

Prepare_{the}Way

Preparing the Bride of Christ for the return of Christ

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Peter Pollock

With man it's impossible

Dr Michael Brown

Who changed the church?

What keeps you from emotional healing?

The truth about angels

Sammy Tippit

God's power in revival

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COVER: "The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, And the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose (Isaiah 35:1)."

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by Stacy Reaoch

ONE of the latest buzzwords in Christian circles, and everywhere else, is “organic.” As a society, we are spending increasing amounts of money buying organic produce, cage-free eggs, and grass-fed beef.

Anything with the label “natural” is quickly becoming the preferred method, even when we’re not totally sure what “all-natural” really entails. For some, essential oils are replacing traditional medicine, with promises to heal everything from a simple cold to chronic illness.

While eating organic foods and using non-traditional medicine certainly can be valuable, the danger comes when we develop a sense of superiority to go along with it. In our attempt to create a more organic, natural lifestyle, it can be easy to begin looking down our noses at someone who isn’t on our bandwagon.

When promoting our own choices for food and medicine is becoming the latest form of evangelism, we are showing where our hope really lies – and that we are close to forgetting the Gospel we say we hold dear.

Let me be clear that I am not against healthy eating. I wholeheartedly agree that what we eat has a significant effect on us, and we are to be wise stewards of our bodies. Bodily training, which includes responsible eating, is of some value (1 Timothy 4:8).

But my growing concern in our Christian communities is that we be careful not to become more passionate about convincing others to feed their families

the same way we do, rather than pointing them to Christ.

Disputable Matters

A dear friend of mine in women’s ministry tells me of a few passionate pleas she received to lead Bible studies on healthy eating. But does the Bible really tell us enough about what we should eat for a whole course?

And do we have a right as believers to tell others what is the more biblical menu option?

Romans 14 addresses exactly these kinds of issues. Choices with food and medicine are exactly that – choices. And these fall into a gray area in the Bible known as “disputable matters.” Paul writes in Romans 14:1-4:

“As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgement on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgement on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.”

Here one believer feels the freedom to eat meat (despite its associations with the local pagan religion), while another is convinced he can only eat vegetables. Paul states that these choices with food – even when the stakes are this high – are a matter of personal conscience. One person

is not deemed more righteous or godly because of the restrictions they place on themselves, or don’t place on themselves. God has welcomed both believers – and we should, too.

We should ask ourselves, Are we promoting a welcoming atmosphere when we’re strongly stating our opinions on food and medicine in a group of people? What is our tone of voice communicating to those around us when we’re explaining our lifestyle choices? Could we be repelling others by our seemingly haughty and opinionated views on things that are really a matter of personal preference?

Where Is Your Righteousness?

When we strongly identify ourselves with a certain lifestyle choice, we evidence our temptation to find our identity and righteousness in that personal preference. Eating and schooling and vaccinations are areas of personal and family choice that can easily become our cause in life.


How intent are you in trying to convert someone to the same schooling method as your family? Or are you out to get everyone to use the same oils as you, while looking down on a sister in Christ who just put their child on a round of antibiotics for an illness?

If we find our conversations continually revolving around our current pet issue, it’s time to ask whether that issue has become too important in our lives. If we’re constantly passing others information about the way we eat, treat illness, or school our kids, a red flag should be raised in our minds about what we’re really putting our hope in.

As Christians, we have a centre and hope that far surpasses these “disputable matters.”

Our One Great Cause

Only in Christ do we find true wisdom, hope, and healing. It is his words, promises, and all-encompassing truth we should be most eager to pass along to others, not the latest studies reinforcing our family’s food choices as the wisest.

Let’s be known for what Christians are really to be known for: an unfading hope and trust in the power of Christ to change lives – no matter what you eat for breakfast. 



With man it is impossible

by Peter Pollock

MODERN air travellers are not chatty. That would be an understatement! But for me, silence is not comfortable, so I quickly introduce myself and ask what he or she does for a living.

Often the question ends up as a rhetorical dead-end, with surprise to hear that I am a preacher. Then that either results in a stilted silence for the rest of the trip or a stream of questions about Christians and Christianity – usually with negative undertones. \

Anyway, on one flight I ended up next to this lawyer who not only had a lot of questions but also had a lot of answers. A regular “church-goer,” he assured that he was involved in his church leadership.

It didn’t take long, though, to establish that there was a severe leeway in terms of understanding the Gospel and Christianity! So it was back to the simple basics, the tried and trusted method that has proved itself over and over again.

I do a well-practiced 45-minute white-board presentation explaining very simply why Jesus died on the Cross and why we need to be “born again.” But I didn’t have 45 minutes, nor did I have a whiteboard.

So I pulled out the passenger’s table, took the clean sick-bag and with a handy ball-point pen proceeded to do the explanation. It took 20 minutes. A bit of a rush job. But for the whole 20 minutes the lawyer sat there silent. Quite an achievement, I would say.

Thoughtfully, he pondered for a short while, then said: “I know that what you have illustrated is the truth. I reckon that most of the people on this Boeing would also agree that it’s the truth. But I do know too, that there is a cost there. In fact, I know that there is a huge cost there!” he added.

“But life has been good to me, I’ll take my chances!” he blurted.

I was quite shattered by his honesty and

openness.

“But I must add further,” he said “You scare me. Not so much with what you have illustrated, because I have known all that to be sort of true. But your conviction frightens me. And not just you. There are other people moving in my circles these days telling me the same things with the same conviction.”

My prayer and wish for him is that he got frightened enough to get on his knees and invite Jesus Christ truly to become Lord of his life.

A lawyer, a Christian, a church leader – happy to take his chances!

A mind-blowing encounter, but one which merely reminded me of the sad state of the nominal and apostate modern church. Pick up a newspaper, turn on the television or just listen in to the conversations around you, and you don’t need much discernment to pick up on the fact that our value system has taken a huge tumble for the worse.

It’s not just an immoral society anymore, it has become “amoral,” sadly meaning that we no longer even consider sin and bad behaviour to be a problem. It’s a post-truth world inundated with lies and fake news. We don’t even know what to believe any more!

A sticker on a car rear window read: “In a world of lies, the truth is treason.”

Satan is rubbing his hands with utter glee. I have been in the ministry for nearly four decades and have markedly noticed that, in the past 10 years or so, men and women who still faithfully continue to serve, have nonetheless become discouraged and disheartened by what they see taking place – in, outside and around the church.

The Bible warns that with the increase of end-time evil, the love of many will grow cold. Sure enough, before our very eyes! So much denial and deceit all over.

But it’s never too late to preach the truth and take head-on the daily confrontation

between God’s values and the values of the world. They are becoming markedly dissimilar day by day, even hour by hour.

You cannot serve God and Mammon. There are simply no ifs and buts! They are not compatible. Of course, the prophetic pages of the Bible, from Isaiah to Malachi and then into Revelation, never stop nagging away at these issues.

The Bible has roughly 400 pages of distinctly set-aside prophetic Word, but we pick and choose selectively.

Isaiah 1:18 tells us that “though our sins are like scarlet, they will be white as snow; though they are red like crimson they will be as wool,” and we conveniently leave it there. But it is only dependent on being “willing” and “obedient.” And, a warning, that if we “refuse” and “rebel” we shall be devoured by the sword.

How to confront...

Taking isolated verses out of context has become the order of the day, but it’s not easy to get away from the truth or the substance of the content in the classic confrontation in Mark 10:17-27 where Jesus met with the rich young ruler and gave an object lesson in straight talk and how to confront with the truth.

What an encounter, an eye-opener, in terms of how to preach and teach the Gospel. There was this wealthy, influential, Pharisee, no doubt rich in his self-assurance but at the same time obviously with a deep selfish religious concern for his spiritual condition.

Successful people tend to be confident about their expertise and all-round general knowledge, that’s why they seldom admit needing help and advice! Clearly though, this young man knew that something was missing otherwise he would not have come to Jesus.

Maybe he was truly earnest about his soul, convicted that something was missing. In Romans 1:19-21 we are reminded that it is foolish to try and deny God because “all the things that are around constantly remind us that there is a God.”

In fact, the Bible warns that we have no excuse. But “thinking themselves so wise we have become fools,” as we worship ourselves and not Him. And because He has ordained so, we reap the consequences of this godlessness. God has “handed us over” to our lawlessness and rebellion.

Many have convinced themselves that there is such a thing as the “Great American dream” that promises eventually to bring us peace and fulfilment out of suc-

cess and achievement in human life.

King Solomon, the richest and wisest king ever, found to the contrary. There is never enough fame, power, money and success.

"It's meaningless and a chasing after the wind," he wrote in Ecclesiastes.

Someone always moves the goalposts, because there is no satisfying greed and egoism. There is never enough!

Maybe the rich ruler had begun to sense that success was no answer. He was desperate. He came running. He knelt, fell on his knees.

And he was explicit about his problem – he didn't have eternal life. He was a member of the synagogue. He was a Pharisee, and yet he knew that something was out of order. I would dare to suggest that this is a huge problem these days – the Synagogue of Satan, nominal church adherents who say they are believers but are not.

You can't keep fooling yourself, rationalising and running away from the truth – choosing relevance, not "rhema" or "revelation" – and following social, liberation and prosperity gospels.

We get caught up in "positivity," "pragmatism" and "patriotism" and other forms of humanism. All to no avail! And worse, never told that the road is NARROW and FEW are saved.

Anyway, the first wake-up call for modern evangelism is that Jesus' initial response was to admonish the young man.

YES... "Why do you call Me good?" he said.

NOBODY IS GOOD... How many times does God have to tell us that absolutely nobody is good. Thanks to Adam and Eve, and their rebellion in the Garden of Eden, we are all miscreants and sinful wretches. No exceptions.

We worship good things

Sinner revelation is an absolute key as we need to recognise our unworthiness before we can repent and turn from our wicked ways. But again, don't try to tell us humans about the depravity of man, because we hold on to good things, worship good things and make idols of good things.

In ignorance the rich ruler saw Jesus as good, a good example which is a great mistake, an error of judgement, a religious view. The church is not about good, it's about grace, mercy, love and unmerited favour – all contained in the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

The young man had religion but all it had done was produce self-righteousness. He

claimed to know the commandments and keep them. He saw himself as blameless. What utter deceit and deception!

Indeed, we can attend church, do and believe in the right things, even know about Jesus, but still go to hell. So, Jesus put that out of the way – he was not good. Then comes the *coup de grace*.

"Just one thing..." said Jesus.

I am sure the young man was excited when he heard that it was a simple one-liner. Then follows the thunderbolt! Go, and give it all away.

"Go take up your Cross," said Jesus – and this is only recorded in some of the Bible versions. Others just leave it out. One translation says: "Go become a father to the poor" – what a blatant social gospel misrepresentation.

GO DIE TO SELF was the crux of the message. Go bury your ego. Go give up your independent right to yourself. The foundation of Christianity is repentance, and that follows conviction of sin – something that, according to Oswald Chambers, is the most uncommon thing that happens to anyone.

The prodigal son's life changed when confronted by the reality of a life that had reached the depths of the pigsty. He confessed and repented: "I have sinned." Conviction of sin is the doorway to heaven.

It was certainly not the money. Even if you are the richest guy in town and you feel compassion to give it all away, it's not going to get you to heaven. You can't buy or earn salvation. It's not about giving away money, or good works, that sees you home eternally.

As Jesus said to Nicodemus: "You must be born again." Jesus prefixed by saying "verily," emphasizing to Nicodemus that he really needed to listen.

Go to the Cross! The Cross is radical. The Cross knows no compromise. The Cross has always stood for death. Only Jesus, and in Jesus, is it turned to life.

Before Jesus uttered the profound statement, the scripture tells us that He looked at the rich young man and "loved him."

Jesus, the fullness of God's love, looked at this young man and loved him enough to tell him the truth. It was the two-edged sword with no punches pulled or band-aid plasters. It was not a wishy-washy and smiley gospel, it was the brazen truth straight from the Son of God.

The young ruler had come with zeal and enthusiasm, but Jesus' words froze him. Yes, in love.

And, naturally enough, there was a response from the bystanders as they

listened to Jesus. It's hard for rich men, because money does give false values and inflated egos. It makes us self-reliant, self-righteous and arrogant, even though we might be generous givers.

The disciples were amazed as they listened. Maybe even shaking their heads in awe and wonderment at their straight-talking leader, amazed at this no-holds-barred approach to ministry. The way it should be!

Too straight, harsh and unloving

What they witnessed would be frowned upon in modern evangelical circles. Too straight. Too harsh. And, yes, unloving! No empathy. No love for humankind.

And it's an oft-repeated refrain: "Who then can be saved?" We never stop trying to find easier ways for sinners to get saved, for evil to be excused and for God to be ignored!

Jesus answered: "With man it is impossible but not with God." It doesn't matter how clever or well organised we are. It doesn't matter how many seminars, services, Bible studies and cell groups we might arrange.

We must stop editing the Gospel. We must stop apologising for Jesus. Jesus is the only way, the truth and the life – and no man comes to the Father, except through Him.

What we need is treasure in heaven. My kingdom is not of this world. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. Nations are a drop in the bucket. Rulers are wheat and chaff.

In John 17, Jesus said "I pray not for this world," as He provides a list of the "kingdom" issues He does, in fact, pray for.


It's all about God! It's not about you and me. With man it is impossible.

Jesus told Paul: "I now send you to open their eyes... that they may receive forgiveness of sins (Acts 26:17&18)."

The young man's face fell, and he was sad. He had not heard what he wanted. It was the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. It was not ear-tickling.

It was heart searching and, tragically, the bottom-line was that the young man turned his back on the greatest preacher of all time. And Jesus did not run after him.

"My spirit will not strive with man forever (Genesis 6:3)."

"Many of us Christians have become extremely skilful in arranging our lives so as to admit the truth of Christianity without being embarrassed by its implications," wrote A.W. Tozer. 



Who changed things?

by Michael L. Brown

WHO changed things from the vibrant, Spirit-empowered “by life or by death” faith of the New Testament to today’s spineless home-and-garden Sunday-morning religion?

Who changed things from “Leave everything and follow Me (see Luke 14:33)” to “Pray this little prayer and you’re set for eternity?”

Who changed things from “All who live godly lives in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution (2 Timothy 3:12)” to “Ask Jesus into your heart and enjoy a comfortable life?”

Who changed things from a fearless proclamation of the truth, whatever the cost or consequences, to a watered-down, compromised message that is afraid to offend anyone?

By what authority, by whose decree, based on what new revelation have we so blatantly departed from the faith of the apostles?

Who changed things?

Who changed things from the New Testament faith, where even the disciples could not minister without the Spirit’s endowment, to today’s version, where whole ministries are run with hardly any evidence of the Spirit’s work?

As A.W. Tozer once said, “If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, 95 percent of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference. If the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn from the New Testament church, 95 percent of

what they did would stop, and everybody would know the difference.” This remains true of most of the contemporary church in the West.

Who changed things from a God-centred faith to a man-centred faith, from “Take up your cross and deny yourself” to “Bypass the cross and empower yourself”?

Who changed things from holiness being beautiful to holiness being bondage, and from the early church being known for its high standards to the contemporary church being known for its scandals?

Who changed things from the people of God being a threat to the powers of darkness to the people of God being active participants in darkness?

In the early church, Paul instructed the Corinthians to separate themselves from people who claimed to be believers but were living in outward, unrepentant sin (see 1 Corinthians 5). Today, some of those very people lead our churches and preach from our pulpits. Who changed things?

Who changed things from a faith that was so focused on the life of Jesus and so infused with the reality of His death and resurrection that no sacrifice was considered too great and no act of service too extreme – to the contrary, suffering for Him was considered a privilege (Matthew 5:10-12; Acts 5:41; Philippians 1:29) – to today’s convenience-store Christianity, where we have to “sell” salvation to the sinner by spicing up the deal with perks and benefits?

When did Jesus stop being enough? When did obedience become an option? When did keeping God’s commandments out of love for Him become “religious” (in the negative sense of the word)? Didn’t Jesus say that if we loved Him, we would keep His commandments (John 14:15, 21)? Who changed things?

If we belonged to another religion that claimed to have other books that supplemented the Bible or traditions that superseded it, that would be one thing. But we don’t. We believe the Scriptures alone are God’s Word and that nothing that comes after the Scriptures – no tradition, no alleged revelation, no consensus – can undermine or countermand the written Word of God.

So who changed things from the biblical version of the Jesus faith to the modern version?

We can debate church history and blame this group or that group, and we can point out what is wrong with this denomination and that denomination. We might even have some great historical and contemporary insights.

*Little authority, little
purity, little effect*

But unless we get back to believing what is written and acting on what is written, we will continue to perpetuate our merry-go-round Christianity with lots of noise and action and bells and whistles but with little authority, little purity, and little effect (if any).

I didn’t get the memo that God’s Word and Spirit were not enough, and I am far more concerned with what He says than with what the latest polls say. Really, now, since when did the Lord command us to fashion our preaching and our style of worship and even the way we look based on what’s trending?

If some church leaders choose to trust in worldly business models and carnal consulting firms, that is their choice. I say we go with the power of the name of Jesus and the wisdom of the Word of God and the fullness of the Spirit. I say we go with the New Testament model, applied with boldness and compassion to the needs of the day.

Years ago, Leonard Ravenhill said, “One of these days some simple soul will pick up the Book of God, read it, and believe it. Then the rest of us will be embarrassed.” I want to be that simple soul. How about

you?

I refuse to believe that what we see in churches today is what God planned for His people. I refuse to believe that it is the God-intended norm. The Word of God is against it. Church history is against it. What the Spirit is doing around the world is against it. What I have experienced in my own life is against it.

Everything inside me is shouting, “There must be more! We must go deeper!” Is that same voice shouting inside you?

If the death and resurrection of Jesus are real – *and they are* – there must be more. If the outpouring of the Spirit is real – *and it is* – there must be more. If the promises of God are real – *and they are* – there must be more. If the requirements of the Lord are real – *and they are* – there must be more.

Take hold of everything He has promised

It is high time we quit trying to drag the Word of God down to our level of experience and commitment, trying to conform Scripture to our ways rather than conforming our ways to Scripture. Instead, we need to take hold of everything He has promised and everything He has called us to, and, by His grace, pursue and obey Him until His reality becomes our reality.

What does God’s reality look like? What is normal according to the Word? As I have said for many years, what the world calls fanaticism and most of the church calls extremism, God calls normal.

In the words of Leonard Ravenhill, “Christianity today is so subnormal that if any Christian began to act like a normal New Testament Christian, he would be considered abnormal.”

What does normal look like, according to Jesus? “Whoever loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it (Matthew 10:37-39).”

What does normal look like, according to Paul? (Let’s remember that Paul told us to follow his example; see 1 Corinthians 11:1; Philippians 4:9.) “It is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honoured in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain

(Philippians 1:20&21).”

Unfortunately, as expressed by Watchman Nee, “By the time the average Christian gets his temperature up to normal, everybody thinks he has a fever.”

I say it’s time we burn. In fact, the Word commands us to be fervent (which means red-hot) in spirit in Romans 12:11, so that others can catch fire as well.

They can call us crazy, judge us as religious extremists, and put us out of their company. But if we walk in humility, if we bless and don’t curse, if we honour those in authority while determining to obey the Lord no matter what, the fruit of our lives will be the proof of God’s goodness.

And people will come flocking to us, saying, “I need what you have. How can I experience more of God in my life?”

Missionary C. T. Studd once said, “If Jesus Christ be God, and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him.” This is the reality we must live by.

The glorious Son of God shed His blood on our behalf, dying for our sins so we could belong to God, bringing us into His family as brothers and sisters. His Father is now our Father, and we are joint heirs with Him (Romans 8:14-17). This is the truth that we are responding to with our lives. Such divine love demands nothing less than everything.

Our devotion wanes cold

The key is ever-setting these facts before our gaze. When we forget what the true New Testament faith looks like and what it should be built upon, our response weakens. Our devotion wanes cold. Passion comes and goes. Suddenly our faith becomes expressed through a weekly event, not a moment-to-moment lifestyle.

Studd summons us back to the wondrous Cross and the radical call of that Cross. And yet when we give our everything to follow the Saviour, He in turn gives everything to empower us for the journey ahead.

Consider the words of Paul: “He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things (Romans 8:32)?”

All things!

That is the glorious Gospel. How should we respond?

Jesus says, “Follow Me” – and that means all that we have, all that we are, and all that we ever could be belongs to Him. We

now live to do His will, with our eyes set on Him, and our life goal is to know Him and make Him known, regardless of cost or consequence.

That is normal, according to the New Testament.

As Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians, Jesus died for all so that “those who live might no longer live for themselves but for Him who for their sake died and was raised (2 Corinthians 5:15).”

Or, as he said to the Colossians, “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:1-3).”

Or, as expressed by Peter, we are to live “for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God (1 Peter 4:2).”

This is beautiful, not binding – our act of gratitude as recipients of grace, not our futile effort to receive His grace. And because of that grace and mercy, we belong totally to Him: “Therefore,” Paul writes, “I exhort you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a sacrifice – alive, holy, and pleasing to God – which is your reasonable service (or “your spiritual worship”) (Romans 12:1).”

So let us crucify every distraction; let us count ourselves dead to sin and alive to God; let us ask the Spirit to work afresh in our lives; and let us take hold of the challenge that fuelled the fires of D. L. Moody’s life, as spoken to him by revivalist Henry Varley: “Moody, the world has yet to see what God will do with a man fully consecrated to Him.”

Time for a true demonstration of the Gospel

Isn’t it time that our nations see what God will do with a man or woman fully consecrated to Him? Isn’t it time that our generation has a true demonstration of the Gospel? This is normal, not abnormal, and so I encourage you to join me in striving to be normal in the Lord’s sight, by the grace and power of God.

It’s time. 

Michael L. Brown is founder and president of FIRE School of Ministry, host of a daily talk radio show, author of more than 35 books, and is widely considered to be the world’s foremost Messianic Jewish apologist.



When the brook dries up...

a Winkie Pratney classic

THE Lord provides Elijah with a brook named Cherith (1 Kings 17), that keeps flowing and He sends birds (ravens) that fly down to bring him meat each morning and evening. So for three years, while other prophets were existing on smuggled bread and water, Elijah sits out the judgement of God with his own private spring and special-delivery meals. Everything was great!

Then one day... the brook dried up.

Well, I had a similar experience of “the brook drying up” years ago on my way to speak at an evangelistic crusade in Canada. I checked my bag on to the plane as I’d done hundreds of times – the bag that contained all my notes and written messages. When I arrived in Canada and opened the bag to reach for my notes – they were gone!

I immediately called my wife back in Texas and said, “Can you look for them? I think I left them there.”

She looked everywhere, but couldn’t find them. So then I thought, “I’ve just come from New Zealand – I probably left them in New Zealand!” There wasn’t anything I could do, so I just preached without them.

Three months later we returned to New Zealand – but they weren’t there either.

The harsh reality finally hit me – I had

left about 30 major messages (ones I had no copies of) in a motel somewhere. Now you’ve got to understand that I only get about one or two major new evangelistic messages each year, so 20 years of my life’s work had just vanished with those papers. They were gone and I had no idea where I’d left them. Probably some maid found them in a drawer and threw them out!

It was a horrible experience. Back at home I went over and over the list in my mind until I came to the grim conclusion that I had lost all of them. I wish I could say that was the end, but it only got worse.

A few days later I was checking my bag on to another plane, this time on my way to a Christian music festival. When we landed I headed down to baggage claim, waited for my bag, grabbed it in a mad dash, and then rushed off to the music festival.

When I got there I opened the bag and everything inside was a mess. It looked like a tornado had ripped through my papers!

Apparently, the bag had popped open, spilling more of my papers all over the airport, and the baggage handlers had just stuffed everything back in and jammed the thing closed. My precious new notes were now blowing around an airport terminal that was at least an hour and a half away.

I couldn’t believe it! Almost no losses in 20 years of ministry and then suddenly two major losses in less than six months.

All I could say to the Lord was what I had said at the start of my ministry: “Well, if they all get lost, I’ll just have to start again from scratch and do it better the next time around.” It was right in the middle of this loss that I came across the story of the brook Cherith.

The brook dried up!

Suddenly everything Elijah had relied on or found security in was gone. Now when this happened the Lord said to him, “Arise, go to Zarephath... I have commanded a widow there to provide for you (1 Kings 17:9).” And it was at this critical point that the Lord began to minister to me, revealing the amazing truths that abound in this story of Elijah.

Nobody Has All They Need

In the 1930s, Henry Sloane Coffin wrote an insightful message called *Inspirations That Fail*. The major theme of that message went something like this: God has a course for His children. Everyone’s curriculum is different. The only thing that remains the same is His aim, and that is to keep you confident in depending on resources outside yourself.

No one has in himself all the wisdom, all the ability, or all the means to meet the

needs of the hour. You were never made to be wholly and fully independent. Each one of you has a friend, teacher, church, ministry, book, or idea that has ministered to you.

A friend? Have you got close friends, people that stimulate your heart, soul, and mind – people who you enjoy just being around?

Maybe a teacher awakened your appreciation and pushed the door open to new realms of learning for you. Maybe one day you read a certain book and it blew your mind and gave you a whole new perspective on life.

Maybe your security has been in a home – some sanctuary that, when you crawl home at midnight looking like Clark Kent, can still send you out the next morning looking like Superman!

Maybe your “Cherith” is a church where there are people of like mind and heart. You really feel a part of something vibrant and alive there, like you’re going places for God.

Maybe your “river of God” is an idea, something that lights up your whole world with vision. Maybe it’s a job, a business, or a ministry – and your “flowing stream” is the one thing you enjoy doing most in this world.

But One Day... The Brook Will Run Dry

Has it happened to you? What happened to that one special friend? It wasn’t like you had a fight – as a matter of fact, you may still be on the best of terms. But something has changed, and for some reason you just aren’t that close anymore. You may see them just as much, but somehow it means less. And that’s a really scary thing. Or perhaps your paths have moved in different directions and, slowly but surely, you have grown apart.

Maybe for you it’s a teacher, somebody you’ve outgrown. A man or woman at whose feet you used to sit when you were 20, but now you’re 30 or 40 and you may be viewing them a bit more critically.

Or maybe there’s a book that 20 years ago blew your mind, but you read it again now and it’s merely amusing. Perhaps it really was good, but like an old song full of nostalgia – it’s just a sweet memory in unrepeatable history.

Maybe it’s a place. How many times have you moved home? Is the place where you grew up, or spent the best years of your life, now gone? Maybe somebody else lives

there now. Maybe it burned down or a developer ripped it up and it’s no more. The brook dried up and you had to move on.

And even in ministry it’s the same. Sometimes the work is done, or you can’t do what you did before and somebody else comes in to take over. Or maybe the church that you are in has lost its spiritual appeal. People have moved or changed.

Maybe you have changed and the water that used to be a fountain of heaven for you has diverted into side channels. And the ideas that changed the world for you then may not satisfy anymore. No one person, place, or thing throws light on all the mystery.

The brook has run dry.

Cherith Cannot Always Satisfy

How easy it could have been for Elijah to stay by his brook! It was his ongoing testimony of the supernatural protection and provision of God. Cherith proved that he was watched over and cared for and loved by God.

And herein lies the danger of our Cheriths. Hang around them too long, and you get attached to the situation. Stay by the brook too long and you may fall in love with the brook and forget the God who gave it to you.

Privilege Can Turn To Pride

Cheriths loved too long can make you proud. They can make you forget that you are a stranger and a pilgrim passing through – that this world is not your home and that beyond the brook there still lies a hurting world under the dealings of God.

Elijah could have enshrined his special secret spring. When the birds delivered breakfast each morning and Elijah contentedly dipped a jug into his private Perrier, he was probably tempted to think: “It shows how special I am. God’s provided the brook and the ravens – what other prophets ever got this kind of treatment?”

Cherith Is For Rest... Not Recluse

Perhaps you’ve been tempted to rest from the quest for others – to become reclusive, quit the battle, and stay near a free-flowing stream. So God arranges the end of Cherith. The brook dries up. It is time to move on, and the drying up of the brook is the gentle nudge of God back into the work, which the Father has called you to do.

When Cherith stopped flowing, Elijah had to follow God’s command to go to Zarephath. Here is a man who fearlessly confronts false prophets, and now God is

sending him to the home of a widow and her son who are about to share one last meal before they starve to death!

What kind of God is this who sends Elijah from a place of miraculous provision to this kind of scene? The same kind of God who loves all people as much as He loves His prophets! Sometimes constant provision and protection can insulate us from the sadness of our world until we no longer understand what it means to be outside of His care. We forget what it feels like to be lost.

Blessings Can Become Barriers

If the brook had kept on flowing, Elijah might have counted on it and forgotten the God who gave it. The blessings of God for our shelter and sustenance can sometimes become the very barriers that keep us from Him – and God will not allow that.

Cheriths cannot be permanent.


We live in a world where nothing seems to last. It is one of the single most frightening characteristics of our time. What lasts? What remains? What will always be there?

When we consider “created things” like people, ministries, places, or ideas – our experience tells us that little or nothing of what we know will stay the same. Best-selling books of years past are now in bargain bins, ideas change as fast as rock stars, and you are not the same as you were 10 years ago.

As Thomas Hardy once said: “It is the ongoing of the world that makes it sad. If the world stood still at a happy moment there would be no sadness in it. The sun and the moon standing still at Aijalon was not a catastrophe for Israel, but a type of paradise.”

Yet, even a stationary heaven and earth would become dull at last.

Child of God, don’t cry too long over your brook. Lift up your eyes again to the God who gave these blessings – there is something better to come. Though you may miss your brook, you will not miss God!

A brook and birds don’t show you as much of God as a mother and child do. Your new course will move you from the valley to Bethlehem, and He will again hold your heart with the only thing that lasts forever, changeless and secure – Himself. 

Water the roots!

by J. R. Miller (1840-1912)

IN these days of bustling Christian activities, is there not danger that we neglect the culture of our hearts? And is there not danger that many who are absorbed in acts of benevolence may forget to look after their own souls? Is there not the same danger in the life of every Christian pastor and Christian worker? Is not the tendency of these days, even in the church, toward the cultivation of a working religion – oftentimes to the neglect of deep heart piety?

I have not one word to say against Christian activity. No one can do too much. But efficient activity can spring only from deep heart religion. First, sit at Jesus' feet, and then ministry will follow as naturally as the harvest follows the sowing.

The Redeemer's own life was an example for our imitation, and never was there such a worker as He. All His energies were given out in unceasing activities. But His life had a root. He spent hours, oftentimes whole nights, in prayer. He was always full of the Holy Spirit, and went ever from silent and deep communion to his toils among men.

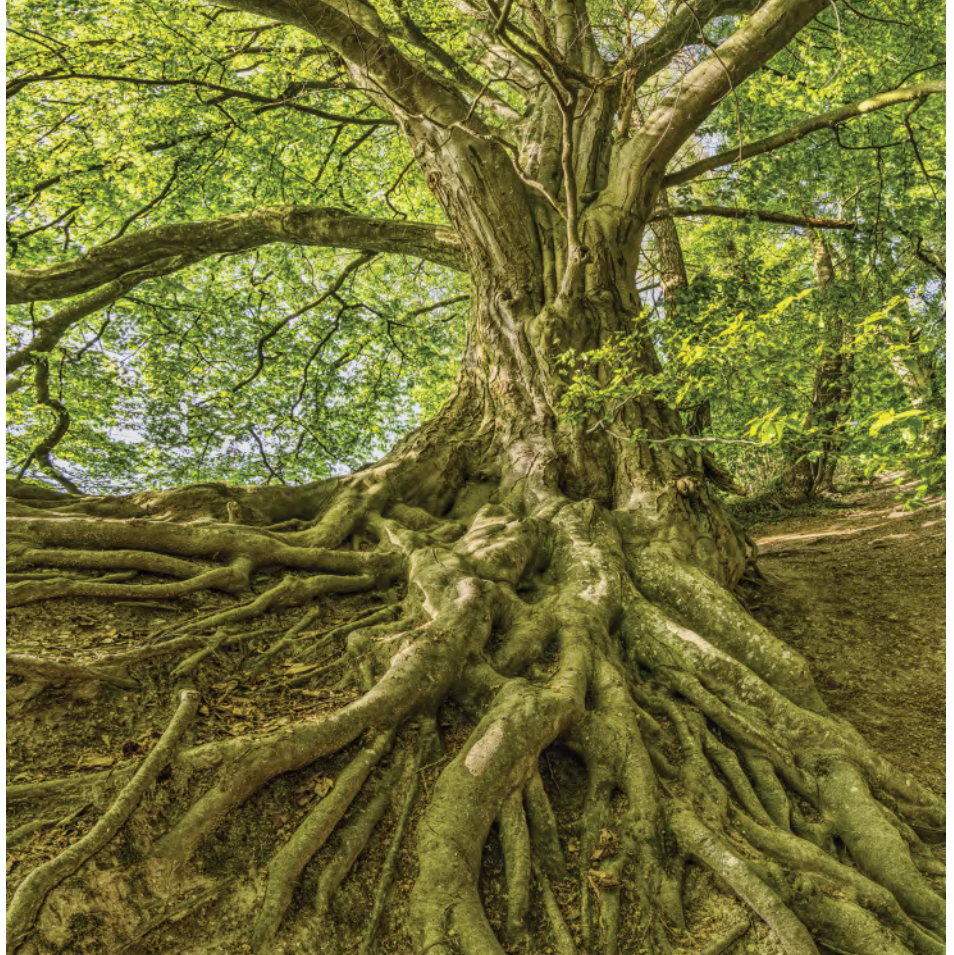
And the same is true of all the truly great workers who have ever toiled in the church. They took care of their own souls as the best and only true preparation for caring for the souls of others. Their grand developments of Christian energy were the regular outgrowths of fervent piety.

They took root downwards and bore fruit upwards. And so it must ever be. Efficient, continued, and fruitful activity can result only from a life that is hidden with Christ in God.

What the church needs then, today, is not less Christian energy and activity, it needs more. But that it may have more, it must first have more heart-life. A Christian life can only be luxuriant and fruitful when its roots grow in a deep soil, and receive plentiful showers of spiritual influence.

And it is in the prayer closet that the roots of Christian life grow. If there is no secret prayer, no silent communion, no personal living with God, then there can be no genuine fruits of the Spirit.

In many ways, the root is the most im-



portant part of the tree. Men do not see it. It is hidden under the ground. It gets no praise from men. Yet in the dark it works in silence and in its secret laboratory it generates the life which goes up into the tree, and which manifests itself in trunk and branches, in foliage and fruits.

The leaves are woven down in the dark earth-factory. The colours that tint the flowers are prepared down in that lowly workshop. The little blocks that are piled in silence, one by one, as the beautiful fabric of the tree goes up, are hewn out in the secret quarries of the roots. The fruits which every year hang in rich clusters on the branches, draw all their richness and lusciousness from the roots.

And if a tree droops and languishes, he who would revive it must look to the roots.

In the same way, these analogies hold true in the spiritual life. A man's secret and personal Christian life is not that which the world sees, and praises, and understands; nor is it that which directly blesses and benefits the world.

It is not a man's prayer closet which is to be set upon a hill. But that there may be a beautiful, luxuriant and fruitful life in the sight of the world, there must be a secret, hidden root-life to nourish this visible growth. That a man may be active and useful as a Christian worker, he must first be wrought upon by the Divine Spirit.

Every active Christian life must have, therefore, for its counterpart, a close personal walk with God. The energy of the

one, must be balanced by the intenseness of the other.


The danger is not that we work too much, but that we pray too little.

It is to be feared that we have too many deserted or rarely frequented closets. We take too little time for quiet, solitary communion with God. When we are hurried with duties, then we take still less time for secret devotion. Our activity entrenches upon our communion. Our work takes us away from our waiting.

It is right to give, but we must first receive from God, or how can we give? We must not go out to starving souls with an empty basket; we must wait at Jesus' feet, until He fills our hands with bread.

We are so cumbered with much serving that we have no time with Mary, to sit down to silent meditation. In our hurry for results, we do not give God time to bring the fruits to perfection in our lives. We pluck them while green and unripe, and think to feed men with them thus.

If we would be busy Marthas, then we must first be waiting Marys. We must receive at God's hand before we distribute to the multitude.

Let us, then, see to it that our own souls are fed before we seek to feed others. Let us build our prayer closets close to our pulpits and our fields of labour. Let us see that the roots are watered and then we shall be fruitful trees indeed, our branches hanging full, and covered with beauty! 



A missionary recalls revival

by R. A. Paulson

IWRITE this letter (dated April 19, 1945, French Equatorial Africa) as a call to the battle. We need reinforcements or the devil will throw us back. As long as Moses' arms were up in prayer, Joshua and the warriors prevailed against Amalek; but the minute Moses weakened and his arms went down, the enemy prevailed. Yes, dear friends, the battle is on.

The Holy Spirit has come down with power on our work at Kembe. F.B. Meyer said, "Whenever in the world the Holy Spirit comes down in mighty power among men, there is always an uprising of evil spirits to resist it."

Why some of us have never known much about the devil is because we haven't known much about the Holy Spirit. If you ever begin to live by the power of the Holy Spirit, all hell will be there to stop you.

The devil has been battling us through the elements from the first day we set foot on his territory at Kembe.

At the time these things happened, we didn't know why Satan was striking so hard by these physical means. Nor was he only striking in the physical but in the spiritual realm as well. Several of the Christians had fallen under his onslaught and were out of fellowship, which caused the heathen around about great joy.

Yes, friends, the devil had us on the run, not only the sheep but the shepherd as well, meaning myself. We were trying to fight the battle in our own strength and were being defeated on every hand because we were in a low spiritual state.

Sin had crept in, sin of the worst kind – unbelief, prayerlessness, not taking God at His Word, letting God's work crowd God out.

All of this goes with unbelief. It is the sin that made Christ weep. It is the sin that breaks God's heart today as He sees His church falling steadily back because of its prayerlessness and consequent pow-

erlessness.

I praise God that He didn't let this continue but brought me to a place of utter despair and weakness. At our 1944 Missionary Field Conference at Crampel, He caused me to cry to Him for forgiveness and pardon. I surrendered to Him and laid my all on the altar in complete obedience.

Words cannot express the way the Holy Spirit moved among us – filling and empowering for this service. God's presence could be felt all over the whole mission station at Crampel. Many others can testify to the same thing in their lives.

We began to realise what Pentecost must have been like and why Peter and the rest who were so weak and powerless before became like lions in their fearlessness.

We went back to Kembe with the Lord of Glory ruling our hearts and with the faith that the One who began His reign through our lives would also continue it. The Bible became a new living Book and flashed forth the Glory of God. The Spirit of prayer was upon us. It was harder not to pray than to pray.

The Lord of Glory

I realised that the church didn't need more teaching, more preaching. What they needed was the Lord of Glory reigning in their hearts and the Holy Spirit's power enabling them to walk and witness of the living Christ within them.

God put a burden of prayer on my heart for an outpouring of His Spirit and also gave the right message to convict our believers of their low spiritual condition and unbelief. It was on Saturday evening of January 27, about two months after our revival at Crampel, that we were blessed with God's gracious visitations.

There were 23 of us gathered. I was closing the meeting when the Spirit moved upon us with such power as to make the believers fall on the ground with their faces in the dust.

What groans, agony, heart cries as

they confessed their sins. O God... have mercy... Thanks God... Thanks for the Lord Jesus.

He touched their hard hearts and the wells of living water sprang up. The tears were streaming down their dusty faces.

This mighty work of the Spirit continued for three hours. What a prayer meeting! The villagers who heard us praying came out of curiosity and were also brought low before God. When we closed this meeting, they went to our mission village nearby and gathered there. They testified and sang songs and continued in prayer all night.

Souls are being born again. The church has been revived. Backsliders who had taken other wives put them away with such conviction of sin that they wept all night. The deacons couldn't sleep at night for the great burden of prayer.

Prayer meetings are popular because the Holy Spirit is here with power. There were hundreds of answers to prayer. The God who seemed far away is now very near, even in their hearts.


One chief, a professor, awoke at dawn under great conviction and began to pray. He began to tremble quite violently, so much so that his bamboo bed shook. His wife said, "Ngangou (Strong-Man), what ails you? I have never seen you act like this before."

He said, "Woman, let me be. God is talking to me." Yes, by the tears rolling down his cheeks and the look of joy on his face when he gave his testimony in the Sunday morning service, you could tell he had had an experience.

With regretful hearts, we left the work at Kembe in the heat of the revival, even as Philip left Samaria. The revival goes on and is spreading. Man's fire goes out when he leaves but this fire is of God and no man can quench it – nothing except man's sin.

Remember the words of F.B. Meyer in the beginning of this letter that when the Holy Spirit comes down in power, the evil spirits resist it. That is why we ask your prayers for the church here in Bangassou where revival is needed.

The great need of the hour is revival for the whole world, and I believe that it is coming. It is near, friends, nearer than we think. Let us pray and expect God to answer. We were seeing and are going to see great things here in Africa and to the uttermost parts of the earth for we have a God whose name is: "Thou That Hearest Prayer."

If we are really in the battle, the fighting must be done on our knees. Who will join us? 

God's power in revival

by Sammy Tippit

THERE are dangers in talking about God's Power, especially in relation to revival. There are three dangers I want to mention to you.

The *first* is, when speaking of the power of God, people often emphasise the *power* of God rather than the *God* of power. We must always have our focus on the God of power and not focus on the power. Power can corrupt the best of people.

One of the greatest problems you find in churches, when the church is not revived, is a power struggle. Someone is wanting the power. The pastor may want the power; or the deacons want the power; the women or the men want the power. Everybody's vying for power.

Power can be a very dangerous thing. Pride can come in if power is not centred in God Himself. Pride goes before a fall (Proverbs 16:18). We must be careful when we talk about the power of God in revival, and not speak of the power of God only, but *the God of power*.

Secondly, when we talk about the power of God in this generation, it is dangerous because we are living in a generation that seeks signs and wonders. I believe God works miracles today. I believe every time God forgives sin and saves a soul, a miracle takes place.

Seek after God Himself

I believe in a miracle-working God. But we must be very careful not to seek after miracles and signs and wonders, but to seek after God Himself, and seek to obey the Word of God.

I don't find anywhere in the Bible where we believers are to run after signs and wonders and miracles. What I find in the Bible is that we are to be preaching the Word of God, teaching the Word of God, obeying the Word of God.

Signs and wonders follow us. We don't chase after them; they chase after us. What we have to be concerned about is doing the will of God, and if we do the will of God, God will do the rest.

The *third* danger is that we become so familiar with the terminology of all that surrounds revival that we can talk about

revival, we can teach it and preach on it – and yet we find that our pulpits and our pews are powerless. We find our own lives standing in need of revival.

There are two words for power used in the King James Version of the Bible. The word I am speaking about is *dunamis*.

Robertson, in his study of the New Testament, writes of it as “divine enabling.” When I speak of revival, I am going to speak of it as a new walk of obedience to God. When we speak of the power of God in revival, we are talking about a divine enabling to do the will of God in our lives.

In Luke 24:44-49, Jesus is speaking. He had been three years with His disciples, and had told them over and over again, the Son of Man must go to Jerusalem; He must be crucified; He must be buried; three days later He will rise from the grave. Although He had told them this, they lacked understanding as to what was going to transpire.

And then it happened: Jesus was crucified; buried in a borrowed tomb, and three days later He arose from the tomb; He appeared to more than 500 people. Just before He ascended to the right hand of the Father, He appeared to His disciples and He spoke these words to them:

“These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.” And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.”

Jesus had taught His disciples from the Law, from Moses, from the Psalms, from the Prophets. Everything in the Old Testament had been pointing to this one great day when the Christ, the Messiah, would come and lay down His life for the sins of the world. He would be crucified, buried and three days later rise from the grave. Everything in all their history was pointing to this one great event.

Then He said to them in effect, “And you



have been witnesses of these things. You have beheld it; you have seen it with your own eyes; you have handled these things. Now, you bring this message of repentance, of forgiveness of sins, to all men and all women, to all tribes and all nations, all people everywhere.”

Then he said something very interesting: “But before you do that, wait for the promise of the Father. Tarry in Jerusalem, until you be clothed with that power from on high.”

Look at the New Testament Church. The Church was born in a state of waiting before the Lord, of seeking the face of God. All through the Book of Acts we find this to be the pattern of the Church.

The Church is praying in Acts 1. In Acts 2, the Church is proclaiming. In Acts 3, Peter and John are going to a prayer meeting and a man is healed and then the word spreads throughout Jerusalem. In Acts 4, they are in another prayer meeting with the Church and as they pray, they proclaim the Word of God. In Acts 13 there is a great missions movement and the Gospel is going to go around the world, to the non-Jewish community.

The whole thrust of this missionary movement began in a prayer meeting where prophets and preachers and teachers and leaders were gathered together seeking the face of God. Out of that waiting experience, the Church became the dynamic Church it was, taken from this timid, fearful group of men and women and made a *dunamis*, a powerful and explosive group of people.

They were common, ordinary men and women, like you and me. It was said of them in Acts 16: “These who have turned the world upside down have come here also.” They literally shook the Roman Empire for the glory of God.

There was *dunamis* in the Church; there was power that permeated the life of the Church that was explosive, that caused them to see things happen, that caused them to bring life to multitudes. God moved and worked, and the Church was revived in a tremendous way.



All through the Book of Acts we see God moving, working, cleansing, breaking, filling, sending His people, and we find that they shook their world for Christ.

Looking at the evil in our present-day culture and then looking at the Church today, I get discouraged. I see the Church doing all of our little things, playing our games, and having our shows and going through all our little rituals and the things that we do, and we say, "O God, can You do anything?"

I believe that if we need anything, we need to understand what Jesus was saying in this passage of Scripture: "But tarry in Jerusalem until you be endued with the power of God upon your life."

If we are going to affect this society, if we are going to reach our nation and the world, it's not going to be by the business as we are doing it today. It's going to take nothing less than a divine intervention in the affairs of human history. It's going to take God moving and God working.

It's not going to be a great personality, nor a great orator; it's not going to be a great ministry nor a great organisation.

It is going to be God coming and visiting His people! If I did not know that God has done that in the Scripture, and that God has done that throughout history and that I've seen God doing that on occasion with my own eyes, I would be discouraged and ready to give up. But Jesus said to His disciples that He would endue them with power from on high.

The question I want to ask and to answer from this point on is, *where* is that power? *What* is that power that Jesus was talking about? There are three things that I want to suggest to you about the power of God in relationship to what Jesus was talking about.

The first is: *The power of God is in the message of the cross.* In 1 Corinthians 1:18 Paul writes: "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but to us who are saved, it is the *dunamis* of God." It is the very power of God.

I have watched something take place around the world over the past 10 or 15 years, and that is, we have ceased to believe that the power of God is in the preaching of the message of the cross.

We preach everything else; we do everything else; but we do not confront men and women with this message of the cross of Jesus Christ, and all the implications that are in the Word of God about this great message. If there is going to be a release of the power of God in our churches in this nation or in any nation, we are going to have to go back to preaching the old-time, old-fashioned message of the cross!

It is the cross that deals with sin. It is the cross that deals with self. It is the cross that transforms lives. It is what Jesus Christ did on the cross that is the very power of God. When we proclaim the message of what He did and how it affects the lives of men and women, it is the very power of God released.

No other message that will transform lives

Everywhere I go I get the same story. There is very little preaching of the simple message of the cross, which is the very power of God to change lives. I don't know of any other message that will transform lives, that will heal hearts, that will forgive sins, that will set the captive free.

I don't know any other message but the message of the cross of Jesus Christ. It is the message of the cross that the world needs and that the churches need. We need to preach the old-time, old-fashioned message of the cross!

In 1990, one year prior to the collapse of the former Soviet Union, I had the opportunity to preach in the national stadium of the Republic of Moldova, which was one of the Republics of the Soviet Union.

I went there at a unique moment in their history. They had never had anything like this meeting. I was concerned whether we were going to have it at all. I had been arrested in Leningrad, when there was a Leningrad, for witnessing to university students and sharing Christ with them.

So, when I was asked to go into Moldova when it was still in the Soviet Union and preach in the stadium, I really didn't think they were going to give me permission to do that.

I told the church leaders, "There are two things I need. First, I need an official invitation from you, and secondly, I need an

official invitation from the government," and I really didn't think the government would give me an invitation.

That day we received the telex into our office granting permission, I couldn't believe it. I knelt and gave God the glory.

We went to Moldova and nobody knew what to expect. They had never had an evangelistic meeting. Thousands of people came to the stadium that Sunday. It was broadcast nationally on television.

A journalist came up to me and asked a perceptive question. She said, "Mr Tippit, do you really think that people's lives are going to be changed by you standing on the platform and saying some words?" That's a pretty good question, especially if you grew up in an atheistic country.

I looked at her and I said, "Yes, Ma'am, I am convinced 100% that lives are going to be changed. Not because I'm speaking; not because I'm a good orator, not because of any such thing, but the one reason is that the message that I am going to speak has supernatural ability, and it will penetrate the hearts of people, and it will transform the lives of people."

That was in 1990. I have been back there several times for national conferences on revival. I've had enough time to see if I was telling that journalist the truth or not. There is a lady who walked into that stadium that Sunday an atheist, and she walked out a born-again Christian changed forever.

Today she is the chief editor for the only and first Christian news magazine in the nation of Moldova.

There are at least ten who are now missionaries I know, who walked into that stadium that day unsaved, and they heard this wonderful message of the cross of Christ preached by a foreigner who could not even speak their language and had to have an interpreter, and they walked out as Christians. Today they are travelling throughout their nation of Moldova as missionaries, proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

There is power in the message of the cross! The power of God is not in preaching signs and wonders. The power of God is not in making everybody comfortable. The cross was not comfortable for Jesus Christ.

The cross was a place in human history whereby outside Jerusalem 2 000 years ago, hanging between two thieves, suspended between heaven and earth, was the Lamb of God. From one end of eternity came the very wrath of God, and Jesus took upon Himself all of the wrath. Why?

God's power in revival

Continued...

Because of your sin and my sin.

And from the other end of Eternity came the love of God. The wrath of God and the love of God collided on the cross 2 000 years ago, and it left a *dunamis*, an explosion, so that when we speak of what Christ did in relationship to our sins and our self and our rebellion, when we speak the message of the cross, there is the power of God!

The message of the cross is the message that is going to bring revival to our churches. Our churches are filled with sin and with self, and only the cross deals with sin and with self. Our people need to fall in love with Jesus again – not the things of Jesus, not the power of Jesus, but with Jesus and what He did on the cross, understanding that my sin put Christ on the cross! Not Jews, not Romans, but my sin put Christ on the cross.

When I see that and understand what He did for me, I fall on my face before God and say, "O God, have mercy upon me, a sinner! O God, look what I have done to your own Son!"

The message of the cross brings revival. The message of the cross sets the captive free. The message of the cross brings forgiveness. The message of the cross brings reconciliation. The message of the cross transforms lives. It is the power of God.

Paul said, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God."

We are not going to have the power of God without the message of the cross. The cross must be central. It must be foremost in our lives. The message of the cross must burn in our hearts and souls. It must be the message we proclaim. We must be consumed with what the Saviour did on the cross, and we must teach it; we must preach it; we must explain it, for there is the very power of God in it.

The second thing I want to say about the power of God in revival, is that *the power of God is in a life wholly yielded to the Holy Spirit*. In Acts 1:8 Jesus said, "But you shall receive power (*dunamis*), after that the Holy Spirit has come upon you: and you shall be witnesses to Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and to the uttermost part of the earth."

The power of God is not in what man can do. The power of God is not in human

abilities. It is not in great organisation nor in great strategy. The power of God is not in a superstar preacher or singer. The power of God is in the Holy Spirit of God, and it is the life that is absolutely yielded to the Holy Spirit that will know the power of God.

You shall receive that *dunamis*, that divine energy, and you shall be witnesses to Me.

There have been many times in my life when it was Sammy and not God. Revival is when God comes. Revival is when God does it. Man can manipulate. Man can try to get people to do things. But the power of God is when God's Spirit comes and visits and moves and works among His people. God is looking for men and women whose lives are completely surrendered and totally yielded unto Him.

The filling of the Holy Spirit is that which enables us to become like Christ. It ought to be the goal of every Christian to be like Jesus. We cannot of ourselves become like Christ. There is no good thing that dwells in our flesh. The only way we can become like Christ is for the Holy Spirit to make us like Him.

That is why we must yield ourselves daily to Him, to His fullness, allowing Him to take control of our lives and make us the persons He wants us to be.

But the anointing of the Spirit is that divine enabling to do the work of God. Many times we talk about revival, we preach about revival, and yet we have very little of that divine enabling for God to move and to work. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts (Zechariah 4:6)."

The Holy Spirit does the work

It is not that we are eloquent or are able to accomplish this or that, but it is the divine enabling of the Holy Spirit of God that does the work of revival and the saving of souls.

One last thing I want to say about the power of God, *the power of God comes through protracted prayer*. This goes back to Luke 24:49: "But tarry in the city of Jerusalem, until you are endued with power from on high," with divine enabling.

Every great revival in the history of the Church has been preceded by holy, humble, praying men and women. There is no shortcut to revival. I'm convinced this is one reason we don't have revival today. We want to have a prayer meeting and then expect that tomorrow there's going to be revival.

If we're going to have revival that shakes our churches and our communities, we're going to have to get a group of people somewhere, sometime, somehow, to pray.

I've discovered that when the wind of God blows, it always blows across a praying people. We can't twist God's arm to send revival, but we can get in a position to receive it, and the position to receive it is prayer. That's what Jesus was telling His disciples: "Tarry in the city of Jerusalem, until you are endued with power from on high."

Perhaps my closest heartbeat to genuine Spirit-sent revival has been in the nation of Romania. I started travelling there in 1980. I was a pastor in Germany when I went into Romania, and I saw something I had never seen before.

I went into the city of Oradea. Here were Christians who were persecuted, Christians who lost their jobs, Christians who went to prison for their faith. I went to preach in a church there and God was moving. I had a singing group with me, and we arrived about two hours before the church service was to start to set up the sound equipment.

Scattered throughout the church were people praying – weeping, crying quietly in pews all over the church, calling out to God. As I walked in, there was a sense of "God's here!" By the time the service started, there wasn't room for the people. They stood around the pulpit and outside on the streets to hear the Word of God.

In early 1984 I went back to that church again, and I stood in that church and preached. The place was packed; people were standing down the aisles. Many came to know Christ that night. After the service was over, one of the leaders of the church came up and said, "Brother Sammy, did the Lord work?"

I said, "What do you mean, 'Did the Lord work?' Why are you asking me this? Didn't you see how many people were here? Didn't you see what happened? People came to Christ. Why are you asking me, 'Did the Lord work?'"

He said, "O, you don't understand. I was not in the sanctuary. I was in another room with 100 men and we were praying the whole time you were preaching. There was another room with 100 women, and they were praying the whole time you were preaching."

Up until that time I had never been anywhere where there were 100 men and 100 women praying the whole time I was preaching.

He said there was a pastor who came to

that church who taught the people to pray. He did two things: he taught the people to pray and he called for repentance.

In Romania, in Eastern Europe, believers are called “repenters.” The pastor’s message was, “The repenters must repent.” The church actually entered into a covenant of repentance. They repented of the sins that were in their lives, sins that were in the church. They were broken before God and entered into a covenant of repentance.

Then they began to pray and there was an explosion; there was a *dunamis* which took place. Within the next six months there were 200 baptised. In Eastern Europe, during the days of communism, to be baptised was very dangerous. When God began to move, that church began to grow. A great revival took place. It spread throughout the whole northwestern quadrant of Romania.

The pastor taught the people to pray in an unusual way. He said, you pray that one day we will stand in the great stadiums of this country and we will proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You pray that one day over the radio and through the newspapers we will proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You pray, you pray, you pray.

You will never return!

And the people prayed, and they prayed, and they prayed. And the more they prayed, the darker it got and the worse it became. God was preparing a people.

In 1988 I was going into Romania. The train stopped. The soldiers came and took me off the train and held me under guard. I was deported from the country. They said, “You will never, you will never, you will never put your feet on Romanian soil again.”

My heart broke, because I loved these Romanian people. I had such a wonderful relationship with them. But I knew that though communists had deported me, they couldn’t deport the Holy Spirit, and they could not deport the prayers of God’s people. I received a message from one of my friends that simply said this, “Sammy, keep praying. Remember, the glory of God comes through much suffering. Keep praying.”

In December, 1989, I was visiting my mother at Christmas, and my son came in from watching the CNN News and he said, “Dad, you need to see what’s on the news. Something is happening in Timisoara (Romania).” As we investigated we learned that an evangelical pastor was to be arrested. The believers from all the churches went to his apartment and made

a circle around it and tried to protect him from being arrested by the Secret Police. The Secret Police came and began to fire into the crowd, killing innocent men, women and children.

When the blood of the martyrs began to flow in the streets of Timisoara, there was a release of the wrath of God on the evil Ceausescu regime, and a release of the glory of God on the people of God. An estimated 200 000 people gathered in the main square.

They were all atheists. They were all trained from kindergarten to the post-graduate university level in scientific atheism. They were taught there is no God. The pastor of the First Baptist Church stood up before the crowd and began to preach. As he preached on the cross of Jesus Christ, a *dunamis* took place.

The crowd of about 200 000 people, all of whom were trained in atheism, began to shout, “Existe Dumnezeu! Existe Dumnezeu!” (which translated means, “There is a God! There is a God!”) Faith erupted in the whole population. This spread from one town to another town to another town.

A friend of mine from Ohio called in automatic redial for 16 hours to get in touch with a friend of mine in Romania, Titus. Finally he got through to Titus, and he said, “Titus, are you okay? Is your family okay? What’s happening?”

All Titus could say was, “The glory of God has come to my people! The glory of God has come to my people! Tell Sammy that for which we have prayed for so long has finally happened. Tell him he must come back.”

I left everything I was doing, got on a plane and flew to Vienna, Austria. Friends picked me up in Vienna and we drove across Hungary to the Romanian border. We prayed the whole way, because we knew that my name was in the computer. Before the revolution, the first question they asked at the border was, “Do you have any Bibles?” and if you had Bibles you were in trouble.

We arrived at the border that night. The revolution was still in process. It was cold; it was dark; it was snowing. We were the only car. Soldiers came up to the car. They said, “Get out.” We got out. And they asked this question, “Are you Christians?” My heart began to beat hard. I looked at that soldier and I said, “Yes, sir, we’re Christians.”

For the rest of my life, until I die, I will never forget what happened next. That soldier threw his arms open wide and he

said, “Welcome to the new Romania!” My friend Titus was waiting in the customs building. He had been pushed into the new transitional government. He came out and embraced me, and on the very spot where they told me, “You will never, you will never, you will never put your feet on Romanian soil again,” we knelt and gave glory and honour and praise to Jesus Christ!

There is a God!

We went into Romania, and I saw things with my eyes I had never dreamed I would see. The last time I was there, when we would go to some Christian’s home, we would have to park our car far away late at night and have to walk around in a way to disguise where we were going to go into the home to have a meal with him. Now it was not that way.


As I walked on the streets, people who didn’t know me but could tell I was from the West, throngs of people on the streets – not church people, but people on the streets – would gather around and would begin to shout, “Existe Dumnezeu! Existe Dumnezeu! Existe Dumnezeu (There is a God! There is a God! There is a God!)!”

The theme song of the days of revolution was a song about the second coming of Jesus Christ. I’m not saying the whole country was converted, but there was a visitation of God upon the nation in which the spirit of atheism in one divine moment was blown out of the country.

I know that we’ve got problems today. I know we’ve got secularism and humanism and materialism and all those things are destroying our young people and destroying our churches. But I want to say to you, in one divine moment when God comes, He can blow it away by the *dunamis* of God!

It came in Romania through years and years and years of prayers ascending to the Throne of God, by men and women who were willing to sacrifice their lives for the sake of Jesus Christ. Oh, how we need the God of power, of *dunamis*!

Might we come to the cross. Might the Lord break us, bend us and melt us and strip us. Might everything that is of the self-life be exposed by the light of the cross. Might we not just talk about revival, but might we pray until God will send revival to us.

We cannot work up revival. We cannot bring it down. Only God can send revival. Let us ask God to search our hearts and do in our hearts what He needs to do. 



Self-control through the Holy Spirit

by P. D. Landy

IRECENTLY read a little book entitled “*The Young Christian*.” It was a reprint of a work written by Matthew Henry some 300 years ago.

It did me good.

Its chief theme was “sobermindedness,” or to use a more contemporary idiom – self-control. It is a book with a challenge and it led me to look a little more at the biblical teaching concerning this important subject.

I hope and pray that the following reflections may help you to know and experience more and more each day of a life led and controlled by the Spirit of God.

A superficial consideration of this matter of “self-control” might lead us to assume it is something I DO to restrain my sinful desires. The Greek philosopher Plato believed that temperance – the control of appetites and passions – was possible through an instructed reason and the power of the will.

The New Testament, however, teaches us that true self-control is the fruit of the Spirit in the life of the believer. See for example, Galatians 5:22&23. It is a control from within.

It is a control of self – but by and through the Holy Spirit’s enabling.

Another misconception regarding self-control relates to its more traditional name – temperance. This idea has often been communicated in a negative way. For example, in the 19th Century there arose the Temperance Movement which sought to address the drink problem and began to advocate total abstinence.

Temperance as a fruit of the Spirit, however, is a much broader and more positive idea.

Paul speaks of the athlete’s need for self-control and daily discipline, and reminds us that we need self-control for effective Christian service (1 Corinthians 9:24-27). Athletes who break world records do so only after years of diligent training.

To do, think and say things that are pleasing to God

As Christians we have a greater prize and goal in view which should energise us in this desire for self-control.

There are two or three New Testament words which identify this Christian virtue. Our Bible translations use words like: temperance, restraint, sobriety, etc. to describe it.

Jerry Bridges in his helpful book, “*The*

Practice of Godliness,” defines it as “the exercise of inner strength under the direction of sound judgement that enables us to do, think and say the things that are pleasing to God.”

The Spirit-controlled Christian is a self-controlled Christian and will be a blessing to the church and the world. Above all else, he will bring glory to God.

One of the characteristics of these “last days” is that people will be “without self-control (2 Timothy 3:3).” In the name of freedom all kinds of immorality are excused. Here is an area of our lives where we can display the transforming power of Christ so that “each thought and each temper” may be seen to be “beneath His control.”

Self-control will be demonstrated by a humble, patient and gentle spirit. Pride, impatience and anger must be put to death. Our emotions and thought life must be under the rule of Christ.

“Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).”

“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, whatever things are just, whatever things are

pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things (Philippians 4:8)."

"God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7)."

Our tongues likewise must be tamed. Personally, my temperament and my place of origin incline me toward turning everything into a joke. The gift of humour is a wonderful gift but it must be controlled like anything else.

James 3 reminds us that our words ought to be few and wisely chosen. We have one mouth and two ears! Are we prone to gossip or lies?

If the tongue is difficult to control so are our appetites. Some are in danger of gluttony, and many have a continual struggle with lust. The body is meant to be our servant but too often it becomes our master.

Luther struggled with temptation in his monastery cell, but no amount of penance could give him victory. He had to discover the grace of God for that to happen.

Some suffer in the opposite direction. They don't know how to stop and be still. The tyranny of work and time can rob us of our Christian joy. Like Martha, we can be preoccupied with the good and miss the best.

Paul, writing to two young pastors, Timothy and Titus, repeatedly stresses the need to teach by word and example the exercise of self-control. Church leaders must demonstrate it (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8). The older men and women must teach it to the younger (Titus 2:3-6). The Cretans were notorious for their laziness, lies and gluttony (Titus 1:12), and there is therefore a great need for the church to display the opposite.

In the Old Testament and particularly in the Book of Proverbs we have detailed warnings about all these matters. The Old Testament history abounds with illustrations concerning the practice and neglect of self-control.


If Jesus is Lord of our lives then we are to be faithful stewards of the gifts He has given us. Am I demonstrating self-control

in my use of time and money? Am I self-controlled in my relationships? These are a few questions we need to ask ourselves.

Perhaps you already feel defeated in the light of all that Scripture teaches. You may have tried to overcome anger, lust or laziness, but feel you've failed God once too often.

If so, let me encourage you to keep coming back to the Lord, seeking His pardon and cleansing for a new beginning. There is no temptation so great that His enabling grace cannot help you overcome. There is no sin so heinous that He is unwilling to forgive if you come to Him in true repentance.

This battle with sinful self is lifelong, but the victory is assured in Christ. Meanwhile, He gives us His Word – the Bible, which is our guidebook to heaven. It is the sword of the Spirit whereby we may fight against the world, the flesh and the devil.

There is a race to be run and a heaven to be won. Let us be looking unto Jesus that we may win the prize. 

The battlefield is the will

by Oswald Chambers

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

When that is done, all is done.

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

There are very few crises in life. What we are apt to call crises are not crises.

The great crisis is where we surrender the will.

God never crushes a man's will into surrender. He never beseeches him. He waits until the man thoroughly yields up his will to Him.

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

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

After you have gone through the full surrender of the will, you will always remember the time.

But do you remember how long it took God to get you there? Do you remember



how you weighed up all the circumstances, and how you found that your heart or mind or body or sentiments, or other ties and friendships held you down here and there?

For a time you seemed to get peace, and you thought it was all done. But the battle came back again and again, because you had not surrendered to Him the central citadel which is your will.

The remainder of the life is nothing but the manifestation of that surrender. The battle for the will is the great point where Jesus Christ wins or loses in your life and mine.

Once the full surrender of the will has taken place, you need not care what your circumstances are. Once you have got through the crisis of surrendering your will to God, wherever you are placed, on


the home or foreign field, the Lord can rely on you, because your surrender has allowed the supernatural work of God to fully identify your life with that of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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

It is not being taken up on a mount of transfiguration. It is a quiet, commonplace moment when God puts the thing to you so clearly that there is no misunderstanding that He is asking of you the full surrender of your will.

Some have gone through with this surrender of the will, and no matter where God places them there is no fear that they will turn back, because the central citadel of their will is possessed by God.

Unless the central citadel of your will is held by the Lord, you may go down at any second, anywhere, no matter what the devotion of your heart may be.

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

My Arrest And Rescue

by H.C. Morrison

IT was during Christmas week that I was placed under arrest and dragged into court. I was a very small boy, in my 14th year. I was caught in the act; there was no excuse; there seemed to be no help or hope. I was guilty.

I was thrust into the prisoner's dock. The gate was slammed, and a big policeman leaned on the gate, and seemed to look at me with a degree of satisfaction at the thought that he had me, and that I was sure of punishment.

I felt utterly helpless. I could not even weep. I had wept all the tears out of my system. I was dry and emotionless, except I was crushed to the very earth with a sense of my guilt and lostness.

The judge sat in his big chair but I did not dare look at him. I had no hope for mercy, and I knew that justice would be my ruin.

The courtroom was packed with people. As I crouched in the corner of the dock, they were gazing at me with looks of accusation which seemed to say, "Judge, give him the full weight of the law and save society from further trouble."

Finally, the clerk announced the opening of the court and my case came first. The judge asked the clerk if the boy had anyone to represent him. "Represent" was a new word to me.

I supposed my representative was to be

my executioner. The clerk answered that I had no one.

The judge then said to a lawyer within the bar, "I appoint you to represent this boy." The lawyer rose up and walked slowly forward, picking his way among the chairs, approached the dock, pushed the policeman to one side, opened the gate and stepped inside the dock.

I crouched in a corner

I, withered with fear, crouched closely in one corner, and with eyes wide open with horror, gazed up at my lawyer. He had a wonderful face; it was strong and calm, full of kindness and marvellous beauty.

I noticed a tear hanging on one eyelash. That tear helped me wonderfully. He sat down and slipped his arm around me. It seemed that my very bones had dropped out of their sockets and I was scarcely breathing below my collar button.

My attorney drew me up to him. The pressure was so gentle, and yet so strong. It seemed to restore and readjust my bones, relax my nerves, and I commenced to breathe more deeply.

Stooping down, his silken beard brushed over my suntanned face, and placing his lips close to my ear, he said, "My little friend, are you guilty?"

I could not have lied to him if it had been

to save my life.

With trembling voice I answered, "Yes, sir, I am guilty of much, more than you know about."

"Well," said he, "do you not think it will be best for us to confess judgement and throw you on the mercy of the court?"

I did not know what it meant to be thrown on the mercy of the court, but I felt sure that if he would throw me I would alight in the best place there was for me, and I at once answered in the affirmative.

My lawyer gave me a gentle pat on the head, and stood up facing the judge.

He said, "Please, your honour, it has been my privilege to practice for many years in your honour's court, and I have been glad to notice that when the ends of justice can be secured, and society can be protected, it has been your honour's prerogative to show mercy.

"I thank the court for appointing me to plead in the interest of this little boy. He confesses his guilt. His heart is broken. He is full of contrition. He has been an orphan from his infancy and is dependent and moneyless and begs for compassion."

I reached out my soiled, lean fingers and caught hold of the skirt of my attorney's coat. I clung to him with the feeling that if I would hold on to him he would pull me out.

I thought his speech was finished but it

was a mere introduction.

A deep stillness fell upon the great gathering and his mellow voice rose until it filled the room with a most marvellous appeal. He spoke of orphan children, of their loneliness, of their unprotected condition, of the temptations to which they were subjected, of their desolation – like lambs without a shepherd, in a world full of hungry wolves seeking to destroy.

He spoke until the harsh people softened, old men groaned aloud. He spoke until the tears trickled down the policeman's cheek, who, looking kindly at me, whispered to inquire if I did not want a drink of water.

New life and a new hope

I was too busy clinging to the coat tail of my attorney, gazing into his wonderful face, and listening to his marvellous words, to want anything else. I was breathing deep. New life and hope were creeping into me. I was falling desperately in love with my lawyer.

My attorney said, "Please, your honour, if you in the spirit of mercy, will dismiss the charge and set the lad free, I pledge myself to become his guardian, to see to it that he has a home and protection. I will look after his education and I promise to give to society a good and useful citizen."

I could scarcely keep from crying aloud for joy. It seemed my heart would burst within me for gratitude. I felt that if they would let me place my ragged shoes on the bench upon which I sat, and throw my ragged coat sleeves around the neck of my attorney and kiss his cheek one time, they might take me out and hang me, and I would die shouting.

In the midst of his wonderful address, my attorney, instead of addressing the judge as "Your Honour," said, "My Father."

This shot through me. I saw that if the judge had appointed his own son to plead for me, it was more than likely that he would heed his pleadings and show me mercy.

Men were weeping all over the courtroom. I had both hands full of the skirts of the coat of my lawyer. The policeman had laid aside his cap, had gotten out his handkerchief, and had buried his face in a flood of tears.

It was a powerful moment in my trial. My attorney had reached his climax.

He exclaimed, "My Father, this child for whom I plead is none other than my brother." I saw at once that if the judge was the father of my attorney, and the attorney was my brother, then the judge was my father also.

I could restrain myself no longer. I gave a great cry of joy, leaped out of the dock, rushed up to the judge's stand and flung myself upon his bosom.

He embraced me with a long, tender pressure that seemed to make me through and through a new creature.


Folding me into his arms, he stood up and said, "Rejoice with me, for my son who was dead is alive, who was lost is found."

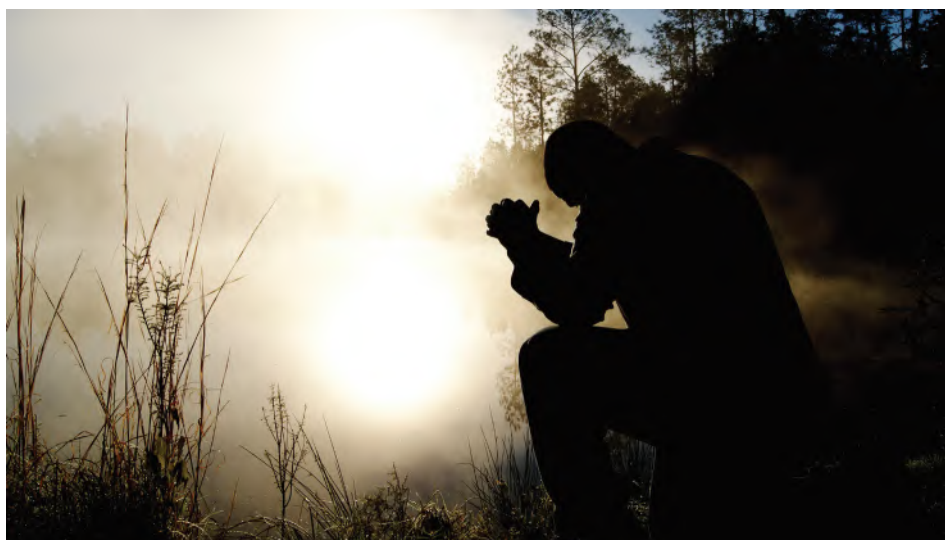
The entire crowd in the courtroom broke into tears and laughter. The people embraced each other. They all seemed to want to shake hands with me. They congratulated my attorney, and we laughed, and wept, and shouted together.

I hardly need tell you that the courthouse

was a Methodist Church, that the trial was an old-time revival, that the Word of God arrested me and brought me, convicted and guilty, to the bar of justice; and the eternal Father was the judge upon the throne, and that the Lord Jesus Christ was the Attorney who pleaded my case, won my pardon, and secured my eternal salvation.


I look back with fondest memory to that great occasion when bowed and burdened with guilt and bound with sin, Jesus Christ undertook for me, broke my chains, swept away my guilt, and at the throne of the universe, secured for me a full and free forgiveness, a blessed and glorious pardon, and revealed the blessed fact that the great God – the Judge of all the world – was, and is, my Father in Heaven.

Think not your sins are too many or too black. "Come now..." says the Lord, 'though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool (Isaiah 1:18).'" 



John Bunyan on prayer

JOHN Bunyan (1628-1688), author of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, offered these insights regarding prayer:

- In prayer, it is better to have a heart without words than words without a heart.
- Pray often, for prayer is a shield to the soul, a sacrifice to God, and a scourge for Satan.
- Prayer will make a man cease from sin, or sin will entice a man to cease from prayer.
- In all your prayers forget not to thank the Lord for His mercies.
- The spirit of prayer is more precious than treasures of gold and silver.
- The truths that I know best I have learned on my knees. I never know a thing well, until it is burned into my heart by prayer.
- To pray rightly, you must make God your hope, stay, and all. 



Getting Healed

by Gary Wilkerson

MY friend the evangelist Nicky Cruz calls the church a Holy Ghost hospital. I couldn't agree more. The church is and should be a place of healing. In my decades as a pastor, I've counselled a lot of people who needed restoration after lifelong heartbreak.

By far the most damage came from broken homes. Some Christians were wounded by their parents' divorce. Some were abandoned by a mother or father. Some were abused by a family member. They carried their wounds into adulthood, and sometimes a pattern repeated. Their spouse divorced them, and they endured painful rejection all over again; or their significant other abused them, and they thought they deserved it.

How does anyone deal with wounds this deep? Most people I've counselled try to repress their hurt. They never allow their emotions to surface because they're too painful to face. Instead, they press on, burying their pain in worship or Bible study. Others struggle with addictions, but their inner pain never leaves them.

Jesus doesn't promise anyone a pain-free life, but he does promise that we can be restored to abundant life. What does that look like in a wounded, suffering Christian?

The first hurdle for a lot of hurting people is the difficult question, "Why did God let this happen?"

Have you ever wondered how nice it would be to live a shame-free life? To no longer be plagued by circular thinking that reminds you of all your wounds and failures? Wouldn't it be liberating not to constantly wonder, "What did I do, that

God let me be abused as a child? What did I do to cause my divorce? Why did he allow my son, my daughter to become a prodigal? Why do I have to go through such pain?"

The book of Judges offers insight into the question of our pain. When Joshua led the Israelites to victory in Canaan, God allowed some of their enemies to remain in the land. Why would he do that?

God explained why: "I will no longer drive out the nations that Joshua left unconquered when he died. I did this to test Israel – to see whether or not they would follow the ways of the Lord as their ancestors did. That is why the Lord left those nations in place (Judges 2:21-23, NLT)."

The next chapter repeats this: "These people were left to test the Israelites – to see whether they would obey the commands the Lord had given to their ancestors through Moses (3:4)."

God left Israel's enemies around so the Israelites would be tested. Some might read this and think, "Wow, God didn't put much faith in Israel. That's almost like setting them up for failure."

As I read these passages, I don't interpret them that way. God was clearly up to something different here.

We all know people who like a challenge. Where I live in Colorado, a lot of people take up rock climbing or triathlons or iron-man competitions for one reason: They want to test their own mettle. They want to know whether they have something inside that will make them rise to the challenge.

I believe our Father holds out the same kind of test for each of his children. It's not because he wants us to fail. His purpose is

just the opposite: He wants us to see and grasp the power we have in Jesus Christ, a strength we wouldn't know we have unless there were enemies in the land.

Most of us don't know how strong we are in Christ and the power he places within us to be released for his glory. John tells us, "The Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world (1 John 4:4)." We have been given incredible authority by the Spirit who lives within us. We're to call on that authority as we face our enemies.

I see four primary enemies thwarting wounded Christians today.

Enemy number one is anxious fear.

If you've had a difficult family history, anxiety may be a daily reality for you. This may be a free-floating anxiety, unattached to any present reality. You don't know why you're anxious, but you find yourself worrying over things you think might happen. Suddenly, you're blowing things out of proportion that have yet to exist.

For example, you find out your child has smoked pot. You start thinking, "What if he gets caught up in a circle of addicts? It might lead to harder drugs and more risks. What if he does something that lands him in jail?"

People from difficult backgrounds are especially vulnerable to thoughts like these. Their deep wounds can cause them to project their past on to their future. It's an unconscious coping mechanism that says, "If I think it will happen, then I won't be surprised by it the way I was surprised by my parents' divorce."

For any wounded brother or sister reading this, the Bible speaks one command more than any other: "Fear not." Why

would God say this more than “Don’t sin” or “Love one another?”

It has to be because God knows we’ll have fearful events in our lives, and those realities can make us want to shrink back.

We already know we have been given supernatural authority to stay in the fight. Jesus also assures us with this: “Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world (John 16:33).”

Enemy number two for many Christians is a sense of rejection.

There is no worse blow to human desire than the experience of rejection. It tells us not to hope again. We may desire many good things – relationships, friendships, a spouse, a calling – but rather than face possible rejection again, we shut down desire.

In reality, you can’t shut down one part of your heart and not expect other parts to be affected. If you choose to shut down pain, you also shut down the possibility of receiving love to heal that pain. Friend, our hope lies not in our past experience but in the future Jesus has prepared for us.

“Let all that I am wait quietly before God, for my hope is in him (Psalm 62:5).”

Enemy number three is lonely isolation.

Our deep wounds can tempt us to withdraw from community, yet that’s where most healing happens.

Think of the mighty pairings that were

God’s design: Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Moses and the elders, David and Jonathan. In so many instances of great need, there were communities – even just two people – who came together to strengthen each other’s faith.

I can’t imagine life without my encouraging wife, Kelly, who tells me in every trial, “Don’t run, Gary. Stay in this fight! You’re being tested, but you’re meant to have victory.”

When you face your trial, will you do it alone? Or will you open yourself to the love God has provided for you in community?

Our final “enemy in the land” is common to many Christians I’ve counselled.

Enemy number four is self-loathing or self-hatred.

Often when I’ve counselled people, we began with the wound, the rejection, the shame. Almost always, the core issue was that the person blamed themselves for their wound.

A man would tell me, “My mother used to slap me around. I must have provoked her to do that.” A woman would tell me, “My husband left me. I must have been a bad wife.”

This is different than a shame that says, “I’m wrong.” This shame says, “I’m bad.” It tells someone their core being is rotten. So, they try to reinvent themselves, constructing a different personality that others will

find acceptable.

We have been given a source of authority over all false shame. It is the Lord’s unconditional love. “Love is patient and kind. Love... keeps no record of being wronged.... Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).”

I suggest that every wounded person apply this love toward themselves. After all, it describes God’s love for you. No one who loves themselves the way God loves them needs external validation because they already have it from the One who lives within them.

They don’t need to construct a false self because their true self is celebrated by their creator and Saviour.

Stop allowing yourself to say, “I’m a failure, a loser!” True love reveals the truth: “You’re growing. You’re being stretched. This challenge is calling you to new heights because the merciful, gracious, healing foundation Jesus has put underneath you is solid.”

Stay in the fight, stay in community and find his abundant life filling you day after day. There may be enemies in the land to test you, but your Father has put power in you to conquer them all. He calls on you to summon forth that power for your healing and his glory. Amen. ☞

Will you help us be a blessing?



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

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

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

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

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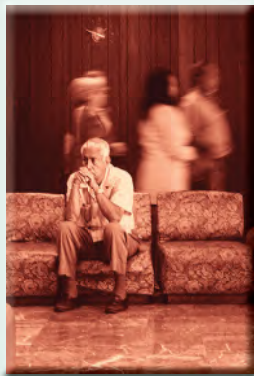
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Biblical Facts About Angels

***Angels were created before humans.**

In fact, angels witnessed the creation of the earth (Job 38:4-7). Genesis 2:1 says God created the heavenly beings before the seventh day of creation.

***Angels live forever.**

According to Luke 20:36 angels are immortal.

***Angels do not marry.**

Matthew 22:30 states that angels never marry.

***Angels have emotions.**

Angels can express great joy (Job 38:7 and Luke 15:10), and we are told that they yearn to know the meaning of all the Bible's prophecies (1 Peter 1:12).

***Angels are not to be worshiped.**

Romans 1:18&19 and Colossians 2:18 warn us about any glorification or worship of angels. The book of Revelation reveals that when the Apostle John tried to worship an angel, he was rebuked and told to worship only God (Revelation 19:10).

***Guardian angels really exist.**

The book of Daniel portrays the angel Michael as the protector of Israel (Daniel 12:1). In Matthew 18:10 Jesus refers to the guardian angels of children. See also: Exodus 23:20, Psalm 34:7 and Psalm 91:11&12.

***The Bible mentions only two angels by name.**

Michael, the Archangel, is mentioned five times (Daniel 10:13, 21; Daniel 12:1; Jude 1:9 and Revelation 12:7).

He is a powerful angel who serves as the commander of the heavenly armies.

The other named angel is Gabriel who serves as a messenger of God. He is mentioned four times (Daniel 8:16; Daniel 9:21; Luke 1:19 and Luke 1:26).

The apocryphal book of Tobit mentions an angel named Raphael.

***There are too many angels to count.**

Psalm 68:17 asserts that there are "thousands upon thousands of angels." Hebrews 12:22 refers to the number of angels as "myriads," which Merriam-Webster defines as "innumerable."

***Angels can take on human form.**

Abraham was visited by three angels who appeared as human beings (Genesis 18:1-22). Two of these men proceeded to visit Lot in Sodom (Genesis 19:1).

In the Gospel of Mark we are told that when three women visited the tomb of Jesus, they were confronted by "a young man" who declared to them the resurrection (Mark 16:1-6). Matthew identifies this man as an angel (Matthew 28:1-7).

In Hebrews 13:2 we are told that we should "show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it."

***Angels are subject to Jesus.**

See Hebrews 1:1-13. 



Thanks to
Elizabeth Kendal

WATCH & PRAY

KENYA: AL-SHABAAB KILLS 'INFIDEL' TEACHERS IN GARISSA

At around 2:30 a.m. on January 13, al-Shabaab militants from Somalia stormed a residence at the primary boarding school in Kamuthe, Garissa County. They ordered the teachers out of their rooms and then separated the locals (Somali Muslims) from the non-locals (Kenyan Christians).

A teacher who managed to escape told *Morning Star News*: "One of the attackers said, 'We cannot allow infidels to teach our children,' and there and then fired at three teachers as I managed to escape through the window."

According to this teacher, the militants knew where the teachers were sleeping. "The attack was well planned," he said, before surmising that the militants must have conspired with local Muslims. A local pastor confirmed that four new teachers had recently arrived in Garissa and had been attending his church. He believes the local community had been "monitoring the Christian faith of these teachers." Please pray.

INDIA: PERSECUTION WITH IMPUNITY

On Sunday, January 5 Pastor Jai Singh was leading worship in a house church in Bichpari Village, in Haryana State's Sonapat District (which is only about 50 km north of central New Delhi) when a mob of up to 300 Hindu nationalist militants surrounded the property.

Militants seized Pastor Singh and took him away; first to a school where groups of six militants beat him in turns, then to a Hindu Temple where

they forced him to sit before idols. Eventually the Hindus stripped Pastor Singh of his Kameez (traditional tunic) and dropped him – naked, bruised and bloodied – at Gohana police station, where eventually he was charged with luring people to convert to Christianity.

The pastor faced a judge on January 6 and was remanded to judicial custody. Alliance Defending Freedom-India filed a petition for bail which saw him released on January 7. An undisclosed Christian organisation has enabled him to receive treatment from a hospital in Delhi. Numerous believers, including children, were verbally abused and violently assaulted during the horrific, traumatising attack. Police have not taken any action against the attackers.

ASSYRIA: LAST CHRISTIANS DISAPPEAR

Father Adday Remzi Diril is an Assyrian Chaldean Catholic priest in Istanbul; he is well known for his devoted, selfless service to more than 7 000 Iraqi Christian refugees displaced throughout Turkey. On January 11 his parents disappeared from the Assyrian village of Meer (or Mehr; also known as Kovankaya) in Turkey's south-eastern province.

The village had been evacuated in 1989 and again in 1994 due to civil war (Turkish government v PKK). The Dirils returned some five years ago to re-occupy and start the rebuilding process. Since then they have resisted all government pressure to abandon the village. On January 12 Father Diril visited his parent's home only to find it empty. A witness reported seeing the couple being led away. Their whereabouts remain unknown. Please pray.



MOST THREATENED: THE CHURCH IN CHINA

On December 30 a court in China sentenced Pastor Wang Yi (pictured above with his wife) of Chengdu's Early Rain Covenant Church to nine years in prison on charges of "inciting to subvert state power" and "illegal business operations." As *World* magazine's June Cheng notes, "This is the longest prison sentence given to a house church pastor in a decade." Please pray.

On December 30 the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) announced that new Administrative Measures for Religious Groups, promulgated in November, will come into force in February. The new Administrative Measures provide in-depth instructions

on how the revised *Religious Affairs Regulations* will be implemented. The Administrative Measures are designed to eliminate all unregistered house churches, which will be forced to choose between becoming part of the CCP system in service to the CCP, or going underground, thus risking legal prosecution and severe penalties if caught.

The Administrative Measures mandate that all religious activities must be registered with, as well as guided, supervised and managed by, the Religious Affairs Department, which is now under the control of the CCP's United Front Work Department. The Chinese Church is standing on the threshold of a major persecution. The battle of the century has begun. Please pray.

Make a date with us! June 7, November 1

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

Manna for mahala!

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



THE POWER OF STILLNESS

by A. B. Simpson (1843-1919)

A SCORE of years ago a friend placed in my hands a little book, which became one of the turning points of my life. It was called *True Peace*, and was an old medieval message. It had but one thought, and it was this – that God was waiting in the depths of my being to talk to me if I would only get still enough to hear His voice.

I thought this would be a very easy matter and so I began to get still. But I had no sooner commenced than a pandemonium of voices reached my ears, a thousand clamoring notes from without and within, until I could hear nothing but their noise and din.

Some of them were my own questions, some of them my own cares and some were my very prayers. Others were the suggestions of the tempter and the voices from the world's turmoil. Never before did there seem so many things to be done, to be said, to be thought.

In every direction I was pushed and pulled and greeted with noisy acclamations and unspeakable unrest. It seemed necessary for me to listen to some of them and to answer; but God said, "Be still, and know that I am God (Psalm 46:10)."

Then came the conflict of thoughts for tomorrow, with its duties and cares. But

God said: "Be still." And as I listened, and slowly learned to obey, and shut my ears to every sound, I found after awhile, that when the other voices ceased, or I ceased to hear and heed them, there was a still, small voice in the depths of my being that began to speak with an inexpressible tenderness, power, and comfort.

As I listened it became to me the voice of prayer, and the voice of wisdom, and the voice of duty, and I did not need to think so hard, but that "still, small voice" of the Holy Spirit in my heart was God's prayer in my secret soul; was God's answer to all my questions; was God's life and strength for soul and body, and became the substance of all knowledge, and all prayer, and all blessing; for it was the living God Himself as my life and my all.

The best thing about this stillness is that it gives God a chance to work. "He who has entered into His rest, he also has ceased from his own works, as God did from His (Hebrews 4:10)." When we cease from our works, God works in us; when we cease from our thoughts, God's thoughts come into us; when we get still from our restless activities, "God... works in (us) both to will and to do His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13)," and then we can hear "the still, small voice."

There is another kind of stillness: the

stillness that lets God work for us, and we hold our peace; the stillness that ceases from controversy, and self-vindication, and expedients of wisdom and forethought and lets God provide and answer the unkind word, and the cruel blow, in His own unfailing, faithful love.

How often we lose God's intervention by taking up our own cause and striking for our own defence.

There is no spectacle in all the Bible so sublime as the silent Saviour answering not a word to the men who were maligning Him, and whom He could have laid prostrate at His feet by one look of Divine power, or one word of fiery rebuke.

But He let them do their worst and He stood in the power of stillness – God's Holy Lamb.

God give to us this silent power, this mighty self-surrender, this conquered spirit, which will make us "more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

Let our voice and our life speak like "the still, small voice" of Horeb, and as the "sound of a gentle stillness." Then after the heat and strife of earth are over, men will remember the morning dew, the mellow light and sunshine, the evening breeze, the Lamb of Calvary, and the gentle, holy, Heavenly Dove. ☞