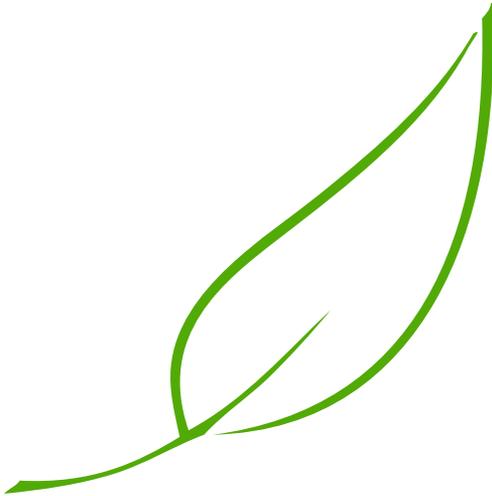


STANDIN' IN THE NEED

by Ken Bradbury



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The small rural church was just like I remembered. My memory had made the white framed building much smaller than it actually was.

The musty smell of worn hymnals was the first reminder of coming here as a youngster. Thumb-smoothed and grayed by the years of Sunday-scrubbed hands, those hymnals stood as mute watchmen protecting the backs of pews from Sabbath to Sabbath.

But the smell. I'd forgotten about the sweet holy smell.

A stray gulp caught in my throat as I saw the old number nine wire. It was still strung taut as if holding in the very walls themselves. They crisscrossed the front of the sanctuary with the yellowed sheets still hanging against the wall ... sheets attached to the wire with big safety pins, ready to section off the front of the room for Sunday School Classes. I took a breath. I'd also forgotten about the sheets.

The plush carpet that sadly erases all traces of worshippers-past in most churches was happily still missing from the old structure and I walked fight down to where I used to sit with my family. I could see the scuff marks of grandpa's church shoes ... the ones he polished every Saturday night. Nothing was padded in *those* pews but the tails of the congregation. The scratches made by five-year old feet streaked the once-white pew backs. I think I saw my print. At least I remember where I used to fidget.

I began to look for the one thing I most wanted to see again. Yes ... nobody had moved it ... the picture of the Savior kneeling in the garden, looking straight up into the light of His father. You can get copies of that print but you can't find that



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