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# **With Pen in Hand**

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**Series: God's Living Legends II**

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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# With Pen in Hand

What would you say if I offered you a history pen...a writing instrument so powerful, that with a mere stroke of its point, history could be rewritten.

...A pen that could touch the delicate scrolls of days gone by and with a few well-chosen words, erase those incidents that marked and marred the course of history. Those hours of shame, those days of violence would vanish forever from life's chronicles of events, only to be replaced by right choices, by prudent decisions, by rational experiences. Oh, what a different story would be told.

With pen in hand, we'd touch the fibers of the pages of man's first bout with sin...and Eve would have answered the serpent's taunting cries with, "Thus saith my God." What a difference those words would have made.

With pen in hand, we would but make one solitary change in the choice of a young man named Cain. "I shall bring the sacrifice thou seekest, Lord," he would have said.

With pen in hand, Lot would have turned his eyes from the glitter of Sodom and said, "That's not for me."

With pen in hand, Jonah would have turned his eyes to God and responded, "Nineveh, Lord? What a golden opportunity. I'll go pack my bags."

With pen in hand, we would rewrite the pages of ages gone by...and Hitler would never have risen to power; there would never have been a holocaust; the great wars that rose from the ashes of the ambitions of godless men would never have appeared in the pages of history, and the lives that vanished in their prime in the process, would instead have fresh pages of accomplishments before them yet to be written.

Even more to the point, with pen in hand, you and I would rewrite the diaries of our own lives, lives perhaps insignificant in the course of human events; but events of significance to us would most certainly be changed.

That moment of passion, that instant of anger, that series of avoidable circumstances, those vindictive words that dissolved a home would all be stricken from the record and replaced with

deliberate, godly choices, choices made under God's control.

Wasted words and wasted years would be washed from the shores of our memories and what would remain would be lives that glisten in the sunlight of history...if only, with pen in hand, history was ours to change.

But of course, it isn't!

God's plan for man does not include drinking from the mirage of what might have been. And a sovereign God who has chosen to weave into the fabric of life's mistakes the golden colors of Romans 8:28 has taken life as it is and commanded and demanded of His children...

to forget those things which are behind us

and to reach forth rather unto those things which are before us...

pressing towards the mark

pressing towards the prize

pressing towards the high calling of God which is in Christ Jesus.

So neither moments just past nor ages long past are ours to change. History is sealed in the concrete of time; *and until that glorious* moment when time is swept up into the arms of eternity, what has happened must stand.

But though we cannot alter even one comma from the scrolls of what has been written, still what has been written has been written that you and I might profit thereby.

And so it is that Romans 15:4 pulls back the curtain of the mind of God for us and reveals the real reason for history. There Paul gives this amazing commentary on God's purpose in recording the events of the past. He says this:

For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. (Romans 15:4 NKJV)

Paul is saying, "There is a reason for history." It is very simply this: so that the present generation seeing the consequences of the choices of past generations (both good and bad) might view all of life through the lens of the Scriptures and thus be filled with hope. It is so you and I, seeing the right choices that changed the

course of history, might make those same choices. It is also so you and I, seeing wrong choices and the resulting consequences, will not make those same mistakes, for God has provided us a mirror to reflect the future before it happens, by showing us through history the causes and effects of sin.

In other words, history was written to confirm the principles of the Word of God. Oh, if only all of history were taught from God's perspective! History isn't an accumulation of facts; it is the chronicle of a Holy God designed to demonstrate that the absolutes of Scripture are without error, and the principles of Scripture always work. That's why God has superimposed across the principles He revealed for us in the New Testament, the Living Legends of Lives in the Old Testament who either violated or upheld those principles, so we can see the corresponding results.

It was in I Corinthians 10 that Paul decided to give the Corinthian church a history lesson. He intended it to be a picture book for the church to use when it was tempted to compromise the convictions of the Word. In verse 6 he injected this warning:

Now these things [these historical illustrations] became our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, *"The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play."*

Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell;

Nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents;

Nor complain ye, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

(I Corinthians 10:13 NKJV)

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In this passage the Holy Spirit is even more graphic in His attempt to delineate for us the reason for recording history. It is so we, seeing the results of things such as idolatry and fornication, murmuring, and tempting God, will recognize that we, too, are subject to the pull of those desires; and unless we learn our lessons from the history books of the Old Testament, we, too, are candidates for self-destruction. But God says that it is not necessary for you to make the same mistakes they made. God has given YOU a way of escape. He has painted for you a picture of the causes and the consequences. You are without excuse. Then He graciously gave you His Spirit to caution you, to arrest you, to teach you, and to correct you, lest you are drawn to enter the same circle of defeat followed by those who walked before you.

So the reason for history is to teach us the Truth and thus allow us to avoid the pitfalls of repeating history needlessly.

In essence, then, you and I do have a pen such as I described at the beginning of this lesson. We each own a history pen...not one that will let us go back and rewrite the past. Praise God for that. But we each have a history pen that allows us to interpret our lives and the choices we are about to make in the light of history, and thus write in the light of history the current chapters of our lives, and the continuing chapters as well.

With pen in hand, you and I are writing history. And history itself is our mentor, our instructor, our guide. With pen in hand, therefore, it is our task, to return to the Living Legend of David and quietly travel once more through the pages of those devastating chapters in Israel's history we looked at in our last study, chapters that recorded in graphic detail what happens when certain Biblical principles are ignored. With pen in hand, our goal is to rewrite those chapters in make-believe form so that, seeing the difference that right choices make, we might, with pen in hand, we write a different story in the remaining chapters of our Book of Life.

In our last study, we hurriedly spanned six chapters of II Samuel and we began to unfold some of the consequences of David's wrong choices. We saw his child die. We saw the prophecy that the sword would never depart from his house begin to be fulfilled; and, sadly, we saw the prophecy also come to pass that his own wives would be taken in public the way he took

Bathsheba in private. And beyond a doubt if, with pen in hand, we could rewrite David's story, he would never have stayed home from the battle, nor taken his ease from his responsibilities, nor gazed longingly on that rooftop, nor taken another man's wife, nor murdered a woman's husband. If we could rewrite David's story, then Amnon's story, and Absalom's story, and Joab's story, they may well have never needed to be told the way they were. But we have discussed in enough detail the consequences of David's sins, and so we must press on to look at the application of our last study together. For even though Amnon's decisions were affected by David's, Amnon was still responsible for his own choices. And even though your parents may have left you a heritage of failures, those failures can just as well serve as a beacon to warn you, as a trap to ensnare you. Your decisions are your decisions, and those decisions cannot be laid on them.

This lesson is, in essence, the application portion of our last study. While time will not permit a rerun of the drama that unfolded, a few sentences that replay the story line seem to be necessary, as a reminder and as a backdrop for today's study.

The principle characters in the story were David, two of his sons, Amnon and Absalom, one his daughters, Tamar, and David's trusted military general, Joab.

What started the family feud was a grievous sin. Amnon, David's eldest son, thought he was in love with his half-sister, Tamar. But he could not so much as go near her. So with the unfortunate help of his ungodly friend, Jonadab, he devised a scheme that lured Tamar into his chamber, where he forced her in an act of gross immorality.

Daddy David, unfortunately, did nothing, but brother Absalom, after two full years of planning his revenge, manipulates the king into sending ALL his sons to a sheepshearing shindig. There Absalom proceeds to fill brother Amnon with wine. When he is in a drunken stupor and unable to defend himself, he is ruthlessly murdered.

Now Amnon is dead, and Absalom flees. Joab manipulates David into inviting Absalom back home, but the pouting king refuses to forgive. Bitterness festers. Absalom campaigns for and wins the affections of the people; and finally, pretending to go on a journey to pay his vows to God, he signals for a nationwide revolution to begin. David flees, leaving ten of his wives behind,

only to hear that his own son, Absalom, has defiled them.

The battle rages, and David wins. Absalom meets a humiliating death, finalized by Joab who defies David's orders to deal kindly with his son. At the end of our last lesson, David was in the chamber above the city gates, weeping over his errant son... "Oh, Absalom, my son, my son, would to God I had died for thee...Oh, my son, my son."

Oh, Beloved, if only we could rewrite that story. Of course, we can't! And the stench of it remains as a lesson to us. But can we not go back and at least view it through the lens of what might have been had David and Amnon and Absalom and Joab responded God's way?

We must! For in doing so, we will then know how God intends us to respond as we proceed to write the remainder of the stories of our own lives.

#### REWRITING AMNON'S STORY

With pen in hand, then, let us now go back to II Samuel, Chapter 13, and rewrite Amnon's story the way God wanted it to be written, and thus see how our story should be written, when we are faced with the same kinds of decisions Amnon had to make. Remember, these things were written for our admonition to give us a way of escape. So we are without excuse should we, having seen Amnon's errors, choose deliberately to do the same. Remember that.

The first step in rewriting Amnon's story is to sit Amnon down and teach him the principle of holiness. Amnon did not know the difference between lust and love. He did not know that love protects the object of its love while lust perverts the object of its love. Love gives in order to fulfill another's needs. Lust takes in order to fulfill its own. With pen in hand, we would rewrite Amnon's story by having him humble himself before God in confession of his lust, and taking the way of escape open to him, we would have him flee the very appearance of evil. Some of you may right now be on the edge of a compromising situation. You may be toying with something you said could never happen to you. Amnon's story was written for your admonition. It is your way of escape. Flee that situation at whatever the cost. Never can you compromise holiness and call it love. Never. Never can you break the moral laws of God and justify it in the name of



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uncontrollable passion. There is no such thing as uncontrollable passion, according to I Corinthians 10:13. There are uncontrolled passions, but not uncontrollable ones. God has given you a way of escape. Learn from the Living Legend of Amnon. Go home today and take whatever measures are necessary to prevent your violating God's moral laws. With pen in hand, you still can control what will be written in the book of your life tomorrow.

The second lesson we can learn from Amnon is that wrong friendships corrupt. The writer of Proverbs wrote:

Make no friendship with an angry man, And with a furious man do not go,

Lest you learn his ways And set a snare for your soul.

(Proverbs 22:24,25 NKJV)

And again,

Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a bad tooth and a foot out of joint. (Proverbs 25:19 NKJV)

If we, pen in hand, could rewrite Amnon's story, we would write Jonadab out of the script. He was the kind of friend that is more dangerous than an enemy. His is the "counsel of the ungodly" the Psalmist told us to avoid.

With pen in hand, look carefully at whom your friends are. How sad that so many husbands and wives whose marriage are under attack, spend their time listening to friends whose own marriages have already failed. Wrong friendships defy the principles of Scripture and attempt to justify their own behavior by encouraging others to fail as well.

With pen in hand, look carefully at where your counsel comes from. If it comes from the world, and it is not in harmony with Scripture, you need not, like Amnon, end up an early marker in a cemetery, because you listened to counsel that denied the absolutes of Scripture. The right friend in Amnon's life could have changed his perspective, altered his course, and spared him sorrow. And when Amnon suffered the natural consequences of his wrong choice, look who was there counseling the king as though he was innocent of any wrongdoing, Amnon's fair-weather friend, Jonadab.

If your marriage is in trouble, whatever you do, seek out someone who sees life from God's perspective, and hopefully someone who has made their own marriage work. Don't take your

advice from someone who has failed and is looking for company. And remember, Satan and God are locked in hand-to-hand combat for control of your home. So never seek counsel from unbelievers. Never. Why get your counsel from the enemy? God forbid. With pen in hand, you can write the next chapter of your life free from the results of the counsel of wrong friendships. God has given you a way of escape. Take it.

Another lesson we can learn from Amnon is this: Don't ever use the "I'm in love, I just couldn't help it" lie of the devil. Amnon's argument was that he had to do what he did because he was sick with love. He was sick, all right. But not with love. Love is never an excuse to take what by divine decree is not yours. And you young girls, listen to this. Don't buy the lie that he only wants to violate God's holiness because he loves you and needs you. What he needs is some self-control and a Word from God. Amnon is a cardinal example. Once he had taken what was not his, the guilt of it caused his "love" to turn to bitterness. Love suffers long and is kind; love envieth not, is not puffed up, behaveth not itself unseemly. That's love. Some of you, with pen in hand, need to rethink the chapters you are writing in the name of love, before you write the chapter Brother Amnon wrote.

And we parents need to take pen in hand, as well, and learn from David at this point. Amnon's sin was against God, against David, against Tamar, against Absalom, and against the laws of Israel. Had David punished him publicly, Amnon may have lived to repent; Absalom may have been spared the bitterness that came from his exile; and David's family may have come back together in humility, rather than being torn apart by strife and murder. David's excuse seemed to be, "I love him too much to punish him." That's not love, that's a lie. Proverbs 13:24 reminds us:

He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him  
disciplines him promptly. (Proverbs 13:24 NKJV)

David was still responsible as a father and as a king. In the name of love, he forfeited justice, cheated his sons of their heritage, and God's people of their example. The result was a disaster.

Maybe you're one who has bought the lie that Satan has sold to modern man. It goes like this: "If you love someone, you will never bring them hurt; punishment is damaging to their self-image."

God's Word says if you love someone, you will demonstrate that love through discipline, in order to protect them in later years from the hurts that last. If you have fallen prey to the world's philosophy at the expense of God's Truth, take pen in hand and begin today to write the next chapter of your children's lives in God's handwriting. You have a way of escape. Take it.

### REWRITING ABSALOM'S STORY

Now with pen in hand, let's take a look at Absalom's story. Absalom began as the self-righteous brother who, in the name of justice, brooded over an injustice until he justified the very act of premeditated murder. Absalom was grieved and angered over what had happened to his sister. Well he should have been. But there were a variety of avenues open to him. From all we can tell, he took none of them. There is no indication he ever went to David. There is no indication he ever went to Amnon. There is no indication he ever went to God. According to Amnon's ungodly aide, Jonadab, Absalom had been planning the murder of Amnon since he defiled his sister. For two long years, he brooded. For two full years, he waited. Revenge was all that consumed him. If we could rewrite Absalom's story, we would sit him down and have him memorize, "A bitter spirit, who can bear it." We would read to him, "God, be reconciled to thy brother" and "Let not the sun go down on thy wrath." Absalom lost touch with reality. He was consumed with a cause that was not his. Every day his anger festered; every day his desire for revenge deepened. No one won. Everybody lost. You are no exception.

Maybe you have taken up an offense for someone or taken up an offense against someone, and all you think about is their getting what they deserve. Subtly, you have allowed yourself to become consumed with revenge. You have branded God unfair, for not visibly disciplining them; and so consumed with hatred are you, the very lines on your face are hardening into patterns of bitterness. You have a choice right now. You can continue on the course of self-destruction you are on, or you can learn from the Living Legend of Absalom. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay saith the Lord." "If thine enemy hungers, feed him." "But I say unto you, love your enemies; pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you."

God has given you a way of escape. He has painted a portrait for you of what lies in store for you if you continue to harbor that

hatred as Absalom did. It's too late for Absalom. It's not too late for you. With pen in hand, you still can write the next chapter of your life, it can be a chapter of love, a chapter of forgiveness, a chapter of reconciliation, or it can be carbon copy of II Samuel 13. Absalom refused to speak to Amnon for two years. It led to disaster. Is that your answer to being hurt? It's not God's answer. With pen in hand, begin writing God's melody of mercy. You have a way of escape.

If we were rewriting Absalom's life, our next stop would have to be that afternoon at the palace when he manipulated his indecisive father into letting him invite all his brothers to Amnon's murder. What a way to go! The brother who has not spoken to you in two years invites you to a sheepshearing shindig, gets Papa's permission, and invites all the family to witness the event. The trouble is the event they're invited to see is to see you lose your head. David knew better. He knew what Amnon had done. He knew how Tamar had suffered. He knew, surely, how vindictive Absalom could be. But David, like so many of us, couldn't say no to his children. Why they're so much smarter than we are, I don't know. But Satan knows just how to phrase their, "Aw, Daddy, please, just this once" and we melt like a Hershey bar in the Texas sun. Had David drawn the line and said, "No", Amnon might still have been alive, and the rest of the story, the saddest part of all, might never have needed to have been written.

You children, learn from the legend of Absalom. Don't manipulate your parents into giving you what you want, when you know what you want is wrong. They are to blame for letting you, BUT you are to blame as well for twisting them around your finger. And as parents, ought we not to profit from Daddy David's dilemma? Even without cue cards he could have memorized the word "No." Instead, he just gave in, as we parents do, and he lost two more sons in the process, not to mention 20,000 Israelis that never should have had to die! Our job is to consider the facts without the emotions and make an appropriate decision. You say, "Well, I can do it till they begin begging, and then I melt." You have a way of escape. His name is Absalom. His story was written for your admonition. With pen in hand, write a different one for yourself.

Here's another lesson that was written for us to learn from. For the second time in David's life, alcohol was used to set up a man so he could be destroyed. Had Amnon looked at his new

Mercedes donkey and said, “No thanks, I’m driving,” he would have been alert enough to know that he was being measured for a coffin. Just read tomorrow’s paper and see how many stabbings, shootings, murders, and rapes take place in or near the local bars, or with one or both of the parties “under the influence” as the press words it. “Under the control of” would be a better phrase. Learn from the Living Legend or should I say the Dead Legend of Amnon. Anything that causes you to lose control of your senses, causes you to lose control of your sense as well. If alcohol or drugs are robbing you of control of your life..you have a way of escape. Look at Amnon. And then get whatever help you need to get so that, with pen in hand, the next chapter of your life isn’t written in the obituary column. No matter what society tells you, the choice is yours. You have a way of escape.

The next lie Satan sold Absalom is overworked for sure. It is this: when the going gets tough, the tough get going. When the heat is on, flee to cooler temperatures. When your job gets tough, quit. When your marriage gets complicated, leave. When your circumstances become traumatic, look for new surroundings. Guess what? When you get where you’re going, the problems won’t have changed. The problem is not your circumstances. The problem is your response to the circumstances. Like Jonah, Absalom fled when the heat was on. And like a fool, David let him stay there. Are you contemplating running from that situation you are in, reading or should I say mis-reading the signs of your frustration as signs from God that say, “Go”?

The principle woven throughout the tapestry of God’s design for living is the principle that says when the going gets tough, the tough hang in there. They don’t ask God to hit a moving target. They face their accusers. They face their consequences. They face their punishment. They face their misfortunes. When the enemy assaults you, according to Ephesians 6, the Christian’s marching order are to... “stand” and having done all, to “stand”. If you are about to take off to avoid facing whatever it is that is looming on the horizon of your life, you have a way of escape. Look at the legend of Absalom. And stop running. With pen in hand, let the next chapter of your life read, “and having done all, I remained in place.”

Perhaps the most devastating truth that was overlooked in this passage, however, was the principle that every one of our key characters overlooked. That principle is this: no man is an island.

Whatever you do, like the ripples in a pond, the consequences spread in ever-widening circles until they encompass life after life besides your own. Amnon's answer was: "It's my business what I do." Wrong. It was Tamar's, and Absalom's, and David's, and Joab's. Twenty thousand widows mourned because Amnon lusted for his sister. A king almost lost his kingdom. Two sons became statistics because one of the two listened to the advice of a fool. Like shock waves, the consequences resounded across the hills of Israel until a whole nation was in revolt, because a son was in revolt, because he had murdered a brother who was in rebellion, and who, while in rebellion, had defiled his sister.

Don't ever buy the lie that what you are doing is your business. Whatever you are doing is your family's business. It is your children's business. They stand to pay a price for your vice. Mark it. And most of all, it is God's business. His reputation rides on your behavior. Like it or not, what you do is everybody's business. And though nobody knows now, that, my friend, is a temporary condition. God knows. And God knows when that disease that is contained in your own spirit will break forth like a venomous cancer and contaminate those closest to you. David's indiscretion was the cause, directly or indirectly, of thousands of unnecessary deaths. Because of his sin, God allowed the natural failures in David's life to seep beyond the boundaries of his grace, and his wrong choices that God had protected him from undeservedly, now were allowed to run their course.

Be not deceived, God is not mocked. Sowing brings reaping. And never only to you. But you young people still have a way of escape. Listen to the voices of David and Amnon and Absalom and Joab. They are shouting to you. They are saying to you...with pen in hand, yours can be a different story.

#### REWRITING JOAB'S STORY

There was another character in the story whose compromises speak as loudly as David's. His name was Joab. When his boss gave him a command to violate the Word of God by killing Uriah, he obeyed. When his boss gave him a command to spare the life of his son, Absalom, he disobeyed. Joab was a political pawn who didn't have the courage to stand for what was right, and didn't have the faithfulness to obey when he didn't agree with the orders. As a result, two men were dead, and he participated in both of the murders. In both cases, he saw to it that someone else

did the dirty work. His kind always does. But Joab has a message for us. It is this: *Those who try to keep everyone happy, usually end up on the wrong end of everyone's sword.* Joab's answer to life's questions was to tell everyone what they wanted to hear; to do what seemed at the moment to be expedient. Joab had no conscience. He only had an antenna that rotated around to see what was the popular mood of the moment. Then like a puppet, he would mimic that mood. You can get by with it for a season. Joab did. But sooner or later, the ax falls. With pen in hand, learn from the Living Legend of Joab. A man without convictions is a man without a future in the Kingdom of God. If your spine is made of jelly, ask the Great Physician to do surgery. He has a cure. It is called "the way of escape." And it was designed for you.

You and I cannot rewrite the pages of history—not David's, not Amnon's, not Absalom's, and certainly not your own. What has been done, has been done. The pages are filed in the archives of eternity and woven carefully into God's sovereign story of your life. No history pen exists that is powerful enough to erase those pages and write them anew with what might have been.

But you and I DO possess a history pen that perhaps some of us have been overlooking in the process of our pilgrimage on earth on our way to heaven. It is the pen with which we write today's story, and tomorrow's story...pages as yet unwritten in the manuscript of our lives.

That pen is called a history pen because it scans the pages of the Living Legends of Scripture to see what happens when God's children adhere to God's principles, and what happens, as well, when they don't. God has told us that there is no situation that can come up in your life today, tomorrow, or any day until you are home at last, that He in you cannot handle. He has given you a way of escape. A vital part of the way of escape is called Life's Living Legends. They were, God has told us, written for our admonition so we, who think we can stand on our own, would take heed, lest we fall.

We have just taken a microscopic look at six chapters, at one series of incidents from God's Living Legends. In that brief encounter, God has demonstrated for us His way of escape and demonstrated for us the consequences of ignoring it. Lovingly, he painted us pictures of how to deal with immorality, with wrong friendships, with justified behavior, soft-hearted parents, vengeful

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spirits, manipulative children, the perils of drunkenness, the dangers of running, the principle that no man is an island, and the concept of spinelessness...and all in one little portion of His Word.

You and I can do absolutely nothing about David and Amnon and Tamar and Absalom and Bathsheba and Joab. They are history. You and I can do nothing about our own choices of the past. They, too, are history, and thanks to God's amazing grace, we are still here and still able to write yet another page or two on the script entitled, "My Walk With God."

What we can do something about is the rest of the book. We can learn from God's Living Legends how to take the way of escape. We can learn how to take the history pen and write the remaining chapters according to what we have learned.

With pen in hand, enabled by His grace, may we begin to write.

### WITH PEN IN HAND

With pen in hand, it's time to write  
The next page in our story,  
It can be a tragedy  
Or it can bring God glory.

If we but heed God's precious Word  
And read of lives gone by  
God will show us what to do  
And He will tell us why.

Then the choice will be our own  
To learn from those before us,  
Or simply follow in their steps  
And sing their dismal chorus.

The choice is ours; oh, will we learn  
And do whate'er it takes?  
With pen in hand, let's write, my child,  
And learn from their mistakes.

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