

10/08/05

Welcome to 2nd Thief Ministries! We appreciate you visiting and are glad you could join us. You can meet us in person at any one of our sponsored events and you can always meet us here at the website! We invite you to take a few moments from your busy life to get a cup of coffee (or tea) sit back, relax and enjoy time well spent reflecting with us on the goodness of the Lord.

2nd Thief Riders participated in an Outreach with Mountain View Community Church in Culpeper, VA on 9/18/05. It was a tremendous time of fun and fellowship. Mountain View sponsored a car and bike show and awarded a total of twenty trophies for the event. There was free hot dogs, chips and lemonade. They also provided a band and everyone had a great time.

2nd Thief Riders presented the message of the "2nd Thief" during the event and sponsored an 115 mile "Skyline Drive Ride." God blessed us with wonderful weather for the event and the ride. Hearts were touched by Him and new found friendships with other Brothers and Sisters were made. I know for a fact that at least one family that had no church home committed to start attending Mountain View Community Church!

Just this week the 2nd Thief Riders completed the Men's Fall Ride (six states, 1400 miles). I would like to add at this point that the weather pattern from 10/02/05 through 10/05/05 was twenty degrees warmer than normal for this time of year and the cold front (with rain) was held at bay until 10/06/05. We all returned refreshed in our walk (ride) with the Lord! I want to share some of the highlights as a means to remind us all of the love and faithfulness of our Heavenly Father.

One of our fellow riders who was originally going on the ride was unable to participate due to the premature birth of his daughter "Maggie." The remaining Riders felt lead to dedicate the ride to Maggie and her family. The Riders created a

"Maggie Flier" encouraging believers they met along the way to pray for God's favor for her health and well-being and that of her family.

Right from the very beginning we got to see "God at work." The very first staging area was a convenience store in Luray, VA. We met two lovely ladies that were working there and gave them a flier. They immediately placed it in a prominent location on the front door of the store. By the way, if the lady that we met there would contact 2nd Thief Ministries we can arrange to provide you with the item you requested.

The first night we stayed at Mount Airy, NC. It just so "happened" that there was a Police Chaplin's Convention being held there! Needless to say the fact that the 2nd Thief Riders were comprised of Police Officers (one also being a preacher) and a Firefighter we immediately "connected." The Chaplin's prayed with us for Maggie and her family. They agreed to bring the need for prayer back to their home churches and continue to pray for her and the family.

During the Ride God touched hearts and people joined with us in praying for Maggie. Many restaurants, convenience stores and motels displayed the flier. It truly was a blessing to pray for her in all the states the 2nd Thief Riders traveled through.

Which brings us to another point in our reflecting on how the Lord spoke to our hearts during the ride. We actually had two other last minute cancellations on the ride. One Rider was called to Gulf Coast Relief Duties and one had college responsibilities. While they and the rest of us were disappointed we truly believe that "God works all things together for good for those who love Him and our called to His purpose." Romans 8:28

Well the Rider called away to Hurricane Duty is the Treasurer of this Ministry. While I was on the ride I received a request from a subject. He wanted to know if the Ministry knew of any individual(s) that suffered loss because of the hurricanes and he wanted to donate a substantial amount of

money towards helping them get back on their feet. Do you see the **Hand of God** here? We had a person from our Ministry in place to be prepared to handle that "call for service." Tony is a Federal Law Enforcement Officer and is assigned at the heart of the relief efforts! I called him and he is actively seeking out a needy individual (or family) to connect with this donation. Praise God for His mercy and faithfulness.

This all comes under the heading of "Trust Him with the details of your life." In Proverbs 16:9 we read, "The mind of man plans his way (or Ride), but the LORD directs his steps (or routes).

We on the Ride were reminded of this wisdom several times. Originally we wanted to ride through eight states, but through a few set backs on the day we were to travel through SC and GA it was not looking good. Shortly before we were to head for SC and GA a bike on the Ride broke a throttle cable and that made the decision final.

It could have been a frustrating event at the very least and easily could have resulted into a very serious incident. But it was neither of these. We turned it into a time of fellowship. The bike broke down along the Blue Ridge Parkway (at a place called "Bull Gap" go figure) at a very scenic overlook. We talked and laughed and had a great time of fellowship. Remember, "The Joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10) not the circumstances you find yourself in at the time. Circumstances change for good or bad, but the Lord is unchanging and is *always loving towards you*.

Again now for more tangible "God at Work" observations. There was minimal traffic where we were. We were in a remote section of NC. Suddenly, an older gentleman (late sixties, early seventies and a source of inspiration in of itself) riding a Harley "appeared" and stopped to see if he could help. He was on his way to take *his* bike to the local Harley-Davidson Dealer (only 13 miles away). He filled us in on all the details and location of the dealer. We made a few calls on the cell phone and within three hours we were on our

way to Gatlinburg, TN. The very location where we intended to spend the night.

An aside here so that it will be perfectly clear I am not picking on Harley riders. My Honda VTX1800R did experience one malfunction during the last three years of ownership. I was riding to a church in Fairfax, VA from my former home that was located in the country. I had stopped at a gas station in Gainesville, VA and turned the bike off. When I went to turn it back on...nothing, no power. There were four Harley riders right across the parking lot watching me push my 800lb+ bike on a very hot day.

Honestly I didn't get upset and I asked the Lord what the "Life Application" was for this incident. I was heading to church with my oldest son and the young lady he is courting. I was on a mission for the Ministry to distribute fliers for the Culpeper Outreach. I was doing *all* the "right things" I thought.

He spoke to my heart and revealed this truth to me. He impressed upon me that my VTX was great to look at, but not too much fun push. I simply in my own strength could not get this motorcycle to do what it was created to do. It needed power I did not possess to operate it effectively. My strength pushing it around quickly gave out. The simple fix for it required a 1/4 turn of the screw on the positive terminal of the battery. With that done it was re-connected to a power source much greater than mine and it became a true joy again.

That's true for our lives too. We are these "lumps of clay" we might even be good to look at, but using only our own strength we easily give out and cannot operate in the manner we were created for. When we get "re-connected" to God through the work of Jesus on the Cross we have power through His Holy Spirit in our lives we too become all we were created to be. Our life becomes a true joy as we operate through His Spirit.

Well back to the Men's Fall Ride...

Some observations at this point. God had been speaking to my heart earlier the second morning about not going to SC and GA. I like to call these as being a "check in my spirit." I was praying to the Lord about it when through this and another event He made it perfectly clear that we were not to ride to SC/GA.

Now remember we were on a mission to bring the message of the Gospel and prayers for Maggie and her family to as many people as we could. It could be argued that two more states meant more people hearing the Gospel and more believers praying for Maggie. Again I am reminded about the Apostle Paul who was prevented from going to Asia Minor and preaching there. Like the VTX incident we need to operate in the Spirit and not lean towards our own understanding. God knows the reasons for these turn of events and we need to trust enough in *His love for us* that they are good reasons.

During the ride I had my trusty iPod with me that was loaded with hours and hours of all kinds of Praise and Worship music. I mention this because being able to hear and sing along (if my voice qualifies as singing) with uplifting Praise and Worship music for the vast majority of the day had tremendous blessings. It is hard to get upset or be angry or disappointed or whatever when you are continually reminded of the greatness and love of God.

Factor into the equation the awesome areas we rode through to include the Blue Ridge Parkway, Great Smokey Mountains, Scenic Highway along the Ohio River and others. Again I am reminded of Psalm 19:1 which states, "**The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.**"

Then of course remember that when you ride a motorcycle it is you and God (unless you have a passenger) it adds up to a lot of quality time alone with Him. He brought to my attention areas of my life that I need to turn over to Him. And there were many times along the way I became aware of how blessed I am and thanked Him for His favor in my life.

I will leave you with these final thoughts from the Ride. We certainly got to travel to many different states, counties, cities and towns. While I enjoyed myself tremendously meeting and making new friends along the way God spoke a deep truth to my heart. I was made to feel very welcome at the various places we stayed along the way, but I was still a stranger passing through.

From the very beginning of the Ride I was in all reality "Homeward Bound." Each day I knew I was only visiting and eventually I would arrive at my home. That's what he impressed upon my heart. He wants me to enjoy all the blessings He has provided for me while I am traveling through this life. The blessings of His Salvation by Grace, my family, the Ministry, fellowship with other believers and friends, my health, my work, riding my motorcycle, the beauty of a sunrise or sunset, the mountains, food well prepared, good music, great works of art or poetry, etc.

It is incumbent upon me that I keep them in the proper perspective and remember that this earth is but a temporary home for me for as long as the Lord grants I should live. Heaven is my ultimate and eternal home and I am to stay the course and remain "Homeward Bound."

"They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that *country* from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly *country*. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them." Heb 11:13-16 (NKJV)

My prayer is that you would see Jesus for who He is our loving Lord and our God and respond to His love with a humble heart and a simple act of faith like the 2nd thief on the Cross, "Jesus remember me."

And Jesus said, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

Godspeed

Preacher Crane