

Prepare^{the}Way

Preparing the Bride of Christ for the return of Christ

Issue No. 107
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Helen Gardiner

Major hindrance to revival

Peter Pollock

**The beginning
and the end**

**The power
of gentle
suffering**

Zac Poonen

**Decisions
determine
what you
become**

John Piper

**Why what we sing
really does matter**

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COVER: "Therefore don't be anxious for tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Each day's own evil is sufficient (Matthew 6:34)."

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The last half-hour

"He that shall endure to the end (Matthew 24:13)..."

A PREACHER once pointed out that the way to have more power in the spiritual life is to have more pressure. The secret of power in a steam engine is the pressure of steam. The engine says, "I want more power," and the answer comes, "Put on more pressure."

God intends the utilisation of pressure in any life to be the secret power in that life, for He makes all trial, suffering and bitterness the occasion of imparting Himself and His power to the one who will trust Him.

The secret of the Apostle Paul's power was his utilising the pressure of all kinds of strain – human or satanic. He took pleasure in pressure because thus he obtained more of God's power. "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong (2 Corinthians 12:10)."

It is not the pressure itself but the using

of it that brings us into the place of power, through "fire and water, into a wealthy place," into "the place far above all" where Christ Himself so delivers from the stress and strain that in the midst of pressure we do not feel the pressure, but only His presence and grace.

This is exemplified in Paul's words to the Corinthians, when he related the story of the trouble which came to him in Asia. How helpless Paul felt his words tell us. "We were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life," he said (2 Corinthians 1:8).

Where now is manifest the victory of the Cross? Only in the unseen realm. The pressure was utilised to press the apostle into greater power. At the time in Ephesus nothing appeared to have been gained. The apostle over whom the stir was made just escaped death, and quietly departs from Macedonia.

So also at Calvary. A mocking multitude. Crucifixion. Silence. Apparent triumph of the mob and the powers of darkness.

But afterwards millions of souls brought through that death from darkness into light.

So with the children of God in personal experience. "Pressed out of measure," "without strength," "despairing even of life" – where is the victory? Where is the power to conquer? Why the apparent triumph of the enemy?

In the unseen realm we find the answer. His conquering ones know victory by defeat. The believer is shown the secret.


The pressure is the sentence of death upon all natural resources – even of physical strength, all natural buoyancy of character, or any help that comes from temperament or strength of will, or self-power in every shape and form. The pressure must be great enough to press out all strength and hope outside God. And why? "That we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raises the dead, who delivered... and does deliver (2 Corinthians 1:9&10)..."

The enemy rages, and the soul looks on "without strength," without hope. "Ah, how can this be claiming the victory of Calvary?" we cry. And we discover that outward defeat is the very victory of Calvary wrought into us, as we sink down in despair of ourselves into God, to see Him "raise the dead" and deliver.

"The problem of obtaining great things from God lies in the problem of holding on the last half-hour," once said the late Rev. C. G. Moore. The pressure just now on the saints of God means to test whether they will hold on during the last half-hour which precedes the dawn.

The conflict is intensifying into pressure which is harder to hold through than sharp attacks of the enemy. "And he... shall wear out the saints," was the warning issued to Daniel to the saints of this hour (Daniel 7:25).

The wearing-out process brought to bear upon the Lord's people is harder to recognise as being of the foe than the more terrifying roaring of the lion in hell. The church is entering the "last half-hour."

There is a pressure of the adversary which needs all the sustaining power of God to enable His children to hold through. Nevertheless Calvary is Victory, and the "last half-hour" precedes the dawn. 





THE BEGINNING AND THE END

by Peter Pollock

THERE are two books of the Bible the devil really hates – Genesis and Revelation! Satan continuously attacks them through his many and varied agencies. He predictably leads his unrelenting attack with those highly recognisable but subtle “doubt” innuendos that are the backbone of his unchanging “surely-not” strategy. It has been his *modus operandi* from the outset, ever-undermining and ever-questioning the truth.

The problem, of course, is that Genesis reveals the origin of it all and Revelation defines the final outcome. In between simply traces a series of dispensations granted by God in establishing fellowship with man.

The two books – Genesis and Revelation – are the ultimate divine bookends to the Lamb’s “Book of Life” and, as such, are spiritual dynamite.

First, we have THE FALL! Genesis 3 reveals what went wrong. Adam and Eve were “warned,” they “sinned” and “died” – all as God had promised. Suddenly they realised they were “naked.”

They were now minus the Spirit, which was the protection and wisdom of God. Then once they recognised the truth of their predicament, they “hid away.” In Genesis 3:10, they “heard,” acknowledged sin; were “afraid,” felt the guilt of sin; were “naked,” experiencing the effect of sin and then “hid,” culminating with the result and consequences of sin.

God had said: You will die! Satan said

“surely not” and our great human problem was birthed. The father of all fibs, falsehoods, fabrications and fake news – the devil – was now exposed, but the damage was done.

Satan’s great lie has always been that sin does not reap consequences or incur the wrath of God. Of course, that contention is utter nonsense. In John 3:16, the greatest statement of love in the Bible we see the word PERISH.

If we do not “believe” we are doomed, and it’s important to note that “believe” is a continuous Greek verb which means “believing” and “obeying” at the same time. They run concurrently!

As Jesus said: If you love Me you will do as I say! John 3:18 reminds us that if we do not “believe” we will “remain condemned” and John 3:36 confirms that the “wrath of God abides” on those who don’t believe. John 3:19 says: This is the verdict. This is the condemnation. That the Light came into the world. And we did not believe!

Thanks to Adam and Eve, we became “sinners” in the Garden of Eden. Dying spiritually separated us from God.

When God originally made man He was pleased with what He had made. Mind, body and spirit were blended together beautifully. Furthermore, God gave us our own will. But in exercising that will the wrong choice was made that saw the TEMPTATION lead to the FALL and SPIRITUAL DEATH. We lost the image of God!

The image of God in Adam was the spirit. God doesn’t look like you and me!

You can’t tell me that someone who has just raped an eight-year-old girl is made in the image of God. Or that someone who has just mowed down 20 people with a machine-gun is made in the image of God! God’s spirit in us is His image.

So man had fallen. Predictably, the first response was to cover up, with leaves. Inevitably, there is an excuse, a scapegoat or a pointing finger. Adam and Eve hid among the trees, the foliage. Interesting! Hiding from God, even in His own garden.

Indeed, we are hiding in the church. We are hiding in religion. We are hiding in good works. So much deception and denial abounds spawning lukewarm, passive and apathetic fruit. That Synagogue of Satan mentioned in the book of Revelation is alive and well! “Those who say they are believers but are not” – all too plentiful!

Unbelief abounds, churning out onlookers, bystanders and spectators galore. But God’s Word and His promises stand. As pointed out in Romans 1, God has handed us over to the consequences of our unbelief and godlessness so that hopefully, as we recognise the ills of our ways, and experience the consequences thereof, we will repent and turn back to Him.

The curses continue. God listed them: Painful childbirth and submission for women; sweat and hard work for men and endless hate and unpopularity for the serpent.

God clothed Adam and Eve when they saw their nakedness but He did not remove the curse or the banishment. God drove them out, East of Eden and left as

protectors of His Truth, the angels, the cherubim, and a “flaming sword,” which is the Word.

Man’s new protective garments were now material. With the spiritual gone, the devil took over the world, simply by dominating, controlling and manipulating man’s mind.

God put man in charge, so obviously whoever controls man controls the world. Elementary! But the greatest tragedy was man had lost relationship and intimacy with God. Fellowship with God is a mind-blowing concept for the non-spiritual human mind/intellect!

Quite naturally it’s become a huge problem and hurdle in coming to faith. The Prophet Isaiah foretells the extent of this fellowship and intimacy problem when he describes (Isaiah 4:1) the end-time church. The previous two chapters reveal the consequences and signs of a godless world, as it will be just prior to the return of Christ.

Then that one verse symbolically describes the end-time visible church: “Seven women” (seven end-time churches) take hold of one man (Jesus) in “that day” saying “we will eat our own food” and provide “our own clothes” – only let us be called by Your Name!

This is a worldly bride wanting Jesus only for His forgiveness and nothing else. All this “bride” wants is a marriage of convenience. This bride is not interested in loving, obeying, depending or being intimate. Love is not an issue... just a good name, security and an eternal inheritance, an arrangement that has nothing to do with loving, serving, cherishing or obeying.

Just give us forgiveness and relief from guilt, is the humanistic heartcry! That is the entire focus. It ties up with the seven churches in the Book of Revelation: Lost first love; adultery; soiled bridal outfits; salve to open spiritual eyes. Remember those condemnations!

God always offers to cloth us in white, symbolically portraying marriage with all its commitment, obedience and intimacy. We don’t want that! We want the title, the thrills and the goose bumps. We want to “feel good” as we listen to false peace prophets tickling our ears with messages of unlimited cheap grace and mercy and a “saviour” who is not a Lord.

We don’t want to get too close to God. The people demanded: “Moses, you keep in touch and tell us what we must do.” Man prefers an arms-length relationship because it is always so much easier disa-

greeing or disobeying a man than taking on God face to face.

It never ceases to amaze me with all the miracles, signs and wonders in the “wilderness church” that there was no fruit. Only two, Joshua and Caleb, made it into the Promised Land. Even Moses had to pay the price for disobedience.

These facts are a far cry from the modern gospel. Relationship with God was broken in the Garden of Eden and was restored when Jesus paid the price. God desires fellowship. For that purpose He made man and the spirit is the conduit for a spirit-to-Spirit relationship. But it is not something easily gleaned intellectually.

Nor is it anything other than a spiritual transaction. It stumped Nicodemus! The man without the spirit will not and cannot comprehend. You have to be “born again” – Jesus so emphatically told Nicodemus.

It’s a matter of revelation and experience. You give up your independent right to yourself and hand the reins of your life over to Jesus, never to be the same again.

I had always been told that the Book of Revelation was for the lunatic fringe. Eschatology – end-times theology – is not an “exact science” I was told in my early days. So “don’t get involved with it,” was the advice.

THE LITTLE BOOK

“Stick to the solid stuff,” said one of my mentors. But I never stopped being intrigued, so I kept a separate “little book” with all my end-time notes and colourful underlinings. It was a leather-bound NKJV New Testament copy which I was given on my first preaching trip to Australia, way back in 1992. I loved this little book!

Then one morning in my “quiet time” I read Revelation 10:8-11. It told me straight: Take the Little Book. Eat it! It will be honey in the mouth. Bitter in the stomach. Prophecy again! I felt directly “ordered” to preach it in season and out of season. This was, after all, the ultimate prophetic “word.” It was all going to happen and it would be great peril to ignore it.

But for me the key was that I should stick to the biblical principles and not get too involved with symbolic complexities. Look around, and all over you see the church at Laodicea. Professing so much and yet overrun by humanism. Crying “Lord, Lord” but without even knowing God.

Ephesus, too, is all over. Word-based re-

ligion that has lost its first love. “Religion” and “church business” have forgotten about Jesus.

There are the little Philadelphian fellowships, holding on for dear life as the true remnant passionately awaiting the rapture and the return of Jesus Christ. The Synagogue of Satan is all over. Yet despite what we might see and think, we do know and believe that the real church, the real kingdom, is alive and well.

God has not lost control for one single second. Everything is on track!

The four horses of the apocalypse are out there. The white one with political power, delusion, deception, false hope and ultimately an anti-Christ spirit of rebellion and anarchy bringing war (red), famines (black) and death (pale). \

There is a deep foreboding in the discerning prophetic spirit and it’s only the start, the beginning of the end. What follows is too horrendous, too unspeakable with all the terrors, the seals, angels, trumpets, plagues and bowls of wrath. All of it meticulously documented.

As we look around with the help of our TV sets, it’s just one catastrophe after the other. Storms and tsunamis. Terrorism. Global warming. It’s going to get so bad that men will seek death, says the Bible. Xenophobia. Road Rage. Anger. Intolerance. And sadly, there is no repentance!

More and more people are shaking their fists at God. Christian “debate” and “counsel” no longer holds sway. We have reached a state of intellectual paralysis, because there is always a lawyer around or a higher court available to ensure that evil can thrive.

In Revelation 12:10-12 it confirms that the only chance of survival is by the “blood of the Lamb” and the “word of our testimony.” Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because the devil knows that his time is short.

It is all going to happen. God’s day of wrath will most surely come upon us. The nations will mourn, says the Bible, confirming that when all is finally revealed the great majority will be on the wrong side of that truth. It is all about overcomers. Certainly no cake-walk!

Do not add or subtract from what the Book of Revelation promises. And it came to pass! Like everything else in God’s Word, it is going to happen. That “little book” is utterly awesome.

Thus says the Lord. And the devil hates it. Amen! 



Shafts of Light 34

by Helen Gardiner

WHAT is the greatest blockage to revival in the Church of Jesus Christ? Is it wrong doctrine or heresy? Is it divorce or pornography? All these things (and others) play their part in keeping God out...

However, there is a remnant Church where these things are not a problem – yet, still, revival tarries. Why?

I believe it is because God's people do not have control over their tongues.

Even some of the Lord's dearest saints do not have control over their tongues.

Just ask the Holy Spirit to bring His conviction to you whenever there is wrong or sinful use of your tongue. You will be amazed. And ashamed.

If we really want to see revival we need to allow God to cleanse and purge our lips.

When the prophet Isaiah saw the King in His magnificent throne room, he cried out in Isaiah 6:5-7:

"Woe is me, for I am undone!

Because I am a man of unclean lips:

For my eyes have seen the King,

The Lord of hosts.'

Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar.

And he touched my mouth with it, and said:

'Behold, this has touched your lips;

Your iniquity is taken away,

And your sin purged.'"

Your tongue is the greatest member of your body: it holds the keys to your life and death: your salvation or destruction: your blessing or your cursing.

I cannot stress this enough.

I just hope and trust that by opening up this subject and problem to you, that the Holy Spirit will be able to bring full revelation, conviction and repentance.

I remember hearing the testimony many years ago from the life of Dr Helen Roseveare, where she was part of a revival in the Congo. They had been enjoying the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit – He being constantly with them as workers – that is, until there crept in some gossip about another. The Holy Presence lifted immediately.

Grieved by our gossip

Yes, the Holy Spirit is deeply grieved by our gossip.

God has been dealing with me in recent years.

As a pastor's wife, I am privy to many secrets about people. However, I do not automatically just share those secrets with my husband. If the Holy Spirit says that it

is in the person's best interest – then only do I share. I don't want to gossip or speak curse and judgement upon anyone's life.

Just in my normal day-to-day living and talking, I often feel the Holy Spirit's check. Sometimes, it is on the tip of my tongue to say something, then, the Holy Spirit will say, "Don't!" Then He will show me why not.

Let's consider Proverbs 10:19-21:

*"In the multitude of words sin is not lacking,
But he who restrains his lips is wise.*

The tongue of the righteous is choice silver;

The heart of the wicked is worth little.

The lips of the righteous feed many,

But fools die for lack of wisdom."

Here is an exhortation about the tongue from King David in Psalm 34:12&13:

"Who is the man who desires life,

And loves many days, that he may see good?

Keep your tongue from evil,

And your lips from speaking deceit."

Sometimes it is our motives in saying things which are not good. Check even your motive in sharing a testimony of God's goodness.

The apostle James has much to say about the tongue in his letter... Let's read James 3:1-12:

"My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.

For we all stumble in many things, if anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.

Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body.

Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires.

Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!

And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity.

The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.

For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the seas, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind.

But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God.

Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.

Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter

from the same opening?

Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh."

We really need to take this passage seriously. I do find it interesting to note that the tongue being tamed is one of the ultimate works of the Holy Spirit.

Proverbs 6:17 tells us that the Lord hates lying lips.

Flattery is another no-no. Psalm 12:3 tells us that God will cut off flattering lips and Proverbs 26:28 says that a flattering mouth works ruin. Now, you can compliment people, but don't lie or exaggerate.

The wonderful plus side of the mouth is that we can speak to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Colossians 3:16). The praise and worship of God, with our mouth, is a great blessing to Him, and, a powerful weapon against the enemy.

The gift of praying in a tongue or spiritual language is indeed a gift, and, a powerful warfare weapon. If you have such a gift, use it often. Don't despise or doubt it. If you have not received the baptism in the Holy Spirit, seek it with all your heart.

It brings a blessing

Taking control of our tongues brings blessing. Isaiah 58:9 says:

"If you take away the yoke from your midst, The pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness...(verse 11) the Lord will guide you continually..."

In Psalm 17:3: David affirms: *"I have purposed that my mouth shall not transgress."*

Do you have gracious lips?

Proverbs 22:11 says:

"He who loves purity of heart And has grace on his lips, The King will be his friend."

Very seriously, Jesus says in Matthew 12:36&37:

"But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgement. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

James says in chapter 4:11: *"Do not speak evil of one another, brethren."*

We would do well to pray like David in Psalm 141:3:

"Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips."

A hard lesson for me, has been to learn

that when I am in a battle, I must not give vent to feelings and thoughts of unbelief in my heart. I have needed to learn to stand on God's promises, and not to be swayed by the threats of the enemy.

Take all of your heartaches and struggles to the Lord. Take your hurts to Him. Take your unforgiveness to Him. He, and He alone, will bring the victory.

We realise that often what comes out of our lips is an overflow from our hearts. We need to cry out for the Lord to deal with our hearts. However, a good starting

point is to stop our mouths from coming forth. Then the heart has room to change, as we set the course of our lives for good and Godliness.

Do have a thorough cleansing and purging with the Holy Spirit, that you may be washed of past sins, and determine to take control of your mouth. Ask the Holy Spirit to sharpen your conscience. If you do fall, confess and repent to God and to others if need be.

May we begin to be pleasing to the Lord in this matter. 🙏



Be filled with the Spirit

by W. C. Moore

"You shall receive power after the Holy Ghost has come upon you (Acts 1:8)."

THIS Holy Ghost power is for all believers (John 7:37-39; Acts 2:37-39; Acts 8:15; Acts 10:44,45). The Scriptural command to all believers is "Be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18)."

Dr C I. Scofield points out that there is a difference between having the Holy Spirit, which is true of all believers, and being filled with the Spirit, which is the believer's privilege and duty.

An earnest, zealous Christian man who had been gloriously saved and felt so greatly blessed that he didn't see how he could need the baptism with the Holy Ghost, was nevertheless convinced of this need in his own life and ministry when he read how Mary the mother of Jesus was among those 120 who tarried for the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:14; 2:1-12).

Two great reasons why every believer should be filled with the Holy Spirit:

First, to give victory over sin. To enable the believer to live an overcoming life (Romans 8:13; Gal. 5:16).

Second, to give the believer power (Holy Ghost power) to do that particular thing – to perform that particular ministry to which that particular believer has been called. Not all are called to the same ministry by any means, but each saved person is called by the Lord to some one or more ministries or methods of witnessing. "But the one and the same Spirit produces all of these (gifts), distributing to each one separately as he desires (1 Corinthians 12:11)."

Charles G. Finney was an evangelist whose preaching was in the power of the Holy Spirit. He received the baptism with the Holy Ghost the very night after he was saved. He had the ministry of preaching (prophecy, 1 Corinthians 12:8,10,11; 1 Corinthians 14:3). But among those who laboured with him were two men, Brother Clary and Brother Nash, who were not gifted so much with a preaching ministry but who were mighty in prayer.

"To every man his work," Jesus says (Mark 13:34). "Now God has set the members every one of them in the body, as it has pleased Him (1 Corinthians 12:18)."

We should not aspire to have a ministry like Brother so-and-so if God has not called us to such a ministry. We should desire, with all our heart, to fit into the place and do the work God wants us to do, and seek until we find that place and that work. "Do not be unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is (Ephesians 5:17)."

And "Be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18)." 🙏

The power of song

by Jack W. Hayford

THERE are places in the Bible where the sheer power of song explodes upon our understanding. I mean far more than the power of song to express joy, rejoicing, praiseful thanks or unified worship. I'm talking about song as an instrument of miracles – of power works; about instances in which the Bible shows songs becoming power-filled for battle, for breakthrough and for birthing.

1. The Song of Battle

The story of Judea's King Jehoshaphat and his victory over the invasion staged by the combined troops of Moab and Ammon is a great argument against the supposition that history is boring.

Vastly outnumbered by an alien host bent on their extermination, he and his people made the Lord their first point of resort. With prayer and fasting they turned to Him, rather than appealing to a neighbouring nation as a hired gun to come and rescue them. Their call to God was answered:

"Listen, all you of Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and you, King Jehoshaphat! Thus says the Lord to you: 'Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's... You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem! Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the Lord is with you' (2 Chronicles 20:15-17)."

Jehoshaphat and the people responded with awe and praise, but what makes this event memorable – and unique in the annals of military encounter – is the strategy they employed for battle. They took a peculiar action based in the raw conviction that God meant what He said: "You will not need to fight in this battle."

The choir preceded the army and the singers preceded the warriors.

Nobody dictated this arrangement, it's just that they concluded this battle was different. Here's how it happened:

"And they rose early in the morning... and as they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, 'Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the Lord your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper.'"

"And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who should praise the beauty of



holiness, as they went out before the army and were saying: 'Praise the Lord, for His mercy endures forever.'

"Now when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir... and they were defeated... they helped to destroy one another (2 Chronicles 20:20-23)."

God's people lifted their song of praise and expressed their belief in His promise. When they did, their enemies were so confounded by it all they turned on one another!

The song of the Lord is a mighty instrument for spiritual battle. It's a timeless resource which God's Word reveals as a powerful part of the arsenal He has given for our triumph in spiritual conflict.

2. The Song Of Breakthrough

The breakthrough of the Gospel into Europe in the first century was supernatural by every criteria.

*It began as the result of a Holy Spirit-inspired vision which led Paul and his party to move west instead of east in their evangelistic pursuits.

*It was birthed at the edge of a river as God's Word was preached and confirmed by His power as they gained their first European converts.

*It was assailed by a repeated and deceptive testimony, shouted from the lips of a demon-possessed woman whose sorceries had gained influence over many in that area.

*The sorcerer was delivered from satanic torments when Paul cast the demon from her, setting the woman free to follow Christ.

*For their act of mercy, manifest in that act of exorcism, Paul and Silas were cast in prison, a clear effort of the recently expelled demon to restrain further gospel advance into its principality – the doorway to an entire continent.

*From within their prison cell, the two beaten-and-bound missionaries began to sing praises to God. Even as they sang, an earthquake shook the area, resulting

in the miracle of their jailer's repentance and his whole household's conversion (Acts 16:1-40).

This cluster of events bursts like pressed grapes, flowing the wine of Holy Spirit operations of power and establishing a beachhead for the gospel on a new continent. It seems impossible to cite any single event as pivotal, but one thing shines clearly: the original breakthrough of the gospel westward into Europe was not achieved without an apostolic experience in the sheer power of song.

Not every analyst may relate Paul and Silas' song to their miraculous deliverance from the jail. However, the Bible supports the proposition that such may have been the case; that song is a mighty means of breakthrough and liberation:

"You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall surround me with songs of deliverance (Psalm 32:7)."

"The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation (Exodus 15:2)."

"Behold, God is my salvation. I will trust and not be afraid, for YAH, the Lord, is my strength and my song. He also has become my salvation. Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation (Isaiah 12:2&3)."

A close examination of these and other passages shows that songs are not only offerings of praise for what God has done, but instruments of our present partnering with His almightiness unto deliverance. Somehow in ways which defy our analysis, the song of the Lord on the lips of His people has a potential for contributing to spiritual overthrow, upheaval and breakthrough.

Just as music in the physical realm may strike a wavelength that shatters glass, so songful worship in the spiritual realm can shake Satan's dominion, topple principalities of hell and extend the Kingdom of God through Jesus Christ!

Yet one more text reveals another attribute of worship music's incredible power.

3. The Song Of Birthing

Isaiah 54 opens with a paradoxical com-

mand: “Sing, O barren one!” – the irony being that no one would direct a despairing reject to sing.

In ancient Israel, nothing less prompted song than the barren condition of a woman. She was disenfranchised, discredited, suspect of spiritual unworthiness and potentially subject to divorce, all on the grounds of her biological incapability of childbearing.

Into this depressing situation of personal hopelessness, the Prophet commands the woman to sing; and incredibly, with his next words, directs her to start preparing a nursery for there are babies (plural) coming!

“Enlarge the place of your tent... for you shall expand to the right and to the left, and your descendants will inherit the nations... you will forget the shame of your youth... for your Creator is your husband, the Lord of Hosts (Isaiah 54:1-5).”

An entire spool of thought unrolls a continuous thread of blessing which is promised to follow upon the heels of song alone! A tapestry of joy including multiple births is prophesied, complete with promises of widespread fruit and joyous consequences flowing from the midst of the singer’s song. This passage of promise is far more than poetry.

Here is the declaration of a principle which shines from other passages in the Word of God; for song and birth – praises and new life – are linked together time and time again. The cause and effect relationship are not always the same, but God being the Author of all that is, the issue raised is not our sequence in song but the suffocation of song.

The Bible reveals that songlessness – depression, defeat, discouragement, despair – restricts the possible inflow of new life. The spirit of heaviness blankets souls and suffocates hope. But song has a power to explode despair and expand a space for hope to begin.

From the “birth” of creation, when God’s creative activity was accompanied by music, as “the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy (Job 38:7),” to the birth-time songs of Hannah and Mary (1 Samuel 2:1-10; Luke 1:46-55), song and new life are joined together.

The distinctive thing about Isaiah’s words is that the song he calls for is not just a joyous response to a birth, it declares the promise and sets the atmosphere for its fulfilment! It’s a possibility in song’s sheer dynamic that may well be believed today.

It doubtless seemed “just another Sunday” as Mike and Cheri were seated with the congregation that day many years ago.

I didn’t know them at all – they were new to our church and it would be a full year until I actually met them.

They probably weren’t thinking about the matter that morning, but the fact was, Mike and Cheri were unable to have children. Medical examination had indicated that it was very unlikely they would ever enjoy the parental privilege, short of adopting a baby.

Of course, I knew nothing of these facts, nor of their prayerful desire that after 11 years of marriage they might conceive a child.

When The Barren Sang

That day my subject was “The Conceiving and Bearing of Life.” It wasn’t really a message on having children, but on overcoming any barrenness in the bleak spots of our life. Isaiah 54 was my text, “Sing, O barren,” and I discussed God’s call to worship and to praise Him at any point of our lives which seems hopelessly unfruitful.

It was then that something very special took place...

My understanding of at least one manifestation of the spiritual gift called “a word of knowledge (1 Corinthians 12:8),” is that the Holy Spirit will give someone both supernatural insight and a corresponding promise from God regarding the issue being revealed. That’s exactly what happened while I was preaching.

I paused midway in the sermon, sensing the Holy Spirit’s presence and prompting, then I spoke.

“Church,” I said, “I need to interrupt myself for just a moment.

“My message has specifically not had to do with natural childbearing, but with life flowing into barren parts of our lives in other respects. Still, the Holy Spirit is impressing me that there is a couple here this morning who has longed for a child, who has been told they cannot have one and whom the Lord wants to know He is present to speak to your need in a personal way this morning. His word to you is this: ‘Begin to fill your house with song, and as you do, the life-giving power of that song will establish a new atmosphere and make way for the conception which you have desired.’”

I didn’t ask anyone to indicate their personal situation or response to that word. Rather, I simply went on with the message as I had planned, basically forgetting about the incident.

Until nearly a year later.

I engaged Mike and Cheri in conversation that day at the church, prior to the

Sunday they were presenting their baby girl for dedication. Although they had joined our church, I had never had a conversation with them, and it was especially nice to talk with them because they were so excited about their baby. After brief opening exchanges, Mike came to the point.

“Pastor Jack, we wanted to talk with you for a few minutes because of this Sunday’s dedication of our baby. There’s something about it we felt you would want to know...”

With that, he recounted the episode of that Sunday about 11 months before, of their childlessness, their prayer, the Holy Spirit’s word to them and – their baby.

“Pastor,” Mike continued, “we went home that day and began to do what the Holy Spirit instructed us – we began to fill our house with song. Cheri and I would walk hand in hand into each room and simply sing praises and worship to the Lord. We just wanted you to know that the baby we’re bringing for presentation to the Lord this Sunday is the fruit of that song, that the Lord did fulfil His word given that morning.”

Can you imagine how I rejoiced with them?

How gracious our Lord and how tender His ways!

That baby’s birth was a holy phenomenon, not conjured up by man’s efforts or enthusiasm. But it was the precious fruit of one couple’s natural union which, until the divinely appointed song of the Lord entered their situation, had not found the fruitfulness for which they longed.

And so we dedicated the baby. But there’s one last footnote to the story.

It’s about Aimee, a little eight-year-old girl who came to the prayer room door and signalled that she wanted to talk with me, and who then sang me “the song the Lord had given to her.” I was especially touched that morning as little Aimee went back out the door, for as her song was echoing in my ears, I was praising God for the life-begetting power of song. I was revelling in how it can transmit from one generation to another where simple, childlike hearts – and congregations – will welcome it.

For, you see, Aimee is Mike and Cheri’s daughter. She is the baby who was born as a result of their “filling the house with song,” even though years of barrenness without hope had preceded. She was the fruit of a song – a song that now was finding a place in her young life. Who knows what richness her song will bring as her years follow?

Who knows what a new song may bring to you? 🐟

Your decisions determine what you become

by Zac Poonen

"I came down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me (John 6:38)."

JESUS tells us here in His own words what He came on earth to do. And in this one sentence we have a description of how Jesus lived every single day of His entire life on earth.

The 30 years of Jesus' life in Nazareth are referred to as hidden years. But here Jesus reveals what He did during every day of those 30 years: He denied His own will and did His Father's will.

When Jesus was with the Father in heaven from eternity past, He never had to deny His own will, for His own will was the same as His Father's. But when He came to earth in our flesh, that flesh had a self-will that was diametrically opposed to the Father's will at every single point.

The only way in which Jesus could do the Father's will then was by denying His own self-will all the time. This was the cross that Jesus bore throughout His earthly life – the crucifixion of His self-will – and which He now asks us to bear every day, if we are to follow Him.

It was the consistent denial of His own will that made Jesus a spiritual Man. And it is the denial of our self-will that will make us spiritual, too.

Every day we make decisions concerning various matters. We make decisions in relation to how we are going to spend our money or our spare time, or how to speak to, or about someone, or how to write a particular letter, or how to react to another's behaviour, or how much time to spend in studying the Word or in prayer or in serving the church. We react to the

actions and words and behaviour of people around us from morning till night.

We may not be realising it, but we make at least a hundred decisions every day – and in each of these decisions we decide either to please ourselves or to please God.

Many of our actions are not the result of conscious decisions. But even then, we do them in one of these two ways – either seeking to please ourselves or to glorify God. Our unconscious actions are determined by the way we make our conscious decisions.

Finally, it is the sum total of these decisions that determine whether we become spiritual or carnal.

Think of the millions of decisions that we have made since we were first converted. Those who have consciously and consistently chosen to deny their self-will many times each day and do the will of God, have become spiritual.

On the other hand, those who have rejoiced merely in the forgiveness of their sins, and who therefore chose to please themselves most of the time have remained carnal.

Each person's decisions have determined what he has finally become.

You are today as humble and as holy and as loving as you yourself have chosen to be, through the thousands of decisions that you have made in the various situations of life in past years.

Spirituality is not something that comes through one encounter with God. It is the result of choosing the way of self-denial and doing God's will consistently day after day, week after week and year after year.

Consider the spiritual state of two broth-

ers (both converted to Christ on the same day), 10 years after their conversion. One is now a mature brother with spiritual discernment, to whom God can commit much responsibility in the church. The other is still a child, without discernment, and needing to be fed and encouraged by others constantly.

What is it that has made such a difference between the two?

The answer is: The little decisions that they took during each day of the 10 years of their Christian life.

If they continue on the same way, in another 10 years, the difference between them will be even more pronounced. And in eternity, their differing degrees of glory will be as different as the light emitted by a 2 000 watt bulb and a 5 watt bulb!

"One star differs from another in glory (1 Corinthians 15:41)."

Consider a situation where you are visiting a home and you are tempted to say something negative about a certain brother (whom you don't like) who is not present. What do you do? Will you yield to that temptation and backbite, or will you deny yourself and keep your mouth shut?

Nobody ever gets struck down by God with leprosy or cancer just because they spoke evil about someone. No. And therefore many imagine that such a sin will not destroy their lives. Alas, it is only in eternity that many brothers and sisters will realise how every time they pleased themselves, they destroyed themselves a little. Then they will regret the way they wasted their lives on earth.

Jesus, too, was tempted in similar situa-



tions for 30 years in Nazareth. It is written about those hidden years that “He never pleased Himself” at any time (Romans 15:3). He always denied Himself. Thus, He pleased the Father at all times.

Pleasing oneself can be done in many areas of one’s life – for example, in the area of eating. Consider a situation where, even when you are not hungry, you decide to spend some money to buy some tasty snacks to eat.

There is nothing sinful or wrong in that. But it speaks of a certain way of life. Because you have money, you buy what you like, whether you need it or not. You do what pleases yourself.

If you feel like buying something, you buy it. If you feel like going somewhere, you go. If you feel like sleeping late, you sleep late. What is the end result of living like that, even if you go regularly to church meetings and read your Bible every day? You may not lose your salvation, but you will certainly waste the one life that God gave you to live for Him.

Another brother, however, acts differently. He decides to discipline his body. When he is not hungry, he decides not to eat anything unnecessarily. He decides never to buy any unnecessary things for himself. He decides to get up 15 minutes earlier each day to spend time with God.

When someone speaks to him angrily, he decides to reply gently. He decides to remain in love and goodness always. He decides not to read certain news items in the newspapers that will stimulate his lusts. In every situation, he decides to humble himself and not to justify himself. He decides to give up certain friendships that are influencing him towards the world. Through constantly deciding to deny his own will (what pleased him), he becomes strong in his will to please God alone.

What did he lose by not buying that unnecessary thing, or getting out of bed 15 minutes earlier, or by giving up his human sense of dignity and asking for forgiveness? Nothing.

But think of what he has gained!

A man like that, who is consistently faithful in the little things will in a few years’ time become a trustworthy man of God – not because of the Bible-knowledge that he possesses, but because of his faithfulness in the little decisions he takes in life not to please himself but to please God.

Don’t be weak-willed then. Exercise your will to please God at all times. Mature

Christians are those who “because of practice (in exercising their will in the right direction through many years) have their senses trained to discern good and evil (Hebrews 5:14).”

Consider an illustration: Two fat men go to a doctor to remove their flabbiness. The doctor gives them a course of exercises for the next 12 months.

One man goes through the discipline of those exercises consistently every day, and slims down and becomes strong.

The other man does the exercises for the first few days and then slackens off and finally gives up altogether. His pot-belly gets fatter and fatter with his undisciplined ways, until he finally dies prematurely.

This is an illustration of how we can make our wills strong to do God’s will, or leave them flabby and weak for the devil to exploit.

I remember reading once of a young servant of the Lord who felt he had been watching too much television (even though he had been watching only clean programs), and who decided one day not only to sell his TV set, but also to use the time he had spent watching TV, in prayer every day. As a direct result of that little decision that he took – and maintained – God gave him a ministry that blessed thousands.

No partiality

Those who see nothing wrong in watching clean programmes over TV, find that God does not entrust them with much – for He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him and there is no partiality with Him.

Yes, you are what you are today because of the many, many little decisions they you have taken in relation to either denying yourself or pleasing yourself in the areas of food, money, sleep, reading, etc.

Time is running out fast. Those who are over 40 years of age, and who have spent their lives pleasing themselves cannot expect to do much for God now, for they have wasted the best years of their lives. Those past years of your life are gone – gone forever. Even Almighty God cannot restore them to you.

But if you repent even now, you may yet be able to do something useful for God with the second half of your life.

But I want to speak primarily to those who are still in their teenage years and in their 20s. Let me tell you that God wants to bless you in such a way that you become a blessing to others. He wants to entrust

an important ministry in His church to you by the time you are 30 or 35 years old. But will He find you faithful in the next 10 years or so of your life, so that He can accomplish His will in your life?

If you determine to be faithful from now on, you will have no regrets in eternity, no matter how much you may have failed in your past life up until now. Take life seriously then. Think of how Jesus lived in the days of His flesh in Nazareth, and follow His example.

Say to yourself, “I have been born on this earth, to DENY my own will, and to do the will of my Heavenly Father.”

Do you think the devil will allow you to take seriously what I am telling you now? No. He will tell you that there is plenty of time. He will tell you that such a life of self-denial will be a strain. He will tell you that God doesn’t mind you enjoying yourself, or indulging yourself a little bit here and there. He will tell you to take it easy, etc., etc.

Why? Because he wants you to drift aimlessly for the next 20 years, and to wake up when it is too late.


Young people, don’t be fooled by Satan. God has given you only one life, and time is running out fast. Don’t waste it.

You will find more than enough believers around you (even among those who have understood the new and living way) who have no interest in living such a disciplined, wholehearted life. Don’t judge them. Don’t be a Pharisee and despise them. Mind your own business and don’t be a busybody in their affairs. Believe the best about them and leave them alone.

But at the same time don’t follow their example. Be different. Let Jesus alone be your Example. You have a calling over your life and you cannot afford to lose that, no matter what else you may lose on this earth. Think often of the day when you will have to give an account of your life at the judgement seat of Christ.

So forget the blunders that you have made in life. Repent radically of your sins and be wholehearted in the days to come. God forgives you and blots out your past. Don’t mope over your failures now, or you will be a drifter in the future, too.

The memory of your failures will help you to recognise that you are what you are today only by the grace of God. It will also enable you to keep your face in the dust at all times before God.

Determine that you will become a true man or woman of God. He who has an ear to hear, let him hear. 



Be being filled

by Roy Hession

LET us look at that great apostolic word, “And do not be drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).” Let us note the grammar involved in that word “be filled,” for it has helpful lessons to teach us.

First it is in the imperative mood, that is, it is a command. It is just as much a command of God to be filled with the Spirit as it is not to be drunk with wine, which is the phrase that immediately precedes it.

If we are not cleansed by the Blood of Christ *and* filled with God’s Spirit, we are disobeying God.

To be filled with the Spirit is not optional but obligatory on every Christian, whether a housewife, a business man or a preacher. Indeed this fullness is as much commanded at the sink as in the pulpit, and it is not commanded for our compliance at some future date, but now!

Secondly, this verb “be filled” is in the passive voice. It is not fill yourself, but be filled. It is something that is done to us, not something we can do ourselves. This implies that all we have to offer is emptiness.

If only we were more content to take that position before God, we would be more often filled.

Instead, we are all the time making attempts to come other than as empty sinners and to meet our own needs, when we should be letting Him do it.

Being filled with the Spirit is not an attainment, but an “obtainment” – obtained through simple faith by those who know and acknowledge their emptiness. They were saved by grace without works, and they expect to be filled on the same principle.

A word of testimony may help here. On one occasion there had been real defeat in my walk as a Christian and I was much oppressed with a sense of failure. I turned idly to a notebook of mine, and saw two words which I had scribbled there some

time before, “Be filled.” They seemed to come as a direct word from God to me.

“But, Lord,” I said, “I am such a failure.”

“I know,” He replied, “but be filled.”

“But not so soon after defeat,” I said, “I must surely improve first.”

“You need do nothing of the sort first,”

He said, “Be filled – and be filled now.”

“But how can I when I feel so oppressed with my sin?”

“The Blood of Jesus cleanses from all sin,” He replied patiently. “Be filled and be filled now!”

Be filled, be filled, be filled was all that came back to me in reply to every doubtful thought.

This was the last message I would have expected from God that day. To go from the lowest to the highest so immediately seemed impossible. But when I saw the power of the Blood of Jesus to cleanse completely, I could only bow my head and say, “Amen, Lord” to both His command and promise, and receive the cleansing and the filling.

A day of rich blessing followed and others got something of the overflow.

Not for super-saints

The simple truth is that the fullness of the Holy Spirit is not merely for super-saints who by their consecration and devotedness may be deemed to have qualified, but sinners and failures who have learnt to repent and who see the perfect, present cleansing available to them in the Blood of Jesus.

Thank God, whereas this word is in the imperative mood, it is in the passive voice. This simply means that “it is of faith, that it might be by grace,” and this in turn means that “the promise might be sure to all the seed (Romans 4:16).” Not only to saints of high attainments, but to feeble, failing people like some of us.

Grace by its very nature makes the promise sure to failures who admit their failure, and they can do that now.

Someone has said, “The Spirit’s fullness

is not the reward of our faithfulness, but God’s gift for our defeat.”

The Holy Spirit was not given to the disciples in Acts 28 as the culmination and reward of their wonderful service – but He was given in Acts 2 when they had proved themselves cowards, meeting behind barred doors.

There is, therefore, no need to struggle for self-improvement first, for that is to seek the Holy Spirit “not by faith, but, as it were by the works of the law (Romans 9:32).” Nor is there any need to wait for Him as some have thought. There is no need to wait any longer than it takes us to be willing to call sin, sin and come to the cross with it.

The third thing to note about the word “be filled” is that it is in the present continuous tense. This, of course, is not apparent in the English translation. Indeed in the English language we do not use the present continuous tense at all.

In the Greek, however, this word here is literally “be being filled.” In other words, it is not a command that we be filled once-for-all or even occasionally, but that we be filled continually.

It is not a static experience. The figure the Lord Jesus uses of the fullness of the Spirit in John 4 is of a spring of water leaping up in us. “The water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up into eternal life (verse 14).”

There is nothing very static about that!

The fact that we are to go on being filled with the Spirit is of tremendous importance, and I would beg the reader to give special attention to this point. Unless we go on being filled with the Spirit, the great initial experience by which we may have begun will become but a memory of the past, while in the present we are empty, defeated and dry.

Indeed it is a sad and rather depressing thing to hear a man tell of a past filling if he cannot tell you of a present one, too. The fact of his silence about the present is often an indication that nothing is happening in the present. Indeed I had better be silent about my testimony of what happened further back in the past if I have not a testimony of His fullness right now in the present.

The honest fact is that sometimes nothing is

happening in the present with us in spite of all our experience in the past. The blessing is ours today as we continue in His light today. But one refusal of the light, one refusal to accept conviction at any point, however small, will block the flow of the Spirit.

But the command, “be filled,” that came to us yesterday comes to us again today in our present condition, and the Blood that cleansed us yesterday will cleanse us today if we will repent today, and the Lord Jesus who filled our cups to overflowing yesterday will do the same today.

Our need for a continuous filling with the Spirit is matched by the continuous cleansing from sin which the Blood of Christ imparts. Indeed 1 John 1:7 has another of these hidden present continuous tenses. It should read, “If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son goes on cleansing us from all sin.”

This continuous cleansing is, however, not automatic. It only goes on cleansing as we go on walking in the light, that is, go on saying “yes” to what that light reveals, which in turn means go on repenting.

A lady missionary from East Africa told me how she was greeted once by one of the African Christian leaders who asked her, “Are you praising the Lord this morning, sister?”

“If you want to know the truth I’m not,” she replied, “not this morning.”

“Why is that?” he asked.

After a moment’s hesitation she replied softly, “I lost my temper in my bungalow this morning.”

All he answered was, “Has the Blood of Jesus lost its power?” and quietly passed on.

That was just the message she needed. She saw it had indeed not lost its power and it was not long before she had come to the Lord in repentance and been cleansed and filled afresh, with a consequent new testimony of praise to Him.

Even the most outstanding initial experience of being filled with the Spirit can only be maintained by a constant readiness to be cleansed in the Blood of Christ from the smallest things as they come. Without such continuous cleansing and continuous fullness, the great initial experience will become little more than a sad memory, which only accuses us of our present emptiness and coldness.

Indeed a conspicuous experience in the past has sometimes proved to be a life-long liability to a man, for he is always haunted by the memory of that experience which in spite of his struggles, he cannot regain. But if we are willing to “walk in the light, as He is in the light,” saying “yes” quickly to all that that light reveals as sin, the Blood of Jesus will keep on cleansing us from all sin, grace will restore what sin has taken away and our experience

of the Spirit’s fullness will be fresh and up-to-date.

All this has many important implications, one of them being in the matter of fellowship. The fact that some Christians have had an experience of the gifts of the Spirit and some have not, has sometimes imposed a strain on their fellowship one with another.

The fact that a man has had an experience of the gifts of the Spirit will not of itself prevent sin coming into his heart, and once it has come, no harking back to those experiences or endeavouring to gain new ones will restore peace. For that, he must come to the Cross of the Lord Jesus as a sinner, as empty as if he had never had any great experiences.

Nothing but the Blood of Jesus can wash away his stain and make him whole again. There he will meet others who have likewise found the inability of their respective doctrinal backgrounds to help them in their time of need and who are repenting at the Cross.

There is not a thing to choose between the whole lot of them! They are just a bunch of sinners, but sinners who are finding for that very reason the middle walls of partition between them broken down and themselves having fellowship with one another.

A new relationship

If we were only willing to live more on the basis of a “now” relationship with God, we would find the fancied ground of our superiority to one another crumbling beneath our feet.

In the “now” we would have to confess sometimes that things had gone wrong with us, and in the “now” would have to find our way to the feet of Jesus for restoration.

There we would find ourselves drawn in love to others who were being equally honest. No harking back to past experiences can take the place of this honest dealing with God in the present.

But this dealing with God is not all repentance. It is faith, too.

And faith, as someone has said, is not asking for what we have not got, but making use of what God says we have.

It is our response simply to God’s Word. The Word comes to us and faith believes and says, “Thank You, Lord.” But the Word has got to come to us or else faith is merely an effort of our own.

To illustrate I quote my experience in this very piece. As I was at work on the earlier part my mind seemed dull and lifeless

and my heart uninspired. I said to myself, “If ever there was a time when I did not feel filled with the Spirit, it is now. And yet I am trying to write about it.”

In that condition I was tempted to strive in prayer and ask God desperately for what I felt I did not have. But mercifully I just had not the strength to do any such agonising. Along that line I felt defeated before I began. I felt, too, that to go hunting around in my heart for something to repent of would also be mere self-effort.

At an end of myself, I could only tell the Lord my condition. That morning in my reading, God’s Word came to me. “You have an unction from the Holy One, and you know all things (1 John 2:20).” God said I had it.

As I turned to my Bible and read further, I saw that the passage referred to went on to say, “And as for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you (verse 27).”

I saw that He said that the anointing I had received of Him, abides, or to use another word, remains, and does not change.

It was God who said I had this and it did not change. I did not have to think it up. It was God’s given word to me in my needy condition.

How safe, then, to turn from my feelings or lack of them, to receive the Word and say, “Thank you, Lord!”


And how quickly new life, enlargement of heart and help came to me from the Holy Spirit. I saw again the truth that faith is not asking for what we have not got but making use of what God says we have.

It is my experience that I have never come out of coldness and deadness, except by faith. For even where repentance seems to be the dominant act, there yet has to be faith.

Never has deliverance come by some longed-for climactic experience suddenly hitting me. There has certainly been the longing for some such experience, and the praying for it. But the feebleness of my desires and of my praying has made me despair and give up before I had begun.

Then came His word, declaring some blessed fact of grace, then faith believing it to be true, followed by God performing that which was declared and promised, so that one could say at the end, “He has both spoken to me, and Himself has done it (Isaiah 38:15).”

Experiences there have been, plenty of them, but invariably following faith.

In the light of all these rich provisions of His grace, do we not hear Him say to us: **Be filled and be filled now!** 

Why lyrics matter

by John Piper

I'M writing this on Sunday night, after a day of worship with the people of God. And musical worship is such an important part of our embodied life together.

But I don't think I've ever looked at the lyrics of a contemporary worship song in a question. We do today.

"Hello, Pastor John! My name is Samuel, a young minister through music. My church's worship team struggles with a new worship song – What A Beautiful Name – a widely acclaimed song because of its musical orchestration and its reflection on God's glory and the kingship of Christ.

"However, my worship team finds the lyrics of the second verse questionable: 'You didn't want heaven without us, so, Jesus, you brought heaven down.' Our question is, Does saying, 'You didn't want heaven without us' imply a man-centred gospel?"

"The statement isn't necessarily false, but the implications could be skewed. That's our fear. Additionally, the word 'so' is used afterwards, implying that the following statement of 'bringing heaven down' was founded upon the first statement of not wanting heaven without us. Much like the word 'therefore,' 'so' implies heaven was brought down in response to God not wanting heaven without us.

"Do you believe these lyrics are biblically valid?"

Let me start broad and then get specific because I love the issue. I love the concern.

The first thing I want to do is praise God for a worship team that is struggling with issues of truth in song lyrics. This is really good news. It's a good sign and I hope all worship leaders who read this would be encouraged to do the same. One of the reasons this is really good news is that a congregation learns its theology, and takes it down into the crevices of their soul, by the songs that they sing, not just by the preaching they hear.

Powerful means of teaching

Historically, it's the hymnody of the church that has, alongside preaching, been one of the most powerful means by which a church is taught. I would guess that in some churches the songs may be more decisive in the way truth is embraced because the preaching is so thin when it comes to doctrinal teaching.

Of course, the songs may be very thin as well.

You can sing very thin songs that just repeat even great sentences like "his name is great." That's true, but does it ever say *why* it's great or *how* the cross grounds its greatness? I say amen to the struggle, and I commend every worship team to be vigilant over the lyrics of what their people

are singing.

The second thing I would say is that the last 30 or 40 years have been an incredibly fruitful time for writing new lyrics and new music for the church. This is a great thing. This is a great sign of life. The psalmist says five times, "Sing to the Lord a new song (Psalm 33:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1)."

Jesus said, to balance things, "Every scribe" – you could say every worship leader – "who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old (Matthew 13:52)."

What this means is that, given the hundreds and hundreds of worthy, substantial, rich, deep, old hymns that speak nourishing doctrinal truth, and given the many, many, many new songs of the last 30 years that are solid and Christ exalting and gospel rich and God centred – there is no reason for any church to sing songs that are misleading or even questionable.

It's not as though any worship team who has access to the internet is backed into a corner not knowing what to sing or having to sing something questionable. Because there are hundreds of glorious, rich, beautiful, contemporary and old songs.

My main response to Samuel is find the old and the new, the rock solid and beautiful, and use them.

You are teachers in the church. Let this

sink in.

James says, “Let not many of you become worship leaders (because you’re teachers – see James 3:1).” Let not many of you become worship leaders because as teachers you will be judged more strictly. Right after the pastor comes the worship leaders who are choosing what teaching is going to happen while people are singing their hearts out and absorbing all this truth (or non-truth) that these people have put in front of them.

Lacking in gravity

Now, to the specific lyrics Samuel is concerned about. There’s a thread of teaching in some songs today that seems, to me, to lack the gravity of God’s passion for the glory of God above all things.

My sense is that, until a congregation is devastated by the outrage and the horror of our sin as demeaning and belittling to the glory of God, accompanied by a majestic vision of God’s glory and justice and holiness and wrath – until those two realities are taught and felt deep down, the reality of grace and mercy will not be rightly known and cherished by a congregation.

It seems to me that there’s a strain or a thread of songs that tend to assume that people’s sorrows, shame, and difficulties in life are enough of a backdrop (a bad backdrop) to make the mysteries of the glory of the gospel known over against them. I don’t think so.

I don’t think the sorrows and the shame that people bring, without being taught what their real condition is, are enough to help them understand grace. In fact, people are going to distort grace if it’s not taught against the backdrop of the biblical bad news rather than the bad news that people bring which they think they understand to be the bad news. It’s not the bad news.

The New Testament assumes that people need to be taught what their real terrible condition is under the power of sin before grace can really be the God-exalting reality that it is. I see that in Ephesians 2:1-10 and Ephesians 1:4-6, for example.

Samuel is right that the question is not whether a statement in a song is literally true by itself but what effect it has on the people. That is, how does it fit into their view of God? It may be that the same truth will be sung one time in one context, but it will not be sung another time in another context because the whole tendency and

tone of the context is going to be misleading. It’s going to confirm error in the hearts of the people.

Was God lonely?

I don’t favour the lyric he quotes. It fits too easily into a theology of a God who created because he was lonely, and then saved people for the same reason. He just can’t be happy without us.

To be sure, we should sing about God’s amazing delight in us as his children. Witness the father in the parable of the prodigal son throwing a party when his son comes home (Luke 15:11-32). Witness Zephaniah 3:17, where God sings over his people.

What is so amazing about that is that God is not miserable and lonely without us. He’s not motivated to sing over us because we have just made up for some poor deficiencies that God has – and now, at last, His weakening deity is strengthened by our presence, and He can be happy finally. That’s not the picture of the Bible!


God’s delight in us is the overflow of His fullness, not the compensation of His emptiness. Does the song help the people feel that wonder? That’s the question.

Here’s another popular lyric that we sang it in Asia recently. I wish they weren’t

singing this. It’s very popular: “Like a rose, trampled on the ground. You took the fall and thought of me above all.” That’s not true.

It’s not helpful. I’m not frankly even sure what it means. Above all what? Above all other people whom He saved? No, it can’t be that. Above all His own glory? No, not His own glory. Thought of me above all what?

That was a beautiful song before it got to that line. He saved us precisely so that we could see and savour His glory as the supreme treasure of the universe above all. I’m not sure what the lyrics are trying to communicate, but it doesn’t communicate that to most people.

My conclusion is God has been at work in history, and he’s been at work wonderfully in the last 30 years to produce hundreds and hundreds of solid, gospel-rich, doctrinally faithful, Christ-exalting, big-God songs. So many that we don’t have to use the ones that seem theologically skewed and that may mislead our people. *John Piper is founder and teacher of desiring-God.org and chancellor of Bethlehem College & Seminary. For 33 years, he served as pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis. He is author of more than 50 books, including Reading the Bible Supernaturally.* 

God Is Able

God is able to save all who come to Him. “Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them (Hebrews 7:25).”

God is able to keep. “For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day (2 Timothy 1:12).”

God is able to sanctify. “Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen (Jude 24&25).”

God is able to give strength for victory in every weakness. “Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand (Romans 14:4).”


God is able to empower for fruitful service. “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work (2 Corinthians 9:8).”

God is able to deliver in temptation. “For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted (Hebrews 2:18).”

God is able to protect from danger. “If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king (Daniel 3:17).”

God is able to supply the needs of them who obey Him. “And Amaziah said to the man of God, But what shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the army of Israel? And the man of God answered, The Lord is able to give thee much more than this (2 Chronicles 25:9).”

God is able to fulfill His promises in me and to me. “He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform (Romans 4:20&21).”

The guarantee. “Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen (Ephesians 3:20&21).” 

University settles lawsuit with scientist who found soft tissue in dinosaur bones

by Chad Dou

CALIFORNIA State University at Northridge (CSUN) scientist Mark Armitage found soft tissue in a dinosaur bone, a discovery that throws significant doubt on evolution.

Then, two weeks after publishing his findings, he was fired.

Now CSUN has paid Armitage a six-figure sum to settle his wrongful termination suit based on religious discrimination. While the university admits no wrongdoing, Armitage's attorney said they feared losing a protracted lawsuit because of a "smoking gun" e-mail that backed the plaintiff's case.

The case of Armitage is the latest to show the mounting hostility Christians face in academics and other public arenas.

"Soft tissue in dinosaur bones destroys 'deep time.' Dinosaur bones cannot be

old if they're full of soft tissue," Armitage said in a YouTube video. "Deep time is the linchpin of evolution. If you don't have deep time, you don't have evolution. The whole discussion of evolution ends if you show that the earth is young. You can just erase evolution off the whiteboard because of soft tissue in dinosaur bones."

Armitage was hired as a microscopist to manage CSUN's electron and confocal microscope suite in 2010. He had published some 30 articles in scientific journals about his specialty.

A graduate of Liberty University, Armitage adheres to the "young earth" view, against the majority of scientists who say our planet is 5 billion years old. He engaged students in his lab with Socratic dialogue over the issue of the earth's age based on his and others' research, he said.

In May 2012, Armitage went on a dino-



saur dig at the famous fossil site of Hell Creek in Montana, where he unearthed the largest triceratops horn ever found there. Back at CSUN, he put the fossil under his microscope and made the startling discovery: unfossilised, undecayed tissue was present.

If the dinosaur were 65 million years old, the soft tissue could not have possibly remained, he says. His findings seconded groundbreaking discoveries by noted molecular paleontologist Mary Schweitzer, who triggered an earthquake in the world of paleontology when she published about soft tissue in dinosaur bones in 2005 (Schweitzer subsequently postulated that iron is responsible for preserving the soft tissue.)

Armitage's February 2013 study was published in the peer-reviewed *Acta Histochemica*, a journal of cell and tissue research. Two weeks later, he found himself without a job.

We will not tolerate your religion

A biology professor had come into his office and said, "We are not going to tolerate your religion in this department!"

Armitage fought back. Professors and students alike had praised his work managing the microscope lab. His suit alleged he was excluded from a secret meetings of the microscopy committee. In a "smoking gun" e-mail, university officials suggested they could ease Armitage out of his part-time position by making it full-time, Reinach said.



A colleague described the process as a “witch hunt,” according to *Inside Higher Ed*.

For two years, CSUN fought Armitage’s lawsuit. The university alleged his firing was simply a restructuring of their biology department and not a case of religious discrimination. But CSUN lost its bid to have the judge summarily throw the case out of court as groundless in July last year.

So CSUN settled with Armitage for \$399 500, according to *Inside Higher Ed*.

Alan Reinach, Armitage’s attorney, hailed the settlement as precedent-setting.

“We are not aware of any other cases where a creationist received a favourable outcome,” said Reinach, executive director of the Church State Council, a nonprofit California public interest legal organisation. “This was truly a historic case.”

CSUN has downplayed its decision to settle, saying in a statement that the university is committed to religious freedom and freedom of speech.

“The Superior Court did not rule on the merits of Mr Armitage’s complaint, and this voluntary settlement is not an indication of wrong-doing,” according to a CSUN statement published in *Retraction Watch*. “The decision to settle was based on a desire to avoid the costs involved in a protracted legal battle, including manpower, time and state dollars.”

We had them dead to rights

But Reinach countered: “They certainly would not have paid that kind of money if they did not recognise that we had them dead to rights. The state doesn’t put large, six-figure settlement money out unless they are really concerned they are going to lose.”

Prior to looking for soft tissue in dinosaur bones, Armitage studied diatoms, unicellular organisms that make up phytoplankton, which reveal a dizzying complexity and organisation at the microscopic level.



According to Armitage, the beauty and complexity of diatoms lends credence to the idea they are a product of a Creator and not of spontaneous evolution.

“Evolution is structure supported by two pillars: one is chance, and the other is time. Chance is required because we obviously can’t say that a thinking force created life on earth. That is anathema for the materialists. If you kick out one of those two pillars the whole structure

collapses,” Armitage noted. “If you kick out chance by showing incredible design, the structure of evolution starts to totter and it may crash. Because you cannot have design in a world that doesn’t have a Designer.

“The other pillar is time, because you cannot get a man from a frog unless the princess kissed the frog. That’s a fairy tale. So in science you have to have deep time to get evolution.”

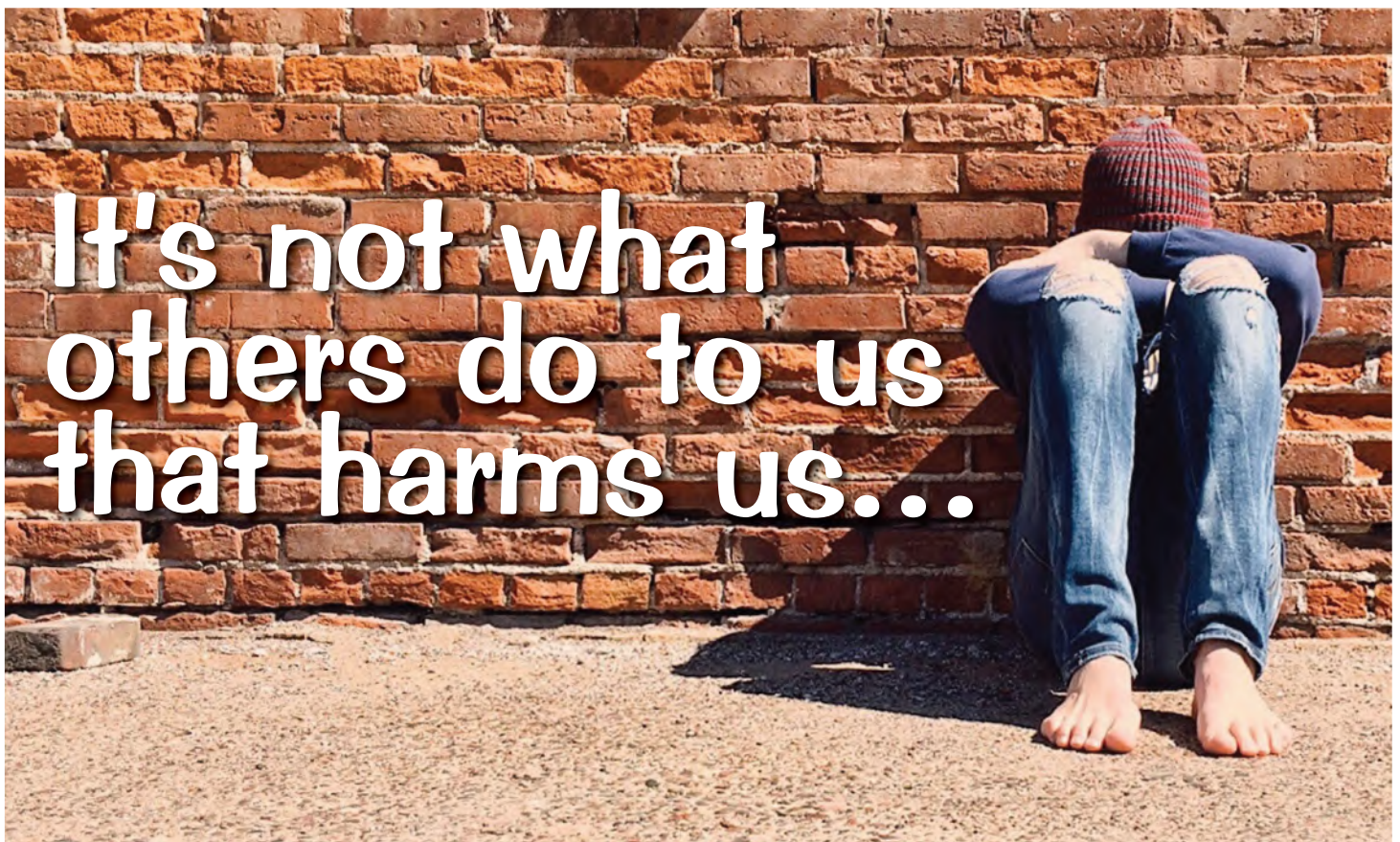
Subsequent to the controversy, Armitage has been on additional digs and found more soft tissue but is finding it difficult to get published. “I’m clearly being black-balled,” he said in *The College Fix*.

“Soft tissue in dinosaur bones destroys deep time,” Armitage said. “Dinosaur bones cannot be old if they’re full of soft tissue.” 🐉



The Power of the Blood of Christ

1. We have redemption through the Blood of Christ (Hebrews 9:12; 1 Peter 1:18; Ephesians 1:7; Revelation 5:9).
2. We have remission of sins through the Blood of Christ (Hebrews 9:22; Matthew 26:28).
3. We are sanctified through the Blood (Hebrews 13:12).
4. We are purged by the Blood (Hebrews 9:14).
5. We have forgiveness of sins through the Blood (Ephesians 1:7).
6. We have peace with God through the Blood of Christ (Colossians 1:20).
7. We are cleansed through the Blood of Christ (1 John 1:7).
8. We have been washed by the Blood (Revelation 1:5).
9. We have been made kings and priests through the Blood (Revelation 1:6).
10. We overcome the devil through the Blood (Revelation 12:11).
11. We are justified by the Blood of Christ (Romans 5:9).
12. We are reconciled to God by the Blood (Romans 3:24,25).
13. We have life as we drink the Blood (John 6:53-56).
14. We enter into the holiest by the Blood (Hebrews 10:19).
15. The Blood of Christ is described as a “Fountain open for sin and uncleanness (Zechariah 13:1).”
16. The Blood of Christ is called “the cup of blessing (1 Corinthians 10:16).”
17. We are made nigh to God by the Blood (Ephesians 2:13).
18. God called Christ’s Blood precious (1 Peter 1:18). 🐉



It's not what others do to us that harms us...

by Paul E. Billheimer

IT is the treasures that cost us most that enrich us. The world's greatest blessings have come out of its greatest sorrows. The poet Goethe is reported to have said, "I never had an affliction which did not turn into a poem."

Many of the finest things in Christian character are the fruits of suffering. Many a Christian had entered a trial, cold, worldly-minded and unspiritual and emerged from it with a spirit softened, mellowed and enriched.

Afflictions, sanctified, soften the harshness and adversities of life. They consume the dross of selfishness and worldliness. They humble pride. They temper human ambitions. They quell the fire of passions.

They show us the evil of our own heart, revealing our weaknesses, faults, and blemishes and making us aware of spiritual danger. They discipline the wayward spirit.

In no other school can some of us learn the lessons of patience, tolerance and forbearance, except in the school of suffering.

One of the methods which God uses to perfect Christian character is to permit us to suffer wrongfully. Most of us think that suffering is enough and that suffering wrongfully is surely too much.

But Peter, speaking of suffering wrongfully, says, "If, when you do good, and suffer for it, and you take it patiently, this

is commendable before God. For to this you were called (1 Peter 2:20&21)."

That is a very sharp tool to use in fashioning a soul, but you know, when the operator of a lathe has a very fine piece of work to do, he uses a very sharp tool.

When God wants to carve a very beautiful design into a Christian, He uses the sharp tool of wrongful suffering. It is difficult to receive injury from others and always return kindness for it, but God has not finished with us until that pattern has been deeply in-wrought into the fabric of our souls.

It will come

We cannot avoid suffering at the hands of others. It is certain to come. But in the last analysis, no one can hurt us but ourselves.

All the wrong which men inflict on us cannot injure us unless it causes us to grow resentful and unforgiving. Only if we give way to bitterness and anger can anything really injure us.

But perhaps you say, "How can I help being bitter? How can I help being injured?"

There is a story of an Indian child who came to an old Indian chief with a wounded bird in his hand. The old man looked at the bird and said, "Take it back and lay it down where you found it. If you keep it, it will die. If you give it back into God's hands, He will heal its hurt and it

will live."

Here is a lesson of how we should do when we are hurt by sorrow. No human hand can heal a wounded heart. It must be given to God (Luke 4:18; Matthew 11:18-30).

But perhaps you have tried to lay your hurt down and you cannot. You have resisted the temptation to bitterness and you find yourself overwhelmed. You want to love, but your heart is numb with grief and you feel that you are not victorious.

Here we must take the position of faith. Many people confuse love with sentiment or emotion. Love is more than an emotion. Love is a principle. If you really desire the highest and best for the one who has wronged you, that is love, even when all emotion seems to be dead.

Love is more than weak sentiment. Love may be stern. Love considers not itself, but always the good of the loved one.

Love does not act upon the basis of emotion, but of principle. Emotion is unstable. The question is not what kind of feelings you have, but what you do with them. That is the index of the real man, the will, and not the emotion.

Many a time my heart yearns to express affection toward one of my children, when I know for his own good I must chastise him. In that case, I act on principle instead of emotion.

"Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to

sin, but alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:11)."

Are you tempted to be bitter? The bitterness is not yours as long as you refuse to accept it, and as long as you act in the interest of the one who has injured you. If you are in Christ and Christ is in you, His love for the unlovely is yours, even when you have no sense of affection.

Here is where reckoning comes in. Paul says that after we have died with Christ, our death is to be made real to us by reckoning – that is, by taking a position of faith and counting the thing done which you do not feel is done (Romans 6:1-14).

"All things are yours and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's (1 Corinthians 3:21-23)."

Christ's love is yours

If you feel bitterness in your heart, then refuse to acknowledge it as yours, and reckon Christ's love as yours. It is yours if He is yours. Accept the injury as coming from God, and as intended to be a blessing to you. See God behind the person who has injured you.

Reckon and claim Christ's love as yours, and as you take this position of faith, it will be made real. You must let go of the hurt, and place your broken heart in God's hands.

Putting off self, and put on Christ. If you do not feel a forgiving spirit in your heart, take a position of faith and say to God, "Because Your forgiving love is mine, I therefore forgive everyone of everything."

As you stand firmly upon this position of faith, refusing to yield to bitterness or resentment, God will work the forgiving spirit into your life and you will be freed even from the temptation of bitterness.

In the last analysis, no one can really harm us but ourselves. Others may treat us unjustly. They may falsely accuse us, and thus reflect upon our name.

They may even do you bodily harm, but none of these things can really injure you, unless you permit them to goad you into growing bitter and resentful, and into an attempt at getting even or taking revenge.

It is not what other people do to us that hurts us, it is our reaction; it is not even our feeling toward them, it is what we do with our feelings. If our feelings congeal into resentment, or result in an attempt to get even, then we are injured.

If we give our hurt to God and refuse to cherish ill will, and take a positive attitude of wishing and praying for God's best for

the one who has wronged us. And if we maintain this position until all bitterness and resentment is swallowed up in a forgiving spirit, then we have actually gained from the attempted injury (see Matthew 5:43-48).

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28)."

One of the reasons for resentment and unforgiveness is that we do not really have faith in God's justice and moral government. In Romans, God says, "Vengeance is mine; I *will* repay, says the Lord (Romans 12:19)."


If we really believed this, we would not try to right our wrongs ourselves. It was because of Jesus' sure confidence in His Father's love and absolute justice that when "He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously (1 Peter 2:23)."

When God says that we are not to avenge ourselves, He means that He will do the

avenging. And the very cornerstone of God's moral government is His absolute justice. The moral law is as inexorable as is any physical law. "Whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap (Galatians 6:7)," is as impossible to break as the law of gravitation.

The man who does the mean or unjust thing is the man who loses, not the injured person, if the injured person remains sweet, with no spirit of antagonism or vindictiveness in his heart.

If we are really sure of God's justice, we will not be tempted to take things in our own hands. We will rather pray for the unfortunate person who has wronged us.

And if we keep sweet and forgiving, we shall find that we are stronger for our victory over resentment. And when our training days are over, we shall be able to see with our eyes just how much these battles have meant to us. "In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you (1 Thessalonians 5:18)." 



Lord Jesus, give me a deeper repentance, a horror of sin,
a dread of its approach. Help me chastely to flee it and jealously to resolve that
my heart shall be Yours alone.

Give me a deeper trust, that I may lose myself, to find myself in You, the
ground of my rest, the spring of my being.

Give me a deeper knowledge of Yourself as saviour, master, lord, and king.
Give me deeper power in private prayer, more sweetness in Your Word, more
steadfast grip on its truth.

Give me deeper holiness in speech, thought, action, and let me not seek moral
virtue apart from You.

Plough deep in me, great Lord, heavenly husbandman, that my being may be a
tilled field, the roots of grace spreading far and wide, until You alone are seen
in me, Your beauty golden like summer harvest, Your fruitfulness as autumn
plenty.

I have no master but You, no law but Your will, no delight but Yourself, no
wealth but that You give, no good but that You bless, no peace but that You
bestow.

I am nothing but that You make me.

I have nothing but that I receive from You.

I can be nothing but that grace adorns me.

Quarry me deep, dear Lord, and then fill me to overflowing with living water.

From an old Puritan prayer 



What Christ means to me

by Vance Havner

IT IS a privilege to speak to my friends in the name of Him who has called us His friends if we do the things which He commands us. Someone asked Charles Kingsley, "What is the secret of your beautiful life?" He answered, "I had a friend."

And I have often thought that if this life of mine ever approaches the beautiful and true it will be because

*I've found a Friend, O such a Friend!
He loved me ere I knew Him;
He drew me with the cords of love,
And thus He bound me to Him."*

There are many things about which I am too ignorant to speak wisely – and, I hope, too wise to speak ignorantly – but I can speak of Christ with freedom, for then I am boasting of Another and not of myself.

Josh Billings used to say, "I'd rather know a few things for certain than be sure of a lot of things that ain't so!" In a day when men are chasing a thousand and one things that "ain't so," I rejoice in "Jesus

Christ the same."

I have found in Christ a life that is beautifully simple and simply beautiful. In Him I find, first of all, **PARDON**. "God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

I have read of a Russian soldier who, years ago, sat in his tent one night before a list of debts he could not pay. He had written at the bottom of the list, "Who is to pay for all this?" As the hours went by, he finally fell asleep. The Emperor came by, looked in the tent, saw the soldier, came up closer, saw the list of debts and the pitiful question. It is said that the Emperor affixed his own royal signature to the bottom of the list, so that when the soldier awoke, he found his debts paid.

I know that once I faced moral and spiritual debts which I could not pay. But Jesus, with the blood of Calvary, wrote, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." Is it any wonder that rainy days become radiant days when the heart can sing?

*"Jesus paid it all;
All to Him I owe.*

*Sin had left a crimson stain;
He washed it white as snow."*

Because Christ means Pardon, He also means **PEACE** to me. Through Him I have peace with God, and as I make my requests known to God with thanksgiving, the peace of God which passes all understanding – and as someone once said, all misunderstanding too! – garrisons my heart and mind through Christ Jesus.

This world has no peace: "There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked." We are all so crazy these days that it has been reported that monkeys have been known to go insane watching people on the outside of their cages!

Someone has spelled modern life in three words, "Hurry, Worry, Bury." The world has insomnia of the soul. It has tried all the opiates and sedatives, but there is only one prophylactic against fear and worry. You don't keep it, it keeps you: "My peace I give unto you, not as the world gives."

Then Christ gives me a **PURPOSE**: "To live is Christ." A woman met her husband

when he got off a merry-go-round and she said, "Now, look at you: you spent your money, you got off right where you got on, and you ain't been nowhere!" It is a perfect picture of modern living.

A philosopher once said, "One reason why some folks never get anywhere is because they weren't going anywhere in the first place." But Christ gives us a purpose, and that purpose is just Himself. As the Mississippi flows through the middle of America and the tributaries feed into it on both sides, so when one seeks first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, all else flows into that central purpose, to know Christ and to make Him known.

Christ also means **POWER**, the power to see the purpose through. "All power is given unto me," He said, and Paul declares, "I can do all things through Christ." Jesus is not only our Saviour, He is our sustenance, He is "the power of God." His power is made real to us by the Holy Spirit, not that we may brag about it but that we may be His witnesses.

And then He means **PLENTY**, spiritual abundance. "All things are yours," says Paul to the Christian. Again he speaks of "having nothing, yet possessing all things."

It is the Christian's paradox. He doesn't have to get rich, he is rich, for "the Lord is rich unto all that call upon Him (Romans 10:12)." Most of us appreciate but do not

appropriate what we have in Christ. We carry cheques on the bank of heaven and never cash them at the window of prayer. We are Bible window-shoppers: we stroll up and down through the show-windows of God's Word and never possess what we perceive. God, who spared not His Son, shall with Him also freely give us all things.

Jesus made the difference

Finally, Christ gives me an eternal **PROSPECT**. "Where I am, there ye may be also." Someone has said, with reference to the life to come, that in the Old Testament they were willing to go but wanting to stay, while in the New they were wanting to go but willing to stay. Jesus had made the difference. And what a difference it makes to be with Christ!

A mother whose little son had died, told her little daughter, "Your brother has gone to be with Jesus." Later, in conversation with a friend, she spoke of having lost her little boy. The daughter spoke up and said, "But, mother, you said he was with Jesus. How can he be lost if you know where he is!"

Truly, the Christian can say of his departed loved ones in Christ:

"Death can hide but not divide;

Thou art but on Christ's other side.


*Thou art with Christ and Christ with me;
In Christ united still are we."*

These are some things Christ means to me. All I need is found in Him. He is Alpha and Omega and all the letters between He is the same yesterday, the historic Christ; the same today, the indwelling Christ; the same tomorrow, the coming Christ.

People ask me sometimes, What is your persuasion? I tell them that I am of Paul's persuasion: persuaded that nothing can separate me from God's love in Christ; persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed against that day; and, knowing the terror of the Lord, constrained by the love of Christ, I would persuade men.

Christ is my message. Some years ago, two boats were passing each other on the Mississippi, when one passenger said to another passenger, "Look, there's the captain!" When asked for an explanation, he said, "Years ago, we were going along like this and I fell overboard. That captain rescued me. And since then, I just love to point him out!"

Some years ago, I was overboard, in water too deep for my wit and will to navigate. But the Captain of our salvation leaped overboard from glory to rescue me.

And I just love to point Him out! 

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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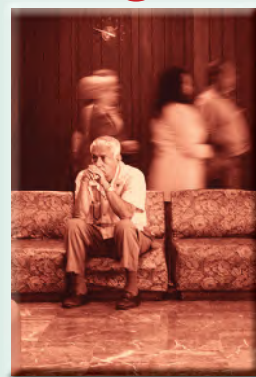
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Brokenness is so crucial

by Delwyn McAlister

IDON'T watch many movies but one of my older daughters insisted I watch *V for Vendetta* with her. It happened to be one of those movies that leaves us wondering how much truth is hidden behind the fiction.

One part I'll never forget was when a young woman (chosen to make a difference in a dictatorial, chaotic world) came to a point of utter brokenness, which led to her raising her arms in absolute surrender to the cause. As I watched this I was reminded of the reason we are broken, and that is to bring us to a place where we surrender our all.

The fragrance from Mary's alabaster box could not be released until it was broken. To activate the anointing and ignite revival you will need to allow the Lord to totally break the outer you so the inner fragrance can be released.

Watchman Nee comments on this theme by writing, "The breaking of the alabaster box and the anointing of God filled the house with the odour, with the sweetest odour. Everyone could smell it."

Wherever you meet someone who has really suffered, been limited, gone through things for the Lord, willing to be imprisoned for the Lord, just being satisfied with Him and nothing else – immediately you scent the fragrance. There is a savour of the Lord. Something has been crushed, something has been broken, and there is a resulting odour of sweetness.

Psalm 51:17, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart – These, O God, You will not despise."

The greatest need in Christendom today is not necessarily more training seminars and conferences. The supreme need is for men and women to be broken before God. Once broken, we will be empowered with divine supernatural energy and the anointing will be overwhelmingly evident, and we will be well equipped for revival.

Lower, lower down

During the Welsh Revival of 1904, the song heard frequently from the lips of broken, contrite hearts was, "Bend me lower, lower, down at Jesus' feet."

Peterus Octavianus, a man greatly used by God in the 1973 revival in Borneo, reminds us, "Revivals do not begin happily with everyone having a good time. They start with a broken and contrite heart."

Smith Wigglesworth believed, "You cannot take people into the depths of God unless you have been broken yourself. I have been broken, and broken, and broken. Praise God He is near to those who have a broken heart. You must have brokenness to get into the depths of God."

Evangelist Sammy Tippett shares a time God showed him the importance of brokenness: "One morning as I was sitting on one of those boulders and contemplating the majesty of God, nature began to give me some answers. I noticed something very interesting about the grass with fresh dew on it. The blades that stood tall and reaching towards the sky had no droplets of refreshing water, but the blades that were bent to the ground had several droplets on them. That grass reminded me that seasons



of spiritual refreshing often come when we're bent and broken. The life that stands tall and arrogant can't hold the dewdrops of heaven.

"As soon as they hit a proud heart, they roll off leaving that soul dry and thirsty. But Divine dewdrops rest on the heart that's bent and broken. It's the position of brokenness that enables us to experience the refreshing waters of life."

Here is an example of someone who has shared his first experience of being broken: "The first time I can distinctly remember the experience of being broken, I was about 18. At that time I didn't understand anything about what was happening, except that it was painful and it hurt. Throughout a conference I was attending, I was walking around like a peacock with his feathers displayed. I was thinking, 'My goodness, what am I going to do when the conference is over? Everybody is going to want me. How am I going to say "no" to so many people? I am going to be in such demand. What am I going to do with myself?'

"But when the conference came to an end, I had not been chosen to be on anyone's team. Nobody wanted me. The selections were made, and I just sat there all alone. The next few days I said to myself over and over again, 'I will never preach again. I will never teach again. I don't ever want to do ministry again. Nobody wants me...'

"That was the first time I can distinctly remember knowing the need to embrace the cross. I began to understand then that my worst enemy was my own stubborn, unbroken life."

The author of this testimony, K.P. Yohannan, became founder and international director of Gospel for Asia. He has written more than 200 books, including a national best-seller with more than 1.5 million copies in print.


A number of years ago, an impressive palace was being built in Iran. Part of its construction was a long mirrored hallway leading up to the throne room. But when the mirrors arrived, many of them were broken. To the onlookers' astonishment, the interior designer started smashing all the other mirrors. One year later the hall was open for all to see, and there was the most elaborate hallway of mosaic mirrors, far superior to the original design.

So it is with us, beloved reader. We are a mosaic of magnificence if we allow the breaking, and allow the Designer to create what He chooses.

Psalm 34:18, "The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit."

Many people are tentative at the prospect of being broken, but let me assure you from someone who has been broken again and again, that there is blessing in brokenness. Without brokenness we would remain proud, arrogant, selfish, and callous. The outcome of brokenness is genuine humility and a total reliance on God.

"The question is no longer if revival will come, but rather through whom will revival come? Where are the humble and broken people who will allow God to initiate a mighty visitation through them?

"Will you allow Jesus to break you and use you in the coming revival? Invite the Holy Spirit even now to fill you with that kind of all-consuming vision and calling. Yield to the Spirit and give Him permission to ache, weep and pray through you! Humble yourself and repent of anything that would hinder or quench the Spirit of revival! Ask the Lord to let you feel what He feels about the state of the Church and the world (David Smithers)." 

WATCH & PRAY

Thanks to
Elizabeth Kendal

CHINA: 'BIG BROTHER' INVADES CHURCH

In March, authorities in Zhejiang Province ordered all churches to be fitted with surveillance cameras. In Wenzhou, church property has been damaged and parishioners injured and arrested as cameras have been installed by force. Unable to resist the installations, some churches are disconnecting or redirecting cameras. The government claims the cameras are for security, but most are not convinced.

China's 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-2020) includes a plan to implement a "social credit system" based largely on data collected from the myriad of surveillance cameras currently being rolled out nationwide. As every Chinese citizen over 16 has a government-issued photo ID card, these cameras, armed with sophisticated facial recognition software, will enable the government to reward its "friends" and punish its "enemies." Please pray for China and the Chinese Church.

SERIOUS THREAT OF HINDUTVA IN INDIA

The ideology of Hindutva (Hindu nationalism) was formulated in the early 1900s as a way to counter British colonialism. Today, Hindutva is a political tool used to fan Hindu pride and dragnet the Hindu vote to consolidate the power and privilege of Hindu elites. Whilst Hindutva supposedly promotes equality of Hindus,

non-Hindus are marginalised as second-class citizens.

Refusal to "return" to Hinduism is viewed as a betrayal against the Hindu nation. The result is religious apartheid with violent persecution. As animists who traditionally vote Congress, the tribals have long been the prime targets of Hindutva activism. These activists view Christian missionaries – almost exclusively Indian nationals – as their principal enemies. Five northern tribal states already have anti-conversion laws; another will soon follow.

MASSIVE JAIL TERMS FOR MANY BELIEVERS IN IRAN

On 12 June three Azerbaijanis and an Iranian, arrested at a wedding in June, 2016, received 10-year prison terms for "activities against national security." On July 4 Pastor Victor Bet-Tamraz and three Persian converts received 10-year prison terms for "activities against national security." They had been arrested at a Christmas celebration in 2014 and a picnic in August, 2016.

Pastor Victor's wife, Shamiram, and their son, Ramiel, have also been charged and are awaiting trial. On July 6 four members of the Church of Iran in Rasht received 10-year prison terms for propagating house churches and promoting "Zionist Christianity." Two of those sentenced, including Pastor Yousef Nardkhani, will spend two years in internal exile far away from their families. Please pray for

these Christians and for Iran.

CAR: ISLAMIC MILITIAS MORE HEAVILY ARMED THAN EVER

The town of Gambo in the Central African Republic's volatile south-east has been in the hands of Islamic militants since 2013. Violence has escalated markedly this year as Muslim militias have split into factions along ethnic lines and escalated their attacks on civilians. In Gambo, women have been specifically targeted. On August 4 anti-Muslim defence militias known as "anti-balaka" invaded Gambo to drive out the ethnic Fulani Muslim militants. As UN peacekeepers chased the anti-balaka into the bush, the Islamic militants in the town invaded a hospital and slit the throats of men, women and children.

Church leaders lament that the UN peacekeepers are failing to protect civilians and that the Islamic militants "appear more heavily armed than ever." May God intervene; a

breakthrough is needed. Pray for CAR and its peacemaker Church.

HIGH COST OF DEFENDING RELIGIOUS LIBERTY IN VIETNAM

Arrested in April, 2011, Lutheran Pastor Nguyen Cong Chinh has suffered heavily for his public defence of religious liberty, as has his wife, Tran Thi Hong. On July 28 Pastor Chinh, his wife and their five children arrived in Los Angeles, USA, having accepted a deal from Vietnam's Communist regime that saw Chinh freed on the condition that he leave the country. On July 30 authorities charged Protestant human rights lawyer and religious liberty advocate, Nguyen Van Dai, and five associates with "carrying out activities aimed at overthrowing the People's administration." As the alleged instigator, Dai could face from 12 to 20 years in prison, a life sentence or a death sentence. As his "accomplices," his co-accused could face 5 to 15 year terms.

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), 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 Mervale (near Howick). Peter Pollock will be preaching – and, what's more, you're invited to stay for lunch, too!

Suffer gently



THE quickest way to get out of great trouble, or suffering, is to so yield ourselves up to God that we suffer with a patient and gentle spirit.

We are living in a world where sorrow and suffering and trouble are indigenous, and sprout like the weeds everywhere. We must go through much trouble and suffering of various kinds, and if it does not spring from one source it will from another.

Now, if we are rebellious and fretful, and are constantly chafing our souls under trials and laying the blame on other people, and murmuring against God, and always fighting with our circumstances, we only bruise our own spirits, and add to the troubles, and postpone the period of our deliverance.

Your case is a peculiar one, of course, and so is every other case as peculiar as yours. You are tempted to lay the blame of your great trials on this or that person, or you recriminate yourself, and lash your own feelings into a tempest forever getting yourself in the fix you are in.

Or Satan tries to make you curse God and die, as he attempted with Job; or you are disposed to think God does not love

you, and is dealing with peculiar severity in your life.

Then you think of how many people there are who could give you relief from your suffering, or could easily change your circumstances in life, and you wonder why they do not do it. Many suggestions come to your mind of what might have been, or what might be.

If you will put yourself utterly into the hands of God, and in your heart detach yourself from persons, and places and things, and plans, and gently sink into the Holy Spirit, and ask Him to so flood you with gentleness and love and faith that you can bear all things in God's will, you will soon find the Lord beginning to work blessed changes both in your inner life and in outer circumstances.

The very things you are suffering, and that seem to be a wreck and ruin in your life, you will see in the end were the very instruments best adapted to perfectly subdue every part of your will and heart to Jesus.

In all your suffering, if you lay the blame on others, or allow your mind to dwell upon the fortunate circumstances of other people, or allow yourself to pine and chafe, you will delay the blessed purpose of your

Heavenly Father, and cripple your faith and becloud the operations of your mind.

Suffer gently.

Sink quietly into the invisible arms of God.

Cling to Jesus.

Love the blessed Holy Spirit and talk constantly with Him.

Do not try to break the chains of trouble that seem to bind you, but put them in the gentle hands of Jesus.

Do not be anxious to have your troubles come to an end, but keep asking God that the suffering may produce in you a perfect fitness of heart and mind to fulfill your life mission.

Be like a lamb that bears without bleating.

Rest assured that just as soon as the Lord gets your soul into the very place He wants it, He can and will quickly alleviate many a trouble, and bring you out into a large place where you will praise Him for everything He has allowed to come into your life.

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28)." 