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From Sorrow to Joy

By Rev. Carlos E. Davenport SR

Abstract- Moreover, we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

Romans 8: 28 (King James)

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This book is dedicated to my mother Mary M. Graham Davenport who set a Christian foundation; her walk with Christ led me to become a Christian first then a preacher.

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CHAPTER - 1

I. THE BEGINNING JOURNEY

They are many different journeys, some journeys are good, and some journeys are dangerous. Some journeys are full of joy, and some journeys are overflowing with pain and sadness. In the Bible, many characters had to take journeys of sadness and joy. Adam and Eve had to make a sad journey from the Garden of Eden because of their sins. Noah took a journey on the Ark with his family because God found favor in him. Abraham left his homeland because God had a plan for mankind. Jacob had to leave home because he deceived his father. Joseph took a journey that he did not want to take. His brothers sold him into slavery, then his Masters' wife lied, and he was put in prison because of his master's wife, and then his journey took him to the palace of Pharaoh. Joseph's journey saved a nation. Moses took a journey down the Nile River in a basket to the palace from the palace to the backside of the wilderness. Moses led his people out of slavery through the wilderness. Apostle Paul took a journey down the Road to Damascus where his life was changed. However, the greatest journey was the one Jesus Christ my savior took to the cross for my sins. It was a journey for all mankind. Apostle Paul said in Roman 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. The verse is so true of a black minister traveling through sorrow and joy of life.

However, on a journey back in time. I have been on this journey sixty-eight years, and the journey is not complete yet. It started in the summer of 1949.

In a small southern town where people live separate, blacks with blacks and whites with whites. The school system was different too. The people work together, but they went their separate ways after work.

The name of the town is North Wilkesboro, and the population is minuscule. The area I lived in is Wood long; it had a small country store called Cows. In the country store, there was a wooden pickle barrel with lots of pickles in it and the store had a lot of penny candy. Down the road was Smithy's warehouse. Up from the school on the same side of the school was a car dealership, just above the dealership was First Baptist Church of B Street's cemetery. It is where most of Davenport's family was laid to rest.

On a sweltering summer day around the 16th or the 23rd of June in 1949, a little boy was born prematurely to Herman and Mary Davenport. My parents named me Carlos. In 1949, you would not find too many black males named Carlos in the rural south. Some of the family members have said that my mother would put me out on the porch to get the energy from the sun. I remember my early years so that we will start this journey at the age of seven. At this, I noticed my mother was different from other people, she had a hump on her, and she walked bent over. Now I know my mom had Scoliosis, which is an abnormal curvature of the spine. In severe cases, heart and lung problems may develop over a period of many years. We will discuss later how Scoliosis affected my mother's life and how it changed my life. She was short in stature, but her heart was big.

The house we resided in was my grandparent's house. It was a country style cape with a small front porch and the house at that time was white. There was no basement, but it had a crawl space. As you walk into the room, the stairs were leading upstairs. The bedrooms were upstairs. In the hallway upstairs was an old fashion sewing machine, which my mother would use. The sewing machine was manual-operated; it was not electric. Upstairs my mom would read us bedtime stories. The stories she read were based on heroes in the Bible. She read these stories each night until we fell asleep. Downstairs to the left of the stairs was the living room. To enter the living room, you had to go thru these beautiful French doors. In the living room, there was a piano I do not recollect anyone playing it.

My mother would sit on the front porch while my brothers and I played in the front yard. My older brother is Herman he has my father's name. My younger brother's name is Larry. One day we were playing in the front yard, and the black man came up to me and asked could he have a drink of water. The man had chains around his ankles; I looked at the other black men they were chains around their ankles too, I gave the man a cup of water, as he was drinking droplets of sweat was

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running down his face because it was scorching out. It was the first time I had seen the chain gang work on the highway. This experience has left a mark on my brain for life. If we were not in the front yard, my mother had all three of us in the kitchen watching her make a Pound Cake.

We would watch mother sift the flour several times, and then she would blend the sugar and butter. She would add all the other ingredients to complete the cake. After my mother made the cake, she would give one beater to one of us and the other beater to the other, and then one would get the bowl. I would like to pause right here and say that my mother was a virtuous woman as described in Proverb 31. She did well not evil, and her family was second to God.

However, before I take you further down the road on this journey, I would like to say a few things about my father. To be truthful, I do not remember my father being around much in my early years. I would like you to know, that I loved my dad very much, but I have to be truthful about his lifestyle. My dad always wanted to be a man even before it was time., my dad was trying to prove to his father that he could stand up to the statue that of his father. However, my grandfather had to grow up very fast in the early 1900's. Black men were being hung because of their color. They could not get decent jobs because treated as if they were still slaves. Blacks considered as property, and the black women were put on a higher level than the Black men were. Most young black men had to go to work early in life. My grandfather was one of the ones that left home early in life to work; he did not have a teenage life. In the 1940's after World War II started, my father tried to enlist in the Navy at the age of thirteen. The Navy sent my father back home., my dad thought becoming an adult, you had to be sexually active; my dad had these thoughts all his life. His lifestyle had a profound effect on my life and my brothers' life. However, my dad did one great thing, and I will talk about it later on in my journey. However, the only way you become a true man is through Jesus Christ my Lord and Savior. You have to apply the word of God to your life. The Bible is the life manual to manhood.

Let us go back to the journey of a Black preacher in the foothills of North Carolina. The dirt was the reddish-orange color we called it "North Carolina Red Clay." These types of soil run from Georgia to Virginia. I remember eating this dirt when I was a little boy. North Carolina is a beautiful state, especially the, including the mountains. Let us continue the journey of a little boy running through the woods and fields of North Wilkesboro, N.C. I remember my mother taking my two brothers and myself to pick blackberries. We would walk on the side of the road in our bare feet or in the woods to get the blackberries. At that time, my feet had been conditioned to the burning heat of the North Carolina sun. After picking the blackberries, we would take them

home, and my mother would begin to cook them. The smell of the cooking blackberries travels through the house with such sweet smell you would want to eat them right then. Sometimes my mother would make a blackberry I still can taste that pie.

School started in the month of August it was still hot and humid. We would walk to school because we did not live too far from the school. It was an all-black school, and the building is still in use. because when the school integrated, they closed the school. We ate at the school. In the lunchroom, we had all black kitchen help. Just to smell the food would touch your soul. The smell of the fried chicken and the tender green beans cooking would make you hungry. The cornbread would melt in your mouth.

I would like to take you back to the classroom, the teachers were very strict, and they believed in a lot of discipline. Sometimes I believe they thought discipline was more important than education. I was having a hard time reading. My second-grade teacher would keep me in while the other children went outside to play. Each time I didn't read the text correctly, my teacher would hit my palm with a ruler. That experience affected my education for a longtime as I went through the public-school system.

However, I do remember the joyful time playing in the schoolyard. Most of the time, the boys played in one area of the schoolyard, and the girls played in the other part of the schoolyard. Sometimes we would tie sewing thread to the back legs of the Japanese beetle and let them fly around the schoolyard. On some, the boys would run after the girls with the Japanese beetles. The girls would yell and scream as if a monster was going to get them. In all schools, there is the school bully. A bully is a person that intimidates the other person; he tries to frighten the person because the person is weak or the bully thinks the person is poor. Just close your eyes and picture the school bully when you use to go to school. Jerry was the school bully, and he would always pick fights with other students, he also would pick on the girls. One day Jerry was going to hit me for no reason at all. However, my friend stepped in and stopped him. God always has someone in your corner. There is always a Gideon out there to defend you and. My friend was a full blood Cherokee Indian. Jerry never tried to pick on me again. In my understanding, Jerry was in and out of prison, and last I heard he was hanging chicken at the chicken factory.

In southern school at that time, they would have a May Day celebration. May Day is celebrated the first day of May. Festivities traditionally involved dancing around a large pole, called a maypole that is decorated with flowers. The pole had streamers hanging from it, and the children would hold them as they danced around the pole. At our school, the streamers were different colors. The school would pick a May Day King and Queen. My brother Herman was chosen May Day

King, and they put a crown on his head. It is just like when you become a Christian, and Jesus Christ is the king. He is the King of King and the Lord of all. We all will receive the Crown of Life.

Sometimes after school, my mother would meet us, and she would take us to Aunt Lars's house. Her house seemed like it was dark at all times and it had a smell of oldness. My Aunt was not my aunt, but she was my grandfather's cousin. However, out of respect for her age, we called her aunt. In today's society, young people have a lack of respect for our elder community. She was about a hundred years old or more and she born a slave. My brothers and I were frightened of my aunt, Mariah Finley. Because of her age of hundred. Her face looked like a piece of leather that was wet, and it had been left out in the hot North Carolina sun to dry. Aunt Mariah was bent over as she stood up and she walked with a cane. The cane was her weapon if she was correcting you and you started to run, she would hook you with her cane. Now I know she was a beautiful woman and dear family member. To think, my aunt went from slavery to freedom what a blessing. Nevertheless, I think the greatest benefit is coming out the slavery of sin into the blessing of salvation.

CHAPTER - 2

II. JOURNEY OF SORROW

The summer of 1956 was the beginning of the journey of sorrow in my life. My mother's sister died that summer. I remember it clear as a bright sunny day in the summertime. There were fifteen children in my mom's family. My aunt was the first one in the family to die. In those days, the viewing of my aunt's body would be held in the home. I remember my aunt's body in a casket in one of my grandparent's bedrooms. She looked like if she was still alive, but I knew the breath of life had left her beloved body. Members of the family and friends would come in and pay their last respect to the household. The neighbors would bring food to help, the family, so would not have to cook. At that time, I did not know I would have to experience again something like this a year later. I will discuss this a little later in the journey of sorrow.

Life is like the four seasons of the year they pass on. The blistering summer heat gave as the autumn drew near. The leaves on the trees started turning colors as autumn took hold in the region. The women started canning vegetables and making preserves. They would slice apples, pears, and other fruits and dry them outside in the sun. These dry fruits are sold in stores today at high prices. As the fruits are drying outside my mother and grandmother would be in the kitchen cooking the vegetables they are going to preserve. They would be cooking on the stove that burned wood. One of the chores we had as children, we had to bring in the wood for the stove. As the autumn

passes into September, then into October and into November we children were looking forward to Thanksgiving. My mother's father had already gotten the live turkey, and we were playing with it in the yard. The turkey had become our pet, but we as children did not know that the turkey would have an inevitable outcome. The turkey was just about ready for the Thanksgiving table. The mornings were getting colder and colder. The night before Thanksgiving my grandfather would take the turkey and put its neck on the log that was in the side yard, and he would end its life. After my grandfather had killed the turkey, he brought it into the house, and my grandmother would pluck the feathers from the turkey. Also, around this time of year, they would slaughter hogs because if they kill them earlier, the meat will spoil. The women would prepare the meat so it would not go bad. They would salt the pork; the salt would preserve the meat. Some of the meat they put in a smokehouse; the smokehouse was a building with dense smoke that cures meat and fish. As the days begin to get shorter and the nights started to get colder, we drifted into December. We children were getting excited because Christmas was just around the corner.

Dad was not at home; he had gone up north to work, this was part of the Black flight to the north. Many Blacks could not find high-quality paying jobs in the south so that the men would leave their families, and they would go north to find better employment. Grandfather was the first in the family to go north. He left grandmother with eight children. He would send money home to help sustain the family. After the war, my grandfather relocated his family to Worcester, MA.

Let us go back to Christmas Eve; dad had not been home for a while. On that night, we received great surprise; our dad was coming up the back steps of us.

Grandparent's house. I ran, and I jump into his arms. To run and jump into his arms is a joyful moment. It is the same when you run to your Heavenly Father arms. It is a joyous moment in time when your Heavenly Father holds you in His arms, and you can cry for joy. Because God can protect you from all the elements of life, even from pain, sorrow, and despair.

Let us go back to that Christmas; one of the gifts we received was a little toy airplane made out of cast iron. The wings folded up resembling the Navy planes of World War II. We played with the planes as if we were going to land them on an aircraft carrier. We got marbles to play with when the weather was beautiful. Playing marbles is fun; you would draw a circle in the dirt, and you put the marbles in the ring. The object of the game is to knock the other player's marbles out of the circle. The marbles were different in color; some looked like snake eyes, some had many different colors, and some sculptures were made of steel.

As the winter passed, the spring brought forth flowers, birds singing and the warmth of the sun coming forth to warm the earth. This warmth would transport



new life to the earth. The tranquility that spring brings life to the region. Little chicks were walking around the yard, and people are starting to plant their gardens. Have you ever been sitting outside on a beautiful summer day? Then the dark storm clouds start to roll in, and you notice a great storm is on the way. As we moved into the summer of 1957, the storm of life was just around the corner. One hot, humid night in August of 1957, the rains of grief came to our family. Our mother had gone to church on that Wednesday night for bible study, just like all the other Wednesdays. They brought her to our grandmother's house, and they set her in a chair on the front porch. Our mother was gasping for air; she was having difficulty in breathing. They took her to the hospital that was across town. Black people were not allowed in the front entrance in that era; they had to enter the back door of the hospital. In 1957, we could not go in the regular part of the hospital; the state had Jim Crow Laws. Many different laws did not favor Blacks, some of the laws were; you had to go to an all-Black school. We could not go in the front door of the movie theater, we had to ride in the back of the bus, and we could only go to the public park on Monday just for a half of a day.

The next time I saw my beloved mother was lying in a casket, it seems as if she was just sleeping. The tears of sorrow continued with dad, and he was on the back porch crying because the love of his life was gone. Maybe the question was going through his mind, how would he raise three sons and where would his family live? Maybe he was saying how he could go on without my wife. In death, there is sadness and sorrow that grips a person deep down in their soul. The death of a loved one leaves a dark hole in your life. At that time, I did not understand death, how God could take someone that I love so dear away from me. Now I know that we all have an appointed time to death and an appointment we all will keep.

In those days, the viewing of the body was in most cases viewed at the family home. My mother casket was placed in the front bedroom of my grandparent's home. I believe they dressed her in a blue dress. Friends and family members would walk by and view my mother. It was hard for me to walk by the casket and see my mother lying there. The picture of my mom lying in that state of sleep, it is still imprinted in my mind.

The funeral was held at my mother's parent's church, and she is buried at her parent's church cemetery. I want you to sit there and think with a child's mind not seeing your mother anymore. Just think the one that gave birth to you and the one that held you in her arms are gone. The one that wiped your tears away will wipe no more tears, and the one that read bedtime Bible stories will read no more. There would be no more walking through the beautiful woods of North Wilkesboro picking Blackberries with my mother. However, as I grew in Christ, I know someday I will see

my beloved mother again and when that day comes what a beautiful day that will be. Whoever reads this, please love your parents with all your heart and soul. I would like to say to you respect your mother at all times because you never know when God is going to call her home.

A mother's love for her child is very high, and it is stronger than the father in my point of view. The look on my grandmother's face showed the pain and grief she had. One daughter died a year earlier, and now another child goes home to be with God the following year. The pain that shot through her soul must have been painful for her. To see your daughter in a casket had to be an enormous burden for my grandmother. Now I know the strength my grandmother had come from her faith in Jesus Christ. The word of God was her strength stated by Jesus, " Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Matt. 11:28-30. Jesus Christ is the burden bearer of all. You can find spiritual rest in him, no matter what you are going through in life.

Some family members wanted to divide my brothers and me. One aunt wanted to take one brother, and another family member wanted to take my other brother. My Heavenly Father had a different plan, and you will see his plan in the next chapter.

CHAPTER - 3

III. A JOURNEY NORTH

The journey started in late August of 1957. Our father had made a decision to bring his three sons to his parents, who lived in Worcester, Ma. The question was going through my mind. Where is this place call Worcester, Ma, and who are the people I am going to live in that city? Who is going to replace my mother? It was the first time we had travel away from North Wilkesboro, N.C. My mind was going in all different direction. The thought of leaving my mother behind was breaking my heart. It seems like I was losing that family connection that I enjoyed so much. Now I know that God had a plan for my life and I had to travel this road to complete His Plan. We all have a path to travel. The road might become rough at times, it might be dark on this path, and the road might become stormy. I would like to encourage you to stay on the path that God has mapped out for you. When the road becomes rough, Jesus Christ can smooth it out. When it is dark on this path, He can light your way. When the storms of life arise on that road, Jesus Christ can calm the storms in your life as He did in Mark 4:39. If He can calm the storm at sea, Jesus Christ can calm the storms in your life. We left North Wilkesboro and traveled fifty-three miles to Winston-Salem N.C. were my father's brother

lived. We stayed overnight with my Uncle James. The journey was just beginning; we still had to travel eight hundred miles to reach our northern destination. We traveled from there to Richmond VA, where is my mother's brother lived. At that time, I did not know that I would return to this city and would think I can go the Jefferson hotel and be served at my son's wedding. We stayed with my mother's brother, and then we continue on the journey north. The bond between my mom's sides of the family was gradually disappearing. It would take me about thirty years to rebuild that relationship. As we travel further north, the landscape changed and the people talked differently. I notice the further north we got; we did not have to sit in the back of the bus. We also used the same restroom as our white counterpart.

The leaves were changing colors; the morning air was filled with a coolest that ran through your bones. It started to sink in that this part the country is different from North Carolina. I had moved from one environment to another environment. I have learned that life has many different changes and we have to adjust to these changes to make it in life. However, the only way you can make it is with the help of Jesus Christ.

As we travel further north, the cities looked different, and the buildings were bigger and closer together. The bus ride was so long it seems like we would ever get there. We stopped at Hartford CT and at that bus stop; we had a great pancake breakfast. Our journey continued north to the city of Worcester, Ma. I saw different types of single-family homes and other building with three floors. I would come to understand that this three-story building was called three-deckers. The houses were close together, and it had a small yard to play in. My grandfather met us at the bus station. We called him Daddy Hub, and he had a profound impact on my life. He became the father figure that I needed at that trying time in my life.

As we traveled to where my grandparents live, I had never seen so many streets and houses in one area. There were so many cars, buses, and so many different types of people that it was becoming overwhelming. I was wondering where all the trees and woods where I use to run through in North Wilkesboro. There were no open fields of grass to run through. Where is the blackberry brush that we pick blackberries? There were no more dirt roads to walk down barefoot, no more North Carolina clay building up on my feet. My world had turned upside down, and it would be many years before it would return right side up. I did not turn my world right side up it was Christ that turns my world right side up. Jacob life as turned upside down when he deceived his father and stole the blessings that belong to his brother Esau. His life stayed upside down until he had a graced encounter with God. It reminds me of Joseph in the Old Testament how he went from the pit to prison and finally to the palace. God had a plan for me as He had plan Jacob and Joseph. As Jeremiah stated

in Jeremiah 29:11," For I know the plans I have for you, 'declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for calamity to you a future and hope." (ASV) Just like the potter making a clay vase he plans it out and then he begins to mold it. There are many phases a Potter was taken before the vase is a finished product.

The journey of sorrow continues as I adapt to my new life and continue to deal with the grief of the loss of my beloved mother. The pain you could not see on my face, grief found a home in my heart. Each room had a name; one was sorrow, another was the pain, another room rejection, and another called abandonment. As time moved on other rooms would be, add. Summer is usually a time for fun for children, running and playing in the park, family vacation time. However, my summer became a time for adjustment to a new life and a new community. How does a little black boy adapt to his new environment, how does he adapt to people with different color skin? Because society has taught, he could not interact with people that were white. Not knowing that journey of adjustment would continue because the school was going to start right after Labor Day. It was the last week of August and Labor Day was the first Monday in September. My grandmother, we called her Mama Grace, took us shopping for school clothes at store call Robert Halls. I dislike that store so much it did not have the latest fashions and stood out like a sore thumb in school. We went to a different store for footwear, and that store was called "The Mart." We could buy a pair of sneakers for less than six dollars.

Now the first day of school was upon us, and my mind was racing, would I be accepted or would these strange talking people reject me. As I walk to the school, it was a greater distance than the school I went to in North Wilkesboro. We would walk through strange neighborhoods and streets with names I could not pronounce at the time. When I went in a feeling came over me, the feeling of being in the wrong place. I am looking around, and 90 percent of the students are Caucasian, my thoughts are that I am going to get in trouble. My mind had been conditioned psychologically that blacks and whites did not interact with each other. I was also conditioned that we were lower than my white counterpart in society was. It is amazing how to continue oppression and racism can damage ethnic groups. I thank God that He does not feel that way about people. As Apostle Peter stated in the Book of Acts, acts 10:34, "Opening his mouth, Peter said: "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality." (ASV) Thank God, He looks at the heart, not the person outer appearance. The sadness continued because I was put back a grade, the teacher did not think I was on the same grade level as the other students. In a way, I felt like the rejected middle child. At that moment in life, I started to withdraw within myself.

My first visit to a northern church was very different from the church I went to in North Wilkesboro.



This church was in a recreation building at a park called Beaver Brook. The congregation was tiny, and they sound different from churches down south. My brothers, my cousin and one other youth sang for the church and we were the beginning of the youth choir.

The nights were still lonely and filled with grief but one special night I got reassurance that all was going to be well. As I was lying in bed with my two brothers one on each side of me, I had a visitor. The visitor stood that foot of the fold-out-couch. The visitor was dress in a blue gown, at first, I thought it was my mother but as I grow in Christ and Christian walk got stronger, I learn differently. The visitor gave this little boy reassurance by saying "It's going to be alright." Those words continue to ring in ears as I go through this life journey. The learn that my visitor was my Guardian Angel we all have one.

I would like to share with you a story I heard about a little girl in the park. There was this little girl one day sitting in the park. Everyone passed and never stopped to see why she looked so sad. Dressed in a worn pink dress, barefoot and dirty, the girl just sat and watched the people go by. She never tried to speak; she never said a word. Many people passed, but never did one person stop. Just so happens the next day I decided to go back to the park, in curiosity, to see if the little girl would still be there. Right in the very spot as she was yesterday, she sat perched on high, with the saddest look in her eyes. Today I was to make my own move and walk over to the little girl. For as we all know a park full of strange people is not a place for young children to play alone. As I got closer, I could see the back of the little girl's dress was obscenely shaped. I figured that was a reason the people just passed by and made no effort to help. Deformities was a low blow to our society and, "so help you" if you make a step toward assisting someone who is different. As I got closer the little girl slightly lowered her eyes to avoid my intent stare. As I approached her, I could see the obscene shape of her back more clearly. Grotesquely shaped in a humped over form. I smiled to let her know it was ok, I was there to help, to talk. I sat down beside her and opened with a simple Hello". The little girl acted shocked and stammered a "Hi" after a long stare into my eyes. I smiled and she shyly smiled back. We talked till darkness fell and the park was completely empty.

Everyone was gone and we at once were alone. I asked the girl why she was so sad. The little girl looked at me and with a sad face said, "Because I'm different." I immediately said, that you are!" and smiled. The little girl acted even sadder, she said, "I know." "Little girl," I said, "You remind me of an angel, sweet and innocent." She looked at me and smiled, slowly she got to her feet and said, "Really?" Yes ma'am, you're like a little guardian angel sent to watch over all those people walking by." She shook her head yes and smiled, with that she spread her wings and said, "I'm your guardian

angel," with a twinkle in her eye. I was speechless... sure I was seeing things. She said, "For once you thought of someone other than yourself, my job here is done." I jumped to my feet and said, "Wait, so why did no one stop to help an angel?" She looked at me and smiled, "You're the only one that could see me, you believe, it's in your heart." And she was gone. And with that, my life was changed dramatically. So, when you think you're all you have, remember, your angel is always watching over you.

Author Unknown

The bible speaks of guardian angles Psalms 34: 7: God's angel sets up a circle of protection around us while we pray. (MSG) This gave me peace in my heart and soul. It also gave that reassurance that all would be all right. But there were dark days of my teenage years. The dark days of being sexually abused my uncle. My father not being around to comfort me. I to drown myself in sports to cover the pain and sadness of these years.

