

# Cross Current



*Real help for real life*

Volume 34, Number 3

January 18, 2009

## Barak To the Future



As Barak Obama settles into his new digs, he can thank former President Harry Truman the White House isn't a White Elephant.

In ancient Thailand, a ruler sometimes punished a man by giving him a white elephant. Those rare beasts were sacred and couldn't be used for work, but were extremely expensive to feed. With no way to earn a living with the high-maintenance animal, the man was soon destitute. Today, a *white elephant* is something that's unwanted and hard to get rid of.

In the late 1940s, that description applied to the President's official residence. "Found the White House falling down," Truman wrote in his diary. "My daughter's sitting room floor had broken down into the family dining room." In the Blue Room, a chandelier swayed for no reason. The floor in Truman's study buckled when he walked on it. But that was nothing compared to what his engineers told him.

According to the experts, beams that held up the structure were severely weakened from being cut into repeatedly and they were bearing much more weight than they were designed to handle. Those beams were split and the whole building was on the verge of collapse.

Truman had three choices: move out and turn the White House into a museum; tear down the historic building and build a replica in its place; or save the outer walls, demolish everything inside, and build a stronger structure. In the end, the President chose the last option, moving across the street to Blair House during reconstruction.

As author Kenneth Leish wrote, "*Mantelpieces, wall panelling, fixtures, moldings — all were taken apart and stored away for later re-installation. Then the whole interior was demolished... Steel beams were erected to support the new interior. The entire structure was*

# SERVICE

*Worship is a service call.  
Once you're tuned up,  
get some mileage out  
of it by helping others.*

followers of Christ meet at  
16 Morrell St., Btfd, ON, N3T 4J2  
*Sharing Jesus and the Journey*

**JOIN US!**

**Sunday**  
Worship 11:00

**Wednesday**  
Bible Study 7:00  
Phone 758-5673  
(75 U-LORD)

*fireproofed and air-conditioned. And the... outer walls were shored up... It took four years and more than \$5 million, but when Truman moved back, in 1952, the presidential mansion was, as [former First Lady] Abigail Adams had said too optimistically 150 years earlier, 'built for ages to come'."*

Though our lives may look good on the outside, sometimes they're on the verge of falling apart. Persistent and unrepentant sin cuts into the spiritual and emotional supports on which our entire faith is built, threatening to collapse with agonising consequences for ourselves and those we love. We're not designed to carry such pressure for long.

Once the seriousness of the situation comes to light, we have three choices: abandon any attempt to repair our life of faith and make it a museum filled with religious relics from the past; tear down everything and rebuild completely, bulldozing the good with the bad; or salvage what's true, positive and meaningful from a weak faith while putting in place a whole new set of spiritual pillars that will make real strength and transformation possible.

No matter how sinful we are, there are always things worth rescuing. With loving care, we need to protect them and keep them safe while God does the reconstruction only He's capable of. That process may be slow and painful but "*God can use sorrow in our lives to help us turn away from sin and seek salvation... But sorrow without repentance is the kind that leads to [spiritual] death.*" (2 Cor. 7:10)

Spiritual death is separation from God. So the Bible is saying that recognition of our sin — and the sorrow it brings when we're on the brink of collapse — must also result in genuine change. We must turn from sin in genuine repentance and let God put in place the internal supports that give new strength.

Supports like prayer and a renewed relationship with him and his Spirit; a fresh focus on the Word which reveals all truth, about ourselves and our Saviour; a rededication to the work and worship of our gracious Father; and a restored passion for loving and serving his people. If we allow those things in our lives, our faith truly will be built "for the ages to come," complete with the good things we had before the near-collapse. Whether it's the economy or our life facing collapse, we need hope, faith and love. Can we change? *Yes We Can.*