

The Master's Perfect Song

*(Sequel to **The Preacher and the Fiddle**)*

2nd Place Winner

**Eastern NC Church of God Senior Talent
Creative Writing/Short Story Division - 2022**

Dedicated in loving memory of

Agnes Horton Ingram,

1917 - 2020,

a faithful servant whose words

will forever ring in our ears...

“He’s calling...”

Flossie Stewart

Benson Church of God

The sound of hammers and power saws filled the crisp, cool air on the fall Monday morning renovations began at the Hickory Creek Church of God. Pastor Jacob Brantley Worthington, Jr. clicked off his cell phone just as Ted Stamphill drove up.

Still sipping his coffee, Ted smiled as he got out and walked over to him. "Good morning, Pastor!"

"Morning, Brother Ted!" The new pastor reached out to shake his hand.

"It sure is good to see this finally happening!"

"Well, you played a big part in it all. This is the reward of not giving up. Gotta stand on faith." The pastor smiled. "Mayor Frank's on his way over. He wants to take a look at the parsonage with us, you know, make some notes on what all needs to be done with it. Said he knows some guys with a company he used to work for that might can help us get it fixed up."

"Oh, that's wonderful!" Ted finished his coffee as his slightly graying wavy brown hair danced in the fall breeze.

"Just one thing I need to make clear, though. I said the renovations would begin immediately. I didn't say I would pay for it all. Mama and I had some funds saved up from Dad's insurance policy and some of what he left us, but I have to make sure she's taken care of, too."

"I certainly understand that. Your Dad was a good preacher and a powerful man of God. He wouldn't want it any other way."

"Yeah, that he was, and I plan to do him right. That's why I came back. I knew it's what he would have wanted, and I feel it's what God's called me to do. So, I went through the training to become ordained. I interned at our church back in Atlanta. I realize not everyone may be all that happy about me coming back after all this time, with all the problems that have developed since I left, but I'm certainly going to do my best."

"That's all you can do, Pastor. I know too, that if God's hand was in your coming back to us, He's gonna see you through, and we're gonna work to get the unity back in this church."

“Yes, I fully believe that. I’ve got a plan in place to make that happen. Like I said, I’m getting it started as far as the work, but I can’t do it all. This church is gonna have to work together.”

“Well, Pastor, you’ve got me on board, whatever I can do.”

“I appreciate that, Ted. If you can, just help me get everything organized and keep people motivated. We need everyone if this is going to work.” The pastor looked up as the mayor’s truck pulled up. “There’s Frank now.”

“What I’d like to do is use this for Sunday School rooms and space for the young people to gather until we can add those extra rooms onto the church.” Pastor Worthington unlocked the parsonage as the three men walked in.

“Well, Pastor, that’s a great plan. Now, we just need to get the membership back up and help them see the importance of paying their tithes. You certainly can’t do it all.” Mayor Frank walked through, jotting down notes as he assessed the damage.

“That’s a fact. I’ve already got the message for next Sunday in mind.”

“Looks like some settling in the floor in places, so definitely get that fixed and replace this old flooring, redo these outdated and worn old cabinets...” Ted stepped down on a weak place in the floor as Frank nodded, scribbling it down.

“You’re gonna need new energy efficient windows, probably redo these walls, and no doubt, your wiring is probably out of date.” Frank tapped a couple of places on the wall. “Ceiling, roof needs repairing, so pretty much everything.”

“I know a guy who does roofing, very reputable. I can get him to call you,” Ted offered as they noted places sagging in the ceiling.

Walking back outside, they looked up at the roof, which had seen its share of storms. The paint had peeled from most of the trim work, and some of it was falling off. The shutters and doors needed replacing.

Noting the pastor's obvious concern, Frank spoke up. "Tell you what. I've got my notes here on what you need. Let's get the basic work done on the church first, you know, enough to get it to at least pass inspection. As for the more expensive projects, that's where everyone's going to have to work together. Meanwhile, I'll make some calls and start getting some estimates lined up for this, and we'll go from there."

"That makes sense." Ted nodded thoughtfully.

"Exactly what I'm thinking." The pastor agreed. "I'm calling a church meeting after service Thursday night. Ted, I'll let you handle getting a men's meeting together for Saturday. Keep them up to date on everything and designate some leaders to head things up so we can get this done."

"Sure, I can do that."

"Well, Ted, Pastor, I hope you both understand the importance of what I said before. This church didn't get like this overnight, and the problems won't be solved overnight. This congregation doesn't just need unity. It needs healing. Pastor, I don't think God would have sent you back here if He didn't already have a plan. We can do this, but everyone's going to have to do their part. I feel you are perfectly capable of making it happen. I have faith in you, JB. I've known your dad since you were just a little fellow, and I see a lot of him in you. This church has great potential if we can just help them see it. I think Gloria and I are going to start coming back to church here."

"Well, thank you so much, Frank. That means a lot, and thanks for coming out. We certainly appreciate your time and efforts."

"You're certainly welcome! I've gotta run, but I'll be in touch! Just remember, Romans 8:28 reminds us that God works all things for good to them that love Him and are the called according to His purpose." With that, the mayor headed to his truck and left.



Two weeks had passed. It was late Saturday evening. Pastor JB sat on the steps of the parsonage as the sun went down. The workers had all gone home. He'd preached on unity, tithing, and even healing. Most nights, he'd stayed long after the service was over and prayed. Yet still, the attendance was down. How could he help them if they wouldn't come? Without very many of them paying tithes and offerings, the money would soon run out. How could he teach them the rewards of their fruitfulness if their faith was dead? What was he doing wrong? Had he wasted his time in coming back?

There was still no real unity. He'd heard some of the members were complaining, blaming him because he had left and let the church get in the shape it was in to start with. There were only a few families with any children. The teenagers had long gone, feeling there was nothing there for them. Jerome Saddler and his friend, Preston Forrester, had pretty much spoken for them all the night of the church meeting when they'd both stood up and explained why most of them didn't come anymore. They'd listened to what the church members said, but their actions never lined up with their words. Too many, they'd said, didn't practice what they preached.

He got up and walked around the old house, thinking of Pastor Dale Hensley and his wife, Nadine, who had given up and left. Was he going to end up just like them? No. God hadn't sent him here to give up. Sinking to his knees there in the yard, he wept aloud as he began to pray. "God, what do You want me to do? Please show me the way. I can't do this alone."

Suddenly, he remembered his dad and the Holy Ghost filled revivals he'd preached. As he wiped his eyes, he was sure he felt the Father's hand on his shoulder. In that moment, the words came to him as he remembered the powerful lesson he'd taught them when he'd first arrived: 'The Master's Perfect Song'. Feeling a breath of renewal surging through him, he jumped up and quickly walked to the church. Going straight to his office and looking in the desk drawer, he retrieved his "homeless" bag, with his outfit, worn blanket, and the old, broken fiddle. Nodding in a moment of truth, he smiled. "Perfect," he said aloud.

Getting out his Bible and laptop, he began typing feverishly. When he finished, he transferred the file to his tablet, then made a couple of phone calls. He had a good feeling Jerome and Preston, and their friends wouldn't let him down. School hadn't started yet, so they were free for the week. After sharing some scripture with them over lunch at Uncle Paul's Sandwich Barn, they went out and hit the streets of downtown, putting phase two of the plan into action. Even he didn't expect the blessing they received. God had truly exceeded their expectations. Now, he had only to get the message ready and put it all together. It was going to be perfect.

The message he preached that Sunday morning was right on time. Reading from Matthew 7:1-5, he spoke on judging and challenged each of them to ask what they could do to help the problems in the church, rather than contributing to them. As the soft music began playing, his altar call brought most of them up there in tears. Jerome, Preston, and three of their friends rededicated their lives to Christ. With tears still in her eyes, Clara Bridges offered to head up the women's meetings, and Peggy Morgan told him she would begin preparations to get the choir back together. It had begun. The stage was set.

The following Sunday morning, the pastor simply smiled quietly as first one, then several more homeless people came in and sat down among them. When he was sure they were all there, he gave a nod. At his cue, four of them stood up from their various places, pulling old, worn-out fiddles from ragged, holey bags. What happened next was nothing short of amazing.

Each of the fiddles was missing a string or two. Yet the music they made was beautiful. In perfect harmony, they began to make their way up the aisles toward the front, playing a well-coordinated rendition of "Softly and Tenderly", followed by "Have Thine Own Way". Though none of them could play all of the notes, one played the notes the others didn't have. Together, it was complete, every note in place.

"Thank you, gentlemen." The pastor nodded as they sat back down. "Folks, these are The Wayland Brothers. They've been doing this for a long time. We appreciate them sharing their talents with us today. Church, what you've just witnessed illustrates my sermon for today perfectly. So, if you would, turn in

your Bibles to Ephesians, Chapter Four. Here, Paul reminds us of the importance of unity in the Church. Now look again at Verse Sixteen. Just as these brothers of ours have demonstrated today, none of us is perfect, and each of us is broken in some way. In and of ourselves, we can do nothing. But together, we form the complete Body of Christ, and if we each play the part He's given us, it brings growth of the body 'for the edifying of itself in love,' as the verse says. When all the parts are played together, it becomes His perfectly harmonized masterpiece. This, you see, is The Master's Perfect Song."



If you enjoyed this story and know someone who might be uplifted by its message, please feel free to share it with a friend. These short story downloads are absolutely free to share, compliments of Flossie Stewart Ministries. I give God all the glory, through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, for without Him, I would be nothing (See Christ's words in John 15:5). This is the sequel to my short story, "The Preacher and the Fiddle", which won Runner Up in the 2018 Eastern NC Church of God Senior Talent competition and competed in the Nationals in Gatlinburg, TN, April/May 2019. You'll also want to be sure to download my dear late husband, Keith's very powerful and inspiring short story, "Pastor John and the Prostitute", which won Runner Up in the 2019 ENCCOG Senior Talent Competition and was to compete in the Nationals in Gatlinburg, TN in April 2020, although the gathering had to be canceled due to Covid regulations. I'll have more FREE downloads coming in the near future as well as more inspirational books I will be releasing soon, the good Lord willing. Visit me here at flossiestewartministries.com and subscribe so you'll be the first to know! May God bless you, and if I can pray for you, please let me know! You can email me at: riversofgracebooks@gmail.com. And as always, I thank you for your ongoing prayers and support of my ministry in finishing the work Keith and I started as we all continue to work together to bring in the harvest until He comes! And as our dear Sister and church mother, Agnes Ingram, always reminded us, "He's calling". May we all help as many as possible to heed His call while there is yet time.

In Christ's love and humble service,

A handwritten signature in dark green ink that reads "Flossie Stewart". The script is cursive and elegant.

Flossiestewartministries.com

Phil. 2:13-14 

