**Remembering My Friend**

**Pastor Robert L. (Bob) Harman**

*1938-2016*

Bro. Bob Harman was the faithful pastor of the First Baptist Church in Jacumba, California for many years. I first met Bob in 1995 while I was preaching in Southern California. Shortly after we met we corresponded a good bit and he asked me to come to Jacumba for a Bible conference. Joining me in the conference were pastors Gene Harmon and Norm Wells. On Sunday morning, as we drove to the last service of the conference, Bob told me that he had decided to preach before me; and asked that I critique his sermon. Needless to say, I dreaded the thought and told him I would prefer not to be put in that position.

At the ten o’clock hour, Bob stood to preach. I do not recall his text; but I do remember the title of his sermon — “Steps to Salvation”! The title was horrible, and the sermon even worse. It was altogether heretical, the preaching of works from start to finish. When Bob was done, I turned to both Bro. Harmon and Bro. Wells, who were sitting one row behind me, and said, “I’ll give either of you $100.00 to preach in my place.” Neither was willing to do so.

Had Bob preached that the moon is purple, snow is gray, and dogs never have fleas, I could have held my tongue. But what he preached was damning heresy. It had been preached publicly in my presence. And, though I was his guest preaching in his pulpit, his doctrine had to be publicly dismantled and corrected. The responsibility, by God’s providence, fell upon my shoulders. And God the Holy Ghost gave me grace and power, as only he can, to meet the responsibility.

I presumed before I stood to preach that all hell would break loose and the 70 mile drive back to San Diego would be torturous. I was wrong! Instead, Bob stood before his congregation, broken hearted and weeping, as he confessed his sin and confessed God’s grace. The Lord God had made his Word effectual to a lost preacher!

From that day until the Lord graciously received him up into Glory, Bob Harman and I were friends. We travelled together. Whenever I was anywhere on the West Coast he either flew or drove to the meetings. At those meetings, we usually had breakfast together most mornings and spent an hour or two together at some point during the meeting, talking privately about the things of God. We spoke often on the phone and corresponded regularly. We laughed together and wept together; but never once did a harsh word pass between us.

After the Lord saved him, Bob remained pastor at Jacumba for many years. After retiring from pastoral work, he was instrumental in establishing San Diego Grace Fellowship, where Bro. Eric Richards is now pastor. I cherish the memory of my friend, wishing only that I had been as good and faithful a friend to him as he was to me. I hope to join him soon in the company of him who is the Friend of sinners, our beloved Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ.