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Purple Hands Teresa Hampton

One of my favorite summertime activities as a child was going to the woods to find blackberries. We would put on long pants and long sleeved shirts to keep the chiggers from feasting on us. It was amazing how many berries grew in one thicket. We picked and ate, then picked and ate some more. Before we knew it, briars snagged a pant leg or two. We would help each other detangle and nurse a few of the stinging scratches. Then we would continue picking until our pails were full and we were exhausted. It was time to leave the briarpatch and head home!

A bathtub was drawn, the clothes were shed, and the scrubbing began. The scratches on our legs stung again and the blackberries left a stained mark on our fingers. We had purple hands, but, truth is, we were just relieved to be out of the briarpatch. It also helped that we knew something good was coming. It wasn't long before we smelled the aroma. Nothing compares to Mom's fresh-out-the-oven blackberry cobbler topped with a scoop of vanilla ice cream!

Though it's not a true analogy (berry picking isn't sinful), the pains and stains of picking blackberries remind me of a young man in scripture. He ventured far away from home. The world was exciting. Before he knew it, he was caught in Satan's thicket and his soul was stained with sin. The scratches and stain of sin left their mark on him. He must have felt as if the whole world saw his failings (Luke 15:11-24).

The wayward son finally came to his senses. Scripture says, "*He came to himself.*" Regardless of the pains and stains, he just wanted to go home. He said, "*I will arise and go to my father and will say to him, 'I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.'*" The hunger driven, sin-stained young man went home.

When he came to his father, he repeated the words he had earlier rehearsed. The father received him back, not as a servant, but as a son. In other words, the father took his son's pains and stains and turned them into something very, very good, something beyond his dreams. Even though he was not worthy, with grace and love the father accepted him as a son. Our Father in heaven does the same for us, and truth is, nothing...not one thing...compares to that kind of grace and love!

Today's verse: "*...Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be a white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*" Isaiah 1:18

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