they were never meant to carry.

Guilt. Bitterness. Regret. Unforgiveness.

The weight of trying to earn what God had already offered freely.

The waves continued rolling toward shore.

The sunlight grew brighter.

The cross-shaped reflection slowly disappeared into the fullness of morning.

But the lesson remained.

The cross was never about the wood.

The nails.

Or even the hill.

The cross was about love.

A love so great that God stepped into humanity.

A love so complete that He carried what mankind could not.

A love so powerful that death itself could not hold Him.

The old man smiled.

The world was waking up.

The sun now stood above the horizon.

A new day had begun.

And just as surely as the sunrise appeared every morning...

The mercy of God remained available every day.

No matter who you were.

No matter where you had been.

No matter what you had done.

The invitation remained the same.

Come.

The old man stood. Looked once more toward the ocean.

Then quietly whispered: "Thank You for the cross."

REFLECTION

Many people spend their lives trying to earn what God has already provided.

The cross is not a symbol of condemnation.

It is a declaration of love.

It reminds us that God's grace is greater than our failures.

His mercy is greater than our mistakes.

And His purpose for our lives is greater than our past.

ELDER KING LATHAM

"Jesus' passion was you. His vehicle was the cross. His purpose was to defeat death and the grave."

Paul King Latham, Jr.

STORY FIVE

The Railroad Beyond The Horizon

Inspired by "Railroad Tracks"

The tracks stretched farther than the eye could see.

Two lines of steel disappearing into the horizon.

Straight. Steady. Purposeful.

The old man stood quietly beside them.

Hands folded across the top of his walking staff.

Watching. Thinking. Remembering.

The railroad had always fascinated him.

Not because of the trains.

But because of the tracks.

Every train that ever reached its destination depended upon them.

Without the tracks...

The train's power meant nothing.

Its size meant nothing.

Its speed meant nothing.

Direction mattered.

The old man smiled. Life worked the same way.

Many people spent their entire lives trying to become more powerful.

More successful. More influential. More important.

Yet very few spent time asking the most important question.

Am I headed in the right direction?

A young traveler sat nearby on an old wooden bench.

His suitcase rested beside him.

His face carried the look of someone standing between yesterday and tomorrow.

The traveler spoke first. "Have you ever wondered if you're on the wrong train?"

The old man chuckled softly. "Many times."

"I thought I knew where I was going." "What changed?" "Life."

The old man laughed. "That'll do it."

The two sat in silence.

The wind moved gently through the nearby trees.

Finally the old man spoke.

"When I was younger, I thought success was the destination."

The traveler listened carefully.

"Then I thought happiness was the destination."

"Then I thought money was the destination."

The old man pointed toward the tracks.

"I was asking the wrong question."

"What question?" the traveler asked.

"I kept asking where I was going. When I should have been asking who was leading me."

Silence filled the air.

The words settled deep.

The train finally appeared.

Far away at first. Then gradually larger. Closer. Stronger.

Its wheels moved confidently along the rails.

Never questioning where to go next.

Because the path had already been established.

The old man smiled.

God had shown him the same thing throughout his life.

Purpose is not discovered by chasing destinations.

Purpose is discovered by following direction.

The traveler stood. His train was arriving.

He picked up his suitcase.

Then looked back toward the old man.

"How do you know if you're headed the right way?"

The old man smiled.

The answer had taken him decades to learn.

"If the road is taking you closer to God..."

He pointed toward the tracks.

"Keep going."

The train stopped. Doors opened.

The traveler smiled. Then boarded.

Moments later the train pulled away.

The old man watched until it disappeared beyond the horizon.

The road. The storm. The garden. The cross. Every lesson had brought him here.

Not to a destination.

But to an understanding.
God was never simply leading him somewhere.
God was shaping him into someone.
The old man lifted his staff.
Turned away from the tracks.
And continued his journey.
Not because he knew everything ahead.
But because he knew the One who did.

REFLECTION

*Many people spend their lives trying to discover their purpose.
Often purpose is not hidden.
Direction is.
When we learn to follow God's direction, purpose reveals itself along the journey.
The destination is important.
But the relationship with the Guide is everything.
Do not become so focused on arriving that you forget who is leading.*

ELDER KING LATHAM

"Don't just learn the process. Get to know the source."

Paul King Latham, Jr.

CHAPTER I — CLOSING THOUGHT

*Every great purpose is born in the wilderness,
refined in the storm,
strengthened through hardship,
redeemed by grace,*

and revealed through faithful obedience.

Paul King Latham, Jr.

CHAPTER II — REFLECTION, REVELATION & RESTORATION

STORY SIX

The Forest Beyond The Fog

Inspired by "Foggy Pine Forest"

The fog arrived before dawn.

It settled quietly among the pines.

Wrapping itself around the trees.

Softening every edge.

Hiding every landmark.

Even the familiar path seemed to disappear beneath its blanket of gray.

The traveler stood at the edge of the forest.

He had walked this trail many times before.

Yet today it felt different.

The path was still there.

But he could no longer see it.

Only a few feet lay visible before him.

Everything beyond that vanished into uncertainty.

He tightened his coat.

Adjusted the strap on his satchel.

And stared into the fog.

Part of him wanted to wait.

Part of him wanted clearer conditions.

Part of him wanted guarantees.

But life had taught him something.

The clearest directions rarely come when the road is visible.

They come when trust becomes necessary.

The traveler stepped forward.

One careful step. Then another. Then another.

The fog remained. The uncertainty remained. The questions remained.

Yet the path continued to reveal itself one step at a time.

As he walked deeper into the forest, memories began to surface.

Moments he had forgotten.

Prayers he thought had gone unanswered.

Disappointments that still carried weight.

Failures he wished he could erase.

The fog outside began to resemble the fog within.

For years he had carried questions.

Why had certain doors closed?

Why had certain relationships ended?

Why had certain dreams taken so long?

Why had God remained silent during some of his darkest seasons?

The traveler stopped beside a towering pine.

The forest stood silent around him.

Not empty. Not abandoned. Simply quiet.

Then a realization came.

Not as a voice. Not as thunder. Not as a miracle.

But as a gentle truth.

God was never absent.

The traveler looked around.

The fog had hidden the forest.

But it had never removed it.

The trees were still standing.

The path was still beneath his feet.

The destination still existed.

His inability to see it had never changed reality.

Tears filled his eyes.

How many times had he mistaken God's silence for God's absence?

How many times had he confused hiddenness with abandonment?

The traveler continued walking.

This time differently.

The fog had not changed.

But his perspective had.

He no longer needed to see the entire road.

He only needed enough light for the next step.

Hours later the sun began to rise.

Its rays pierced through the mist.

Slowly. Patiently.

The fog started to lift.

The forest became visible once again.

The path stretched clearly ahead.

The traveler smiled.

Not because the fog was gone.

But because he had learned something while it was there.

Sometimes God allows us to walk through uncertainty so we can discover where our confidence truly belongs.

Not in the path. Not in ourselves. But in Him.

The traveler stepped into the morning sunlight.

The forest behind him. The future before him.

His faith stronger than when he entered.

REFLECTION

Faith is not the ability to see the entire journey.

Faith is trusting God with the portion you can see.

Many people want certainty.

God often provides trust instead.

And trust develops into something certainty never can: A relationship.

ELDER KING LATHAM

"Faith is trusting God when you cannot see the road He has already prepared for you."

Paul King Latham, Jr.

STORY SEVEN

The Road That Curved

Inspired by "Curving Road Through The Trees"

The road was beautiful.

Tall trees lined both sides.

Sunlight filtered through the branches.

Leaves danced in the breeze.

Birds sang somewhere beyond the woods.

The traveler smiled as he walked.

The lessons from the foggy forest were still fresh in his mind.

He had learned to trust God when he could not see.

Now he walked with confidence.

The path was clear. The day was bright. The future seemed promising.

Then the road curved.

At first it was only a slight bend.

Then another. Then another.

Soon the traveler realized he could no longer see where he was headed.

The road disappeared around each turn.

His confidence began to fade.

He preferred straight roads.

Straight roads provided answers. Straight roads provided certainty.

Curved roads required trust.

The traveler stopped. Looking down the winding path.

"Why can't life ever be straight?" he asked aloud.

The question disappeared into the forest. No answer came.

As he continued walking, he noticed something.

Every curve revealed something new.

Around one bend stood a small stream.

Crystal clear water flowed gently over smooth stones.

Around another bend stood a field of wildflowers.

Around yet another bend stood a family of deer quietly grazing.

Had the road been straight...

He would have missed every one of those moments.

The realization lingered.

Then came another.

The curves were not obstacles.

They were invitations.

Invitations to discover what could not be seen from where he had been.

The traveler smiled.

God often works the same way.

We pray for straight roads. God provides winding ones.

We pray for immediate answers. God provides daily dependence.

We pray for complete visibility. God provides enough light for today.

The traveler continued walking.

This time appreciating the curves.

Trusting them. Welcoming them.

Hours later he reached a clearing.

An elderly man sat on a bench overlooking the valley.

The traveler greeted him. The old man smiled.

"Beautiful road, isn't it?"

The traveler nodded. "It is now."

The old man laughed. "That sounds like experience talking."

"Why does God allow so many curves in life?" the traveler asked.

The old man pointed toward mountains in the distance.

"If this road had gone straight through them, many travelers would have fallen."

"The curves protected you from dangers you never knew existed."

Silence followed.

How many disappointments had actually been protection?

How many delays had been mercy?

How many closed doors had been God's kindness?

The old man stood. Before walking away he smiled and said:

"Never judge a road before you see where it leads."

Then he disappeared down the trail.

The traveler remained seated.

Watching the road wind through the trees.

No longer frustrated by its curves.

No longer demanding straight lines.

Because he finally understood.

The road was not trying to confuse him.

It was preparing him.

Every turn. Every bend. Every unexpected change.

All of it was leading somewhere.

And God had never once lost sight of the destination.

REFLECTION

Many of life's greatest frustrations are revealed later to be God's greatest protections.

A delay is not always denial.

A closed door is not always rejection.

A detour is not always a mistake.

Sometimes God bends the road because He loves you enough to keep you from what lies straight ahead.

Trust the curves.

The One who designed the road can already see beyond the bend.

ELDER KING LATHAM

"Do not let your current circumstances dictate your final outcome. Direct your thoughts in the movement of your next second, next minute, next hour, next day."

Paul King Latham, Jr.

STORY EIGHT

The Field of Mist

Inspired by "Mist Across The Field"

The field appeared empty.

At least that is what the traveler thought when he first arrived.

A blanket of mist stretched across the landscape.

Soft gray clouds hovered just above the grass.

The morning sun struggled to break through.

Trees stood like shadows in the distance.

Everything felt quiet. Too quiet.

The traveler had grown accustomed to movement.

Roads. Journeys. Conversations. Lessons.

But this place felt different.

There was no obvious destination.

No visible path.

No sign telling him where to go next.

Only silence.

Silence has a way of exposing things noise can hide.

Questions surfaced.

Memories surfaced.

Old wounds surfaced.

He remembered one particular season.

The darkest of his life.

A season when loss came faster than healing.
When doors closed faster than new ones opened.
When loneliness became a familiar companion.
He had prayed. Cried. Waited.
Yet heaven seemed silent.
The memory still carried weight.
Even now.
The traveler walked into the field.
The mist wrapped around him.
Every step felt uncertain.
The farther he walked, the less he could see.
Soon even the trees disappeared.
Only fog remained.
For a moment panic stirred inside him.
What if he was lost?
What if he never found his way out?
What if he had taken the wrong path?
Then something unexpected happened.
A bird sang.
Somewhere nearby. Hidden within the mist.
The traveler stopped. Listening.
A second bird answered. Then another. Then another.

Life surrounded him.

Though he could not see it.

The realization struck him immediately.

The field had never been empty.

His vision had been limited.

How many times had he mistaken invisibility for absence?

How many times had he assumed God was gone simply because he could not see what God was doing?

The mist remained.

But now he noticed things he had missed before.

The sound of wind moving through distant trees.

The warmth of sunlight pressing through the fog.

The scent of fresh earth beneath his feet.

Evidence of life existed everywhere.

Even when visibility did not.

Tears formed in his eyes.

Because suddenly he understood something about God's presence.

God's presence is not dependent upon our awareness of Him.

He is present whether we recognize Him or not.

The traveler continued walking.

No longer afraid. No longer searching desperately for signs.

No longer demanding proof.

He simply walked. Trusting. Believing. Knowing.

Eventually the mist began to thin.

The trees reappeared. The sunlight grew stronger.

The field revealed itself.

But the greatest revelation had already occurred.

God had been there the entire time.

Not waiting beyond the fog.

Not arriving after the fog.

Present within it.

The traveler stopped and looked back.

The mist still covered much of the field.

Yet it no longer frightened him.

Because now he knew.

The fog may hide God's hand.

But it can never remove His presence.

REFLECTION

One of the greatest mistakes we make is believing that God's presence depends upon our feelings.

There will be seasons when you feel close to God.

There will be seasons when you do not.

Neither changes the truth.

God remains faithful.

God remains present.

God remains near.

Faith is not believing God is present when you feel Him.

Faith is believing He is present when you don't.

ELDER KING LATHAM

"Even when life appears hidden behind the fog, God has never lost sight of you."

Paul King Latham, Jr.

STORY NINE

The Lone Tree

Inspired by "Lone Tree At Sunrise"

The tree stood alone.

No forest surrounded it.

No neighboring trees stretched their branches nearby.

No shelter shielded it from the wind.

It stood by itself in the middle of an open field.

Season after season. Year after year. Storm after storm.

The traveler noticed it from a distance.

Golden sunlight was beginning to rise behind it.

Its silhouette stood boldly against the morning sky.

Something about it drew him closer.

As he approached, he began to see the scars.

Large branches had broken away long ago.

Lightning had left its mark.

The bark carried evidence of battles fought over decades.

Yet the tree still stood.

Strong. Steady. Unmoved.

The traveler sat beneath it.

Resting in its shade. Looking upward through its branches.

He wondered how many storms it had survived.

A voice interrupted his thoughts.

"Beautiful tree, isn't it?"

An elderly farmer approached.

"Most people see a tree." He pointed toward its trunk. "I see a survivor."

"That tree has seen droughts."

He pointed toward the roots.

"Floods." Toward a broken limb.

"Lightning." Toward a scar running down the bark.

"Wind." Toward branches twisted by time.

"Then why hasn't it fallen?"

The farmer laughed softly.

"Because what kept it standing isn't what you see above the ground."

The traveler looked down. Toward the earth. Toward the roots hidden beneath the surface.

The farmer nodded. "Exactly."

"People spend most of their lives trying to grow branches."

"They want success. Recognition. Influence. Position."

He pointed toward the roots.

"But very few spend time growing roots."

Roots are developed where nobody sees.

In private. In prayer. In surrender. In obedience. In difficult seasons.

The farmer looked toward the horizon.

"The storms didn't weaken this tree."

He smiled. "They revealed its roots."

The traveler thought about his own life.

The difficult seasons. The disappointments. The betrayals. The losses.

The seasons when he felt alone. The seasons when he questioned everything.

Perhaps those storms had not been sent to destroy him.

Perhaps they had been revealing what was beneath the surface.

Before walking away the farmer placed his hand on the tree.

"Standing alone is not the same as being abandoned."

The traveler looked up.

The farmer smiled.

"Sometimes God separates us from the crowd so our roots can grow deeper."

Then he walked away.

The morning sun continued to rise.

Its golden light spilled across the field.

The tree stood exactly where it had always stood.

Strong. Steady. Faithful.

The traveler finally understood why.

Its strength was never found in its branches.

Its strength was hidden beneath the ground.

The deeper the roots...

The stronger the tree.

And perhaps the same was true for him.

REFLECTION

Strong people are not created during easy seasons.

Strength is developed when life becomes difficult.

Storms reveal what comfort conceals.

If God is allowing you to stand through a difficult season, He may be doing something deeper than you realize.

He may be growing roots.

And roots often become the foundation for future fruit.

ELDER KING LATHAM

"A tree does not become strong because the weather was easy."

Paul King Latham, Jr.

STORY TEN

The Sunset Beyond The Mountains

Inspired by "Crimson Mountain Sunset"

The traveler reached the mountain overlook just before evening.

The climb had been difficult.

Steep in places. Rocky in others.

Several times he had stopped to catch his breath.

Several times he wondered if the view would be worth the effort.

Now, standing at the summit, he had his answer.

The mountains stretched endlessly before him.

Layer upon layer fading into the distance.

The sky blazed with color.

Crimson. Gold. Purple. Orange.

The entire horizon appeared painted by the hand of God.

The traveler stood quietly.

Watching the day surrender itself to evening.

For a moment he felt sadness.

The sun was leaving. The light was fading. The day was ending.

It reminded him of life.

How quickly seasons pass.

How suddenly years disappear.

How often people spend their lives chasing tomorrow only to discover yesterday has already gone.

An elderly shepherd approached from a nearby ridge.

His pace was slow. Deliberate. Peaceful.

Together they admired the sunset.

Neither spoke for several minutes.

Finally the traveler broke the silence.

"Why do sunsets make people emotional?"

The shepherd smiled. "Because they remind us that everything has a season."

"The mistake many people make is believing sunsets are endings."

"Aren't they?" the traveler asked.

The old man laughed softly. "No." He pointed toward the horizon. "They are promises."

"What promise?"

The shepherd looked toward the fading sun. "That morning is coming."

The words settled into the traveler's heart.

Simple. Yet profound.

"When people experience loss..." He pointed toward the horizon. "They see sunset."

"When dreams fail..." Sunset.

"When relationships end..." Sunset.

"When difficult seasons arrive..." Sunset.

"But God sees something different." The shepherd pointed toward where the sun was disappearing.

"He sees tomorrow."

Tears forming.

Because suddenly he understood.

Some of the hardest seasons of his life had felt like endings.

Yet God had always turned them into beginnings.

Every closed door. Every disappointment. Every unexpected turn. Every painful goodbye.

God had somehow used them all.

Before leaving the shepherd looked back toward the traveler.

"The darkness may arrive tonight."

He smiled.

"But don't forget." The old man pointed toward the horizon one final time.

"The sun always comes back."

The traveler remained seated.

Watching as the final light slipped behind the mountains.

The valley grew darker. The colors faded. Night approached.

Yet fear never came.

Because he now understood something he had never fully grasped before.

God does not measure life by sunsets.

He measures it by sunrises.

The ending of one season is often the preparation for another.

The traveler stood.

The stars were beginning to appear overhead.

A new kind of light had arrived.

Different. Yet beautiful.

He smiled. Turned toward the path.

And began the journey home.

Not mourning the end of the day.

But anticipating the arrival of tomorrow.

REFLECTION

Endurance is not merely surviving difficult seasons.

It is trusting God's faithfulness while moving through them.

Many of the things we call endings are simply transitions.

God often closes one chapter so another can begin.

Do not become discouraged by the setting sun.

The same God who designed the sunset also prepared the sunrise.

Trust Him through both.

ELDER KING LATHAM

"The darkness may last for a season, but God never intended it to be your destination."

Paul King Latham, Jr.

STORY ELEVEN

The Cabin Hidden Among The Pines

Inspired by "Cabin Hidden In The Pines"

The cabin was difficult to find.

That was intentional.

A narrow dirt road wound through the pines before disappearing into the woods.

Most travelers passed by without ever knowing it existed.

The traveler had been told about the place years ago.

A quiet retreat. A hidden refuge.

A place where people went when they needed to hear God more clearly than the noise of the world would allow.

Now, after many years, he finally stood before it.

The cabin was simple.

Weathered wood. A stone chimney. A small porch.

Nothing about it demanded attention.

Yet something about it felt sacred.

The traveler stepped onto the porch.

The boards creaked beneath his feet.

The scent of pine filled the air.

The world seemed slower here. Quieter. Peaceful.

He opened the door and stepped inside.

A fireplace stood against one wall.

An old rocking chair sat near a window.

A small wooden table occupied the center of the room.

No television. No distractions. No crowds.

Only silence.

At first, the silence felt uncomfortable.

The traveler had spent most of his life moving.

Working. Striving. Achieving.

Silence had always felt like wasted time.

But in this place...

Something was different.

He sat in the rocking chair.

The afternoon light filtered through the windows.

Outside, the pines stood quietly.

Not a sound from the world he had left behind.

He bowed his head.

No agenda.

No request list.

No timeframe.

Just stillness.

Minutes passed.

Then something unexpected happened.

In the absence of noise...

He heard something he had been too busy to notice.

Not an audible voice.

But a gentle awareness.

The kind that only arrives when the heart becomes quiet enough to receive it.

God had been speaking.

All along.

Through the storms.

Through the fog.

Through the curves.

Through the lone tree.

Through the sunset.

Through every season of the journey.

He had been speaking.

The traveler simply had not been still enough to hear.

Tears came.

Not from sorrow.

From recognition.

From gratitude.

From the realization that God had never abandoned him.

Not once.

Not in the wilderness.

Not in the darkness.

Not in the confusion.

Not in the silence.

He had been present through all of it.

Waiting patiently.

The traveler remained in the rocking chair for a long time.

No hurry.

No agenda.

Simply resting.

Simply listening.

Simply being.

And in that sacred stillness...

Something was restored.

Not a plan.

Not a strategy.

Not a to-do list.

Something deeper.

A settled peace.

The kind that cannot be manufactured.

The kind that can only be received.

When he finally rose and walked back toward the door...

He was not the same traveler who had entered.

Something had shifted.

Something had been restored.

Something had been made new.

He stepped back onto the porch.

The pines stood quietly.

The afternoon light had deepened into gold.

The world felt the same as before.

Yet somehow...

Everything was different.

Because he was different.

The traveler looked back at the cabin one final time.

Then smiled.

Adjusted his coat.

Lifted his satchel.

And continued on the road.

Not because the journey was finished.

Because he was finally ready to walk it the right way.

In step with God.

One moment at a time.

REFLECTION

In a world that prizes speed, productivity, and constant motion, stillness has become one of the most difficult disciplines.

Yet it is often in stillness that God restores what the journey has taken.

You do not need a cabin in the pines.

You only need a willing heart.

Slow down.

Be still.

And know that He is God.

ELDER KING LATHAM

"There are places along the journey where God calls you to be still — not because the road has ended, but because what He wants to give you can only be received in silence."

Paul King Latham, Jr.

CHAPTER II — CLOSING THOUGHT

In every season of the journey,

God was never far.

He was in the fog.

In the storm.

In the silence.

In the stillness.

*All along, He was preparing you
for the life He always intended.*

Paul King Latham, Jr.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paul King Latham, Jr. is the founder of TEKL Studios and S.Y.L.A. — Support Your Local Artist. Known as The Elder King Latham, he is a musician, author, educator, and community builder dedicated to creating platforms that strengthen the connection between artists and the communities that value creativity, culture, and purpose.

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