

Tears of Remorse To Tears of Joy!

Prodigal-come-home Singin' Sam tells of his joyful return to full-time service!

Dear Dad & Maria, 28/5/81
WELL, AFTER ALMOST 3 YEARS IT'S ME AGAIN. I love you all so much and les doy mil gracias por la oportunidad de trabajar en el servicio del Señor mas una vez, yo espero que esta vez que voy a quedar a sus ordenes hasta que viene Jesus. (That's sure sign I'm in Puerto Rico, as everyone here slips back & forth from English to Spanish in the course of a normal conversation, ha!)

I LOVE PUERTO RICO & LATIN AMERICA in general, & now that I'm back again it brings back so many fond memories of the first time I ever came here in the Lord's service in July of '72. It was sheepy here then & it hasn't changed a bit in that respect. God knows that I love it here, & right up until this second He has been giving me the desires of my heart since deciding to follow Jesus & His prophet again.

ONE OF THE THINGS THAT MAKES ME THE HAPPIEST is not that I am now fighting the fight of faith & that all my dreams are coming true, but that almost immediately after yielding my life into the hands of the Lord, the testimony started taking its toll. So far two people have forsaken all to join the Family & no small stir is being caused amongst my old friends, family & loved ones.

HOWEVER, IT WAS VERY HARD TO TRUST THE LORD FOR MY CHILDREN, as I knew it was for Cephas, but I am praying very hard for Shiloh that she will change her heart & come back to you & the Lord & bring those beautiful children with her.

THEY ARE ALL ON THE SHELF LIKE I WAS, & I'm praying for the Lord's time to bring them all back. Please pray for them, & I know that it will



Sam records during the Prodigal Musicians' Reunion—"our Jeremy Spencer of the West", as Dad called him! Photo by Shaul.

work, because if you & many others hadn't prayed for me it just wouldn't have been the same. I can look back now & see that it was a united effort that brought me back to the Family, & that's the way I feel now—united. PTL! (All these years my heart followed him. I was broken-hearted to hear he'd left. Thank You Lord for answering prayer.—D.)

LET ME START THE STORY ALMOST 4 YEARS AGO IN PERU. As you may remember, I came to Peru with Shiloh & the kids to help out with the record they were working on, & the band there. I had been pioneering in Argentina & was about to sign another record contract with Polydor there in Buenos Aires, but then we all had to leave the country rather quickly.

WE FELT LIKE THERE REALLY WASN'T A PLACE FOR US, but Faithy really wanted to bring us to Peru & finally

convinced Jethro & Deborah to let us come. I guess I must have worked there around a year & went thru quite a lot with Jethro as he seemed to have a lot against me since we did the albums in Brasil against his counsel & then ripped off Jeremy to help us there, & he took it personally & gave me quite a hard time while we were there.

AS A MATTER OF FACT, THE FIRST TIME HE SAW SHILOH after not seeing her for 5 years the only thing he said to her was negative, & he didn't even have a reason for treating her that way, as he knew nothing of what she had been thru, etc. He called her a "bitch" in such a way to make her break down & cry all the way back to where we were staying, about an hour's drive, & she never got over it. It wasn't just a "sticks & stones can break my bones but words can never hurt me" scene.—He

really wanted to make her feel bad, & he did an excellent job. I know you've heard horror stories & I don't want to dwell on it, but it is part of a long story & I felt like it was necessary to throw it in. We both went thru a lot there in Peru.

WHEN WE WENT TO VENEZUELA WE TOOK A LOT OF BITTERNESS & BAD MEMORIES WITH US. While we were there in Caracas the Lord began to really use the children, & I spent almost all my time with them singing in restaurants, hotels, airport lobbies etc., & we even had a weekly TV show that paid us \$100 per 3-song show weekly.

THERE IN VENEZUELA THE HOMES STARTED BECOMING MORE & MORE SEPARATE. Because of some ideas Jethro had introduced there you couldn't even eat in another Home without paying for it on the spot, & lots of times it was even more than if you ate at a fancy restaurant. I can't put all the blame on poor Jethro for all this type of thing because we did have the Letters & the Spirit, but I'm sure you understand the whole story & how the work degenerated as a direct result of the "dynasty"-type leadership & the chaos that followed in the wake of their reign.

BY CHRISTMAS SEASON OF 1978 SHILOH & I HAD REALLY BECOME 'WEARY IN WELL-DOING' & felt like we should go to another field. As I said, we were both weak in spirit & Shiloh's roots of bitterness started becoming bolder & more obvious. To top it off, Rachel (who I always loved & had a crush on) had just been there & taken Shiloh & me out to eat & told us some pretty heavy things about your house, & how she just had to get away from there for a while & all kinds of lies about alcohol, jealousy & the usual garbage.

SO AT THIS POINT IN MY

LIFE I FELT SLIGHTED from the year of living around Jethro, Deborah, Isaiah & crew & didn't think the Lord was ever going to use me or my music again, so my mind took the easiest way out & yielded to the doubts of the Enemy which resulted in my total defection just a few months later.

THE ARTICLE IN TIME MAGAZINE ABOUT JONESTOWN CAME OUT the day we left Caracas for the States to visit her & my parents for Christmas. Salem Peace also came with us to the States, & he & I always used to get together & play intellectual & be "cool" with each other, so we started analysing the Jonestown thing & found a way to justify ourselves in our rebellion. We came to the conclusion that if Jim Jones could "lose it" in that way then why would anyone else who was a prophet or leader of a sect or cult be exempt from the same type of thing. As I say, this was our finite minds trying desperately to find a way to do our own things, & as I look back on it now I suppose it was necessary, as I'm the type of person who usually has to learn the hard way & when I decide to do something I usually do it all the way.

SO AFTER CONVINCING MYSELF THAT THE FAMILY WAS FALLING APART & Deborah heard from Rachel & Deborah that "Dad's always had a problem with sex & alcohol" etc., I took a ride with the Devil that's lasted up until now. That's what happened in a nutshell. There are several important details I left out but I did want to relate at least that much so you would understand what I've been thru & why it was really the Lord's time to come back to the fold.

AS A MATTER OF FACT BEFORE SALEM & I HAD REALLY STARTED GETTING SERIOUS ABOUT DOUBTING leadership he came over to my house one day & seemed really broken & said that the Lord had shown him something & that he wanted

to share it with Shiloh & me. He said that the Lord had shown him that if you start doubting & bad-mouthing leadership & finding fault etc. then it would eventually lead up to doubting the prophet & ultimately doubting God Himself. Ironically, that's exactly what ended up happening. Believe it or not I really tried to throw the baby out with the bath water.

SO I DECIDED TO TRY IT ON MY OWN. First I tried to get into the "be a Christian & still smoke pot, drink, fuck & be happy trip" & do-your-own-thing, which I never could seem to get the hang of. After realising that the only way I could really serve the Lord would be with my real Family I just went off the deep end on drugs, lasciviousness & working really hard doing construction work. I went door to door & developed my own company (without the help of Shiloh, by the way, as she had given up on my being able to do anything except mope around because I didn't have a cause any more). So it was a big jump from stellar celebrity & soldier of the Lord to forlorn husband & construction contractor with virtually no reason to get up in the morning.

THERE IS SO MUCH UNHAPPINESS I COULD TELL YOU ABOUT, the tears & wounds, the bumps & grinds, but suffice it to say that after deciding to try & do it on my own that it was like the "dog returning to his vomit & the sow to her wallowing in the mire". Absolutely everything went wrong & I was the most miserable man that I know since leaving the Lord's service.

SHILOH ON THE OTHER HAND IS QUITE "SUCCESSFUL" & has been the pride of her mother & father since her "coming back to her senses". The children are fast becoming TV zombies & McDonald addicts, plus all the competition & junk

food they readily accepted when Mommy bought it for them. The first thing to go was Easter—no, Christmas. They started believing in Santa Claus despite my resistance as Shiloh felt that it wouldn't do them any harm as "everybody else did it".

I WAS JUST READING YOUR LETTER THIS MORNING ABOUT "CHILDREN IN THE WORLD" & how our children should feel superior, not inferior. But Shiloh & my children were so freaked out that they just wanted to forget how they had been used by the Lord because their mother & dad talked about the Family like it was a mistake etc.

SO AS A RESULT OF OUR NEGLIGENCE THE CHILDREN ARE FIRMLY EMBEDDED IN THE SYSTEM & its hate factories, poisonous garbage & pagan gods. It breaks my heart because they are all so talented & were used so much by the Lord at one time. They were all born in the Family & knew nothing else until we showed it to them! Please keep them in your prayers, as they are so precious & could be so useful to the Lord's Work, especially at a time like this.

I'M SENDING YOU A TAPE WE MADE IN VENEZUELA right before we left. Maybe it can be offered to the Family & friends as I have about 450 of them here in Puerto Rico, all with colour covers. When I send the words & chords to my songs I'll include a copy of the songs on the tape as they are new songs & mostly in Spanish. I know they would be a blessing here in Latin America, so we just need to find out the best way to send them all away for free as I believe the Lord wants every family to have one, but I just don't know how to go about distribution. I'll just hang on to them for now & wait until I hear from someone about it.

I SENT ONE TO JEREMY AS WELL, & I'd like to hear his re-

action to it. Seeing him on the videos & hearing his testimony really helped & encouraged me to jump in again, & all the testimonies help me realise that no one is too bad for God. I must be really proud because that was one of my hang-ups when I first joined.—I thought that I was too bad for God to forgive etc. But thank the Lord for His mercy & all that He's done for all of us.

THANK YOU FOR SENDING THAT MESSAGE WITH FAITHY as it helped me to struggle down to Laredo. I considered it an honor that you would still want my music when I had made such an ass out of myself. I figured if you could put up with it then I could put up with the Family for a few days in order to record it. But was I ever in for a big surprise! Not only was I able



Sam socks it to 75 Family members at the Laredo meeting, with back-up by Branch, Jerry & Mercy. Photo by Shaul.



Fun in the "Laredo-ville" studio!—Sam bares his belly to the song "No shoes, no shirt, no service" while recording with Huldah, Andrew & Gentleness.

to put up with them, but they put up with my shenanigans for almost a week!

BY THE TIME I LEFT I WAS A CHANGED MAN! When I first arrived at Laredo I was smoking cigarettes, not even having the courtesy to refrain from smoking in the hotel room! The Lord must've been pouring out His grace on Faithy & the others, as I acted quite rude. I suppose I wanted to see what they really thought of me & I was subconsciously testing them to see if they loved me in spite of my almost discourteous attitude.

NOT ONLY DID I FEEL ANY KIND OF DISAPPROVING VIBES or anyone looking down on me, & of course I was probably looking for any excuse I could find to say, "See, it's all fake," or whatever. But all I can say is that the Lord got hold of me & said, "Ok, you've had enough, you can come back to Me." Dad, I want nothing more than to serve the Lord & be used in whatever way that I can to further the Kingdom & my beloved cause, for which I was so hungry.

AFTER I HAD BEEN IN LAREDO FOR A FEW DAYS I got to where I could hardly do anything without breaking into tears. It had been quite a while since I had cried tears of joy, as most of my tears for the past 3 years have been tears of remorse & sadness. (DAD: Lord, bless & strengthen him & give him the courage, the faith & the grace & the determination, Lord.)

ONE THING THAT SEEMS TO BE THE ORDER OF THE DAY IS THAT GOD HAS TO KEEP BREAKING MY HEART to make me useful to Him & that seems to be when I get my best songs that people tell me help them the most. Praise God! "Beauty For Ashes" has been a reality in my life for a long time, & I thank God that He still loves me enough to challenge me & not let me love the world, neither the things that are in the world.

THE PEOPLE IN LAREDO WERE SO SWEET TO ME. I found out that Gentleness, Jerry's wife, had come up there for the sole purpose of showing me love, & that she did! As a matter of fact, I got the song "It's almost like I never left" right after spending the night with her. She made me feel so welcome & I'll love her forever. They even took such good care of me that I had to take a break one night, a real change from the way Shiloh had been treating me, not even letting me touch her for weeks & sometimes months in a row & besides that, insisting that I never make love to her without a condom. She insisted I start wearing condoms when we made love from the first time we made love upon our return to the States.

THE FREEDOM & LOVE IN THE FAMILY IS STILL BOWLING ME OVER, I can hardly believe it! I just feel so unworthy & it still seems like a dream to me. However, the Lord in His mercy has assured me that it's not & that I really am here & writing this letter & getting ready to go over to the studio & record some rhythm tracks for the Spanish Music With Meaning. I can't say thank you enough for sending Faithy to rescue me & for still believing in me when there was really nothing at all I had to offer except what had been accomplished in the past.

I JUST WANT TO TELL YOU HOW MUCH I REALLY LOVE YOU & THANK YOU more than I can say. Everything bad you've heard about me is probably true, but it is a real miracle how the Lord has given me the love that I needed so bad. I'm trusting the Lord for the welfare of my children & I do believe that one day Shiloh will come back & join the rest of us ne'er-do-wells & "get aboard" the train you talked about in your tape.

I'M PRAYING FOR HER & FOR THE KIDS. They are so talented & God could use them

a lot. Gail (Shiloh) has her own business there in Houston & is pretty satisfied with it, but maybe the Lord will put her thru a crisis & force her to come back to Him. At this point she won't even pray or acknowledge the Lord in her life. So I suppose she just has to get full of it, I believe where there's life there's hope, so that's all I have to go on, except that I myself am a miracle & only God could have changed my heart.

I LOVE YOU BOTH & WILL SEND THOSE WORDS & CHORDS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. I'll start on them today as a matter of fact. Also, the Lord is starting to give me a lot of new ideas for songs, & I can't wait to get them out. There's a lot to be done here & that's just what I need, so God knows His timing pretty well.

IT'S STILL ALL UP IN THE AIR IN A LOT OF WAYS, but thank the Lord that it's coming together & He can still use us "old-timers" & cranky old bottles that have been sitting on God's scrap heap for so long. The kids here are so precious, & that's one thing that I still have a real burden for, to work with the children, & they will sure give me the love I miss from my own flesh kids.

WE HAVE TO GO TO THE STUDIO NOW so I'll close this letter by saying thank you one more time for accepting me & whatever I have to give. Pray for me that I'll stay weak in myself & strong in the Lord. I'll be so happy I'll be in a "blob" for a while so I can get the much-needed fellowship & re-learn how to share with my Family. I love you & pray for you.—Sam. (Welcome Home, Son! GBY! We love you! Any of you who would like to send Sam support, we're sure he would be glad to send you one of his albums. Please write to him c/o Musica Con Vida, Apdo. 312, San Juan, Puerto Rico 00902.—Dad.)