

Prepare^{the}Way

Preparing the Bride of Christ for the return of Christ

Issue No. 118

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NEEDED! **A prophet of God**

Peter Pollock

**Who is carrying
your coffin?**

**What's so
bad about
Dominion
Theology?**

**What to do
when you fail**

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COVER: "Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest.' Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest (John 4:35)."

Talk to us..

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Hazardous materialism

by J. V. Fesko

A MINDSET that is popular today is that the more wealth and things a person can accumulate, the better his life will be. In a word, it is living a life dominated by materialism.

We certainly recognize that idolising any possession or thing is inherently wrong; God commands us not to raise up any idol in our lives. Anything that takes the place of Jesus Christ is ultimately a bad thing. Yet for the inquisitive mind, naked commands often only generate questions in the heart, questions about why materialism is such a dangerous foe to the Christian.

What about materialism makes it so deadly? To answer this question we must first determine the purpose of man. Against the backdrop of the purpose of man, the dangers of materialism become more evident.

When we think of the purpose of man, we focus on the opening chapters of the Bible, to the Garden of Eden. It was there that God created man in His own image. God “made him a little lower than the angels,” and “crowned him with glory and honour (Psalm 8:5).”

Man was set over all earthly creation as its lord, just as God sits over His creation as its Lord. Moreover, man was to live in the presence of God, finding satisfaction solely in his Lord. Yet as we all know, man was not satisfied with this state of affairs and rebelled against God.

The apostle Paul tells us that men, professing to be wise, became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man, birds, four-footed animals, and creeping things (Romans 1:22&23).

John Calvin perhaps best summed it up when he wrote that “scarcely a single person has ever been found who did not fashion for himself an idol or spectre in place of God.”

This brings us to two important conclusions. First, man was created to find his satisfaction solely in God, and second, due to his rebellion he can and does turn anything into an idol. When we take this as the backdrop to materialism, it gives us a greater understanding of its dangers.

No Christian ever starts out intending

to be an idolater, worshiping possessions rather than Christ. Instead, a person makes one purchase here, another purchase there, and then one’s thoughts soon become consumed with the next material acquisition. Slowly but surely, like a child who nibbles at dessert before the meal, there is no longer room for the main course – the thing that really matters.

Not poison but apple pie

John Piper observed that “the greatest enemy of hunger for God is not poison but apple pie. It is not the banquet of the wicked that dulls our appetite for heaven, but endless nibbling at the table of the world. It is not the X-rated video, but the prime-time dribble of triviality we drink in every night. For all the ill that Satan can do, when God describes what keeps us from the banquet table of His love, it is a piece of land, a yoke of oxen, and a wife (Luke 14:18-20).

“The greatest adversary of love to God is not His enemies but His gifts. And the most deadly appetites are not for the poison of evil, but for the simple pleasures of earth. For when these replace an appetite for God Himself, the idolatry is scarcely recognisable and almost incurable”

Keep in mind that just as there is nothing wrong with eating dessert, there is also nothing wrong with material possessions. Rather, it is the priority of those material possessions in our lives that makes all of the difference in the world. There is no inherent piety in either want or abundance of material possessions.

Saints throughout redemptive history have fallen into both categories. Abraham had 300 servants (Genesis 14:14) and John the Baptist had little or no possessions, but both ardently sought after God. The main issue is to recognise the danger of idolatry that exists with materialism, and to do that we must recognise the emptiness involved in materialism.

With material possessions we stare into the eyes of an alluring yet vapid substitute for God. We must realise that material possessions are temporal – they do not endure.

As Christ reminds us:

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal (Matthew 6:19&20).”

Moreover, when we consider that God created us to find our satisfaction only in Him, then we are ultimately on the fool’s errand if we believe that we will find true satisfaction in what is temporal.

This is not to denigrate material possessions – good gifts that God showers upon us. When we, however, worship those good gifts, we become the proverbial dog chasing his tail – we will never find satisfaction.

We know, for example, that Abraham, though a wealthy man, did not fall into the trap of materialism. He had many possessions, and God even promised him that he would inherit the Promised Land (Genesis 17:8).

Yet we know from the author of Hebrews that the Promised Land is not that for which Abraham yearned: “For he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God (Hebrews 11:10).” Abraham did not give priority to what was fleeting, but rather sought what was eternal.

It is only when we seek to live according to our designed purpose – to find satisfaction solely in Christ – that we will be truly content. These two aspects of the dangers of materialism, namely the subtle way that materialism can lure us away from God and the fleeting nature of material things help illustrate the way that God wants us to conduct ourselves.

We must remember who we are: sons of the living God and citizens of the Heavenly Kingdom, New Jerusalem (Romans 8:16&17; Revelation 3:12). We must not live as though we were still inhabitants of this present evil age (Galatians 1:4). Rather, we must live with our eyes firmly set upon Christ, the one who has inaugurated the age to come: the eternal age.

With our sight firmly fixed on Christ, His beauty and excellence will far outstrip the allurements and temptations of materialism. Let’s never let possessions or things take the supreme place of Christ.



Who is carrying your coffin?

by Peter Pollock

“COME let us make man in our own image,” said God. And He did just that. First came Adam and then Eve and God was pleased with what He had made. He says so! There are three components of the human being – mind, body and spirit. The mind is our soul, our psyche, our being, the body is the tent we live in and the spirit is the God part of us.

God is Spirit, says the Bible, so it is the spirit which is the image of God in us; it is the spirit that enables us to communicate with God spirit to spirit; and it is the spirit that makes us superior to all God’s other creations (because all of them have only a mind and a body). Only humans have spiritual capacity!

Furthermore, God gave us our own will. He could have made us all robots bowing and scraping to Him, but God wanted us to have our own right to choose or even refuse Him. How mind-boggling!

Having given us our own will, God gave us the opportunity of exercising that will when He told Adam that he could eat of the fruit of any but the one central tree in the Garden of Eden. If Adam ate of the forbidden fruit, he was warned, he would die!

We know how the devil got involved, tempted Adam and Eve and finally led them into eating the banned fruit. Did they die? Not in the mind or in the body, but certainly so spiritually. They separated themselves from God and confirmed that really the only death of any consequence is spiritual death, because if God is core of the universe, and you are separated from Him, you are as dead as the proverbial Dodo.

When Adam and Eve died spiritually, man became “mortal” – which means subject to death. He became Adamic – meaning mind, body and a latent, or dead, spirit. He became sinful – a sin-drenched wretch! Spiritual death meant that man had lost the image of God.

And so life, in fact, became a “funeral march.” Thanks to Adam and Eve we are all born “dead” spiritually. A life-time later we consequently die “dead” spiritually. In other words, we are born separated from God and then die separated from God.

It is a case of “walking through the valley of the shadow of death” as described in Psalm 23. Life thus became a “funeral march” – for want of a better description. Ask someone how to get to hell, and the answer is simple – just keep walking!

At Adams fall, the devil took charge and death ruled supreme. But God had a solution. He sent His Son, Jesus, to pay the price for our sin and rebellion and restore the spiritual link – that’s why Jesus is the way, the truth and the life.

So it’s only Jesus who rescues us from the “funeral march” we are born into. But until we meet Him and get “born

again,” we are all in our biers, our coffins, on our one-way life paths to death. Those biers, those open coffins of old, had four bearers and I am going to introduce you to the “big four” – the four grim reapers who are busy carrying all non-believers to hell and damnation.

Just picture yourself, Mister Unbeliever, lying in your coffin, looking up. Looking down at you, menacingly peering and gloating are these four pall-bearers carrying you and your coffin to an eternity outside God. There should be no graver concern for anyone than the thought of spending timeless eternity separated from God.

The first pall-bearer is **PRIDE!** Triumphant standing over you, chest puffed out even on this day of mourning, he is wallowing in the special honour and glory, for him, of leading the mourners. Even at a funeral, pride of place and the desire to be recognised, raises its ugly head!

**Think positive,
act successful**

The success syndrome is well and truly entrenched. It is a world of CVs, and it insists that the boasting and bragging is acceptable. These days it appears okay to cut corners and to cheat with claims and credentials, not to mention all the exaggerations. We are told to think positive, to act successful and dream big – all part of major-league modern pretence.

Goals and ambitions are healthy and biblical. We are encouraged to run the race to win and to have vision. But we have converted it all into obsession that swallows us, our families and our society. We reckon the keys to life are knowledge, learning and qualifications. Even in the church we look for Christian elitism, a sort of super-spirituality as we try to outdo each other. It is a wrong spirit, absolutely a wrong spirit!

“Thinking themselves wise, they became fools,” says scripture – and that’s exactly what is happening. I recall once at a Promises Keepers meeting at the Three Rivers Stadium in Pittsburgh, the one speaker prayed: “Father, please forgive me and others like me who through our great learning have done nothing but divide your church.”

Intellectual moralists and liberals abound in the church, much to its detriment. These people make intellect their god and even insist that God answer to that intellect. Believe it or not, the devil

is calling the shots.

The golden rule is that he who has the gold rules!

We all know the 10 commandments but we live by the 11th commandment – thou shalt not get caught. Who are we fooling? Man gets away with absolutely nothing. It all finally gets caught up in the dirty washing for those who think they are fooling God. Our egos are monsters, developing into veritable ogres with fame and success.

“I’ve got my pride” – how often have you heard that, as if it’s perfectly okay? “I did it my way” – the devil’s anthem – is a much-favoured song choice at funerals, and the “Great American Dream” is our chosen path.

We believe that success, fame and fortune will finally bring us peace and fulfilment. As King Solomon found, life is a chasing after the wind, a meaningless sojourn except that you find God. And finding God is not just knowing about Him, but truly meeting Him through being “born again.” Romans 8:20 tells us that life is futile outside Jesus!

The second pall-bearer is **PLEASURE**. He stands there with a naughty, knowing smirk on his face. Live it up is his life motto.

“Live” is “evil” spelt backwards! The self-gratification syndrome really appeals to our self-indulgence. If it “feels” so right, how can it be wrong? We don’t take sin seriously, as if it’s just a normal part of life and growing up.

Some think that the devil is a fun guy. Don’t be an old stick-in-the-mud. Get over it! Suck it up! All of these are modern encouragements to ensure the devil has his way. The devil is always available to tempt you with money, power, booze, birds and bucks!

“I will give you the world,” he promised Jesus. They are the devil’s time bombs – sex and mammon! You can’t serve God and mammon, says God’s Word. Riches is a world obsession, because money buys power, influence and friends.

At the other end of the money scale is the issue of credit, which is simply being funded by money you don’t have and can’t afford. Whatever the world may say defending this iniquity, credit finances greed, feeds lust and pays no attention to the biblical warnings that the “borrower is always servant of the lender” and that the “rich will always govern the poor.”

The devil just loves to lend money, and sign you up for the brotherhood of debt,

because he knows that debt pulls the trigger on suicides, murders and divorces. And the devil is laughing all the way to the bank.

Sex? It is a special sin – that’s why God is so explicit, so that there is no doubt, no confusion about just how serious it is when we disregard the sacredness of the marriage bed. The feeling of emptiness and guilt tends to accompany adultery and illicit sex, leaving you feeling dirty and used.

Why, you may ask? Because God has ordained it so! Sex is not a toy to answer to our libidos, and fornication is always a sin.

The third pall-bearer is **PEOPLE** – that ever-present fear of man. We are intimidated, manipulated, blackmailed and bullied so much so that we, not unexpectedly, treat it as normal.

What will people think?

With spiritual cowardice rife, the fear of man continues unabated. Like it or lump it, these “phobias” make up peer-group pressure. “What will people think?” dominates most of our actions – and we are just too timid to own up or do anything about it.

Man’s inhumanity to man should scare us! Have you ever watched kids being cruel to one another? We turn a blind eye, preferring to note only the cute and positive stuff. We argue that we don’t want to ruffle feathers, to keep the peace but deep down we are just too scared to confront the issue.

It takes a lot of courage to stand up to your enemies, but it takes even more courage to stand up to your friends – wrote a famous authoress. Mob madness put Jesus on the Cross and people power will never stop in its relentless pursuit to persecute and undermine the Gospel.

In Mark 12:14 Jesus is described as a man of integrity. Why? Because he does not fear man and determines everything he does by the Word of God.

People-power is a huge influence that determines and manipulates our lives, whether we want to believe it or not. Worldly compromise and powerlessness are inseparably linked in the Christian walk, and the more we seek man’s praise, honour and approval the more we will be undermined and frustrated in our Christian walks.

Finally we have the **POSTPONE-MENT** pall-bearer. He has a master’s degree in procrastination. Even as you

are reading, he will be saying to you: “Yes, it’s all true but don’t go overboard. Everything in moderation! He is an evangelist. He is giving you the radical slant on the story. But surely not? Don’t rush. This is a big decision! Time is on your side. Do it tomorrow!”

The only problem is that tomorrow never comes. Today is the day of salvation!

These four pall-bearers were there with Adam and Eve, they were there with Jesus in His temptation and they are there constantly hounding you and me. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life – that’s how they are clearly listed in scripture.

And there is, of course, the ever-present devil with his “surely nots” – that constant nagging about a loving God not being in the sin, repentance and judgement business.

All the denial, and all the false teaching in the world, won’t alter the truth that God is a disciplinarian and that sin reaps consequences. The devil is happy for you to hear anything religious or philosophical. He is happy for you to sit in church, as long as the true gospel is not preached.

Be involved in as many causes as you can


The devil just wants to prevent you from getting “born again.”

He is happy for you to sew up the ozone layer; to sort out the melting icecaps; to plant more trees in the rain forests and to be involved in as many marches and causes as you can, as long as they are just about church, religion, good works and fixing up the world. Anything but born again, born anew or born from above is acceptable!

And the devil is currently much into the “church business,” encouraging the franchising of ministries and big church movements and falsely prophesying the success of these ventures. Only Jesus is going to bring about change. That’s the truth!

Luke 7:14 reads: “Then He came and touched the open coffin and those who carried him stood still. And He said ‘Young man, I say to you arise.’”

Yes, it is only Jesus who can stop funeral processions. Only Jesus can halt the march of those pall-bearers!

Are you still in your bier being carried to eternal separation from God? Or have you met Jesus Christ? It is the ultimate and only question of any true consequence in our time here on earth! 

✿ The Spirit-Filled Life ✿

by Ruth Paxson

IN the divine plan there is as definite a purpose in the gift of the Holy Spirit as in the gift of the Son. Through the Son the sinner has life; through the Spirit the believer has life more abundant. Through the Son the sinner leaves the sphere of the natural and enters the sphere of the spiritual; through the Spirit the believer is lifted to the highest heights of life on the spiritual plane.

It is God's purpose that every Christian should live a life of deep growing spirituality. The Holy Spirit lives within us to accomplish this in three ways. He reveals through the Word the fullness to be had in the glorified Christ. He creates in our hearts a desire for this fullness, and then He acts as the channel for its transmission from Him to us.

In one terse command God shows us the highest point the believer can reach in relationship to the Holy Spirit.

"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18)."

"Be filled with the Spirit." You have Him dwelling in you, but that is not enough. Give the Spirit full right of way. Let Him fill you from centre to circumference. Permit Him to energise you with His mighty power through filling you with Himself.

"Be filled with the Spirit." This is every Christian's birthright. By virtue of the new birth he has the right to such fullness. It is not the privilege of a few but the prerogative of all. Are you despising your birthright, as Esau did his, and selling it for a mess of pottage? Do you care more for pleasure or money or position than you do for the fullness of the Holy Spirit?

"Be filled with the Spirit." This is every Christian's need. No one can live a truly spiritual life without the Spirit's fullness. One hundred and twenty were filled at Pentecost. Only 11 of them were apostles. Some were women who went back home to cook, to sew, to care for a family; others were men who returned to the field and the shop. The names of only a very few are recorded in the Bible, but I have no doubt that the rivers of living water flowed from the lives of all into other lives.

Do not think you are too young to be filled with the Spirit. It will save you from the years of wilderness wandering of many older Christians. Do not say that you are too old, that the hold of sinful habits is too strong upon you. Give the Spirit a chance. Only admit that to be filled with Him is

your greatest need and submit your life to Him, and He will do the rest.

"Be filled with the Spirit." This is every Christian's responsibility. "Be not drunk with wine." Do you obey this command? Surely you do. "Be filled with the Spirit." Do you obey this command? Why not? Is it not equally binding upon you? Is not God dishonoured through disobedience to one just as much as to the other?

As no Christian is refused the blessing of such an experience, so none will be exempt from its responsibility. As refusal of life in Christ is the greatest sin of the unbeliever, so refusal of the abundant life through the Spirit is the greatest sin of the believer. The fullness of the Holy Spirit is not optional but obligatory. "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit."

"Filled" – "Full" – "Fullness."

"Be Filled with the Spirit" – *A Crisis.*

"Full of the Holy Spirit" – *A State.*

"Filled unto all fullness" – *A Process.*

The apostles were with Christ for three years, but they were not filled with the Holy Spirit until the day of Pentecost. This was a *crisis*. But they were filled more than once, until we read of Stephen and of Paul that they were "full of the Holy Spirit." This was a *state*. But there was an inexhaustible, infinite fullness from which they might draw according to their receptive capacity, so there was a continuous infilling. This was a *process*.

There should be a definite time when we are "filled" for the first time. But there should be repeated infillings that we may be habitually full and yet ever taking in more and more of the fullness of God. To be spiritual one must be filled and kept filled...

Prerequisite to Fullness – Cleansing

The infilling of the Holy Spirit demands cleansing. Two commands given to Christians reveal this fact very clearly.

"Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30)."

Grieve is a love word. You cannot grieve one who does not love you. You can hurt him or anger him but you cannot grieve him. The Holy Spirit is a loving, tender, sensitive Personality. To grieve Him means that we are causing pain to Someone who loves us. How can we know what grieves Him? By His names which indicate His nature.

He is the Spirit of Truth (John 14:17). Anything false, deceitful, hypocritical – grieves Him. Is there a lie in your life? Then do not expect to be filled with the

Spirit of truth until your heart is cleansed.

He is the Spirit of Faith (2 Corinthians 4:13), so doubt, unbelief, distrust, worry, anxiety, grieve Him. Do you doubt His Word? Is there unbelief regarding the fundamental truths of salvation? Do you worry over your business, your children, your health? If so, you are grieving the Spirit of faith and He cannot fill you.

He is the Spirit of Grace (Hebrews 10:29), so that which is hard, bitter, ungracious, unthankful, malicious, unforgiving, grieves Him. Is there anybody whom you will not forgive or to whom you will not speak? Is there someone with whom you have quarrelled? Is there bitterness in your heart toward God? Do you spend your days in murmuring against your circumstances? Then do not pray to be filled with the Spirit unless you are willing to be cleansed.

He is the Spirit of holiness (Romans 1:4), so anything unclean, defiling or degrading, grieves Him. Do you harbor unclean thoughts? Do you read unclean books? Do you have degrading pictures hung in your home? Do you listen to unclean stories? If so, you are grieving the Holy Spirit.

He is the Spirit of Wisdom (Ephesians 1:17), so ignorance, conceit, arrogance, and folly, grieve Him. The Holy Spirit stands ready to teach us and to reveal the deep things of the Word to us. Our ignorance of the Bible, our pride in our own knowledge and ability and our foolish ways, grieve Him.

He is the Spirit of Power, Love and Discipline (2 Timothy 1:7), so our weakness, fruitlessness, disorderliness and lack of control, grieve Him. There are thousands of people all around you who are still unsaved and who do not know the gospel. Perhaps some of these are in your family. Why cannot Christ win them? Because the channels through which His power should flow are choked with sin. Are you embittered because you have been wronged and is your life poisoned by hatred? Do you give way constantly to your bodily appetites, your fleshly desires and your temperamental weaknesses? All this grieves the Holy Spirit.

He is the Spirit of Life (Romans 8:2), so anything that smacks of indifference, lukewarmness, dullness or deadness grieves Him. Do you go for days without opening your Bible? Do you prefer the haunts of pleasure to the house of prayer? This grieves this wonderful Spirit of life.

He is the Spirit of Glory (1 Peter 4:14), so that which is worldly, earthly or fleshly, grieves Him. Are you carnally minded? Do you love the world? Is your heart set upon the things of earth? This grieves the Holy Spirit.

He dwells within to enable us "to grow up into Christ in all things;" and to bring us daily "into conformity to His image." So anything in us which hinders Him from carrying out this purpose grieves Him. Knowingly to permit anything which is contrary to what the Holy Spirit Himself is, to remain in your life must mean that you love sin more than you love Him. Such unfaithfulness grieves Him.

Spirituality depends upon an harmonious relationship with the Holy Spirit.

"God does not require golden vessels. Neither does He seek for silver ones, but He must have clean ones."

"Quench not the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19)."

We "grieve" the Spirit when we say "Yes" to Satan when he lures us into sin. We "quench" the Spirit when we say "No" to God when He woos us into sanctification and service.

To bring the believer wholly into the will of God is perhaps the Holy Spirit's hardest task. Self-will is latent in every one of us and is always bursting out into rebellion.

The only cure for it is a deliberate choice to do God's will in all things, at all times, and at all costs.

It is to have one's heart firmly fixed upon the doing of God's will as the rule for daily life and to permit no exception to the rule.

To grieve or to quench the Spirit is sin. He dwells within us to purify and cleanse us. The Holy Spirit brings out into the light the sin in our lives, and the more completely He fills us the more perfect will be the revelation and recognition of sin.

The nearer God comes to us the more sensitive to sin are we made. Some things which a year ago or even a month ago you would not have called sin you now acknowledge to be sin.

The Means of Cleansing

For sinner and saint alike nothing but the blood of Jesus suffices to cleanse from sin. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7)."

The Christian is in constant contact with sin and the very tense of the verb shows that he never gets beyond the need of the cleansing blood of Christ.

The Method of Cleansing

The Holy Spirit will tell us what grieves Him, will point us to 1 John 1:9 and then our responsibility begins. God requires but one thing of us – a frank, full confession prompted by a true heart repentance. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and

just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9)."

God will accept no substitute for confession and He instantly detects a counterfeit. Have you ever thought that God would accept from you a larger gift of money, greater activity in service or a longer prayer in lieu of a confession of sin? Or are you self-deceived in thinking that regret because of suffering for the punishment of sin, or a forced acknowledgment of some offence with no heart sorrow for the sin itself is confession?

Sometimes a supposed confession is a confession of the other fellow's sin and a justification of oneself. Oftentimes a confession is but a partial one. Some surface sin is mentioned while the root sin is altogether unconfessed.

Some sins need to be confessed only to God because against Him only have we sinned (Psalm 51:4). Other sins need to be confessed to individuals against whom we have sinned (James 5:16), and again a public confession of sin is sometimes necessary when the whole company of God's people have been wronged (Joshua 7:19-25).

The Measure of Cleansing

The cleansing must be from all defilement of both flesh and spirit. Separation from every defiling thing is God's requirement.

"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (2 Corinthians 7:1)."

God demands a cleansing that reaches from the innermost desire to the outermost deed; that goes from the core to the circumference of our lives. He asks us to take His conception of sin which regards a lustful look as truly sin as a lustful act, which sees a murderer in the one in whose heart there is hatred as truly as in the one in whose hand there is a bloodstained dagger.

God commands us to cleanse both the inside and the outside. Is there a root sin in your life that has been there for years? Roots multiply and spread. There is then a trail of sin marking the path of your life since. You must go back over it, claiming

cleansing for all sin.

God's withholding of His presence in power from His own children until sin is put away is very strikingly revealed in His dealings with the children of Israel over Achan's sin. God had told them that, when Jericho was taken, no one was to take any of the spoils for himself. But Achan, coveting gold, silver and a Babylonish garment, took them and hid them under his tent. No eye but that of the all-seeing God saw it done. Immediately afterward Israel met with overwhelming defeat at Ai. Joshua, falling upon his face in prayer, charged God with blame for such humiliation before their enemies.

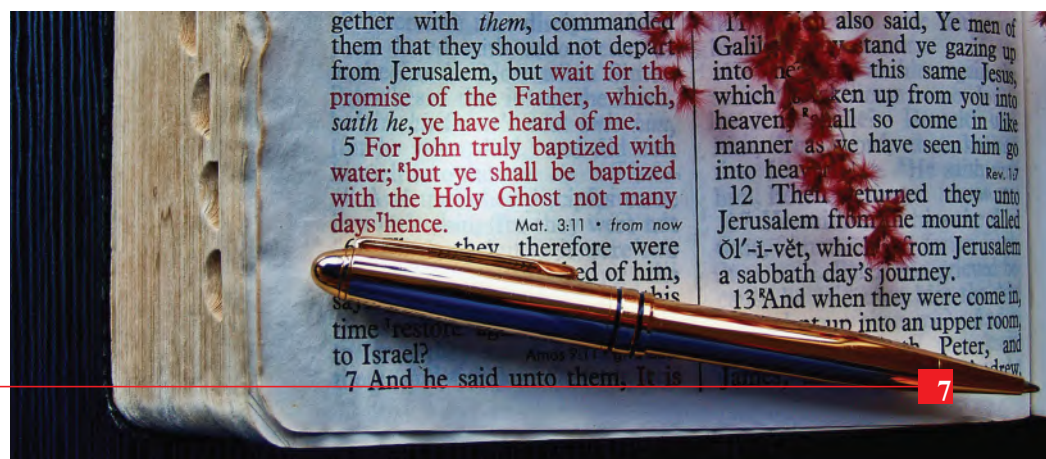
But God commanded Joshua to stop praying. He told him that he would not presence Himself with power in their midst so long as the accursed thing was there. The man who had coveted, stolen and lied must be found and confession of sin made.

Is there an Achan in your church who hinders the manifestation of God's power? Are you the man? Have you been praying fervently for the fullness of the Holy Spirit while all the time there has been the continued indulgence of some known sin, the wilful disobedience of some known command, or the deliberate resistance of God's clearly revealed will.

If so, God is saying to you:

"Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face? Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. For they have even taken some of the accursed things, and have both stolen and deceived; and they have also put it among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they have become doomed to destruction. Neither will I be with you anymore, unless you destroy the accursed from among you. Get up, sanctify the people, and say, 'Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, because thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'There is an accursed thing in your midst, O Israel; you cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you (Joshua 7:10-13).'"

So long as you are living with a grieved or a quenched Spirit you cannot be filled. To be filled one *must* be cleansed of sin. ☞





After failure

by K.P. Yohannan

YEARs ago a man came to me seeking counsel. He served as a full-time minister and was very well-known for his extraordinary giftings. Within the first few minutes of our time together, he broke down weeping. I could hardly make out what he was saying because of his intense sobbing. Finally, through his tears, he voiced his deep pain with these few words – “I lost it all. I failed.” He had fallen into adultery.

His sorrow was deep and his repentance more sincere than any I have ever witnessed. He knew the depths of his failure and was crying out for mercy and hope, wanting to believe they were still available to him. By the grace of God, I was able to speak the words he needed to hear and to pray with him.

Years later I learned that this gentleman who took such a hard fall had fully recovered. God’s grace was lavished upon him and brought restoration. Now his life and his gifts were being used in multiplied ways, more than he ever thought possible after such a moral failure.

Through the years, I have witnessed similar situations, revealing the gracious way God works.

There is an irony here, however. I have also witnessed younger brothers, placed in less influential settings, fall in minor ways and lose it all. There was no adultery or murder, yet these who failed in what

many would consider smaller ways were sometimes driven out of the ministry by what they had done.

It makes me wonder, “What happened?” The veteran who should have been wiped out from the ministry is restored and thrives, his life being used to touch thousands of people, while the rookie who really didn’t steal all that much lost out completely. How do you explain this?

It’s not the size of our sin that determines whether or not we recover from a fall. It’s our response. How we deal with our failure determines our future.

God desires to make your life into something beautiful and bring about His purposes through your failure. He wants to accomplish His perfect will in your life, but He is waiting on you.

Just as there are real-life examples from Scripture and the people we know who demonstrate God’s great skill to still bring about His best in the midst of failure, there are also real-life examples of those who never fully recover.

So there is still a question of whether God’s best for your life will be experienced. It is yet to be decided... by you!

How will you handle what is before you? Will you surrender your heart and your ways to the Lord and let Him do His work of humility within you? Or will your pride rise up and keep you captive to a life that never fully recovers?

Today He is rooting for you. I also encourage you with all my heart to take

these simple steps to recovery and a life that refuses to settle for second best.

It Begins with Honesty

God tells us that He desires honesty in our inward parts (see Psalm 51:6, NLT). Honesty is the foundation of all good things God does in and through us.

In Ephesians 6, truth is the first piece of spiritual armour we are told to put on. This belt of truth is worn around our waist, the middle of our bodies and the centre of our balance. Honesty and truth must be in place before anything else because they keep us from losing our balance and falling.

This is not the truth that is simply the opposite of lying. Instead, it is a willingness to come before the Lord without any excuses and sit quietly, letting Him search out our heart. It is an openness to hearing His still, small voice that all too often people keep trying to cover up. Then we must listen closely for what He says.

Only then will you be able to understand – without justification and explanation, without twisting the truth to put yourself in a more favourable light – the gravity of what you have done.

It may be painful for the moment, but this truth will set you free. The Lord can then begin His cleansing in your heart. This cleansing by His Spirit far outweighs any brief moments of pain.

C.S. Lewis explains it further, “It is impossible for Him to show Himself to a man whose whole mind and character are in the wrong condition. Just as sunlight... cannot be reflected in a dusty mirror as clearly as a clean one.”

It is in this experience of exposure, this act of truly being transparent before the Lord, that the way is cleared for the Spirit to really work in your life. It is the beginning of a deeper work and the foundation for accomplishing His perfect will for your life.

Out of this honesty with the Lord, you can truly admit you have failed and ask for His forgiveness. This is the first step to restored intimacy with God and others.

C.S. Lewis states, “A man who admits no guilt can accept no forgiveness.”

For each one to whom God’s best was restored, the road to recovery began with honesty and admitting their failure: from David who told Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord (2 Samuel 12:13),” to Jacob who finally admitted both his name and his character was Jacob, the deceiver (Genesis 32:27), to the thief on the cross

who affirmed that he deserved his judgement (Luke 23:41).

It was in those moments of truth for each of these men that their restoration began: that Nathan told David the Lord took away his sin and he was not going to die (2 Samuel 12:13), that Jacob's name was changed to Israel, the prince of God (Genesis 32:28), that Jesus informed the thief on the cross that today he would be with Him in paradise (Luke 23:43).

In those moments of honesty, the Lord may also show you practical steps of restoration that He wants you to take. Listen to His voice and act on what He puts on your heart. The present awkwardness is nothing in contrast to the joy of our inner man being clear before God and man.

Be aware that admitting your failure in honesty before the Lord is the exact opposite of what your flesh wants to do. When Adam and Eve sinned, their first reaction was to run for cover. Shame entered the scene, and ever since, humanity has tried to hide its failure.

The reason? Simply pride – the desire to keep who we are intact.

I advise you against this. You will only put up a roadblock on your way to recovery. You cannot skip this part and move on to the next step. It begins here or ends here.

Some hide not only from the searching of God's light, but also from those who know their failure. Though sorrowful over the way they failed, their pride keeps them captive. They go through life cutting off relationships and avoiding those who know their flaws, never admitting any wrong and never fully recovering.

Don't let the fear of man hinder what God has in store for you. Go ahead – meet that person, make that call, send that e-mail. Return what you owe. Ask for forgiveness. For the "fear of man will prove to be a snare (Proverbs 29:25)."

The brief pain of reality doesn't compare to the lasting joy and peace experienced in God's restoration. Step into the cleansing and the new life that awaits you.

Accept God's Forgiveness

You must next accept God's forgiveness. Many people today say God forgave them, but they still live with their failures clouding their lives and casting shadows over their days. They really have not believed His forgiveness.

When others have not forgiven us, it can be difficult to cling to the Lord's forgiveness. We almost feel it is wrong to

accept God's forgiveness when others are still hurting.

Yet it is not wrong. It is God's desire that we accept His gift of forgiveness and journey on the road to restoration. Give others the time and space that they need to work through their struggles. But we must receive with gladness the gift God has given us.

The Lord makes it clear in His Word: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9)." What He has told us, we must simply believe.

You see, it is God's free gift of righteousness. Notice I said free – it is not something we earn. Sanctification, yes – we fail, repent, grow continually day-by-day, becoming more like Jesus. But righteousness is not a growing process; it is simply a gift from God.

We are made righteous in Jesus, through the Father's grace. It says in Romans, "God will credit righteousness – for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification (Romans 4:24&25)."

When Jesus died on the cross, provision for sin was made. We can be washed clean. Before God, it is as though our sin never happened.

Can you imagine – the divorce never occurred or the cheating never took place? You never lied or lusted. You never fought with anyone. You never thought evil. You never committed murder.

Through Christ, you are made as pure as the day God made Adam and Eve. This is difficult for our minds to grasp and our hearts to believe – but it's true. When God looks at you, He now sees the righteousness of Jesus.

Receive His forgiveness that washes you white as snow.

Resist the Enemy

Our enemy prowls around "like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8)." In vulnerable times when we are face-to-face with failure, Satan seeks to discourage us to the point where we lose all hope.

At such times, we can become so introspective that we wallow in despair and forget the grace and forgiveness God has given us. We become so preoccupied with our failures that our enemy wins the battle against us simply because we give up.

If we are to stand against this roaring lion, we must realise that a defeated mind-

set is not from God; then we must – absolutely must! – resist the devil and his lies.

Our faith, the blood of Jesus and our testimony are powerful weapons to resist the enemy who seeks to destroy all hope for the future and the plans God has for us.

Ephesians 6:16 tells us that we must take up our shield of faith by which we can quench the enemy's fiery darts and stand against this accuser of the brethren. By the sacrifice and blood of Jesus, Satan's head was crushed. By our testimony, we confess with our mouth Jesus' victory over the enemy. We refuse to accept thoughts of confusion, accusation, guilt, condemnation and whatever else he may conjure up. We reject these because of what Jesus did for us and because we are "accepted in the beloved (Ephesians 1:6)."

Then what happens? "The accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony (Revelation 12:10&11)."

The devil is a defeated foe. Don't be fooled by his blustering.

Believe God

In every step of this process, we must believe God. It says in Hebrews 11:6, "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."

Along this journey of restoration, every step requires that we believe His Word regardless of our feelings.

So – we must believe there is hope.

We must believe that His best remains.

We must believe that His road of humility is better than our road of pride.


We must believe His restoration is more important than our reputation.

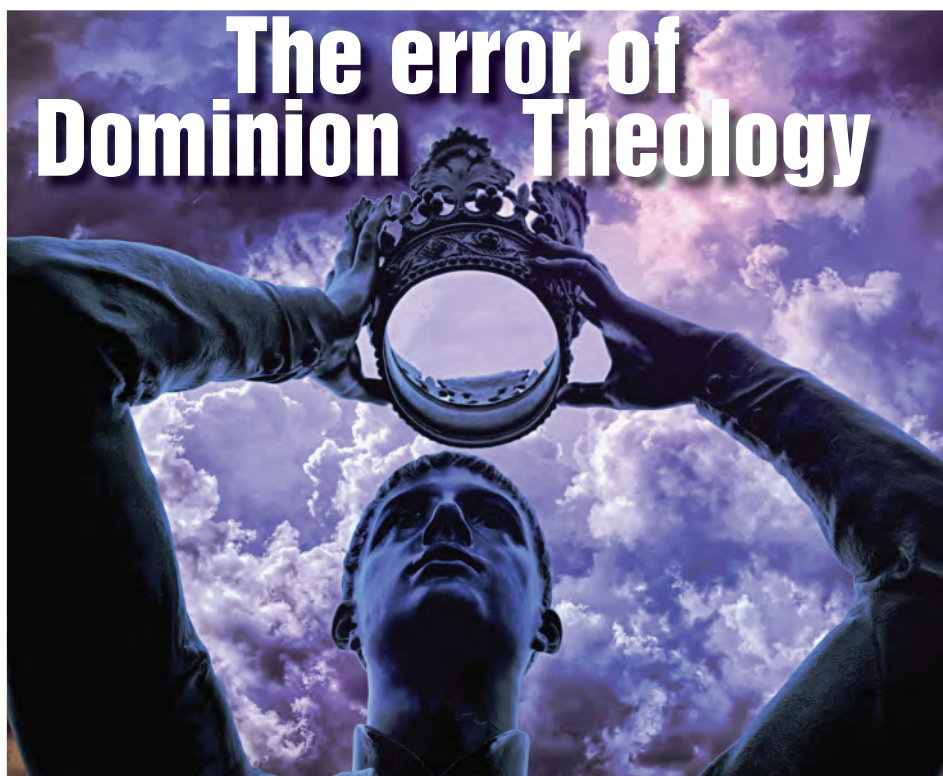
We must believe He truly forgives us.

And we must believe that by His blood, Satan's head was crushed.

The answer for which you are searching lies in believing God. This is a life of faith. Our salvation started with it, and our journey on earth will end with our first act of faith becoming sight. And all along the journey, the only way we continue strong is by faith – faith in God and in His goodness.

He is constantly working with us and is able to finish the good work that He started (see Philippians 1:6).

My brothers and sisters, nothing – *absolutely nothing* – is impossible with our God. 



by *Dennis Pollock*

ANTIVIRUS programs have become a standard component of computers these days. Anyone who surfs the net, sends and receives e-mails, and refuses to guard himself against viruses will surely have an infected computer sooner or later (probably sooner).

In the Church, Christians are often subject to spiritual viruses. These are false and misleading teachings that emerge seemingly from nowhere, and begin to multiply and take on a life of their own.

Sometimes these viruses gain a foothold for a while, then lose steam for a season, and suddenly reappear in a slightly altered form to a new generation.

Such is the teaching known as Dominion Theology. In other versions it might be called Christian Reconstructionism, Kingdom Now or Postmillennialism. The main idea is to reverse the plain teachings of Jesus and the Apostles concerning the last days.

Whereas an unbiased reading of the Scriptures leads you to the conclusion that the last days will be times of great difficulty and wickedness, this teaching reverses the scenario and predicts that the Church will eventually dominate every aspect of society and the entire world shall become Christian! There is no reference to Christ returning and accomplishing this – world dominion is strictly the Church's business.

Ministers who believe these things will often make belittling references to the idea of Jesus returning to take His people to

Himself. Those who have an eager expectation of the Rapture of the Church are characterised as "sitting around and waiting for Jesus to come." The real Christians are the ones who are out there changing the culture, transforming society, infiltrating the arts, and creating a Christian world – not looking to the skies for some kind of escape.

This kind of teaching has a militant sound which is appealing to many. We like the idea of flexing our muscles and going out and changing the world. Perhaps the world isn't doomed after all. Maybe we can save it if we just try hard enough.

The problem with this doctrine is that it looks a whole lot better at a distance than it does close up – that is if we get "close-up" to the Scriptures. A careful and close scrutiny of what Jesus and the Apostles taught about the last days and Christ's return reveal what a complete fallacy this is.

The worst part of this teaching is that it entirely throws out what the Bible refers to as our "blessed hope" – "the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13)."

The return of our Lord has no relevance for you if you are convinced you will be building a new righteous world on your own, and that perhaps in a thousand years or so the job will be completed. Jesus couldn't possibly return now – you have too much work to do!

The main tenet of Dominionism

As we have noted, at the centre of Dominion Theology is the idea that the world shall improve and progress more and more

over time, transformed by the Church. Every aspect of culture and society will be affected. Christians will infiltrate the movie industry, take control of the government, become leaders in art, science, music, medicine, education, and every other major field. False religions will crumble, atheism will collapse, and agnosticism will disappear as the world turns to Jesus. "The earth shall be filled with the glory of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11:9)."

Of course, Christians have always believed this would be the case, but orthodox Christianity expects to see this when Christ returns and establishes His kingdom rule on this earth. This new theology tells us there is no need to wait for Jesus – we can do this all by ourselves.

The first argument against such a notion is that, even apart from what the Bible predicts, where is the evidence of this? Is America of the 21st century a more godly nation than the United States of the 1950s? Are our movies and television programmes more thoroughly Christian than they were 50 years ago (Please stop laughing!)?

Do we have a higher percentage of people attending church regularly than there were in 1955? Are people more sexually pure than they were back in 1945? The answer is a huge, resounding no!

Society is far more secular than at any time in its history.

Never have our movies and TV shows been more filthy and vulgar than today. Never has music been more coarse or the typical language heard in our streets more crude. If we are making moral progress, you would have to get out a microscope to look for it.

Evidence of the Scriptures

But of course, the ultimate test is the Bible. If you are trying to decide the legitimacy of a teaching, when all else fails, open your Bible and start reading. The Scriptures could hardly be more plain in revealing that our world will be in a morally degenerate condition just prior to the coming of Christ.

Paul wrote, "in the last days perilous times will come. For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers (2 Timothy 3:1&2)..." This hardly sounds like the glowing, transformed society predicted by the Dominion folks.

In like manner, Paul told the Thessalonian believers that Christ's Second

Coming cannot occur “unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition (2 Thessalonians 2:3)...” Then he explains why it is that God will allow the Antichrist to rise to power and rule over the earth: “Because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie (2 Thessalonians 2:10&11).”

A wicked and rebellious world will receive a powerful deluding force in the person of the Antichrist due to their unwillingness to receive God’s truth. They have hated truth and loved falsehood. They have mocked Christ, calling His inspired Word a myth, and ridiculing His commands for sexual purity as primitive and antiquated. Now they shall experience the greatest delusion ever to come on the face of the earth.

You may be saying to yourself, “Well, Paul was kind of a grumpy guy, but the Lord Jesus was so positive – I’m sure He had lots of good things to say about how as we get closer to the end of things, everything is going to get better and better...”

Don’t be so sure! Jesus declared that the last days would be similar to two previous societies: the days of Noah and the days of Lot (Luke 17:26-30).

Jesus deliberately chose the two most wicked societies and times the Bible records. In both Noah’s generation and Lot’s, the prevailing cultures were so wicked, so vile, violent and immoral that God destroyed every living person, except for the families of Noah and Lot.

Of Noah’s day we read, “The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence (Genesis 6:11).” Of the people who lived in Lot’s day, the Bible tells us, “But the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord (Genesis 13:13).” Jesus chose these two cultures to describe the conditions of the last days, saying, “Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed (Luke 17:30).”

Skirting the Scriptures

The folks who preach Dominion Theology know these verses are in the Bible. They prove a tremendous inconvenience to them, but they often attempt to solve the problem by suggesting that Jesus has already come.

Yes, you read that right – they have somehow managed to convince themselves that Jesus has already come! They don’t

always put this out for general consumption, knowing that many Christians just couldn’t stomach such an idea, but if you listen to them carefully you will catch bits and pieces of this bizarre doctrine.

They suggest all the exhortations to watch for Jesus and all the dire predictions of perilous times and calamities in the last days were fulfilled historically in 70 AD when the Romans came and destroyed Jerusalem. In their view, this was the coming of Christ. There is no more return of Jesus to look for – forget about the Rapture and go out and convert the world.

Often, if they speak at all about the return of Jesus, they will refer to it in a mocking tone. How they love to use the phrase, “sitting around and waiting for Jesus to come.” The implication is that if you were as spiritual as they are, you would give up on this foolish notion of Christ returning to take you out of the world, and you would get busy changing the world.

There is an accusation of spiritual wimpiness here: real men change the world while the wimps sit around and hope to escape the world. If you are excited about the return of Jesus you must not be a real man – or a real woman!

Good or bad?

Again, the basic question to be answered here is what does the Bible say? Is it a good or a bad thing for Christians to give serious thought to the return of Jesus Christ? Is it recommended or condemned in the Bible?

Of course, this is the ultimate no-brainer. Anyone who has read the Bible the least little bit knows the answer to that. The New Testament is absolutely inundated with exhortations for us to watch for Jesus’ return.

Paul writes, “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:20).” Jesus tells us, “You yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately (Luke 12:36).”

Peter encourages us, “Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:13).”

Is there a danger of Christians sitting around and doing nothing as they wait for Jesus? Perhaps so, but in my experience I find that those who have the greatest pas-

sion for the return of Jesus Christ are far more likely to be out sharing the gospel and active in their churches than those cold-hearted believers who never give it the slightest consideration.

The classic example of this was the Apostle Paul. Here was a man who was constantly on the go for Jesus. He was evangelising non-stop, building churches, healing the sick, and getting himself thrown in jail for his aggressive style of Christianity. Yet, Paul could never stop talking about the day of Christ. The return of Jesus fills his epistles and obviously filled his heart. There is no need to try to reconcile evangelism with eschatology. They are best friends!

The true motivation


You may ask, “But if you believe you can convert the whole world, won’t that serve as a greater motivation than believing that the world is going to fall apart?”

Our motivation for reaching our world should have nothing to do with the percentage that we think may or may not believe. Imagine a Christian businessman who tells you, “I don’t think I will ever share my faith with anyone in my office. I know I could never convert the entire office, so why should I even try?” What incredibly stupid reasoning!

So what if you can’t convert your entire office? You may be able to win that depressed lady in the cubicle next to you, or that young man you sometimes eat with at lunch. The fact that we don’t expect to win the entire world for Christ should never stop us from witnessing.

Jesus told us from the outset that the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many will take that path. But He also tells us to go and preach the gospel to all creation, and His love and His Spirit compel us to do just that, regardless of which direction our world is moving.

One of the cardinal doctrines of the Church is the return of Jesus Christ for His people. Paul writes, “We should live soberly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13).”

We will not “sit around” as we await His return, but we will work, we will watch and we will not apologise for our love for the glorious return of the King of kings, the mighty God, the One who is called Faithful and True, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. 

Needed: a prophet

by Vance Havner

Covet earnestly the best gifts (1 Corinthians 12:31). Follow after love and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that you may prophesy (1 Corinthians 14:1). He who prophesies speaks edification, and exhortation, and comfort to men (1 Corinthians 14:3).

SINCE here is something that a Christian is allowed to covet, it deserves our careful attention. The New Testament prophet is not so much a foreteller as a forth-teller, carrying on a threefold ministry. His is a ministry of edification, a strengthening ministry; a ministry of exhortation, a stirring ministry; and a ministry of comfort, a soothing ministry.

Bengel remarks: "The exhortation is to remove sluggishness and the comfort is to remove sadness!"

As a minister of edification, he is a teacher; as a minister of exhortation, he is an evangelist; as a minister of comfort, he enters into the field of the pastor. Yet he is neither teacher, evangelist, nor pastor – he is a prophet!

Just now we are concerned, not so much with the work of the prophet itself, but with the need of a prophet. The work itself might interest only a few of us; the need concerns us all.

1. Consider first, the need of a ministry of edification, a strengthening ministry.

Christians need to be built up in the Word today as never before. Our churches number thousands of members who, after years in the churches, are still babies in need of milk and who cannot bear meat; who ought to be teachers of the Word and need to be taught first principles.

Some have plenty of zeal, far more of it than knowledge. They present the sad spectacle of a locomotive with plenty of steam but off the track and with only the whistle blowing, for the track is the Word of God and the best locomotives with most steam only end in the bog when they leave the charted course of "Thus saith the Lord."

We are not discrediting zeal. It is better to have more zeal than knowledge, than to have more knowledge than zeal. It is better to run too fast than not to run at all, though one sometimes is reminded of the old church dignitary who was asked whether he thought a certain very enthusiastic sect of Christians would get to heaven. "Yes," he replied, "I think they will if they don't run past it."

Yet, for all that, one of the saddest mistakes a Christian ever makes is to try to live upon his experiences alone. More than one bases his hope on a "happy day that fixed his choice," forgetting that what gives that happy day its value is that the choice was fixed on "Him my Saviour and my God."

Years ago I trusted Christ; but I am not depending upon my experience of Christ to save me; I am depending upon the Christ Who is greater than all our experiences. Thousands of Christians are wasting time and driving themselves into snares of the devil, chasing this experience and that, instead of growing strong on the bread of God.

It is possible even to substitute *studying* the Bible for *feeding* upon the Bible, analysing what the Bible teaches without being vitalised by what the Bible says. A man might live in a bread shop and study calories and vitamins and starve: and just so may one divide and dissect the Scriptures and yet never be edified.

When I say "edified," I do not mean that comfortable, cosy feeling that comes over one after hearing a good sermon. Nothing is more disastrous than hearing good things without translating them into practice.

Goethe said, "Thought without action is a disease" – and many believers are so affected. We are not edified merely by hearing the Word. The Word does not profit us until it is mixed with faith in us who hear.

We were bidden by our Lord to teach them to observe all the things com-



manded, and we have neither learned nor taught a truth until we have learned to put it into practice and have brought others to do so.

We are not edified until the Word has been not only appreciated but appropriated; not only heard but heeded; not only adored but obeyed; for it is by reason of use that our senses are exercised to discern good and evil.

2. Consider, in the second place, the need of a ministry of exhortation, a stirring ministry.

Isaiah lamented: "There are no one... who stirs up himself to take hold of You." Paul admonished Timothy to stir up the gift of God within him. If ever God's people needed to be awakened and aroused and shocked and alarmed into a sense of their holy privilege and solemn duty, it is today.

"It is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed (Romans 13:11)."

Sometimes I have thought that the most unappreciated man on earth is a porter on a train, who must go down that mahogany lane in early morning to awaken passengers who are in no mood to be aroused. But this business of arousing people is a thankless job, whether it apply to a railway porter at 6 a.m. or to a minister of the gospel at 11 a.m.

Too many Christians come to church on Sunday to rest at ease in Zion, and across their faces one seems to see as upon hotel



room doors, “Please Do Not Disturb!” It is not enough to be orthodox: we must awaken to action. We have more apologists than apostles. Too many fundamentalists are sound – sound asleep!

Our theology needs to go up in doxology. We have the facts but not the fire. If we had as much vitality as we have had vocality, we would have set the world on fire long ago. We have talked much farther along than we have walked. We need to let our feet catch up with our tongues.

We defend the truth, but we do not demonstrate the truth. We ponder it instead of proving it.

We preach a dynamite gospel and live fire-cracker lives. The power of the Holy Spirit is not a sedative but a stimulant.

The early Christians were charged with being drunk on new wine. But the average Christian today seems more doped than drunk! To believe that we are living in the last days; that we are in the midst of a world of emergency; that judgement is just around the corner; that without Christ men are lost and sure for hell – to believe all that and then wend one’s way complacently through a world of sin and shame is not merely unfortunate; it is criminal.

An infidel lawyer said to a young preacher who had come to interview him, “If I believed what you claim to believe, I could not take it

as lightly as you do. I would not rest day nor night. I would warn men and plead with them to be saved. If I plead my cases like you present Christ, I would lose all of them.”

Truly we need today a ministry of exhortation. Finney used to say, “We must have exciting and powerful preaching or the devil will have the people.”

We are interested, but only mildly interested, and this world has never been moved by mildly interested people. The saints who left their impression upon this poor world were men whom God made drunk and all the powers of Satan could not sober.

If the gospel is not true, nothing matters; if it is true, nothing else matters.

If it is not worth everything, it is not worth anything. Lincoln used to say that when he went to church, he wanted the preacher to preach as though he were fighting a swarm of bees.

This generation is terribly excited about the unimportant and terribly unexcited about the important. The same church-members who yell like Comanche Indians at a football game sit like wooden Indians at church on Sunday.

If ever Presbyterian sepulchres and Baptist graveyards and Methodist mau-soleums are to resound with revival, we

must recover the ministry of exhortation.

3. Finally, we need a ministry of comfort, a soothing ministry.

While most of us need stirring, many of us need to be calmed in our souls. “Comfort ye my people” is still the Word of the Lord. The world is living in a nervous breakdown; even the saints have the “jitters.”

The world is full of broken hearts. The journey is too great for them. They need to hear the Lord inviting the labouring and laden to His rest. They need to cease from their own works, to enter into rest, and study to be quiet and roll their burden on the Lord.

They need a fresh experience of the Comforter; to wait on the Lord and increase their strength; to encourage themselves in the Lord their God. They need to learn that they have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear but that God has given them the spirit of love and of power and of a sound mind.

This poor, shell-shocked world tries to drown its misery in mirth and laugh away its pain, but one has only to look at the faces on the street to see that while they may wear cheerful robes without, they wear sackcloth next to their flesh.


Some time ago, a poor, nervous wreck called on a famous London doctor. Said the doctor, “You need to laugh. Go down to the theatre and hear Grimaldi, that famous clown. All London is holding its sides laughing at him.” But the visitor straightened himself and said, “Doctor, I am Grimaldi.”

No, we cannot laugh it off, but there is One whose cooling, healing touch has still its ancient power. Jesus, the Name that charms our fears And bids our sorrows cease: It is music to the sinner’s ear; It is life and health and peace.

We need a ministry of comfort by which we may comfort others with the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. We need men who have been to Gilead and have found a Physician there.

And what is the work of a prophet but simply to hold up Him Who, living within us, strengthens and stirs and soothes?

Said Spurgeon: “In the days of Paul, the sum and substance of theology was Jesus Christ. I am not ashamed to vow myself a Calvinist. I do not hesitate to take the name of Baptist. But if I am asked what is my creed, I must reply, it is Jesus Christ.”

That is the true theology of every prophet! “For we preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.” 



Spiritual food for a hungry world...

by Billy Sunday

"They need not go away. You give them something to eat (Matthew 14:16)."

SOME folks do not believe in miracles. I do. A denial of miracles is a denial of the virgin birth of Jesus. The Christian religion stands or falls on the virgin birth of Christ. God created Adam and Eve without human agencies. He could and did create Jesus supernaturally. I place no limit on what God can do. If you begin to limit God, then there is no God.

I read of a preacher who said that the miracles of the Bible were more of a hindrance than a help. Then he proceeded to spout his insane blasphemy.

He imagined Jesus talking to the 5 000 and, like many speakers, overrunning his time limit. The disciples, seeing night coming, said: "Master, you have talked this crowd out of their supper and there is nothing to eat in this desert place; dismiss them so they can go into the towns and country and get food."

He imagined Jesus saying: "We have some lunch, haven't we?"

"Yes, but not enough to feed this crowd."

"Well, let's divide it up and see." So, Jesus proceeds to divide his lunch with the hungry crowd.

An old Jew, seeing Jesus busy, asked, "What's he doing?" "Dividing his lunch." "Huh," grunts this old knocker, "He is the first preacher I've ever seen who practices what he preaches."

Shamed by the example of Jesus, this old tight-wad brought out his lunch basket and began to divide. Others caught the spirit and followed suit and in this way the 5 000 were fed. This heretic of a so-called preacher thought such an occurrence more reasonable than the Bible account.

Every attempt to explain the miracles by

natural laws gets the explainer into great difficulty and shows him up as ridiculous.

I wish to draw some practical lessons from this miracle of Jesus feeding the 5 000. The world is hungry. Jesus stood face to face with the problem of physical hunger just as we, in our day face, the problem of hunger, not only physical but spiritual.

If one were to believe all the magnificent articles in current and religious literature, one would think the world is disgusted and indifferent to the religion of Jesus Christ. I believe exactly the opposite is true. In no century since the morning stars sang together has there been more real hunger for genuine religion than this.

And yet, many a preacher, instead of trying to feed this spiritual hunger, is giving some book review, staking a claim out on Jupiter or talking evolution – trying to prove we came from a monkey throwing coconuts at his neighbour across the alley.

The world is not disgusted with religion, but is disgusted with the worldliness, rituals, ceremonies and non-essentials in which we have lost religion.

There are some kinds of religion the world is not hungry for:

A religion of formal observances. In Isaiah 1, the Lord says:

"To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices? I am full of the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts. Incense is an abomination to me; your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates. When you make prayers, I will not hear them. Your hands are full of blood. Put away the evil of your doings; cease to do evil, learn to do well."

Their formalism didn't make a hit with the Lord. He saw through their smoke screen. Religion does not consist in doing a lot of special things, even if branded as religious – but in doing everything in a special way as the Lord directs.

Whenever the church makes its observances and forms the end, instead of the means to the end, the world will turn its back on it.

Praying is not an act of devotion – reading the Bible is not an act of devotion – going to church is not an act of devotion – partaking of the communion is not an act of devotion. These are *aids* to devotion. The actual religion lies not in prayer, reading the Bible, church attendance, but in the quality of life which these observances create in you.

If the doing of these things does not change your life, then it profits you nothing to have them done!

Thousands forget religion and allow the forms of religion to take the place of religion. They are substituting religiousness for righteousness.

There has never been a time in my memory when religion has been so reduced to forms and ritual as today. In the mind of Jesus, religion was not to build up the church, but the church was to build up religion. Religion was not the end but the means to the end.

Jesus was so far removed from the formalism and traditions, taught by the priests of His day, that he was constantly at cross-purposes with them.

A church of make-believers

A church of make-believers will soon beget a generation of non-believers!

The church, in endeavouring to serve God and Mammon, is growing cross-eyed, losing her power to know good from evil. Jesus dealt with fundamentals; His quietest talk had a torpedo effect on His hearers.

Some sermons, instead of being a bugle call to service, are showers of spiritual cocaine.

I am satisfied that there has never been a time when it is harder to live a consistent Christian life than now. I believe the conflict between God and the Devil, right and wrong, was never hotter. The allurements of sin have never been more fascinating. I do not believe there ever was a time, since Adam and Eve were turned out of Eden, when traps and pitfalls were more numerous and dangerous than today.

The world is not hungry for a religion of social service without Christ. I will go with you in any and all movements for the good of humanity providing you give Jesus Christ his rightful place.

You cannot bathe anybody into the

kingdom of God. You cannot change their hearts by changing their sanitation. It is an entirely good and Christian act to give a down-and-outer a bath, bed and a job. It is a Christian act to maintain schools and universities, but the road into the kingdom of God is not by the bath tub, the university, social service, or gymnasium – but by the blood-red road of the cross of Jesus Christ.

The Bible declares that human nature is radically bad – and the power to uplift and change is external. That power is not in any man, woman or system, but by repentance and faith in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. The church is the one institution divinely authorised to feed the spiritual hunger of this old sin-cursed world.

You will notice that Jesus did not feed the multitude. He created the food and asked His disciples to distribute it. Jesus was the chef, not the waiter, at this banquet. Jesus created salvation, the only food that will feed the spiritual hunger of the world; the task of distributing the food is in the hands of his human followers.

For every two nominal Christians, there are three who are not even nominal. Out of every two church members, one is a spiritual liability; four out of five with their names on our church records are doing nothing to bring the world to Jesus.

There are many institutions that enter into competition with the church in preaching certain phases of religion, but not in preaching religion itself. Associate charities preach charity sometimes with stronger emphasis than the church. Some organisations talk about justice and square-dealing with more vehemence than the church. Some individuals thunder against vice and crime more than the pulpit. Many institutions and organisations preach one or more phases of religion, but it is to the church humanity must ever turn for the last word on salvation and eternal destiny.

People are dissatisfied with philosophy, science, new thought – all these amount to nothing when you have a dead child in the house. These do not solace the troubles and woes of the world. They will tell you that, when they were sick and the door of the future was opening in their face, the only comfort they could find was in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Christianity is the only sympathetic religion that ever came into the world, for it is the only religion that ever came from God.

Take your scientific consolation into a room where a mother has lost her child.

Try your doctrine of the survival of the fittest with that broken-hearted woman. Tell her that the child that died was not as fit to live as the one left alive. Where does that scientific junk lift the burden from her heart?

Go to some dying man and tell him to pluck up courage for the future. Try your philosophy on him; tell him to be confident in the great to be and the everlasting what is it.

Go to that widow and tell her it was a geological necessity for her husband to croak. Tell her that in 50 million years we will all be scientific mummies on a shelf – petrified specimens of an extinct race.

After you have gotten through with your science, philosophy, psychology, eugenics, social service, sociology, evolution, protoplasms, and fortuitous concurrence of atoms, I will take the Bible and read God's promise, and pray – and her tears will be dried and her soul flooded with calmness.

Is the church drawing the hungry world to its tables? There is no dodging or blinking or pussy-footing the fact that in drawing the hungry world to her tables, the church is facing a crisis.

Give them something to eat

Does the world need to turn to other tables than those of the church for spiritual food? Jesus said, "They do not need to depart; give them something to eat."

The church has the power and the food with which to feed the hungry world. It can feed the spiritual hunger of the world by doing what Jesus did when he fed the 5 000.

What does the church have on hand with which to feed the hungry world?

It has a set of principles which, if put into practice in the life of the individual and society and business and politics, will solve every difficulty and problem of city, state, nation, and the world. There is no safer or saner method to settle all the world's problems than by the Sermon on the Mount. These principles are truth, justice, and purity. It has a person who has the power to create and make powerful these principles in the lives of men and women – and that person is Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Many sceptics have said, "Bill, if you will only preach the principles of Christianity instead of the Person, we will find no fault with you." Nothing doing, old top! Wherever a preacher or a church preaches a set of principles without the person Jesus Christ, that ministry, that church becomes sterile and powerless.

Truth is never powerful unless wrapped up in a person.

I take truth and wrap it up in Christ and say, "Take it!" You say, "Give me truth but no Christ." Then you will be lost. You are not saved by truth but by the person Jesus Christ.

Why take truth and reject Christ when it is Christ Who inspires truth?

I take justice and wrap Christ up with it and say, "Here, take it." You say, "I will take justice. I deal squarely in business, pay my debts, give labour a square deal; I take justice but not your Christ." You are lost.

Why take justice and cast Christ away when it is Christ Who inspires justice?

I take purity and wrap it up with Jesus and say, "Here, take this." You say, "I will take the principle of purity but not the person Jesus Christ." Then you are lost, for it is Christ that saves, not the principle of purity.

"One thing thou lackest" – the person Jesus.


Other religions have preached good things, but they have no Saviour who can take these things and implant them in the human heart and make them grow. All other religions are built around principles, but the Christian religion is built around a person: Jesus Christ, the Son of God, our Saviour.

Every other religion on earth is a religion you must keep – but the Christian religion saves you, keeps you, and presents you faultless before His throne.

Oh, Christians! Have you any scars to show that you have fought in this conflict with the devil? When a war is over, heroes have scars to show; one rolls back his sleeve and shows a gunshot wound; another pulls down his collar and shows a wound on the neck; another says, "I never had use of that leg since Gettysburg," another says, "I was wounded and gassed in the trenches of France."

Christ has scars to show – scars on His brow, on His hands, on His feet, and when He pulls aside His robes of royalty, there will be seen the scar on his side.

When the Scottish chieftains wanted to raise an army, they would make a wooden cross, set it on fire and carry it through the mountains and the highlands among the people and wave the cross of flame and the people would gather beneath the standard and fight for Scotland.

I come out with the cross of the son of God – it is a flaming cross, flaming with suffering, flaming with triumph, flaming with victory, flaming with glory, flaming with salvation for a lost world! 



Staying pure in a sinful world

by T. A. Hegre

IF we are truly born again, there is a desire for the image and likeness of God. There is a desire for likeness to Jesus. The question is, How are we made holy? How does God make us holy?

When man sinned, he lost his innocence – and became guilty. He lost his spiritual life – and became dead in trespasses and sin. He lost his power – and instead became enslaved to the devil and to the world. The greatest loss, however, was the loss of heart-holiness.

But God's so-great-a-salvation is equal to every need of fallen man, and He has made provision for our recovery (for restoration of heart-holiness) in this present life, as well as for other perfections in the life to come.

Let us consider carefully the different agencies employed in making man holy. In God's great redemptive programme, there is both the instantaneous aspect and the progressive aspect.

Made Holy by the Blood

First of all, we are made holy by the blood. Christ shed His blood on Calvary's Cross as the only and perfect basis for the forgiveness of our sins. According to God's own word, all who repent and believe in Jesus Christ will be forgiven.

The animal sacrifices typified this wonderful fact throughout the whole Old Testament, beginning immediately after the Fall. In the New Testament, John the Baptist pointed to Jesus Christ as the One typified in the Old Testament sacrifices. He said, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29)."

The Apostle John in his first letter says, "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another,

and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:7-9)."

Sin is removed and holiness made possible by the blood of Christ. The blood is God's agent in making us holy. "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission (Hebrews 9:22)." For Jesus' sake, God forgives and cleanses the repentant believer. Such a one will be born from above and should from that moment on have the assurance of eternal life.

Made Holy by the Cross

But the blood of Christ is not the only agent used by God in making us holy. We are also made holy by the Cross. Sin has infected every part of man. Redemption is not a simple but a rather complex problem requiring the wisdom and power of God.

One who has received forgiveness and assurance of eternal life soon discovers a deeper need than forgiveness, for sin is twofold. Besides acts of sin, there is also the inner principle of sinfulness.

This cannot be forgiven. It must die.

Isaiah explains best the corruption of human nature. He says, "All of us like sheep have gone astray; we have turned each one to his own way (Isaiah 53:6)." This "own way" (selfishness) is the basic element in man's sinfulness. It cannot be forgiven; it must end; it must die.

"I want my own way" must be put on the Cross. It must be crucified.

God can and will forgive selfish acts. But God cannot forgive selfishness while one persists in wanting his own selfish way. This must end. The provision for this deep

need in man's nature is not the blood; it is the Cross.

Jesus said so in the words, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me (Matthew 16:24)."

The Apostle Paul stated this provision so plainly in Romans 6. In the first verse he asks the question, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" Then he answers, "God forbid." The rest of the chapter reveals in detail God's method of dealing with inward corruption of the self-life.

In verse 6 he says, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin (Romans 6:6)." If this verse says anything at all, it says that through our crucifixion with Christ, sin's power is broken. We do not *have* to sin!

This means more than Christ, our Substitute, dying for our sins. Christ did take our sins to the Cross. But more than that, He took us there as well. That is God's provision for sinfulness of nature.

Later, in verse 11, Paul tells us to "reckon yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord." We are to know this truth; we are to believe it; we are to count on it. Unless we reckon on the fact of our union with Christ in death to sin as our death to sin and in His resurrection as our resurrection, we will never know the reality of victory over sin.

It is a crisis experience which can be followed by daily obedience in dependence on the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul knew this in experience and gave testimony to that great fact: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me (Galatians 2:20)."

Our side is to know this great fact, to believe it, to accept it, to make the necessary moral adjustments – that is, to turn completely away from the world, from the flesh and from the devil and to turn to God in total surrender, a surrender so complete, so irrevocable that the only word which can properly describe it is death – death to self.

The Cross is God's method, His agent in making us holy. It is union with Christ in His death and in His resurrection. That which is positional for all *must* become experiential and personal.

Made Holy by the Spirit

These two aspects of God's work in

making us holy – that is, forgiveness and cleansing through the blood and the Cross of Christ – are both negative.

There is also a very definite positive side, another aspect – being made holy by the Holy Spirit.

On resurrection day Jesus breathed on His disciples and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit (John 20:22),” and at Pentecost 50 days later, they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit of God is holy and He imparts holiness. God not only counts us righteous; He makes us righteous. He not only counts us holy; He makes us holy.

Unless the Holy Spirit fills us with resurrection life, the life of holiness will not be a reality in our lives.

There must be a time when we deliberately nail to the Cross the disposition to have our own way, which disposition is at enmity with everything God wants to do in us. And God has put that disposition to death in the crucified body of Jesus Christ on the Cross.

We are also raised with Christ. We can now walk in newness of life. We have the disposition of Christ. Therefore the ready, trusting believer can lead a holy life. The Holy Spirit comes upon such a one to give him power for service.

On the evening before the crucifixion, Jesus prepared His disciples for this great experience (John 14-16). Just before His ascension, He again assembled His disciples together and charged them “not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, ‘which,’ He said, ‘you have heard from Me; for John truly baptised with water, but you shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit not many days from now (Acts 1:4&5).”

This experience became theirs at Pentecost. It is available today for any and every one who is “thirsty” enough to come to Christ and drink, to receive the blessings which He has promised – a personal Pentecost.

We must become related personally to what has been given both at Calvary and at Pentecost. God’s desire is to pour out the full blessing of both Calvary and Pentecost, and He will do so upon every penitent, surrendered, believing soul.

Thus the Holy Spirit is one of God’s agents in making us holy. Peter in relating the experience of Cornelius and his household said, “And God, who knows the hearts, acknowledged them, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as He did to us; and made no distinction between us and

them, purifying their hearts by faith (Acts 15:8&9).”

Progressive Side of Holiness by the Spirit

When the conditions are met, God’s work in making us holy through the blood and through the Cross and through the Holy Spirit can be received instantaneously, but after that there is also a progressive side in God’s recovery programme. The Holy Spirit not only applies the blood and the Cross for the cleansing away of sin, but He also sets about to conform the yielded, trusting one to the image of Christ.

He will help in the changing of habits, traits and characteristics which may not be sinful in themselves but which are not fitting for the new man.

This work goes on continually, and is properly called “growth in grace.” The Holy Spirit is our guide, our teacher, and our moulder of character. If we remain trustful and yielded, the Holy Spirit will be able to perform His wonderful work.

Progressive Side of Holiness by the Word

There is another aspect of our progressive holiness: we are made holy by the Word. Jesus said, “Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken to you (John 15:3).” “Sanctify them through Your truth: Your word is truth (John 17:17).” The Apostle Peter refers to this aspect in these words: “Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth (1 Peter 1:22).”

The psalmist has this to say, “Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path (Psalm 119:105).” “How shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word (Psa. 119:9).”

We continually need the Word of God, for it is the only safe rule for faith and Christian walk. The Word of God is a means of grace in Christian growth.

Progressive Side of Holiness by Discipline

Another aspect of our progressive holiness is “discipline.” It must be understood that this does not refer to the discipline of the “old man.” The Bible reveals only one provision for the old Adam life and that is death on the Cross with Christ.

Hebrews 12 speaks of discipline very definitely and relates it to holiness (Hebrews 12:1-13). It says that our fathers “for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness (Hebrews 12:10).” We need discipline (chastening). We need exercise, for we are perfected

by exercise. If we want to grow, we must exercise.

Even in the land of Canaan Israel had opponents. To us Christians these Canaanites stand for the world, the flesh and the devil – or we may recognise them as evil spirits and old habits. All these must be conquered. God does not want flabby holiness. He wants us to be strong and has, therefore, left opponents in the field. He Himself watches over us carefully, and if we fail, as did Israel, He chastens us.


I suppose that much of the mystery in the circumstances of life would be explained if we knew how God was arranging things and circumstances for our good (the experience of Job, for instance). Often He teaches us through people who are unworthy. Job had to learn from the accusations of his three friends, Peter from a rooster, Balaam from a donkey, Paul from a thorn. Abraham had to learn that he loved Isaac more than God, and Elijah that he had a hidden weakness, a fear – he ran from a woman.

Even Jesus “learned obedience by the things which He suffered (Hebrews 5:8).” Jesus was holy through and through; but He also had to go through the fire. What we all must learn is absolute and instant obedience.

In this aspect of God’s great work of recovering and restoring fallen man – made holy by discipline – there are two things we must avoid: not to kick and not to despair. There is a great danger either of rebelling against circumstances that may be God’s method of disciplining us, or else giving up in despair or despondency.

Both are wrong and either one would cause us to lose not only the benefit of this progressive aspect of God’s sanctification but also what we have received instantaneously through His perfect method in making us holy.

God makes us holy by the blood, by the Cross, by the Holy Spirit, by the Word, and by discipline. We must neither kick nor despair but yield in faith and trust Him to do His own wonderful work, so that it might be fulfilled in us that which is spoken in Ephesians:

“...As Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish (Ephesians 5:25-27).” 



The rapture under attack

by Dr David R. Reagan

NOAH preached for 120 years before the Lord delivered on His promise to destroy the world with water. I'm sure that in the final years before the flood came, he must have been severely mocked as a false prophet and a madman. But God was faithful to His promise, and Noah was vindicated in the end.

Likewise today, people are scoffing at the promise of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture, and they are mocking those who are preaching it. We get very sarcastic messages all the time saying, "People have been preaching the Lord's imminent return for a hundred years, and nothing has happened." The irony is that this attitude is one of the signs that we are in the final days of the end times, for the Bible says "that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming (2 Peter 3:3&4)?"

Let's consider for a moment some of the main criticisms that are being aimed at the concept of a Pre-Tribulation Rapture.

1 The concept is not in the Bible. The word, Rapture, is not mentioned anywhere in the Scriptures.

First, there are many biblical concepts and words that are not found in the Bible – like Trinity, Atheism, Divinity, Incarnation, Monotheism, Shekinah Glory, and even the word, Bible.

But the word, Rapture, *is* found in the Bible – in the Latin version, which was the Bible of the Western world for over 1200 years (from 400AD to 1611). The word appears in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 where, in English, it says that a day will come when the living and dead in Christ will be "caught up" to meet Him in the sky. In the Latin, the term, "caught up," is expressed as *rapiemur*, which is a declension of *rapio*, meaning snatch, or grab or abduct.

More importantly, the concept of the Rapture is clearly taught in the same passage (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) as well as other passages, such as John 14:1-6 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-58.

2 None of the Church Fathers believed in a Rapture that was separate and apart from the Second Coming.

It depends on your definition of "Church Fathers." All the true Fathers of the Church definitely believed in a Rapture that was distinct from the Second Coming.

I'm speaking, of course, of Jesus who taught the Rapture in John 14:1-6; the Apostle Paul who wrote about it in 1 Thessalonians 4 and 1 Corinthians 15; the Apostle Peter who described the principle of it in 2 Peter 2:4-9; and the Apostle John who does not mention the Church being on earth during the Tribulation (Revelation 6-18).

The later Church Fathers, who lived between 100 and 400 AD, were nearly all Premillennial in their Eschatology, but none of them seemed to pick up on the teaching of the Rapture. And when the Catholic Church endorsed Augustine's concept of Amillennialism around 400 AD, all discussion of end-time prophecy became taboo. That viewpoint pictured only one return of Jesus at the end of the Church Age.

Thereafter, you either accepted Amillennialism or you were burned at the stake, together with your writings.

3 The concept of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture is too new to be true.

This is exactly what the defenders of Roman Catholicism said to Luther about his biblical concept of "salvation by grace through faith."

It is true that the concept of a Pre-Tribulation Rapture was not crystallised in its final form until the writings of Englishman John Darby in the early 1800s, but we now have overwhelming proof that the concept was being discussed by Bible prophecy students for over 200 years prior to the time of Darby (see William C. Watson's book, *Dispensationalism Before Darby*, published in 2015.)

But then, how could there be any development of eschatology prior to the Reformation which began in 1517? During the Middle Ages, most people could not read, and even if they could, printed Bibles did not exist, nor were there translations available in the common languages of the people.

Once people obtained printed Bibles in their own languages, they quickly realised that the Amillennial view of the Catholic Church was based upon a spiritualisation of the Scriptures. That's

when a revival of the Premillennial view occurred because it is based upon the plain sense meaning of the Bible's prophecies. And that is also when Bible students began to notice that the Rapture is an event that is separate from the Second Coming.

Nor should the late development of the Pre-Trib Rapture concept be a surprise to anyone because the Scriptures themselves tell us that end time Bible prophecy will not be understood until the time comes for its fulfilment.

For example, the prophet Daniel did not understand the end time prophecies that were given to him. And when he complained about this to the Lord, he was told, "these words are concealed and sealed up until the end times (Daniel 12:9)."

Many end time prophecies are being understood today for the first time because their fulfilment depended on either historical developments (like the re-establishment of the state of Israel) or technological inventions (like the atomic bomb and satellite television).

4 The concept of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture originated with a demon-possessed teenage girl in Scotland in the early 1800s who conjured up the idea in a vision.

This is pure myth. The idea comes from the writings of a man named Dave MacPherson who has made a cottage-industry of writing books in which he makes this ridiculous claim.

It is true that there was a teenage girl named Margaret MacDonald who had seizures and visions about the Lord's return. And it is true that years later, after the concept of a Pre-Trib Rapture had gained acceptance, her husband claimed that she had originated the idea in one of her visions. But this claim can be disproved quickly and decisively by the fact that there is not even a hint of a Pre-Trib Rapture in any of her recorded visions.

And furthermore, as I have already pointed out, William Watson has proved that the idea of a Pre-Trib Rapture had been circulating among Bible prophecy scholars and writers for 200 years prior to Margaret MacDonald. Also, even if it were true that she mentioned such a concept in one of her visions, it would prove nothing. The test of any doctrine should not be who originated it or when it was originated. The only test should be whether or not it is biblical. And the concept of a Pre-Trib Rapture certainly stands the test of the Scriptures.

5 The Rapture and the Second Coming are a combined event that will take place at the end of the Tribulation when Jesus returns to earth.

How could this be? These two events have nothing in common except that they both focus on Jesus.

Consider the radical differences:

The Rapture

Jesus appears in the heavens.

Jesus appears for His saints.

Jesus appears as a Deliverer.

Jesus appears in Grace.

Jesus appears as a Bridegroom.

The Second Coming

Jesus returns to earth.

Jesus returns with His saints.

Jesus returns as a Warrior.

Jesus returns in Wrath.

Jesus returns as a King.

These obviously are not the same event. We must conclude, therefore, that the return of Jesus is going to be in two stages: first, the Rapture, and then the Second Coming.

If the Rapture is an event separate from the Second Coming, then it will most likely occur sometime during the Tribulation, either in the middle or near the end.

But the Bible teaches that the Rapture is imminent (Matthew

24:36,44 and 25:13), meaning it could occur at any moment. If you place the Rapture anywhere inside the Tribulation, then you render it non-imminent, for there are prophecies that must be fulfilled before it occurs. Furthermore, we are told to live looking for Jesus Christ, not the Antichrist.

Also, keep in mind that believers are promised exemption from the wrath of God. One of those promises is found in 1 Thessalonians 1:10 where it says that believers are waiting "for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come."

The promise is repeated in the book of Revelation before it describes the horrors of the Tribulation. You will find that promise in Revelation 3:10 where it says, "Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth."

Some critics argue that the Seal and Trumpet Judgements constitute the wrath of Satan and not God. Therefore, the Church is immune only to the Bowl Judgements that will be poured out at the end of the Tribulation. This argument constitutes a serious challenge to the sovereignty of God – as if Satan is free to do as he pleases. Furthermore, the book of Revelation clearly pictures all the judgements of Revelation as coming from God's throne, and the Bowl Judgements are referred to as the completion of God's wrath, not the beginning (Revelation 15:1).

Conclusion

The Bible refers to the Rapture as our "blessed hope" (Titus 2:13). When Paul completes his detailed description of it in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, he concludes by saying, "Comfort one another with these words (Verse 18)."

At our annual Bible conference in 2017, one of our guest speakers, Ron Rhodes, pointed to these comforting scriptures when he demonstrated how ridiculous it is to believe that the Rapture and Second Coming are all one event that will occur at the end of the Tribulation. He pointed out that if the Rapture is one and the same event as the Second Coming at the end of the Tribulation, then this is how Paul's great passage about the Rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4 would read:


"You will go through seven years of God's wrath. You will also suffer through Satan's furious wrath. You will experience the agonizing Seal, Trumpet and Bowl Judgements which grow progressively worse and are incredibly painful. And many of you will die horrible deaths as martyrs. Therefore, comfort one another with these words."

What? I don't think so. Would that encourage and comfort you? It just doesn't work.

The great American pastor, Adrian Rogers (1931-2005), once said, "The world is growing gloriously dark." What he meant by that, of course, is that the Bible prophesies that in the end times society will become as immoral and violent as it was in the days of Noah and that would be one of the signs of the Lord's soon return.

We are witnessing the fulfilment of that prophecy before our very eyes today. It is difficult to watch, but at the same time, it is a sure sign that we are living in the season of the Lord's return.

As the world is falling apart, the signs of the times are falling into place.

Amidst of the growing darkness, we need hope, and the Bible's promise of a Pre-Trib Rapture is a great source of that hope. 

Alas! What shall we do?

by Colonel Tim Moore

“Alas, master! What shall we do?” Elisha answered, ‘Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.’ Then Elisha prayed and said, ‘O Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see (2 Kings 6:15-17).’”

FOR several years, I have had the privilege of sharing the message that Jesus is coming soon. In Sunday School classes and church services and prophecy conferences, I’ve implored people to recognise the signs of the times. As foretold by Bible prophecy, they are multiplying all around us and are proclaiming that we are indeed living in the season of the Lord’s return.

I believe we can separate the signs into six categories: nature, society, spiritual, world politics, technology, and Israel. In fulfilment of Jesus’ prophecy that the signs would be like birth pangs (Matthew 24:8), the frequency and intensity of the signs in every category is increasing.

A Survey of Signs

Nature – In September 2014, *Governing* magazine featured an article with the sub-headline: “Governments throughout the country are touting the need for resilience in the face of ever-more-frequent natural disasters.” Do you think the editors realised that they were documenting the fulfilment of Jesus’ words in Matthew 24:7 and Luke 21:11?

Spiritual – This category has some obvious positive fulfilments, including a leveraging of technology to share the Gospel in every tongue and nation. But there are negative indicators as well. One lament that many Christians express is the drift of the Church away from God’s Word. With rare exceptions, the trend has been to move away from the inerrancy of Scripture and the exclusivity of salvation through Jesus alone. Whether by adopting the naturalistic ideology of evolution or watering down the whole Word of God to minimise sin, judgment and hell, too many churches are preaching a different



gospel, something Paul warned about in Galatians 1:6-8.

World Politics – The world’s attention continues to focus on Israel and Jerusalem. And, news stories throughout 2018 highlighted Russia’s growing influence in the Middle East and its budding alliance with Iran, especially in Syria. Those two nations are poised to unite against Israel in preparation for a key war of the end times.

Technology – Technological advances continue to be amazing. Aviation progress – from cloth and wood biplanes to transcontinental airliners that weigh over a million pounds – has all occurred in just 120 years. In 1965, Intel co-founder Gordon Moore predicted that computing power and memory capability would double every two years, while cost would be halved. That has proven true – if underestimated. Regarding the explosion of information, some experts now claim that information is doubling every 12 hours! The Lord told us this would be the case in Daniel 12:4.

Israel – Israel has been recognised as a category unto itself because so many end-time prophecies are tied to Jacob’s offspring. For many centuries, few Christians could imagine how God would orchestrate the regathering and re-ascendancy of the Jewish people. But, in just the past century, God has indeed proved faithful. He is fulfilling every prophecy concerning the Jewish people, right before our very eyes.

The Most Pervasive Sign

I’ve intentionally left off one category for last. It is the category of society.

While the other categories of signs are evident all around us, some of them can

be held at arm’s length by the average Christian. For instance, unless we are personally impacted by a natural disaster, the increase in frequency and intensity may be an academic reality instead of an experienced one. The advance of technology can be a blessing. And if a person attends a biblically faithful church, they may feel immune from the negative aspects of spiritual decline.

But, all of us live in a society that is deteriorating before our very eyes. The culture around us becomes the air we breathe – and if the Lord delays His return, His promise to come again will become increasingly polluted for our children and grandchildren.

Society – At one time, it required a prophet’s discernment to recognise looming threats in this arena. Men like Peter Marshall, David Wilkerson, and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn identified cracks in the foundation and structure of the Christian West years before most people awakened to the trends. Like frogs in a pot, we find ourselves now boiling and wonder when it became so hot.

The hostility toward Christianity in formerly Christian nations has been well-documented. Publicly proclaiming the truths of Scripture regarding a host of social issues is criminally punishable in previously hospitable places like Britain and Canada. But it is here in my home country of America that the pace of cultural change is accelerating at such an incredible rate.

Al Mohler of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary says that while, in the past, the sexual revolution’s encroachment on our culture could be measured year by year or month by month, recently it has become week by week and even day by day.

This can be proven by considering the position of various politicians on the question of traditional marriage. Just 12 years ago, every leading national politician professed their support for marriage between a man and a woman. Now, the Democratic Party has rejected that definition as altogether unenlightened and unworthy of defending.

Attitudes on life also demonstrate the abandonment of a biblical worldview. A generation ago the liberal mantra regarding abortion was “safe, legal and rare.”

In just the past several months the progressive Left has decided to advocate for abortion that is “safe, legal and free.” Never safe for the unborn baby, this procedure is being touted as a non-negotiable position. States like New York, Illinois,

and California are eagerly rushing to bring in the most abortion-friendly laws imaginable and mandate taxpayer funding for unlimited abortions.

Is it any wonder that Christians and casual secularists alike are asking, "what in the world is going on?"

First of all, we can take great comfort in recognising that these trends and social changes were foretold in Scripture. Bible prophecy tells us that society will break down in the end times. Jesus said, "the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah (Matthew 24:37)." Genesis 6:5&11 records the nature of society in Noah's day:

*the wickedness of man was great upon the earth

*the earth was corrupt in the sight of God

*the earth was filled with violence

Recognising that reality in our own day proves that Jesus is coming soon. The culmination of all the signs is another proof that we are living in the end times.

If any one category of signs was being manifest before us, that would be remarkable. But all the signs are converging simultaneously. Jan Markell is right in saying, "the world is not falling to pieces, rather the pieces are all falling into place." Do you believe that? Do you cling to that positive hope in the midst of discouraging trends?

Rita Springer's beautiful song, *This*

Blood, contains a line that says, "So I come to tell you He's alive." Imagine the first people to hear that glorious news – two women who came to the tomb to anoint Jesus' decaying body. While they rejoiced, the disciples gathered in gloomy dejection, wondering how Jesus could have allowed Himself to suffer the indignity of death, and pondering their own uncertain future.

Like some of us, their immediate frustration and sadness overwhelmed their ability to grasp Jesus' promises yet to be realised.

We can become consumed with evil to the point of distraction. Certainly, some of us who have opened our eyes now see the spiritual dimension of forces raging about us. We realise that the decline of our culture and society is a fulfilment of ancient prophecies.

Like Elisha's attendant, we are alerted to the dangers multiplying around us. But, tempted to despair like him, our prayer may be, "Alas, my Master! What shall we do?"

Generations of Christians have aspired to witness the manifold fulfilments of prophecy we take for granted. They have passed on the baton of faith to us and it would not do for us to falter at the finish line.

This is why Revelation contains several asides to reassure readers that victory is

certain. Let's not lose focus.

Elisha, the great prophet, was used mightily by God to speak truth to his own generation and down through the centuries to us today. Our actions likewise must have a contemporary and a lasting impact.

But, my prayer today follows after Elisha's. He asked that his attendant's eyes would be fully opened. Scripture says, "And the Lord opened the servant's eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha (2 Kings 6:17)." Hope quickly surmounted what had seemed a hopeless situation.

I pray that your eyes will be open. In addition to comprehending the obvious forces of evil multiplying all around us, infecting our society, and threatening to undermine the freedom and faith of our posterity, I pray that you will realise that the armies of heaven are on the move.

Speaking of the signs of the times, Jesus said, "When you see all these things, recognise that He is near, right at the door (Matthew 24:33)."

While the darkness may be deepening day by day, soon and very soon the Father will send forth His Son to claim His bride, the Church. From that moment for the rest of eternity, we will realise the fulfilment of His first words: "Let there be light" – for we will never know darkness again. Amen and Godspeed! ☠

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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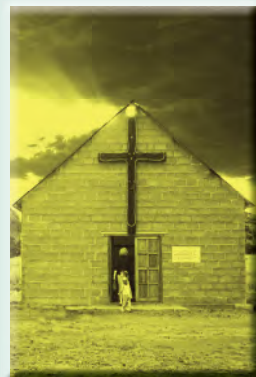
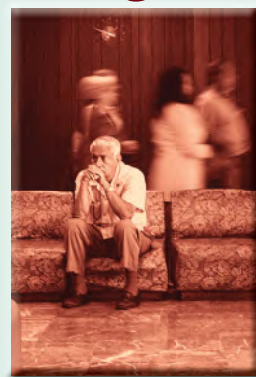
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The Fool

by Grant Phillips

THERE has always been wickedness in the world, but without question it is increasing rapidly in these last days prior to our Lord's return.

Decent people are no longer safe at their work place, in their church gatherings, at a restaurant, in the schools, walking down a street, and even in their own home. Every crime imaginable is being committed by lawless heathen, largely due to our spineless justice system administered by Godless politicians.

The entertainment industry is the mother of filth that is openly and brazenly regurgitated upon mindless citizens. No sexual act or vile word has been omitted from their trash they deliver to their zombie groupies.

Finding a true statesman among the political world is as likely as finding gold in your backyard. Nearly everything coming from these scoundrels is fool's gold.

The religious arena has become so corrupt, only a few good men remain who actually serve the one and only true God. Elijah could tell us much about these miscreants.

There is no area I can mention that is not corrupted by evil, the type of evil that looks at God and says, "So what!" The sports world, the business world, even many homes across this land can be added to the list and are serving the god Baal.

The general attitude among most people in our land can be summed up with the following Scripture passages.

"The fool has said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is not one who does good (Psalms 14:1)."

"The transgression of the wicked says within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes (Psalms 36:1)."

Whenever the Rapture of the Church does take place, most people will be left behind. Most of those dying now, prior to the Rapture, are not arriving in Heaven after their last breath, but in hell.

God wants all to come to Him in repentance and be saved, but He will not force Himself upon anyone. The following verse is very clear that God will not make an exception. There is no respect of persons with Him, and He cannot be bribed.

"Let the fear of the Lord be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts (2 Chronicles 19:7)."

Most people today are fools, because they think there is no God. They have become totally corrupt; whether by violence, lewdness, false piety, etc. The wise man is different. He fears evil and departs from it, but not the fool.

"A wise man fears, and departs from evil: but the fool rages, and is confident (Proverbs 14:16)."

We in my home country of America have been blessed like no other nation in history. No nation has ever had the riches of spiritual and material blessings that have been heaped upon us. It is no mystery why everyone wants to live in this country. Unfortunately, we are now so corrupt; there is nothing remaining but certain judgement. God is patient, and He will allow us just so much rope. Please notice carefully the next verse.

"But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required: and to whom much has been committed much, of him they will ask the more (Luke 12:48)."


When judgement comes – and it will come, I don't know how or to what extent – but we will pay dearly for our sins as a nation simply because we have been so richly blessed and then turned against the very God who blessed us.

I do feel strongly that after the Rapture, this country will be reduced to a dead carcass that will be picked clean by our enemies. However, there is no promise that God will wait until after the Rapture. It could be before that glorious event.

This next passage is from God to Israel, but the message is just as much ours to claim.

"Say to them, 'As I live,' says the Lord God, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn, turn from your evil ways; for why should you die, O house of Israel (Ezekiel 33:11)?'"

As a watchman on the wall, I simply reiterate what others have said, and that is we need to repent and we need to do so today.

Don't be a fool. Even though most in this country, even the world, have gone mad with satanic glee, wake up. Remember this. Every person in hell believes in God and would give anything to have another chance. There are no atheists in hell. What we do with God while we are in this body will remain with us for eternity. 

WATCH & PRAY

Thanks to
Elizabeth Kendal

'NEW SUDAN' IN SIGHT BUT NOT YET IN HAND

After 30 years of racism, jihad, repression and hardship at the hands of Sudan's Islamist and Arab-supremacist government, Sudan's diverse peoples have had enough! Protests erupted on December 19. On February 22 President Omar al-Bashir deployed his militias against the people. On April 11, Al-Bashir – who came to power in a military coup – was ousted by a military coup. The military then appointed a ruling Transitional Military Council (TMC). But the protesters – who have come to Khartoum from all over Sudan – said “no” to military rule, “no” to political Islam, “no” to Arab hegemony and “no” to Sharia Law which the TMC insists should remain the bedrock of the constitution.

A “new Sudan” is in sight, but not yet in hand. These are dangerous, watershed days. Please pray for Sudan and its Church.

TERRORISTS TARGET THE CHURCH IN BURKINA FASO

On Sunday, April 28 gunmen attacked a church in Sirgadiji in north-eastern Burkina Faso. The worship service over, the believers were chatting outside when a dozen militants swept in on motorcycles, demanding everyone convert to Islam. The believers refused. After burning their Bibles and phones, the militants executed their captives one by one.

Pastor Pierre Ouédraogo

(80), his son, his brother-in-law and three other church members were martyred. Relatives had advised Pastor Pierre to flee the region, but he refused to leave the church. Both al-Qaeda and Islamic State are active in Burkina Faso; terror is escalating. Islamic State has long encouraged its supporters to unleash terror at home and recently declared it will specifically target “crusaders,” – in other words Christians and Westerners. Please pray for Burkina Faso and its Church.

SRI LANKA: A RATTLED CHURCH, A FRAGILE NATION

On Sunday, April 21 nine Sri Lankan suicide bombers killed 253 people in three churches – St Anthony's in Colombo, St Sebastian's in Negombo and Zion Church in Batticaloa – and three hotels. More than 100 Christians died in St Sebastian's church.

On April 24 anger overflowed in Negombo as traumatised Christians took to the streets to drive out at least 600 newcomer, mostly Ahmadiyya (non-violent Muslims) Pakistani refugees. The Church is exhorting Christians to demonstrate grace and maintain openness. On Friday, April 26 Sri Lankan authorities targeted more terrorists and uncovered a huge cache of explosives as they raided terrorist safe houses in the city of Kalmunai.

The bombings have rattled the Sri Lankan Church and exacerbated the nation's fragility

and vulnerability. Please pray for Sri Lanka and its Christians.

CHINA: CALLING ALL WILLING INFORMANTS

Guangzhou, the capital city of Guangdong Province, has become the first provincial capital in China to offer financial rewards to informants who report “illegal religious activities.” Informants can earn about \$1 500 for information that leads to the arrest of a non-Chinese religious leader.

Ying Fuk-tsang, director of the Divinity School of Chung Chi College at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, told *South China Morning Post* that the mobilisation of grass-roots officials and community groups for social control purposes, including cracking down on religious activities, is increasingly common. “This will compress the survival space of house churches,” he said. “Not only will they have to deal with the official crackdown but

now also the threat from their neighbours.” Please pray for the Church in China.

CUBA: A FRESH WAVE OF PERSECUTION

In a referendum in February, Cubans voted in favour of amending the constitution to include modest reforms, to strengthen socialism, restrict religious liberty and pave the way for same-sex marriage. Because of its strong opposition, the Church was labelled counter-revolutionary.

During April, a number of pastors affiliated with the Apostolic Movement were cited and interrogated by the police. After 20 years of ministry, the Nazarene Church in Granma has had its land confiscated. On April 18 Ramon Rigal and his wife – who are home-schooling their children with the support of a Christian college in Guatemala – were detained in Guantanamo and put on trial for refusing to send their children to a government-run school. Please pray for the Church in Cuba.

Make a date with us!

June 2, November 3

These are the dates for this year's Prepare the Way days at Mount Zion Church, Merrivale (near Howick in KZN) at 9.15 am. Peter Pollock will be preaching at both events. Bring a friend, make a day of it and stay for (free) lunch!



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Prayers Of Petition

by Alvin J. VanderGriend

YOU can petition God for any or all of the following spiritual blessings for yourself with the confidence that you will be given what you ask because they are in line with God's will (1 John 5:14&15). This assumes that you ask in faith and have a pure heart.

Abiding in Christ – “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing (John 15:4&5).”

Blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ – “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ (Ephesians 1:3).”

Conformed to the likeness of Christ – “For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters (Romans 8:29).”

Delivered from the evil one – “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one (Matthew 6:13).”

Equipped for works of service – “So Christ Himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip His people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-13).”

Forgiven of my sins – “And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors (Matthew 6:12).”

Grace upon grace from His fullness – “Out of His fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given (John 1:16).”

Holiness in all I do – “For it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy (1 Peter 1:16).’”

Integrity and uprightness – “May integrity and

uprightness protect me, because my hope, Lord, is in You (Psalm 25:21).”

Joy of the Lord, complete in me – “I have told you this so that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete (John 15:11).”

Knowledge and depth of insight – “And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight (Philippians 1:9).”

Love for God and neighbour – “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself (Matthew 22:37-39).”

Meditating on the Word of God – “But whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on His law day and night (Psalm 1:2).”

New mind, new self – “To be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:23&24).”

Obedience to all that Christ commands – “And teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age (Matthew 28:20).”

Prayer in the Holy Spirit – “And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people (Ephesians 6:18).”

Quietness and trust as your strength – “This is what the Sovereign Lord, the

Holy One of Israel, says: ‘In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it (Isaiah 30:15).”

Righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit – “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17).”

Strong in the Lord and His mighty power – “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power (Ephesians 6:10).”

Thinking God-honouring thoughts – “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things (Philippians 4:8).”

Useful to the Master – “Those who cleanse themselves from the latter will be instruments for special purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work (2 Timothy 2:21).”

Virtues covered with love – “And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity (Colossians 3:14).”

Worship in spirit and in truth – “God is spirit, and His worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).”

X-rayed by the Spirit – “Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting (Psalm 139:23&24).”

Yearning for God

– “My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God (Psalm 84:2).”

Zeal in serving the Lord – “Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord (Romans 12:11).”

Taken from Love To Pray by Alvin VanderGriend.

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Prepare the Way

