

Prepare^{the} Way

Preparing the Bride of Christ for the return of Christ

Issue No. 101
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The presence and power of the Holy Spirit

**Is modern
worship headed
for a crash?**

**A little
word
about
temper**

Peter Pollock

**Blessings of
the Sermon
on the Mount**

**How to fight for
a lust-free mind**

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COVER: "For as the earth brings forth its sprouts, And as a garden causes the things sown in it to spring up, So the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise To spring up before all the nations (Isaiah 61:11)."

Talk to us...

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Is worship headed for a huge crash?



by Jamie Brown

RECENTLY, I spent a couple of days attending a worship leader conference featuring many well-known speakers and worship leaders. The conference was held about 15 minutes down the road from me, so it was an opportunity I couldn't pass up.

I'm glad I went.

I met some new people, heard some thought-provoking teaching, enjoyed some good meals and conversations with worship leader friends, and experienced in person some of the modern worship trends that are becoming the norm in evangelicalism.

It was eye-opening in many ways.

Over the last few days, I've been processing some of what I saw and heard.

The hosts did a fantastic job of putting on a worship conference that exposed the attendees to a wide variety of resources, techniques, workshops, songs, new artists, approaches, teachings, and perspectives.

I thought of Mark Twain's famous quote, "If you don't like the weather in New England, just wait five minutes." The same could be said of this conference. It was an intentionally eclectic mix of different speakers, teachers, worship leaders and performers from different traditions, theological convictions and worship leading philosophies. You'll hear and see some stuff you like and agree with, and then five minutes later you'll hear and see some stuff you don't agree with at all.

It's good for worship leaders to experience this kind of wide exposure from time to time, and this national conference certainly provided it.

Yet throughout the conference, at different sessions with different worship leaders

from different circles, using different approaches and leading with different bands, I picked up on a common theme.

It's been growing over the last few decades. And to be honest, it's a troubling theme.

And if this current generation of worship leaders doesn't change this theme, then corporate worship in evangelicalism really is headed for a major crash.

It's the theme of performance-ism.

- The worship leader as the performer.
- The congregation as the audience.
- The sanctuary as the concert hall.

It really is a problem. It really is a thing that is happening more and more. And we really *can't* allow it to become the norm.

Worship leaders, we must identify and kill performance-ism while we can.

It's not rocket science.

- Sing songs people know (or can learn easily). Sing them in congregational keys.
- Sing and celebrate the power, glory and salvation of God.
- Serve your congregation. Saturate them with the Word of God.
- Get your face off the big screen.
- Use your original songs in extreme moderation.
- Err on the side of including as many people as possible in what's going on.
- Keep the lights up.
- Stop talking so much.
- Don't let loops/lights/visuals become your outlet for creativity at the expense of the *centrality of the Gospel*.
- Point to Jesus. Don't draw attention to yourself.
- Don't sing songs with bad lyrics or weak theology.
- Tailor your worship leading, and the

songs you pick, to include the largest cross-section of your congregation that you can.

•Lead pastorally.

I am a worship music nerd. I listen to a lot of it. I follow the recent developments. I know who's out there (sort of). I try to keep up (it's not easy).

Even I didn't know most of the songs that we were supposed to be singing along to at the conference. **I tuned out.** I sat down. I tweeted. I texted my wife. I gave up.

You're not reading the ramblings of a curmudgeonly guy complaining about all the new-fangled things the kids are doing these days, with their drums and tomtoms and electric geetars. You're reading the heart-cry of a normal guy who's worried about what worship leaders are doing to themselves and their congregations.

People are tuning out and giving up and just watching.

This is not a criticism of any particular individual, group, or even the conference. I do think they could make some changes to more intentionally *model* an approach to worship leading that isn't so weighted on the performance side. As I said, this conference exposed us to what's out there in the (primarily) evangelical worship world. The trend was glaringly evident to me.

It's what's out there that's increasingly a problem.

Worship leaders: Step back. Take a deep breath. Think about it.

Do we really want to go down this road? It will result in a crash.

Back up. Recalibrate. Serve your congregations, point them to Jesus, help them sing along and sing with confidence.

Get out of the way, for God's sake. ☞



The Sermon on the Mount

by Peter Pollock

WHAT is it to be truly blessed? The answer comes direct from our Lord Jesus Christ in His “sermon on the mount,” a sermon that we are not all that happily disposed towards in this modern day and age!

To me, it is one of the ultimate messages of scripture. It’s not a set of rules or regulations but it is about truly coming into the heart of the matter in terms of the Christian walk and our relationship with Jesus.

Let us concentrate on the first 19 verses of Matthew 5, as Jesus, seeing the multitudes, went up on the mountain. Interesting that it suggests that He virtually absconded when faced by the multitudes and then, when He was “seated” there, His disciples came to Him! Jesus is “seated” at the right hand and we do need to “come” to Him.

These were His disciples, His special called out ones, those who had responded to the apostolic calling of leaving behind everything, and to be utterly sold out to Jesus. Holiness is to be separated unto God and it has always been a demand placed on those who choose to truly serve God, that they should be severed, cut off and markedly different from the world. In the world, but not of the world!

In the Old Testament we read about the Levites who were always regarded as different from the rest. An immutable God works this way. Salvation is available to everyone but there are those specifically “called” to service like the prophets.

Look at Isaiah and Jeremiah and how

men of this ilk seem to follow a similar path into serving God. First and foremost they experience the “woe” revelation, that life-changing and irreversible moment in their lives when they realise, by the power of the Holy Spirit, just how wretched and worthless they are, rather like John the Baptist who knew that he had to decrease so that Jesus could increase. And that he was not worthy to tie the Lord’s shoelaces!

John didn’t just say that because it was a trite and proper submissive statement to make. He said it because he believed it with all his heart. It was an attitude of heart, mind and disposition.

We recall when Peter experienced, for the first time, a net full of fish he looked at Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit responded: “Go away from me, I am a sinful man.” Conviction from on high that lays the foundation for meaningful servanthood. It’s all or nothing!

Gravity in purpose

When Peter was reconciled after his denial of Jesus, it was a simple question about whether he loved Jesus more than anything else in the world. Because only when Jesus is your all and your everything, can you truly “feed His sheep.” It’s about a calling that is specific and carries gravity in purpose and experience.

Someday there will be rewards and crowns for those “called.” But at this end of life/eternity, as we battle the odds in a godless world, the motivation to serve Him revolves mainly around a passion and

love for Jesus and the awesome privilege of knowing and serving Him. It certainly is not a bed of roses!

“Where else can we go,” answered the disciples when given an option to leave and go their own way. When you have truly met Jesus there are no other options! Absolutely nothing compares with Him.

Humanly we interpret blessings in many and varied ways, but in these scriptures Jesus underlines and stresses what true happiness consists of in spiritual terms. And it does rather glaringly expose the huge gulf that exists between worldly and spiritual values.

In the world, the greatest shall be the king while in God’s Kingdom the greatest shall be the servant. Now you can’t get more diametrically opposed than that! My Kingdom is not of the world, said Jesus, because flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. Nations are a drop in the bucket. Rulers are wheat and chaff. And in Jesus’ own words, He refused to pray for this world.

Of course, all these statements do tend to rock the establishment, humanly speaking. And I suppose that is why, to most, the reading of the “sermon on the mount” is an exercise in wishful thinking, a whole lot of unachievable pipe-dreams.

No doubt it will even bring despair and despondence to those who are striving to achieve some form of Christian level or attainment. In this context these passages are hugely misunderstood and misinterpreted and then, for all the above reasons, just ignored.

Very few, even in the church, take these chapters seriously. But just don't dare suggest that to anyone. It will be self-righteously denied and refuted!

Blessed are the poor in spirit. That means, according to Matthew Henry, those who are contentedly poor, willing to be empty of worldly wealth. These blessed people are humble and lowly in their own eyes and they do not have confidence in their own power and righteousness but depend solely on Jesus Christ. As author and teacher Henry concludes, poverty is the first Christian grace. To which I would add, it is a grace that is humanly despised!

If that seems a bit strong, then let's just admit it's not something that is too readily or willingly preached or accepted by Christian adherents. It's an aspiration that some regard as a negative confession.

What about the blessing for those who mourn? There is, of course, a sinful mourning that is an enemy of true mourning – the sorrow of the world (2 Corinthians 7:10) – but there is a true penitential mourning that is true godly sorrow as the Holy Spirit brings conviction and keeps us humble.

Oswald Chambers contends that if the Holy Spirit is truly working in our lives then every morning as we stand before the mirror and look at ourselves we will mourn for the wretchedness within us. And then as we look out the window, we will mourn at the evil and godlessness in the world around us.

We are the blessed meek. We are in total submission to God, sold out and bearing fruit. The meek do inherit the earth and that revolves around a joy and peace that is beyond the understanding of this world and emanates from a humble, submissive and contrite heart.

And all of that is impossible outside the ambit of the Holy Spirit! Psalm 51:17 reads: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart. These, Oh God, you will not despise."

God does not require sacrifice and a burnt offering, writes David in the previous verse. It's these "meek" believers who hunger and thirst for righteousness, highlighting that it is all about commitment and passion, zeal and fervour.

Hunger and thirst are very strong words. "Hunger" and "thirst" humanly if not quenched lead to death. And indeed, spiritually it is also a matter of life and death and, dare I say it, is the type of urgency and action that is much lacking these days.

Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness... His righteousness, of course, being Jesus Christ. And it's important to understand that it is very specifically about Jesus, and that "all else is added" because Jesus is all sufficient in Himself!

We are told that the prayer of a righteous man avails much – that righteousness is Christ alone, not any other attributes. We are blessed and merciful, that means forgiving, empathetic and understanding and we are pure in heart. True Christianity lies in the heart. As with David, we need to have a heart after God, for He promises that if we seek Him we will find Him when we seek Him with all our HEART.

I have always found it a bit difficult to think of myself as pure in heart. In fact, I often say that it is arrogant of me to believe that I could ever be pure in heart. But that is human thinking, the natural way.

Spiritually, I know it is an absolute truth because I stand in Jesus Christ who has started a work in me and, I shall never be the same again. God has promised to finish the work that He started in me that moment I gave my life to Him.

No point in scrapping

You are blessed as a peacemaker, meaning that you do have a peaceful disposition towards all animosity, hate and resentment. There is no point in scrapping with anyone, verbally or otherwise, and even debate does not have merit when it revolves around being right or wrong on non-eternal issues.

A peacemaker is certainly not a doormat and does not compromise, but again is recognized by the fruit of a quiet and contrite heart. In quietness and confidence is their strength.

Finally, along comes the cherry of the top! The blessing of being persecuted. It's an absolute promise. Persecution is about unmerited uphill and hassles. It's doing right things with wrong undeserved consequences. You are in Satan's cross-hairs, and he is gunning for you full-time.

True prophets are reviled, hunted and hounded and without honour in their own land and own family. These prophets are promised an audience, but these "audiences" consist so often of people with deaf ears and blind eyes.

Salt and light that is what we are supposed to be. Salt is seasoning and this salt is applied, as Paul wrote to Timothy, in

season and out of season. The salt flavours, we do know that; the salt stings, that we have experienced, and the salt also preserves, an abiding promise that we have in Jesus Christ.

As for the light, well that should never be hidden, shining brightly like a lighthouse built on rock and steadfastly providing direction while the storms of life beat down on us in waves and gusts.


Jesus came to reveal the Father. He did not come to make things easier for us or to cancel out anything that His Father ministered in the Old Testament. In fact Jesus upgraded THE BIG 10. Indeed, we all know those commandments but as we read in these passages, Jesus repeats over and over "You have heard it said 'but I now tell you.'"

God said you must not kill, but Jesus said you can't even get angry. Committing adultery was a problem, but Jesus said don't even think about it. Divorce only if there has been adultery. No revenge – just turn the other cheek. Don't just love your neighbours, love your enemies.

Bless those who curse you. Pluck out your right eye. Cut off your right hand. That's if they are leading you into sin! And don't swear.

Yes, and it's all in red (if you have a fancy Bible). Jesus said all these things, verbatim. Direct quotes from the Son of God. Jesus came to fulfil, not destroy. He also did not have any problem speaking straight about hypocrisy, much of which had to do with charitable deeds, praying and fasting to impress others, judging others, laying up treasure on earth and then proclaiming "Lord, Lord" and using His name when in fact not even truly knowing Him.

Oswald Chambers writes: The "be-attitudes" contain "dynamite" that should explode in and upon our lives. They are not soothing and beautiful precepts or concepts. They should bring a tremendous spiritual upheaval. They should bring astonishing discomfort when truly accompanied by the Holy Spirit and received with soft hearts and open ears. They are not a set of rules and regulations, but a picture of what will be accomplished in our lives when the Holy Spirit has unhindered access to our hearts and minds.

Obedience is dependent upon acknowledging a higher authority. God is that awesome higher authority. His word is His narrative, and our obedience is the only right and proper response. To God be all the glory. Amen! Amen! 



Shafts of Light 29

by Helen Gardiner

"But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast (Ephesians 2:4-9)."

WHEN I came to the Lord at the end of the Charismatic Renewal this scripture was paramount. And so it should be. Basic salvation from hell is not based on our good works, "lest anyone should boast."

In those days of Charismatic Renewal, for me it was all about the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and it was exciting that women, too, could flow in the gifts.

I tended to look down on the women of traditional churches with their women's auxiliaries and institutes. It was all about the book of Acts.

But how wrong I was. If I had considered the life of Tabitha in Acts 9:36-41, I would

have seen my error.

Tabitha, or Dorcas, was probably the first woman to be raised from the dead in the church age. The account in Acts tells us that she was *full* of good works and charitable deeds. When the apostle Peter was summoned to pray for her, the remaining women showed Peter all the beautiful things Tabitha had sewn. It was as if her good works justified the prayer for resurrection.

So what about good works: are they important?

The answer is, "Yes, very much so."

The passage at the beginning of this article has another important verse that is seldom, if ever, quoted:

Verse 10 reads: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

The way the Holy Spirit showed it to me once is: we all have an individual list of good works which God has ordained for us to fulfil during our earthly stay. As we complete them, they get ticked off our list. One day, when we see Jesus we will be rewarded according to the number of good

works on our list that we have completed.

You have to find your unique list, you cannot copy someone else's list.

Many of us are familiar with the apostle James' teaching on faith and works: James 2:14-18: "What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, 'You have faith, and I have works.' Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works."

The book of Titus also has some things to say about good works:

Talking about Jesus, Paul says in Titus 2:14: "who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works."

As in Ephesians, Paul, in Titus says we are not saved by good works: Chapter 3:4-7 says: "But when the kindness and

the love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

Yet again, however, Paul doesn't end here, but he goes on to say in verse 8 of the same passage: "This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men."

Still further Paul reiterates in Titus 3:14: "And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful."

Exhorting the rich, Paul says in 1 Timothy 6:17-19: "Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."

The apostle Peter also has something to say about good works in 1 Peter 2:11&12: "Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honourable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation."

On this same subject, we can include Ephesians 4:28: "Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labour, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need."

Finally, we need to follow the example of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ about whom is written in, Acts 10:38, "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him."

I have one last Scripture to cap it all: 2 John verse 8: "Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but

that we may receive a full reward."



A good marriage is something many battle to attain...

Paul, in 1 Corinthians 11:3 makes this point: "But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God."

This is a truth which can be comforting to women, especially when tough decisions need to be made.

I believe that in any decision, we women, need to give all our wisdom and counsel to our husbands (we don't need to keep it to ourselves), but then the final decision rests with the man.

What can we, as women do, to contribute to a good marriage?

We shall not fail if we follow wholeheartedly the apostle Peter's advice in 1 Peter 3:1-6: "Wives, likewise, be submissive to our own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. Do not let your adornment be merely outward – arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel – rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror."

This is simple to understand, but for many it is difficult to do. Many women

feel the need to play the Holy Spirit in their husband's life.

I once heard that there was a pastor's wife who said that a wife often gets in the way – between the husband and God. The wife, she said, needed to get out of the way so that God could give the husband a good "klap."

Notice, also, that we need a reverential fear of the Lord, but not to have the negative terror of our husbands.



There are Christians who cannot see that it is possible for a Christian to have any demonic oppression.

Peter Horrobin put forth a wonderfully simple analogy in his series of teaching which we watched recently.

It goes something like this...

There is a rich house buyer who loves beautiful old homes. He finds one he really loves. He pays the full price for it and is so excited to get the keys.


He opens up the lovely home and looks all around it.

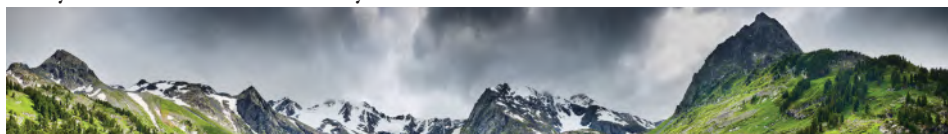
Then he goes into the roof and finds it is infested with borer beetles.

The home is still his, but he has to do something about the pests in the roof. If he doesn't the whole house will collapse. He hires "Rent-o-Kil" and the problem is sorted out.

Jesus is the house buyer. We are the house. The demons are the borer beetles. Jesus' deliverance ministry is "Rent-o-Kil" for Christians.

Peter Horrobin makes the point in his series that many Christians fall away because they are not discipled and do not receive deliverance and healing.


Makes us think... and hopefully act... doesn't it? 



The Valley of Vision

LORD, high and holy, meek and lowly, You have brought me to the valley of vision, where I live in the depths but see You in the heights; hemmed in by mountains of sin I behold Your glory.

Let me learn by paradox that the way down is the way up, that to be low is to be high, that the broken heart is the healed heart, that the contrite spirit is the rejoicing spirit, that the repenting soul is the victorious soul, that to have nothing is to possess all, that to bear the cross is to wear the crown, that to give is to receive, that the valley is the place of vision.

Lord, in the daytime stars can be seen from deepest wells, and the deeper the wells the brighter Your stars shine; let me find Your light in my darkness, Your life in my death, Your joy in my sorrow, Your grace in my sin, Your riches in my poverty, Your glory in my valley. 



The Presence and Power of the Spirit

by Samuel Chadwick

THE church is helpless without the presence and power of the Spirit. The human resources of the church were never so great. The opportunities of the church were never so glorious. The need for the work of the church was never so urgent. The crisis is momentous; and the church staggers helplessly amid it all.

The church has lost the note of authority, the secret of wisdom, and the gift of power, through persistent and wilful neglect of the Holy Spirit of God. Confusion and impotence are inevitable when the wisdom and resources of the world are substituted for the presence and power of the Spirit of God.

The presence of the Spirit is vital and central to the work of the church. Nothing else avails. Apart from Him, wisdom becomes folly, and strength weakness.

Scholarship is blind to spiritual truth till He reveals. Worship is idolatry till He inspires. Preaching is powerless if it be not a demonstration of His power. Prayer is vain unless He energises. Human resources of learning and organisation, wealth and enthusiasm, reform and philanthropy, are worse than useless if there be no Holy Ghost in them.

The church always fails at the point of self-confidence. When the church is run on the same lines as a circus, there may be crowds, but there is no Shekinah.

That is why prayer is the test of faith and the

secret of power. The Spirit of God travels in the prayer life of the soul. Miracles are the direct work of His power, and without miracles the church cannot live.

The carnal can argue, but it is the Spirit that convicts. Education can civilise, but it is being born of the Spirit that saves. The energy of the flesh can run bazaars, organise amusements, and raise millions; but it is the presence of the Holy Spirit that makes a temple of the Living God.

The root trouble of the present distress is that the church has more faith in the world and the flesh than in the Holy Spirit, and things will get no better till we get back to His realised presence and power. The breath of the four winds would turn death into life and dry bones into mighty armies, but it only comes by prayer.

The Gift of the Holy Spirit

The story of Pentecost reveals what the gift of the Holy Spirit did for individual men, as well as for the whole company. Peter moves in the blaze of the sun. Throughout the gospel narrative he is a man of generous impulses, with many failings. He utters his resolves with the emphasis of the irresolute, and often fails in the hour of testing.

Pentecost reveals him transformed. He has the certainty of revealed truth in his speech,

and the confidence of invincible power in his bearing. The man who cringed and skulked a few days ago stands upon both feet, utterly destitute of fear. Temperament and natural aptitude are unchanged, but the man is radiant with a new energy, transfigured with a new Spirit, effective with a new power.

He speaks with the same Galilean accent; but the utterance is of the Holy Spirit.

Paul put the same truth another way when he said: "I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ lives in me (Galatians 2:20)." The indwelling Presence is clothed with sanctified manhood, and becomes the very life of life, and the very soul of the soul, "I live; yet no longer I."

The apostle attributes all spiritual effectiveness to the indwelling power. "Our sufficiency," he says, "is of God; who also has made us able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the Spirit: for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life (2 Corinthians 3:5&6)."

There are other kinds of ability than that which comes from God through the Spirit, but they are death-dealing and never life-giving. It is the Spirit that quickens. Everything else fails. The letter may be faultlessly orthodox, the method may be marvellously ingenious, the man may be tremendously earnest, but only the God-made, God-inspired, God-enabled avails.

Carnalities kill. The power that quickens, transforms, perfects, is of God the Spirit. There never was so much human perfection in the church, but the New Jerusalem is not built up by the powers of Babylon; it comes down out of heaven from God. Believers without the Holy Spirit cannot do the work of the Spirit.

It is this mystery that has filled the history of the church with anomalies. Inadequate men are always doing impossible things, and ordinary men achieve extraordinary results. God's biggest things seem to be done by the most unlikely people. Unknown Davids kill terrifying Goliaths. The weak confound the mighty, and things hid from the learned and wise are made known to unlearned and ignorant men.

The insufficiency of all

The All-wise seems to delight in nothing so much as turning the wisdom of the vain to folly, and the strength of the proud to shame. He has declared the insufficiency of all but Himself, but man struts and sets himself to demonstrate his own sufficiency. Pride of logic, pride of skill, pride of personality, pride of power, perpetuate the spirit of Babel in the church of God with the same inevitable result. It ends in defeat, disaster, and dishonour.

There is no conquest of the world for God other than by the Holy Spirit. He alone can convict the world "in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement (John 16:8)." There is no other power that can do that, and without conviction there can be neither the salvation of the soul nor the coming of the kingdom.

The gift of the Spirit is God's gift of power, for effective witnessing, holiness of life, and consecrated service. Do we measure up to the standard of the fullness of Pentecost?

Have we power over sin? The Spirit of Truth is the Spirit of Holiness. He sanctifies in truth. The Day of Pentecost changed carnal thought into spiritual vision, pride into humility, selfishness into love, and cowardice into courage. It changed hearts, and transformed lives. Victory comes by fullness. Have we the joy of conquest over sin? Is the character of the average Christian anywhere near the standard of a Spirit-filled soul?

What about the love of the world? Jesus said He was One "whom the world cannot receive (John 14:17)." They are in irreconcilable antagonism. What has come of the doctrine of separation? If believers were filled with the Spirit, would they haunt the world's gaudy

fountains and brackish springs? It is mockery to profess fullness, and go about panting with thirst and gasping with vanity.

What about the power for service? Is our decline due to external difficulties or internal weakness? Think of the host of workers, the vastness and variety of their service, the earnestness and ingenuity of their labours, and the scanty result of it all. What influence has the church upon the life of the people, and what impression does it make upon the strongholds of iniquity?

What about the dearth of conversions? The gift of the Spirit is the gift of power, and the lack of power is due to the absence of His indwelling fullness.

There is no doubt that the one thing needful for the church is the blessing of Pentecostal fullness. The flood would sweep away all the rubbish, fill all the dikes, and fertilise the desert. The work of God cannot be accomplished without the fullness of the Spirit, and everywhere God waits to give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.

It is His will that every believer should be filled with the Spirit, overflow in the power of the Spirit, and in all things prevail through the Spirit. What hinders? The blessing is for all – and for all now!

The conditions are simple, unalterable, and universal. God waits to fill ordinary people with extraordinary power, and to turn a baffled faith into a rapturous conquest.

The steps of faith

Now what are the steps of faith by which the blessing is appropriated?

The first step is to repent.

"And Peter said to them, Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38)." There is a repentance of believers as well as of sinners. When men begin to pray for the blessing of Pentecost the answer begins in conviction of sin. Things are not surrendered, indulgences retained against light, possessions held for selfish ends – these must all be surrendered to the supreme authority of Christ. For until He is exalted, crowned, glorified, there can be no Pentecost.

The second step is to ask.

"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him (Luke 11:13)?" There must be definite asking for the specific gift.

I was talking with a farmer a few years ago about prayer, and he said all the preachers he

heard were urging people to pray and come to prayer meetings. "But," he said, "to my mind, desire has a good deal to do with praying, and praying is a slack business when desire is lacking." There must be desire that is focussed into petition. "You have not," says James, "because you ask not (James 4:2)," and there are thousands of believers who have never definitely asked for the Blessing. God waits to give, but He is a God of discretion, and waits to be asked. "I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it... For this, moreover will I be inquired of by the house of Israel; to do it for them (Ezekiel 36:36&37)."

We must be careful not to ask amiss. Nothing hinders faith so effectually as a wrong motive. "How can you believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that comes from God only (John 5:44):"

James traces the failure of prayer to the same source: "You ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it in your pleasures (James 4:3)." The pleasures may be lawful and laudable enough, but God will not give the glory of His Son to another, but the mission of the Spirit is to glorify the Son. If the power is sought for success in Christian service merely, it will not be given. Christ must be supreme in affection and aim.

The third step is to receive.


When the consecration is complete the act of faith is quite simple. "Receive the Holy Spirit" is the all-inclusive command. "Therefore I say to you, all things whatever you pray and ask for, believe that you have received them, and you shall have them (Mark 11:24)." Take God at His Word.

The fourth step is the continuous life of obedience.

Jesus Christ identifies faith with obedience, and in the Acts of the Apostles obedience is made the condition of receiving and retaining the Spirit. "And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him (Acts 5:32)." Abiding fullness depends upon obedience to the ever-widening circle of illumination. The blessing of Pentecost may be lost, and it is always lost when obedience fails.

The Spirit-filled must be Spirit-ruled!

We are ministers of the Spirit through whom the supply is conveyed. Those who are greatly used of God have no monopoly of the Holy Spirit; they are mighty through God because the Spirit has a monopoly of them.

Again I say this extraordinary gift is for ordinary people. All may be filled as full and as truly as the 120 on the day of Pentecost. The conditions are the same for all. Repent, Ask, Receive, Obey. 



The end of discernment

by Don McGee

DISCERNMENT might be defined as the exercise of judgement and civilised taste. If that is applied to modern culture then, without doubt, we have lost it. Europe lost it many decades ago, and the debasement of spiritual and social norms that wrecked the structure of decency on the Old Continent has done the same in the New World, seemingly with a vengeance.

Our Moral Free-Fall

In order to be very clear, the intention of this article is not to leave the reader with the idea that 21st Century culture has accidently stumbled and fallen, thus damaging its ability to recognise spiritual and moral squalor. That would be a mistaken conclusion.

Where western culture is today spiritually and morally is not the result of an accident. Society is wallowing in the muddy shallows of debasement because it has chosen to be there.

In humanity's headlong rush to estrangement from God it has thrown overboard most every vestige of conduct that separates human standards of living from those of mongrel dogs, just like Bible prophecy said it would do, "...as in the days of Lot."

Leviticus 18 presents the precedent for the spiritual degradation and its attendant fallout that has enveloped modern civilisation.

I used to own a couple of hunting dogs whose sole purpose for living was the hot pursuit of whitetail deer in order for me to put meat in the freezer and a full-grown trophy version of Bambi on the wall. Of course my dogs had biblical names – Joshua and Caleb – but that did not change the fact that they had no inhibitions and discernment whatsoever. They were dogs, and male dogs at that.

That means they would publicly and in broad daylight propagate with any bitch that came around. They enjoyed rolling in rotting carcasses and had no qualms about taking care of bodily functions at any place and at any time – no matter how disgustingly offensive. For these and other reasons their pen was some distance from my house, and they were consigned to riding in the back of my truck while *en route* to and from the woods. Much of today's society reminds me a lot of my dogs.

However, to be honest about the matter, my dogs had no choice because living like that was simply part of their being dogs.

Moral Choice

But, such rationalisation cannot be afforded human beings regarding their dog-

like conduct. What is now being publicly displayed by those who see themselves as the world's current trendsetters and future leaders has no excuse of any kind, much less something based upon species genetics.

One of the great distinctions between humans and dogs is that humans have a choice in developing a moral conscience and exercising its associated discernment. Said another way, when people live like mongrel dogs it is because they choose to do so. And, like dogs rolling in rotting flesh, they really, really enjoy it.

True, some people have been living with the morals of hound-dogs for millennia (actually, apologies might be in order to all hound-dogs), but never have people been able to shamelessly flaunt it before the entire world in real time while being excused under the "culture-toleration" exemption. This rationalisation is scraping the bottom of the proverbial barrel. God allows for no such toleration and it would be of great benefit if society would do the same.

The Nature of the Problem

How did this happen, and why? I can offer only a microcosm of the answer, and it is in the context of Bible prophecy. Said succinctly, in order for Satan to do what he will ultimately do to humanity,

he must destroy any semblance of spiritual discernment, and he has seen phenomenal success in this area.

It is important to see that what he has accomplished was not through a by-the-numbers, sharply-defined, multi-step process. That would not work because the degradation would be too easily defined and too easily recognised, even by the spiritually weak.

Rather, Satan has chosen to use a slide-to-ruin, smooth process without distinct stages. Something that is smooth is more easily swallowed than something sharp. Essentially, and without going into intricate detail, the result of lost spiritual discernment leads to the loss of moral discernment and other debasements that have been wrecking lives, homes and churches for a long time.

The Main Problem

Number one on the list is the refusal to judge. It has been said that the most quoted Bible verse is Matthew 7:1, "Do not judge so that you will not be judged." If Satan has ever been successful in duping people into taking a verse from its context it is this one.

Can anyone in their stable, God-given mind make that verse mean that tolerance is the key to godliness? Yet, that is exactly what is being taught in multitudes of pulpits and in untold numbers of Bible classes each week. Especially in "seeker-friendly" churches and in those churches that push the unbiblical, but popular "social gospel." Must we wonder why some Christians (especially teens and young adults) dress, talk and live as they do?

Consider some words of great wisdom from F. F. Bruce, the great Scottish scholar and son of a Plymouth Brethren preacher. He said, "Judgement is an ambiguous word, in Greek as in English: it may mean sitting in judgement on people (or even condemning them), or it may mean exercising a proper discrimination. In the former sense judgement is depreciated; in the latter sense it is recommended."

A.W. Tozer, the great American pastor, preacher and author, said, "Among the gifts of the Spirit, scarcely one is of greater practical usefulness than the gift of discernment. This gift should be highly valued and frankly sought as being almost indispensable in these critical times. This gift will enable us to distinguish the chaff from the wheat and to divide the manifestations of the flesh from the operations of the Spirit."

Corrupted Christianity

Some believers are nothing less than

dismayed after comparing men like Bruce and Tozer to the likes of Brian McLaren, Rick Warren and others who are absolutely void of biblical discernment. The reason for this glaring distinction is that the former had a centralised view of spiritual authority – namely, the Bible. The latter, Emergent Church leaders, are determined to transform Christianity into a constantly developing and de-centralised "conversation," as they call it, and to "deconstruct" historical Christianity and rebuild it as they think it ought to be.

Further, most readers would also be dismayed to know how much influence these men wield in what has historically been Evangelical circles. Think not? In 2005 a Barna Group survey found that *The Purpose Driven Church* by Rick Warren was voted as the second most influential book in the lives and ministries of American church leaders. It ranked just behind *The Purpose Driven Life*, also written by Warren.

So, what is the fallout from leaving the centralised authority of the Bible and going to a let's-talk-about-it-in-order-to-feel-good system of discernment?

Moral deconstruction follows spiritual deconstruction. When what God says no longer carries life-influencing weight, then something must fill the vacuum. When discipleship becomes a "conversation" built upon the rubble of "deconstructed Christianity" then it no longer has a sure foundation, and thus easily falls to any prevailing wind.

Case in point. At a recent prophecy conference a woman had some comments and questions about current standards among young Christians. She was very concerned because her grand-daughter is a Bible class leader in her youth group. This girl, in her late teens, "goes to youth group meetings dressed in shorts so tight and short that certain regions of her derriere (I had to soften up her description a bit) are openly visible and her parents and the pastor and youth pastor say nothing!"

Her conversation continued about what Christian girls are now wearing to their proms and that it must be an embarrassment to God. I agreed. The truth is that what they are wearing gives them all the dignity and class of a wild-west saloon floozy.

A Twisted Theology

"Cheap grace" theology (though God's grace is indeed free, it was not cheap) has been taught for so long in Bible colleges, seminaries and pulpits that it has become woven into the fabric of pastoral counsel.

It is the idea, or at the very least the strong perception, that God's grace does away with God's commands, something that could not be further from the truth.

It is the belief that being saved by grace and obeying God's commands about the way we live are mutually exclusive. The indecisive, indiscriminate, undiscerning church is long and loud about, "Neither do I condemn you," but is eerily silent about, "Go and sin no more."

It is absolutely impossible for a person who chooses to live a life of darkness to, in reality, be a Christian living a life of righteousness (John 8:1-12).

The following is often said and bears repeating. The False Prophet of the Tribulation will not have very far to go in order to construct and impose a global religion that will be palatable to most people left behind when the church is taken out.


There will be no need for discernment and judgement regarding what God has said, because there will be a demand for allegiance to the Antichrist under penalty of death. Worship might be some kind of adoration-liturgy with oaths and other such trappings, but in the context of morals and lifestyles, nothing further will be required. Without Godly discernment nothing else will matter, as it often does not matter even now. Anyone with biblical discernment can clearly see that much of professing Christianity is already at that point today.

The Need for Action

The broken-hearted grandmother mentioned above is only one of many Christians who are very concerned about what is happening in their churches. Ironically, it seems to be people like her who actually see what is happening, are generally ignored because their concern is seen as being too reactionary.

Church leaders often seem more concerned with the orchestration of the Sunday morning entertainment, current outreach programmes, the latest praise and worship digital technology and numbers. Not that numbers mean a great harvest, but that numbers mean a large financial offering.

Strong words? Yes. Because the situation is critical and time is running out very quickly.

Nobody wants to experience difficult and oppressive times. However, church history indicates that those things cause God's people to shed the excesses and to simply get back to, "This is what the Lord says (Zechariah 1:3)." 

A word about temper

by J. R. Miller (1888)

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you (Ephesians 4:32)."

MORE than half of us are bad-tempered – at least an English social scientist tells us so. He claims that this is no mere general statement and no bit of guesswork; he gives us the figures for it. He arranged to have about 2 000 people put unconsciously under observation as to their ordinary temper, and then had careful reports made of the results. The calculations of the returns has been announced, and is decidedly unflattering to the 2 000 tempers that were thus put to the test. More than half of these people – to be entirely accurate, 52 percent of them – are categorised as bad-tempered in various degrees.

The dictionary has been well-near exhausted of adjectives of this order, in giving the different shades of bad-temper: aggressive, angry, bickering, bitter, capricious, choleric, contentious, crotchety, despotic, domineering, easily offended, gloomy, grumpy, hasty, huffy, irritable, morose, obstinate, reproachful, peevish, sulky, surly, vindictive – these are just some of the qualifying words. There are employed, in all, 46 terms which describe a bad temper!

We do not like to believe that the case is quite so serious – that many of us are not amiable in some offensive degree. It's easier to confess our neighbour's faults and infirmities, than our own. So, therefore, quietly taking refuge for ourselves among the 48 percent of good-tempered people – we are willing to admit that a great many of the people we know, have at times rather ungente tempers.

They are easily provoked; they fly into a passion on very slight occasion; they are haughty, domineering, peevish, fretful or vindictive!

What is even worse, most of them appear to make no effort to grow out of their infirmities of disposition! The sour fruit does not come to mellow ripeness in the passing years; the roughness is not polished off the diamond to reveal its lustrous hidden beauty. The same petulance, pride, vanity, selfishness and other

disagreeable qualities are found in the life, year after year.

Where there is a struggle to overcome one's faults and grow out of them, and where the progress toward better and more beautiful spiritual character is perceptible, though ever so slow – we should have sympathy. But where one appears unconscious of one's blemishes, and manifests no desire to conquer one's faults – there is little ground for encouragement.

Man-like it is – to fall into sin.

Fiend-like it is – to dwell therein.

Saint-like it is – for sin to grieve.

God-like it is – for sin to leave.

Bad temper is such a disfigurement of character, and, besides, works such harm to one's self and to one's neighbours, that no one should spare any pains or cost to have it cured. The ideal Christian life is one of unbroken kindliness. It is dominated by love – the love whose portrait is drawn for us in the immortal 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians:

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs."

That is the picture of the ideal Christian life!

He never failed in sweetness

We have but to turn to the gospel pages – to find the story of a life in which all this was realised. Jesus never lost his temper. He lived among people who tried him at every point – some by their dullness, others by their bitter enmity and persecution – but he never failed in sweetness of disposition, in patience, in self-denying love.

Like the flowers which give out their perfume only when crushed; like the odoriferous wood which bathes the axe which hews it with fragrance; the life of Christ yielded only the tenderer, sweeter love to the rough impact of men's harshness and wrong.

That is the pattern on which we should strive to fashion our life and our character. Every outbreak of violent temper, every shade of ugliness in disposition, mars the radiant loveliness of the picture we are seeking to have fashioned in our souls.



Whatever is not loving – is unlovely character.

There is another phase: bad-tempered people are continually hurting others – more often than not their best and truest friends. Some people are sulky – and one person's sulkiness casts a chilling shadow over a whole household!

Others are so sensitive, ever watching for slights and offended by the merest trifles – that even their nearest friends have no freedom of fellowship with them. Others are despotic, and will brook no kindly suggestion, nor listen to any expression of opinion. Others are so quarrelsome that even the meekest and gentlest person cannot live peaceably with them.

Whatever may be the special characteristic of the bad temper, it makes only pain and humiliation for the person's friends!

A bad temper usually implies a sharp tongue. Sometimes, indeed, it makes one morose and glum. A brother and a sister living together are said often to have passed months without speaking to each other, though eating at the same table and sleeping under the same roof. A man recently died who for 12 years, it was said, had never spoken to his wife, though they continued to dwell together, and three times daily sat down together at the same table!

Bad temper sometimes runs to sullen silence. Such silence is not golden.

Generally, however, a bad-tempered person has an unbridled tongue and speaks out his hateful feelings; and there is no limit to the pain and the harm which angry and ugly words can produce in gentle hearts!

It would be easy to extend this portrayal of the evils of bad temper – but it will be more profitable to inquire *HOW a bad-tempered person may become good-tempered*. There is no doubt that this happy change is possible in any case. There is no temper so obdurately



every feeling and emotion, so as to be able to restrain every impulse to speak or to act unadvisedly.

We represent Christ in this world. People cannot see Him; they must look at us to see a little of what He is like. Whatever great work we may do for Christ, if we fail to live out His life of love, kindness and patience, then we fail in an essential part of our duty as Christians.

Nor can we be greatly useful in our personal life, while our daily conduct is stained by frequent outbursts of anger, and other exhibitions of bad temper. In the old fable, the spider goes about doing mischief wherever it creeps, while the bee by its wax and its honey, makes "sweetness and light" wherever it flies. We should be bees rather than spiders; living to turn darkness into light and to put a little more sweetness into the life of all who know us.

But only as our own lives shine in the brightness of holy love, and our hearts and lips distil the sweetness of patience and gentleness, can we fulfil our mission in this world – as Christ's true messengers to men.

Then there is need of a higher standard of character in this regard, than many people seem to set for themselves. We never rise higher than our ideals. The perfect beauty of Christ should ever be envisioned in our hearts as that which we would attain for ourselves. The honour of our Master's name should impel us to strive ever toward Christlikeness in spirit and in disposition.

In striving to overcome our impatience with others, it will help us to remember that we and they have the common heritage of a sinful nature. The thing in them which irritates us is, no doubt, balanced by something in us which looks just as unlovely in their eyes and just as sorely tries their forbearance toward us!

Very likely, if we think our neighbours are hard to live peaceably with, they think about the same of us! And who shall tell in whom lies the greater degree of fault? Certain it is, that a really good-tempered person can rarely ever be drawn into a quarrel with anyone.

He is resolutely determined that he will not be a partner in any unChristian strife. He would rather suffer wrongfully, than offer any retaliation. He has learned to bear, and to forbear. Then, by his gentle tact, he is able to conciliate any who are angry.

A fable relates that in the depth of a forest, there lived two foxes. One of them said to the other one day, in the politest of fox-language, "Let's quarrel!"

"Very well," said the other; "but how shall we go about it?"

They tried all sorts of ways – but in vain, for both would give way. At last, one fox brought two stones.

"There!" said he. "Now you say they are yours and I'll say they are mine, and we will quarrel and fight and scratch! Now I'll begin.

"Those stones are mine!"

"All right!" answered the other fox, "you are welcome to them."

"But we shall never quarrel at this rate," replied the first.

"No, indeed, you old simpleton! Don't you know, that it takes two to make a quarrel?"

So the foxes gave up trying to quarrel, and never played at this silly game again.

A lesson for all creatures

The fable has its lesson for other creatures, besides foxes. "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you," Paul tells us, "we should live peaceably with all men."

A wise man says, "Every man takes care that his neighbours shall not cheat him, but a day comes when he begins to care that he does not cheat his neighbours. Then all goes well."

So long as a man sees only the quarrelsome temper of his neighbour he is not far toward holiness. But when he has learned to watch and to try to control his own temper, and to weep over his own infirmities, then he is on the way to Christ-likeness, and will soon be conqueror over his own weakness.

Life is too short to spend even one day of it in bickering and strife! *Love is too* sacred to be forever lacerated and torn by the ugly briars of sharp temper! Surely we ought to learn to be loving and patient with others since God has to show every day such infinite patience toward us?

Is not the very essence of true love the spirit that is not easily provoked, that bears all things? Can we not, then, train our life to sweeter gentleness? Can we not learn to be touched even a little roughly, without resenting it? Can we not bear little injuries, and apparent injustices, without flying into a rage? Can we not have in us something of the mind of Christ, which will enable us, like Him, to endure all wrong and injury and give back no word or look of bitterness? The way over which we and our friend walk together, is too short to be spent in wrangling. 🐾

bad – that it cannot be trained into sweetness.

The grace of God can take the most unlovely life – and transform it into the image of Christ.

As in all moral changes, however, grace does not work independently of human volition and exertion. "I labour, struggling with all His energy, which so powerfully works in me (Colossians 1:29)."

God always works helpfully with those who strive to reach Christlikeness. We must resist the devil, or he will not flee from us. We must struggle to obtain the victory over our own evil habits and dispositions, although it is only through Christ that we can be conquerors.

He will not make us conquerors, unless we enter the battle. We have a share, and a large and necessary share, in the culture of our own character.

The bad-tempered man will never become good-tempered until he deliberately sets for himself the task, and enters resolutely and persistently upon its accomplishment. The transformation will never come of itself, even in a Christian! People do not grow out of ugly temper into sweet refinement, as a peach ripens from sourness into lusciousness.

Then the thing to be accomplished, is not the destroying of the temper; temper is a good quality in its place. The task is not destruction – but control. A man is very weak who has a strong temper without the power of self-control. Likewise is he weak who has a weak temper.

The truly strong man is he who is strong in the element of temper – that is, has strong passions and feelings capable of great anger, and yet also has perfect self-control. When Moses failed and broke down in temper – in self-control, he was not the man to lead the people into the Promised Land; therefore God at once prepared to relieve him.

The task to be set, therefore, in self-discipline is the gaining of complete mastery over



by Lois J. Stucky

MAY I recall for you the story from World War 2 days of Mrs Ethel Roffe Bell, missionary to West Africa with The Christian Missionary Alliance, a woman who endured through Christ. In her 20s, Ethel, who had given her life to God to become a missionary like her three brothers, was stricken with tuberculosis and was apparently dying.

Her brothers took her from the sanatorium for prayer. There was no apparent change, but again at home, Ethel by faith struggled out of bed and began to live as though she was healed. Within months, she was enrolled as a student preparing for missionary work, with a testimony on her lips of how the healing power of God had touched her.

Her marriage to George Bell took place in Africa. Together this devoted couple served the Lord with zeal and God-given success. God blessed their home with a daughter, Mary, and twin sons. But one sad day, the twin sons were buried beneath the African soil, the price of serving God in a land of tropical disease. Another son, Robert, was born to them, and was the joy of his mother's heart. But he, too, was stricken with disease and left partially paralysed. The family returned to the U.S. for medical help.

As the boy's medical health improved, the family joyously looked forward to returning to Africa. But while touring in meetings on behalf of their missionary work, George was called above after being seriously injured in a bus accident.

Clinging to the Lord for the comfort and

courage she needed, Ethel Bell kept her face set toward fulfilling God's calling to her. Within a few years, in spite of sorrow and loneliness, she and her daughter and son returned to serve the Lord in Africa.

Then came World War 2, and American missionaries in this part of Africa found themselves regarded as enemies and they were obliged to return to the U.S. It was no small task to find shipping, but eventually room was found on an American freighter sailing from Ghana. A difficult overland journey enabled Ethel Bell and her children to reach the ship and set sail for America.

When tragedy struck

All were aware that German submarines made the journey treacherous. Every precaution was taken. Life preservers were kept near at hand; lifeboat drills were conducted. The ship was at last only two days from reaching Trinidad, their first stop. Then tragedy struck.

Here we take up the story as recorded by a Christian tract...

"It is a beautiful Sunday afternoon. Mrs Bell is resting in her cabin. The children are somewhere out on deck. Suddenly the ship careens violently seeking to avoid an onrushing torpedo. Simultaneously comes the crash of the deadly missile and the call to abandon ship. Life belts are hurriedly adjusted and, even as they rush for the boats, another torpedo strikes the doomed vessel.

"Some lifeboats are smashed in the explosions. Time is too short to release others from the ship. Water is already covering the deck. Mrs Bell, seeing no hope of rescue, commits herself and the children to God. Two minutes

after the first torpedo's crash, the ship disappears beneath the waves.

"The suction drags the little family down. This must be the end! But no, their life belts bring them to the surface. One after another their heads appear above the water, covered with palm oil, the main cargo of the vessel. Mrs Bell and her two children (Mary and Robert) swim to a piece of wreckage.

"From the piece of wreckage to which they are clinging, the sailors pull them up on to a raft. Then the Captain sees them and two other missionary children and orders all transferred to his raft. This is a better one, but even so, it is scanty shelter for 19 souls. Eight by 10 feet, hard and uncomfortable, barely above the surface of the sea!

"But the presence of God's messenger transformed and glorified that raft. Morning and evening Mrs Bell conducted family devotions with the four children, and soon the sailors asked to be included in the prayers. Without a printed book, but from the pages of her memory, she quoted Scripture passages.

"The raft prayer room became also a choir loft when Mrs Bell, assisted by the children, led the singing. No choir director was more needed than this one. They sang those old hymns of comfort and courage – *Rock of Ages, Jesus, Saviour, Pilot Me, Trust and Obey, 'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus*, and other spiritual songs.

"Twice during those long days the raft assumed the sombre aspect of a funeral parlour. Strong men died on the raft. With only their wet clothes for shrouds, their bodies must be committed to the watery grave where lurked the sharks. And in those trying hours that

frail, little woman, although forced to turn away from the final tragic moments, had the grace and fortitude to conduct those last sad rites with words of human dignity and simple faith.

"Who will be next? God only knows! The hearts of men are failing and minds are weakening, while food is getting low and the water is being rapidly consumed. Where is the God of Elijah now? Water is needed. Ethel Bell prays for rain and it rains. Drinking water is replenished. With wet clothes and the chilly night coming on, she looks up to heaven and asks for the rain to stop. God stops the rain for her. Elijah's God still lives today and He is Mrs Bell's God.

"Everybody on the raft is becoming more and more weary. The salt water is affecting their skin. Feet swell and sores multiply. The nights seem to grow longer and more fraught with danger. Waves toss the tiny raft boat about, making it lurch and shake. With a sinister persistence the sharks follow them, playing with the raft, ever watching and waiting.

Within reach of the sharks

"Everyone is drowsy but Mrs Bell must remain alert at all times, especially when the children sleep, lest an arm slip over the side within reach of the sharks.

"She mothered all on the raft, not only her own two children, and the other Shaw children who lost their parents in this disaster, but also the 14 men. From the first they treated her with consideration and respect. Those who survived acknowledged they owed much to her invincible spirit.

"To the discouraged she would quote a word in season from the Book of books. The children would join her in reciting a psalm. Then they would ring out a cheery chorus, such as, *Joy Bells*. When rescued, the sailors said that their morale had been sustained by Mrs Bell's indomitable courage and the children's songs.

"A week passed. They entered a second week, and days were never so weary or nights so long. The third week began and they lost track of the days. Never had an ocean seemed so vast, time so slow or eternity so near. Will relief never come? Is no boat to pass that way? Will no plane ever see them? Why does God delay? Has He forgotten His own?

"Ten or 12 planes had passed overhead but the little craft and its human cargo had remained unnoticed. Hope was aroused, only to droop again. One night some lights were seen, possibly on the West Indies, but daylight revealed no land.

"Then comes a plane that circles over them, round and round, lower and lower. Obviously

it sees them. It drops some food. Then leaves, presumably to send them help. At dawn next day a ship appears on the horizon, undoubtedly in search of the little band of hopeful souls. But it misses them and five days more they drift on.

"Five awful days they are, equalled only by five nights of sheer terror... Bodies are near exhaustion, and minds well nigh the breaking point.

"Then on that fateful 20th day help comes at last! With true seamanship, a lookout is kept posted. Suddenly the man shouts, 'Convoy!' All struggle to their feet. All eyes are strained in the direction he points. Sure enough, there it is, coming over the horizon, a line of freighters guarded by destroyers. One of them seems to have sighted the raft and speeds toward it. Help has come! Rescued at last!


"But what is happening? Flame and smoke burst from the destroyer. Shells fall around the raft! Their improvised sail which attracted the destroyer's attention is mistaken for a submarine's decoy. That crafty trick had deceived other destroyers. This one does not propose to be duped. It evidently intends to sink what it supposes to be a disguised enemy sub.

"The children cry and scream. The men frantically pull down the sail and wave it.

Mrs Bell prays. Are they to be destroyed at last by friendly hands? Surely God will not forsake them now!

"No, He will not forsake either His trusting children nor their exhausted fellow wanderers. God deflects the aim of those skilful gunners so that not a shell hits the target. He whispers and the officer orders, 'Cease firing.' How else can we explain this escape from death! Their preservation to this point has been miraculous. Their rescue now is no less so.

"The destroyer draws near, officers and men lining its rails. Mrs Bell, the children and even the sailors are tenderly lifted and carried aboard. Kindness and attention are showered upon them. They are soon transferred to a passenger vessel and carried to Barbados, there to enter the local hospital for much needed medical attention and recuperation. Efficient physicians and kindly nurses devote themselves to Mrs Bell's recovery for 24 days, expressing amazement that she recuperates so rapidly after so harrowing an ordeal."

"Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you (Isaiah 41:10)." "Look to Me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other (Isaiah 45:22)." 





How to fight for a lust-free mind

by Ed Buch

A LUSTFUL thought is like a torpedo, cruising relentlessly, silently under the water, straight toward the hull of our ship. Unless we take instant evasive action, we're in trouble. Eventually that thought will strike.

We tend to minimise the impact. In fact, most of us believe we're spiritually stalwart enough to take a few hits. But the truth is we can't afford to let any lustful thoughts into our minds.

We can't let them linger, even for a few seconds. That little opening is all the Enemy needs; he is very adept at slithering in through the smallest of openings. He knows how to exploit that one little opening until it is a gaping hole in your spiritual armour.

If I sound like I'm speaking from experience, it's because I am. I've had to learn these things the hard way.

A Self-Defeating Fight

Most of us know what it's like to finish committing some act of sin, say masturbation, and then immediately begin to question ourselves: How did that happen? What went wrong? I was doing fine, then all of a sudden, IT happened. Be assured, IT began as a tiny, silent thought in your mind.

We tend to pay little attention to the thoughts that come into our minds. Some

come and go so quickly we couldn't voice them or act on them if we wanted to. But others linger. Some entice and tantalise. Some are sinful. Some are so blatantly sensual that we would be massively ashamed to have them played on a screen for others to see.

For those who were once given over to sexual sin, it is these lustful thoughts in particular that seem so hard to overcome. Long after men (or women) stop acting out sexually, they still admit to having a seemingly constant battle with lustful thoughts.

Some will give up and eventually backslide into their former sexual sins. But others will press through to the victory that is found in Christ Jesus.

Let me assure you: there **is** victory in Jesus Christ over impure thoughts!

To be frank, the major problem on the road to victory over lustful thoughts is that we don't really want them to go away. There is still that thing in us – that desire for sin – that welcomes a lustful thought now and then. We want to re-live the excitement and pleasure of past trysts – even if only for a few minutes in our minds. But yielding to such temporal pleasure has far more devastating consequences than we realise.

I've also learned that success doesn't come in the form of some secret formula that stifles lustful thoughts or is guaranteed to produce instant victory. There is

no such shortcut that I'm aware of. Lustful thoughts are overcome one by one, thought by thought.

I realise that doesn't have much appeal to the pop-Christianity crowd. But that's the way it is. It's not a glamorous walk down the fashion-model runway; it's hand-to-hand combat in the trenches. Such battles are the proving ground of your proclamation of faith.

Are you willing to fend off those pesky lustful thoughts and fill your mind with Jesus?

If you are really serious about this battle, there are several things you must do to assure victory.

1. Break the Trance

The first is what I refer to as "breaking the trance." When lustful thoughts start to arise in your minds and fantasies begin to swirl around, you need to do something outwardly to break that momentum toward sin. The situation you're in is likely too conducive to lustful thoughts, and something needs to immediately change.

If you're watching television or using the computer, turn it off. I find it helpful to get up and take a short walk, even just a walk around the house is often enough to help me get my thoughts redirected.

Colossians 3:5 says, "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry." What does this mean? It means to stop

feeding that thing. Any living thing that is not fed will eventually die, or at least lose its power.

2. **Pray Continuously**

Secondly, PRAY! We neglect the weapon of prayer far too often. The truth is, you and I don't have what it takes to win the battle against lustful thoughts and the sin they will lead us into. You need help from outside yourself; you need the Lord's help. The Word of God instructs us to take our thoughts captive (2 Corinthians 10:5), and the best way I know to do that is to pray. It is impossible to pray and think lustful thoughts at the same time. Prayer is also the means by which we appropriate the power to overcome sin.

If you lack the discipline to pray, then call a family member, a friend, or a spiritual mentor who can pray with you. Humble yourself and confess your need for prayer to overcome these lustful thoughts. Such humility opens the door for God's favour. Remember, God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble (1 Peter 5:5).

3. **Clean House**

Third, get serious about applying the admonition given by the apostle Paul: "Do not be conformed to this world (Romans 12:2)." Too often our homes are filled with the very things that stimulate lustful thoughts because we've conformed to the world's standard in what we allow into our homes.

Need I even mention television as the obvious source of much that makes provision for our flesh while crushing our spiritual life? But don't stop there. Take a closer look at those catalogues and magazines filled with glossy advertising based on sensual appeals. Could they be one of the reasons your battle with lustful thoughts seems so unwinnable? A good housecleaning could go a long way toward making your home the sanctuary you need it to be to escape the onslaught of sensual propaganda the world hurls at you.

But ultimately, these three steps will not produce lasting victory over lustful thoughts. They will help in the short term, but they need to go hand-in-hand with a long-term transformation of your mind.

A Great Reversal

Romans 12:2 goes on to say "...but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Be transformed? What does it mean to have to have a renewed and transformed


mind?

A transformed mind is one that draws its thoughts and motives from an increasingly vibrant relationship with God. Any time you "put off the old," you must also "put on the new (Ephesians 4:22,24)." Hollow and deceptive fantasies need to be replaced by something more wonderful. If you do, the Scriptures promise that you will "be renewed in the spirit of your mind (Ephesians 4:23)."

A new and transformed mind is filled with thoughts of Jesus and His love as it was revealed on the Cross. A transformed mind meditates day and night on the life and power available through His Word. A transformed mind causes the flow of your life to be reversed, so that instead of everything flowing toward you – your wants being pre-eminent and your desires

being catered to – things are flowing toward others.

You must come to a place where you are truly putting others ahead of yourself. In the same way you once gave over to lust, you must be given over to meeting the needs of others.

God wants to renew and transform our minds. He wants to transform our ugly, self-centred, lust-filled minds and give each one of us a "beautiful mind" – one that truly pleases and glorifies Him.  Ed Buch is Director of Counseling for Pure Life Ministries.

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Appropriate the benefits of the Blood Of The Lord Jesus Christ!

Redemption

"In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace (Ephesians 1:7)."

"You know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot (1 Peter 1:18&19)."

"You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation (Revelation 5:9)."

Purchased

"The church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28)."

Washed from Our Sins

"To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood (Revelation 1:5)."

Cleansed

"But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7)."

Purged from Dead Works

"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God (Hebrews 9:14)?"

Peace and Reconciliation

"And, having made peace through the blood of His Cross, by Him to reconcile all things to Himself (Colossians 1:20)..."

Justification

"Being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him (Romans 5:9)."

Sanctification

"Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate (Hebrews 13:12)."


Made Near to God

"But now in Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ (Ephesians 2:13)."

Access into the Holiest

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus (Hebrews 10:19)."

Victory over Satan

"And they overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto death (Revelation 12:11)." 

God is doing a new thing in His church

by David Wilkerson

HOW often have you heard Christians say, “God is doing a new thing in the church”? The “new thing” they refer to may be called a revival, an outpouring, a visitation or a move of God. Yet very often the “new thing” they describe dies out quickly. And once it has faded, it can’t be found again.

In this way, it proves not to have been a move of God at all. In fact, Christian sociologists have tracked many of these so-called visitations. They’ve discovered that the average span of such an event is about five years.

Personally, I believe God is doing a new thing in his church today. Yet this great work of the Spirit can’t be found in a single location. It’s happening worldwide, yet

you don’t have to travel far to behold it. Indeed, God’s “new thing” may be as close as a nearby church.

There is a biblical principle that governs any true move of God. We find this principle at work again and again in both Testaments. It has proven true through centuries of church history. The principle is this: *God will not begin a new thing in his church until he does away with the old.*

As Jesus put it, the Father won’t put new wine into old wineskins.

Why is this so? It’s because God has a controversy with the old thing in his church. With every new work he raises up, only a few generations pass before apathy and hypocrisy begin to creep in. Soon God’s people have become idolaters with hearts bent toward backsliding. Eventually, God chooses to bypass the old work in his church. He forsakes it completely before he introduces the new.

This cycle has repeated throughout church history. Almost always it’s because the ministry becomes flesh-driven. The red-hot passion that birthed the work begins to fade, and over time the ministry becomes a human institution. Lifeless routine sets in. The once-prayerful leaders now rely on organisation and fleshly skill to keep the work going.

At one time, these leaders trusted God wholly and he spoke to them. But at

some point they abandoned their servanthood for politics. Now instead of ministering, they compete for power, prestige and numbers. Sadly, their ministry has become a faded memory of what God once accomplished in power and truth.

The Lord responded to this kind of compromise in Jeremiah’s time. He sent the prophet to the temple gate to proclaim a devastating word: “Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place (Jeremiah 7:3).” In other words: “This work has grown corrupt, and now death is at the door. But there is still time to save it. I don’t want to walk away from it. I want to stay with you and move in your midst. But for that to happen, you have to repent. You must return to your first love.”

God heard the people crying, “God can’t destroy the temple. He’ll never abandon what he established here.” But the Lord responded, “Trust not in lying words, saying, ‘The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord (7:4).’” He was saying, in essence, “What about your defilements, your rampant adultery? You swear falsely, you bow to idols and you’ve turned my house into a den of robbers. I sent prophets to warn you but you wouldn’t listen.”

He ended with this: “Therefore do not pray for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear you (7:16).” In short: “Don’t bother praying for this old work. It is over, dead and gone, beyond all hope of reviving. I have a totally new thing in mind. And you no longer represent me. I will have a people who represent me to the world as I truly am.”

Would God dispose of an old work in New Testament times the same way he did in the Old? Yes, he would. Jesus stood in the temple and invited all to come under his merciful wings of protection. He called out to the blind, the sick, the leprous, the poor, the lost, everyone to come and find healing and forgiveness. But the religious crowd refused his offer.

Christ testified of them, “You would not (Matthew 23:37)!” He answered those



who rejected him by saying, “Behold, your house is left desolate (23:38).” He told them, “This is now your house, not mine. I’m leaving it. And it’s left to you wasted and deserted.”

Jesus added, “For I say to you, You shall not see me henceforth, till you shall say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord (23:39).’” He was declaring to them, “My glory is no longer in this old work. I’ve now rejected it. And the remainder of your religious life will be conducted without God’s presence. I turn this old work over to your flesh.”

The disciples couldn’t believe Jesus’ words. They urged him, “Master, look at the magnificence of the temple, the awesome structures. Consider its history, the centuries of tradition. This can’t possibly be left in ruins. Are you saying it’s over?” Jesus answered, “Yes, it’s over. This old work is finished, dead. I’m going to do a new thing.”

Think of it: Here stood mercy and grace incarnate saying, “This old thing isn’t mine anymore. I now leave it utterly desolate. It has absolutely no chance of being revived.”

But Christ moved on to Pentecost, to the beginning of a new thing. He was about to raise up a new church, not a replica of the old. And he would make it brand new from the foundation up. It would be a church of new priests and people, all born again in him.

Meanwhile, the old work would drag on. Crowds would still come to the temple to observe their dead rituals. Shepherds would still rob the poor, adulterers would sin at will and people would drift into idolatry. Each day, the old work would grow increasingly dry and weak. Why? God’s presence was no longer in it.

This brings us to the church of the present day.

Let me ask you: Is what you see in the church today representative of who Jesus is? Consider all the denominations and movements, everything associated with Christ’s name. Is what we’re seeing truly the church triumphant, the spotless bride of Christ? Does it reveal to a lost world the very nature of God? Is this the best that God’s Spirit can produce in these last days?

The number one idol among God’s people isn’t adultery or pornography. It’s a much more powerful lust: a driving ambition for success. And it has a doctrine to justify it. Many in God’s house

are upright, morally clean and full of good works. But they’ve set up an idol of ambition in their hearts and they can’t be shaken from it.

Tragically, this was the same driving spirit behind Baal and Molech: to prosper and be successful. Today this spirit has polluted the gospel of Jesus Christ worldwide. It presents itself as a spirit of blessing, but it’s a perversion of the blessing God intends for his church.

And it’s shipwrecking the faith of millions.

This is not the church that Jesus Christ is coming to take as His bride. So has the modern day church become the old thing? Has it become defiled, teetering on the brink of being replaced by some new work? In short, will God make a change one last time before Jesus returns? Will he abandon what has become corrupt and raise up a final, glorious church?

Yes, I believe he will. Isaiah says, “Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them (Isaiah 42:9).” The materialistic, flesh-driven institution has grown old and corrupt. And young pastors all over the world sense this. They’re fed up with the old thing, with its bickering and denominational infighting. They want nothing to do with it. They’ve rejected the drive for bigness and notoriety. Instead, they’re turning back to the centrality of Christ, back to seeking God, back to hungering for truth. And they sense a fresh new work in the air.

Laying hold of His true blessing

What is the new thing God is doing in his church? Right now, God is raising up ministers and people who’ll lay hold of his true blessing. This blessing has been misrepresented and defiled by the modern church. And now the Lord desires to renew it for the people he’s calling forth.

God first revealed this blessing to Moses: “The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, “This way you shall bless the children of Israel, saying to them, “The Lord bless you, and keep you: The Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you: The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.”’ And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them (Numbers 6:22-27).’”

God is stating, “This is the way I will bless

my people.” This implies, “There is only one formula for my blessing. It’s defined in this prescribed manner alone. All other methods of blessing are unacceptable to me.” The blessing he describes to Moses is threefold:

1. “The Lord bless you, and keep you (6:24).”

This speaks of the keeping power of Christ. It is the beginning of all blessings: the knowledge that we are kept by Christ himself. Armed with such knowledge, we no longer fear falling. God’s last-days people will lay hold of his covenant promises to give them a holy fear, take away their heart of stone and give them a new heart. They trust him completely to keep them from falling: “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile (Psalm 32:2).”


2. “The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious to you (6:25).”

This describes a church with a clear conscience, not a seared one. After all, God can’t show you his “face” – that is, the glory of his grace – until you’re secure in Him. That implies favour; you’re no longer a stranger to God but favoured in His eyes. You’re in His favour not by your initiative but by His. You don’t have to pray for His favour to come upon you; He brings it to you.

3. “The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace (6:26).”

This speaks of an increase of God’s presence. Here is a mark of the new thing God is doing: a prostrated people who receive God’s touch of love and assurance. That intimate touch keeps them prostrate in prayer. And they hear His voice clearly. All the while, a pure ministry is being birthed in them. It’s a prophetic ministry, producing pastors after God’s heart and believers who are secure in his love. Such servants aren’t restless or driven. They’re gifted with great peace. And because of that peace, they bear the very countenance of Christ.

There is no more critical time for a remnant of God to represent Him to the world. Indeed, God has lifted his Spirit from the old and he’s beginning the new. He’s going to have a church that’s spotless, not through works of flesh but by his Spirit. And this church will walk in his blessing as He intended it.

Amen! 



A warfare prayer

by Victor M. Matthews

HEAVENLY Father, I bow in worship and praise before You. I cover myself with the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ as my protection. I surrender myself completely and unreservedly in every area of my life to You.

I take a stand against all the workings of Satan that would hinder me in my prayer life. Satan, I command you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to leave my presence with all of your demons. I bring the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ between us (Revelation 12:11). I address myself only to the true and living God and refuse any involvement of Satan in my prayer.

Heavenly Father, I worship You and give You praise. I recognise that You are worthy to receive all glory and honour and praise. I renew my allegiance to You and pray that the blessed Holy Spirit would enable me in

this time of prayer (Romans 8:26).

I am thankful, Heavenly Father, that You have loved me from past eternity and that You sent the Lord Jesus Christ into the world to die as my Substitute. I am thankful that the Lord Jesus Christ came as my Representative and that through Him You have completely forgiven me; You have adopted me into Your family.

You have assumed all responsibility for me; You have given me eternal life; You have given me the perfect righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ so I am now justified. I am thankful that in Him You have made me complete, and that You have offered Yourself to me to be my daily help and strength.

Heavenly Father, open my eyes that I might see how great You are and how complete Your provision is for this day. I am thankful that the victory the Lord Jesus Christ won for me on the Cross and in His resurrection has been

given to me and that I am seated with the Lord Jesus Christ in the heavenlies. I take my place with Him in the heavenlies and recognise by faith that all wicked spirits and Satan himself are under my feet. I declare, therefore, that Satan and his wicked spirits are subject to the Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:18-2:7).

I am thankful for the Armour You have provided. I put on the Girdle of Truth, the Breastplate of Righteousness, the Sandals of Peace and the Helmet of Salvation. I lift up the Shield of Faith against all the fiery darts of the enemy; and I take in my hand the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. I choose to use Your Word against all the forces of evil in my life. I put on this Armour and live and pray in complete dependence upon You, blessed Holy Spirit (Ephesians 6:13-17).

Made a show of them openly

I am grateful, Heavenly Father, that the Lord Jesus Christ spoiled all principalities and powers and made a show of them openly and triumphed over them in Himself (Colossians 2:15). I claim all that victory for my life today. I reject all the insinuations and accusations, and the temptations of Satan. I affirm that the Word of God is true and I choose to live today in the light of God's Word. I choose, Heavenly Father, to live in obedience to You and in fellowship with Yourself.

Open my eyes and show me the areas of my life that do not please You. Work in me to cleanse me from all ground that would give Satan a foothold against me. I do in every way stand into all that it means to be Your adopted child and I welcome all the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

By faith and in dependence upon You I put off the fleshly works of the old man and stand into all the victory of the crucifixion, where the Lord Jesus Christ provided cleansing from the old nature. I put on the new man and stand into all the victory of the resurrection and the provision He has made for me to live above sin (Colossians 3:8-10).

Therefore, today I put off all forms of selfishness and put on the new nature with its love. I put off all forms of fear and put on the new nature with its courage. I put off all forms of weakness and put on the new nature with its strength. I put off all forms of lust and put on the new nature with its righteousness, purity, and honesty. I am trusting You to show me how to make this practical in my daily life.

In every way I stand into the victory of the ascension and glorification of the Lord Jesus

Christ, whereby all the principalities and powers were made subject to Him (Ephesians 1:19-23). I claim my place in Christ as victorious with Him over all the enemies of my soul. Blessed Holy Spirit, I pray that You would fill me. Come into my life, break down every idol and cast out every foe.

I am thankful, Heavenly Father, for the expression of Your will for my daily life as You have shown me in Your Word. I, therefore, claim all the will of God for today. I am thankful that You have blessed me with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:3). I am thankful that You have begotten me unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Peter 1:3).

I am thankful that You have made a provision so that today I can live filled with the Spirit of God with love and joy and peace, with longsuffering, gentleness and goodness, with meekness, faithfulness and self-control in my life (Galatians 5:22). I recognise that this is Your will for me and I therefore reject and resist all the endeavours of Satan and his wicked spirits to rob me of the will of God. I refuse in this day to believe my feelings and I hold up the Shield of Faith against all the accusations and distortion and insinuations that Satan would put into my mind. I claim the full-

ness of the will of God for my life today.

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I completely surrender myself to You, Heavenly Father, as a living sacrifice. I choose not to be conformed to this world. I choose to be transformed by the renewing of my mind, and I pray that You would show me Your will and enable me to walk in all the fullness of Your will today (Romans 12:1&2).

I am thankful that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, to the casting down of imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and to bring every thought into obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 10:4&5).

Power, love, sound mind

Therefore, in my own life today I tear down the strongholds of Satan and smash the plans of Satan that have been formed against me. I tear down the strongholds of Satan against my mind, and I surrender my mind to You, blessed Holy Spirit. I affirm, Heavenly Father, that You have not given me the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7).

I break and smash the strongholds of Satan formed against my emotions today and I give

my emotions to You. I smash the strongholds of Satan formed against my will today. I give my will to You, and choose to make the right decisions of faith. I smash the strongholds of Satan formed against my body today. I give my body to You, recognising that I am Your temple (1 Corinthians 6:19). I rejoice in Your mercy and goodness.

Heavenly Father, I pray that now and through this day You would strengthen and enlighten me. Show me the way Satan is hindering and tempting and lying and distorting the truth in my life. Enable me to be the kind of person that would please You. Enable me to be aggressive in prayer and faith. Enable me to be aggressive mentally, to think about and practice Your Word, and to give You Your rightful place in my life.

Again, I cover myself with the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and pray that You, blessed Holy Spirit, would bring all the work of the crucifixion, all the work of the resurrection, all the work of the glorification, and all the work of Pentecost into my life today. I surrender myself to You. I refuse to be discouraged. You are the God of all hope.

You have proven Your power by resurrecting Jesus Christ from the dead, and I claim in every way this victory over all satanic forces in my life. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ with thanksgiving. Amen. ☩

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She tried suicide multiple times, until she found hope and healing in Jesus

by Michael Ashcraft

NINE times Shannon Palmer attempted to commit suicide.

"They were surprised that I lived," she said. She searched Google to find the right dose to snuff her life while she slept.

She deeply loved her father despite his drug addiction, and she was hit hard by his abandonment when she was seven. Her mom slipped on a patch of ice and injured her back. The resulting lifelong pain is what drove the single mother and two kids to church, hoping for a miracle.

"I was angry at God for a very long time," Shannon said. "I was one of those ones who felt like I had to be re-saved over and over and over to be forgiven. God didn't become real for me until three years ago."

Her mother worked three jobs until she met and married a "rescue dad," who gave the kids their first Christmas.

Shannon developed obsessive-compulsive disorder. Until she was diagnosed, she didn't understand some of her behaviour. "My family got so frustrated with me. They said they felt like they were walking on eggshells around me."

In her first year of high school, she directed her obsessive-compulsive behaviour into sports. But then she became anorexic. "The feeling of hunger was an issue of control," she said. "I felt like for the first time I could control something in my life. It was a high being able to say 'no' to the hunger pains when you were starving."

At 17, Shannon tried to take her life the first time. She blamed herself for her mom's pain. She felt pressured unfairly by a family that chafed at her psychological disorders. In one blowout with the family, she stuffed piles of pills into her

mouth and swallowed them in front of everybody. They rushed her to the nearest hospital. She was admitted to a padded room in a psychiatric hospital.

"That's when they first put me on medication," she said. The psychiatric drugs made her hungry and put her to sleep. She dropped out of sports and wallowed in depression. In a few years, her weight steadily rose to 120 kilograms.

She moved to Alaska, to get away from the family drama. She worked on a whale-watching boat and in a veterinarian hospital. She tried to study, but anxiety attacks and mood swings disrupted the academic discipline.

She was later admitted to the ICU after taking an entire bottle of extra strength Tylenol, and doctors thought she wouldn't make it. When she woke up, the nurse told her she had liver failure. But God healed her.

"I prayed to Jesus, 'Please take me. I want to be with you.' I just wanted it to be over," she said.

Next, Shannon moved to Washington, to pursue her veterinary passion at school. By now she was self-mutilating. She isolated herself from the world, sleeping 14 hours a day.

She didn't encounter much help at church. "When I went to the small groups at church, they got freaked out," she said. "They told me, 'We're sorry. We don't feel comfortable with you here. You're going to have to go somewhere else.'"



In 2011, she moved back to California when her mom was diagnosed with breast cancer.

Suffering severe depression, Shannon submitted to electric shock therapy 21 times. It did no good.

The anger would always simmer over, and her only relief mechanism was either cutting herself or suicide.

One day while driving under the influence of another mega dose, she slammed into a pole. Her petrol tank punctured, and fuel spilled everywhere. Luckily, it was raining.

Shannon believes God saved her life that night. She was taken a psychiatric hospital where nurses held her down so they could inject her. She stayed a month.

A far-reaching change for the positive came in 2014. At a Good Friday service, the pastor encouraged people to write their worst sin on a paper and go up to the front and nail it to a wooden cross. Shannon wrote "attempted suicide" on the paper.

"After that, I was so emotional. I remember crying. On the way home, I was thanking God for sending Jesus. He loved us so much to forgive us," she said, crying.

"It was the first time I told Him that I loved Him. Even though I had gone to church, I was always angry with Him. But that day was the major life change. I finally realised that I was Shannon. Before that I was 'bi-polar.' I became me, happy, not known for being depressed."

Through God and counseling, she shed the stigma of being mentally ill. She realised she "had" a disorder, like a disease, but that it was not her identity. "I wasn't ashamed any more," she said.


"Now I don't even have the desire to do the cutting or the pills," she said.

She got involved in church, serving with homeless and greeting. The light turned on in her life. She was feeling the Spirit more. When she shared her testimony at Mountain View Church in San Juan Capistrano, some girls approached her and shared their dark secrets, and she encouraged them.

Shannon recently went on her first medical mission organised by the Door Bilingual School of Guatemala. She was bubbly, vivacious, helpful and hard-working at the clinic in the City of Coban with Lighthouse Medical Missions. Had she not shared her testimony, no one would have realised her dark past. The other volunteers hugged her and supported her.

Shannon shed 60 kilograms in one year. She is down to two meds to normalise the imbalance in her life. Things are looking up. She cries at telling her testimony. She has come a long way out of the dark chambers of despair and hopelessness.

For the first time in her life, she's thinking about marriage.

"I never wanted love from a man before," she said. "Because of what my dad did, I figured they'd always leave me. I always hurt the men before they could hurt me. But now that I've seen my step dad being committed to my mom, and seen men of God in the church, I find that I want to get married and think it would be possible." 

Thanks to
Elizabeth Kendal

WATCH & PRAY



'BLASPHEMY' FUELS TENSIONS IN INDONESIA

Indonesia's fundamentalist Muslim clerics have accused Basuki 'Ahok' Tjahaja Purnama – the ethnic Chinese Christian Governor of Jakarta – of blasphemy, hoping to prevent him contesting Jakarta's February, 2017 elections. The clerics assert the Quran forbids Muslims taking non-Muslims as allies (Sura 5:51) and therefore as rulers. When Ahok suggested this was a lie, he was accused of blasphemy.

Led by the Islamic Defenders Front, up to 200 000 Muslims protested in Jakarta on November 4, calling for Ahok to be prosecuted and even killed. Transnational jihadists have threatened to kill Ahok if he is not convicted, and Islamic State is calling its supporters to "fan the flames of jihad in Indonesia." A profound struggle is under way, with legal and spiritual dimensions. Please pray for Indonesia and its Christians.

UPDATE ON THE BATTLE FOR ALEPPO

For the second time in three months the "rebels" controlling eastern Aleppo have refused the Syrian government's offer of safe passage out of the

besieged city. Not only are they refusing to surrender the city, they are refusing to surrender their human shields, with a doctor confirming that anyone trying to leave is strafed by rebel sniper-fire. On October 28 the al-Qaeda-led Jaysh al-Fatah coalition launched a new offensive aimed at breaking through into government-held western Aleppo, home to some 40 000 Christians.

May the Lord protect, preserve, deliver and build his Church. Meanwhile, Turkish forces have crossed into Syria and are advancing south. If the "rebels" do not surrender eastern Aleppo soon, the Syrian government will be compelled to re-conquer it by force. May the Lord have mercy on Aleppo.

NEW REGULATIONS HERALD DARK DAYS FOR CHINA'S CHURCH

On September 8 China's ruling Communist Party (CCP) released a draft of new "Regulations on Religious Affairs." Friday, October 7 was the final day for public comment before the law would come into effect. The regulations give the CCP total control over religion nation-wide, purportedly on national security grounds. Unregistered religious activity will no longer be tolerated, registered churches will be heavily restricted and all building will be tightly regulated.

Furthermore, when the Ministry of Justice's amended "Administrative Measures for Law Firms" came into effect on

November 1, China's lawyers were banned from speaking publicly about human rights abuses. So not only will the Church be without freedom, it is destined to be without lawyers to advocate for it. May God intervene in China and build his Church.

OUTREACH IN RUSSIA THE VICTIM OF GEO-POLITICAL TENSIONS

Russia enacted anti-mission measures on July 7. In most cases hitherto, the "missionaries" have paid a fine. As other cases now move through the appeals courts, this law is being tested. Since 1994, U.S. Baptist Donald Ossewaarde has been witnessing in Russia, living in Oryol since 2005.

All this time, he and wife have ministered in complete freedom in line with the religious freedom provisions in the Russian Constitution. On August 14 Donald was sentenced under a predatory use of the anti-mission law. He and his legal team will appeal the charges all the way to the Supreme Court for the sake of religious freedom in Russia. American and non-Russian Orthodox "missionaries" are victims of geo-political tensions with Russia. Please pray for Russia and for its Church.



ANOTHER MASSACRE IN CAR

Central African Republic (which is 76 percent Christian) remains divided with the north largely under the control of foreign-backed local and foreign Islamic militants. Christians whose towns and villages are in rebel-held territory live with terrible insecurity. Hundreds of thousands are displaced and the front-line is perpetually volatile.

On September 16 Islamic militia swept through the mostly Christian village of Ndomete north-central CAR, killing 19 residents and wounding dozens. The government has labelled it a "massacre." The next day clashes erupted in nearby Kaga-Bandoro claiming at least five more lives. UN peacekeepers were deployed to the area and are now maintaining the "peace." Please pray that God will intervene in this forgotten, continuing conflict to bring about peace, justice and liberty. Please pray for CAR and its Church.



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DESERT BLOSSOMS

by Bryan Hupperts

"He led you through the great and terrible wilderness (desert), with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water; He brought water for you out of the rock (Deuteronomy 8:15)."

"And you shall remember all the way which the Lord your God has led you in the wilderness (desert) these forty years, that he might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not (Deuteronomy 8:2)."

THE dry times, those painful seasons of barrenness, are times to be humbled before the Lord. Jesus said that the Father was glorified when we bare "much fruit that remains." Notice when the children of Israel finally got fruit... after they had walked through the desert.

Fruitfulness is the ultimate objective of God for you when He has you walking through a desert.

What is precious in the desert? Sand? No, there is shifting sand everywhere. Sky? No, in fact, there is little protection from the merciless beating of the sun.

What is precious in the desert is water.

A single drop of water can make the difference between living and dying. Water is the precious commodity of life. Life processes only occur in the presence of water. Most plants cannot survive in deserts.

For those that can, survival depends on their taproot digging deep through the sand to find water. Water is the survival issue in arid lands. Having water is the decisive factor between what lives and what dies.

Look at the history of God's dealings with his saints. He led his people out of

Egypt by the hand of Moses... through the desert headed to the promised Land. John the Baptist lived in the desert until the word of the Lord came to him. Jesus was "led by the Spirit" into the desert to be tested by the devil. Paul spent years in the desert before his commissioning as an Apostle.

God has used the drought of many deserts to forge some of His finest saints.

Deserts are such obscure places. They precede blessing but are themselves looked upon as curses. They function to bring you to the place of having to only concern yourself with the basics of existence.

It is when water, symbolic of the Living Word of God, becomes the only issue of your life, what you live and die by, are you finally ready to enter into the Masters service. One drop from heaven is all you need. When all else in this world appears as sand in your eyes, empty barren waste, you are ready for Kingdom service.

Deserts have the curious effect of hardening your resolve while humbling your heart before God.

Plants grow in direct relation to the amount of water available. When you can

blossom with just a little water, you can blossom anywhere!

The only plants that survive the desert have root systems that can find water. The roots' absorption force must be greater than that of the soil. In other words, you have to thirst more for the Waters of Life than the world. It is when you hunger and thirst for righteousness that you are satisfied.

Don't curse the desert times. God is testing you, seeing what is in your heart. Actually, He is letting you see what He has seen all along. Allow your roots to grow deep into God so that "out of your belly shall gush forth rivers of living water." A river in the desert suddenly springing forth? Sure, that's His way.

God often uses the desert to prepare the messenger. When the messenger is ready, then the message comes. We have our part to prepare ourselves for the ministries God calls us to. We also have to be prepared by God for those same tasks.

When we can serve Him in a place of barrenness, we can serve Him in a place of fruitfulness. It is when we are humbled and broken of our own power that

God can then show Himself strong on our behalf.

There are some beautiful things growing in the desert. Be patient and let Him finish what he has started in you. It takes a deep, well-developed root system, to be able to not only nourish a plant, but produce and feed the growing fruit on its branches. If there are no roots, there will be no fruit. And His goal is to bring you to a place of fruitfulness.

After the desert, you will be "like a tree planted by the water" – thriving!

