

TROY BAKER FIELDS MEMORIAL MESSAGE

Big Creek Baptist Church – August 2, 2013

Message and Eulogy –Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Deuteronomy 33:1-3 and 25b-27a

My mentor and leader and a humble man of God, born in Avawam, Kentucky, June 5, 1916, went Home to the arms of Jesus this past Tuesday, July 30th, 2013. He was a Moses to many of us as we went to the school where Troy and Mildred Fields were godly educators, as our elementary teachers at Whitaker School. Mrs. Moses, if you will, Mildred had the little room, grades 1-3 and our Moses, Troy, taught us in the big room in grades 4-8. It was a one room school with a divider down the middle of it. Troy Baker Fields today is with the Lord, reunited with his precious wife Mildred and his youngest daughter, Carolyn. A few years ago, when I went on mandatory social security, they wanted a copy of my birth certificate. I always used to say, “I was born two miles up the hollow on middle Big Creek.” My birth certificate states I was born in Avawam 28 years and ten months after Troy was born there. Troy shaped my life as a mentor and hero more than he will ever know. My Dad, Pastor Harold N. Carlson with his wife, my Mom, Verma, served on middle Big Creek at The Church of the Open Door. Troy and Mildred were the mentors for all seven of us children, as Troy names us in his book, “Trails and Tales,” and that includes in birth order, Marilyn Ann, Ruth Arlene, myself, Richard Paul, Harold Timothy, Bruce Daniel, David Arlan, and Charles Jonathan. My sister Ruth told me on Wednesday, “Troy and Mildred taught us in those early years everything we needed to know about life with godly values.” She's right. My connection to Troy and Mildred, Winston, Joyce and Carolyn runs too deep for words. The way I feel about God's goodness in giving me Troy and Mildred is like the words of the country Gospel song, “I'm Drinking From A Saucer Cause My Cup Has Overflowed.”

Today at Troy's funeral, I sense the urging of the Holy Spirit to preach this message and eulogy from Moses' final blessing on the people of Israel before his death. I just want to use as my text, Deuteronomy 33: 1-3, 25-27 which states, “This is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the people of Israel before his death. He said, “The LORD came from Sinai and dawned from Seir upon us; He shone forth from Mount Paran; He came from the ten thousands of holy ones, with flaming fire at His right hand. Yes, He loved his people, all His holy ones were in His hand; so they followed in your steps, receiving direction from you...and as your days, so shall your strength be. “There is none like God, O Jeshurun, who rides through the heavens to your help, through the skies in His majesty. The eternal God is your dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms.” These words of Moses were addressed to the tribe of Asher, but the Holy Spirit has made it clear to me that these words are apropos to us all today at this funeral. In these few words I find four challenges from the words of Moses and from my Moses, Troy Fields that I come today from Wyoming to share with you all at the Big Creek Baptist Church to you and to your Pastor, Brother Darryl Jessie, and especially to

all of you in the Troy Fields' Family. These four challenges are my feeble attempt to challenge us all with the life and example and teaching of Troy Fields. What are these four challenges? First of all,

LIVE YOUR LIFE, HUMBLY, LOVING OTHERS AS GOD LOVES HIS HOLY ONES IN HIS HAND AND PASS ON GOD'S DIRECTIONS TO THEM. (I.) I read here in Deuteronomy 33: 3 about God, “Yes, He loved His people and all His holy ones were in His hand, so/so that they followed in your steps...” I have no idea how much Troy knew about his effectiveness in loving others, his wife, Mildred, his children, Winston, Joyce, and Carolyn, and the rest of us who figuratively, were in his hand, as he led us, following the Lord. Nevertheless, I see Troy as my hero, my mentor, my educator, my leader, and my model for life, since way back in the 40's. Like the old Whitaker singers used to sing, Troy lived, “A Beautiful Life.” Those words of that old Gospel song fit him. “Each day I'll do a golden deed, By helping those who are in need, My life on earth is but a span, And so I'll do the best I can. I'll help someone in time of need, And journey on with rapid speed. I'll help the poor, the sick and weak, And words of kindness to them speak. To be a child of God each day, My light must shine along the way. I'll sing His praise while ages roll, And strive to help some troubled soul. While going down life's weary road, I'll try to lift some traveler's load, I'll try to turn the night to day, Make flowers bloom along the way. The only life that will endure, Is one that's kind , and good and pure. And so for God, I'll take a stand, Each day I'll lend a helping hand. And the chorus, Life's evening sun is sinking low, A few more days, and I must go, to meet the deeds that I have done, Where there will be no setting sun.”

Troy used to take us children home from school on rainy days, on snowy days, on muddy days, and more times than not, he turned around at our house, just pastor George Campbell's store. Nobody paid Troy to take us home from school on bad days for walking, but he was just living out his love and Christian witness. One of my earliest memories from first grade was riding home in the back of his old pickup. There was a little window in the back of the pickup that he could look back at us, and yes, we could look up into the cab and see him with Mildred. What I saw over and over was Troy reaching out to Mildred and wooing her over to his side. He wasn't deterred by her polite words of Troy, Troy, aw, Troy, stop that! He always succeeded in getting her from the right side of the pick-up over to his side as he often had his right arm around her shoulder. I used to dream about it as a boy. What a model! I longed for the day when I would be seated in my own pickup and be wooing my wife over to my side, and listen to her unsuccessfully keep saying, “Aw, Rich, stop that!” That modeling was born out of Troy living to do that golden deed of taking us a mile up the hollow from Whitaker School to our home. I owe Troy for teaching me to romance my wife. It all was learned a mile a day, at the end of school, year after year, day after day as a boy. Secondly, **MAKE SURE THOSE FOLLOWING IN YOUR STEPS AND RECEIVING DIRECTIONS FROM YOU BELIEVE THAT THERE IS NO GOD LIKE OUR**

GOD. (II.) Moses told the tribe of Asher, “There is none like God, O Jeshurun, who rides through the heavens to your help, through the skies in His majesty.” Troy Fields knew the Lord as his own personal Savior. He was born again from above. Troy knew there was no God like his God. Yet Troy never seemed to be uppity or above any of us. I loved to go to his home. We often stayed overnight. Mildred made eggs and bacon, biscuits and gravy, chicken and dumplings and fried chicken, soup beans and corn bread. He led his family and prayed at the table for the food. Troy was mostly quiet about his faith, but no one who knew him ever doubted the reality of his faith in Jesus. In a way that is hard to describe, Troy seemed to make God reachable for me since the time I was a little boy. Both he and Mildred made God accessible, desirable and reachable. Jesus declared in Matthew 18: 3, 4, “Truly, I say to you, “Unless you turn/repent and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” That makes Troy one of the greatest saints, because he was a humble man. In the upside down kingdom of God, down is up and up is down. Those who want to ascend higher must descend lower. Troy's life reminds me of words I once read by F. B. Meyer. He said, “I used to think that God's gifts were on shelves one above the other, and that the taller we grew in Christian character, the easier we should reach them. I find now that God's gifts are on shelves one beneath the other, and that it is not a question of growing taller but of stooping lower, and that we have to go down, always down, to get His best gifts.”

Troy had that brand of Christianity modeled for him at home growing up. The son of Cora and Bob, Robert Lincoln Fields, he had to see that humility in Corey as we all called her. Troy's Mom, Cora was for a time my Sunday School teacher. One Sunday when my Dad gave the invitation at the end of a Sunday worship service, Cora came weeping to the altar. I remember it as one of my choice early childhood memories. My Dad went up to her and spoke to her about why she came to the altar. She was a godly Sunday School teacher. She said it out loud. I could hear it and the words stunned me. Cora said, “Today the Lord showed me that I have tried to live for Him for many years, and tried to teach His Gospel in Sunday school. But I've been trying to be a Christian. I've never truly repented and given my heart to the Lord. Today, I'm coming to receive Jesus as my personal Savior. As tears came down her face, I was touched. My own wonderful Sunday School teacher who taught me Bible stories was getting saved. She wasn't ashamed to humble herself as a child. That's Troy's roots. What God put in Cora, that same humility He put in Troy.

One of my earliest memories of Dad and Mom on Big Creek was overhearing them speak of Troy and Mildred doing something for them. I could tell it was monetary, and I could tell it was a private gift, but whatever it was, it was Troy and Mildred humbling themselves to consider their pastor and his needs, whether they were emotional needs after Dad had his first heart attack, when I was only nine years old, or whether the needs were financial, or whether the needs were spiritual. The Church of the Open Door wasn't

a big church with a large attendance, like Big Creek Baptist Church, but some things were constant. What was constant was Troy and Mildred in church on Sunday morning, Sunday evening, and Wednesday nights. Dad could count on Troy just like you folk here at Big Creek Baptist Church counted on Troy for a good while as one of your deacons and for a time, the co-teacher of your Adult Men's Class.

Some years ago, when both Troy and Mildred were living there at the mouth of Big Creek, he took time to gather some of his Kentucky Wonder pole beans, seeds that are vintage seeds, kept year by year for over a hundred years and planted many years by Troy in one of his famous gardens. Those of you who know anything about gardening know gardening is, at times, down on your knees time. Wednesday morning before I heard that Troy had died, I was out weeding my carrots and my pole beans. I was down on my knees, weeding, praying, and wondering about Troy in Rock Springs, Wyoming. Joyce called me on Tuesday morning to tell me Troy was failing. There I was in our garden weeding some slow carrots and some awesome blooming Troy Fields' Kentucky wonder beans. These are the best beans in the world in my book. They are heritage beans, my heritage, and Troy knew my love of gardening so he gave them to me. When I sit at home in a couple weeks, the Lord willing, and string my beans and snap them, yes I love the task of stringing string beans, I won't ever forget the kneeling gardener who gave me the seed, and who planted more than beans to give to me. Troy gave me a model of God's character in my life, a model I can never fully grasp or thank God for. The third challenge I give you...

LIVE YOUR LIFE GETTING CLOSE TO GOD AND MAKE OTHERS WANT A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM TOO. (III.) Moses told the blessed sons of Asher in his last words, in Deuteronomy 33: 27, “The eternal God is your dwelling place and underneath are the everlasting arms.” If Troy could be here to speak today, I know he would urge you to trust Jesus personally, and find the Lord Jesus Christ to be your dwelling place, where you are hidden in the hollow of His hand. Winston told me of some of Troy's last words. He told the nurses who were telling him good-bye, he fought for words to tell them he was going Home to be with Jesus. Troy fought hard for words in these last years. He was 97 years old. He kept saying, “I'm going, I'm going, I'm going and that was all he could say. The nurses asked Troy, “Where are you going?” He said, “I'm going...to retire.” That's the word of one of our servicemen for Troy served our country as a military policeman. That's the word of an educator who is hanging up teaching in the public school, But what is Troy's retirement program. Listen to Moses' words. “The eternal God is your dwelling place and underneath are the everlasting arms.” Beloved, if you want to have Troy's retirement package eternally, you must repent, believe and receive Jesus as your Savior. How do you get up close and personal with Jesus. Fearlessly, but respectfully go up to the Lord and speak to Him and seek His face. One of my strong memories of Troy was when he used to stand on his front porch there at the mouth of Big Creek. Some of you know his love for hummingbirds. Troy

would stand up as the hummingbirds were zooming in and out and fighting each other for a drink of his nectar. Then slowly, through practice, Troy learned the joy of getting up close and personal with his hummingbirds. I have never seen anyone else get away with what he did. He literally was standing watching the hummingbirds within inches of them drinking. They not only tolerated it. They kept coming to that feeder as if they wanted to see Troy face to face. When I think of getting close to God, Troy's example with those hummingbirds will always stand out to me. Getting close takes time and practice, but the Lord Jesus is calling us as He called Troy, saying in Matthew 11: 28, "Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." I hear in Jesus' words an echo of Deuteronomy 33: 27, "The eternal God is your dwelling place and underneath are the everlasting arms." Fourthly and lastly, I challenge you,

LIVE A FULL LIFE WITH A DEEP ASSURANCE OF GOD'S STRENGTH KNOWING THAT AS YOUR DAYS, SO SHALL YOUR STRENGTH BE. (IV.)

Moses said these words to the blessed sons of Asher, but Troy would want them for you, and so do I. Moses said, "And as your days, so shall your strength be." It seems sad that every day must end in night, that every birth must one day, for Troy, after 97 years, every birth must end in death, if the Lord does not come yet to rapture His church. It seems sad that summer must be followed by winter, but in the rhythm of life on earth, God has a purpose, a holy purpose even in our death. I wouldn't be preaching to you today unless God's word was true, in Psalm 116: 15, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death or the Home-going of His godly ones." Wednesday was a precious day in Heaven for not just Mildred, Troy and Carolyn. It was precious to God. Troy is part of God's Bride of Christ—and calling His Bride Home is no small thing to God.

Without winter, we will never be able to enter into the treasures of the snow. Without night, we would never see the beauty of the moon and stars. Without death, we would never know the hope of graduation to Glory, absent from the body, present with the Lord. Without weakness, as Troy knew so well at the end of his life, we would never learn the fullness of God's strength being made perfect in our weakness. Before I close this memorial message and eulogy, let me share a few aspects of what it means, "as your days, so shall your strength be."

Only a weak person can appreciate this promise of God. (1) On Wednesday night as I flew in to Knoxville, Tennessee, I felt God's urging me to come on home to Winston's. I got in to Joy and Winston's up on the hill at 2:30 AM, flying into Knoxville at 11 PM. I cried out to God for strength, and He brought me in safely. Troy knew this strength God often made perfect in his weakness.

Only the suffering person knows fully the measure of this promise. (2) The preacher Charles Spurgeon once said, "Women suffer, and suffer well; but I do think there are very few men who could bear the tithes of the suffering that many women endure,

without exhibiting a hundred times as much impatience.” My understanding of Troy is that he is one of those men who knew God's strength best through his most recent suffering. Troy never quit clinging at the last to his Gideon Bible.

Only the tempted man or woman know the fullness of this promise. (3) Most of us know the strength of tall trees, whether its in Kentucky or in Wyoming. Yet when the test comes, many a beautiful immovable tree has fallen. The tree withstood the storms, the sun, the rain, but in the test and temptation of the howling wind, the tree fell. It is the tempted man like David, who once fell badly, who came to know the truth of God's promise in the face of temptation. Troy was no stranger to the temptations of the devil.

Only the person desiring to live a holy life can know the fullness of God's promise. (4) Troy wanted to live a holy life. So did Paul, but he struggled. Read Romans 7. Many of us like both Troy and the apostle Paul have learned that when we have tried the hardest to have more faith, and to be more faithful to God, we have felt ourselves slipping backwards instead of going forward. A person who longs to be holy can cling to this verse for each of us must often admit an Achilles heel.

Only the person who feels insecure can appreciate this promise. (5) Every word of this promise is true—there is no bill we face that God does not have enough gold bullion in His vaults of heaven to pay off. As your days, so shall your strength be. The one who holds the depths of the oceans in the palm of His hand—says--as your days...

Only the one who knows how to give God full reign of his expectations can know this promise. (6) God doesn't say, “As your desires, but as your days...” The unlimited resources of God do have this limit--”As your days...” **Only those with huge days, can know the extensiveness of this promise.** (7) Job knew the loss of all he had, his wealth, his 7 sons and three daughters, his health, and the respect of his wife. Yet, he learned God's promise—saying in Job 1: 21, “Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.” Troy had his own Job times, losing Mildred his wife and then his precious daughter Carolyn. He learned in the worst of circumstances, “as your days...” **Only the ones who live in variable circumstances, know the meaning of the promise.** (8) Sunny days, it is true, stormy days it is true. **Only the real elderly learn the fullness of this promise.** Troy lived long enough to say--”as your days...” **Only those who give up doubting and start trusting the Lord can know the truth of this promise.** (10) As I close today, I call to all of you—Call on the Lord for His comfort. He is here for you. “As your days...” For you who have fought the call of God and have doubted His Word, call today on the Lord. Talk to Pastor Jessie or myself after this service—Receive the Lord. He will save you today. You'll learn for yourself—As your days, so...” Amen.

