

*Precious Pilgrim,*

*I'm back on our 6'x4' front stoop at the guesthouse where we have been living ever since our house fire. It's 5:15 P.M. and the sun is slowly setting. Daisy the Dog, our fourteen-year-old lab, is lying on her cushion next to me in my folding chair. The azalea, the dogwood, and the birds are once again breathtakingly beautiful. I'm sitting on the edge of a football field-size dug-out yard with trenches and rebar. There's also a port-o-let, a huge garbage bin, and our burned out house to complete the picture. It's truly "the good, the bad, and the ugly."*

*I guess I'm a little reflective right now, maybe even melancholy, not depressed, but rather sad. And that's OK. I just picked up Daisy from the vet. She's been there for over a week. She's old. She has arthritis and an inoperable tumor in her ear. The latter is causing her to lose her equilibrium. She's on three different pills a day. She's not suffering and she's still her old self in so many ways. She still loves to eat, loves to smell, and loves to be petted. Her extraordinary personality is still very much present and intact. I love her. She loves me. We have spent many hours together, just the two of us. Her favorite spot on earth is also mine -- the end of the dock at Lake Martin, Alabama. We've spent days there -- me reading, resting, writing, she sunning, sleeping and swimming. In her prime, she could catch a tennis ball thrown at full speed at her as fast as you could throw it. She had incredible eye-mouth*

*coordination.*

*In her prime, she could fish all day. She would stand on the dock steps with her body half-immersed in the water and intently watch and wait. Occasionally she'd launch herself like a gigantic battleship into the deep. Never in all these years has she made a catch, but never has that dampened her enthusiasm for the quest.*

*She was a great sailing mate. She could wedge herself perfectly in the tiny hole of our Sunfish sailboat. She was my ballast, for her weight kept me from capsizing. She was my bailer, for she kept the hole dry with her lapping. She was my barometer, for she would become restless sensing an approaching storm.*

*As I mentioned, she loves food, all food, human or canine, except tomatoes. Her voracious appetite, plus her owner's over-indulgence of her, has caused her to be a little overweight, but she's still beautiful.*

*In this mature stage, she just tolerates children and babies. I guess she feels like she's raised one family, ours, and she thinks that should be enough. If you interviewed my husband or each of our grown children, each would have his or her own "Daisy" tales. She has been faithful and protective and obedient and playful, an incredibly good pet. When my husband was in town, she slept on his side on the floor next to the bed. If he was away, she would sleep on my side.*

*Now we've moved inside to finish your letter. Night is upon us. Daisy sleeps. Her ear has been bleeding. I washed it as best I could. Her balance is very unsteady. Another "letting go" opportunity seems to be lurking in the wings. Lord, it's so hard. I know this is part of life, the "letting go" part. It's hard and doesn't seem to be getting any easier. Daisy's just a dog, a wonderful, glorious dog.*

*I might not get this right, but I think I heard in this week's sermon given by a visiting minister from South Dakota that animals and plants and all things in nature are "glorious" because they reflect God's glory. Each is doing exactly what God intended and created them to do. They are living out the creative glory of the Lord. Gosh, I'd like to live like that.*

*Daisy, better known and registered as "Princess Daisy," is, just as her name indicates, no ordinary canine. She is truly glorious. She has reflected her Creator's creativity by being totally what she was meant to be -- a dog.*

*Thank You, Lord, for this precious pet. May she not suffer and may she go peacefully -- home.*

*She has often been a living inspiration to me -- how she kept her eyes on her master, her loyalty, her faithfulness, her gentleness, her dependence. Lord, may I so train my eyes on You. Thank You and good night.*

*I am your sister in Christ,*

*Lucy*

*P.S. "Come Holy Spirit, use me to Your glory," is the first thing I write at the beginning of each of your letters. I yearn that my life would be lived more and more as my Father God intended. Do you so yearn? It is by living in His will that there can be reflected even a tiny glimmer of His glory. Thank the dear Lord, we have His Holy Spirit to direct and heal and comfort us and we have our Lord Jesus Christ as our loving example and Redeemer and Savior. And we have our Father God's desire for us to live in communion with Him, and His desire for us to become as He intended -- LOVE. Glorious love! God bless.*