

Prepare^{the} Way

Preparing the Bride of Christ for the return of Christ

Issue No. 119

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The miracle of 90%

**The snare of
self-righteousness**

Winkie Pratney

**When you're
walking in
darkness**

Peter Pollock

**Just give
me Jesus**

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Contents

Issue No. 119

- 3 *That incredible Christian*
- 4 *Just give me Jesus*
- 6 *I am my beloved's*
- 8 *The miracle of 90%*
- 9 *Altogether lovely*
- 10 *Almost a Christian*
- 12 *Walking in darkness*
- 15 *Husbands, don't be bitter*
- 16 *Snare of self-righteousness*
- 17 *Battlefield of the will*
- 18 *Seven questions*
- 20 *Roll away the stone*
- 22 *Conviction of the Spirit*
- 23 *Watch & Pray*
- 24 *Guarding the first love*

COVER: "I will lift up my eyes to the hills – From whence comes my help? My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth (Psalm 121:1&2)."

Talk to us...

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That Incredible Christian



by *A.W. Tozer*

THE current effort of so many religious leaders to harmonise Christianity with science, philosophy and every natural and reasonable thing is, I believe, the result of failure to understand Christianity and, judging from what I have heard and read, failure to understand science and philosophy as well.

At the heart of the Christian system lies the cross of Christ with its divine paradox.

The power of Christianity appears in its antipathy toward – never in its agreement with – the ways of fallen men. The truth of the cross is revealed in its contradictions.

The witness of the Church is most effective when she declares rather than explains – for the gospel is addressed not to reason but to faith. What can be proved requires no faith to accept. Faith rests upon the character of God, not upon the demonstrations of laboratory or logic.

The cross stands in bold opposition to the natural man. Its philosophy runs contrary to the processes of the unregenerate mind, so that Paul could say bluntly that the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness.

To try to find a common ground between the message of the cross and man's fallen reason is to try the impossible, and if persisted in must result in an impaired reason, a meaningless cross and a powerless Christianity.

But let us bring the whole matter down from the uplands of theory and simply observe the true Christian as he puts into practice the teachings of Christ and His apostles.

Note the contradictions:

The Christian believes that in Christ he has died, yet he is more alive than before and he fully expects to live forever.

He walks on earth while seated in heaven and though born on earth he finds that after his conversion he is not at home here.

Like the nighthawk, which in the air is the essence of grace and beauty but on the ground is awkward and ugly, so the Christian appears at his best in the heavenly places but does not fit well into the ways of the very society into which he was born.

The Christian soon learns that if he would be victorious as a son of heaven among men on earth he must not follow the common pattern of mankind, but rather the contrary.

He goes down to get up

That he may be safe he puts himself in jeopardy; he loses his life to save it and is in danger of losing it if he attempts to preserve it.

He goes down to get up. If he refuses to go down he is already down, but when he starts down he is on his way up.

He is strongest when he is weakest and weakest when he is strong.

Though poor he has the power to make others rich, but when he becomes rich his ability to enrich others vanishes. He has most after he has given most away and has least when he possesses most.

He may be and often is highest when he feels lowest and most sinless when he is most conscious of sin.

He is wisest when he knows that he knows not and knows least when he has acquired the greatest amount of knowledge.

He sometimes does most by doing nothing and goes furthest when standing still. In heaviness he manages to rejoice and keeps his heart glad even in sorrow.

The paradoxical character of the Christian is revealed constantly. For instance, he believes that he is saved now, nevertheless he expects to be saved later and looks forward joyfully to future salvation.

He fears God but is not afraid of Him. In God's presence he feels overwhelmed and undone, yet there is nowhere he would rather be than in that presence. He knows that he has been cleansed from his sin, yet he is painfully conscious that in his flesh dwells no good thing.

He loves supremely One whom he has never seen, and though himself poor and lowly he talks familiarly with One who is King of all kings and Lord of all lords, and is aware of no incongruity in so doing.

He feels that he is in his own right altogether less than nothing, yet he believes without question that he is the apple of God's eye and that for him the Eternal Son became flesh and died on the cross of shame.

The Christian is a citizen of heaven and to that sacred citizenship he acknowledges first allegiance; yet he may love his earthly country with that intensity of devotion that caused John Knox to pray, "O God, give me Scotland or I die."


He cheerfully expects before long to enter that bright world above, but he is in no hurry to leave this world and is quite willing to await the summons of his heavenly Father.

And he is unable to understand why the critical unbeliever should condemn him for this; it all seems so natural and right in the circumstances that he sees nothing inconsistent about it.

The cross-carrying Christian, furthermore, is both a confirmed pessimist and an optimist the like of which is to be found nowhere else on earth.

When he looks at the cross he is a pessimist, for he knows that the same judgement that fell on the Lord of glory condemns in that one act all nature and all the world of men. He rejects every human hope out of Christ because he knows that man's noblest effort is only dust building on dust.

Yet he is calmly, restfully optimistic. If the cross condemns the world the resurrection of Christ guarantees the ultimate triumph of good throughout the universe. Through Christ all will be well at last and the Christian waits the consummation.

Incredible Christian! 



Just give me Jesus

by Peter Pollock

ANNE Graham Lotz – daughter of Billy Graham – has seen it all. As far as the church is concerned she has most certainly been there, done it all, worn the t-shirt and the moccasins and now in her eighth decade of life experience has earned the right to draw conclusions.

And she famously did that in the title of perhaps the most noted of her 11 books – *Just Give Me Jesus*. In a nutshell, that is it!

“God forbid that I should boast except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom the world has been crucified to me and I to the world (Galatians 6:14).”

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me (Galatians 2:20).”

And Psalm 23 states: “The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want.”

God promised us Jesus. Abraham, the father of all believers, “saw My day and I was pleased,” confirmed Jesus – and John the Baptist had firmly announced “Behold, the Son of God who takes away the sin of the world.”

Nothing more or nothing less! Nothing needs to be added or subtracted and there are no yes, buts! Jesus is all sufficient in Himself. Jesus is all we need and is all we should desire.

God ordained that everything would fall under the authority and Lordship of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, His Son; that Jesus will come back to rule and reign and that every knee shall bow and tongue confess

that Jesus is the Lord.

“I am determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2).” The apostle Paul did not support a cause. He belonged absolutely to Jesus Christ. He saw nothing else and lived for nothing else!

Many years ago I had an amazing 20-minute “experience” in Kolkata, India when I visited the mission run by the late Mother Teresa. She spoke to me non-stop for 20 minutes, completely dominating the conversation.

She told me that the greatest shall be the servant of all; what you do to the least you do unto me; and then finally, that you will never know that Jesus is all you need until Jesus Christ is all you’ve got!

She then prayed for me and sent me back to Africa to “save souls.” Her message was loud and clear – Just give me Jesus! I believed what she said was “straight” from God and I would never be the same again.

I am reminded of Peter and his re-affirmation when Jesus simply asked him, three times, “Do you love Me more than these?” Yes, did Peter love Jesus more than anything else in the world. That was all that counted.

Only when Jesus is truly number one in our lives can we truly feed His sheep. It’s a spiritual condition with an attitudinal fruit.

God’s love, grace and mercy do not save. It is only Jesus specifically who saves!

Yes, it’s not the biblical principles and not the validity of the doctrinal truths that change our lives. They all work. They are all true! But Jesus Christ is the “saviour” and the “redeemer.”

And Jesus is so much more than we have

allowed Him to be in our lives, just as God is so much more awesome than presented by the modern-day church. You cannot be saved by the “how-to’s” I am sorry!

Trust, belief and faith in the “person” of God must precede trust and belief in the “word” of God. No matter how good the instruction or the teaching or how anointed the ministry, “you must be born again” as Jesus so authoritatively told Nicodemus.

Nicodemus thought you need to climb back into your mother’s womb, because the man without the spirit will always see everything in the material and physical. But this was a spiritual thing.

“Flesh gives birth to flesh; the spirit gives birth to the spirit,” explained Jesus.

So many are going to be left behind! Jesus, talking about the 10 virgins is very specific that five of them don’t make it. The 10 virgins represent the visible end-time church – and despite all the current TV pomp and glory, half of the adherents are going to hell. And it’s Jesus making that strong point.

Also, as Jesus speaks to the end-time churches in the Book of Revelation, He does twice mention the Synagogue of Satan – those who say they are believers but are not! That’s why, no matter how full the auditorium, we must not stop “preaching the word” – as Paul encourages Timothy. In season and out of season we are to convince, rebuke and exhort with all long-suffering and teaching because the time has come when sound doctrine is not endured but rather people with itching ears are turning away from the truth and following fables.

We need to preach the Word, not vaguely

“from” the Word or interestingly “about” the Word. Modern pulpits are over-run with topical “world-wise” messages that are nothing but humanism. Intellectual application of His Word is often a gross misrepresentation and we have almost come to treat God as if He is the Queen of England – a sovereign figurehead with no authority or power.

“We are in charge! He gave us dominion,” I heard a well-known preacher proclaim on television. It was as if God is merely an advisor and supporter with His Bible being a helpful manual that we might choose to consult as we exercise our dominion. Ridiculous!

Truth is how you translate it

Of course it’s ludicrous, but that is what is virtually being insinuated by some of the off-the-wall doctrine doing the rounds. It’s a “post-truth” world, and you will find that phrase in the dictionary.

Here are some modern dictums: Bible truth is how you translate it or perceive it to be. Your interpretation is okay. If you regard it as God’s truth or message to you, preach it!

I heard this classic David misinterpretation: Listen! “David defeated Goliath when he realised that he was no longer a shepherd but a king.” And the audience loved it.

What a revelation! But humanistic garbage. Goliath was a spiritual battle. David saw himself against an unbelieving pagan and knew it was God’s battle. The armour did not fit. It was not needed. The battle was the Lord’s!

David had a heart after God. And that’s finally what counts. David had “Bathsheba,” “Absalom” and “census” problems, all of which incurred their consequences, but he loved God with his whole being.

The Bible is not just a “manual” or a “textbook,” it is God’s revelation of Himself. Intellectual Christianity is continuously at loggerheads with itself, as one doctrinal debate after the other reach inevitable dead-ends, leaving frustration and even anger.

As happened on Good Friday, the “world” will always choose Barabbas and the “world” will always crucify Jesus and the true battleground and weapons never change.

Rather give me the Jesus of hours and hours of meditating on His word and allowing His Spirit to bring alive the

wondrous words that God spoke through prophets like Jeremiah, Malachi and Habakkuk. Reading out aloud and being truly “washed” by His Word does reveal a rather different God from the one popularly preached.

It’s not the Jesus of Christ of Christmas with the baby still in the manger. While His birth should be heralded, even if it’s the wrong date, the Gospel message is so much more.

It’s not the Jesus of the “prosperity” gospel and the modern church franchise “money and music” business. I have watched priests become politicians when churches grow big and the numbers swell.

It’s just a natural human progression, because to manage so many people becomes a human malfunction, whether we want to believe it or not. Also, modern teachers and preachers seem hell-bent on sort of “de-toxing” the Gospel and making it sin- and seeker-friendly.

Globalism is one of the buzz-words. I reckon God spells globalism either GLO-BABEL-ISM or GLO-BAAL-ISM! Again a veritable monster produced by man and his humanism.

Prayers and prophecies are tainted by concern for personal safety, profit and comfort. Man’s unity depends largely on “common cause” and “agreement,” which of course needs manipulation and compromise.

God’s unity is by the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus prayed for it – “that they be one” – and we are one. “In Him we live and move and have our being.” God does not live in temples, as much as we love to keep building them, and as recorded in all four Gospels, Jesus clears out foreign currency.

There is only one acceptable vision – Jesus! He is the Son of God, The Christ, The Messiah, The Lord and the Soon and Coming King!

We are to behold, to look intently for Him. Jesus isn’t just a prayer meeting or a church service. That’s the only time most of us accord to Him and we wonder why there is no change in our lives and why the world is in such a mess. If we all took the number of minutes we spent in a day on prayer, reading the Word and even thinking about Jesus, added them up and then divided them into the number of minutes available in a day we would probably end up with .00 percentages.

And again we wonder why. We are called to be holy, to be separated unto Him. God is awesome, to be feared, to be hallowed, to be beseeched, to be honoured and to be

worshipped. We are called by Jesus, specifically to Him. We are to “Follow Me” – not the church, pastors or the crowd.

“Come to Me” – it can’t be plainer or clearer than that.

We are to take up our Cross daily, we are to put the hand to the plough and refuse to look backwards. We are not called to a “ministry” or a “gifting” or a “vision” but to Him.

I am not for one minute undermining the value of “gifting” and “ministries” and “good works” – but they have no standing in the spiritual yardstick that is so important for us to understand and be aware of.

We get so caught up in “visions” but they are so laden with poisonous pride. Pride is a monster! It is right at the top of the list. Jesus never hid His disgust of what the Pharisees represented in terms of spiritual pride.

Faith is more than believing

Faith, as defined by Hebrews 11:1 is: “to be sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” That is a particularly challenging statement viewed in the “revelation” light of understanding that if you are not “sure” and “certain” then you don’t in fact have faith!

Faith is so much more than just believing that the Bible might be true. All God wants from us is everything! When God initially made man He created Adam and Eve in “our own image.”

The Spirit was that “image” and also the vital “enabler” in terms of fellowship. God gave man his own will because He did not want robots. We should be able to make up our own minds in terms of choosing Him.

A jealous God, who is a consuming fire by His own admission, desires fellowship. But we are not our own. “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God’s (1 Corinthians 6:19&20).”

There are no such things as atheists! They are just people trying to convince themselves that there is no God. You don’t need a preacher. There are no excuses. You just have to look around.

You can’t hide from Jesus! So says the book of Romans.

JUST GIVE ME JESUS! That’s all I ask. That’s all I need. 



I Am My Beloved's And My Beloved Is Mine

by George Müller

"A garden enclosed Is my sister, my spouse, A spring shut up, A fountain sealed. Your plants are an orchard of pomegranates With pleasant fruits, Fragrant henna with spikenard, Spikenard and saffron, Calamus and cinnamon, With all trees of frankincense, Myrrh and aloes, With all the chief spices – A fountain of gardens, A well of living waters, And streams from Lebanon. Awake, O north wind, And come, O south! Blow upon my garden, That its spices may flow out. Let my beloved come to his garden And eat its pleasant fruits (Song of Solomon 4:12-16)."

"I have come to my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk. Eat, O friends! Drink, yes, drink deeply, O beloved ones (Song of Solomon 5:1)!"

WHEN we read such a portion of Scripture, we should read it with reference to ourselves. It is in the measure in which we are able to appropriate the statements in the Scriptures to ourselves, that we enjoy them.

The point is not how much we speak about these things, how much we write about them, how much we read about them, how much we preach about them. It is not how many books we may have written about the things of God, but it is how far we appropriate them to ourselves, and know the power of them in our own hearts. Only in so far as this is the case, will the Word of God be really profitable to our own souls.

"A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse"

What does this mean? Literally it means barred – locked up. But what is it intended to convey here? When a garden is locked up, it is that only the owner may have the right to enter, or those to whom he may give this right. Not everyone may have access to the garden to help himself to the fruits as he pleases.

The garden is not only enclosed by walls, as would seem here, but in the Hebrew it

is "locked up" or "barred" so that none but the owner may have access. Who is He? The Lord Jesus Christ, and He alone should have access to our hearts, and not anyone else as he pleases.

What, then, does this deeply important truth convey to us? Simply that we are bought with a price, even the precious blood of Christ, that we are set apart for the glory of Christ. He and He alone has any right to us, and the devil has none.

More than this, we have no right to ourselves. We are not our own; we are bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:19&20).

We are not our own masters. No one can say, "My time is my own," as the world does say. It is not mine. My time, my talents are not mine; they are God's. My business even is not mine; it is God's. My house, my lands, my purse, everything I have is not mine, but it belongs to the Lord; for He has bought me with His precious blood, and having bought me, He has purchased all that I have (1 Peter 1:18&19).

All this is implied in the figure used, "a garden barred."

But, beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, let me ask you affectionately, is it so with you? Do you rejoice in this, that you are not your own, that you are bought by the precious blood of Christ, and that you and all you have belong entirely to Him?

Let us seek to enter into this – that we are set apart for His use, and so we shall be enabled to bring forth more abundant fruit to the praise and honour and glory of God. This is intended by the Holy Spirit to be conveyed to our hearts by the figure, "a garden barred." But still there is more.

"A spring shut up"

Why is it shut up? When an earthly spring is shut up, it is that not everyone may have a right to it, but that the owner, or any to whom he may allow the right and privilege of access to the spring, may be able to use the water, and no others.

It is then, another figure used by the

Holy Spirit to teach us the truth we have already been considering – to show us that we are the Lord's and that we are set apart that He may use us as He pleases. That we have no right to our time and talents, but that they all belong to Him.

Some think it is all the same how they spend their time, whether in learning sciences or languages, and they think they have a perfect right to do so if they feel inclined.

Now I do not mean to say that such things are sinful, if we have time for them; but no one has any right thus to employ his time or talents until he has laid it before the Lord, and has asked, "Is it Your will that I should spend my time in doing this? Shall I serve You with this or not?"

If it is the will of the Lord, then it is right and proper to use our time this way. So with everything we have – our time, money and talents. They are His, and we ought not to use them unless it be for the praise and honour and glory of God.

"A fountain sealed"

Another figure is used here. Not only "a garden enclosed" and a "spring shut up," but also "a fountain sealed." It is not simply "a spring shut up," but more pointed, to confirm that the owner of the spring alone has right of access to it, it is called "a fountain sealed." It is His, and His only, and therefore there is a seal on it, and no one dare break that seal to take water out of the spring.

The spring is His; the water which is in it came from Him; the water that He has put there is for Him and for His use. Therefore, the water which is in it is to be used only for the praise and honour and glory of His great name. This brings before us for the third time, even more clearly than before, that we are the Lord's.

Therefore we are to learn to be more decidedly out and out for the Lord, and we should never look on ourselves as belonging to this world, or as being our own. We should always remember that we are bought with a price, even the precious blood of Christ, and that thus we, and all we have and all we are, belong solely to the Master for His glory and use.

"An orchard"

"Your plants are an orchard of pomegranates With pleasant fruits, Fragrant henna with spikenard, Spikenard and saffron, Calamus and cinnamon, With all trees of frankincense, Myrrh and aloes,"

He means by these figures to convey the delight which He, the Bridegroom, takes in His bride, to show us how dear we are to His heart, and what loveliness and

beauty He sees in us. It shows how He is delighted with our service, although it may be but little, and how our worship and praise are sweet as incense to Him. Wonderful, is it not?

“A fountain of gardens”

This does not mean a fountain producing gardens, as it might here be taken to mean, but a fountain in the midst of gardens. A fountain, the waters of which refresh and nourish the gardens.

This he says further of His Church, and here He again uses three figures, even as we notice with regard to the first point. The figures are – “a fountain of gardens,” “a well of living waters” and “streams from Lebanon.” What do these figures imply?

“A fountain of gardens” means that we are in this world for the refreshment and nourishment of one another, for the strengthening and invigorating of one another.

Just as by a fountain in the midst of a garden, the plants are watered and nourished, and all the vegetation benefits from it, and the beautiful and fragrant flowers are refreshed – so the Church is left upon the earth to be a blessing.

She should not merely enjoy His fullness herself, but she should be for the blessing of those surrounding her, and especially she may lend a helping hand to the brethren and sisters, particularly the younger ones in Christ.

“A well of living waters”

In John 7:38&39 Jesus said, “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”

Now the Holy Spirit has been given. Therefore we are expected to be wells of living waters. The living water has been given us to flow out to others. Have we considered this, that for this very reason the Holy Spirit has been given to us – so that we may minister to the world around us?

Out of us there should flow rivers of living water, that sinners all around, young and old, rich and poor, whether enemies or friends, should be benefited.

We should also be as wells of living water to the dear fellow believers. They often stand in need of refreshing and comforting, and it should be our aim to seek to be the messengers of this blessed help to these brethren.

“Streams from Lebanon”

“Streams from Lebanon” goes still fur-

ther than the other figures. When the snow melted under the summer sun on the heights of Lebanon, then mighty torrents poured down from the mountain, sweeping everything before them.

Nothing could stand in the way of these streams. So should streams of living water flow out of us with so much divine force and power that the people of this world shall not be able to stand before us, but shall be constrained to say that God is with us.

If such were our state, we should carry all before us, being strong in the Lord, and hundreds, yes, thousands, would be converted. The whole Church, which may be cold and dead, would be quickened and set on fire, and all would be stirred up to new love and joy. Thus must we become blessings to many around us. Surely we ought all to aim after this, to be like “streams, or torrents, from Lebanon.”

Reciprocal delight

In the 16th verse to which we now come, the Bride of Christ is speaking. The Lord Jesus Christ has spoken in the highest terms of His Bride, and now His Bride speaks to Him in return. She delights in giving joy to the heart of the Lord Jesus, to see Him partaking of her fruit with pleasure, and to see Him gratifying His loving heart with her.

Therefore she now says, “Awake, O north wind, And come, O south! Blow upon my garden, That its spices may flow out.” This means that what I am, I am for the Lord’s sake. All that I have belongs not to me but to the Master, who has bought me with His precious blood. Therefore I take delight, joy and pleasure in gratifying His heart who bought me. All I have and all I am I take delight in rendering back to Him again.

It is with this feeling that the Bride responds to the loving words of the Lord Jesus, “Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out,” because the wind causes the spices and sweet fragrance of a garden to flow forth, so that the owner may enjoy the smell thereof.

Whether it be the pleasant south wind or the strong, rough north wind, it is all the same – only that my blessed owner may be gratified by spices which flow out. Whether it be the sweet, soothing influence of love, or the blows of affliction, it matters not, but only that He is gratified by the display of the graces which He has given.

But she goes on to say: “Let my Beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant

fruits.” Do you seek thus to gratify the heart of Jesus?

My beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, we can verily do so. We can cause sweet spices to ascend to Him. He can come into our company, even now and enjoy our graces. “Let my Beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.”

Let me ask you affectionately, are you doing this? Are you lending a willing, an utterly willing hand to the work of the Lord? Are you so doing to gratify the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ?

The Lord’s response

Now Jesus responds to the words of His Bride – “I have come to my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk. Eat, O friends! Drink, yes, drink deeply, O beloved ones.”

What is this? I belong to Jesus. I am His sister, His spouse.

By the grace of God, we are what we are; by the grace of God we have what we have. All we have and are is His by divine right. While He accepts the longings of our heart to offer ourselves to Him, still He would have us remember that we do belong to Him.


Thus the Lord Jesus Christ brings before us that we are His and have received all we have from Him. He would have us keep in mind that we are His through Him – and what we have is through Him.

We are wholly His, and to the very last day of our earthly pilgrimage, all we ever have in the world is of Him. While therefore we invite Him to come into our garden and partake of the pleasant fruits, yet He claims it as His own by right. He does accept and rejoices in our offer of it, but would have us know that it is already all His own.

The Invitation

Lastly, “Eat, O friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly, O beloved.” If there is anyone who desires to partake of these blessings, the Lord Jesus Christ says to him, “Eat, O friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly” – which literally means “be drunk with love.”

Oh, aim above everything after this to increase and abound in love, as it were, to be drunk with love, intoxicated with love (Philippians 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:9&10).

Oh, that we might know something more of this and be so brimful of love to Jesus, and brimful of love to everyone, that it were running over all round us! Jesus delights in seeing us filled with love, intoxicated with love, drunk with love. May we aim increasingly after this! 

The miracle of 900%



by Dave Butts

JESUS spoke more about money than virtually any other single issue. Any form of Christian spirituality that doesn't deal with the topic of finances and proper use of what God has given us is lacking in a very practical dimension.

Jesus knew that everyone has some sort of financial concern – too many bills, not enough salary, insurance, health care expenses, debt, taxes... and in some countries, just the strain of having enough to buy daily food.

We live daily with the pressures of finances. That's why Jesus gave so much instruction on this topic.

He taught about the dangers of money and possessions as well as about the proper use of those possessions. However, today's Christians still try to separate finances and spirituality.

If we don't have enough, we worry. If we have enough, we worry about keeping it, or getting more. The enemy continually uses our finances to deceive and distract us.

The Lord knew that money would be a problem for His people.

He is our great provider and delights in caring for His children. Yet, when He gives to us, we worry about losing it. If He doesn't give in the time-frame we have chosen, we worry about not having enough. What is God to do with us?

Fortunately, God has a solution to the

problem of finances and spirituality. I believe His answer to our dilemma is the tithe!

Now let me say up front, that this article is not trying to get you to give more money. That may happen... but that is not the intent. My goal is to focus our attention on the wonderfully creative way God has chosen to step in to deal with a major spiritual problem we all face.

God's solution is...

We must look to Him for the solution to financial worry. And His solution... is the tithe!

Listen to the Word of the Lord:

"Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse – the whole nation of you – because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,' says the Lord Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit,' says the Lord Almighty. 'Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,' says the Lord Almighty

(Malachi 3:8-12)."

We need to understand that God doesn't need the tithe. *We* need the tithe. The blessing of the tithe to us is that it is a continual reminder that everything is the Lord's. A tithe is not thoughtlessly giving 10% of your income. It is an act of reverence by which you acknowledge that everything you have comes from God.

The 10% given is an act of acknowledging His ownership over the 100%.

The act of tithing is an act of humility. It gives us a right perspective on where everything we have comes from and who really owns it. The tithe provides a right perspective on finances. Whether we have much or whether we have little... it all belongs to God.

The tithe is also a constant miracle of provision. A lot of people say they would like to see God work in their lives, but then they refuse to place themselves in a position where they can see God at work.

The tithe is a regular opportunity to see the Lord do amazing things in your life.

The passage from Malachi *promises* God's provision, if we will tithe. It is the only place in the Bible where you actually hear God telling us to test Him.

"Try me," He says. "See if I'll do what I say." The person who does not tithe is basically displaying an appalling lack of belief in the very words of God Himself. The non-tither is in effect saying, "Yes, I

know God said He will provide... but I just can't risk the chance that He might not."

A recent statistic showed that only 3% of adult Christians tithe at least a full 10%! We will never have the great joy of seeing the miracle-working power of God in our lives until we step out in faith and watch the Lord do His work in us.

Christians around the world and down through history have lined up to share their testimonies... the Lord is true. He is our provider. And we will see that in an astonishing way in the tithe.

I love to watch the miracle of the 90%. You give God 10%... God makes up the difference. I don't know how He does it, but He does. An extra cheque comes in. A bill is lowered. Expenses aren't as bad that month... somehow it always works.

I would suggest to you that there is a reverse miracle as well. If you don't give to the Lord with a glad heart, you still won't enjoy the benefits of what seems like extra money.

God can't bless you unless...

God can't bless you unless you give Him the opportunity. Remember that 100% belongs to the Lord – it all comes from His hand. Unless you trust Him with the portion that He has asked you for, you may never have the opportunity to use that money anyway.

God's Word explains it this way: "Re-

member this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work (2 Corinthians 9:6-8)."

One of life's great adventures is to watch the Lord work through your giving. You should never give with the unbiblical materialistic concept, that if I give more, God will give me more money. Rather, it is the exciting process of watching the Lord provide as you actually live on less.

Perhaps in no other way will Christians see the mighty hand of God work in their lives in such a regular way as in their tithing.

Let me respond quickly to the anticipated reply of some who say that tithing is "Old Testament" and therefore not applicable to the Christian today. Nowhere have I suggested that tithing 10% is a law that must be followed. It is instead a great privilege by which we watch and participate as God does a mighty work in our lives and finances.

Please do not relegate it to law... instead, place it into your life as a wonderful honour by which we partner with the Lord in His provision and power.


And, why limit His grace and power to

10%? If those under Law gave 10%, then surely we, who have a greater understanding of the wonderful love, grace and provision of God through Christ Jesus, would be eager to surpass that Old Testament standard? One of the great adventures in the lives of many believers is to continually add to their giving year after year – watching, growing, and stretching their faith as they see the Lord's provision.

Where do you give your tithes and gifts? There is no "thus saith the Lord" in this matter. Some people believe (including myself) that it is good to give your basic tithe (10%) to your local church. Other people believe that part of the tithe may be given to support the Lord's work outside the local congregation.

Beyond the tithe, we have freedom to give to other Christian ministries, as well as directly to the poor and those in need. Missionaries and ministries are able to continue their service because of gifts received from the Lord's people.

Christianity is extremely practical and is a matter of all or nothing. God's call is for people everywhere to submit their lives to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all matters – including finances.

May not only our finances, but also our whole lives be turned over to the Lordship of Jesus. May we be made rich in every way so that we can be generous on every occasion, so that through the act of giving, our generosity will result in thanksgiving to God (2 Corinthians 9:11). 

Altogether lovely!

by James Meikle

"Yes, He is altogether lovely! This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend (Song of Solomon 5:16)."

WHY does the world reject the Saviour of the world? Why do they abhor Him who is altogether lovely, and hate Him who is the best Friend of mankind?

O men of the world! What good can you desire which is not in Christ? The excellencies of earth are but His footstool; the excellencies of heaven are but His throne. How excellent, then, must He himself be!

His treasures are infinite – and open for you.

In Jesus are...

riches – if you are poor;

honour – if you are despised;

friendship – if you are forsaken;

help – if you are injured;

mercy – if you are miserable;

joy – if you are disconsolate;

protection – if you are in danger;

deliverance – if you are a captive;

life – if you are mortal;

and all things – if you have nothing at all.

Time and eternity are His! He can give you all the glorious things of eternity!

Moreover, He can deliver you...

from all your fears;

from sin – the worst of all evils;

from self – the most hurtful of all companions;

from death – the most dreadful of all changes;

from Satan – the most subtle of all enemies;

from hell – the most horrible of all prisons; and


from wrath – the most horrifying doom of all sinners!

Now, where will you find such a one as Jesus?

Why, then, refuse life, and seek after death?

All heaven is enamoured with His beauty!

The longer we look on "created fivolities," the leaner and less lovely they grow; so that, by the time we have viewed them 40, 50, or 60 years – we see nothing but vanity in the creature. But when 10 000 ages are employed in beholding the perfection and beauty of Jesus – He still appears more and more lovely – even altogether lovely!

Alas! I can say nothing of His true excellencies. They overwhelm my labouring thought, and are too vast for my feeble conception to bring forth! 



Almost a Christian

from a treatise by M. Meade, 1661

THERE are two questions of very great importance which we should every one of us put to ourselves: “What am I?” and “Where am I?”

Am I a child of God or not? Am I sincere in religion, or am I only a hypocrite under a profession? Am I still in a natural state, or in a state of grace? Am I still in the old root, in old Adam, or am I in the Root, Christ Jesus? Am I in the covenant of works that ministers only wrath and death, or am I in the covenant of grace that ministers life and peace?

I press this upon you who profess to be Christians – because many rest in a notion of godliness and an outward show of religion, and yet remain in their natural condition. Many are hearers of the Word and not doers of it, and so deceive their own souls (James 1:22).

He that makes little of the ordinances cannot be a true Christian, but it is possible a man may own them and yet be no true Christian. Errors in the first foundation are very dangerous.

If we are not right in the main, the fundamental work, if the foundation is

not laid in grace in the heart, all our following profession comes to nothing. The house built upon a sandy foundation, even though it may stand for a while, when the floods come and the winds blow and beat upon it, great will be the fall of it.

There are many things *like* grace that are not grace. And it is the likeness of things that deceives.

Many take gifts for grace; common knowledge for saving knowledge; whereas a man may have great gifts and no grace, great knowledge and yet not know Jesus Christ.

Some take common faith for saving faith; whereas a man may believe all the truths of the gospel, all the promises, all the threatenings, all the articles of the creed to be true, and yet perish for want of saving faith.

Some take morality and restraining grace for renewing grace; whereas it is common to have sin much restrained where the heart is not at all renewed. Some are deceived with a half-work, making many mermaid Christians, or like Nebuchadnezzar’s image, head of gold and feet of clay.

Endless are the delusions that Satan

fastens upon souls in order to avoid this self-search. Satan will try us at one time or other. He will winnow us and sift us to the bottom, and if we now rest in a groundless confidence, it will then end in a comfortless despair.

No, God Himself will search and try us, at the day of judgement especially, and who can abide that trial, that never tries his own heart? Whatever a man’s state be, whether he be altogether a Christian or not, yet it is good to examine his own heart.

If he finds his heart good, his principles right and sound, this will be a matter of rejoicing. If he finds his heart rotten, his principles false and unsound, the discovery may be in order to a renewing.

If a man has a disease knows it, he may send to the doctor in time, but what a sad vexation it will be not to see the disease till it be past cure! So for a man to be graceless and not see till it be too late, to think himself a Christian when he is not; that he is on the right way to heaven when he is in the ready way to hell – and yet not know it till a death bed or a judgement day confute his confidence – this is the most

irrecoverable misery.

These are the grounds upon which I press this duty of examining our state. Oh, that God would help us in doing this necessary duty.

You will say: But how shall I come to know whether I am almost or altogether a Christian? If a man can go so far and yet miss the mark, how shall I know when my foundation is right, when I am a Christian indeed?

Christ is King, Priest, Prophet, and all as Mediator. Without any one of those offices, the work of salvation could not have been completed.

As Priest He redeems us, as Prophet He instructs us, as King He sanctifies and saves us. Therefore, Paul says He is made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Righteousness and redemption flow from Him as Priest, wisdom as a Prophet, sanctification as a King.

Now many embrace Christ as a Priest, but yet they own Him not as a King and Prophet. They like to share in His righteousness, but not to partake of His holiness. They want to be redeemed by Him, but they do not submit to Him. They want to be saved by His blood, but not submit to His power. Many love the privileges of the gospel, but not the duties of the gospel.

Now these are almost Christians – despite their closeness to Christ – for it is on their own terms, but not upon God's. The offices of Christ may be distinguished, but they can never be divided.

The true Christian owns Christ in all His offices. He does not only relate to Him as Jesus, but as Lord Jesus. He says with Thomas: "My Lord, and my God."

He does not only believe in the merit of His death, but also conforms to the manner of His life. As he believes in Him, so he lives in Him.

The altogether Christian has a thorough work of grace and sanctification wrought in the heart, as a spring of obedience. Regeneration is a whole change. All old things are done away, all things become new.

It is a perfect work as to parts, though not as to degrees. Carnal men do duties but from an unsanctified heart, and that spoils everything. A new piece of cloth never does well in an old garment, for the rent is made worse (Matthew 9:16).

When a man's heart is thoroughly renewed by grace; the mind savingly enlightened, the conscience thoroughly

convinced; the will truly humbled and subdued; the affections spiritually raised and sanctified; and when the mind and will and conscience and affections all join issue to help on and with the performance of the duties commanded – then a man is altogether a Christian.

Here the almost Christian fails. He does the same duties, but he does not do them in the same manner. If he prays, he does not exercise faith and fervency in prayer; if he hears, he does not mind Christ's rule: "Take heed how you hear."

If he obeys, he does not look to the frame of his heart in obedience; therefore miscarries in all he does. These defects spoil all.

Christ and His righteousness

The altogether Christian is much in duty and yet much above duty in regard of dependence. He lives *in* his obedience, but not *upon* his obedience. He lives upon Christ and His righteousness.

The almost Christian fails in this: He is much in duty, but not above it, but rests in it. He works for rest, and he rests in his works. He cannot come to believe and obey, too. If he believes, then he thinks there is no need for obedience, and so casts that off; if he is much in obedience, then he casts off believing, and thinks there is no need of that.

He cannot say with David: "I have hoped for your salvation, *and* done thy commandments (Psalm 119:166)."

The altogether Christian is universal in his obedience. He does not obey one command and neglect another, do one duty and cast off another; but he has respect to all the commandments.

He endeavours to leave every sin, and love every duty.

The almost Christian fails in this. His obedience is partial and piece-meal. If he obeys one command, he breaks another. The duties that least confront his lust, he is much in; but those that do, he lays aside.

The Pharisees fasted, paid tithes, etc, but they did not lay aside their covetousness, their oppression; they "devoured widows' houses;" they were unnatural to parents.

The altogether Christian makes God the chief end of all his performances. Now the almost Christian fails in this. For he who was never truly cast out of himself, can have no higher end than himself.


It is dangerous to be almost a Christian, in that it stills and serves to quiet the conscience.

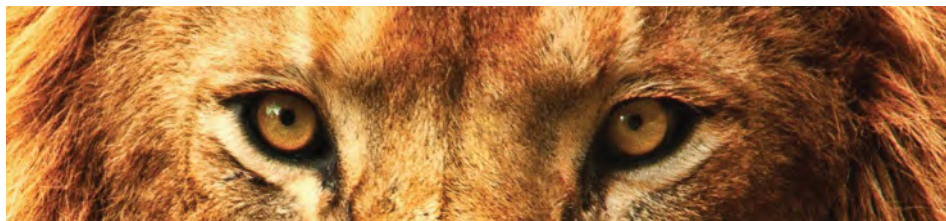
Now it is very dangerous to quiet the conscience with anything but the blood of Christ.

It is bad to be at peace until Christ speaks peace. Nothing can truly pacify conscience less than that which pacifies God, and that is the blood of Christ (Hebrews 9:14).

Now the almost Christian quiets conscience but not with the blood of Christ; it is not a peace flowing from Christ's propitiation, but a peace rising from a formal profession; not a peace of Christ's giving, but a peace of his own making.

He silences and bridles conscience with a form of godliness and so makes it give way to an undoing soul-destroying peace. He rocks it asleep in the cradle of duties, and probably never wakes it until death or judgement.

Ah, my brethren, it is better to have a conscience never quiet than quieted any way but through the blood of sprinkling. A good conscience is the greatest affliction to the saints, and an evil conscience that has been quietened is the greatest judgement to sinners. 



"Not many Christians today can forget the fact that the devil goes about as a roaring lion, but we seem to have lost sight of the fact that the Lion of the tribe of Judah has defeated the roaring lion of hell, and therefore every anointed Samson or Gideon or church can also slay the lion of hell.

"Though wicked men are doing wickedly, God's promise to us is that 'the people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits (Daniel 11:32).'"

Leonard Ravenhill

by Winkie Pratney

IAM no prophet, nor am I the son of a prophet, but I do believe we're headed for some very dark times. I really believe in some places it's going to be rough to be a Christian. In many nations believers have already faced trouble and pressure.

But what I want to look at here is a "dark time" that doesn't result from the persecution of the world. This is something that will happen to every single Christian who wants to be involved in the work of God, or to any Christian who has truly set his heart on pleasing God. It is not a problem that comes from other people – and it is not necessarily a problem that comes from the demonic world.

It can very well come to Christians from God Himself.

"Who among you fears the Lord? Who obeys the voice of His Servant? Who walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord and rely upon his God. Look, all you who kindle a fire, who encircle yourselves with sparks; walk in the light of your fire and in the sparks you have kindled - this you shall have from My hand: you shall lie down in torment (Isaiah 50:10&11)."

When I first read this passage, I assumed it was written to an unbeliever. After all, it deals with darkness.

I knew of only three kinds of darkness mentioned in Scripture and, well, everybody knows that darkness comes only to unbelievers!

Perhaps it meant the darkness of sin. After all, the Bible does say: "Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil (John 3:19)."

Secondly, there is a darkness in the Bible that is really ignorance, and the opposite of this darkness is the word "light." This is one of the most basic statements about God in the entire Bible: "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5)."

Then, thirdly, demonic power is sometimes referred to as "the power of darkness (Luke 22:53; Acts 26:18; Ephesians 6:12; Colossians 1:13)."

But the darkness Isaiah spoke of doesn't refer to any of those things. The strange thing about these verses (and this kind of darkness) is that it happens only to people who are walking with God and who love God. It happens to people who are not messing around with sin, and who are not ignorant.

There is a darkness that can come to men and women of God that has nothing to do with sin, that has nothing to do with lack of wisdom, and has nothing whatsoever to do with the devil. And the tragedy is, when this darkness comes upon certain



Walking In

people of God, they don't understand what it is and it nearly wipes them out.

Everyone who has set his heart on serving God will have this darkness come at some point.

Has it happened to you? You wake up one day to find all spiritual feelings gone. You pray and nothing seems to happen. You read your Bible, and you understand the words – but there is no light. You search your heart and find nothing to match what you are going through. You rebuke the devil, you ask others for prayer, you go to hear your favourite Christian speaker – and nothing happens.

No counsel seems to help. No answers answer.

St John of the Cross called it "the dark night of the soul." Tozer called it "the ministry of the night." Spurgeon preached about "the child of light walking in darkness."

Each writer dealt with this differently, but the experience is common. It is not darkness of wrong or guilt or demonic oppression. It is not sin. It is, instead, an inexplicable sense of loss and uncertainty. It is above all a withdrawn sense of the presence of God.

What Does Darkness Look Like?

The first thing that happens is this: There's a strange sense of emptiness in

your life. There's no sign of God. You sit in meetings and take your usual notes. The message is great, but there is no answering chord of response in your heart.

When everyone else is feeling something, you don't feel anything. So you pray. You get on your knees and tell God you don't feel so good. Prayer usually "changes things," it is said, but this time there seems to be no light from heaven!

So you go to hear teaching that has always excited you, fully expecting inspiration to flow like streams of living water – and nothing! You walk out of the service in which everyone else "touched God" and say to yourself: "What in the world have I done?"

Perhaps, you think, it is unconfessed sin. You apologise to everybody. You write letters of confession to your primary school teachers. You go through everything you can possibly think of, but it's still the same. Nothing.

Then you think: "Ah ha! Of course. It's the devil! I haven't taken my authority in Christ." So you do. And? Still nothing.

What you are going through is not new. It came to every major man or woman of God in Scripture. It came to Abraham when he stood waiting for God to accept his sacrifice (Genesis 15:12). It came to Moses on the mountain waiting to receive the Commandments in the "thick darkness" where God was (Deuteronomy 5:22). It came to Job when he "looked for good" and "evil came (Job 30:26)."

It came to David when the bottom seemed to



h Darkness

drop out of his world. It came to the prophets and they wept. It came to the godly kings and they humbled themselves. One dark day it even came to Jesus, the Son of God Himself.

And if you set your heart to seek God, this darkness will also come to you. You will not be exempt. You will not escape it. It is an essential factor in a deep and thorough Christian experience.

Even in nature you know it's true. Nothing can live in unbroken sunshine. There must be the cycles of the night, and days of clouds and rain. Light and darkness are both essential for plant growth. Non-stop sunshine only creates a desert.

What is true in the seasons of nature is also true in the seasons of the spirit. Summer is beautiful, but winter must always come. Don't be surprised at the darkness. Jesus will help you walk in it sooner or later.

Dealing With Feeling

An unsaved girl who had been attending a Christian college once asked me a profound question: "Do Christians really love Christ or do they just love the good feelings that come from loving Christ?"

Job faced the same question when his world fell apart and God did not seem to answer. Sheltered in the personal care of God, he had walked secure in the knowledge that God his Friend was also his Provider and Protector. He, too, was a man who feared the Lord, who walked in obedience, who trusted Him.

Satan's challenge to God over Job was simple. He said, in effect: "Sure Job loves and worships you. Why not? You give him everything he wants! Take away the presents and he'll be just the same as one of my crowd."

So God let Satan test Job. And Job came through – but barely.

Job faced the darkness that is the most fearsome of all to the child of God. Not the darkness of sin, ignorance, or the demonic, but the divine darkness – the darkness of the withdrawn sense of the presence of God.

What can you do to get out of this darkness? Nothing. Nothing at all.

There is nothing you can do to get out of the darkness if it is God who put you into it. That is why all your usual remedies fail, all your counsellors draw a blank, and all your frustrated attempts come to an eventual exhausted end.

The darkness of God is given by Him, and it will not lift until it has accomplished its work in your soul.

"Jacob was left alone" in the darkness and "a man wrestled with him until daybreak (Genesis 32:24)." You cannot escape it, but you can surely live through it.

What do you do when you are going through the darkness? You say, "Lord, I know that this is a hard place. But what shall I do?" Nothing. Silence. "Well," you say, "at least show me what to do." Nothing.

Yet what is this person in Isaiah 50:10 doing? Look carefully: he is walking. The first thing you must do when the darkness comes is to do your duty, to keep going in the same direction you were going when the darkness came. You must continue your daily routine.

What did God say to you before you went into the darkness? What was your call when the voice of God was clear? Then do it still. Keep on walking. Nothing has changed on the path except your perception of it. Do your duty nevertheless, and keep walking even when the lights go out.

Let him who has no light trust in the name of the Lord.

"The name of the Lord is a strong tower the righteous runs into it and is safe (Proverbs 18:10)" and "those who know Your name will put their trust in You (Psalm 9:10)."

His name is descriptive of what He is – and He is there. He is the uncreated, unchanging, unshakable God. He is what He always is, and He has not changed in the darkness. He is not missing because you cannot see Him.

God is committed in everlasting covenant to you. He is faithful and will remain faithful yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8).

You're to get on your knees and say: "O God, I don't feel You. I don't get any zap from You. I don't feel Your presence. But You're there nevertheless because Your Word doesn't change. Amen."

Here is something else you can do: In this time of darkness, go over in your mind what God has already done in your life. Those things aren't just little dreams in the back of your head – they really did happen. God really did do them. Now you are going to have to remember them.

Remember what His character is like. When you can't see the way, open the Book and read again what He is like. Recall what God has already done. What have you seen of God in your own experience? Once you said, "I have seen His hand, I know what He is like and I am committed to Him forever." Did you really mean that?

Others before you have walked in the darkness. They too, have found that faith is not something you hold but someone who holds you.

The Danger Of False Fire

St John of the Cross had some rare insight on walking through this "dark night



Walking In Darkness

Continued...
of the soul."

He said, "The way in which they are to conduct themselves in this night is not to devote themselves to reasoning and meditation, since this is not the time for it, but to allow the soul to remain in peace and quietness, although it may seem clear to them that they are doing nothing, and are wasting their time, and although it may appear to them that it is because of their weakness that they have no desire to think of anything. The truth is that they will be doing quite sufficient if they have patience and persevere in prayer without making any effort."

Isaiah 50 contains a solemn warning: You cannot take matters into your own hands! If God does not bring you light, you must not make your own.

Some have tried to do just that. "If God is not going to speak," they say in anger, "Then I am going ahead anyway. If He won't show me the light, I will make my own."

What they are saying is, "Okay, God, if You're not going to guide me, I'm going to guide myself." What you have then is an extremely brief and temporary light. It cannot last and will only leave you blinded.

Don't do it. Don't make the foolish and futile mistake of lighting your own fire. If God has put you into the darkness, let it do its work in your soul. He got you in – and you can trust Him to take you out.

If you light your own little match and then go and do your own thing, you will see in that man-made light a destruction of much that God has for you. Walk in what God has already given you to do and remain faithful until new light comes.

The Purpose Of Darkness

You might be wondering, "Why is God doing this to me? How long will it last? How come when I talk to Him He doesn't answer? Why am I not getting any revelation in my life?"

Probably because this is the only way God has of teaching you some very im-

portant lessons. And those lessons are basically: Will you obey Him whether you feel like it or not? Will you do what He asks you to do? Will you hold on to the truth He's given you, whether you feel He's there or not?

You say, "Of course I will!" Some of you have convictions that God has written and locked into your heart. You think these are so strong, so unshakable that you will never, ever doubt them. Then the darkness comes and you start asking questions. Are these convictions really true or not?

What you will find out is whether you really do believe them. The darkness will test your convictions. And the only thing left when the darkness lifts from your life is what you really do believe.

How about your consecration? You had a wonderful experience, perhaps in a church service one time. A totally incredible, miraculous, fantastic thing happened. You wish you had a movie so you could play it back every day of your life.

On that day you said, "Lord, I know You've called me. I'm giving my life to You. Hear me, Lord, I dedicate my life to You. I'll never turn back."

Then darkness comes. How long will the darkness last? A week? Maybe more. Maybe a year. But when the darkness has finished its work in you, everything that can be shaken will be shaken, and only what is firm, real, and solid shall remain.

Light At The End Of The Tunnel

Darkness comes to reveal our need of God and God alone. Don't fret over your helplessness and your emptiness – they will be riches to you.

God says, "I will give you the treasures of darkness (Isaiah 45:3)."

When I was a little boy my sister and I sometimes rode into town on the train. Early New Zealand railroad cars had no interior lights in the daytime, so when we entered a tunnel the car would become totally dark for a brief time.

Do you know what happens in such darkness? The pupils of your eyes, which in the sunshine shrink almost to pinpoints, expand wider and wider in the darkness. And when the train suddenly bursts out the other side of the tunnel,

the brightness of the world outside is astonishing!

And so with the darkness of God. We do not know or appreciate the brightness of the light we already walk in until we enter this discipline of God. We have absorbed so much that our spiritual perception has shrunk to a pinpoint. We have been given so much that we cannot appreciate what has been shown us.

And then God puts us like children on to His train and runs it into the darkness. But this darkness you are in is only a tunnel. The train is on a sure journey. It is headed without fail to the place you need to be, and the Engineer knows all of the way.

This tunnel is not eternal. You will not remain in darkness forever.

And ultimately you will come out of the darkness into a greater sense of light than you had when you went in.

Holding The Hand Of God

The darkness and the light are alike to God (Psalm 139:12).

There are treasures that can be found only in darkness, for there He will show you things about Himself and about yourself that you will never learn any other way.

Remember, you will find wonderful things in that darkness!

You will hear the voice of God at the end of the tunnel saying, "Well done, you good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Lord."

We must ask God for courage to go through the darkness ahead. This is necessary because God is going to prepare His people to obey no matter how they feel. You will go through it, beloved – but make the most of it! He will speak to you in that very silence.

When I was a child I remember reading a small plaque that hung on my grandfather's wall. I was not a Christian when I first read it, but I'll never forget the words inscribed there:

I said to the man who stood at the gate of the years

'Give me a light that I may walk safely into the unknown'

He said to me, 'Go out into the darkness And put your hand into the hand of God And He shall be to you brighter than a light

And safer than a known way' 

Love your wives, don't be bitter...

by W. C. Moore

"Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them (Colossians 3:19)."

NOT only is it true that God's Word tells wives to submit to their husbands, but a very important instruction to husbands is that they, on their part, love their wives, "and be not bitter against them."

In fact, Christ, Who is the Head of the husband (1 Corinthians 11:3), expects the husband, as the head of the wife (Ephesians 5:23), to really love his wife and never permit himself to take advantage of the fact that he has been placed in the position of headship.

It is so easy to blame the wife if things go wrong; it is so easy to forget that the wife gave up all to become your life companion – gave up even her very name, her home, and all.

It is so easy to forget that the "little" courtesies, the "little" kindnesses, the "little" acts of thoughtfulness – really make up the deciding issues in a Christian wife's life – as to whether she is to be a happy, co-operative companion or otherwise.

"Be not bitter." Oh, the heartbreaks, the sorrow, the despair – and the resultant disasters that so often follow when bitterness and unkindness creep in!

Oh, if only the husbands had remembered and obeyed the Word of God which tells them to "Be not bitter" against that precious soul who has taken on your name – who has left all to be with you and to share life's joys and sorrows with you!

"Be not bitter." God's Word says it! It is a needed saying! It is so easy to take advantage of one over whom we have some sort



of authority. O God, help us!

O you husbands – remember the vow you made at the altar, when, before God and man, you deliberately, solemnly, promised that you would "love and cherish" that precious bride. My brother, a true wife never ceases to be your bride. Remember that – and remember your solemn vow – which God heard you make on your wedding day.

Perhaps even now you should go and ask your wife to forgive you for your failure to "love and cherish" her as you promised to do.

Polished, not ground down

Our blessed Heavenly Father wants us to permit all things to work together for OUR GOOD – and not for our harm (Romans 8:28). He desires that we be so anointed with His Holy Spirit that we will be polished by the grindstone of life – not ground down by it!

No matter what your wife does – or what she does not do – God still says to you, "Be not bitter" against her. You may have to go to God desperately sometimes to be able to keep this Word – but, Brother, in Jesus' Name, KEEP IT.

Wait not, I beseech you, NOW, today, get right with God, and get right with that precious wife of yours – that God may be glorified, and that your prayers be not hindered (1 Peter 3:7&8).

"For the husband is the head of the wife (Ephesians 5:23)" and he must an-

swer to God as head. Many husbands let the wife be the head – thus ignoring or despising God, and His Holy Word. But that very fact – that God has made him the head – should make the husband careful that he love his wife, and be not bitter against her.

If young married couples would only start out right – to obey ALL God's commands to both husbands and wives – Oh, how many shipwrecks and broken homes might be avoided. God's ways are BEST!

Jesus, the Head of the Church (Ephesians 5:23&24), commands to young married couples, a "leaving" of father and mother, and the setting up of a new household. Never let "in-laws" come between you and your wife or husband. When the Lord says "LEAVE" – He means it! Not that you are to be at enmity with your relatives, but have it understood that they are not to cause trouble in your own new home.

Also, "CLEAVE" to each other, wife and husband, through thick and thin – because the LORD has so commanded you (Mark 10:1-12).

Husband and wife – remember that God must be FIRST! Neither the husband nor wife should honour the other mate above God. See the two great commandments – Matthew 22:36-40 and Mark 12:28-31. And Jesus says, concerning these two great commandments, "There is no other commandment greater than these (Mark 12:31)."



by W. C. Moore

THE Pharisees are not all dead yet. Even the most spiritual churches today have Pharisees in them. Outwardly they appear righteous to men, but within they are “full of hypocrisy and iniquity (Matthew 23:28).” I must ask, “Am I in that class?”

Notice how humble David was when Nathan, God’s messenger, told him of his great sin, and see how quickly forgiveness followed David’s confession: “And David said to Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said to David, The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die (2 Samuel 12:13).”

David had to suffer greatly for his terrible sin, but upon fully confessing and forsaking his sins, he was fully forgiven.

“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).” Only upon full confession can God fully pardon.

“Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him (John the Baptist) and were baptised by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins (Matthew 3:5&6).”

“He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy (Proverbs 28:13).”

Even under the mighty ministry of John the Baptist, some would not repent. If we reject God’s messenger we reject God

Himself. “And when all the people heard Him, even the tax collectors justified God, having been baptised with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptised by him (Luke 7:29&30).”

“Verily, verily, I say to you, He who receives whoever I send receives Me (John 13:20).” “He who hears you hears Me; and he who despises you despises Me (Luke 10:16).”

Did he need to confess any sins?

Did Job need to confess any sins? Not at first, for he was not conscious of any. However, God saw that Job could go a lot further in his experience of godliness, so He permitted Satan to attack him for his good.

After all Job’s sufferings and testings and trials, God began to talk to him (Job, chapter 38). In Job 40:3-5 we see his answer to the Lord: “Then Job answered the Lord, and said, ‘Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer You? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yes, twice; but I will proceed no further.’”

Now this was not a real, humble, broken, full confession before the holy presence of Almighty God. It is as though Job had said, “Well, I will hush. I think, Lord,

You are pretty hard on me – as righteous a person as I am – but I won’t say any more. I’ll keep quiet.”

We know that Job had not fully humbled himself before God, for the Lord said to him, “Will you also disannul My judgement? Will you condemn Me, that you may be righteous (Job 40:8)?”

It is nothing but right that we should fully humble ourselves before God, the Almighty, the Creator of all things, Who gave His only begotten Son to die a cruel, shameful death for our poor souls. It is reasonable and proper that we should make God first in our lives.

Trouble with the old saints

How often the Lord has trouble with “old” saints. How often He finds it hard to get them into a humble, honest place before Him where He can fully show them His favour.

Oh, the terrible, subtle sin of self-righteousness! It was the religious leaders of Jesus’ day who caused His crucifixion. It is hard for a person who has a reputation for sanctity and uprightness to humble himself fully and confess openly and fully when some sin is shown up in his life.

The tendency is to excuse ourselves, to justify ourselves, to blame other people, to blame conditions, to blame even God Himself – that we may appear to be not so bad after all.

Oh, the deceitfulness of the human heart. May God help us!

“And the Pharisees... heard all these things: and they derided Him. And He said to them, ‘You are those who justify yourselves before men; but God knows your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God (Luke 16:14&15).”

There is no respect of persons with God. If a religious leader, like Saul of Tarsus for instance, will humble himself and throw away all his self-righteous rags, God will have mercy on him.

Thank God, Job did finally come to a humble and a full confession. In Job 42:5&6 he says, “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eye sees You: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

It was then that God began to bless him mightily. However, it was not till Job had prayed for those tormenting friends of his – prayed *for* them, not against them – that the Lord gave him “a double portion.”

“And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before (Job 42:10).”

One great lesson we learn from the experiences of Job is this – that no matter how long we have been Christians, no matter how God has blessed us, no matter to what degree of holiness we have attained – God wants us always to be humble before Him.

If you have been saved 40 years, you need to humble yourself just as much as the drunkard or harlot who comes to the altar for salvation.

“Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted (Matthew 23:12).”

“Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted (Luke 18:14).”

Are you a religious leader? Are you an “old” saint? Take care, my friend, that you keep very humble before God. Maybe you do not look so big in God’s sight after all. Jesus told the religious leaders of His day, “Verily I say to you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you (Matthew 21:31).”

Wanting the praises of men...

It is an exceedingly dangerous thing to get into a place where you want the praises of men or where you will accept the praises of the people. “How can you believe, who receive honour from one another, and do not seek the honour that comes from the only God (John 5:44)?”

“Woe to you, when all men shall speak well of you, For so did their fathers to the false prophets (Luke 6:26).”

Are you a Christian? Have you been “invited” to the wedding (Matthew 22:1-14)? Take heed then that you be not too much occupied with other things and neglect that humble, prayerful walk where your chief concern is not what people think of you, but how you can please God.

Many are called but few are chosen we read in Matthew 22:14 and 20:16.

When someone criticises you, or when some sermon “hits” you, don’t fight back and try to defend yourself. Say rather, “Well, maybe there is something God wants me to look into in this matter. Maybe that harsh criticism has some truth in it after all.”

“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time (1 Peter 5:6).”

“God resists the proud, but gives grace


unto the humble (James 4:6).” God Himself resisted Job till Job gave up his pride and self-justification. It was when Job humbled himself and fully confessed that the Lord gave him His grace, His favour, His help, His blessing in full.

Isaiah was a prophet. But one day he caught a vision of the holiness of God and he said, “In the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple... Then I said, ‘Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for my eyes have seen the

King, the Lord of hosts (Isaiah 6:1,5).”

Thank God, the Lord met Isaiah right on the spot when he humbled himself and made a full confession: “Lo, this (live coal from off the altar) has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged (Isaiah 6:7).”

Even a prophet had “sin” and iniquity” which up to that time, when the illumination of the very presence of God shone into his innermost heart, had been apparently unnoticed.

“Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you (James 4:8).” 



by Oswald Chambers

WE all have to learn that surrender is not the surrender of the external life, but the surrender of the will to God.

When that is done, all is done.

If the rest of the life is not right, the reason is that the will has never really been surrendered.

There are very few crises in life. What we are apt to call crises are not crises. The great crisis is where we surrender the will. God never crushes a man’s will into surrender. He never beseeches him. He waits until the man thoroughly yields up his will to Him.

“If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself (Matthew 16:24).” The surrender here is of myself to Jesus. “If you would be My disciples,” Jesus is saying in effect here, “then give up your right to yourself to Me (see Galatians 1:15&16).”

This is not done by praying or longing. It is done by a sharp battle where the surrender of the will takes place.

After you have gone through the full surrender of the will, you will always remember the time. But do you remember how long it took God to get you there? Do you remember how you weighed up all the circumstances, and how you found that your heart or mind or body or sentiments, or other ties and friendships held you down here and there?

For a time you seemed to get peace, and you thought it was all done. But the battle came back again and again, because you had not surrendered to Him the central citadel which is your will. The remainder of the life is nothing but the manifestation of that surrender. The battle for the will is the great point where Jesus Christ wins or loses in your life and mine.

Once the full surrender of the will has taken place, you need not care what your circumstances are. Once you have got through the crisis of surrendering your will to God, wherever you are placed, on the home or foreign field, the Lord can rely on you, because your surrender has allowed the supernatural work of God to fully identify your life with that of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The surrender of your will to God has always to be made in cold blood. Beware of the surrender you make to God in an ecstasy, for you are apt to take it back. It is not a supernatural vision of God that does it. It is not being taken up on a mount of transfiguration.

It is a quiet, commonplace moment when God puts the thing to you so clearly that there is no misunderstanding that He is asking of you the full surrender of your will.

Some have gone through with this surrender of the will, and no matter where God places them there is no fear that they will turn back, because the central citadel of their will is possessed by God. Unless the central citadel of your will is held by the Lord, you may go down at any second, anywhere, no matter what the devotion of your heart may be.

After surrender, what? The whole of the life is an aspiration – the aspiration of an unbroken life of communion with God, and it does not matter if the life is dark or bright.



Seven questions of vital importance

by Oswald J. Smith (1889-1986)

THERE are seven questions that every Christian should face, questions of such vital importance that to ignore them is to imperil one's spiritual life. Let us consider them, then, one by one, and may God help us to answer them honestly and sincerely.

1. Am I committing any known sin?

"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me (Psalm 66:18)." He will not even listen to what I say. Hence, my prayers will not be answered while I am harbouring sin.

Note, if you will, that I have said "known" sin, for it may be that you have to face what the Bible terms "the sin which so easily besets us (Hebrews 12:1)" – that one sin to which from time to time, you yield. It may be but a weight, an idol, and yet it is sin, and God says you must give it up.

"Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear (Isaiah 59:2)." Sin separates. Sin hides God's face. There can be no communion, no fellowship where there is sin.

"Let every one who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity (2 Timothy 2:19)."

That is God's command. We must forsake all known sin if we are to be approved of Him. Oh, then, let us turn from everything we know to be wrong, everything that grieves the Holy Spirit. Let us put

it out of our lives, for we will never make any progress in the Christian life until we break with sin.

Sin is like a millstone; it will always hold us down. And if we yield to it, we will crave it again. To feed desire is to fan it into a flame that can never be quenched. The only real sorrow that can ever come into the life of a Christian is the torture and anguish of the heart that harbours sin.

Therefore let us break with it, break with it at all costs, or we will never know "the peace of God that passes all understanding (Philippians 4:7)."

Sin will ruin us unless we give it up. "The way of transgressors is hard (Proverbs 13:15)."

My friend, "Remember Jesus Christ." He can break every fetter and snap every chain. He can set the prisoner free. And He can set you free, yes, even from your besetting sin. Not only is He mighty to save; He is also able to keep. You can be victorious over every known sin by the power of His indwelling Spirit.

It pays to be an "Overcomer."

2. Am I living in obedience to God's will?

"Yield yourselves to God (Romans 6:13)..." Have I surrendered all? I sing it, I know. Again and again I exclaim, "Have Your own way, Lord," but do I really mean it? Will I go where He wants me to go? Or do I still want my own way? And do I put self first instead of Christ? Is He the Lord and Master of my life?

God must have obedient children. If we are self-willed He cannot use us. "To obey is better than sacrifice (1 Samuel 15:22)." Rebellion in the camp is fatal to the cause. Loyalty He must have. Blunders are permissible; mistakes will be overlooked, but disloyalty – never!

If we are to be used of God we must be obedient. We must be prepared to go where God wants us to go. It must be His way instead of our own, His choice rather than ours. And, blessed be God, when we really yield to Him, His plan becomes ours, and we delight to do His will.

Let us not think of Him as a hard taskmaster; One who insists on us doing things we do not want to do. Not at all! He is our Father. He loves to lead us to the still waters. Within our hearts He puts the very desires that are pleasing to Him. All He asks is that we yield, for we are His, body, soul and spirit. Hence, there can be no fellowship apart from obedience.

3. Am I spending time each day in prayer?

No one can be victorious apart from prayer. No one can make a success of the Christian life unless he prays. If you have neglected prayer you are weak. It is those who wait upon the Lord who renew their strength. Unless you have been living, therefore, in an atmosphere of prayer you are open to the attacks of the enemy.

Jesus prayed. He spent whole nights in prayer. Paul prayed. The early church prayed. All those who have been used of

God have been men and women of prayer.

So, let me ask myself the question, do I pray? Do I keep meeting with God? Have I an appointment with Him day by day and am I careful to keep it? Does God know me as a man of prayer? Or have I failed Him? If so, may He enable me to renew my covenant and begin again to meet Him morning by morning, lest He come and find me sleeping.

4. Am I a diligent student of God's Word?

To neglect the Word of God is to cut myself off from hearing His voice, for God speaks through His Word. Hence, if I am not giving time to Bible Study I am without guidance. Many a man has gone astray simply because he has ignored the Word of God. Nothing can take its place. It is God's Word to man, and if I really know Him I will want to study it. And the more I read it the more interesting it will become. I will find that I cannot do without it. It will be my meat and my drink for the day's work.

Again and again I turned to it in the early days of my Christian life. When I was first converted I read it daily. But – am I still poring over its pages? Is it just as new to me now as it was the first time I read it? Do I revel in the experiences of the apostles and prophets? Am I still finding comfort from the Psalms of David? Is the Word of God a living Book to me, and am I feeding on it daily?

Perhaps I am weak. God compares His Word to milk and meat. Hence, if I am to be strong I must turn to it constantly. May He enable me, therefore, to become a diligent student of His Word.

5. Am I confessing Christ publicly?

During the early years of my Christian experience I was on fire for souls. I enjoyed getting out on the street corner with a company of God's people and giving my testimony. I revelled in the opportunity of working in rescue missions and pointing souls to Christ. I was burdened about the condition of the unsaved. In the glow of my first love for Christ I eagerly sought to tell others what He had done for me. I went home to my friends even as the demoniac of old.

But what about today? Have I lost my first love? Have I become cold and indifferent? Does the fire of God no longer burn in my heart? Can I attend church and go through religious performances without any burden concerning the lost? If so, why? What has happened?

I sing, "Rescue the perishing," but do I do anything to rescue them? I sing, "Care for the dying," but do I care for them? And when I join in the words, "Weep o'er the erring one," are my eyes dry or do I actually weep over the perishing?

Have I any heart-interest in the salvation of lost men and women?

If not, there is something seriously the matter, and I should start at once to discover the cause and remedy it. I must confess Christ publicly. I must make Him known. He has commanded me to bear witness. Let me again, therefore, testify. Surely, I can distribute gospel tracts. Surely, I can write soul-winning letters to my friends. At least I can speak to those with whom I work. If I am God's representative, I must be true.

6. Am I giving liberally as God prospers me?

"Give, and it shall be given to you (Luke 6:38)..." As we give, God gives – for He will be no man's debtor. You cannot beat God giving. One tenth at least should be set aside for God's work, and then as much more as He asks. For if you are faithful with Him He will be faithful to you.

Seldom will you find one who has faithfully given to God's work in a systematic way through the years of prosperity who is in want. "The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that waters shall be watered also himself (Proverbs 11:25)."

But when you do give, be sure you are giving to a definite, soul-winning work. For God will hold you responsible to find out how your gifts are being used.

And give cheerfully, for "God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7)." Give systematically, month by month, or week by week. Keep books with God. But however you give, give – for "How shall they preach except they be sent (Romans 10:15)?"

If the Gospel is to be given to the world someone must pay the bill. It is like water. The water is free, but you have to pay for the piping. And so with salvation. It costs to send it on its way, and we must speed it to the uttermost part of the earth. Hence, in the language of the Apostle Paul, giving becomes a Christian grace, and if we are New Testament Christians, we will give and give liberally.

7. Am I doing something definite for the Lord Jesus Christ?

If I am to be used of God I must find a place and a people where I can give my testimony and not feel that I am condemned

by those around me. A soul-winning church must become my home. I am saved to serve, and unless I am doing something for the Lord Jesus I am not true to the vision He has given me. I may not have many talents, but I can do something. I can visit the sick, I can distribute gospel tracts, I can testify, I can do something.

There are those who wait to be asked. They attend the church, enjoy the services, but never think of taking part themselves. They have an idea that the pastor will seek them out if he needs them and tell them what to do.

It seems to me, however, that if they are really saved they will find something themselves. Paul's first cry was, "Lord, what do You want me to do (Acts 9:6)?" And that ought to be the cry of every newborn soul. Love is service, and those who really love the Lord Jesus will want to serve Him. They will never be satisfied to be drones.

Instead of waiting for their pastor or someone to tell them what to do, they will go direct to God and get their instructions from Him. It may be He will want them to teach a Sunday school class. If so, they will approach the superintendent and offer their services. If they have a voice they will be eager to sing in the choir, or if they can play an instrument, they will play.

Some may be called to usher, others to serve in the young people's organisations, or as intercessors. It may be that the foreign field is calling, and that there is an urge to train and prepare for whole-time service. One thing is certain: they will never be at rest if they have been truly born again until they are doing something for the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so I ask again, am I working for Christ? Am I active? Is my time devoted to God? Or am I still on the reserve list waiting for a call? There are two kinds of volunteers, remember, the active and the inactive. The inactive volunteer says, "Lord, here am I." The active volunteer says, "Send me." Which am I? Am I doing something for the Lord Jesus Christ?

These, then, are the questions that must be faced if we are to receive His approbation. "Study to show yourself approved by God," is His Word, "a workman that needs not to be ashamed (2 Timothy 2:15)." For if we would receive a full reward; if we would hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant (Matthew 25:21)," we must examine ourselves and see to it that we measure up to His requirements.



Roll away the stone

by David Wilkerson (1931-2011)

I'M convinced we can't fully obey God's Word until we understand why the Lord calls for perfect obedience. Why does God demand this? Is it because He's a despot, a tyrant who delights in placing heavy yokes and burdens on His people? No, not at all. Jesus tells us the burden He places on us is light and easy (Matthew 11:30). His commands aren't grievous.

So, does God demand perfect obedience because it appeases him in some way? Certainly not. Our obedience to His laws is not designed merely for His pleasure. God isn't looking to satisfy something in Himself by seeing us obey His instruction.

Yet our perfect obedience to him does have to do with His pleasure. He has great pleasure when He sees the fruit that our obedience produces. Our Lord is like any father: He loves to see His children blessed and maturing as a result of their obedience to His instruction.

Under the Old Covenant, Israel's obedience resulted in good fruit and many tangible blessings for them: "You shall serve the Lord your God, and will bless your bread and your water. And I will take sickness away from the midst of you. No one shall suffer miscarriage or be barren in your land; I will fulfil the number of your days (Exodus 23:25&26)."

Great fruitfulness was the reward for Israel's obedience. God said when they obeyed His commands, they would receive tangible, material blessings. They would see increases in their livestock, vineyards and crops. They would enjoy good weath-

er, fine clothing, nice homes and personal security. Their obedience would also result in powerful spiritual blessings, including manifestations of the Lord's glory.

Yet, unbelievably, Israel chafed under God's law. They kicked against the very commands designed to make them strong, victorious and prosperous. It was clearly meant for their benefit, but they resented it!

The disciples had every reason to question one of Jesus' directions: "After this He said to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judea again.' The disciples said to Him, 'Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You, and are You going there again (John 11:7&8)?'"

The disciples couldn't believe what Jesus was asking of them. The last time they were in Judea, the people there tried to kill Him. No doubt they would try again, if He went back now.

Christ answered them, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up (11:11)." The disciples' response? "Lord, let him sleep! Why wake him? Sleep is good for a person. If Lazarus is sleeping, he's getting healthy (see 11:12)!"

Then Jesus explained to them that Lazarus had died. This must have confused the disciples even more. Why step back into danger if Lazarus' battle with illness was already over?

Their Lord had given His followers a clear word, a definite direction. Yet the frightened, confused disciples came up with any number of excuses why they shouldn't obey it. Obviously, they saw danger ahead, both for themselves and their Master.

Thus, they saw no point to what Jesus was asking.

Many devout Christians today react the same way upon hearing a seemingly absurd direction from the Lord. Sometimes the Holy Spirit tells us something that isn't contrary to Scripture but that we simply don't understand. We think, "That can't be God speaking. It has to be my flesh, my own thoughts." We quickly find a convenient passage to counteract the direction. Yet all along, it's the Holy Spirit trying to get through to us, all for our own blessing.

Jesus explained to His followers, "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him (11:15)." Christ was telling them, "I'm glad I didn't go when I was called to Lazarus' bedside. I had a reason for delaying, and that reason has nothing to do with Lazarus. Rather, it has to do with you, my friends. It's all for the purpose of purifying your faith. I'm about to put you face-to-face with the greatest impossibility ever known to humankind. And to face it, you're going to need great faith."

Jesus knew His disciples had seen people raised from the dead – they had watched as He healed a young girl who had been dead for at least several hours. But He also knew that His disciples had never seen anyone raised up who had been dead for four days, with the body already beginning to decay. Likewise, their unbelief now was a hindrance to the faith He wanted for them.

We see this demonstrated in the reaction of Martha, Lazarus' sister, when Jesus finally arrived. She said, "Lord, if You

had been here, my brother would not have died (John 11:21)." Martha believed Jesus could have offered help when there was still some visible life left in her brother. She trusted He could heal a half-dead man but not one who'd been dead for four days.

I believe Martha embodies the attitude of most Christians today. We accept that God can perform miracles for us when there's still a little inkling of hope left in our situation.

But what happens to our faith when the Lord brings us face-to-face with absolutely impossible circumstances that demand His supernatural, miracle-working intervention?

Martha questioned her Lord's ability to work a miracle for her brother. Similarly, the disciples doubted His power to deliver them from the threat of death in Judea. No one gave the Lord credit to perform the impossible. In every instance, they had no faith whatsoever that He could meet them in their situations.

Our crisis comes when the Lord begins to deal with us about something in our life that has to go. It's a bondage we carry year after year, never enjoying deliverance from its dominion. It clings to us like the graveclothes of death.

To perfectly obey our Lord, we are to lay this bondage down, to set it aside and walk in freedom. Our clinging to it is a sign of our unbelief. We don't trust in the Lord's ability to bring the fruit of life from our

obedience to His word.

The fact is, He has supplied us with all the power and resources we need to obey Him perfectly through the presence of His indwelling Spirit. "If you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live (Romans 8:13)."

Lazarus represented more than a dead body. He speaks to us today of two things:

Lazarus represents the chains, bondage and stench of death. He's a symbol of the darkness that enshrouds the hopeless burial of freedom. Paul might easily have been referring to Lazarus when he wrote, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death (Romans 7:24):?"

A picture of the glory

Lazarus in the tomb also represents the revelation of Jesus Christ. He's a picture of the glory of God manifested before all humankind, a person totally set free from the dominion of sin. He represents resurrection life and freedom from the death-grip of controlling bondages.

For many believers today, there remains a crisis. A great stone stands in the way – and it is unbelief.


At Lazarus' tomb, Martha protested, "Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days (John 11:39)." Many Christians today have adopted this

kind of thinking about their own bondages. They convince themselves, "This sin has attached itself to me for too long. I've tried to break free from it, but all my efforts have been in vain. This sin has too great a hold on me."

No! God's revelation to you of His resurrection life lies in that tomb, all wrapped up in unbelief. Right now, Jesus is saying to you the same thing He told His disciples: "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God (John 11:40):?"

When Jesus came to Lazarus' tomb, He cried out, "Roll away the stone!" With these few words, He was saying to us all, "Do you want to see deliverance, to be set free? I've made a covenant with you. Now, roll away the stone. Get rid of your unbelief. It's all within your power to do so."

He didn't summon an angel to remove the rock. He commanded human hands to do it. When they did roll it away, it was as an act of faith, and they saw the glory of God. Out came Lazarus, with all the wrappings of death dropped from his now-living body.

Today, when you roll away your stone of unbelief, Christ's resurrection power is released in you. With a mere word from the Lord, all the rags of self-effort will be removed from you. You'll leap for joy as a testimony to the world, crying, "Lord, Your word is always true. With You, nothing shall be impossible!" Amen. 

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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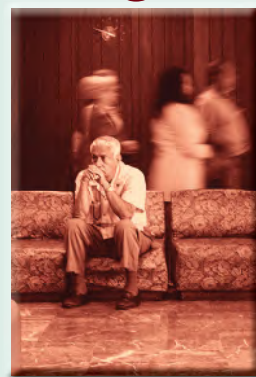
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The Holy Spirit brings conviction

by R. A. Torrey (1856-1928)

THE Holy Spirit has power to reveal Jesus Christ and His glory to man. When Jesus spoke of the Spirit's coming He said: "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He shall testify of Me (John 15:26)," and it is only as He does testify of Christ that men will ever come to a true knowledge of Christ.

You send men to the Word to get a knowledge of Christ, but it is only as the Holy Spirit takes the Word and illuminates it, that men ever get a real living knowledge of Christ. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, except through the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3)."

If you want men to get a true knowledge of Jesus Christ, so that they will believe on Him and be saved, you must seek for them the testimony of the Holy Spirit. Neither your testimony nor that of the Word alone will suffice, even though it is your testimony, or that of the Word, which the Spirit uses.

But unless your testimony is taken up by the Holy Spirit, and He Himself testifies, they will not believe. It was not merely Peter's words about Christ that convinced the Jews at Pentecost. It was the Spirit Himself bearing witness. If you wish men to see the truth about Jesus, do not depend on your own powers of exposition and persuasion, but cast yourself upon the Holy Spirit



and seek His testimony.

Now let us turn to John 16:8-11: "And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgement, because the ruler of this world is judged."

The Holy Spirit has power to convict the world of sin. This is closely connected with the preceding; for, it is by showing Jesus and His glory and His righteousness, that the

Holy Spirit convicts of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement.

Note the sin of which the Holy Spirit convicts, "Of sin because they do not believe in Me." It was so at Pentecost, as we see in Acts 2:36&37.

You can never convict any man of sin because that is the work of the Holy Spirit. You can reason and reason, and you will fail. The Holy Spirit can do it very quickly.

Did you never have this experience? You have shown a man passage after passage of Scripture, and he was unmoved,

and you have wondered why the man did not break down, and suddenly it has occurred to you, "Why, I am not looking in my helplessness to the mighty Spirit of God to convict this man of sin, but I am trying to convince the man of sin myself," and then you have cast yourself upon the Spirit of God for Him to do the work, and conviction came. The Spirit can convince the most careless, as experience has proven again and again.

But it is through us that the Spirit produces conviction. In John 16:7&8 we read: "I will send Him to YOU. And when He is come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement."

It was the Spirit sent to Peter and the rest, who convicted the 3 000 through Peter and the others on the day of Pentecost. It is ours to preach the Word and to look to the Holy Spirit to produce conviction (see Acts 2:4-37).

In Titus 3:5 we read: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of the regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit."

The Holy Spirit has power to renew men or make men new, to regenerate. Regeneration is the Holy Spirit's work. He can take a man dead in trespasses and sins, and make him alive.

He can take the man whose mind is blind to the truth of God, whose will is at enmity with God and set on sin, whose affections are corrupt and vile, and transform that man, impart to him God's nature, so that he thinks God's thoughts, wills what God wills, loves what God loves, and hates what God hates.

I never despair of any man when I think of the power of the Holy Spirit to make new, as I have seen it manifested again and again in the most hardened and hopeless cases. 🐟

WATCH & PRAY

Thanks to
Elizabeth Kendal

PERSECUTION ESCALATES IN CUBA

Cuba is a Communist Party-ruled state where all religion is tightly controlled. Churches must register with the Ministry of Justice; only churches that are pro-government are approved. Even then, the Office of Religious Affairs supervises gatherings and dictates terms. Unregistered churches – mostly Protestant/Evangelical – are illegal. Persecution has escalated markedly since the February referendum which saw evangelicals deemed “counter-revolutionary.”

On June 23, Pastor Rigal and his wife Ayda were sentenced to two years and 18 months respectively for home-schooling their two children. On July 12, Christian journalist Ricardo Fernandez Izaguirre was arrested and “disappeared” while documenting the escalating religious persecution. On July 13&14 officials prevented evangelical leaders from travelling to the U.S. to attend a Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom meeting. Please pray for Cuba and its Christians.

ARRESTS AMIDST TENSIONS IN IRAN

On July 1 agents from the Ministry of Intelligence and Security raided the homes of Christian converts in Bushahr, in south-west Iran. They violently arrested eight believers, including five members of one family. The matriarch was subsequently released due to her age, but seven converts aged in their 20s and 30s (including three married couples) remain detained in Bushehr. Doubtless conditions remain oppressive.

On May 9, regime agents raided the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Tabriz, in north-west Iran. While the 100-year-old heritage-listed

church had been confiscated in 2011, the Assyrian believers had been allowed to continue worshipping there. Now the state has expelled the church warden, changed the locks, torn down the cross and installed surveillance cameras. Please pray for Iran and its believers.

VIETNAM'S COMMUNIST PARTY PERSECUTES WITH IMPUNITY

Since 2016, human rights have deteriorated markedly in Vietnam as the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) has moved to consolidate and strengthen its control. Police violence and CPV-commissioned thuggery are escalating, draconian laws are accumulating and prisons are filling with peaceful activists being sentenced to increasingly lengthy prison terms.

One such prisoner is Protestant Pastor Nguyen Trung Ton (48), severely beaten and serving 12 years in prison, ostensibly for his religious liberty advocacy. Another is Nguyen Nang Tinh (42), a Catholic parishioner and singing teacher, arrested without warrant in May for a Facebook post deemed anti-state.

Ethnic minority, mostly Protestant Hmong and Montagnard Christians face the most egregious persecution, including physical assault, detention, banishment and forced statelessness. Vietnam, her Church and her many courageous Christian advocates need our prayers.

CHRISTIAN CRISIS IN MESOPOTAMIA

Five years after IS swept through northern Iraq, thousands of Assyrian Christians remain displaced and destitute. Sunni Kurds and Shi'ite Arabs are violently seizing control of Assyrian ancestral lands. Christians cannot return and rebuild amidst such

gross injustice and insecurity.

Meanwhile, Islamic State is regrouping and escalating its terror across the region. In neighbouring Syria, the civil war is essentially over but mopping up – particularly the removal of foreign jihadists – will continue for years. Tensions are escalating between Russia and Iran because of their opposing visions for post-war Syria.

CHRISTIAN CRISIS IN NORTH INDIA

India's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) not only out-campaigned its rivals to win the election in a landslide, but also ran a sophisticated and subversive campaign of mass manipulation through social media. Analysing data, the BJP covertly (not using its own name) “microtargeted” individuals and groups with custom messages delivered primarily through Facebook and WhatsApp. This strategy created a customised enemy for every group, then posited the BJP as the solution.

Thus, to secure the political conversions required to win, the BJP divided communities and fuelled communal tensions. The result is escalating polarisation and persecution.

This includes extreme violence and crippling boycotts, with Christians being denied access to life's necessities such as food, water, work and housing.

The situation is extremely serious. Please pray for India and its Christians.

CHRISTIAN CRISIS IN ERITREA

President Afwerki has long used the “Ethiopian threat” as a pretext to justify his repressive dictatorship and indefinite military service. Consequently, when Ethiopia and Eritrea brokered peace in July, 2018, many hoped human rights would improve. Today, however, Eritrea's human rights remain among the worst in the world and Eritreans continue to flee *en masse*.

To prevent protests as the nation prepared to celebrate Independence Day (May 24), the regime deployed police and soldiers to the streets of Asmara and raided several Protestant groups. On May 10, 141 Christians, including 14 minors, were arrested as they gathered in north-east Asmara; 50 were subsequently released.

Conditions in detention are horrendous; torture is routine. Please pray for Eritrea and its Christians.

Manna for mahala!

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

Make a date with us! November 3

This is the date for this year's final *Prepare the Way* day at Mount Zion Church, Merrivale (near Howick in KZN) at 9.15 am. Peter Pollock will be preaching. Bring a friend, make a day of it and stay for (free) lunch!



Guarding the first love

by E. S. Gerig

"Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall grow cold (Matthew 24:12)."

THIS waning of love refers to the dying out of the fire of a holy passion for the Lord Himself and for those for whom He gave His life, the loss of holy enthusiasm in His service and devotion. It does not refer to that fleshly enthusiasm in His service and devotion that shouts and rejoices when the crowd is coming, or works zealously when the brass band is playing and the grandstand is filled with admirers.

No! No! It is that enthusiasm that works with a quiet, untiring, unassuming earnestness and steadiness when it must plod on alone unheard and unnoticed except by the Lord – that enthusiasm that is born not of outward encouragement, nor the applause of men, nor by what men call success, nor by the unholy desire for praise, but that which is born of an inward urge implanted by the Holy Spirit, the overflow of the passion of Christ.

The waning of this love, said Jesus, will be one of the hallmarks of the end-time.

The other characteristics of the last days are easily noticeable, but this loss of love is far more subtle and less easily detected. We may be thoroughly orthodox and have a contempt for heresy and deviation and yet be guilty of a loveless heart.

The other features have to do largely with the world and apostate Christendom, but

this one has to do with the saints of God.

This is the blighting sin which our Lord so strongly condemned in the Ephesian Church in Revelation 2:4. This is that sin for which our Lord threatened to "remove the candlestick out of his place." "Nevertheless I have this against you, because you have left your first love" was His condemnation. "You are fallen" was His solemn charge (Revelation 2:4&5).

So important is the possession of this love Divine in its fervent glow that Paul by inspiration said, "If I do not have love, I am nothing (1 Corinthians 13:2)."

The waning of this love, said our Lord, would characterise the end-time. And why? "Because iniquity shall abound (Matthew 24:12)." So profuse will be the growth of evil, so completely will the spirit of evil pervade every realm of human activity and relationship, and so subtle will be the injection of evil into the realm of righteousness, that many of God's saints will become infected with this spirit of evil. Subtle and gradual compromise will result in the "waxing cold" of the love of the heart for Christ.

This condition is self-evident today. There has been such a subtle satanic mixture of religion, secularism, worldliness and sensualism in the realm of religion, business, commerce, stage and screen that many a dear Christian has become trapped and the strength of their love is being sapped from the heart and life.

Even in the realm of orthodoxy, too, often a carnal contention for the faith has taken the place of a passionate personal passion for Christ and His truth. A cold orthodoxy can contend eloquently for the faith. But it is a heart passionately in love with Christ that loves souls into His kingdom.

To "contend for the faith" is a God-given command not to be disobeyed (Jude 3). But to "Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus" is its counterpart and complement (2 Timothy 1:13).

Look about you and analyse carefully the spiritual condition today and you stand face-to-face with this sad hallmark of the end of this age. "The love of many shall grow cold" is sadly true too generally (Matthew 24:12).

How often have I had to bow my head in shame and confess that my love was waning! How often have I prayed that this subtle hallmark of the end of this dispensation may not be true of my own heart!

Let us ask God for a keen spiritual discernment that will enable us to understand and detect the slightest waning of His love in our hearts. Let us wait upon Him repeatedly for a fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit until "the fruit of the Spirit – love (Galatians 5:22), will burn and blaze in all its holy passion in our hearts. 