

# Prepare<sup>the</sup>Way

*Preparing the Bride of Christ for the return of Christ*

Issue No. 106

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Peter Pollock

**I know in Whom  
I have believed**

**Six ways NOT to  
take up an offering**

Helen Gardiner

**Just forgiven,  
not perfect?**

**He burned  
his sermons &  
caught on fire!**

Zac Poonen

**The truth about  
speaking in tongues**

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**COVER:** "And God said, 'See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food (Genesis 1:29).'"

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# Six ways not to take an offering

by J. Lee Grady

**I**'VE seen it all when it comes to church offerings. Once when I attended an outdoor service in Nigeria, deacons used wheelbarrows and pickup trucks to collect money because more than 500 000 people were in the audience. Yet I know a pastor in Malawi who collects the equivalent of 80 cents in his offering plate each Sunday because his members are so poor. With that money, he has planted several churches.

Giving is a huge part of the Christian life. Jesus encouraged generosity; the first disciples collected offerings; and the apostle Paul said, "God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7)." Paul taught us that collecting money to support the church's mission should be done with integrity and that believers should respond with generous hearts.

But even in those days, some Christians resisted the idea of giving to God's work. Others used strong-arm tactics to get their hands in people's pockets. We are still dealing with this problem 2 000 years later. Here are six of the most reckless tactics used today to raise funds in church:

## The endless appeal

Some preachers drone on and on for 45 minutes to collect an offering – and then they take another 15 minutes to pass the buckets. This is rude and insensitive – and it reveals a lack of faith on the part of leaders. You don't have to talk people out of their money or hold them hostage until they give out of frustration. Trust God to supply the need rather than begging.

## The salesman's extortion

Certain slick preachers are known for their uncanny ability to open people's wallets. But these fundraising "skills" are more akin to those of a used-car salesman than a minister of the gospel. They promise magical benefits to those who give large amounts. They also set deadlines. I once heard a preacher suggest that if people gave

"right now," their unsaved children would find salvation!

Never give in response to manipulation. Paul taught us that when we sow, we will reap. But in the same passage, he also said if we sow to the flesh we will "reap corruption (Galatians 6:8)." If you give in response to a prompting of the Holy Spirit, you will be blessed. But if you give because the preacher twisted your arm or used pressure tactics, your gift will not be blessed. Paul told us to give "not grudgingly or out of necessity (2 Corinthians 9:7)."

## The give-to-get tradeoff

There is no question that God blesses generous people. If you keep your hands open to God by giving, He will open a channel of blessing for you. But God is not a slot machine, and His goodness is not for sale. Never believe a preacher who says you can buy the Holy Spirit's anointing. And never follow a preacher who guarantees you will get a new house or a new car if you put a certain amount in the offering plate.

## The Holy Ghost auction

Numerous times I've heard a preacher announce that he needs a certain number of people to give \$1 000 – and he will wait for hands to go in the air. Next, he needs \$500 gifts, \$250 and so on. Within a few minutes, the church has become a cattle auction. Sometimes the donors are asked to stand – suggesting that God blesses rich people but not the widow on a fixed income who doesn't have means to give a big amount.

Jesus rebuked the Pharisees because they liked to blow trumpets in public to announce they were giving to the poor. He told them: "When you do your charitable


deeds, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deeds may be in secret (Matthew 6:3&4)." Can you imagine Jesus asking rich people to stand and give their large cheques while everyone in the audience applauds them? He actually pointed out a poor widow and raved about her tiny gift.

## The railing judgement

I cringe when I hear pastors tell people they will be under a curse if they don't tithe. I don't tithe to appease God's anger; I give more than a tithe because I love to share God's goodness. We should never put a guilt trip on people while collecting money. The church is no place for threats. Zacchaeus was a greedy tax collector, but Jesus did not attack him for his thievery; He extended mercy – and this melted Zacchaeus' heart and made him a lavish giver.

## The pathetic apology

Sometimes we act timidly about collecting offerings, maybe because the world thinks all Christians are fakes and that churches are "all about money." But we have nothing to apologise for! We are involved in the greatest mission on planet Earth, and God Himself supplies the funds needed to evangelise the world.

When we collect offerings, we are engaging in a holy process. God is just as much involved in the offering as He is in worship, the preaching of the Word or the demonstration of spiritual gifts. God allows us to be His vessels to give, and then He rewards us abundantly so we can give more. The church has been sustained for 2 000 years by supernatural giving. He is in our midst. While we seek to become more generous, let's learn to be more faithful in the way we steward God's money. 







# *I know in Whom I have believed*

by Peter Pollock

**THE** end was close at hand for Paul. It had been more than 30 years since his dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus and he sensed time was up as he penned his final letter to his beloved Timothy.

Beloved and faithful was Timothy and yet Paul exhorts and admonishes him at the same time, something that is all-too-absent in modern leadership circles. Timothy received it all with a soft heart and open ears and the key elements of the message were that the young man should “confess” and be “convicted” of the true “Gospel” and be committed to serving with heart, soul, mind and strength.

They had not inherited a spirit of fear, but of power, of love and of a sound mind! The words were carefully chosen because the doctrinal balance is vital. They should not be ashamed of the sufferings that are part-and-parcel of representing the true gospel in a world that daily becomes more and more aggressive towards God’s truth in Jesus Christ.

“Share with me in the sufferings,” writes Paul, but “know that God has saved us and called us according to His own purposes and grace.” There cannot be a greater privilege or honour than to be called to serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

God had called Paul to be a preacher, an apostle and a teacher and it’s for that reason that he faces constant opposition

and suffering. It’s not a debate issue or a subjective viewpoint. It is a statement of fact!

“I am not ashamed,” says Paul, “for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.” Of course, we all know “that Day” is what we daily pray for, but for me the crux is that Paul knows in “whom” he believes.

It is not how? It is not why? It is not when? But it is in Whom he believes! By the power of the Holy Spirit Paul knows that it is all about JESUS!

“I am persuaded,” means that Paul is totally and utterly convinced. It’s a revelation! It is a truth that has been indelibly written on his heart and will never ever be moved or even challenged. Paul loves Jesus more than anything else in this world.

D.W. Whittle’s famous hymn written way back in 1883 says: “I know not why God’s wondrous grace to me He hath made known, nor why unworthy, Christ in love redeemed me for His own.”

The hymn continues: “I know not how this saving faith... I know not how the Spirit moves... I know not what of good or ill... I know not when my Lord may come...” BUT “I know Whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I’ve committed to Him against that day.”

As I move around the modern church I have to wonder how many have reached

this point of true faith and blessedness. No need for any intellectual steps. No room for doubt or debate. No need for signs and wonders. Blessed indeed are those who have not seen and yet believed!

Never will I forget the night I got saved. It was at the bottom end of the garden and it was round about midnight! It had been a dramatic evening coming under conviction watching a TV Christian discussion programme. I was trying to gain the world, something I would never achieve. But I was losing my soul.

In my whole life, I had always believed that Jesus was the Son of God but now I was facing Him as my Lord and Saviour. I cried out for mercy, both literally, spiritually and figuratively. I sobbed and wept like a baby. And I gave my whole life to Jesus! Not just a part of it, but my whole life.

I understood that it was as absolute as that!

It was a life-changing decision, for once the tears dried and I ambled back into the house that night, it was never to be the same again. From the next day I wanted to read the Bible. I wanted to save the world. I was excited! I was changed!

But it was not long before my excitement and conviction started to get up a few nostrils. I heard someone at the church suggest that I “should be locked up for six months” while someone else showed a little more empathy hoping that “I would



mature someday!”

I had met an absolute Jesus. I believed. I repented. I cried. Jesus arrived. Life would never be the same again! Childlike. Absolute. No ifs and buts! I believed with all my heart and soul and mind and strength. Yes, it was total. It was utter. I was sold out for Jesus. My hand was on the plough!

It is some 35 years later and I am still so excited and wondrous. The world is in a mess and it is getting messier by the day and yet I am not glum and full of fear.

“The Good news is that the bad news is actually good news,” I keep telling listeners. You see all that is going on just confirms that the Bible is true. It’s all going to plan. Sin and godlessness reaps consequences. Jesus is coming back soon!

I have a passion for souls and would have to say that the most rewarding aspect of 35 years in the evangelistic ministry is seeing multitudes of lives that have really changed, as night becomes day in the light of Jesus Christ.

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## Still so excited

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The other evening I was speaking at a leadership group and afterwards someone asked how old I was. “Seventy-five,” I replied. He shook his head! “Seventy five and still so excited about Jesus,” he said, almost as if it was not allowed.

Among some of the more staid and stilted religionists, it is downright embarrassing to show excitement about things spiritual. This is so, even if you have tempered your behavior to what I would call “seriously” joyous.

I was once told by a lawyer on a Boeing, as I explained the Gospel to him, that it was not so much the detail, the presentation or the articulation that frightened him! “It was your conviction that scared me,” he said.

“How can you be so sure?” is often remarked to me from church leaders who readily admit that they are battling to put Jesus number one in their lives. And the “downside” is that a passion for the gospel and getting souls saved and “discipled” does, rather uncomfortably for me, directly challenge and confront leadership “passivity” and “humanism” head on. Strange but true. Consequently, it’s exciting and scary!

We are more than conquerors, it tells us in Romans 8:35-39. “More than” means there is no English, Greek or human word or intellectual disposition that can really describe the spiritual condition of truly being in Jesus Christ. It is indescribable. And it is experiential.

“Conqueror” is a strong word! It conjures up thoughts of immense power, physically, mentally, intellectually and materially. But it is infinitely greater and more awesome than that. It is beyond imagination and/or understanding. It is incomprehensible. Indeed we are more than crusaders fighting causes, building temples, debating doctrines or trying to change the world!

Who shall separate us? Tribulation! Distress! Famine! Persecution! Nakedness! Peril! Sword! Nor death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, not height, nor depth, nor any created thing can separate us from God in Jesus Christ! In Him alone!

He is all sufficient in Himself. All authority God granted unto Him. God’s love gave us Jesus and when we are “born again” we come into His lordship. “Born again” is not a process, it’s a one-off regeneration of spirit.

The “love” of God is only available in Jesus. Outside Jesus we “remain condemned” and the “wrath of God is upon us.” Outside Jesus it’s a one-way ticket, a slippery slope to hell.

To get to hell, you don’t need a map or a grid reference or a GPS, you just keep walking.

Jesus is Lord. The real church is alive and well. It is a remnant but God is in control, the Kingdom is on track and there will be no hitches, glitches, shocks or surprises.

God is meticulous as you see from the temple details, the genealogies, the prophecies and the perfect timing for the “Cross” and His “Return.” God is immutable which means He does not change and does not have to change.

There is not a different God from Old to New Testaments. I say this because you hear some teachers/preachers who seem to indirectly suggest that the “legalist” ruthless God of the Old Testament has become the “doting father” of the New Covenant. He is the same yesterday, today and forever; there is nothing new under the sun and “revelation” is simply when some old truth becomes new for you by the power of Holy Spirit illumination.

“Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine. Oh what a foretaste of glory divine” – remember the lines from that old much-beloved hymn? It is an absolute truth that when Jesus is truly mine I have a blessed “assurance” and a “foretaste” of glory here on earth. And that foretaste does not need to be continually pumped up by the local preacher.

I know in Whom I have believed!

The definition of faith in Hebrews 11:1

says that “we are SURE of what we hope for; CERTAIN of what we don’t see.”

In a nutshell that would be conversely saying that if we are unsure, lukewarm, backsliding and apathetic then something is wrong with the root. Fundamentally and radically there is a huge flaw, a problem. Yes, if there is no change there is no Jesus. Simple as that!

I don’t have to convince myself and others that I am free! “Whom the Son has set free is free indeed (John 8:36).” I know that I know in my knower! In quietness and confidence, and in the resulting humility, is my strength.

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## Where else would we go?

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I am redeemed. I am so free that I have chosen to be a “slave of righteousness.” I am a bond-servant and I love it! I would not want to be in any other place. I also know that there is no point being in any other place as the disciples so aptly exclaimed to Jesus “where else could we go?”

I have a fear of God but that fear revolves more around His awesomeness than judgement because I am in the world and not of the world. Holiness is separation unto God and it is a natural progression when you are truly “born again.”

Holiness is not a halo or a harp or a list of good deeds. It’s a spiritual condition emanating only from the Holy Spirit in you. My kingdom is not of this world. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. Nations are a drop in the bucket. Rulers are wheat and chaff!

And dare I mention that in John 17, Jesus said “I pray not for this world.”

My joy is in Jesus and it is a serious joy, when you truly begin to understand the enormity of it all. By grace I am saved. I earn nothing. I deserve nothing. It is unmerited favour, as I was first told some 35 years ago.

The more I understand my wretchedness and undeservedness the more I marvel at His grace. Only God dispenses His grace. I don’t understand it, but I live in it, which underlines that even if some things don’t make sense to me intellectually, it doesn’t matter. I just have to hold His hand and know that He will lead me into all truth.

“Thy Rod and Thy Staff they comfort me.” No need for human hands as the shepherds well know. I KNOW IN WHOM I HAVE BELIEVED! And as the words of another well-word hymn state: “It is well! It is well! With my soul...”

Yes, I am more than a conqueror! 



# Shafts of light 33

by *Helen Gardiner*

**WE came to Christ in the early '80s, near the end of the Charismatic Renewal. The main issue in those days was having to be "Born Again," and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. I don't remember much emphasis on repentance. Nevertheless, I felt a strong desire to live my life in a way that was pleasing to God.**

With great delight I stuck a fish on my car. I wanted the world to know I belonged to Jesus. And I wanted to glorify the Lord on the road and with my driving. I would get so disappointed when I saw another car with a fish on it, and the driver was smoking; or when the driver was behaving badly.

I was reminded of all this recently, when one of the younger women in our women's discipleship group asked us to pray for her, because, she was being given a hard time about her sin by other people. She was constantly reminding her accusers that she had been given the righteousness of Christ. This jolted my memory again to a sticker I had seen on a couple of cars some years back. It read: "Just forgiven, not perfect."

This led me to inquire afresh of the Lord as to what His heart is on this issue, and, what does His Word say?

My friend, Alice Schikkerling, and I were once talking and she told me, that a woman who mentored her, had told her, that as Christians we are "a forgiven people moving towards perfection."

As I sought the Lord recently, He gave me a cross-section of Scriptures, not exhaustive by any means – but as we make our way through them, I think, we come to an understanding of His heart and His truth.

We begin with King David in his psalm of victory recorded in 2 Samuel 22 and Psalm 18. Let's read 2 Samuel 22:24&25 and then also verse 33:

"I was also blameless before Him, And I kept myself from my iniquity. Therefore the Lord has recompensed me according to my righteousness, According to my cleanness in His eyes.

"God is my strength and power, And He makes my way perfect."

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## Righteousness reaps rewards

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David is an Old Testament hero and he did sin big time on a couple of occasions – and he was severely punished by God. Nevertheless he records his understanding that personal righteousness reaps its rewards.

Let's move on: Jeremiah 23:5&6:

"Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord, "That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, And execute judgement and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell safely; Now this is His name by which He will be called: The Lord Our Righteousness."

This is a clear indication of our imputed righteousness in Jesus Christ.

We consider now Daniel 12:3 where the end of the age is spoken about:

"Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever."

The righteousness here is not capitalised to indicate the person of Jesus Christ, and so it refers to the behaviour of righteousness.

Now to the New Testament – Matthew 5:18-20:

Jesus is speaking: "For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.

"Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in



the kingdom of heaven.

“For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Do not belittle the law and especially the 10 commandments, and be careful about taking a vociferous stand against legalism. Remember, though, that as Gentile believers we are free from the Mosaic Law – see Acts 15:28&29.

Our righteousness needs to be higher than the Pharisees. We are to obey both outwardly and inwardly. This is possible because we have Jesus Christ living inside us, by His Holy Spirit.

In Matthew 9:2, we see that Jesus was concerned about sin, for He says to the paralytic: “Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.”

Jesus urges us to take care how we live our lives. He says in Luke 6:47&48: “Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it; for it was founded on the rock.”

The Lord does not want us to fall into sin. He says to His disciples, near the end, in Luke 22:40&46: “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.”

“Why do you sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation.”

One of the best pictures of the whole Gospel is contained in the account of the woman caught in adultery. Let’s read the end of that story in John 8:10&11:

“When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, ‘Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?’

“She said, ‘No one, Lord.’ And Jesus said to her, ‘Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.’”

Just note that not only does He not condemn her, but He also tells her to sin no more.

The Holy Spirit’s work of sanctification is not often spoken about these days. It is His work of making us holy within. In praying to the Father for His disciples, Jesus says in John 17:17:

“Sanctify them by Your truth, Your word is truth.”

The Holy Spirit uses His power and the written Word to conform us to His divine holy nature.

To offset this we have Romans 1:16&17:

Paul writes: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’”

So positionally we have the righteousness of God by our faith in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

We are given new clothes, a fresh slate (Zechariah 3:4&5). Every time we confess and repent of our sin we are given a fresh start. As we stumble and fall, stumble and fall, we do over a period of time begin to overcome our sins. For many, this takes a lifetime.

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?” Paul himself asks this question which begs to be asked – in Romans 6:1&E2.

Here is another reference to receiving righteousness by faith. Galatians 5:5 reads: “For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.” The truth that we “eagerly wait” shows that we have a hunger and a thirst. Matthew 5:6 says: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.”

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### By grace alone

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However, we need to be clear that basic salvation from hell is by grace alone. So says Ephesians 2:8&9: “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.”

But, did you know, that righteousness is a fruit of the Holy Spirit? See Ephesians 5:8-10: “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.”

The doctrine of righteousness by faith is picked up again by Paul in Philippians 3:7-9: “But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.”

Even although we have attained righteous through faith (we have His imputed righteousness), God is still concerned with the fruit in our lives.

The writer of Hebrews exhorts in Hebrews 13:20&21:

“Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

The most challenging book in the Bible, in my opinion, is 1 John. The apostle says in 1 John 1:6: “He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.”

Then comes the all-time shocker. I have never heard a sermon on this, and I think I only ever will, when revival comes. Consider seriously 1 John 5:18: “We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him.”

True, full revelation of this Scripture will transform the Church. Consider every word recorded here.


Leaders need to be particularly concerned about the fruit of righteousness. We cannot say, “Don’t follow my example, follow Christ.” We need to be able to say, as does Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:1: “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.”

The Church during the time of the Great Tribulation will be concerned about cleanness. Revelation 7:13&14 tells us they will wash their white robes in the blood of the Lamb.

While our basic salvation is by grace, our rewards in the coming age, depend on our works, and the performing of those works with good fruit. Love is the key. Paul exhorts in 1 Corinthians 16:14: “Let all that you do be done with love.”

Jesus says in Revelation 22:12: “And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.”

To wrap up, I do think, the woman who said that Christians are “a forgiven people moving towards perfection” was indeed wise.

The final word comes from the head of the Church Himself in Matthew 5:48: “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” 



# Doing what comes unnaturally

by Ray C. Stedman

**SOME** years ago there was a popular song called, *Doing What Comes Naturally*. It was all about hillbillies and the way they lived, and the repeated theme was “doing what comes naturally.” That covers a multitude of sins, if I may paraphrase the Scriptures a bit.

There are many things that it is just human nature to do, and one is to try to control ourselves or other people by using rules, regulations and laws. In a very real sense it is natural to be legal and law-minded. Listen to the conversation of people around you, or your own conversation, once in a while. Note how many times control by law is mentioned.

I heard a couple of people the other day on the street corner discussing some particular need in the community, and one man turned to the other and said, “You know there ought to be a law!” Whenever we find something going wrong, that is our first reaction, isn’t it? “There ought to be a law!”

Did you ever say to someone, “I’m going to give you a piece of my mind.” That is just another way of saying, “I’ll tell you what you ought to do; I’ll lay down the law to you.” Sometimes you hear someone determinedly say, “They are going to do it – or else!” That is legality again, isn’t it?

At the beginning of each year, a lot of people say, “Well, I’ve decided to turn over a new leaf. I’ve signed a New Year’s Resolution.” That simply means, “I’ve passed a law concerning myself; now I’m going to behave in a certain way.”

It is a natural thing to be legalistic, and to want to control ourselves with law. But a Christian is called to be unnatural in that respect, or perhaps I should use the term “supernatural.”

This matter of control is a supernatural thing. We are not called to live by law, we are called to live by grace, and grace requires God’s unending help in our life.

It’s doing what comes unnaturally!

Now, I want to begin with brief definitions of what law and grace really are.

Let us start with a definition. If someone asked you to define legality, what would you say?

I’ve tried to think this matter through and came to this definition: Legality is an attempt to control outward actions by means of rules, enforced by penalty.

Traffic laws are a good example of this. Here is a sign that says, 60 km/h Speed Limit, and you are going 75. Now you are up against a rule that governs your outward actions. You can go past that sign with your heart filled with bitterness about the whole matter of traffic control, but as long as you keep under 60 km/h the law will leave you alone. The law is only interested in controlling your outward actions, but if you fail, there is a penalty. That is a good example of legality.

Income tax is another one. If you do not have your tax in by the deadline there is a penalty attached. The government does not care whether you like it or not. You are required to fill out that form, and you are asked to get it in by a certain time. All this is simply the natural, the normal way of

controlling the actions of human beings.

Then what is the definition of grace? Well, Grace is the control of inward attitudes and outward actions by means of love, without any penalty.

If you want an illustration of that, ask yourself what makes a young man bring his sweetheart an armful of flowers? If she asked him to do it, it would ruin the whole thing, wouldn’t it? If he were under obligation to do so, it would be a meaningless act.

But something so controls his actions that, when the right circumstances arise, he gladly digs down in his pocket for the money and brings her the flowers. He does not have to do it, but he does. Why? Well, there is love there. Grace, you see, controls by love.

Let us look at these matters a little closer. Legality deals with outward actions or words, while grace deals with inward attitudes and motives of the heart. It is possible for man to obey the law outwardly but disobey it inwardly.

A man could stand with a brick in his hand in front of a plate glass window with his heart hot with hatred and with a great surging desire to throw that brick through the window. As long as he does not throw it, the law is totally unconcerned how he feels.

As long as he controls his actions, the law doesn’t care what his heart feels like. But grace does! Grace is vitally concerned with the heart. Grace wants that heart to be filled with love and benevolence, instead of hatred and bitterness, and so its control is from within.

## From ought to want-to

Law deals with the surface; grace with the centre. Law appeals to fear, fear of a penalty; grace appeals to grateful love. Law prescribes what one *ought* to do; grace creates a *want-to* within.

We all prefer grace for ourselves, but law for everyone else. But the work of the Spirit is to teach us to show grace toward others as well as desire it for ourselves.

The Scriptures confirm that it is a natural thing to be legal. The natural man needs law to control his actions. If he does not have the law to tell him what to do, he will go overboard and be lawless, and the result is anarchy and rebellion. The natural man needs law.

I’m not saying anything against law. It is necessary, but, it is for the natural man.

Let me give you a passage of Scripture that confirms that.

*“But we know that the law is good if one uses it*



*lawfully, knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust (1 Timothy 1:8-11)."*

Now, the regenerate person who has come to believe in Jesus Christ, who has come into a living relationship with Him, and in whom the Spirit of God dwells is not to be governed by the Law. The Law is not made for him. We who know Christ are to be controlled by grace in every aspect of life.

*"But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter (Romans 7:6)."*

That makes it clear, doesn't it? We are not to be under the Law. Paul repeats this, with different emphasis, in Galatians 4:9: *"But now, after you have known God, or rather are known of God, how do you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage (Galatians 4:9)?"*

Paul asks, "Why are you going back under Law now that you have been brought out into the liberty that is Christ Jesus?" The Word of God makes it very plain that a Christian is to be controlled by grace and not by Law.

Unfortunately, there are many misunderstandings about the practical applications of grace to a Christian life. I want to treat some of the most common of these in a simple, practical manner.

Perhaps the misunderstanding that is most prevalent today is that grace really means no control at all.

Their idea is that you can do anything you want in grace: If you are under grace you do not have any restrictions; you do not have any rules or any regulations; you just do as you please, and nothing can stop you.

Since you will be forgiven, you may feel free to live it up all your life. This is a most common misunderstanding of grace.

But it is one that is far from the truth.

In a Christian life there are two extremes: Legality, and licence – and the devil does not really care which one he pushes you into. If he can get you into either one, your life is ruined as far as usefulness for God is concerned. But grace represents the middle path that goes right down between the two.

Licence is lawlessness; it is anarchy; it is saying "I'm free to do anything I want,

there are no limits to my indulgence. If I want to do something that the Bible says is wrong, well I'm not under the Law, but under grace, and I can go ahead and do it." That is licence and it is wrong.

At the other extreme there is legality. Our trouble is that to escape licence sometimes we rebound into legality. We feel the condemnation of conscience that comes with living a wild, free life, and we react with legality. Instead of coming to a position of grace, we go clear over to the side of legality. We impose on ourselves laws, rigid rules, long lists of "don'ts" which prevent us from doing anything but eat, sleep, and read the Bible.

Have you seen the sign? "Everything I like is either immoral, illegal, or fattening!"

Well, that is legality.

Now grace represents real control. It is control from within, not from the outside only.

A man said to me the other day. "Since I began to learn what grace means, I watch not only my actions, but my thoughts as well. I have a much greater sense of sin under grace than I ever had under law."

Surely this indicates how much more control grace exerts than law. The fact is that since grace is concerned with the thoughts as well as the actions, it can prevent wrong actions at the very source – the thought life.

A second widespread misunderstanding exists along with this. Many feel that grace is so opposed to Law that it never involves any commands or rules of any kind. I read somewhere recently that wherever you find commandments in the Bible, that is law, and, if you live by grace, you cannot have any laws or rules of any kind.

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## No rules!

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You sometimes hear people say, "I'm under grace, I don't need any rules in my life." And if you refer to some rule they rebel, and say, "That's not for me. I'm under grace; I'm not subject to any rules."

Now the Bible indicates plainly that grace has its rules as well. Grace gives commands

Jesus said, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you (John 15:12)." Now that is a command of grace.

The Bible says, "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together (Hebrews 10:25)." That is a command, but it is given under grace.

The Bible says, "Do not be drunk with wine (Ephesians 5:18)." That is a com-

mand, but it is grace!

The Scripture exhorts, "Pay taxes to whom taxes are due (Romans 13:6&7)." That is a command, but it is grace!

Grace has its commands just as truly as Law does.

So, what is the difference between law and grace? The difference is that the law commands without supplying a motive to obey. In fact, it creates a feeling of rebellion within.

I don't know whether you react like this or not, but I do. Whenever I see a sign that says "Keep Off The Grass," I have an urge to walk across it.

There is created immediately a sense of rebellion: "Why should I keep off the grass?" I resent being told not to walk on it. I do not do it, because I know I will get into trouble. But I would like to.

Now that is law. It is a command without creating a desire to comply. Grace commands even a higher thing than Law, but also creates an ability and desire to comply with the demand.

I saw a sign some time ago that was gracious: It was not the usual, blunt "Keep Off The Grass."

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## Give me a chance

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Right in the middle of a beautiful, newly planted spot, green with new grass, was this sign that said simply, "Please Give Me A Chance!"

That is grace. No one would walk on that grass. It appealed to the instinct for the underdog in every human heart. It created a sentiment for fair play, "Let's give it a chance."

That is grace.

One sign was as much a command as the other, but the second awakened a desire within to comply with it, and so was gracious.

Remember that grace has its commands, it has its rules, it has its regulations – exactly as the Law does – but grace alone has the ability to create a *desire* to comply.

There is yet a third misunderstanding: This is a very common one and a very serious one. It is the thinking that says the standards of grace are much lower than the standards of legalism.

The argument goes something like this, in various forms: True Christians never use tobacco, or dance, or go to the movies, or go to the theatre, or gamble, or drink. And since you sometimes see those who say they are living by grace do some of these things, it therefore proves the standards of grace are lower than those of the Law.



# Doing What Comes Unnaturally

*Continued...*

Actually, the reverse is true. In the light of the Word of God, which alone must set the standards for believers, these outward acts are much less serious sin, if they are sin at all, than the inward, vicious sins of the spirit that legalists almost invariably permit in their own lives.

Legal standards always concern themselves with outward acts. As long as you can keep the outward aspect of your life adjusted to a particular rule or standard, you can consider yourself spiritual.

But grace goes beyond the outward act into the heart, and says the heart must be right as well. The spirit must be righteous in God's sight. The standards of grace are concerned with those inward attitudes that create the outward act.

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## Reserving the right to be...

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I had a young man from another church come to me. He had in his hand a pledge that his church had asked him to sign before he became a member. The pledge said: "I promise never to use tobacco in any form, or to drink liquor, or to attend the movies or the theatre, or to gamble, or to play cards" – and there were several other things mentioned. He said, "My church has asked me to sign this before I become a member. Should I sign or not?"

I said, "Yes, sign it. But write on it after the words that are printed there: 'I reserve the right to be jealous, gossip, slander, be hypocritical and proud, and indulge in all the other sins of the saints.'"

That is where the real sin lies. Read your New Testament and you will find that gossip, evil talk and a bitter spirit are far worse sins in God's sight than any of the outward acts that may be evil as well. We must put the emphasis where it belongs.

The standards under grace are far, far higher than those under Law.

Grace speaks thus:

*"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice, and be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you (Ephesians 4:31&32)."*

Legalism can never rise to that level. It is only concerned with a few outward things, visible to others, but the heart may be rank

and evil with slander, malice, bitterness, gossip, and all the other works of the flesh.

Our Lord Jesus gave a perfect picture of a legalist when he said to the Pharisees of his day, "You strain a gnat but swallow a camel (Matthew 23:24)." That is legalism.

Another common objection to grace is that grace is much harder to apply to life than Law. Strangely enough this is an objection that is true. It does take more time and effort to be gracious than to gruffly say, "Don't!" to someone.

Any parent knows that. It is a lot easier to say "Stop that!" and keep saying it for 15 or 20 years than it is to sit down and explain why an action should be stopped, what the harm is, what is going to happen if it is continued, or to help a child to see what is involved in the whole matter.

"Don't!" and "Stop that!" work fine for a while, as long as the penalty is consistently invoked, but inwardly the heart may all along be seething with rebellion.

I do not mean by this that discipline of children is wrong. It is most assuredly right. But it must be discipline with understanding, and the manifestation of love and concern. Grace takes time, and, above all, it requires sacrifice. That is the heart of grace. You must give of yourself. You cannot win love by buying a few gifts now and then, or saying a few kind words once in a while.

No, grace must take time to create love, because it is love that controls. Until you have created that attitude of love in the heart, you cannot possibly expect the result you want. But the results in terms of obedience and direction are well worth all it costs.

There is still one final misunderstanding. This is the idea that it is quite optional whether a Christian lives by Law or grace. That is, if grace is found too difficult or demanding, the Lord will accept sincere legalism.

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## Legalism is sin

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Nothing could be further from the truth.

Legalism is sin! If you discover it in your heart, you ought to be down on your face before God repenting and confessing the thing. It is corrupting; it is vile; it is disturbing; it destroys the unity of the Spirit and produces the works of the flesh in your life.

Paul calls it leaven, and he treats it as evil in the extreme.

Ignorance of grace is called weakness in the Scripture. Such a one is expected to grow, to develop, and learn something better. But a deliberate failure to live un-

der grace when you know better, is called falling from grace. It is called deceit; it is called vain jangling; it is called empty talk.

You are considered unruly and disobedient as Christians. We could sum it all up by simply saying it is impossible to please God by legality. He can be pleased only by grace. We are called to grace.

Paul says "Sin shall not have dominion over you, because you are not under law but under grace (Romans 6:14)." Peter says, "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18)."

Now I come to the last thing, briefly and quickly. It is the supreme illustration of grace. There are many illustrations that we could use, but the greatest illustration of grace is spread right out before us at the Lord's Table. The Lord's Table speaks of nothing but grace.


*"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might be rich (2 Corinthians 8:9)."*

That is what this table proclaims. It tells how grace has already given all for us. Before we even asked, God gave. While we were yet rebels, Christ died. We are invited to come, just as we are. God does not ask us to clean up our lives, nor to improve ourselves.

He asks us to come just as we are. Guilty and filthy and stained with sin; righteous in act without, but rebellious of heart within. Come and receive the gift of love and righteousness he desires to impart. That is grace. There is no need to struggle to be accepted before God today. When you believe in Jesus Christ it is written over against your name in heaven: Accepted in the Beloved! Welcomed in Christ! Already cleansed, already righteous in his sight!

The appeal of grace now that God has made you saints is: Live saintly! Now that He has accepted you and made you fellow-heirs with Christ, joint heirs with the Son of God, live like it, walk like it! The heart that receives such a gift is constrained by love to honour it.

Prayer

*Our heavenly Father, we thank you for the riches of grace we have in Christ Jesus. How marvelously He has already given himself for us. You have bade us to be tenderhearted, kind, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us. We pray that our hearts may be awakened to the riches of grace and that we may be stimulated to do the very things that are pleasing to you, not because we have to but because we want to. In Jesus' name, Amen. *

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by Warren Wiersbe

*“Why do the nations rage, And the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, ‘Let us break Their bonds in pieces And cast away Their cords from us.’ He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The Lord shall hold them in derision. Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, And distress them in His deep displeasure: ‘Yet I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: The Lord has said to Me, “You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.”’ Now therefore, be wise, O kings; Be instructed, you judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, And rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, And you perish in the way, When His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him (Psalm 2:1-12).”*

**T**HE world is getting noisier. So many voices vie for our attention. The result is that many people are getting the wrong instructions. It is important that we have discernment in a noisy world filled with propaganda. We need the truth.

We need to distinguish the four voices of Psalm 2.

**The first is the voice of defiance** – the nations of the world (vv. 1-3). It is amazing that the nations would defy Almighty God. He has provided for them (Acts 14:17), guided them (1 Timothy 6:17) and determined their histories (Acts 17:26).

Why do the nations rebel? They seek freedom without God. P.T. Forsythe said,

“The purpose of life is not to find your freedom. The purpose of life is to find your Master.” Authority demands submission (Matthew 11:29).

The world is a mess morally, intellectually, socially, politically, economically and ecologically because it has defied God. Man is made in God’s image. The irony is that when man rebels against God, he rebels against himself.

**Second, we have the voice of derision** – the voice of God the Father (vv. 4-6). While there is tumult on earth, there is tranquillity in heaven. God laughs because the Kingdom is secure; the King has been established. Jesus is God’s King. Though the nations rebel, we don’t need to worry, for the King is already enthroned in heaven.

Listen to the voice of God. He is laughing at the world’s rebellion, and you can laugh with Him if Jesus is your King.

The world often tries to drown out the truth. Its voice of defiance is clear. The world’s corruption is a result of its defiance. Take inventory of the voices you listen to. Are you part of the voice of defiance, or can you laugh with God at the world’s rebellion?

**A third voice we hear in the world is the voice of declaration** – God the Son (vv. 7-9). He runs the universe by decree, not by democracy. He knows everything, is everywhere and can do anything. God’s decrees will succeed. Puny, foolish men with their godless living will not eradicate or hinder His decrees.

God decrees that Jesus Christ is His Son. Jesus is God, and He is King by nature, by

conquest and by His Resurrection. He is reigning today, and we can reign in life through Him (Romans 5:17).

God also decrees that He will break the rebellious nations with “a rod of iron.” When His sceptre of righteousness goes forth in judgement, the nations will cry out, not in repentance but in rebellion. God already has given the nations to His Son (Matthew 4:8-10).

**The fourth voice is the voice of decision** – the Holy Spirit (vv. 10-12). He wants us to learn – to be wise, to be instructed. Many depend on philosophy, psychology and history. These disciplines are helpful, but Christians must rely first and foremost on the Spirit of God to reveal truth.

The Holy Spirit wants us to be willing to serve. We serve the Lord, not sin. There is joy with our fear because God is our Father. In searching for liberty, the rebellious crowd practices anarchy – for freedom without authority is anarchy. We are made in the image of God. To rebel against Him is to rebel against our own nature.

The Holy Spirit also wants us to be reconciled. God is reconciled to us through Christ (Acts 16:31). Jesus “kissed” us in His birth and death. Today He is the Lamb, but someday He will come as the Lion to judge. God is holy and will not allow sin and rebellion to go on forever.

Are you listening to the right voices? “Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.” We are saved by faith through the death of the Son of God. Are you saved? If not, hear His voice and trust in Him. 🐟



by Joseph S. Carroll

**T**HERE is an acceptable approach to God. What is it? We read in Hebrews 10:22 – “Let us draw near with a true heart.”

Drawing near with a true heart is the first condition of acceptable approach to God for true worship. We can honour God with our lips, but we worship Him with our heart. True worship is heart worship.

In Matthew 15:7&8, our Lord in a clear manner revealed why those in Isaiah’s day were hypocrites or play actors – “Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: ‘These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honour Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.’”

What an indictment! What did they have? They had confession without commitment. There must be commitment, the commitment of a true heart, for acceptable worship.

### What Is a True Heart?

Bishop Westcott, who wrote a classic on the epistle to the Hebrews, said that a true heart is “a heart which expresses completely the devotion of the whole person to God. There is no divided allegiance, no reserve of feeling.” This is perfect self-surrender of the whole person: in other words, it is the intellect, the emotion, and the will.

Another scholar who has given us a classic on Hebrews is Adolph Saphir. He has this to say: “What is meant by a true heart?... Only a whole heart is true... A true heart is never pleased with itself; but it is at peace, content that Jesus shall be all.”

Andrew Murray, who has given us possibly the best devotional classic on Hebrews, has this to say about a true heart: “In man’s nature the heart is the central power. As the heart is so is the man... Our inmost being must in truth be yielded to Him... It is only as the desire of the heart is fixed upon God, the whole heart seeking for God, giving its love and finding its joy in God, that a man can draw near to God.”

This may possibly cause you to think, “What hope do I have for a true heart? Can I fix the desire of my heart upon God? Can my whole heart seek for God, giving its love to and finding its joy in God? Can I do that?”

If you seek for a true heart with all your heart, you will receive it. It is entirely your decision – for God’s callings are His enablings. He lives in you by His Spirit to meet His own demands. Most certainly,

without the enabling Spirit, such a heart is impossible; but with the Spirit controlling, it is the very life into which He will lead you.

### Abraham’s Surrender

In Genesis 22:1&2, we read of the great surrender of Abraham. Let us therefore note carefully what he surrenders. “Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, ‘Abraham!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’ Then He said, ‘Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.’”

What is He saying to Abraham? “You must put Isaac to death. You must offer him as a burnt offering. Your only son whom you love, you must place on an altar.” What a test! But we would do well to remember that when God tests a person it is because He wants to bless him. This test is going to be severe; but if Abraham passes it, the blessing is to be not only for him but also for multitudes.

Now before Abraham can obey, he is going to have to surrender three things. The first thing is his intellect. What God has asked him to do does not make sense. It defies the understanding. Why? Isaac is the child of promise. He is the miracle child. All depends upon Isaac. Now God says to put him to death. Well, God will raise him up; but why put him to death if He is going to raise him up? It makes no sense.

Therefore, the first thing Abraham must surrender is his intellect. Abraham had to yield to the imperative of Proverbs 3:5 – “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding.”

This is a command of God. It is a command we need before us during these days when we are apt to lean on our own understanding, apt to lean on what man can do by his trained intellect, apt to become the victims of a subtle, man-centred, religious humanism.

The intellect must be surrendered. This is the first thing.

What must he surrender next? Abraham must surrender his affections, his emotions. He loved Isaac, so he must surrender his emotions.

And, finally, he must surrender his will. He must will to do the will of God in preference to his own will.

In other words, what is God asking Abraham to do? He is asking him to sur-

# A True Heart

render his heart – his intellect, his emotion, and his will – that he might do the will of God. This is the test. This is also the test for us, for it means death to what we want in order that we might have what God wants.

Surely if there was one thing that Abraham wanted, it was that Isaac be preserved. Offer his son, his only son whom he loved? Anything but that!

But what did Abraham do? Did he call his friends together and say, “Now we must have a prayer meeting. I must seek the Lord about a big decision that I must make.”

Oh, no! “Abraham rose early in the morning (Genesis 22:3).” He rose in immediate, unquestioning, unhesitating obedience to the revealed will of God. When God speaks, we do not have to pray. We can ask for grace, that is true; but we do not have to seek guidance.

When did you surrender your heart to the Lord? Surrender of the intellect and emotions apart from the will is no surrender. When did you yield yourself in totality to the Lord? Do you have a true heart? That is what God wants, and that is what He must have.

That is the great imperative.

### Surrendered Servants

Here are five examples of those who offered a true heart, wholly surrendered to God:

**D.L. Moody:** What was the key to the life of D.L. Moody? He once heard British evangelist Henry Varley say, “The world has yet to see what God can do through a man wholly consecrated to Him.”

D.L. Moody said, “By the grace of God, I will be that man.”

We know how God used D.L. Moody. Was it because he was brilliant, because he was gifted, because he was educated, because he was a man of essentially superlative gifts? No, he was a man with a perfect heart who proved the truth of 2 Chronicles 16:9 – “For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him.”

It is not what we can do for God; it is what





God will do for us and through us when we have a perfect heart. He is waiting for such men; He is waiting for such women; and when God finds such a man or such a woman, He will show Himself strong in their behalf. We must never forget that it is not what we can do for God; it is what He waits to do for us and through us that glorifies Him.

We must perfect our hearts. There must be that altar in our lives upon which we have laid our intellect, emotion, and will to be God's man, God's woman, if God is to use us as His tried and trusted servants.

**Graham Scroggie:** I was present at the famous Keswick Convention in England in the early 1950s when the Bible readings were given by Graham Scroggie.

At the conclusion of his first message, he gave a word of personal testimony. On one occasion while ministering, he was suddenly taken with illness. The illness persisted, and he consulted his doctor concerning what he should do. A diagnosis was made, and the doctor informed him that the only cure would be for him to cease from preaching; for if he continued preaching, there was no cure. In his dilemma Scroggie cried to the Lord and was led to seek counsel from Grattan Guinness, a close and trusted friend in Ireland.

Back from his friend came a Spirit-directed, unusual letter. "Scroggie," he said, "have you ever truly surrendered to Jesus Christ?" What a question to ask a famous preacher, but it is a very important question to ask anybody.

Scroggie replied, "I have in a general sort of way."

Back came another letter from his friend. "Do it in a deliberate, specific manner."

Again, Scroggie sought the Lord; and in the stillness of His presence, powerful conviction gripped him. He realised that he had been living for his preaching, living to make a name as a preacher; and it had grieved his Lord. So in tears, he yielded himself in a deliberate, specific manner to be God's man, not Scroggie's, and was healed, going on to preach for many

years with great power.

When did you surrender to Jesus Christ? You might give the same answer as Dr Scroggie, "Well, I have surrendered in a general sort of a way." Well, do it in a deliberate, specific manner; and do it once for all. You must give up your right to yourself. Intellect, emotion, and will must be yielded in a deliberate, specific manner.

**F.B. Meyer:** Another of the great Bible teachers of his day, he was mightily used not only in England but also throughout the world. He was greatly gifted and had a brilliant mind.

As a young man with a thriving reputation, he went to a farewell meeting for a number of graduates of Cambridge University who were going out to China. These young men were called the Cambridge Seven. One of them was a young man named Charlie Studd, the most famous sportsman in England, for the captain of the English cricket team was always considered the foremost athlete in the land. Now he was turning his back upon the world of sport to go to China with the China Inland Mission.

That afternoon as he gave his testimony, F.B. Meyer listened intently. It was not so much what F.B. Meyer heard, as what he saw and felt; for it was obvious that C.T. Studd was a man totally yielded to Jesus Christ. A statement that C.T. Studd once made perhaps sums up the whole man: "If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him."

After the meeting F.B. Meyer went to Charlie Studd and said, "It is quite obvious that you have something that I lack, something that I need. What is it?"

C.T. Studd in his very forthright manner looked him straight in the eye and asked, "Have you ever surrendered everything to Jesus Christ?"

F.B. Meyer thought a moment and said, "Yes, I have."

But a small voice within said, "No, you have not."

Deeply troubled, he made his way home, hurried to his bedroom, fell to his knees, and began to pray. He tells us that when he was praying it seemed as if the Lord came to him and said, "Meyer, I want all the keys to your heart."

F.B. Meyer began to argue a little with the Lord. "All the keys?"

"Yes, Meyer, I want all the keys."

Then F.B. Meyer deceitfully took a ring of keys and handed them over to the Lord.

But you cannot fool the Lord. There was one missing. The Lord, it seemed, F.B. Meyer tells us, took the ring of keys and began to count them carefully. When He had finished, the Lord looked at him and said, "There is one key missing; and if I am not Lord of all, I am not Lord at all." Then, He turned as if He would leave the room.

In his dilemma, F.B. Meyer cried out to Him, "Lord, don't leave! Why are You leaving?"

Back came the word, "If I am not Lord of all, I am not Lord at all."

"But Lord, it's just a very small key, a very small place in my heart."

Back again came the word, "If I am not Lord of all, I am not Lord at all."

In desperation, F.B. Meyer surrendered that last key. And what happened? He became a Spirit-controlled man who was a blessing to countless multitudes.


He had to build an altar, and he had to place F.B. Meyer upon the altar. Every key had to be surrendered.

**Nicolaus von Zinzendorf:** In these days we are all conscious, I believe, of the desperate need for revival. If you are a student of revival, you will know that possibly the purest of all revivals was that which took place among the Moravians in 1727 under the leadership of Count von Zinzendorf.

And what was the key to that great movement of God? The key was the worship of the slain Lamb.

As a young man, Count von Zinzendorf visited an art gallery in Germany. Admiring the various, priceless paintings, he was suddenly transfixed by one. As the curator of the art gallery made his rounds, he noticed this young man gazing intently at that painting hour after hour. Finally when it came time to close the gallery, the young Count was still there. At last the curator went to him and put his hand on his shoulder.

He was about to tell him that he must leave when he saw tears streaming down the young man's cheeks. There in front of Von Zinzendorf was a magnified painting of the slain Lamb of God, beneath which were the words, "All this I did for thee. What hast thou done for Me?" Before that painting of the crucified Christ, the Holy Spirit spoke; and Nicolaus von Zinzendorf from that day had a broken heart.

**What is a true heart?** It is a heart that is broken, broken from self, and offered up to God. 

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# The lost agony for souls

by H.C. van Wormer

**G**EORGE Whitefield cried, “Give me souls, or take my soul... There is a passion for souls, a depth of burden for men, a care for the flock of God that defies words and sighs and tears.”

An old saint before the days of motor cars said that he quit his work in the middle of the afternoon, hitched up his horse and drove 30 kilometres to pray with a man whom he felt was drifting from God. Listen to him: “I could scarcely help it, my love and concern for him was so great I could not rest until I had done my best to bring him to God.”

Beloved, this agony for souls is what we must recover!

David Brainerd said, “I care not where I go or how I live or what I endure so that I may save souls. When I sleep, I dream of them; when I awake, they are first in my thoughts... No amount of scholastic attainment, of able and profound exposition, of brilliant and stirring eloquence can atone for the absence of a deep, impassioned, sympathetic love of human souls.”

John Fletcher, praying man of God, said, “Love, continual, universal, ardent love is the soul of all labours of a minister.”

One evening during the great Welsh Revival, Dr F.B. Meyer saw a young minister come to a crowded meeting. This young man stood up and prayed to God in behalf of two of his mates who were scoffing behind. One of these men immediately arose and said, “No, that is not true; I was not scoffing. I simply said I was not an infidel, but an agnostic, and if God wants to save me, I will give Him a fair opportunity. Let Him do it!”

The boast seemed to strike Evan Roberts so that he fell on his knees in a perfect agony of soul. It seemed as though his very heart would break beneath the weight of this man’s sin.

A friend of Dr Meyer’s who stood near him, said, “This is too dreadful! I cannot bear to hear this man groan so! I will start a tune to drown it!”

Dr Meyer said, “Whatever you do, don’t do that. I want this thing to sink into my heart. I’ve preached the Gospel these 30 years with dry eyes. I’ve spoken to great masses of people without turning a hair, unmoved. I want the throb of this man’s anguish to touch my own soul.”

Evan Roberts sobbed on and on and Meyer said, “My God, let me learn that sob, that my soul may break while I preach the Gospel to men.”

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## Heavy with sighs, tears & groans

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After about 10 minutes, Roberts arose and addressed the men in the gallery, “Will you yield?” They said, “Why should we?” Then he said to the people, “Let us pray.” The air became very heavy with sighs, tears, and groans. Everybody seemed to be carrying these two men upon their hearts, as if their hearts must break beneath the strain.

Meyer declares that he never felt anything like it. He sprang to his feet. He felt as though he were choking. He said to his friend, “We are in a very fight between heaven and hell. Don’t you see heaven pulling this way and hell that? It seems as though one heard the beasts in the arena.”

After that, one of the men yielded while the other, like an impenitent thief, went his way, but Meyer could not believe but that afterwards he came back to God.

If it took that to reach men in the great Welsh Revival, will it not take the same today?

If you will read about the great revivals and the hundreds of men and women who were brought to God under the ministry of the great Methodist evangelist, John Wesley Redfield, you will discover that the people of that day had not lost “the agony” – that is, some of them still had it. Here are two instances:

“He (Redfield) began to have some of his own peculiar experiences again that had often attended his most successful efforts. He began to be burdened for the work. He had often had these struggles, and sometimes with a severity that threw him upon his bed as if with a fit of sickness, and held him there until victory came. One night in the church he was filled with unspeakable agony for souls.

“If he could have howled like the old prophets, it would have relieved him; but this he could not do. He thought he could not endure it. He attempted to go out of the church, but was checked by the Holy Spirit. He then said, ‘Lord, I’ll try to hold on.’ He then began to cry out, ‘O my God, this people must be saved.’ At this he was instantly relieved. The whole church was now in a commotion. Screams for mercy mingled with shouts of rejoicing were heard on every side.”

The result of this was that hundreds were brought to God in this meeting and the work was so deep and thorough... years later it was stated: “Some of the fruit of this revival still



remains.”

The secret of Mr Finney’s revivals was in the fact that he (and others) knew how to travail – “as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children (Isaiah 66:8). Listen to Mr Finney:

“It loaded me down with great agony. As I returned to my room, I felt almost as if I should stagger under the burden that was on my mind; and I struggled, and groaned, and agonised, but could not present the case before God in words, but only in groans and tears. The Spirit struggled within me with groanings that could not be uttered.” How near this is to what is given in Romans 8:26.

In the Hebrides some recovered the lost agony. People gathered for whole nights of prayer, but it was no ordinary prayer meeting. The leader said that in those prayer meetings they moved out of the realms of the common and the natural into the sphere of the supernatural.

In one of their services the preacher stopped in the midst of his message and asked a little lad by the name of Donald to lead them in prayer – “He stands; he is not praying more than five minutes when God sweeps into the church...”

“But the remarkable thing about that great meeting is this, that while that was happening in the church, fishermen out in their fishing boats, men behind their looms, men at the pit bank, a merchant out with his van, school teachers examining their papers were gripped by God, and by 10 o’clock the roads were black with people seeking after God who were never near me. I went along that country road and found in one place three men lying on their faces, so distressed about their souls that they could not talk to me; yet they were never near the meeting I held. This is revival!”

To get the full picture you would have to read about the agonised wrestling for a whole night, four nights a week for a year before the answer came. Agonised wrestling is something more than breathing a two-minute prayer before hopping into bed, or stepping into your car in the morning.

Agonised wrestling means to get down before God and stay down before Him until you get a hold of the horns of the altar and prevail. This kind of wrestling involves pleading, begging, arguing, agony and sweat, persevering, persistent seeking, asking and knocking until something drops from the laden skies. Are mothers and fathers doing this today for their children who are lost?

The sooner we confess that we have lost our agony for souls, the better it will be for the cause of Christ. Let us face the grim, startling fact that we are becoming used to the thud of lost souls as they tramp the road to a Christless eternity. It appears that we have lost the power to weep, to wrestle, to plead, and to agonise over lost souls. The multitudes out of Christ have no conviction regarding their lost condition, simply because we lack deep conviction about their iniquitous condition and eternal woe.

Indeed, it is true that we have a multiplicity of evangelistic campaigns, crusades, and what we call revival meetings. These campaigns come and go, but the cities, towns and villages are seemingly as lost as ever. We have become too professional, mechanical and cold in our effort to reach souls. Those we try to win recognise no warmth, no passion, no agony, no real alarm, and no tears over their lost condition. They see no evidence of conflict on our part to warn them of the errors of their way. All they see in our personal witness is a fitful, languid, listlessness, so they continue their godless ways.

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## Trying to persuade without passion

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God pity us if we are content with forming crusades, convening conferences, going through revival efforts, enlisting men and money for so-called gospel efforts and missionary machinery!

We try to persuade without passion, to win without conquest. It is impossible to win souls with cold hearts and dry eyes.

Instead of mourning, fasting, and intercession, it is eating and drinking, fun, frolic, and rousing hilarity today, and then we wonder why folk are not saved. Deep humility of soul and prayer in the upper room prepare the way for God to come.

The reason there is no intercession, no agonising, no weeping “between the porch and altar” is that God’s people are not awake to the condition of the day. The majority feel that in every direction there is abundant proof of church growth and real spiritual progression. But the truth of the matter is that with an increased church membership moral standards have fallen to an all-time low.

Where are there any indications of humility and repentance even on the part of the multitudes who “join the church?” Oh, where are the weeping, agonising intercessors? Who is alarmed?

As Harold Freligh asked, “Have our preachers’ retreats resolved themselves into intellectual spreads, inoffensively seasoned with a little prayer? Can any minister carry a burden for others when he is pressed with the urgency of getting home from his night service to see his cherished TV programmes? Is there any preparation for the Lord’s Day among children of God when their chief talk in the Sunday morning greeting concerns the entertainment of the night before?


“Fellowship over the teacup is becoming more fashionable than fellowship in prayer. The repentance and performance of the first works that accompany the first love are quite obliterated by feasting and frolic.”

Beloved, this is no time for fun, frolic, trifling, but for tears, agony, intercession and mourning “between the porch and the altar.” It is time to call a solemn assembly and go down before God with fasting and prayer. The emergency of this present hour is enough to send us to our knees crying, “Spare Thy people, O Lord!”

To recover the lost agony will be costly. What did it mean for Paul to engage in soul-winning labours? Loss of fame, friends, riches, rest, reputation, and relatives. What separation, sobs, scars and scarcity were his – all because he wanted others to find Christ! His was a passion for souls that flamed up in ardour, and burned steadily in spite of all discouragement.

Would we share the apostolic agony for souls of men? We can find it where Paul and all other soul-agonisers found it – at the foot of the Cross. It is impossible to work and witness for Christ with cold hearts and dry eyes if we truly understand what it meant for Him to shed His blood that sinners might be saved from sin and hell.

When William Booth founded the Salvation Army in the East End of London, he was not long in gathering around him a few consecrated young people who had caught his vision for the outcast. In time, he had a training school for the sole purpose of teaching his cadets how to win souls. One day, while lecturing to them on evangelism he paused, and in his dramatic fashion said, “I wish I could send you all to hell for two weeks.”

You know what he meant. If those young folk could have lived in the midst of the moans and groans of the damned for a few days, they would have come back to earth with an undying passion to warn men to flee from the wrath to come. 

# The truth about speaking in tongues

by Zac Poonen

*“Every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation (change) (James 1:17).”*

**G**OD never makes a mistake, He never changes and He gives only perfect gifts. Therefore when He gave the gift of “speaking in unknown languages (tongues)” to the church on the day of Pentecost, He knew exactly what He was doing. The gift of “tongues” was a perfect gift. God has not changed His mind about the gift, for He never changes.

God knew the controversies that would surround this gift in our day. Yet He felt the church needed this gift to fulfil its ministry.

Even major truths such as the Trinity, the Deity of Christ, the Humanity of Christ and the Person of the Holy Spirit have been opposed and have faced controversy in the history of Christendom. So it should not surprise us if the gift of “tongues” has been controversial too.

It is always best to stick exactly to what Scripture says on all doctrinal matters. Let us look then, with an unprejudiced mind, at every single verse in the Bible on the subject of “speaking in tongues:”

## Truth No. 1

*Mark 16:17: Jesus said, “These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues... they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”*

Jesus said that some of the signs accompanying the company of “those who have believed” would be speaking in tongues, casting out demons and healing the sick. He did not say that ALL these signs would accompany EVERY believer. But He said that these signs would be found among the company of “those who have believed”.

So every believer need not have all these gifts. Neither need every church have

all these gifts. But they will be found in the whole church worldwide. The Holy Spirit sovereignly decides whom to give the gifts to.

## Truth No. 2

*Acts 2:4,7,11: “They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance... And the Jews from every nation marvelled saying... ‘We hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God.’”*

The first time that believers were filled with the Holy Spirit, they ALL spoke in tongues. The “tongues” were languages that others understood immediately. So there was no need for the gift of interpretation.

Notice also in verse 4 that it was the people themselves who began to speak in tongues and not the Holy Spirit. The Spirit did not move their tongues. The Spirit only gave them utterance. They spoke themselves.

In no gift, does the Holy Spirit take away freedom of choice from us. In fact, the fruit of the Spirit is “self-control (Galatians 5:23).” Only demon-possessed people lose control of themselves. One who is filled with the Spirit will have more control over himself than anyone else. “The spirit of the prophets is subject to the control of the prophets (1 Corinthians 14:32).”

## Truth No. 3

*Acts 10:46: “They were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God.”*

Here, in the house of Cornelius, all who were in his house were baptised in the Holy Spirit, at the same moment as they were converted to Christ. They spoke in “tongues” exalting God (praising Him) – not speaking to people, as was the case on the day of Pentecost.

## Truth No. 4

*Acts 19:6: “When Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they*

*began speaking with tongues and prophesying.”*

The Holy Spirit came upon the believers in Ephesus, when Paul laid hands on them. The “tongues” here seems to have been prophesying.

Note the following facts from the above instances in “Acts:”

(a) In Acts 2 they received the Spirit, after water baptism. In Acts 10, they received the Spirit BEFORE water baptism.

(b) In Acts 2 and 10, they received the Spirit without anyone laying hands on them. In Acts 19, they received the Spirit after Paul laid hands on them.

(This proves that there is no standard pattern for receiving the Spirit. It could be either before or after water-baptism, and also with or without the laying on of hands).

(c) In Acts 8:14-18, when the disciples in Samaria received the Holy Spirit, there is no mention that they spoke in tongues. But Simon the magician did see some evidence (we are not told what it was) which made him want the same ability that Peter had.

## Truth No. 5

*1 Corinthians 12:7,8,10: “But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit... to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.”*

The gift of tongues is for “the common good” – the good of the church. This was written 25 years after the day of Pentecost. And the gift of tongues was still being given then by the Spirit “for the common good.”

## Truth No. 6

*1 Corinthians 12:11: “But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.”*

This is perhaps the clearest Scripture that teaches that the Holy Spirit sovereignly decides to whom to give each gift (includ-



ing the gift of tongues). We cannot dictate to Him whom He should give any gift.

#### **Truth No. 7**

*1 Corinthians 12:28: "God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then... various kinds of tongues."*

It is God Who appointed the gift of tongues in the church – for some purpose. So we should never oppose this gift, lest we be found opposing God. Remember that He has more wisdom than we have.

#### **Truth No. 8**

*1 Corinthians 12:30: "All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?"*

All believers do not speak in tongues, just like all believers do not have the gifts of healing. So obviously, God does not feel that "tongues" is an essential gift for all believers – either for being holy or for being effective in His service. If it were, He would have given this gift to everyone.

#### **Truth No. 9**

*1 Corinthians 13:1: "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal."*

Speaking in tongues without love is useless. All pride in those who speak in tongues, and all "looking down" on others who don't speak in tongues is because of a lack of love. Such unloving believers who speak in tongues are as repulsive to God as a noisy gong is to us.

#### **Truth No. 10**

*1 Corinthians 13:8: "Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away."*

When perfection comes at Christ's return, there will be no more need for speaking in tongues.

In heaven, there will be no need for "tongues" – just like there will be no more need for Bible-knowledge or prophecy.

So "tongues" is a temporary gift needed only under the imperfect conditions prevalent on earth. This explains why Jesus never needed the gift of tongues. It was because His mind was perfectly pure and because He lived in perfect communion with His Father at all times,

#### **Truth No. 11**

*1 Corinthians 14:2: "One who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men, but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries."*

The gift of tongues mentioned here is obviously different from the one manifested on the day of Pentecost – for this gift is not to "speak to men but to God" and no-one can understand what the speaker is saying.

#### **Truth No. 12**

*1 Corinthians 14:4: "One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself."*

The gift of tongues enables a believer to build himself up spiritually.

#### **Truth No. 13**

*1 Corinthians 14:5: "I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying. But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what shall I profit you, unless I speak to you either by way of revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy or of teaching?"*

Paul wished that ALL spoke in tongues. This is yet another verse that clearly indicates that all believers do NOT speak in tongues.

Paul's wish here is similar to his wish that ALL should be single like he himself was (as he states earlier in the same letter - 1 Corinthians 7:7). Paul saw some benefits in being single. He also saw some benefits in speaking in tongues. But Paul recognised that just as God was sovereign in giving the "gift of being single" only to some believers, He was equally sovereign in giving the "gift of tongues" also only to some believers.

Therefore it is as foolish to expect all believers to speak in tongues as it is to expect all believers to be single!

In the church meetings, it is far better to prophesy (that is, to speak God's Word "to encourage, edify and console" others – 1 Corinthians 14:3). If however a "tongue" is interpreted, then it is equal to prophecy.

#### **Truth No. 14**

*1 Corinthians 14:9,13: "Unless you utter by the tongue speech that is clear (understandable), how will it be known what is spoken?... Therefore let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret."*

"Tongues" must be interpreted when used in a church meeting.

#### **Truth No. 15**

*1 Corinthians 14:14: "If I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. What is the outcome then? I shall pray with the spirit and I shall pray with the mind. I shall sing with the spirit and I shall sing with the mind."*

When praying in tongues, a person cannot understand what he is praying. But Paul still felt that he should pray and sing "with the spirit" (in tongues), as much as he did with his mind (in a known language).

#### **Truth No. 16**

*1 Corinthians 14:18: "I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all."*

Paul was thankful to God for this gift.

So it must have helped him.

#### **Truth No. 17**

*1 Corinthians 14:19: "However, in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind, that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue."*

In the church, speaking in a known language is always the best.

#### **Truth No. 18**

*1 Corinthians 14:22: "Tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers"*

Tongues are for a sign to unbelievers – as on the day of Pentecost.

#### **Truth No. 19**

*1 Corinthians 14:23: "If therefore the whole church should assemble together and all speak in tongues, and ungifted men or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad?"*

It is madness for all to speak in tongues in a church meeting – for no one will understand what anyone is saying. (This must obviously be referring to people speaking in tongues individually and not when all are praying together – for in the latter case, we do not listen to the prayers of even those who pray in a known tongue.)

#### **Truth No. 20**

*1 Corinthians 14:26, 27: "What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and let one interpret."*

Not more than two or three should speak in tongues in a meeting of the church, but each "tongue" must be interpreted. "Interpretation" is not the same as "translation." Translation is word-for-word. Interpretation is "expressing the thought in one's own words."

#### **Truth No. 21**

*1 Corinthians 14:39: "Therefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues."*

This then is the conclusion. Don't forbid the exercise of the gift of tongues. But if you are desiring a gift, seek for the gift of prophecy more than for the gift of tongues.

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## **The True And The Counterfeit**

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There is a certain amount of mystery about the gift of tongues, as all those who have received the gift will acknowledge – if they are honest. We do not know everything about it. We know only in part (1 Corinthians 13:12).

As one who has spoken in tongues for

# The truth about speaking in tongues

## Continued...

the past 26 years, let me add a few words concerning what I presently understand about the gift, from my own experience.

When a person speaks in tongues, his spirit (heart) speaks forth syllables (directly from his heart to his mouth, bypassing his mind) and thus he pours out whatever is in his heart to God – whether that be an overflow of joy or a burden caused by sorrow or discouragement. Thus the pressure on his heart is relieved. That is how he is “edified.”

Unburdening himself like that in moments of pressure helps a believer, especially if his mind is too tired to pray in a known language. We may not be able to explain how this works, but it does.

Let us now look at the gift of interpretation: As we have already seen, interpretation of a tongue is equivalent to prophesying. So this gift will usually be given by the Spirit to one who has the gift of prophecy as well.

In a church meeting, if someone speaks in a tongue, one of those having the gift of prophecy (usually one of the elders), if he is walking in the light of God, will find a thought being impressed on his mind, if the “tongue” is genuinely from God. He speaks forth that thought in his own words - for it is not a translation, but an interpretation.

If another elder (who also has the gift of interpretation) had interpreted the “tongue,” the interpretation would have been the same (although couched in that elder’s own words). This would be the case if both elders were in perfect touch with the Lord.

Since no revelation from God can contradict what is written in the Bible, the interpretation will be in accordance with Scripture – just like all true prophecy will also be in line with the Scriptures.

Some who are sceptical of spiritual gifts have asked this question: If a “tongue” that was interpreted in a meeting, is copied on to a tape and someone else (with the gift of interpretation) in another place is asked to interpret it, will the interpretation be the same as the first one?

The answer is: It should be, if both interpreters had a perfect understanding of the mind of the Lord. If the interpretation

is different in content, (and not just in words), that would only indicate that one or both interpreters are not in such perfect touch with the Lord as to understand His mind perfectly. That is not abnormal, because no believer in the world is in such perfect touch with the Lord as to know His mind perfectly.

The following example will prove this fact beyond any doubt: Suppose you have to speak in a meeting and you have a particular message on your heart which you feel is the burden of the Lord for that meeting. Then, if you are unable to be at that meeting and someone else speaks in your stead, strictly speaking, he should give the same message as you had on your heart (even if it be in his own words).

If that brother doesn’t give the same message as you had on your heart, it would indicate that one of you did not have a perfect understanding of the Lord’s mind for that meeting. So we see that believers could fail such a test even when giving a message in a known language.

That’s why the Bible tells us to judge even a prophet’s message (1 Corinthians 14:29). Similarly, we should judge, all messages in “tongues” and their “interpretations.”

What should we judge in such cases? Just this: Whether our spirit witnesses that the utterance (prophecy, tongues or interpretation) was Scriptural (and from the Lord) or not.

## Test the spirits

We are warned (in 1 John 4:1) not to believe every spirit but to “test the spirits whether they are of God”. So every time, we hear “tongues” or interpretation in public, we must test it in our spirits. Many of the “supernatural utterances” we hear may not be from God. We must always reject a prophecy (or any part of it), a “tongue”, or an interpretation, if we feel uneasy about it in our spirits, for any reason.

It is the unquestioning acceptance of everything supernatural and abnormal that has brought tremendous confusion into Christendom – and tremendous dishonour to the Lord’s Name as well.

Of all the “speaking in tongues” that I have heard, my spirit has borne witness to only a small percentage of it as genuine. Most of the rest I have felt was an attempt to imitate the gift – either to be accepted by others in a group or to impress them. A small percentage could even be of demonic origin.

My observations are based on the fruit and the results that I have seen in the lives

of many people in many lands. Speaking and singing in tongues often appears to be a form of “exhibitionism” in many churches – and exhibitionism is characteristic of little children.

It is also a well-established fact that, at this present time, the maximum exploitation of believers for financial gain is practised by those preachers and pastors who claim to “speak in tongues.” Most of the cults in the 20th century developed from tongue-speaking groups.

My advice to all believers therefore is: Avoid churches that major on the gifts of tongues and healing – because many of them go to dangerous extremes and usually don’t have spiritually-minded leaders. Seek instead for fellowship with a church that emphasises holiness and disciple-making primarily, that accepts the genuine gift of tongues and that does not covet your money or seek to control your life.

## Sane advice


In a nutshell then, here is a bit of sane advice on tongues:

If God gives you the gift of tongues, receive it and exercise it. Speak forth the syllables from your heart to God when you are alone with Him – anywhere – and especially when your heart is under pressure (through discouragement) or overflowing with joy.

If you don’t have the gift, don’t worry about it. But be open to the Lord to receive it, at all times. Don’t be against it and don’t get into a frenzy to receive it. God will give it to you, if He wants you to have it, without any frenzy on your part.

At the same time, don’t believe that everything you see and hear in Christendom is inspired by the Holy Spirit. Test everything. Use your God-given faculties of discernment. If you don’t have the gift of tongues, don’t consider yourself inferior to those who have it. And if you do have the gift, don’t imagine that it makes you spiritual or superior to those who don’t have it.

What is absolutely essential for all of us is to be endued with the Holy Spirit’s power. It is power, and not speaking in tongues that is the evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8).

The Holy Spirit is to be received by faith (John 7:37-39), just as we received the forgiveness of our sins – on the basis of Christ’s merit alone, and not on our own merit. We do not receive the Gift of the Spirit by fasting or praying or by any other work. He is a Gift (Acts 2:38). 



# A true and false

by Catherine Booth

**P**EACE is the universal want of man. Everywhere and always the human race is in a state of unrest, seeking rest and finding none. Consequently, men adopt many counterfeits, and try to satisfy the aching void of their souls with the opiates of Satan.

Peace is not a state of mere quietness or insensibility. Alas! Many are in this state of torpor, and when you ask them about their souls they say, "Oh, yes! I have a hope; I have a measure of peace. I hope I am right." But when you try to shake them up, and find out whether they have any thorough foundation for their peace, they don't want to be disturbed.

Peace is not insensibility to existing differences between the soul and God, for in such a condition there are all the elements of awful and eternal warfare. There only needs a change of circumstances in order to land the soul into conflict, distress and desolation. We do not mean that sort of peace.

True peace, divine peace – the only peace that will do to die with – arises out of a settlement of our differences and a cessation of hostilities toward God, and reconciliation with God, bringing assurance and quietness in view of the past, the present and the future.

By false methods Satan lulls the souls of sinners and backsliders into a false peace. For one thing, he gets them to make a false estimate of the character and deserts of sin. When God's Spirit wakes them up, puts before them the heinousness and enormity of their sins, Satan comes and helps them to reason and search for excuses.

They say, as the Jews did in Ezekiel's day, "If we pine away in them (our iniquities), how should we then live?" They charged their sin back again upon God. They said His way was unequal, and when years later He accused them with wearying Him they said, "How have we wearied Him?" When He charged them with robbing Him they said, "How have we robbed You?"

They made excuses for themselves in their sins.

Multitudes do that now! People want to make out that they are dying for want of light. I say no. They are not dying for want of light; they are dying for want of honesty.

This spirit of finding excuses is most hateful in the sight of God. In the Old Testament He is continually reproofing this spirit and threatening the backslidden people with chastisement because of it; whereas He tells them that if they would confess and forsake their sins they should be forgiven.

In Revelation 2:5 it says: "Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come to you quickly, and will remove your candlestick out of its place, unless you repent."

Do you see that the everlasting principle on which alone God can pardon sin, laid down in the last utterances of the New Testament as well as all through the Old, is repenting and forsaking of sin, and not excusing and covering it up?

Whose works are you doing? Do not let Satan deceive you, if you are living in sin, no matter what church you are a member of, no matter how long you have been a professor of the faith. By excusing yourselves you can get quietness, perhaps, but peace – never!

Oh, that every soul that is quiet in sin were awakened as the jailer at Philippi was, by an earthquake if necessary. People in that condition say they have peace, but all the elements of everlasting warfare are ready to break out in their bosoms at any moment.

Do not confuse quietness with peace.

Another method by which people get false peace is that of stifling their fears and convictions. You may succeed in stifling your convictions for a while, perhaps a long while – but when death comes it will open the floodgates of Hell.

Oh, the deathbeds of people who have been burying their iniquities in their bosoms, instead of confessing and forsaking them and being saved! Some would get off their beds and hang themselves if by so doing they could get out of their misery.

There is only one way to deal with sin; and that is to be out with it, to forsake it, and to have it washed away.

Another method by which sinners and backsliders seek peace is by adopting false views. They say, "I must not look at myself, but at Christ. I have nothing to do with my feelings or dispositions; I am to be saved by believing the word. Salvation is not of works, and I am clinging to the Cross, so I must be right. I belong to the church, I take the communion and read my Bible, and pray morning and night."

Such people are trying to heal their hurt slightly, and crying, "Peace, peace" when there is no peace.


The only way to find true peace is to put away the cause of the war. Where there is sin there must be conflict and misery. God Himself cannot give peace to a soul that is holding on to sin, nor does He ever propose to do so. "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God," and before you can be restored to Him they must be repented of and put away.

Give up trying to make yourself believe you are right, and just get right! Then your peace will flow as a river.

Another false method of trying to get peace is by putting off the reckoning day. I heard a lady say, "The fact is, I have given up the struggle, and I hope somehow or other I shall get right when I am dying!" Poor woman! That is an awful experiment.

You need to have all the powers of mind and body in full play when settling your accounts with God. Dying pains and distractions will be poor circumstances for making your peace with Him, even if you were sure of the opportunity; but the people to whom God has been showing his way of peace for years, and who have refused to obey, are not the people who get right when they are dying.

Then you say, "If none of these is the right method for getting peace, what is?"

God's way is always effectual, and this is simply to put away sin. Confess and forsake your sins and cast your guilty soul on Jesus. Then He will give you his peace, which will abide with you forever. 

# The fallout of sexual sin

by Jeff Colón

**I**N the early morning hours of April 26, 1986, a testing error caused an explosion at the Chernobyl nuclear power station in northern Ukraine. A radioactive fire ensued and burned for 10 days, expelling 190 tons of toxic materials into the atmosphere. The explosion released 100 times the amount of radiation unleashed on Hiroshima and Nagasaki combined.

More than 7 million people were exposed to the deadly radioactive material, which in the course of time has revealed a staggering array of health concerns. The list includes thyroid cancer, leukemia, nervous system disorders, bone and muscle disorders, diabetes, birth defects, genetic mutations, cardiac abnormalities, and a variety of other and new forms of cancer.

Also, a large percent of the environment in which Chernobyl residents continue to live (i.e. the air, ground water, soil and food) is still contaminated – more than 30 years later.

A common misconception is that only a few people died as a result of the Chernobyl disaster, yet the facts show different. Those who experienced acute exposure, which is a high dose of radiation over a short period of time, saw quicker results.

Approximately 134 power station workers were exposed to extremely high doses of radiation directly after the accident. About 31 of these people died within three months. Another 25 000 “liquidators” (the soldiers and firefighters who were involved in cleanup operations) have died since the disaster from diseases such as lung cancer, leukemia and cardiovascular disease. In the case of the millions of oth-

ers who were and still are exposed to lower doses of radiation, the ramifications will be felt for decades to come.

## Sexual Sin’s Exposure

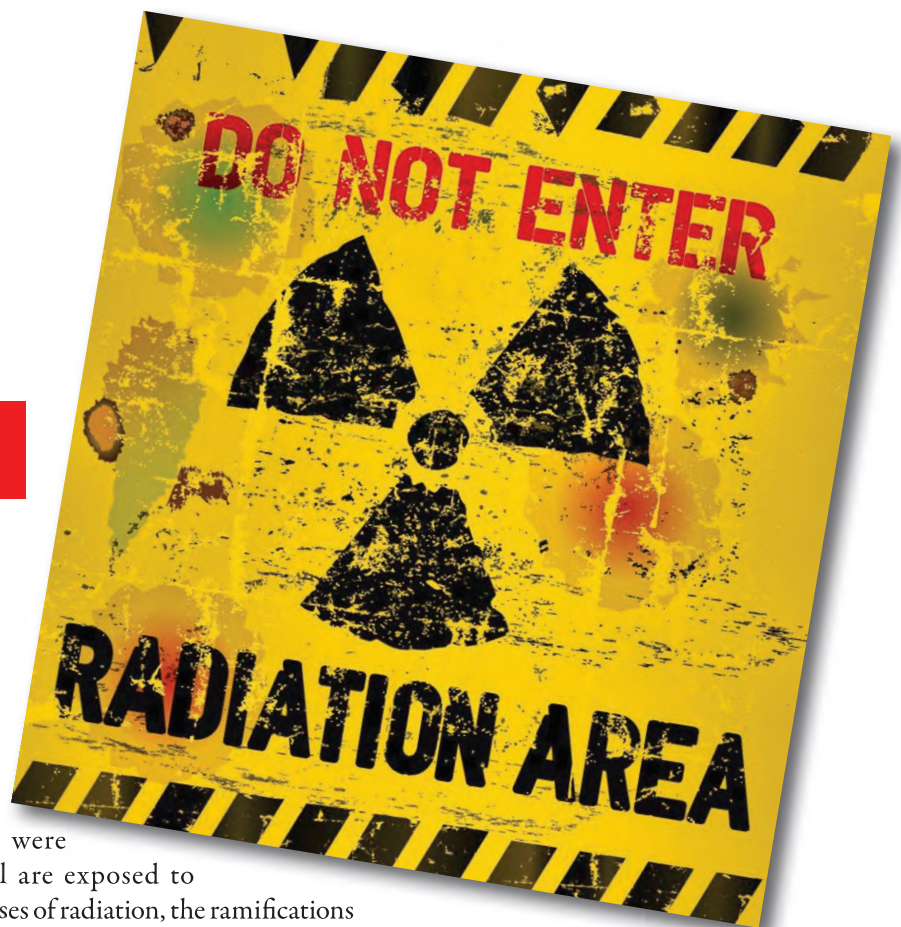
As tragic as that may seem, it pales in comparison to the enormity of another silent killer called sin, whose toxic cloud has overshadowed the whole of humanity in its hideous, cold and chilling death grip.

Both man and the creation groan under its curse, “For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labours with birth pangs together until now (Romans 8:20-22).”

Sin is a poison that affects the whole human race. Sexual sin, in particular, is like a great fire that begins with a spark, and if left unchecked, devours everything in its path. It destroys the soul and burns to the lowest hell.

The person who thinks he can live and continue to expose himself to the toxic fumes of lustful thinking, pornography, and infidelity and not be affected is sorely deceived and doesn’t realise that this inconspicuous killer is already at work, deep within his soul. The man who continues to expose himself to any kind of sin is basically throwing himself into a consuming fire that won’t relent until his whole body and soul are utterly destroyed.

“Can a man take fire to his bosom and his clothes not be burned (Proverbs 6:27)?”



The Bible clearly states that sin can manifest itself in the lives of people in many forms. In Galatians, the apostle Paul makes a list of sinful deeds and what each one leads to: “adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19-21).”

Most assuredly, unless a man is released from sin’s deadly exposure, the end result is not only a physical death, but everlasting ruin, where fallout will be felt throughout all eternity. The penalty of sin is as certain as the laws of nature, and far more terrible and destructive in its power.

“Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren (James 1:15&16).”

Anyone who has a sight of the reality of his sexual sin and where it leads to, would be absolutely insane to even consider exposing himself to it again and again. It would be like asking someone to go and stand inside of the now sealed Chernobyl nuclear reactor, which is as hot as ever inside. We know because of science that would prove fatal. How much more should we reverence and obey the Word



of God, which warns us that “the wages of sin is DEATH (Romans 6:23).”

### Sexual Sin's Effects

We were born in sin, and therefore, it affects every aspect of our lives. “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me (Psalm 51:5).”

Millions die an eternal death every year due to sin's toxic fumes. People basically go about life unaware of what is taking place deep down in their souls – even those who sit smugly in church pews week after week who've never truly repented of sin.

The psalmist describes sin's affect on the human soul when he says, “When I kept silence (before I confessed), my bones wasted away through my groaning all the day long (Psalm 32:3).” That is the reality of what is taking place in a man's soul when he doesn't confess and forsake his “pet sin” of masturbation or pornography but rather continues to live in it.

Those dealing with the aftermath of the nuclear accident at Chernobyl are at the mercy of scientists and doctors who are grappling with all the problems related to their exposure to radioactive material. Yet with the most advanced technology and human ingenuity, these men cannot break out of the circle of mankind's fallen nature.

Even if medical researchers could prolong some lives through medicine and

technology, those affected will still die and face the consequence of a greater cancer of the soul if they don't repent and turn to Jesus.

### Sexual sin's cure

Thankfully, what man could not do, God has done through His only begotten Son Jesus Christ, who took away the curse and penalty of all sin. God has enabled us to get outside of the circle of fallen nature where there is hope for the sin-sick soul. He has given us a living hope through the blood of Christ.

Praise the Lord for His divine healing power for the soul!


Confession and repentance pave the way to the cure for sexual sin. The light of God has come, which is like a divine X-ray of the soul, that reveals how and where we are exposing our soul to sin's deadly influence. When that light comes through His word, by His Spirit, or through one of His saints, the first thing we must do is acknowledge our sin and confess it before God and man.

“But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1John 1:7-9).”

“Be not wise in your own eyes; reverently fear and worship the Lord and turn (entirely) away from evil. It shall be health to your nerves and sinews, and marrow and moistening to your bones (Proverbs 3:7&8).”

The tremendous hope we have is that we can turn from our sin to God at anytime. We don't have to succumb to the deadly influence of sin. Confession opens the door to life and the fear and worship of God is what enables us to walk in “newness of life.” A lifestyle centred on loving God and being a doer of His word, will expose us to His divine presence, which in turn will shelter us from sin's lethal exposure.

God is always calling sinners to repentance. He can see the danger we are in, every minute we allow ourselves to continue in sin. We can't afford to live one more moment under its influence. It's a matter of life or death!

“Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts!” God desires that all would come to repentance. He doesn't delight in the death of one sinner. 

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# Will you help us be a blessing?



Did you know that *Prepare the Way* is sent free of charge to church leaders in many African countries, as well as overseas missionaries and prisoners? But this **only** happens through the support and donations of people just like you.

If you have a heart for the nations and a desire to see churches built up through sound, Biblical teaching, then please would you consider supporting this ministry?

*Prepare the Way* is a 100% non-profit ministry. No-one associated with the magazine draws **any** form of salary or income from the magazine – so, very simply, every cent you give goes straight towards sending out more magazines! The more gifts we get in, the more magazines we give away – it's as simple as that.

If you are able to help, please fill in the form below, or simply do a direct deposit into the magazine's account (Prepare the Way, Standard Bank, Howick Branch, Branch code 058325, Account number 052449815)

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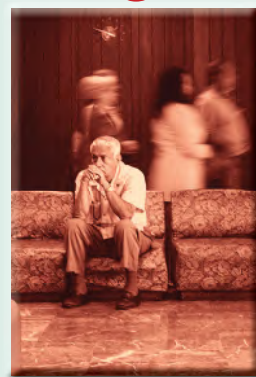
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# Samuel Chadwick burned his sermons and caught fire!

by Trevor Saxby

*"Destitute of the fire of God, nothing else counts; possessing fire, nothing else matters (Samuel Chadwick)."*

**S**AMUEL Chadwick was born in the industrial north of England in 1860. His father worked long hours in the cotton mill and, when he was only 8, Samuel went to work there, too, as a means of supporting the family.

Devout Methodists, they attended chapel three times on Sunday, and as a young boy, Chadwick gave his heart to Christ. Listening to God's word week by week, he often felt the inner call to serve Jesus. It seemed impossible, as he was poor and uneducated, but in faith he made preparations. After a 12-hour factory shift he would rush home for five hours of prayer and study.

At the age of 21 he was appointed lay pastor of a chapel at Stacksteads, Lancashire. He found the congregation self-satisfied, but Chadwick threw himself into the work with great optimism. He had been trained to prepare well-researched and interesting sermons as the sure way to bring in the crowds. He recalled later: "This led unconsciously to a false aim in my work. I lived and laboured for my sermons, and was unfortunately more concerned about their excellence and reputation than the repentance of the people."

Soon, however, his sermons were exhausted and nothing had changed. Staring defeat in the face and sensing his lack of real power, an intense hunger was kindled within him for more of God. At this

point he heard the testimony of someone who had been revitalised by an experience of the Holy Spirit. So, with a few friends he covenanted to pray and search the scriptures until God sent revival.

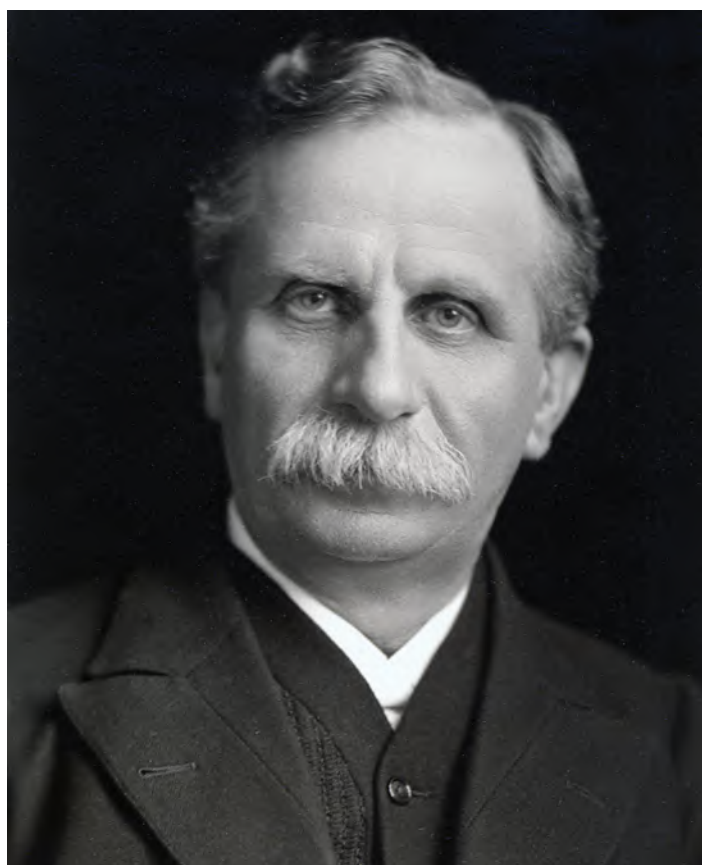
One evening he was praying over his next sermon, when a powerful sense of conviction settled on him. His pride, blindness and reliance on human methods paraded before his eyes as God humbled him to the dust. Well into the night he wrestled and repented, then he got out his pile of precious sermons and threw them on the fire!

The result was immediate – he was baptised with the Holy Spirit and with fire (Luke 3:16).

"I could not explain what had happened, but it was a bigger thing than I had ever known. There came into my soul a deep peace, a thrilling joy, and a new sense of power. My mind was quickened. I felt I had received a new faculty of understanding. Every power was vitalised. My body was quickened. There was a new sense of spring and vitality, a new power of endurance and a strong man's exhilaration in big things."

The tide turned. At his next service, seven people were converted ("one for each of my barren years"), and he called the whole congregation to a week of prayer. The following weekend most of the church was filled with the Holy Spirit and revival began to spread through the valleys.

In the space of a few months, hundreds were converted to Jesus, among them some of the most notorious sinners in



the area.

The pattern was repeated over the next few years as Chadwick moved to various places. In 1890 he was in Leeds, where the power of God was so strongly upon him that the chapel was full half an hour before the service began, and police had to control the crowds.


Chadwick records: "We were always praying and fighting (the devil), singing and rejoicing, doing the impossible and planning still bigger things. The newspapers never left us alone, and people came from far and wide."

Within a few years, the chapel had to be demolished and a substantial Mission Hall built.

Always a man of the people, Chadwick would spend his Saturdays mixing with local workers. Once, when his wife was away, he teasingly invited anyone who was lonely to come for Saturday tea. He expected about a dozen. More than 600 turned up! Yet God had already catered: one church member was a baker and had been awoken by the Lord with the order to bake for all he was

worth!

Chadwick was a man of prayer and urged others to it too. "The one concern of the devil is to keep Christians from praying," he wrote. "He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work and prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom – but trembles when we pray!"

The final phase of Chadwick's life was spent as Principal of Cliff College, a Methodist training school for preachers, and it was here that he wrote his famous book, *The Way to Pentecost*, which was being printed when he died in 1932. In it we read: "I owe everything to the gift of Pentecost. For 50 days the facts of the Gospel were complete, but no conversions were recorded. Pentecost registered 3 000 souls. It is by fire that a holy passion is kindled in the soul whereby we live the life of God. The soul's safety is in its heat. Truth without enthusiasm, morality without emotion, ritual without soul, make for a Church without power." 



# WATCH & PRAY

Thanks to  
Elizabeth Kendal

## CAPTIVES IN CRISIS IN MALI & PHILIPPINES

The day before the French president stood in Bamako, Mali, pledging to support a new regional multinational anti-terror force, a Mali-based al-Qaeda affiliate released a disturbing video. It provided proof of life of six Western hostages (mostly missionaries), while explaining that “if we are struck... you will be struck.”

Clearly these captives need to be freed before the new multinational anti-terror force commences operations in September. Meanwhile, reports have emerged in the Philippines that the civilians being held captive by IS-inspired jihadists in Marawi are being used not only as human shields, but as porters and sex-slaves, with Christians being forcibly converted to Islam. The rebels’ demands have been rejected and their territory is shrinking. The situation for the captives is most serious. Please pray (Psalm 20:7).

## BURMA (MYANMAR): IMPRISONED PASTOR DETERIORATES

Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC) pastors Dom Dawng Nawng (65) and La Jaw Gam Hseng (35) were abducted by Burmese military personnel on December 24, 2016, after they helped reporters document destruction caused by Burmese military aggression. On January 24 the military handed the pastors over to

police who accused them of spying and charged them with “illegal association”. In a recent conversation with Morning Star News, Khon Peng, wife of Pastor Nawng, revealed that her husband is discouraged and his health is deteriorating. Nawng was transferred from Muse, 174 km south to Lashio in April and the four-and-a-half hour road trip makes visiting difficult. Peng said her husband – who shares a cell with some 40 other prisoners – suffers from asthma and has diarrhoea often. Attorney U Brang Di confirmed to Morning Star News: “He lacks nutrition. As he is old, it makes it worse. He seems very weak.”

## CHINA: IMPRISONED PASTOR PUNISHED FOR APPEAL

A Communist Party-approved “Three-Self” pastor Zhang Shaojie of Nanle County Christian Church, Henan Province, was arrested in November, 2013 along with 23 other church members after they accused the Communist Party of attempting to seize church land. In July, 2014 Zhang was sentenced to 12 years’ jail; an appeal in August, 2014 failed. According to China Aid Association (CAA) Zhang recently launched a fresh attempt to appeal his sentence, igniting the wrath of prison officials. His daughter, US-based Esther Zhang, told CAA that her father is now being punished with “strict supervision.” Newly released inmates have told her that her

father is being subjected to sleep deprivation and starvation and that he is depressed and “barely alive.” Please pray.

## ERITREA: ARRESTS CONTINUE

Eritrean authorities arrested nearly 100 Christians during May. It has now been confirmed that a further 22 arrests occurred at the end of May and the beginning of June. Seventeen Christian men were arrested in the Godaif neighbourhood of the capital, Asmara, on May 28, while a further five Christians were arrested from their homes in Dongolo on June 6. While Eritreans (including many Christians) are fleeing at the rate of 5 000 per month, it is a high-risk endeavour. While many drown in the Mediterranean Sea, others fall prey to human traffickers who sell them to terrorists in the Sinai or Libya who torture them for ransom. If ransom is not forthcoming, their organs

are harvested. Furthermore, Eritreans are increasingly being refused asylum in Europe and Israel. May God intervene in Eritrea.

## EGYPT: COPTIC WOMEN ‘DISAPPEAR’

Suzan Ashraf Rawy (22) disappeared on June 5 as she walked from her home in the Cairo suburb of Al Khosous to her job at the nearby Virgin and Pope Kyrillos Coptic Orthodox Church. Local Copts believe Suzan has been abducted by a Muslim gang, making it the third such abduction since May 30, when a Muslim man was accidentally shot dead by a Coptic man. While the abductions are believed to be “retaliatory,” the Coptic shooter was arrested, is in police custody and has been charged with manslaughter. With three local women “disappeared” in three weeks, local Coptic women are now too afraid to leave their homes. Please pray.

## Manna for mahala!

If you’d like to receive Peter Pollock’s Daily Manna devotional, which will also take you through the whole Bible in a year, then go to our website ([www.prepare.co.za](http://www.prepare.co.za)), and on the home page go to the “Daily Manna Sign-up” at the top, fill in your details and we will e-mail it to you every morning. What’s more, it’s absolutely free!



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## Prepare the Way Day: November 5

This is the date for this year’s remaining *Prepare the Way* day at 9.15 a.m. at Mount Zion Church in Merivale (near Howick). Peter Pollock will be preaching – and, what’s more, you’re invited to stay for lunch, too!

# WHEN GOD SEEMS SO DISTANT

by Nathan E. Jones

**H**AVE you ever attended a White Elephant Party? No, I'm not talking about some pale pachyderm popping out of a pastry. Rather, these are parties where attendee gifts are more likely to be of the flea-market persuasion, and the more creatively weird the better.

It's all a lot of fun – that is, as long as the receiver of these kinds of gifts isn't a birthday boy or your wife. If they are, and they're receiving Great Aunt Betty's pig-shaped soup bowl, then well, you'll likely end up visiting the dog house.

For these important people in our lives, especially on their special day, only the best gifts will do.

Once there was a people who believed they only needed to give God white-elephant gifts. It's a fantastic little story found in the last Old Testament book of Malachi. The Minor Prophet uncovered poignant insights into the heart of a Heavenly Father who had been receiving second, and even third best.

One day the Prophet Malachi had been standing outside of the Temple, mouth agape, watching with incredulity as the priests readily accepted one sorry excuse of a sacrifice to God after another. Mosaic Law required the best of the flock, the unblemished and the healthy. Instead, the people reluctantly dragged in shabby goats with broken horns, sickly lambs with eye infections, and bulls so old they might just die before reaching the butcher block.

Burdened to the point of exasperation, God's prophet readied himself to set the stingy bunch of worshipers straight about what loving God truly meant.

Malachi shouted out so that the unruly crowd of half-hearted devotees could not miss him, "The Lord says, 'I have loved you!' Yet you say, 'In what way have You loved us?'"

Thus Malachi had begun a series of seven literary disputations, where God pronounced a statement and the people responded by brazenly questioning the truth of God's claims (1:1-5). In each case, the people threw God's statements back at Him like moody teenagers questioning



their parents.

And these people were at the Temple to worship!

In His first statement, God reminded the people just how special Israel had been to Him over the centuries, giving historical examples of His great love. But the people just wanted to know what God had done for them lately.

Malachi presented God's second statement, this time against His own corrupt priests (1:6-2:9). "If then I am the Father, where is My honour? And if I am a Master, where is My reverence?" The priests questioned, "In what way have we despised Your name? In what way have we defiled You?"

God responded by pointing out the obvious – the sacrificial animals were appalling! Blind, lame, sick, and even stolen, the guardians of God's grace that covered the people's sins were shaming Yahweh's name.

Aghast at the obvious, Malachi spit forth God's third statement (2:10-16). "Judah has profaned the Lord's holy institution which He loves." The people scoffed with, "For what reason?"

The holy covenant of marriage was being treated with casual contempt as divorce rates skyrocketed, demonstrating the treacherous people were unfaithful. Therefore, God rejected their offerings. Even if they were to weep and wail, which they wouldn't, God would ignore their faithless sacrifices.

God sighed deeply in utter weariness at His people's hard hearts and constant questioning (2:17-3:6).

The prophet in this fourth statement revealed, "You have wearied the Lord with

your words." Demonstrating no sympathy, the congregants squealed, "In what way have we wearied Him?" And with a snap remark they added, "Where is the God of justice?" Ouch!

The insolent people just accused the God of the Universe of delighting in evil. Patiently, God promised true justice when the ultimate Judge – the Messiah – arrived.

Malachi presented God's fifth statement, this time a magnanimous plea (3:7).

"Return to Me, and I will return to you." Like an angry toddler who doesn't get the toy he wants, the stubborn people spit, "In what way shall we return?"

In His sixth statement, God leveled an accusation, "You have robbed Me (3:8-12)!" The guilty people merely hid their pathetic animals behind their backs, batted their eyes, and replied innocently, "In what way have we robbed You?" God challenged them that if they sacrificed with generous hearts, He would bless them beyond measure.

Sadly, the people's hearts were stingy, for they didn't trust God to follow through.

In the seventh and final statement, God lamented, "Your words have been harsh against Me (3:13-15)." In an embarrassing display of ignorance, the people scoffed, "What have we spoken against You?" And then they immediately spoke against Him: "It is useless to serve God."

God had enough of these faithless people and their casual indifference to His Law. They had spurned God's love, so God would shut His mouth... for 400 years!

While a majority will always reject God, just emotionlessly going through the motions of worship, a believing remnant always exists that responds positively in repentance to God's Word.

Malachi ended with a promise to the faithful few who feared the Lord: "They shall be Mine (3:16-4:6)." When the Day of the Lord's judgement finally arrives, God's "jewels" shall be spared.

God will always seem distant to those who, in truth, want Him to be distant. But, for those faithful who love the Lord and give Him their best, "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble (Psalm 46:1)." 