

“Tony Manly has said you wanted to do go through the kidnapping so you could get the nail scars,” Luke said quietly. “Will you please tell the court why that didn’t sound right to you?”

Greg locked eyes with Luke, obviously speaking only to his brother. That was how he’d get through this horrible memory. He couldn’t look at his sisters because if he saw them share his agony, he would lose it for sure.

“You’ve got to understand,” Greg said with a tremor in his voice, “that the first thing I remember clearly in that basement was the nail going through my hand. It shot pain up my arm and it burst like a blinding light in my brain. Before I could wrestle the pain and make it manageable, there was another pain higher up on my arm.” Greg touched his left arm where the bone had been broken. “And it was way more intense than the first pain, maybe because when the bone snapped, I instinctively tried to jerk away from the pain and the flesh of my hand tore around the nail. And I was drowning in the pain.

“But a voice that I knew but didn’t recognize spoke to me, told me I was Greg and he was Steve. And it sounded right. Then the voice reminded me that I love Jesus and that was way right. Beyond right even. It was reality with a capital R. I didn’t remember, but I knew things about Jesus and God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. And I knew I wasn’t alone even after Tony and Mare left me alone.

“The pain was intense and I must’ve passed out or fallen asleep because when I came to later on, I was in a chair instead of kneeling on the floor. I couldn’t see anything because it was totally black in that room, but I could feel the chair I was sitting in, the table I was nailed to and of course the nail that pierced my hand.

“I thought about Jesus being pierced by the nails and I knew it wasn’t the nails that hurt the most, it was the sin that Jesus took upon himself. In the course of events down there in that basement, I understood that the spiritual price was way higher, the giving up some part of the self he’d always been to become fully man even while he was still fully God. And then when he hung on the cross, he lost his Father. The Father was right where he’d always been

but because Jesus was burdened with the people's sin he couldn't get to the Father not even in his mind, just like I wasn't able to get to my family, not even my brother-in-law Steve whose name I'd been told. I didn't remember Steve for sure, but I knew it was right. I could remember I had a wife named Tiger and she had amazing silver eyes and I could remember that I had a brother and a sister and eventually I remembered that I had a mom too, but they weren't memories. I knew those people existed and I loved them but I couldn't feel them or see them, not even in my mind. That's what Jesus felt on the cross about his Father and it hurt him way worse than the nails and the beating did, just like my loss of memory hurt me worse than the nail in my hand and the bruises on my body.

"But that was understanding not discovery. My hand was nailed to the table, my arm was broken and I'd already been beat up pretty badly when I got the crack on my head, but the pain in my soul over not knowing who I was was worse than the physical. Knowing I was separated from people I love was way worse than the physical pain. I could understand how Jesus' spiritual agony was worse, harder to deal with than the nails, the physical agony. It wasn't a revelation like I'd never known this before. It was an understanding of something I knew even though I didn't remember learning it.

"I'd already known the nails were only a small part of the whole plan of salvation. They don't deserve singular attention because they have to be put in context with all the rest of the plan of salvation. They have to be put in with a whole bunch of other small but important parts so that they all equal up to the big plan. And I wasn't surprised or disappointed to realize that the nails weren't so important. That's why Tony's accusation sounds false to me. I'm pretty sure I've been trying to convince people to look beyond the nails. Why would I want to have people focus on them?"

Greg blinked almost in surprise. He looked around the room and saw tears on many faces, frowns on a few and growing wonder on others. He looked back at his brother and Luke smiled softly.