

# Prepare<sup>the</sup>Way

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

Issue No. 120  
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Peter Pollock

**No looking back...**

Dr Michael Brown

**Why I don't  
celebrate  
gay pride**

**Can you guess  
where the world's  
fastest-growing  
church is?**

**The glorious  
filling of the Spirit**

**What DOES God  
say about sex?**





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**COVER:** Let us get up early to the vineyards; Let us see if the vine has budded, Whether the grape blossoms are open, And the pomegranates are in bloom. There I will give you my love (Song of Solomon 7:12).

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# Deal with it!

by Greg Hinnant

**“DEAL with it or it will deal with you” seems to be an unwritten but ever-present law of the Christian life.**

Let me explain.

When life acts, we react – and, thus, rightly or wrongly, we “deal with it.” Our reactions, or “dealings,” must be “spiritually minded,” or according to God’s thoughts and ways as revealed in the Bible. That is, if we want to enjoy the peace and joy of the Lord and be ready to serve Him at a moment’s notice day or night. “To be spiritually minded is (or brings) life and peace (Romans 8:6).”

For instance, when disappointing things happen, we must deal with them or our disappointment will turn to discouragement.

And if we don’t deal with discouragement it will turn to depression.

And if we don’t deal with depression it will lead to defeat.

And if we don’t deal with defeat it will lead to disbelief: we stop believing God is willing, able, and ready to see us through the trials of life and turn elsewhere for help... in vain! Always in vain!

Refuse to accept this downward spiral! Deal with life so it doesn’t deal with you.

How?

By seeing every situation “spiritually minded,” or according to God’s Spirit-inspired Word.


What does the Bible say about the situation before you? What does it urge you to believe, say, do, or not do?

If you will humbly ask Christ’s help, ask Him for more of the Holy Spirit and, utterly abandoned to His will, trustingly obey His instructions, His grace will rescue you every time – and

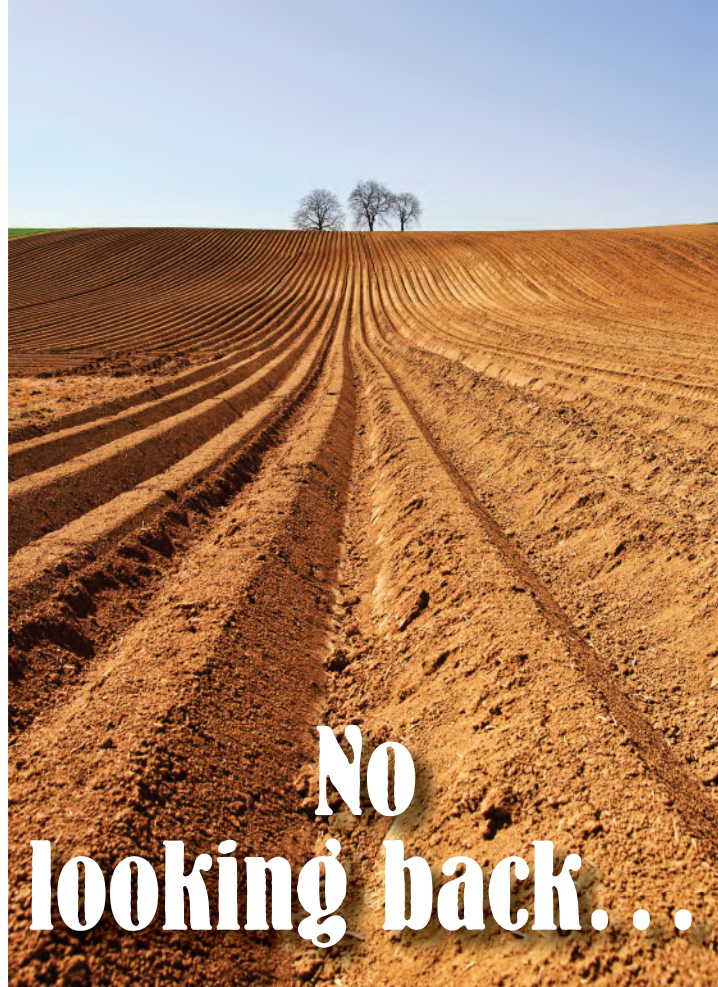
carry you through to your trial’s end. And to a higher walk.

On that new spiritual plain you will experience stronger faith, more closeness to Christ, more insight into His Word, sharper hearing of the Holy Spirit’s quiet voice, more strength in your daily work, unspoilable gladness, unshakable hope, unprecedented peace, unfailing love for every person you meet, especially Christians, and more influence with souls for the Saviour. This positive, upward trend can be yours!

No more discouragement. No more depression. No more defeat. No more disbelief – no matter how many disappointments you meet! Only a quiet, steady walk trusting a living Jesus for every life need, however great, and wisdom and strength for every problem, however imposing.

If you’ll deal with it, God’s way. 





# No looking back...

by Peter Pollock

**A**s a youngster on my uncle's farm in the lush Natal Midlands, I was once afforded the opportunity of ploughing. If, at any stage, I thought I was in control or even faintly directing the proceedings, I would have been fooling myself!

But something did come through loud and clear that day – it takes strength, resolution, single-mindedness and determination to accomplish this seemingly simple but important farmer's chore.

And so I have always been thoroughly appreciative of what Jesus was talking about when He said: "No one, having put his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God." I would know that even thinking of removing either hand or looking back would be an utter disaster! You just can't do it without all your hands on the deck and eyes firmly focused on the task in hand.

And equally we fool ourselves that the same does not apply in our walk with Jesus Christ. Somehow, we have managed to convince ourselves that making this type of comparison is rather severe!

In Luke 9: 57-62, Jesus issues that familiar call: "Follow Me!" A simple but utter call.

"Let me first go bury my father," was the response. "Let the dead bury the dead... but you go and preach the Kingdom,"

replied Jesus.

Another in response to the same call said: "Lord, I will follow but let me first go and bid my family farewell." Yes, Lord, but... The church has plenty of these stubborn types. Always a negative, an excuse or a question. Always a reason not to do or not to believe. The yes-butters!

And to a man, those of this liberal humanistic persuasion will contend that Jesus' response was a bit harsh. Or else it has been translated incorrectly or taken out of context. Surely

not! How can a God of love act or speak so?

The modern picture we paint of God or Jesus has no room for straight talk or strong language. Indeed, it's the same old refrain that keeps coming from the devil – recorded in the Garden of Eden when Eve told the devil that eating of the fruit of the forbidden tree would result in death.

Jesus was straight and direct to the prospective disciple because He knew that returning home would see the respondent influenced by the unbelieving relatives. Their weeping and manipulation would surely pull the plug on his final response for Christ's call.

## Surely-not-do-good-ism

Humanism, humanitarianism and emotionalism are powerful all-consuming factors that simply suck us in as fallen, sin-ridden humans. "Surely-not-do-good-ism" is rife as we attempt to climb our own moral ladders.

Was Jesus a little hard, a bit unfeeling and slightly short on empathy? Ridiculous! Sadly, it's the same modern reaction to any attempt to truly preach the true gospel of sin, repentance, heaven, hell and regeneration.

It is an indictment on the modern church that today the truth is regarded as a hard gospel. We have gone overboard in

trying to be relevant is accommodating a sinful fallen world. We need to be strongly reminded, as Jesus did to His beloved Peter, that the ways of man are replacing the ways of God.

Get behind me Satan! Yes, that's what Jesus said! Certainly not for the faint-hearted or the liberally inclined.

But God is calling for ploughmen, who fearlessly will put their hands to the plough and will not dare to let go, or even think about looking back. Yes, no looking back!

Worldliness, double-mindedness and compromise are not acceptable. The disciples did not look back. In John 6:68 they confessed that there was just nowhere else to go. They had found the pearl of great price!

All else had paled into insignificance by comparison and their hands were firmly on the plough. In Luke 9:23-26, there's the same urgent and uncompromising call. The call to deny SELF and take up the Cross on a daily basis.

## An awesome God is in charge

We are to lose our lives for His sake, or else we are merely gaining the world and losing our souls. Pretty strong stuff!

We are not to be ashamed of Him or His Word. It really is time for us to truly understand that an awesome God is in charge – irrespective of whether it seems so or even whether we happen to believe it or not.

God has written biblical principles into the world system – and they work, again despite whether we accept it or not. Discipline, respect and obedience are God factors, and stepping outside His parameters has consequences.

God is a disciplinarian. The world cries out for "freedom," but I would dare to suggest that the "freedom" we are looking for these days is nothing short of rebellion and anarchy in God's sight!

Humans are wretched, stubborn and rebellious and we only tend to learn the hard way. So, God has instituted a "school of hard knocks" – and He is principal, rector and dean of this effective learning institution.

There are spiritual consequences for sin and godlessness. Innocent blood pollutes the land, so warns God. If we are living in a land where there are more than 50 murders a day, it's no small wonder grief

and heartache abound.

Abortions are performed at an alarming rate while rape, fornication, adultery and sexual perversion have reached catastrophic levels. Add to that witchcraft, idolatry, ancestral worship and all those other godless abominations and you realise that judgment is in store.

God allows/uses evil agents to bring about judgement and retribution, as we see in the Bible with the Babylonians and Assyrians, who were part of God's plan in dealing with His own rebellious people.

Yes, Nebuchadnezzar was God's tool and the prophets even warned the Israel: "Don't run away. Your worst fears will follow you. Serve Nebuchadnezzar that it might go well with you."

Sin reaps consequences and judgement; God is more interested in His Kingdom than our nations – and He is more concerned about our character than our comfort.

The bottom line is: God wants "ploughmen."

He wants more men of God like Daniel who served for 69 years in a godless society under Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar and Darius.

Daniel was a success story! How did he do it? Was it the right food? Vegetables, not the oily stuff? Was it his noble birth, his brains or his good looks? Was it his ability to interpret dreams? Was it his "conscience" or his "conviction?"

Did it have to do with surviving some extreme tests, like his three friends in the fire or his own sojourn in the lion's den? Was it his gutsy political stances, openly defying authority? Was it his ability to read the writing on the wall, his super insight?

Or maybe, finally, it had something to do with his eschatology, his end-time theology and his revelation of the end times?

That's how we humans analyse things and draw conclusions. But these are unspiritual, religious, intellectually humanistic conclusions. Interesting, stimulating, absorbing – but utterly useless spiritually speaking.

## The answer was simple

The answer was actually exceedingly simple Daniel 6:3 supplies the truth: "An *excellent spirit* was in him." There is no more excellent spirit than the Holy Spirit – "in Him we live and move and have our being."

Seek first the Kingdom and God, and

His righteousness, and all else will be added unto you.

Jesus Christ is all-sufficient in Himself. It is a simple, profound truth than blows our minds and truly separates church adherents into the haves and have-not's, the wise and the foolish virgins, the wheat and the tares, and the sheep and the goats.

Joshua and Caleb were told to go and inspect the land that God had offered His people. It was a land full of good things, but also the Amorites and the sons of Anakem. Now while their fellow spies saw nothing but the negatives and problems, Caleb and Joshua came back with confidence and positivity. An "excellent spirit" was in them!

They were not in denial about the problems that faced them, but they trusted God – they had faith to believe, they were ploughmen with hands and eyes steadfast on God's promises.

They had given up their independent right to themselves; they had forsaken all and they were the Daniels of their time. The fruit of their lives bore testimony, as with Daniel.

The Bible tells us that there was no corruption in Daniel, he was trustworthy and not negligent. He worked hard, he excelled at all he did, standing out and standing alone when necessary. He was influential, had integrity and ended up being a governor, a leader and a confidante.

In Mark 12:14, the Pharisees said: "Teacher, we know that you are a man of integrity. You are not swayed by men because you pay no attention to who they are; but you also teach the way of God in accordance with the truth, His Word." Not to fear man and to rely totally on the Word of God – that's God's definition of integrity!

D.L. Moody wrote: "Work as if everything depends on you; pray knowing that it all depends upon God!"

The opposition trumped up a religious charge against Daniel. Religion can be a curse when framed in divisive dogma. Great learning so often brings dogmatism and division, sad to say.

Daniel was arresting for praying! I wonder how many of us would be guilty of overt praying? Why do we battle so to pray and obey? Because we battle to recognise a higher authority in our lives.

No doubt we will contend that God occupies supreme sovereignty in our lives, but such is the problem of unbelief, even in leadership in Christian circles, that

prayer and obedience is in major shortfall.

Praying is an attitude and a way of life and is linked with such issues as fasting. Daniel's gifts were not just church gifts, and like Joseph and Nehemiah, he brought those gifts into a pagan ruler's household, bearing an extremely strong witness.

Daniel never held back and was always quick to correct any notion that God was not the total commander and architect over all.

"Even if He doesn't rescue us, He is God" – was one reminder.

"No, I don't interpret dreams, God does" – was another. All very powerful stuff!

Opposition and persecution will abound when there is genuine testimony because holiness stirs hate in unregenerate man.

Paul speaks of a "great and effective door (that) has opened... and many adversaries (1 Corinthians 16:9)." Are the two linked? Oh yes!

With Daniel there was absolutely no compromise. Worldly compromise and powerlessness are inseparably linked in the Christian walk. Power is not about ministries, signs and wonders but about the confidence that exudes, a peace and a joy that is beyond the understanding of the world while all else is collapsing around you.

## God promises to honour those who honour Him

Compromise is an "art" perfected in politics, democracy and diplomacy. Daniels will not compromise and will not allow themselves to be manipulated – but they will be persecuted.

God's promise is to honour all who honour Him. Daniel, Joshua, Caleb – all ploughmen!

A decision of the heart and will, an excellent spirit, a huge challenge. We are where we choose to be. We are the consequences of our decision-making process.

Consecration is the strong call on our lives – because all God wants is everything!

To plough is to turn up the soil, to prepare for sowing. "Break up the fallow ground (Jeremiah 4:3)." Break up the unsown, uncultivated, inactive but potential ground.

Hosea 10:12 says: "Break up your fallow ground for it is time to seek the Lord till He comes and rains righteousness on you."

There is no other way! 





by Vance Havner

**I**n the Ephesians 2 the inspired writer sets before us a marvellous contrast. In the first three verses he describes our wretched state apart from the grace of God. He piles one phrase upon another to picture our lost and undone condition.

We were “dead in trespasses and sins,” we walked “according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience,” we “had our conversation (literally, manner of life) in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind,” we “were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”

Can you imagine a more formidable array of words, a more terrible stacking of expressions to declare the state of mortal man apart from redeeming grace?

Now, if the writer had stopped there, if no more could be said, if we were left shut up in those dismal phrases, then life would be but another name for death and earth but the anteroom to hell.

But verse 4 opens with two words that spell the difference between life and death, between sin and salvation, between heaven and hell: “*But God!*”

Sin was black, *but God* came in and God is light!

Satan was powerful *but God* came in, and God is almighty!

Man was lost, *but God* came in and God found him!

Man was under wrath, *but God* came in and God is love!

The course of history revolves around these precious words.

There was a day when the earth was without form and void, *but God* said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.

There was a day when “the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and... every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually,” *but God* chose Noah and gave the race a new start.

There was a day when again men forgot God and walked by sight, *but God* called Abraham to set out not knowing whither he went, looking for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

There was a day when the chosen people languished under Egyptian bondage, *but God* called Moses to endure as seeing Him who is invisible.

There was a day when the backsliding people hung their harps on willows in foreign exile, *but God* raised up Ezekiel and Daniel.

There was a day when it seemed that heaven had ceased speaking to earth, *but God* returned on the banks of Jordan to thunder through the voice of John the Baptist.

And then there was the day of all days when man wallowed in sin without a Saviour, groped in darkness without light, struggled in bondage without redemption, *but God* sent forth His Son to live and die and live again, the Just for the unjust, the Sinless for sinners, God for man!

Since that glad day, no matter how low the clouds have hung, no matter how dark the night, nor dreary the age, just when everything has seemed hopeless, history has always turned a corner with those blessed words, “*But God...*”

There came a day when the early church seemed to face an impenetrable Gentile

world, *but God* struck down a rebel on the Damascus road to make Saul of Tarsus the spearhead of world evangelisation.

There came a time when the Bible was chained, and superstition took the place of the gospel, *but God* called Wycliffe and Tyndale to loosen His Word in the language of the common people.

There came a day when ecclesiasticism threatened to choke the church and when ignorance bound millions in the clutches of the law, *but God* touched a miserable monk, worn out with trying to earn his own salvation, and Martin Luther rose in the strength of the Lord to declare, “The just shall live by faith!”

Again, there came a time when the notes of free grace were lost in an age of worldliness and the church had lost the spirit of power in the lap of Delilah, *but God* woke up another groping preacher, and John Wesley warmed his heart at Luther’s fire and went out on horseback to carry the gospel to a needy world.

There never has been an age so hopeless but that just when it looked as though the devil had had the last word and hell had turned the tables on heaven, the historian has always been able to turn a new page and write at the top, “*But God!*”

And although we live in the midst of world apostasy, the world’s Saturday night will turn into God’s good-morning, for in that blackest hour just before daylight everything may seem to be lost, *but God* is coming in the Person of His Son to receive from the world His own.

What is true in general has been true in particular in the experience of individual believers. In the darkest hour, those who trust in the Lord have been able to turn

from distress to Deity and say, “*But God.*”

The Psalmist laments of enemies who speak evil of him, who wonder when he will die and his name perish, who say an evil disease cleaves to him. But from such a sad plight he turns to cry, “But You, O Lord (Psalm 41:4-10).”

Again, he groans in affliction: His days are consumed, his bones burned, he is like a pelican of the wilderness, an owl of the desert, a sparrow alone upon the housetop. Thus he moans over his sad state, but he turns presently to cry, “But You, O Lord, shall endure forever (Psalm 102:1-12).”

Jeremiah pines in his Lamentation over the pitiful state of the land, in 18 verses of pure misery (Lamentations 5:1-18) but he turns to rejoice, crying, “You, O Lord, remain forever.”

Micah paints a picture of times so dismal that he reminds us of Elijah under the juniper: The good man is perished; the rulers are in sinful collusion, not even friends, not even wives may be trusted. Then he turns upward with, “Therefore I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.”

All else fails... *but God!* As you look back over your life, I am sure that you have occasion to thank God for the unnumbered times when everything else had failed, *but God* came to the rescue.

Health had broken – *but God!*

Your friends had deceived you – *but God!*

Business had failed – *but God!*

Loved ones had passed away – *but God!*

And right there is the shame of our lives today, that when God has proved Himself again and again a very present help in time of trouble, we should leave Him out of our calculations and measure our undertakings without reckoning on that unseen factor—*But God.*

Too often He is a last resort, and prayer is a final expedient, as with the elderly woman who in her illness was told, “You must trust God,” and who replied, “Has it come to that?”

We “reason” among ourselves “because we have no bread,” and forget Him who spreads a table in the wilderness.

We measure the situation by the size of the enemy and forget to say, as did King Asa, “Lord, it is nothing with You to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power.”

We decide just about how much we can or cannot do and be, and we limit it all with the old alibis, “Yes, but my family...” “Yes, but my nerves...” “Yes, but my circumstances...”

Why not put it the other way, “Yes,

*but God.*” “If God be for us, who can be against us?”

What if everybody has failed us so that we must say with Paul, “No man stood with me, but all men forsook me?” Let us move on with him and say, “Nevertheless, the Lord stood with me!”

What if men do conspire against us? Let us say to them, as did Joseph to his brethren: “You thought evil against me; *but God* meant it for good.”

So may our experiences begin like the old song, “Nobody knows de trouble I see,” but end as it ends with, “Glory, glory, hallelujah.”

Adoniram Judson caught a vision of evangelising Burma. “Impossible,” you say. Certainly, if you leave out God.

Moody, starting out to England on his first evangelistic mission, said, “I go to win ten thousand souls to Jesus Christ.” “Impossible,” do you say?

Yes... *but God!*

Why do we today not follow in the train of these giants of old? We are afraid – afraid to attempt great things for God and expect great things from God.

## They will not listen

Moses argued with the Almighty in such terms as these: “Yes, but I am not eloquent; yes, but they will not listen to me.” God answered, “Say... I AM has sent me to you.” In other words, it is as if the Lord said, “It is not a matter of who you are but of who I AM.”

So in our unworthiness, let us, like Amos of old, say, “I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet’s son: but I was a herdsman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit: And the Lord took me.” Nothing in myself... *but God!*

To the sinner, let this picture reveal your lost condition. Read these terrific verses in Ephesians 2:1-3 again.

You may seem to be very much alive, *but God* says you are “dead in trespasses and sins.”

You may be moral and idealistic, *but God* says you walk “according to the course of this world.”

You may recognise the fact of God and His Christ, *but God* says you walk “according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience.”

You may seem decent and respectable and claim to be a character of integrity, but if you are without Christ, God says your manner of life is in the lusts of the flesh and mind.

You may talk of the fatherhood of God and deny the fact of hell and judgement, *but God* says you are a child of wrath even as others.

But, thank God, the Scripture does not end there.

Wretched may be your state and hopeless your condition, *but God* has done something about it.

Black indeed was the night of sin, *but God* sent His Son to be the Light of the world.

Grievous indeed was our bondage to sin, *but God* sent His Son to be our deliverer.

Awful indeed was the guilt of sin, *but God* sent His Son to be our substitute.

Sin has abounded, *but God* has seen to it that grace did much more abound.

And if, in simple faith, we turn from sin to this Saviour and receive Him, then the rest of this precious passage becomes our own: ***But God***, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ (by grace you are saved;) and has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us, through Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:4-7).

No human merit could earn this blessing; no works of the flesh could purchase this treasure, “for by grace you are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God (verse 8).”

How blessed to be able to say,

Once I was blind, *but God* touched me.

Once I was lost, *but God* found me.

Once I was under wrath, *but God* loved me.


Once I was under guilt, *but God* forgave me.

Once I was dead, *but God* gave me life.

Once I walked according to the course of this world, *but God* turned me and now I walk as He walked.

Once I walked according to the prince of the power of the air, *but God* stopped me, and now I follow the Prince of peace. Once I had my manner of life in the lusts of the flesh and mind, *but God* gave me a new life, and Christ lives in me.

Once I was by nature the child of wrath, *but God* has begotten me into the family of love.

And all of this is the free gift of grace if one will, by faith in God’s Son, come to that second birthday, the beginning of a new life that opens with those two precious words: “*But God...*” 





# Birds of prey

by Samuel L. Brengle

**A**GAINST the entire sanctification of believers Satan brings to bear all his devices, his sophisticated arguments, and the full force of his powerful will. But the resolute soul, determined to be all the Lord's, will find him a conquered foe, with no power but to deceive. The way to overcome him surely is to *will* to steadfastly believe and agree with God, in spite of all Satan's suggested doubts.

In the 15th chapter of Genesis, we have an account of Abraham's sacrifice, which is very suggestive to the seeker after full salvation.

Abraham took certain beasts and birds, and offered them to God. But after he had made the offering, and while he was waiting for the witness of God's acceptance, birds of prey came to snatch away the sacrifice. Abraham drove them away. This continued until the evening, and then the fire of God consumed the offering.

Equally, he who would be entirely sanctified must make an unreserved offering of himself to God. This act must be real, not

imaginary – a real transfer of self, with all hopes, plans, prospects, property, powers of body and mind, time, cares, burdens, joys, sorrows, reputation, friends, to God, in a “perpetual covenant not to be forgotten.”

When he has thus given himself to God, to be anything or nothing, go anywhere or stay anywhere for Jesus, he must, like Abraham, patiently, trustingly, *expectantly* wait for God to witness that he is accepted.

“Though the vision tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry... but the just shall live by his faith (Habakkuk 2:3&4).”

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## The devil will send his birds to snatch the offering

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Now, during this short or long period of waiting, the devil will surely send his birds of prey to snatch away the offering.

He will say; “You ought to *feel* different if you have given yourself wholly to God.” Remember, that is the devil's bird of prey – drive it away.

Feeling is always produced by some appropriate object. To have the feeling of love, I must think of some loved one, but the very moment I get my thought off the object of my love, and begin to examine the state of my feelings, that moment my feelings subside.

Look unto Jesus and pay no attention to your emotions. They are involuntary, but will soon adjust themselves to the fixed habit of your faith and will.

“But maybe,” something suggests, “your consecration is not complete; go over it again and be sure.”

Another evil bird of prey – drive it away.

Satan becomes exceedingly pious just at this point, and wants to keep you eternally on the treadmill of consecration, knowing that, as long as he can keep you examining your consecration, you will not get your eyes on the promise of God, and consequently, will not believe – and without faith that your offering is now accepted, it is only so much dead works.

“But you do not have the joy, the deep and powerful emotions that others say they have.” That is another bird of prey –



drive it away.

A woman recently said to me: "I have given up all, but I have not the happiness I expected."

"Ah, sister," said I, "the promise is not to those who seek happiness, but, to those 'who hunger and thirst after righteousness, they shall be filled.' Seek righteousness, not happiness."

She did so, and in a few moments she was satisfied, for with righteousness came fullness of joy.

"But faith is such an incomprehensible something, you cannot exercise it; pray to God to help your unbelief."

The devil's bird of prey – drive it away.

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## Faith, almost too simple to be defined

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Faith is almost too simple to be defined. It is trust in the word of Jesus, simple confidence that He means just what He says in all the promises, and that He means all the promises for you.

Beware of being "corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ (2 Corinthians 11:3)."

I tell you, dear comrade, everything that is contrary to present faith in the promise of God for full salvation is one of the devil's birds of prey, and you must resolutely drive it away if you ever get saved.

Quit reasoning with the devil! "Cast down reasonings (2 Corinthians 10:5), and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God," and trust.

Instead, reason with God. "Come now, and let us reason together," says the Lord (Isaiah 1:18)."

At one of our watch-night services, a man knelt at the table with quite a number of others, seeking a clean heart. He was told to give himself wholly to God, and trust.

Finally, he began to pray, and then he said: "I do give myself to God, and now I am going to live and work for Him with what power I have, and let Him give me the fullness of the blessing and power just when He chooses. He has promised to give it to me, and He will do it, will He not?"

"Yes, my brother; He has promised, and He will surely perform," I replied.

"Yes, yes; He had promised it," said the man. Just then light shot through his soul, and his next words were: "Praise the Lord! Glory to God!"

He reasoned together with God, and, looking to the promise, was delivered.

Others about him reasoned with the devil, looked to their feelings, and were not sanctified.

But after you have taken the step of faith, God's plan is for you to *talk* your faith. The men of character, of force and influence, are the men who put themselves on record.

The man who has convictions, and who is not afraid to announce them to the world and defend them, is the man who has true stability. It is so in politics, in business, in all moral reforms, in salvation.

There is a universal law underlying the declaration: "With the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

If you are sanctified, and want to remain sanctified, you must at the earliest opportunity put yourself on record before all the devils in Hell and all your acquaintances on earth and all the angels in Heaven.

You must stand out before the world as a professor and a possessor of heart purity, of "Holiness unto the Lord." Only in this way can you burn all the bridges behind you, and until they are destroyed, you are not safe.

The other day a lady said to me: "I have always hesitated to say, 'The Lord sanctifies me wholly;' but not until recently did I see the reason. I now see that I secretly desired a bridge behind me, so that I might escape back from my position without injury to myself. If I profess sanctification, I must be careful lest I bring myself into disrepute, but if I do not profess it, I can do questionable things and then shield myself by saying, 'I do not profess to be perfect.'"

Ah, that is the secret! Be careful, dear reader, or you will become a religious fence rider, and the devil will get you, for all who are astride the fence are really on the devil's side.

"He who is not for Me is against Me." Get away over on God's side, by a definite profession of your faith.

But the devil will say: "You had better not say anything about this, till you find out whether you will be able to keep it. Be careful, lest you do more harm than good."

Drive that bird of prey away quickly, or all you have done thus far will be of no avail. That bird has devoured tens of thousands of offerings just as honestly made as yours.

You are not to "keep the blessing" at all, but you are to boldly assert your faith in the Blessor, and He will keep you.

Only yesterday a brother said to me: "When I sought this experience, I gave

myself definitely and fully to God, and told Him I would trust Him, but I felt as dry as that post. Shortly after this, a friend asked me if I were sanctified, and before I had time to examine my feelings, I said 'Yes'; and God that minute blessed me and filled me full of His Spirit, and since then He has sweetly kept me."

He talked his faith, and agreed with God.

"But you should be honest, and not claim more than you possess," says Satan.

A bird of prey!

You must assert that you believe God to be honest, and that He has promised that "Whatever things you desire when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them (Mark 11:24)." Count God faithful.

A former soldier of mine gave herself to God, but did not feel any difference, and so hesitated to say that God had sanctified her wholly.

"But," she said, "I began to reason over the matter thus: I know I have given myself wholly to God. I am willing to be anything, do anything, suffer anything for Jesus. I am willing to forgo all pleasure, honour and all my cherished hopes and plans for His sake, but I do not feel that God sanctifies me. And yet He promises to do so, on the simple condition that I give myself to Him and believe His Word. Knowing that I have given myself to Him, I must believe or make Him a liar. I will believe that He does now sanctify me."

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## The shining face, sufficient evidence

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"But," said she, "I did not get any witness that the work was done just then. However, I rested in God, and some days after this I went to one of the holiness conventions, and there, while a number were testifying, I thought I would rise and tell them God sanctified me. I did so, and between rising up and sitting down, God came and witnessed that it was done. Now I know I am sanctified."

And her shining face was a sufficient evidence that the work was, indeed, done.

Dear reader, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Give yourself wholly to God, trust Him, then confess your faith.

"And the Lord whom you seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom you delight in: behold He shall come," says the Lord of Hosts (Malachi 3:1). 



# Common bonds between Islam and Catholicism

by Mike Gendron

**A**N historic interfaith covenant was signed in the Middle East on February 4 of this year (2019). Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb, considered to be the most important imam in Sunni Islam, arrived at the signing ceremony in Abu Dhabi with Pope Francis “hand in hand in a symbol of interfaith brotherhood.”

But this wasn’t just a ceremony for Catholics and Muslims.

The signing of this covenant was done in front of a global audience of religious leaders from Christianity, Islam, Judaism and other faiths. There was a concerted effort to make sure all of the religions of the world were represented at this gathering. The Pope explained that the document was “born of faith in God who is the Father of all and the Father of peace; it condemns all destruction, all terrorism, from the first terrorism in history, that of Cain.”

As the world’s two largest religions converge we can only wonder if this will be the catalyst for the prophesied one-world religion.

In 1994 the Vatican issued a publication entitled: “Spiritual Bonds Which

Unite Us: 16 Years of Christian-Muslim Dialogue.” At first glance, the two faiths appear to be vastly different, but under close inspection, they have at least 10 common bonds that will help facilitate their convergence.

**1 Both Esteem and Honour Mary** – Muslims and Catholics both call her “Our Lady,” and venerate her as a pure and holy saint. Most people know the importance of Mary to Catholics and how she is the cause of their salvation and how she delivers souls from death.

But not many know of her prominence among Muslims. She is the most revered women of the Muslim faith. Her name is mentioned more often in the Qu’ran than in the Bible. Her name appears 34 times and an entire chapter in the Qur’an is named after Mary.

**2 Both Seek Messages from Apparitions of Mary** – Muslims and Catholics are flocking to apparition sites to receive messages from Mary.

Could these be some of the lying signs and wonders Satan will use to unite Catholicism with Islam? Many of the messages make it clear she is coming for all her children including Muslims, Catholics

and Protestants and that people of all religions can be saved apart from Jesus Christ as long as they are good.

An average of five million people flock to apparition sites each year.

Years ago I was interviewed on the History Channel that was producing a documentary on the apparitions of Mary. I made a statement that they used in the opening segment. “People travel thousands of miles and spend thousands of dollars to seek messages from apparitions when they can open their Bible right where they are and get a message from God.”

**3 Both Are Anti-Semitic** – The Vatican has issued more than 100 anti-Semitic documents and taught the Jews should be cursed because they killed Christ.

Mohammed’s words recorded in the Hadith say, “The last day will not come until the Muslims destroy the Jews.” This is why Islam is determined to eliminate the Jews from Israel.

As long as the Jews remain, it says to the world that Mohammed was a false prophet, Allah is a false God and the Qu’ran is a false revelation.



**4 Both Embrace Another Jesus** – Catholicism has a counterfeit Jesus, who returns to the earth every day at the beckoned call of Catholic priest, to be transubstantiated into a lifeless piece of bread.

His death on the cross was not sufficient to save Catholics, so he has to be re-presented on an altar as a sin offering.

The true Jesus cried out, “It is finished,” and there are no more offerings for sin (John 19:3 and Hebrews 10:14).

Islam also has a counterfeit Jesus (Isa) who is not God, but only a prophet, who did not die on a cross.

**5 Both Seek World Dominion** – Both religions rule with an autocratic government and have a history of forced conversions, and killing those who oppose them. Could these religions – which control people with indoctrination, intimidation and fear – be a precursor to the rule of Antichrist?

Why would the Catholic Church single out the one religion of Islam and not another of the world’s religions? Could it be that it is not only a religion but a political ideology similar to Catholicism?

Islam is a controlling system that lays down detailed rules for society and the life of every person. Islam means “submission” and is not compatible with freedom and democracy. Could this be a pre-cursor to a world that must submit to the strict control of an antichrist?

**6 Both Deny the Authority of Scripture** – The pagan beliefs of both religions stand opposed to the Bible.

Muslims reject the Bible as the final revelation from God, declaring that God has revealed a final testament: the Qu’ran which is their supreme authority.

Catholics use their “infallible” teachings to twist and distort Scripture to support their ungodly traditions.

Whenever religions, cults or denominations do not submit to the authority of Scripture they are easily influenced by the lies of the devil. He is the master deceiver, schemer and ruler of this age so it is no wonder that both religions are enemies of God’s Word.

**7 Both Use Prayer Beads to Avoid Punishment** – Catholics pray the rosary to remit punishment for sin. Muslims use 99 beads that correspond to the names of God. Praying to Allah five times a day is an act of obedience to escape the punishment imposed on those who do not pray.



*Pope Francis greets Egypt’s Grand Imam Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb after signing documents during the Human Fraternity Meeting at Abu Dhabi on February 4, 2019. It was the first visit by the head of the Catholic Church to the Muslim-majority Arabian Peninsula.*

**8 Both Take Pilgrimages to Obtain Favour from God** – Catholics take pilgrimages for religious purification and the promise of indulgences. Muslims take pilgrimages to Mecca, a mandatory religious duty that must be carried out at least once in their lifetime.

**9 Both Have Human Mediators** – Catholics rely on the priesthood to dispense salvation through sacraments and seek Mary to intercede with God on their behalf.


Muslims rely on the intercession of Muhammad on judgement day. He will prostrate himself before Allah who will say, “O Muhammad! Speak, it will be heard; and be given; intercede, and it will be approved.”

**10 Both Have a Works-Righteousness Salvation** – Allah will place one’s good and evil works on the divine scale: “Those whose scales are light are those who lose their souls in hell (Sura

23:102,103).” Good works by Muslims are determined by their performance of the Five Pillars of Islam.

In Catholicism, sacraments, good works and obeying the law are necessary for salvation. Catholics obtain the joy of heaven, after they “merit for themselves and for others all the graces needed to attain eternal life (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* paragraph 2027).”

These two religions represent a huge mission field with nearly three billion precious souls. They need to know the true Jesus and submit to His Word as their supreme authority for knowing truth. Only then will they see the need to repent of their works-righteousness salvation and believe the glorious Gospel of grace.

As ambassadors for Christ, let us sow the seed of His Word in these mission fields which are ripe for harvest. Only the truth will set them free from religious bondage (John 8:31-32). 

## What happens when Christ returns?

**I**N the 1930s, F. E. Marsh wrote a book entitled *What Will Take Place When Christ Returns?* The table of contents of this book is fascinating:

- 1) The Prophetic Word Will be Verified
- 2) The Sleeping Saints and the Living Ones Will be Unified (in a Post-Tribulation Rapture)
- 3) Believers Will be Glorified
- 4) The Saints Will be Classified (Rewards)

- 5) Israel Will be Vivified (Re-established)
- 6) Hell Will be Stultified (Binding of the Antichrist)
- 7) Mankind Will be Pacified (Universal Peace)
- 8) Creation Will be Gratified
- 9) The Earth Will be Beautified
- 10) The Holy Spirit Will be Justified
- 11) Christ Will be Satisfied
- 12) The Father Will be Magnified

# THE GLORIOUS FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

by Andrew Murray (1828-1917)

**H**AVE you received the Holy Spirit since you believed (see Acts 19:1&2)? Let every reader submit himself to this heart-searching question. To be filled with the Holy Spirit of God, to have the full enjoyment of the Pentecostal blessing, is the will of God concerning us. Let us judge our life and our work before the Lord in the light of this question, and return the answer to God.

"They were all filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4)."

Whenever we speak of being filled with the Holy Spirit, and desire to know what it precisely is, our thoughts always turn back to the day of Pentecost. There we see as in a mirror how glorious the blessing is that is brought from heaven by the Holy Spirit and with which He can fill the hearts of men.

There is one fact which makes the great event of the day of Pentecost doubly instructive – namely, that we know very intimately the men who were at that time filled with the Spirit, by their fellowship for three years with the Lord Jesus.

Their infirmities and defects, their sins and perversities, all stand open to our view.

But the blessing of Pentecost wrought a complete transformation. They became entirely new men, so that one might say of them with truth: "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new (2 Corinthians 5:17)."

Close study of them and their example helps us in more than one way. It shows us to what weak and sinful men the Spirit will come. It teaches us how they were prepared for the blessing.

It teaches us also – and this is the principal thing – how mighty and complete the revolution is that is brought to pass when the Holy Spirit is received in His fullness.

It lets us see how glorious the grace that awaits us is if we press on to the full blessing of Pentecost.

## **The ever-abiding presence and indwelling of the Lord Jesus**

In this we have the first and principal blessing of the Pentecostal life. In the course of our Lord's dealings with His disciples on earth He spared no pains to teach and train them, to renew and sanctify them. Mostly, however, they remained

just what they were.

The reason was that up to this point He was nothing more than an external Christ who stood outside of them and from without sought to work upon them by His word and His personal influence. With the advent of Pentecost this condition was entirely changed.

In the Holy Spirit He came down as the inward, indwelling Christ, to become in the very innermost recesses of their being the life of their life. This is what He Himself had promised in the words: "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you... on that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you (John 14:18, 20)."

This was the source of all the other blessings that came with Pentecost. Jesus Christ, the crucified, the glorified, the Lord from heaven, came in spiritual power, by the Spirit, to impart to them that ever-abiding presence of their Lord that had been promised to them.

Him whom they had had in the flesh, living with them on earth, they now received by the Spirit in His heavenly glory within them. Instead of an outward Jesus near them, they now obtained the inward Jesus within them.

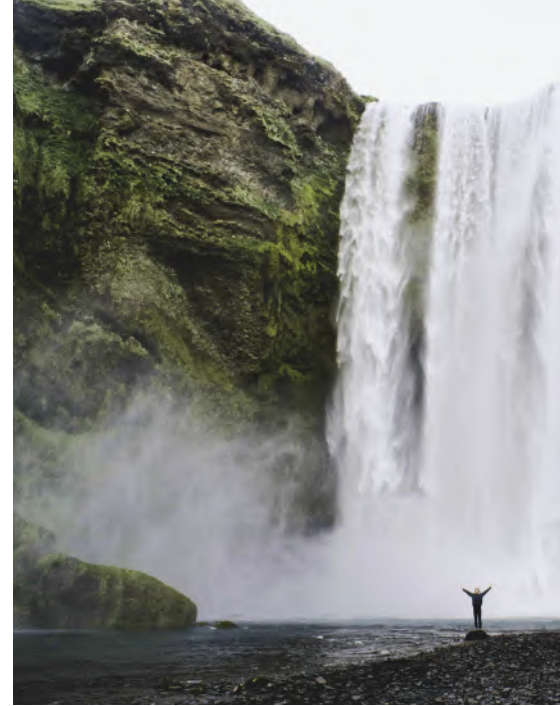
## **The Spirit of Jesus came into them as the life and the power of sanctification**

This springs from the first and principal blessing. Here I shall highlight only one feature in this change. We know how often the Lord had to rebuke them for their pride and exhort them to humility. It was all to no avail. Even on the last night of His earthly life, at the table of the Holy Supper, there was a strife amongst them as to who should be the greatest (Luke 22:24).

The outward teaching of the outward Christ, whatever other influences it may have exercised, was not sufficient to redeem them from the power of indwelling sin. This could only be achieved by the indwelling Christ.

Only when Jesus descended into them by the Holy Spirit did they undergo a complete change. They received Him in His heavenly humility and subjection to the Father, and in His self-sacrifice for others, as their life. Henceforth all was changed. From that moment onwards they were animated by the spirit of the meek and lowly Jesus.

This in very truth is still the only way to a real sanctification, to a life that actually



overcomes sin. Many preachers and many Christians keep their minds occupied only with the external Christ on the Cross or in heaven, and wait for the blessing of His teaching and His working without understanding that the blessing of Pentecost brings Him *into* us, to work Himself all in us.

Because of this, they make little progress in sanctification. Christ Himself is of God made unto us sanctification: and that in no other way than by our living and being moved and existing in Him, because He lives and abides in our heart and works all there (1 Corinthians 1:30).

## **An overflowing of the heart with the love of God**

This also is a part of the blessing of Pentecost. Next to pride, lack of love – or as we may put it in one word, lovelessness – was the sin for which the Lord had so often to rebuke His disciples. These two sins have in truth one and the same root: the self-seeking *I*, the desire for self-pleasing.

The new commandment that He gave them, the token whereby all men should know that they were His disciples, was love to one another (John 13:35).

How gloriously was it manifested on the day of Pentecost that the Spirit of the Lord shed abroad His love in the hearts of His own. The multitude of those who believed were as one heart, one soul.

All things they possessed were held in common. No one said that anything of that which he had was his own. The kingdom of heaven with its life of love had come down to them. The spirit, the disposition, the wonderful love of Jesus, filled them, because He Himself had come into them.

How closely the mighty working of the Spirit and the indwelling of the Lord Jesus are bound up with a life in love is clearly shown in the prayer of Paul in behalf of the Ephesians. He asks that they might be strengthened with





power by the Spirit, *in order that* Christ might dwell in their hearts. Then he makes this addition: “that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend... the love of Christ which passes knowledge (Ephesians 3:17-19).”

The filling with the Spirit and the indwelling of Christ bring of themselves a life that has its root, its joy, its power, its evidence in love, because the indwelling Christ Himself *is* Love. **The coming of the Spirit changed weakness and fear into courage and power**

We all know how, from fear rising in his heart at the word of a woman, Peter denied his Lord, and how that same night all the disciples fled and forsook Him. Their hearts were really attached to Him, and they were sincerely willing to do what they had promised and go to die with Him. But when it came to the crisis, they had neither courage nor power. They had to say: “To will is present with me; but to perform that which is good I do not find (Romans 7:18).”

After the blessing of the Spirit of Pentecost, there was no more question of merely willing yet not performing. By Christ dwelling in us God works both the willing and the doing (Philippians 2:13).

With what confidence of spirit Peter, on the day of Pentecost, dared to preach the Crucified One to thousands of hostile Jews. With what boldness he was able, in opposition to the leaders of the people, to say, “We ought to obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29).”

With what courage and joy were Stephen and Paul and so many others enabled to encounter threatening and suffering and death. They did this even triumphantly.

It was because the Spirit of Christ, the Victor – yes, the Christ Himself, who had been glorified – dwelt within them.

**The blessing of Pentecost makes the whole Word of God new**

How distinctly do we see this fact in the case of the disciples. As with all the Jews of that time, their ideas of the Messiah and the kingdom of God were utterly external and carnal. All the instruction of the Lord Jesus throughout three long years could not detach their minds from them.

They were utterly unable to comprehend the doctrine of a suffering and dying Messiah or the hope of His invisible spiritual dominion. Even after His resurrection He had to rebuke them for their unbelieving spirit and their backwardness in understanding the Scriptures.

With the coming of the day of Pentecost a complete change took place. The whole of their ancient Scriptures opened up before them. The light of the Holy Spirit in them illumined the Word.

In the preaching of Peter and Stephen, in the addresses of Paul and James, we see how a divine light had shone upon the Word of the Old Testament. They saw everything through the Spirit of this Jesus who had made His abode with them.

So will it be also with ourselves. It is as necessary as it is helpful that we should study the Scriptures and meditate upon them, and keep the Word of God in head and heart and daily walk.

Let us, however, constantly remember that it is only when we are filled with the Spirit that we can rightly and fully experience the spiritual power and truth of the Word. He is “the Spirit of truth.” He alone guides into all truth when He dwells in us (John 14:17; 16:13).

**It is the blessing of Pentecost that gives power to bless others**

The divine power of the exalted Jesus to grant repentance and the forgiveness of sins is exercised by Him through His servants whom He sends forth to proclaim these blessings. The minister of the Gospel who desires to preach repentance and forgiveness through Jesus with success in winning souls, must do the work in the power of the Spirit of this Jesus.

The chief reason why so much preaching of conversion and pardon is fruitless lies in the fact that these elements of truth are presented only as a doctrine. Preachers endeavour to secure a way to the hearts of their audience in the power of merely human earnestness and reasoning and eloquence. But little blessing is won by these means.

“He who believes in Me,” said Jesus, “out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water (John 7:38).” This He said of the Holy Spirit. A heart filled with the Spirit will overflow with the Spirit.

**It is the blessing of Pentecost that**

**will make the church of Christ what God would have her be**

We have spoken of what the Spirit will do in individual believers. We also have to think of what the blessing will be when the church as a whole apprehends her calling to be filled with the Spirit, and then exhibits the life and the power – yes, and the very presence – of her Lord to the world. We must not only seek and receive this blessing, every one for himself, but we must also remember that the full manifestation of what the blessing itself is, cannot be given until the whole body of Christ be filled with it.

“If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it (1 Corinthians 12:26).” If many members of the church of Christ are content to remain without this blessing, the whole church will suffer.

Even in individual disciples the blessing cannot come to its full manifestation. Hence it is of the utmost importance that we should not only think of what the being “filled with the Spirit” means for ourselves, but also consider what it will do for the church, especially in our own neighbourhood, and by her for all the world.


**One thing needful**

Beloved fellow Christians, this summons comes to you. “One thing is needful (Luke 10:42).” For yourself and the whole church of the Lord, this is the one thing that is needful: we have to be filled with the Spirit.

Please do not imagine that you must comprehend or understand it all before you seek and find it. For those who wait upon Him God will do even that which has not yet entered into their heart to conceive.

If you would taste the happiness, if you would know by personal experience the unutterable blessedness of having Jesus in the heart, of having in you His Spirit of holiness and humility, of love and self-sacrifice, of courage and power, as naturally and continuously as you have your own spirit; if you would have the Word of God in you as light and power, and be enabled to carry it about as a blessing for others; if you would see the church of Christ stand forth arrayed in her first splendour – then separate yourselves from everything that is evil.

Cast evil utterly out of your heart, and fix your desire on this one thing: to be filled with the Spirit of God. Reckon upon receiving this as your rightful heritage. Appropriate it and hold it fast by faith.

It shall certainly be given you. 

# John Bunyan's dying sayings

**J**OHN Bunyan (1628-1688), a Puritan preacher, is best remembered as the author of *The Pilgrim's Progress* – but this allegory was only one of more than nearly 60 books he wrote. The following quotes were made by Bunyan in the period before his death from the fever on August 31, 1688. Bunyan's estate at his death was worth £42.

## OF SIN

Sin is the great block and bar to our happiness, the procurer of all miseries to man, both here and hereafter: take away sin and nothing can hurt us: for death, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, is the wages of it.

Sin, and man for sin, is the object of the wrath of God. How dreadful, therefore, must his case be who continues in sin! For who can bear or grapple with the wrath of God?

No sin against God can be little, because it is against the great God of heaven and earth; but if the sinner can find out a little God, it may be easy to find out little sins.

Sin turns all God's grace into wantonness; it is the dare of his justice, the rape of his mercy, the jeer of his patience, the slight of his power, and the contempt of his love.

Take heed of giving thyself liberty of committing one sin, for that will lead you to another; until, by an ill custom, it becomes natural.

To begin a sin, is to lay a foundation for a continuance; this continuance is the mother of custom, and impudence at last the issue.

The death of Christ gives us the best discovery of ourselves, in what condition



we were, in that nothing could help us but that; and the most clear discovery of the dreadful nature of our sins. For if sin be so dreadful a thing as to wring the heart of the Son of God, how shall a poor wretched sinner be able to bear it?

## OF AFFLICTION

Nothing can render affliction so insupportable as the load of sin: would you, therefore, be fitted for afflictions, be sure to get the burden of your sins laid aside, and then whatever afflictions you may meet with will be very easy to you.

If you can hear and bear the rod of affliction which God shall lay upon you, remember this lesson – you are beaten that you may be better.

The Lord uses his flail of tribulation to separate the chaff from the wheat.

The school of the cross is the school of light; it discovers the world's vanity, baseness, and wickedness, and lets us see more of God's mind. Out of dark affliction comes a spiritual light.

In times of affliction we commonly meet with the sweetest experiences of the love of God.

If we heartily renounce the pleasures of this world, then we should be very little troubled by our afflictions; what makes an afflicted state so unbearable to many is because they are too much addicted to the pleasures of this life, and so cannot endure that which makes a separation between them.

## OF SUFFERING

It is not every suffering that makes a martyr, but suffering for the Word of

God after a right manner. That is, not only for righteousness, but for righteousness' sake; not only for truth, but out of love to truth; not only for God's Word, but according to it: in other words, in that holy, humble, meek manner, as the Word of God requires.

It is a rare thing to suffer aright, and to have my spirit in suffering bent only against God's enemy, sin: sin in doctrine, sin in worship, sin in life, and sin in conversation.

Neither the devil, nor men of the world, can kill your righteousness, or the love of it – but it is only by your own hand. Nor will he who does indeed suffer for the sake of righteousness be tempted to exchange it for the goodwill of all the world.

I have often thought that the best of Christians are found in the worst of times. And I have thought again that one reason why we are no better, is because God purges us no more. Noah and Lot – who so holy as they in the time of their afflictions? And yet who so idle as they in the time of their prosperity?

## OF SERMONS & WEEK DAYS

Have a special care to sanctify the Lord's day; for as you keep it, so it will be with you all the week long.

Make the Lord's day the market for your soul; let the whole day be spent in prayer, repetitions, or meditations; lay aside the affairs of the other part of the week; let the sermon you have heard be converted into prayer: Shall God allow you six days, and will you not afford Him one?

In the church, be careful to serve God; for you are in His eyes, and not in man's.

You may hear sermons often, and do well in practicing what you hear; but you must not expect to be told from a pulpit all that you ought to do, but be studious in searching the Scriptures, and reading good books; what you hear may be forgotten, but what you read will be better retained.

Do not forsake the public worship of God, lest God forsake you, not only in public, but in private.

In the week days, when you rise in the morning, consider, 1. You must die. 2. You may die that minute. 3. What will become of your soul. Pray often.

At night consider, 1. What sins you have committed. 2. How often you have prayed. 3. What has your mind been set upon. 4. What have been your dealings with people. 5. What has your conversation been like. 6. If you call to mind the errors of the



day, do not sleep without a confession to God, and a hope of pardon.

Thus every morning and evening make up your accounts with Almighty God, and your reckoning will be the less at last.

## OF PRAYER

Before you enter into prayer, ask your soul these questions – To what end, O my soul, are you coming into this place? Have you not come to communicate with the Lord in prayer? Is He present; will He hear you? Is He merciful; will he help you? Is your business light; is it not concerning the welfare of your soul? What words will you use to move him to compassion?

To make your preparation complete, consider that you are but dust and ashes, and He the great God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that clothes himself with light as with a garment; that you are a vile sinner, He a holy God; that you art but a poor crawling worm, He the omnipotent Creator.

In all your prayers forget not to thank the Lord for his mercies.

When you pray, rather let your heart be without words, than your words without a heart.

Prayer will make a man cease from sin, or sin will entice a man to cease from prayer.

The spirit of prayer is more precious than treasures of gold and silver.

Pray often, for prayer is a shield to the soul, a sacrifice to God, and a scourge for Satan.

## OF REPENTANCE & COMING TO CHRIST

The end of affliction is the discovery of sin, and of that to bring us to a Saviour. Let us therefore, with the prodigal, return to Him, and we shall find ease and rest.

A repenting penitent, though formerly as bad as the worst of men, may, by grace, become as good as the best.

To be truly aware of sin is to sorrow for displeasing God; to be afflicted that He is displeased *by* us more than that He is displeased *with* us.

Your intentions to repentance, and the neglect of that soul-saving duty, will rise up in judgement against you.

Repentance carries with it a Divine rhetoric, and persuades Christ to forgive multitudes of sins committed against Him.

Do not say to yourself, tomorrow I will repent – for it is your duty to do it daily.

The gospel of grace and salvation is above

all doctrines the most dangerous, if it is received in word only by graceless men; if it is not attended with a sensible need of a Saviour, and does not bring them to Him. For such men as have only the notion of it, are of all men most miserable; for by reason of their knowing more than heathens, this shall only be their final portion, that they shall have greater stripes.

## OF THE LOVE OF THE WORLD

Nothing more hinders a soul from coming to Christ, than a vain love of the world; and till a soul is freed from it, it can never have a true love for God.

What are the honours and riches of this world, when compared to the glories of a crown of life?

Love not the world; for it (the love of the world) is a moth in a Christian's life.

To despise the world is the way to enjoy heaven; and blessed are they who delight to converse with God by prayer.

What folly can be greater than to labour for the meat that perishes, and neglect the food of eternal life?

To seek yourself in this world is to be lost; and to be humble is to be exalted.

The gourmet who delights in the dainties of this world, little thinks that those very creatures will one day witness against him.

## OF DEATH & JUDGEMENT

As the devil labours by all means to keep out other things that are good – so, too, he attempts to keep out of the heart the thoughts of passing from this life into another world. For he knows if he can but keep us from the serious thoughts of death, he shall the more easily keep us in our sins.

Nothing will make us more earnest in working out the work of our salvation, than a frequent meditation of mortality; nothing has greater influence for the taking off our hearts from vanities, and for the begetting in us desires after holiness.

O sinner, what a condition will you fall into when you depart this world; if you depart unconverted, you would have been better having been smothered the first hour you were born; you would have been better plucked one limb from another; you would have been better made a dog, a toad, a serpent, than to die unconverted. And this you will find true if you do not repent.

The only way for us to escape that terrible judgment, is to be often passing a sentence

of condemnation upon ourselves here.

When the sound of the trumpet shall be heard, which shall summon the dead to appear before the tribunal of God, the righteous shall hasten out of their graves with joy to meet their Redeemer in the clouds; others shall call to the hills and mountains to fall upon them, to cover them from the sight of their Judge.

## OF THE JOYS OF HEAVEN

There is no good in this life that is not mingled with some evil; honours perplex, riches disquiet, and pleasures ruin health. But in heaven we shall find blessings in their purity, without any ingredient to embitter, with everything to sweeten them.

Oh, who is able to conceive the inexpressible, inconceivable joys that are there? None but those who have tasted of them. Lord, help us to put such a value upon them here, that in order to prepare ourselves for them, we may be willing to forego the loss of all those deluding pleasures here.

How will the heavens echo of joy, when the Bride, the Lamb's wife, shall come to dwell with her husband forever?

Christ is the desire of nations, the joy of angels, the delight of the Father; what solace then must that soul be filled with, that has the possession of Him for all eternity?

Oh, what acclamations of joy will there be, when all the children of God shall meet together, without fear of being disturbed by the antichristian and Cainish brood!

Is there not a time coming when the godly may ask the wicked what profit they have in their pleasure? What comfort in their greatness? And what fruits in all their labour?


## OF THE TORMENTS OF HELL

Heaven and salvation is surely not more promised to the godly than hell and damnation is threatened to, and shall be executed on, the wicked.

When once a man is damned, he may bid *adieu* to all pleasures.

Oh! who knows the power of God's wrath? None but damned ones.

Sinners' company are the devil and his angels, tormented in everlasting fire with a curse.

As different as grief is from joy, as torment from rest, as terror from peace; so different is the state of sinners from that of saints in the world to come. 



# What does God say about sex?

by Sue Bolin

**I**T IS not surprising that in a time of growing biblical illiteracy, so few people have any idea what God thinks and says about the extremely important subject of sex.

The world holds the Christian view of sex in contempt, considering it prudish, naïve and repressive. But the Bible elevates sexuality as God's gift to us that is both sacred and mysterious. The world's perspective degrades it to just something that feels good – another form of recreation or socialisation.

Counsellor Waylon Ward offers an insightful way to understand the problem, which he calls “the Pickle Principle.” In order to make pickles, we put cucumbers in a brine solution of vinegar, spices, and water. After a cucumber soaks in the brine long enough, it is changed into a pickle.

Most of us are like pickles.

We sit in the brine of a sex-saturated culture, absorbing its values and beliefs, and it changes the way we think. Even most Christians are pickled today, believing and acting exactly like everyone else who has been sitting in the brine of a culture hostile to God and His Word.

The world's sex-saturated brine includes the belief that sex is the ultimate pleasure. The message of much TV, movies, and music is that there is no greater pleasure available, and that it is the right of every individual, even teenagers, to have this pleasure.

Another aspect of this pickling process is the belief that no one has the right to deprive anyone else of this greatest of all human pleasures, that no one has the right to tell anyone else what is right or wrong about the expression of his or her sexuality.

If the purpose and goal of sex is primarily pleasure, then other people are just objects

to be used for sensual gratification. Since people are infinitely valuable because God made us in His image, that is a slap in the face, whether we realise it or not.

The Christian perspective is that the purpose of sex is relational, with pleasure as the by-product. The Bible teaches that sex welds two souls together (Genesis 2:24; 1 Corinthians 6:15&16). It is so powerful that it is only safe within a committed, covenant marriage relationship.

It's like the difference between the wild energy of lightning compared to the harnessed power of electricity. God knew what He was doing when He limited sex to within marriage!

God wants to get His “pickled people” out of the world's brine and into an intimate relationship with Him. He wants to change our thinking and beliefs to be in alignment with His.

## *Sex is God's Invention!*

Sex is God's idea. He made it not only efficient for making babies, but pleasurable and deeply satisfying. He designed men's and women's body parts to complement each other. He created hormones to make everything work right and make us want to be sexual.

Unlike animals, whose mating behaviour is purely instinctive for the purpose of reproducing, human sexuality has several wonderful purposes. God means for all of them to be contained within marriage.

In a lifelong covenant of faithfulness between husband and wife, we can express and enjoy God's two major purposes to sex: fruitfulness and intimacy.

His first command to Adam and Eve was to “be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:28).” One very foundational purpose of sex is to create new living beings. Fruitfulness is not limited to having children,

though. A mutually loving and serving sexual relationship between husband and wife can produce emotional and personal fruitfulness as well. Both people are nurtured to grow, develop, and soar, becoming more of what God means them to be.

The other big purpose for sex, emotional and physical intimacy, is only possible within marriage. In his little gem of a book called *What God Says About Sex*, Eric Elder says that intimacy really means “into-me-see.”

It is only safe to reveal the fullness of who we are, “warts and all,” to someone who loves us and has committed to be faithful and supportive “till death do us part.” The fullest experience and freedom of sex is found within the marriage bed, which God says to keep holy or set apart (Hebrews 13:4). God says that we are to use self-control to keep all expressions of sexuality limited to marriage (1 Corinthians 6:18).

Sex also builds oneness, a mystical union of two lives and souls into one life together. The one-flesh union of sex is a picture of the way two souls are joined together into a shared life.

In fact, we could say that sex is like solder that is used to fuse two pieces of metal together. Once they are joined, it is a strong bond that helps keep marriages and families intact, which is God's intention for our lives.

Another purpose of sex is the pleasure that comes from being safe in another's love. The entire book of Song of Solomon is gorgeous poetry that glorifies married sexual relations.

God also says that an important purpose of sex is to serve as an earthbound illustration of the mystical but real unity of Christ and the church, where two very different, very *other* beings are joined together as one. This spiritual component to



sex is what helps us see more clearly why any, and all, sex outside of marriage falls far short of God's intention for it to be holy and sacred – and protected.

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### *So... What Does God Actually Say?*

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A lot of people believe the Bible says, "Sex is fun and it feels good, so don't do it." Nothing could be farther from the truth! Sex was God's great idea in the first place. But God's view of sex as a sacred and private gift to married couples, as well as a gift each spouse gives to the other, is at great odds with the world's perspective of sex as simply a pleasure no one should deny him- or herself.

The overarching statement God makes is that sex is to be completely contained within marriage. As I said above, sex is so powerful that it's like the difference between the wild, uncontrollable power of lightning compared to the safety of harnessed electricity in our buildings. God wants us to harness the power of sex within marriage.

This means that all other expressions of sexuality are off-limits, not because God is a cosmic killjoy, but because He loves us and knows what's best for us, namely, not playing with lightning!

So, God says not to engage in sex with anyone before marriage, with anyone else once we are married, with anyone of the same sex; or with prostitutes, or with family members, or with animals.

God says that sexual purity is a treasure to be guarded and valued. It is a reflection of God's own character, which is what makes it so valuable.

In our culture, many people have been deceived into thinking that their virginity is worthless, something to get rid of. But God says it is special (Song of Solomon 4:12), a gift that we can only bestow on one person, one time. God calls us to purity after marriage as well by remaining faithful to our spouse.

Purity before and during marriage prevents "ghosts" in the marriage bed; comparisons are nowhere as deadly as in the intensely intimate realm of sex. We glorify God in our sexuality by using self-control to stay pure if single, and by loving our spouse sexually if married.

The good news is that purity can be restored if we confess our sin and put our trust in Jesus to forgive us and give us a new, holy quality of life. The Bible

promises, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9)." God stands ready to forgive and cleanse us, and restore our purity the moment we ask.

God says that sex is to be reserved for adults only. Three times in the Song of Solomon, a beautiful book extolling the glory of married sex, it says, "Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires," which means "until the time is right (Song of Solomon 2:7, 3:5, 8:4)."

As I minister to sexually broken people, most of them bear the still-painful scars of childhood sexual abuse from people who never should have opened a door to sexual experience. Their entire view of sex has been warped and skewed. God never meant for children to be introduced to sex. It's for adults. *Married* adults.

God wants us to actively fight sexual temptation. The battle is harder than it's ever been because of our sex-saturated culture. He says to flee immorality (1 Corinthians 6:18). In fact, God says to offer not even a *hint* of sexual immorality (Ephesians 5:3).

That means that it is a violation of His intentions to engage in phone sex with strangers, or virtual sex in chat rooms and porn sites. The fact that you're not physically touching another person's body doesn't mean it's not sin, because Jesus said that sexual sin happens in the mind first (Matthew 5:28).

Eric Elder suggests asking a powerful question to help clarify the battle against sexual temptation: will this lead to greater intimacy and fruitfulness with the husband or wife God has created for me?

This filter is helpful for both married people and singles. If an action doesn't build intimacy or fruitfulness, it probably destroys them. Another question to ask is: Can I glorify God in what my flesh wants to do? Can I invite Jesus into what I'm about to do? If the answer is no, God invites us to meet the struggle with His supernatural energy instead of our own puny human strength (Song of Solomon 5:1).

Outside of the safety of marriage, sex is wounding and hurtful, but God created it for our pleasure and delight. In the Song of Solomon, God enthusiastically invites the newlyweds to enjoy His good gift of sex, where He says, "Eat, friends, and drink, o lovers (Song of Solomon 5:1)!"

In fact, God wants married couples to bless each other by enjoying sex often and

regularly (1 Corinthians 7:5).

Are you surprised by what God says about sex?

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### *Why Sexual Sin Hurts So Much*

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Pastors and counsellors will tell you that there is a greater intensity of shame and pain in the people they counsel when the issues involve sexual sin. Paul says that all other sins are outside our bodies (1 Corinthians 6:18), but sexual sin touches you deep in your heart and soul.

As mentioned above, it may be helpful to think of sex like solder. God created it to make a strong, powerful bond that creates healthy, stable families into which children are welcomed. But when people fuse their souls through sexual sin without the safety and commitment of marriage, it causes tremendous pain when the relationship rips apart. (Have you ever seen a broken weld? It's pretty ugly.)

When sex is disconnected from love and commitment, it also disconnects the body from the soul. This inflicts deep wounds of shame and guilt on a heart that has been used for gratification instead of love.

Waylon Ward says that sex sins expose and exploit our deepest emotional and spiritual vulnerabilities. He writes, "In the counselling office, individuals rarely if ever weep scalding tears about any other sense of loss like they do for a sexual relationship when it ends. There are soul ties that bind two partners together in unseen ways and there is a sense that part of you has been stolen. There is a hole in your soul where the connection was ripped from you."

The pickling brine of our culture's increased sensuality says, "If it feels good, do it. You're entitled." But while this belief about sex may *feel* good, it is most definitely not good for us.

Note the runaway epidemic of sexually transmitted diseases, and the resulting increase in infertility. Note the number of broken hearts and broken families. Note the alarming amount of sexual abuse. Note the soaring rates of depression, especially in teens, much of which is related to sexual activity outside of marriage.

God invented sex for His glory and our benefit. His basic rule – keep sex inside marriage – isn't meant to be a killjoy, but to protect our hearts and bodies and relationships and families. He knows what He's doing, and we do well to follow.

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# Why I do not celebrate gay pride



by Dr Michael Brown

**If you ask my detractors, they would tell you that the reason I do not celebrate gay pride is that I'm a bigot. A hater. A homophobe. A transphobe.**

And I understand their perspective.

After all, no matter how Christian I claim to be, if I tell a gay couple I do not believe they are truly married in God's sight, that feels like hatred to them. If I tell a woman who identifies as a man that I still believe she is a woman, that feels like hatred to her.

From their perspective, I can understand how unchristian my position seems, how bigoted, how biased, how primitive.

After all, they would be quick to point out, there are gay parents who are more devoted to their children than some straight parents. There are transgender men and women who are kind, gentle, caring souls.

There are people all across the LGBT spectrum who help the poor, who care for the oppressed, who love the loveless, who are outstanding bosses or employees or friends or neighbours.

Why shouldn't all of us celebrate gay (or LGBT) pride?

## Three Major Reasons

For me, there are three major reasons, and none of them have anything to do with hatred or fear.

First, I do not accept the categories of LGBT as fixed and definite categories, worthy of special recognition. Put another way, why should there be a special month to celebrate people based on their sexual desires and romantic attractions? Or based on their gender identity perceptions?

The very fact that we've gone from G (as in gay) to LG, to LGB, to LGBT, to LGBTQ, to LGBTQI to LGBTQIP (and beyond) indicates that these are hardly fixed categories.

Or, to zero in on the letter B, why should I celebrate someone who is attracted to both males and females? Why should I put them in a special category (like Hispanic or Asian or Black)?

If the person happens to be a courageous firefighter, I'll celebrate them for that. If the person happens to be a cancer survivor with an amazing story, I'll celebrate them for that.

They are fellow human beings, and if they deserve honour or commendation, I'll gladly give that to them.

But I won't celebrate their bisexuality. Why should I?

And that leads to my second point. Why celebrate what is contrary to God's design? If I'm convinced that homosexual practice is contrary to God's design, why should I celebrate it?

If I personally know people whose same-sex attractions were the result of childhood sexual abuse and rape, why should I celebrate those attractions?

If I'm convinced that, ideally, a child should have a mommy and a daddy (rather than two mommies or two daddies), why should I celebrate a family setting that willfully deprives that child of either their mother or father?

Do we celebrate single parent pride? No, we say to those single parents, "It must be hard to raise your child on your own, but we're standing with you to help." There's quite a difference.

And why should I celebrate transgender identity? What is there to celebrate?

Why should I celebrate putting a child on hormone blockers? Why should I celebrate a 17-year-old girl having her breasts removed? Why should I celebrate a lifelong regimen of hormones? Why should I celebrate something that causes so many people so much pain, even after "transitioning?"

If you asked me to stand with those who identify as transgender and offer them support and compassion and hope, I would say, "Count me in."

If you asked me to stand against their harassment and mistreatment, again I would say, "Count me in."

But if you ask me to celebrate their transgender identity (and all the challenges that come with it), I would have to politely decline.

## The Destructive Agenda

Third, and finally, I do not celebrate LGBT pride because there is an agenda attached to it.

In other words, this is not just a matter of me appreciating LGBT people as people, or recognising their accomplishments for the sake of their accomplishments.

Instead, to celebrate LGBT pride is to recognise and embrace a larger cultural agenda.

As I explained in 2011, "the legitimising of homosexuality as a perfectly normal

alternative to heterosexuality also requires that all opposition to homosexual behaviour must be delegitimised. At the very least, the gay agenda requires the following three platforms (and let recognised gay leaders renounce this if it is not so).

\*"Whereas homosexuality was once considered a pathological disorder, from here on those who do not affirm homosexuality will be deemed homophobic, perhaps themselves being labelled as suffering from a pathological disorder.

\*"Whereas gay sexual behaviour was once considered morally wrong, from here on public condemnation – or even public criticism – of that behaviour will be considered morally wrong.

\*"Whereas identifying as transgender was once considered abnormal by society, causing one to be marginalised, from here on those who do not accept transgenderism will be considered abnormal and will be marginalised."

And remember, I wrote this in 2011.

Again, from the LGBT viewpoint, LGBT pride is all about coming out of the closet. It's about saying, "We're just as good and as gifted and as normal as anyone else, and rather than being ashamed of our LGBT identity, we are proud of it. The days of being mistreated are over. That's what LGBT pride is all about!"

Again, I understand these sentiments, and if it was a matter of caring for people as people, I'd march side by side with them.

But it's not just that. It's about creating new categories and foisting them on the society. It's about celebrating something that should not be celebrated. It's about a larger agenda.

For those reasons, I do not celebrate gay pride, even though it makes me a hateful bigot in the eyes of many LGBT people and their allies. That saddens me, but that doesn't change my convictions.

June remains just another month on my calendar. It is not marked off for LGBT pride. 🐟





# Praying Down Satan's Strongholds

by De Vern Fromke

**I**N the war upon the powers of darkness, prayer is the mightiest weapon. Prayer will accomplish what argument will not. When you see an onslaught of the enemy in a certain situation, be careful not to touch it until you have prayed the whole thing through.

In the greatest innocence, you may fan up a tornado of the enemy's workings by trying to put things right. Also, it may be just a trap to draw you into it in order to divert you from vital work and if you do not touch it, the enemy will stop because his "trap" has failed.

In your home, church or prayer group, or wherever there is a tornado of the enemy

at work, keep out of it! Your most effective weapon against that thing will be prayer, not speech.

Never imagine that your business is to give "light" to a Christian until they are ready to receive it.

For instance, there is a child of God under deception. If you were to tell him so, he would not believe you. It is far better to deal with the enemy at the back of the deception by prayer. Pray something like this: "Lord, open his eyes to see that the enemy is deceiving him. Give him the knowledge he needs for deliverance."

Pray over every detail you know of until you know there is a change, and the satanic power has subsided, so that you have only

the person himself to deal with (not extraneous supernatural power also).

Then you can give light on the experience, and how to resist the devil – the deceiver – and the person will be able to listen to you. But if you have not enough knowledge to distinguish between the person himself and the working of the enemy, you will be blaming the person and trying to put the person right.

You will reason with him, argue with him, weep for him, but you will not pray away the workings of the enemy of that soul.

Remember, you are "in Christ," the Conqueror, and wherever you see a trace of the enemy's work, in your own life or in others, you pray against it, in the Name of Jesus.

## A systematic warfare

It is a systematic warfare of prayer against the enemy. "The Lord your God drives them out from before you (Deuteronomy 18:12)." If all God's people were awake to this warfare, there is not a church, or a conference, or a deceived believer, where the emissaries of the devil are at work, that they could not be driven out by prayer.


Much of the lack of unity among the brethren springs from this very source. It can be overcome only through the prayer of individual warriors who are in a position "in Christ" to rebuke the evil spirit causing disunity.

"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you (James 4:7)."

When Satan tempted Christ, He commanded him to "Get thee hence (Matthew 4:10)." In other words, Christ commanded Satan to leave. He did not ask him to go. He *commanded* him to go, and the marvelous thing is this, Satan obeyed.

In the all-conquering Name of the Son of God, we can command Satan, wherever we find him at work, in home, or church, "Get thee hence!"

God calls upon us with insistency to offer this resistance. Resistance to Satanic power, in the Saviour's Name, on the authority of His Word, by faith in His finished work on Calvary, is the spiritual weapon that, when used, makes the devil's strongholds crumble in the home or church.

This resistance can be done in prayer with fasting without touching the actual situation. It is by *faith* that it may be of God. Obedience to God's Word in life and lip, makes faith strong to move mountains. 

# Prove All Things



by J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)

**T**HE Holy Spirit, by the mouth of Paul, says to us, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good (1 Thessalonians 5:21).” In these words you have two great truths:

- The right, duty, and necessity of private judgement. “Prove all things.”
- The duty and necessity of keeping a firm hold upon truth. “Hold fast that which is good.”

I propose to dwell a little on both these truths.

## Right, Duty, and Necessity

When I say the right of private judgement, I mean that every individual Christian has a right to judge for himself by the Word of God, whether that which is put before him as religious truth, is God’s truth, or is not.

When I say the **duty** of private judgement, I mean that God requires every Christian man to use the right of which I have just spoken; to compare man’s words and man’s writings with God’s revelation, and to make sure that he is not deluded and taken in by false teaching.

And when I say the **necessity** of private judgement, I mean this, that it is absolutely needful for every Christian who loves his soul and does not want to be deceived, to exercise that right, and discharge that duty to which I have referred; seeing that experience shows that the neglect of private judgement has always been the cause of immense evils in the church of Christ.

Now the Apostle Paul urges all these three points – right, duty, and necessity

– upon your notice when he uses those remarkable words, “Prove all things.” I ask your particular attention to that expression. In every point of view it is most weighty and instructive.

Remember, the Apostle Paul is writing to the Thessalonians, to a church which he himself had founded. Here is an inspired apostle writing to young inexperienced Christians, writing to the whole professing church in a certain city, also writing with special reference to matters of doctrine and preaching, as we know by the verse preceding the text, “Do not despise prophesies (verse 20).

And, yet, mark what he says: “Prove all things.”

He does not say, “Whatever apostles, whatever evangelists, pastors and teachers, whatever your bishops, whatever your ministers tell you is truth, **that** you are to believe.” No: he says, “Prove all things.”

He does not say, “Whatever the church pronounces true, that you are to hold.” No: he says, “Prove all things.”

The principle laid down is this: “Prove all things by the Word of God. All ministers, all teaching, all preaching, all doctrine, all sermons, all writings, all opinions, all practices – prove all by the Word of God.

“Measure all by the measure of the Bible. Compare all with the standard of the Bible. Weigh all in the balances of the Bible. Examine all by the light of the Bible. Test all in the crucible of the Bible. That which can abide the fire of the Bible, receive, hold, believe and obey. That which

cannot abide the fire of the Bible, reject, refuse, repudiate, and cast away.”

## A New Testament Principle

This again is the principle laid down by our Lord Jesus Christ in the Sermon on the Mount. Remember what He says, “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. You shall know them by their fruits (Matthew 7:15&16).” How is it possible that men shall know these false prophets, except they exercise their private judgement as to what their fruits are?

This is the practice you find commended in the Bereans, in the Acts of the Apostles. They did not take Paul’s word for granted when he came to preach to them. You are told, that they “searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so” and “therefore,” it is said, “many of them believed (Acts 17:11&12).”

What was this but private judgement?

This is the spirit of the advice given in 1 Corinthians 10:15, “I speak as to wise men; judge what I say;” and in Colossians 2:8, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit...” and in 1 John 4:1, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God...” and in 2 John 10, “If anyone comes to you, and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house...”

## Duty and Necessity of Keeping Firm Hold upon Truth

The words of the apostle on this subject are pithy and forcible. “Hold fast,” he says, “that which is good.” It is as if he said



to us, "When you have found the truth for yourself, and when you are satisfied that it is Christ's truth, that truth which the Scriptures set forth – then get a firm hold upon it, grasp it, keep it in your heart, never let it go."

The advice is always needed – needed as long as the world stands. There is a tendency to decay in the very best of human institutions. The best visible church of Christ is not free from this liability to degenerate.

It is made up of fallible men. There is always in it a tendency to decay. We see the leaven of evil creeping into many a church, even in the apostle's time. There were evils in the Corinthian church, evils in the Ephesian church, evils in the Galatian church.

All these things are meant to be our warnings and beacons in these latter times. All show the great necessity laid upon the church to remember the apostle's words: "Hold fast that which is good."

Many a church of Christ has fallen away through forgetting this principle. Their ministers and members forgot that Satan is always labouring to bring in false doctrine. They forgot that he can transform himself into an angel of light – that he can make darkness appear light, and light darkness – truth appear falsehood, and

falsehood truth.

If he cannot destroy Christianity, he always tries to spoil it. If he cannot prevent the form of godliness, he endeavours to rob churches of the power. No church is ever safe that forgets these things, and does not bear in mind the apostle's injunction: "Hold fast that which is good."

If we would hold fast that which is good, we must never tolerate or countenance any doctrine which is not the pure doctrine of Christ's Gospel.

Who would ever think of tolerating a little poison given to him day by day? If men come among you who do not preach "all the counsel of God (Acts 20:27)," who do not preach of Christ, and sin, and holiness, of ruin, and redemption, and regeneration; and do not preach of these things in a Scriptural way, you ought to cease to hear them.

You ought to act upon the injunction given by the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament, "Cease listening to instruction, my son, And you will stray from the words of knowledge (Proverbs 19:27)."

### Thorough Knowledge of the Word

I have set before you two things. One, is the right, the duty, and necessity of private judgement. The other is the duty and necessity of keeping firm hold upon truth. It only remains for me to apply these

things to your own individual conscience by a few concluding words.

If it be your duty to "prove all things," let me beseech and exhort you to arm yourself with a thorough knowledge of the written Word of God. Read your Bible regularly. Become familiar with your Bible.

Prove all religious truth, when it is brought before you, by the Bible. A little knowledge of the Bible will not suffice. Depend upon it, a man must know his Bible well, if he is to prove religious teachings by it; and he must read it regularly if he would know it well.

There is no royal road to a knowledge of the Bible. There must be reading, daily, regular reading of the Book, or the Book will not be known. As one said quaintly, but most truly, "Justification may be by faith, but a knowledge of the Bible comes only by works."

The devil can quote Scripture. He could go to our Lord and quote Scripture when he wished to tempt Him. A man must be able to say, from his knowledge of Scripture when he hears Scripture falsely quoted, "Thus it is written" again, lest he be deceived.

Neglect your Bible, and nothing that I know of can prevent your becoming the prey of any false system you happen to meet. 🐟

# 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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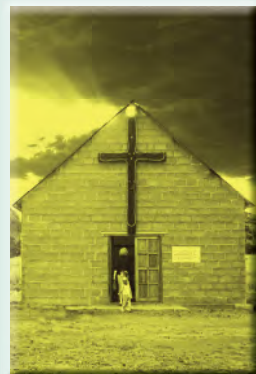
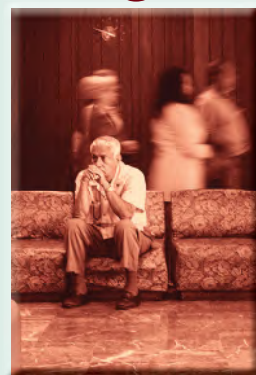
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# Fastest growing church has no buildings & no central leadership

by Mark Ellis

**F**OR the last few years, researchers have credited the underground church in Iran as the fastest growing Christian church in the world. It has unique characteristics that defy comparison with churches in America and Europe, and in the opinion of some who know it well, the church in the West could learn by studying it.

"The fastest growing church in the world has taken root in one of the most unexpected and radicalised nations on earth," according to *Sheep Among Wolves*, the outstanding two-hour documentary about the revival that has taken place inside Iran. "The Iranian awakening is a rapidly reproducing discipleship movement that owns no property or buildings, has no central leadership, and is predominantly led by women."

The documentary was produced by Frontier Alliance International (FAI), which supports disciple-making teams targeting the "unreached" and "unengaged" within the 10/40 Window.

There is a mass exodus leaving Islam for Christianity within Iran, according to FAI.

"What if I told you Islam



is dead?" one unidentified Iranian church leader says on the film. "What if I told you the mosques are empty inside Iran? What if I told you no one follows Islam inside of Iran? Would you believe me? This is exactly what is happening inside of Iran. God is moving powerfully inside of Iran."

Many of the ruling class still follow Islam, "because that's where the high-paying jobs are," according to the film, but the majority of the ordinary people love God and recognise that Islam is the problem.

"What if I told you the best evangelist for Jesus was the Ayatollah Khomeini?" an Iranian church leader asks. He maintains the ayatollahs brought the true face of Islam to light and people discovered it was a lie, a deception. "After 40 years under Islamic law – a utopia according to them – they've had the worst devastation in the 5 000-year history of Iran."

Efforts by the ayatollahs to destroy Christianity have backfired, but have served to refine and purify the church. "What persecution did was destroy the church that were not disciples, and destroy the church that was about converts," the Iranian church leader noted. "All these church planters found out that con-

verts run away from persecution, but disciples would die for the Lord in persecution.

"So our model inside Iran is that we don't convert to disciple, we disciple so we can convert."

Often a disciple-making movement begins the first moment someone comes into contact with an unbeliever. "Everything is foundational on prayer. We find people of peace through prayer. We even find locations through prayer," the Iranian church leader noted.

"When we do discipling, Jesus has gone faster than us. He has come in their dreams or he's come miraculously in their lives. When we hear this, we know that Jesus has gone ahead of us."

## Making disciples

Surprisingly, their emphasis is not planting churches; it is making disciples. "He is letting unbelievers lead other unbelievers to himself and the kingdom of God. If you plant churches you might make disciples. But if you make disciples, you *will* plant churches," the Iranian church leader said.

"One thing powerful with a disciple-making movement is that it is obedience-based discipleship. It is based on the authority of Scripture and every time you read the Scripture you must obey it. This is how people become conformed to the image of Christ and sanctified. They are not just reading the Bible for information. They are reading the Bible to get transformed."

About 55% of the disciple-makers are women, according to one Iranian leader.

One stereotype of Iran promulgated by the nightly news involves crowds of angry Muslims shaking their fists and chanting "Death to America" and "Death to Israel."

But the film presents a different reality beneath the surface. "The most mind-blowing


aspect of the church in Iran is that central to their redemptive theology, and their understanding of not only who Jesus is, what He came to do and what He will return to do, is a covenantal theology that has Israel at the centre!

"When you ask most people what the most existential threat is to Israel and they will say Iran – and that's true. But behind the curtain of what God is doing, God is raising up one of the fastest-growing movements of former Muslims that are falling in love not only with the God of Israel, not only Israel's king, not only Israel's Messiah, they are actually falling in love with the Jewish people! As a result of this you have a prayer movement in Iran that is crying out for the salvation of Israel."

The film cites one Iranian couple that had the opportunity to move to the US. After living in America for a matter of months, the wife decided she wanted to move back to Iran, telling her surprised husband: "There is a satanic lullaby here. All the Christians are sleepy and I'm feeling sleepy."

One leader with FIA notes the alarming nature of her conclusion. "That story was disturbing because that woman was discerning a threat to her faith that was a greater threat than the kind of persecution that happens in Iran. She saw that spiritual sleepiness is a greater threat to her faith than persecution."

The film observes that the only church in the book of Revelation not critiqued by Jesus was under persecution and suffering. "If freedom is such a great thing for the Kingdom, then why are Europe and America in the state they are in?" an Iranian believer asks.

"When we walk outside, we really don't care if we get arrested, we are not upset if we get arrested. What is 50 years in prison compared to eternity with Jesus?" 



Thanks to  
Elizabeth Kendal

# WATCH & PRAY



## HOW WILL THE STORY END IN PAPUA?

Triggered by a racist incident against Papuan students in East Java, the protests currently rocking Indonesia's West Papua and Papua Provinces represent Papuan frustration with decades of racial-religious apartheid and persecution at the hands of Javanese Muslim soldiers, militias and colonisers.

Like their Melanesian brothers and sisters throughout the Pacific, the Papuans have embraced Jesus Christ. However, unlike their Melanesian brothers and sisters, the Papuans have been denied the right to self-determination. In 1969, one year after missionaries Stan Dale (Australia) and Phil Masters (USA) gave their lives bringing light and life to the people of the highlands, Papua was incorporated into Muslim Indonesia. For the mostly Christian Papuans, it has been all downhill since then.

Please pray that God will intervene to bring a just resolution to the Papuan crisis.

## CHINA: GAO ZHISHENG MISSING FOR TWO YEARS

Gao Zhisheng (55), renowned Christian human rights lawyer, went missing on August 13, 2017. Desperate for dental care, he escaped house arrest. After three weeks, Gao was apprehended and "disappeared" into "Residential Surveillance in a Designated Location" – a place of pre-trial detention

where rule of law is non-existent and torture is rampant.

Once a highly regarded lawyer, everything changed in 2004 when Gao started defending persecuted Falun Gong practitioners and house church Christians. Refusing to be silent, Gao has suffered numerous abductions, torture and extended times of solitary confinement.

However, when the Communist Party thought they had crushed him, he wrote a memoir – *Unwavering Convictions* – which was smuggled out and published. His condition and whereabouts are hidden from us, but not from the Lord. Please pray.

## DIVINE HELP NEEDED IF 'NEW SUDAN' IS TO BE REALISED

On August 4 Sudan's Transitional Military Council and the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC) signed a Constitutional Charter (CC), paving the way for democratic transition. The obstacles, however, are enormous.

The CC was finalised and signed under great external pressure as talks were faltering; consequently, peace is tenuous. Sudan's Islamists reject the Charter outright because it is not based on Sharia Law. The Sudan Revolutionary Front – representing the persecuted African tribes of Blue Nile, South Kordofan (including Nuba Mountains) and Darfur – rejects it as it does not adequately address their concerns regarding peace.

In short: the FFC is fractured, the Islamic 'deep state' is entrenched and the systemically corrupt military is not trustworthy. Christians are yearning for a 'New Sudan'; divine help is needed. Please pray.

## PAKISTANI CHRISTIANS VULNERABLE AND ENDANGERED

As the Islamic radicalisation of Pakistan's Sunni Muslim majority advances apace – mostly through Saudi-funded mosques and madrasas (Islamic schools) – so, too, does the systematic discrimination and violent persecution experienced by Pakistan's Christians. The persecution includes assault, rape, murder, forced conversion, human trafficking, Islamic pogroms, terrorism and the routine misuse of Pakistan's infamous blasphemy law.

Far too many Pakistani officials are willing to deny the Christian crisis, which is but a symptom of Pakistan's existential cultural crisis. One positive is the government's commitment to reform the madrasas. Expect resistance; watch and pray! Comprising a mere 2 percent of the population, Pakistan's mostly poor and downtrodden Christians form one of the most vulnerable, endangered and severely persecuted Christian communities in the world. Please Pray for Pakistan and its suffering Church.



## NIGERIA, A LAND OF PERPETUAL TRAUMA

Oil-rich Nigeria is the largest nation on the African continent. Home to 190 million Nigerians, it is fast becoming a failed state due to government ineptitude, systemic corruption and escalating insecurity.

The Christian crisis in the Muslim North and mixed Middle Belt is spreading into the Christian South-East. Mass killings – mostly of Christians by militant Muslims – continue with impunity. Trust in public institutions has broken down and people are increasingly taking matters into their own hands.

Christians live under constant threat of Islamic terror causing death and displacement; whole communities are traumatised. Meanwhile, the government of illegitimate president Muhammadu Buhari does virtually nothing to help, preferring to focus on enriching itself.

Please pray that the Lord will intervene to raise up a government committed to peace, justice and righteousness.

## Manna for mahala!

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

## 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!



# I do not fear death

by *Frances Ridley Havergal*

SOMEONE once spoke to me of “Death, which we ALL dread.” No, not “All!”

**One who has seen and accepted God’s way of salvation, does not dread death. Perhaps I shall best express myself by doing it very personally – just giving my own experience.**

*I do not fear death.* Often I wake in the night and think of it, look forward to it, with a thrill of joyful expectation and anticipation, which would become impatience, were it not that Jesus is my Master, as well as my Saviour, and I feel I have work to do for Him that I would not shirk, and also that His time to call me home will be the *best* and *right* time; therefore I am content to wait.

One night I was conscious of certain symptoms preceding an all-but-fatal attack I had had once before on the brain.

I knew, if means failed, it was probably my last night on earth. I let my mother attend to me, but alarmed no one, and I was left alone in bed. Then, alone in the dark, I felt it might be my last conscious hour on earth, and that either sleep or fatal unconsciousness would set in.

I never spent a calmer, sweeter hour than that. I had not one shadow of fear! Only happy rest and confidence in Him “Whom I have believed.”

Was this delusion? Could it be so in the

very face of death, that great unmasker of all uncertainties? I knew it was not delusion, for “I know Whom I have believed.”

It was not always like this.

I know as well as any one, what it is to “dread death,” and to put away the thought of its absolute certainty, because I dare not look it in the face.

There was a time when I saw clearly I could not save myself – that I deserved hell in many ways, but in one most of all, this – that I owed the whole love of my heart to God, and had not given it to Him; that Jesus had *so* loved me as to die for me, and yet I had treated Him with daily, hourly ingratitude.

I had broken the first commandment, and as I owed all my life – future and past – to God, I had literally “nothing to pay,” for living to Him, and keeping His commands for the future, would not atone for the past.

I saw the sinfulness of my heart and life. I could not make my heart better. “The soul that sins shall die.” So, unless sin is taken away, my soul must die and go to hell.

Where then was my hope? In the same Word of God (1 John 5:10), it is written, “He who believes in the Son has the witness in himself,” and (John 3:36), “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life: and he who does not believe in the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides

on Him.”

Believe what? That He must keep His word and punish sin, and that He has punished it in the person of Jesus, our Substitute, “Who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree (1 Peter 2:24).”

If Jesus has paid my debt, and borne the punishment of my sins, I simply accept this, and believe Him, and it is all a true and real transaction.

I did this – I believed it, and cast myself, utterly hopeless and helpless in myself, at the feet of Jesus, took Him at His word, and accepted what He had done for me.

Result? Joy, peace in believing, and a happy, FULL trust in Him, which death cannot touch.

Now it is a reality of realities to me – it is so intertwined with my life, that I know nothing could separate me from His love.

I could not do without Jesus. I cannot and I do not live without Him. It is a new and different life; and the life and light which takes away all fear of death, is what I want others to have and enjoy.

“Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:54).” 