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The Barnacles of God's Faithfulness

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened,
Ephesians 1:18

Christie sits quietly on the soft sand, and an amber glow shines from her freckled face. Warm afternoon sun cheers the 15-year-old as it begins its faithful descent. Her kindly Master sends seabreezes to cool her, gently wafting through her hair. All the while, the beauty of Jesus radiates brightly in her heart.

Jingling metal tags approach the young woman from the right as Cuddles—her faithful Bernese Mountain dog—bounds to her side. "Hi-ya, Cuddles!" She greets her returning companion.

Christie intently listens to the rhythmic crescendo/decrescendo of rolling ocean waves. Bubbly tongues of water percolate through the sand, producing a tinkling sound resembling a thousand tiny cymbals. The hand of her Master faithfully directs these watery musicians, composing divine notes upon invisible staves[1] that soothe and entertain Christie. An unspeakable peace fills her through and through.

Just above the beach, a string of brown pelicans glides gracefully through the salt-filled air. Meanwhile, sanderlings perform an elaborate ballet, scurrying back and forth at the water's edge. Each retreating wave provides an exotic dinner of small clams, crabs, beached fish, and savory seaweed.

As the birds dance across this shimmering stage, the angle of the sun steadily decreases. To Christie's great delight, the tide is also in retreat, exposing a treasure trove of sea creatures over the wet sand. "I think you got back just in time, Cuddles; it sounds like the tide is pretty far out."

Christie holds a handful of beautiful seashells she has collected. And as she reflects on the wonder of her God revealed in each shell, joy moves her youthful voice to break into song:

"*From the four winds that blow to the whippoorwill call. From the green leaves of spring to the gold in the fall. From sunrise to sunset and all in between.*
The Master's in everything that you see.
The Master's in everything that you see."[2]

1 Staves are the blank lines of a composer's music paper.

2 R.W. Hampton · 2005; Ephesians 4:10

Suddenly, Christie hears another voice, not her own. A stranger approaches. She is not overly concerned because her parents keep a watchful eye on their young adventurer from the family's wind-swept front deck.

"Hello!" echoes a young man's voice from behind. "I hope I didn't alarm you, but I heard you singing and wanted to meet you. Your voice is like that of an angel!"

Christie blushes, then hesitates. "Hi," comes her meek response.

"What was that song you were singing?"

"Oh . . . a favorite Western tune of mine."

"It's beautiful, Christie."

Christie feels perplexed by the stranger's knowledge of her name. "Say, do you know my parents?"

"Yes," comes the stranger's reassuring answer, "I do. I met them up at the house. Do you live here year-round?"

"No, we're renting for the summer."

"Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Eved.[3] Do you mind my asking what the words of your song mean to you?"

More boldly, Christie answers, "I don't mind at all. Jesus has gifted my heart with eyes to see His face in all the things He daily brings out of the sea and onto this beach. May I show you?"

"Yes, please."

With Cuddles at her side, Christie leads Eved to a rocky coastline just south of the sandy beach.

"How long have you been blind, Christie?"

Now even more befuddled, she humbly replies, "From birth." There is a long pause.[4]

"To me, the seashore is like a desert, yet our Lord Jesus—being the Living God—miraculously fills it with life!"

"A desert? What makes it so inhospitable?" the stranger queries.

"The sun bakes these rocks; seabreezes sometimes become quite strong, blowing sand and salt across the surface. And the waves of the surf often pound the shore."

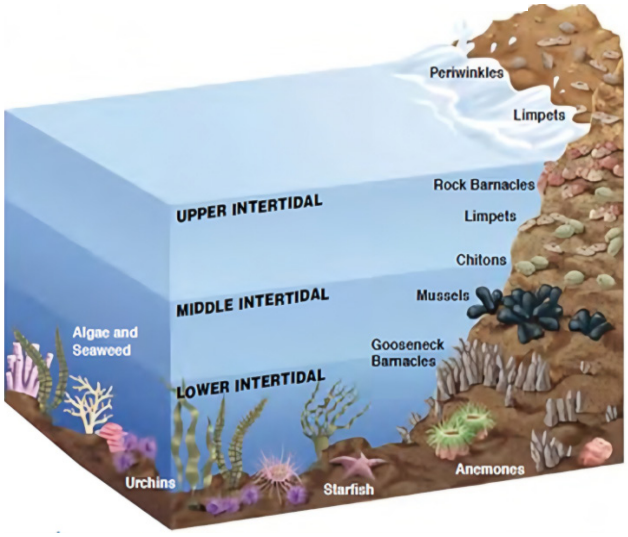
"This is a pretty stretch of beach, Christie. Do you explore here often?" asks Eved.

"Cuddles and I come nearly every day. You can probably see that it's not too far from our home," she responds politely.

"Is there any reason why you come to this particular spot?"

"When the tide goes out, I can get close to my Master's creations," she continues. "The way that God's wisdom arranges the creatures on rocky coasts intrigues me. Did you know that He orders His shorelines into three belts or zones, depending on how far the water reaches *at each high tide*?

"Hundreds of plant and animal species live along the shore in three narrow habitats, known as *intertidal zones*, hemmed in by high and low tides. The organisms Master Jesus causes to live here in these zones are often exposed to extremes of temperature, moisture, and salt. He takes extra special care of them so that they shine His glory even in this hostile environment."



3 Eved is pronounced like "evid"ence. He and Christie are fictitious characters.
4 Christie was born with a condition known as Optic Nerve Atrophy.

"Our Creator has commanded the tides to set a boundary for the sea . . . well, actually three boundaries.[5] Right now it's low tide, which is as far out to sea as the water's edge normally gets. I've learned that tides are very complex things; God uses the position of the moon and the Sun, and the rotation of Earth to create them. It's hard to explain—I certainly don't understand it all myself—but the gravity of these heavenly bodies causes the water's edge to be pulled up and down the shore, forming three distinct levels along the rocks. Shoreline creatures in each zone are sometimes in the water and sometimes out."

Christie pauses to ponder the loving care of her Creator. She becomes overwhelmed by the thought of His goodness.[6] "Thank you, Master, for how You reveal Yourself to me. My thoughts of You are so feeble; oh, how I wish I could know You better!" Sweet silence follows.

"It appears that the rocks further up the shore are somewhat slippery, Christie."

"Yes, those exposed rocks are often covered with microscopic blue-green algae. Our incredibly loving Creator faithfully provides these plants with a unique coating to prevent them from drying out during the several hours that the tide is out to sea. That's why they feel so slimy."

Cuddles and Christie then carefully climb to the upper zone. "Oh, Eved, come feel these small, hard bumps on the rock; they're *periwinkle snails*.[7] It might seem somewhat disgusting, but the periwinkle snail enjoys munching on the slimy blue-green algae.


Periwinkle snails

5 Proverbs 8:29
6 Psalm 104:27-28
7 *Littorina littorea*

"Master Jesus' love for His Creation continues to amaze me—His special design of this snail allows it to withstand the harsh conditions of the *upper tidal zone*. At high tide, they're inundated by the pounding of the surf. At low tide, they spend many hours exposed to the hot summer sun, often withstanding temperatures reaching 120° F."[8]

"That's fascinating," responds Eved.

This newfound friend seems nice, especially with his interest in nature. Yet, there is something different about him that she can not quite put her finger on.

"Our Lord Jesus covers the *high tide zone* in water only during the *spring tide*, which occurs twice a month at the time of the full and new moons." Christie begins to feel around and finds something that has a tough, crumpled-paper texture. "Eved, please come examine this lichen and tell me what you see."


Sunburst lichens

"It has an attractive orange color with fairly smooth edges, but rough in appearance like the rock it's growing on."

"That's sunburst lichen; it survives well here, along with the periwinkle snail.

"If we go further down, we'll be in the *middle tidal zone*." Led by Cuddles, Christie and Eved move halfway down the rocky shore, closer to the water. She stops and again feels around the surface of the rocks.

"Here's what I'm looking for!" Christie's fingers are now examining several hard, volcano-shaped objects about two inches high.

"What are those?" Eved asks.

8 Fifty degrees Celcius or more

Acorn barnacle

"They're acorn barnacles.[9] My Master faithfully cares for them in a truly remarkable way. Do you see the small hole at the top of the pyramid?" Christie points to the opening.

"Yes."

"Inside that hole lives a small crustacean that resembles a shrimp. While still very young, it glues its head to a rock and lives the rest of its life upside-down, in one spot. As the tides come in and cover the barnacles, Jesus supplies them water teeming with microscopic life. To eat, six pairs of legs extend from an inner trap-door and start kicking small bits of food into the creature's mouth. If God had placed the moon or the sun in a slightly different position, these barnacles would have starved long ago.[10] He knows that barnacles are blind and is ever faithful to their care! They're one of my favorite animals."

Cuddles

"Why is that?" asks Eved.

"I guess it's because they're so trusting, durable, and they seem to thrive well here between the tides, despite being blind."

"Does being blind make you anxious?" Eved gently inquires.

Christie responds thoughtfully, "No, not usually. This is my Father's world, and His Son—who is my Master—faithfully looks after all my needs.[11] I just love how powerfully and tenderly Jesus cares for all His creatures. *He's so wonderful!"* Joyful confidence rings in her voice.

"Eved, please let me share with you how my Master feeds the colonies of blue mussel on these rocks. Cuddles loves to sniff them out. Oh, I think he's found some." The dog's wet nose is pressed up against a colony of blue mussels.[12]

Blue mussels

"They feel hard like clams but are more oval in shape. Like barnacles, they live permanently attached to this rocky shore. (Clams usually live in sand or mud.) Barnacles and blue mussels cannot go in search for food but must wait patiently for the Earth to rotate and for the moon to create tides. There is nothing that Jesus, my Master, cannot do![13] He lovingly *moves an ocean of water* to feed His creatures. Isn't that amazing? *He is so incredibly strong and faithful!* Why should I ever be anxious?

9 *Semibalanus balanoides*
10 Isaiah 45:18
11 1 Peter 5:7
12 *Mytilus edulis*
13 Mark 10:27b

"When high tides cover mussels, these simple animals trustingly open the two halves of their shells, absorbing oxygen from the water and filtering out the fine particles of food the Lord graciously provides."

Eved is amazed by how much Christie knows about the sea, the poise of her character, and her intense love for her Creator, Redeemer, and Master.

"Do you hear that, Eved? It sounds like something sweetly moving through a summer's breeze."


Brown pelicans

Eved looks up and spies a string of ten brown pelicans gracefully flying north along the beach, just 30 feet above the water's edge. "It's a flock of birds."

"Brown pelicans. I know them. They're such captivating creatures, aren't they, Eved?"

"Yes, they are, Christie."

"I had the privilege of briefly touching one at a local wildlife rescue park two years ago."

"They seem to move in synchrony," explained Eved, "one after another, as the Invisible Hand tenderly leads them along. Their appearance is that of a . . . a pearl necklace . . . one fit for a king or a queen!"

Christie experiences cold shivers up and down her spine as Eved richly paints a scene she can actually see with her heart. "That's beautiful, Eved. Thank you for sharing with me what you see. Oh, how incredibly ordered and peaceful Jesus has made His world.[14] I only wish I didn't sin as much as I do. *It must disappoint Him so.*" Tears come streaming down her young face as she remembers God's promise to forgive her.[15]

Christie slowly stands upright. Cuddles takes that as a sign to lead his own master over the uneven rocks and further down toward the water. "On many submerged shorelines around the world, our Creator—like a Master Gardener—has planted a garden of countless seaweeds. The common varieties include *brown, red, and green algae.* Some can survive many hours out of the sea, lose up to 90 percent of their water, and still survive. I read somewhere that if a person loses only a tiny fraction of his body's water supply, he will die. I'm puzzled how God gives some organisms the ability to endure trials more than others," Christie humbly adds.


Green algae

"God especially gives His children the strength needed for the moment.[16] Because you are blind, Christie, you see that better than most. Many sighted people do not."

"I'm convinced that my Master loves the things He has made, and helps even the lowliest of His creatures. Like barnacles and mussels, plants can't move to get a drink of water. I think God designed some of them to survive even if they dry out to show us His kindness."

14 Isaiah 9:6
15 1 John 1:9
16 2 Corinthians 12:9

The shimmering of the late afternoon sunshine catches Eved's attention. "What is that small pool of water down there?"

Christie suddenly bubbles over with youthful excitement. "I'm guessing it's *a rock pool!* There are depressions in the rocks here that make perfect spots where water can collect. When the tide goes out, seawater and other creatures of the *lower tidal zone* get temporarily stranded." With increased eagerness in her voice, she pleads, "Eved, please let's go and see."

Cuddles seems to sense exactly where Christie wants to go and faithfully leads her to the pool's edge. As the impulse to explore outweighs caution, she soon finds herself up to her elbows in warm ocean water. Almost immediately, she's holding something. "I think my sweet Lord Jesus strands them here partly so I can learn just how dependent I am upon His care."

"It looks quite bumpy and seems to have five arms," observes Eved.

"Yes, it's a sea star, Eved. Most are blessed with five arms, or multiples of five. Marine biologists continue to discover other kinds as well: some with seven, nine, or even eleven arms—just about any number between six and fourteen will do. God has filled the world with almost 2,000 species of starfish[17] . . . so far."

"So far?"

"New sea creatures are being discovered every year. Oh, how I so wish I could explore the whole ocean realm and peer into the aquatic treasury of my great King! Some sea stars can be found in shallow waters, but I think many live deep on the ocean bottom, many miles down."

Arctic sea star with nine arms[18]

"Don't they need warm water, Christie?"

"No, not always. Master Jesus made several types of starfish that live in the Arctic Ocean." Christie seems to freeze, then exclaim, "Oooo, there's another animal in this pool that feels like a pincushion; it's a sea urchin." Christie carefully scoops up the creature with her two hands to show Eved.

"It looks potentially harmful, Christie," cautions Eved. "You are brave."

"I don't think I'm braver than any other 15-year-old girl. It's just . . . it's just that the Lord has made me so very curious about His creations and I long to know Him better![19]

Sea urchin

17 "Starfish" is the more common name for the sea star. Marine biologists prefer "sea star" because these creatures are not fish!

18 *Solaster endeca*

19 Jeremiah 29:13

"The fact is, this sea urchin has five jaws, *but eats only plants*; the starfish I was just holding is more 'dangerous.' It has no teeth, yet consumes only meat. But I'm just too big for either of them to harm me." A big, beautiful smile fills Christie's face. "God's ways are very mysterious, and *that makes me love Him all the more!*

"I wish we had time to discover all the creatures Master Jesus has placed on Earth's shorelines. It's said that on some rocky spots—only six-foot by six-foot square[20]—there may be up to one million individual animals clinging to the rocks."

"I think you and Mary would have been good friends," encourages Eved.

"Mary?"

"Lazarus and Martha's sister. You're about the same age she was when she sat at Redemption's feet."[21]

Christie's mind goes into a whirl, and she begins to feel light-headed. How in the world does Eved know all this?

"Are these the primary animals found in tide pools, Christie?"

Eved's voice seems mute and far away, like one speaking at the end of a long tunnel. Her thinking clears. "Oh, ah . . . no. Tide pools can harbor crabs, anemones, snails, fish, worms . . ."

"Worms?"

"Yes, the sea is full of worms," Christie exclaims confidently. "But we'll need to visit the nearby sandy beach to find them."

The former stranger wonders how someone so young and delicate as Christie could possibly be interested *in worms*.

"There's a special one Jesus fashioned called the ribbon worm," continues Christie, "sometimes found at low tide. One particular species holds the world record, I think."

"World record?"

"Oh, it can reach a length of 180 feet."[22]

There is complete silence from Eved as he ponders these things.

"The animals of the beach are often buried in the sand. So, the problem for beach animals is not necessarily temperature or water supply, but getting enough air to breathe."

"That makes sense since they are buried underground," adds Eved.

Once they reach the sandy beach, Christie quickly finds some things for Eved to examine.

"Here's a razor clam I just dug up. I had to be fast—they move quickly in the sand."

"Razor clam?" echoes Eved. "Is it dangerous?"

"Oh, no," assures Christie. "It's called a razor clam because Master Jesus created it in the shape of an old-fashioned razor handle. It lives straight up and down in the sand."

Strange shape for a clam, Eved thought. "How does it breathe and eat, buried in the sand like that?"

20 Two meters by two meters
21 Luke 10:38-42
22 Fifty-five meters

"When tidewater covers the beach, clams push body tubes, called *siphons*, up through the sand and into the water. With the siphon, they suck water in and out of their shells. Master uses seawater to faithfully provide His tidal animals with all the oxygen and food they will ever need to survive."

Christie finds a tiny creature on the sand and places it in her left palm.

"It's a *mole crab*."[24]

"Will it bite?" Eved asks with measured concern in his voice.

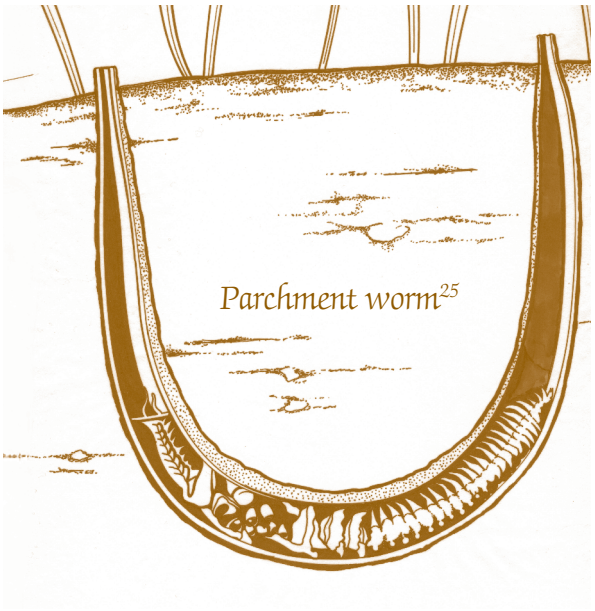
"No, it has no pincers," assures Christie. "The mole crab is quite harmless. It normally buries itself in the sand with only its eyes and antennae sticking above the surface. It then uses its antennae to capture tiny plankton brought in by the waves of the tide."

After returning the animals to their proper homes, they continue walking. Soon, they are confronted by something completely unexpected. Cuddles seems especially aroused.

"Ooo, the smell of rotten eggs!" exclaims Christie. "It's from hydrogen sulfide. We've entered a section of beach that is part of an *estuary*. The sand here is mixed with the mud of a river, which protects the estuary from the pounding waves of the ocean. But the mud encourages the growth of certain kinds of bacteria as well, especially those that can live without oxygen. They produce the odor."

"Nothing could possibly live here, could it?" Eved inquires.

"Hydrogen sulfide is very poisonous to many of the small burrowing animals on the beach; however, our Lord Jesus created a way for some to overcome this problem," Christie explains.



"God creates a protective U-shaped tube for the *parchment worm* to call home. The parchment worm spends all its time in this moist, slippery tube and never comes out. Normally buried in muddy sand, each end of its tubular home sticks above the mud like little smoke stacks. Day and night, it uses fans attached to its body to pump seawater

23 *Ensis directus*
24 *Emerita* sp.
25 *Chaetopterus* sp.

containing particles of food in one end of the tube and out the other. And sometimes it makes a special net of mucous to help strain food from the incoming water."

"So, it's able to live quite well in this nasty-smelling place?" Eved adds.

"Oh, yes, Master is pleased with its design,"[26] Christie announces with extra enthusiasm. "In His winsomeness, He also graced the parchment worm with the ability to light up its tail, like a firefly.

"But the parchment worm is far from the only animal Master Jesus placed in these muddy flats," Christie continues. "If we took the time, we could find lugworms and many varieties of clams and snails. . . But the smell is really getting to Cuddles and me. Would you mind if we went to another spot?" she pleads.

"Oh, not at all, Christie."

"Eved, may I ask you a question?"

"Yes, Christie," comes his kindly reply.

"Why do you talk as if you have spoken to God Himself?"

"Because I have." Eved pauses, then queries, "Do you mind me asking you something, Christie?"

"No, go ahead."

"Does being blind ever make you feel alone?"

"Sometimes, but not usually."

In the gentlest voice Christie ever heard, Eved continues, "Jesus will always be with you. He is faithful to those He loves! He will never leave you nor forsake you.[27] Listen to what God says in His Word: 'Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these stars, the One who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name; because of the greatness of His might and the strength of His power, not one of them is missing.'[28]

"He knows that you cannot see, Christie. This Scripture is encouraging you to continue lifting *the eyes of your heart* up toward the beauty of your Father in heaven."

26 Genesis 1:25
27 Hebrews 13:5
28 Isaiah 40:26

Christie and Eved walk slowly back toward home, discussing the many ways God has been faithful in His goodness.

"Christie, do you really see your Master in everything?"

"Yes! I am so thankful God's Spirit has opened the eyes of my heart to see His glory. My parents tell me that in many ways, I am very blessed. They're convinced that the physical eyes of most folks get easily distracted and often mislead them."

"Do you struggle with temptation?"

"Oh yes, Eved, I do. Often. The world I can't see seems to be filled with many things that lead people away from the joy of the Lord and a pure devotion to Him. I'm very grateful that God has removed many distractions from me."

"Do you consider yourself a Christian?" Eved probes further.

"For as long as I can remember, Jesus has taught me in His Word to confess my sins and trust that they are washed away from my life by His death on the Cross. The Bible says that there is no forgiveness of sins 'without shedding of blood.'"[29] Christie pulls a well-worn Braille New Testament from her brown beach bag. On the front cover of her Bible is the Braille word ⠍⠁⠎⠞⠑⠗[30] "Eved, I touch the Word of God every day and carry it within my heart. I love God so much—I want to please Him and enjoy Him in everything!"

There's a long pause of silence. Eved anticipates a question from Christie.

29 Hebrews 9:22
30 MASTER

"Then, are you a Christian?"

"Well, not exactly. I am an angel. My full name is Eved Ha-Shem, *a servant of God*."

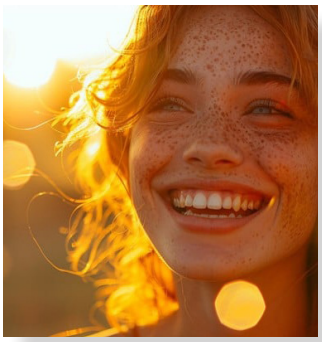
Christie blushes, and she starts to visibly tremble.

"Christie, don't be afraid. I have been sent to watch over you, not to judge you. And you have freely shown me hospitality, though I'm a stranger."[31]

"I love to talk with new people," Christie responds cheerfully, "as long as my parents are watching over me."

"They are!" reassures Eved. "But I must go now for our Master calls me."

"Will you be back. . ?" Christie receives no response and hears no footsteps. For several minutes, she sits silently, pondering all that just took place. Then the most joyful smile suddenly fills her face. And her own footsteps returning home this evening are especially lively as Cuddles guides her. "*The Master's in everything that I see*."



The joy of the LORD *is your strength.*
Nehemiah 8:10

Have *you* ever had difficulty trusting God because you can't see Him? Collectively, our sins have hidden God from our sight.

God knows that we are perceptual beings and that we accept things much more easily when we can see and touch them. This is one reason why He appeared to the world in human form as the Lord Jesus Christ two thousand years ago. Chiefly, the God-man broke through the veil of sin to prove to us just how much He loves His own.

Jesus Christ, being truly God and truly man, allowed Himself to be nailed to a cross—a terrible way to die—to pay the penalty for the wrongdoings of those who would believe in Him. If we repent of our sins and trust Him to redeem us, then we will be united with God through Christ forever.

31 Hebrews 13:2

We hope this story stimulates your heart toward a deeper, sweeter love for Christ Jesus, our only Master (2 Peter 2:1). His Scriptures command us to remember also our Creator in the days of our youth (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

Some of us are well beyond youth, yet what makes a child of God is not age but the youthful heart created by Christ's Spirit (Ezekiel 11:19; Matthew 18:1-5). We fear that many in the visible church today are comfortable with their view of the Creator, even if it falls far short of who He really is. May His Spirit challenge our thinking in the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2) to maintain our First Love (Revelation 2:4).

And may our Lord Jesus use this humble proclamation of His glory to renew our hearts as well as our minds, especially as we see His Day approaching. *The souls of all generations are at stake.* Please continue to prayerfully stand with us in this good fight of faith!

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