

Prepare^{the}Way

Issue No. 124

PREPARING THE BRIDE OF CHRIST FOR THE RETURN OF CHRIST



A new beginning

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It's a new season

WHEN Covid struck in March, 2020 we in South Africa were asked by the President for a few weeks of lockdown to get hospitals and other facilities ready for the onslaught of the virus. The weeks became months, and the months became more than two years.

After the initial hard lockdown we printed issue No. 123 in June, 2020. Because the S.A. Post Office was in disarray, most of the magazines never reached their intended destination.

Since then, we have remained hopeful of printing the magazine again one day.

However, in recent months, and through much prayer, we have come to see that the season for the printed version of *Prepare the Way* magazine is well and truly over. The Post Office remains a dysfunctional disaster with an ever-increasing debt tsunami, and branches closing on a daily basis.

A number of people have asked if we couldn't courier magazines to subscribers, but this would be far too costly for single magazines.

Many people have expressed great sadness at the hole that's been left in their spiritual lives, and asked if we can't just publish the magazine online. While an online copy is just not the same as having a printed magazine in your hand – one that you can then pass on to others – it would seem that we are left with no other choice.

So, after 16 years of printing many, many thousands of magazines that have travelled all around the globe, we begin a new season of online-only publishing. This issue is something of a trial-run to see if there's a need and a response to *Prepare the Way* in this format.

Our aim is to publish at least four magazines a year, which will be completely free and without any subscription fees

Prepare the Way has, over the years, been the beneficiary of the most wonderful prayer and financial support. We are grateful beyond words for your support, and God has seen the giving done in secret that it is of infinite, eternal value to Him.

While the costs will be drastically reduced through online-only publishing, the magazine's bank account will remain open for anyone who feels they would like to keep contributing in any way towards this ministry.

"The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace (Numbers 6:24-26)."

Thank you trusting us and allowing us to share in the wonder of Jesus Christ with you over all these years! With deepest love, gratitude and every blessing in Him,
from all of us at Prepare the Way

The power of a changed life

by John Gardiner

IN 1976 I was working on the Natal Witness in Pietermaritzburg as a sub editor. One day in late March the newsroom was abuzz with the fact that Peter and Graeme Pollock's little sister, Helen, was coming to work at the Witness as a reporter.

Sure enough, she started work on April 1, and I immediately liked what I saw – so I rushed off to the Sports Department Library to do a quick study on the Pollock brothers. However, the more I read about their cricketing achievements, the more I realised how little chance a nerd like me stood with the beautiful Miss Pollock.

Little did I realise that Miss Pollock was tired of sportsmen and being known as nothing more than Peter and Graeme's little sister. Nerds were what she was after and so, amazingly, we were soon dating – and six months later we were engaged.

I met Graeme quite early on because he used to come to play cricket in Durban, and he was a very gentle teddy-bear.

But after we got engaged, there was a dark shadow on the horizon, because we had to drive all the way down to Port Elizabeth to meet the older brother – who was much scarier and much more of a handful than the teddy-bear.

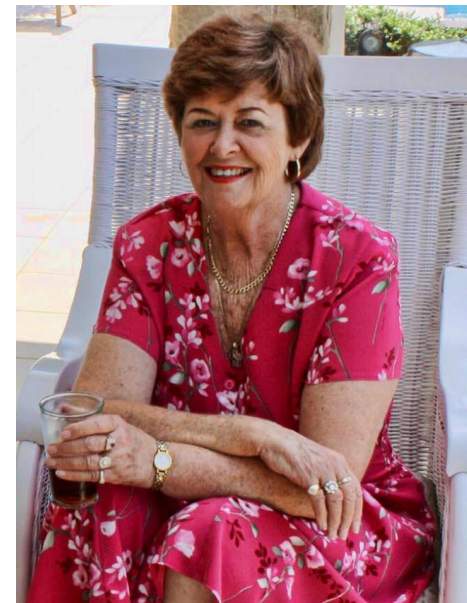
And yet, there was an even darker shadow, because behind the big handful of Peter Pollock there lurked an even bigger handful – his wife, Inez!

Inez's reputation was formidable. She could fight a good fight, she had an impressive temper, and whenever she and her mother-in-law had run-ins, they tended to be very drawn-out battles to see who could nurse their unforgiveness the longest

Fortunately for me, I was never on the receiving end of either Peter or Inez's scariness.

In the early 1980s Helen started searching spiritually, and so we visited various churches. But these visits simply confirmed what I'd known all along – they only wanted our money.

Then one day the family was hit by



some shocking news! Inez (pictured above) had started going to church – and it wasn't even a proper church, but one of those horrible happy-clappy ones.

Of course, we all knew it wouldn't last. But then, incredibly, we began to see some changes. Again, we just knew the changes would be very short-lived, and the old Inez would pop back up sooner rather than later.

But nothing could have been further from the truth. She kept going back to that strange church, and kept getting more and more excited about Jesus.

And not only did she commit the terrible crime of actually becoming one of those born-agains – she even had the cheek to tell us all that we all needed to be born again as well.

But the changes just kept getting more and more obvious – plain to see, unavoidable, undeniable.

And it was that one changed life that spoke to me much more than any sermon I'd ever heard.

And through the simple testimony of that one profoundly changed life, fairly soon Inez's husband, and her sister-in-law and finally her very stubborn brother-in-law all bowed to the lordship of Jesus Christ.

And as a result of Inez's profoundly changed life, Peter fairly soon gave up secular employment to go into full-time ministry. Thousands and thousands of

meetings and countless trips all over the world later – and with hundreds of thousands of lives touched by his preaching and his books – he's still going strong in his 81st year.

Helen and I went into full-time ministry at the beginning of 1991. We wrote some books, started *Joy!* magazine, started a local church and started *Prepare the Way* magazine. Our story in the Lord, too, continues.

That's the profound power of one changed life!

And, yes, to some that will always be an absolute stench, and to others it will be the very sweet fragrance of God.

And you see, that's the one thing unsaved people can just never understand. They will try to argue with you against the existence of God, and think they have all sorts of clever and even very scientific reasons why God doesn't exist.

They can give you ten thousand reasons why it's ridiculous to believe in a God you can't see, hear or touch. But if your life has been impacted and changed by the power of Jesus Christ, nothing's ever going to argue you out of that.

And even in times of great testing and onslaught from the enemy – that's the place I'm often brought back to. There's a lot I don't understand right now, but I do know that I'm not the person I used to be.

And I do know it wasn't that I one day decided to clean up my act and try to put on a show. But I know that I know that something changed in my heart. And that change in my heart changed me, and made me something that I, in myself and in my own strength, could never have become.

In January last year, Inez went home to be with her beloved Jesus. Deeply, deeply missed by Peter, Anthea, Gavin, Nicola, Shaun, their spouses and children – we are all so deeply grateful to the Lord for her wonderful example of faith, love and hope.

And we daily wonder afresh at the power of just one changed life! 🏹

IF MY PEOPLE...

by Peter Pollock

“IF MY people, who are called by my name will HUMBLE themselves and PRAY, SEEK MY FACE and TURN from their WICKED WAYS, THEN I will hear from heaven and I will forgive their sin and heal their land! Much-quoted is 2 Chronicles 7:14, and mostly used in calling people to prayer!

Calling masses to prayer is almost a daily occurrence on social media but oh, when are we going to understand the tremendous implications of the first part of that profound verse, the part that is in fact calling us to consecration? Yes, it is just that!

Those who call themselves Christians – and there are millions and millions – are required to humble themselves and turn from their wicked ways. And pray, truly seeking His Face! It's so much more than just gathering for a meeting and praying for a couple of hours.

It actually all adds up to a spiritual dynamic and a cost that the great majority – and I am talking about church-goers – are not prepared to pay or even think about. Sad, but unfortunately true!

Let's just look at that prayer in its right context. The Lord had “appeared” to Solomon. This was after Solomon had dedicated the temple and prayed a very long prayer. Fire had come down from heaven and consumed the sacrifice. The glory of the Lord had filled the temple. “The priests could not enter” – such was the glory and the presence of the Lord.

And the people had seen it all! They had bowed their faces to the ground, worshipped and praised the Lord. What an awesome and momentous occasion, Almighty God had truly presenced Himself. It was at night, after all this, that God spoke to Solomon and told him specifically to listen!

“When I shut up heaven. When there is no rain. When I command the locusts to devour the land. And when I send pestilence among the people” – said God!

Yes, He does all those things. He is God! He is a God of grace, mercy and love, but He is also God of discipline, judgement,



respect and retribution! And all at the same time, meted out, as and when necessary.

God is awesome! He is a jealous God. He is a consuming fire. He is immutable, unchangeable and sovereign.

When we come to grips with that... ONLY THEN will “My eyes be open, and My ears attentive to their prayers,” says God. When we beseech Him, in tears and on our knees, in sackcloth and ashes and in all humility, He will hear our prayers.

Remember Jonah! God had called him to go to Nineveh. But Jonah fled, he got on a boat and then even hid downstairs. God brought a storm because of this disobedience but finally Jonah was tossed overboard, swallowed by a whale and in those three days in the belly of the fish, God had spoken to Jonah and got him back on the right path. He was spewed out, went to Nineveh and preached the gospel!

From king to commoner, even including the animals, they got the truth straight and uncompromised and there were listening ears that culminated in people flat on their faces in Godly sorrow and repentance. From king to commoner repenting and seeking God! That is what is required – and God heard them. That's how it works!

In verse 19 of 2 Chronicles 7, God stresses this to Solomon: “BUT, if you

turn away, forsake my statutes, serve other gods, I will uproot you, cast you out. And people will be astonished at what I did because you forsook Me.”

God does do that. Believe it! It is prophetic truth, the real stuff.

The prophet Habakkuk was complaining about all that was going on. He was angry, frustrated and despondent and cried out to God. God's response: “You ain't seen nothing yet! Stand back and be amazed. Write it all down because the people are not going to believe you.”

Yes, God was going to use Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonians and the Assyrians, to bring judgement on His people. Banishment and exile were part of God's plan for His people.

When are we going to allow this type of truth to be part of our doctrine and understanding? So often we hear modern prophets promising their hearers that “God's plans and thoughts for you are all about peace and hope and a prosperous future” – using Jeremiah 29:11.

But it's all out of context! Going back a couple of verses, God first warns them to watch out for false prophets and diviners who deceive you, and then tells the people that after 70 years are completed in exile He will visit His people, who hopefully will have learnt a lesson from their banishment and exile.

In much the same vein we can look at Deuteronomy Chapter 28, all about

God's blessings and curses. False prophets, again out of context, promise that you will “be the head not the tail, above not beneath.”

That's the context of the first 14 verses of Deuteronomy 28. But then from verse 15 to 68 – some 53 verses! – God lists the curses for disobedience.

Jesus' death on the Cross did not cancel out the truth that sin, godlessness and rebellion continue to – and will always – reap consequences, because God has ordained it that way.

“Not one jot or tittle will pass away from the law till all is fulfilled,” said Jesus in His sermon on the mount (Matthew 5:18).

Anyway, my issue is the problem we seem to have nowadays with repentance and humility. We don't want to hear about it, let alone apply it to our Christian walks.

In Luke 18:10-14 we have the Pharisee praying: “Thank you that I am blessed. I am not like those other pagans. I am special! I am not of the world. I am predestined. I fast. I tithe. I am loving. I am caring. I do all those things that I am expected to do. I am a blessed, fulfilled Christian!”

Obviously I have expanded a little but the context is the same!

Look at all those I's! The great trinity of sin – I, Me and Myself. There is an I in the middle of “sin,” an I in the middle of “pride” and look at all those I's in “iniquity.” When Adam and Eve succumbed to temptation in the Garden of Eden they died spiritually, thus replacing the image of God with self image. And that's been the monster of the human race ever since.

We all have an “ego” problem – and if we add to that fame and success, the ego becomes a veritable ogre. I have always described modesty as a relative ability some people have in comparison to others in hiding their egos. Some just do it better than others – but with all of us that monster lurks!

And when we live in the modern church where nobody preaches sin and repentance, that “monster” thrives! Dare I say it, but I hear many preachers trying to convince the goats in their congregation that they are sheep, while modern teachers are continuously trying to “explain” what God really meant to say

when some scripture seems to be a bit tough or judgemental. Shredded in the cheap grace machine!

Yes, we flatly refuse to hear anything that we would deem “negative confession” or anything that affronts our self-righteousness. So now we get “coached” to speak fluent “christianese.” We know how to “feel led,” “have a burden” and “put things on the altar.” We know all the right words, phrases and modern liturgy. We feel pretty good about ourselves and our maturity.

Our old pride as taken over, but worse, it is now spiritual pride – the very worst of prides. The modern Pharisee! Smooth, smiley, huggy and sophisticated. We get mad but don't yell. Just avoid! Snide remarks! Subtle body language! A little slur or slander, a “fellowship” gossip snippet. It's all there.

The unbridled tongue! The right “super-spiritual” clichés, all the right Christian expressions, the right tone of voice, and a smile on the face. It may well smell and look like a rose, but inside it is a rubbish heap. Dry rot has set in. The heart is still hard.

A cancer eating the cells of your spiritual walk...

There is anger, resentment, envy, unbelief and unforgiveness all neatly covered up. Like a cancer it is eating up the cells of your Christian walk. Subtle sin and mutiny masked in grace and freedom. “Spiritually” streetwise but walking by sight and logic, living a lie. Triumphalism, presumption and arrogance are all fruit of this pharisaical spirit.

Then we have the tax collector! He was standing far off. He didn't even feel he was worthy to raise his eyes to heaven. He beat his breast. Recognising an awesome God he cries out “Oh Almighty God, be merciful to me, unworthy sinner that I am.”

He was aware of the amazing grace that accommodates a wretch like him!

“Listen,” said Jesus, “I tell you, he is the justified one. He is the saved one. He is the real testimony. He is the sheep, not the goat. He is the wheat, not the tare. He is a wise virgin. He is not a member of the Synagogue of Satan – that undermining group that the Bible warns about in the seven churches of Revelation. They are those who say they

are believers but are not.”

He who exalts himself shall be humbled, says God's Word. The greatest shall be the servant of all, says God's Word. It's all about humility but it's a humility that comes from God via the Holy Spirit – it is not a human attempt.

Just as holiness is a virtue that vanishes when you talk about it, but is conspicuous when you silently live it – so is humility a strange attribute, because the moment you think you have it, it disappears – you've lost it.

We are reminded of the Job story. He was not only the wisest, wealthiest, most successful man on earth but his testimony had even God boasting about him. The devil countered by saying that Job's testimony was only on account of God blessing him so much. Anyway, we know the sad story. He lost the lot!

Job suffered incredibly but finally, when all the tribulations were coming to an end with God's timely intervention, we have these passages: 38:2: Who are you? Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? 40:3: Job answered the Lord: Behold I am vile; I lay my hand over my mouth. 42:1-6: I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.

And when it was all over: The Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than the beginning. Wretchedness, humility and repentance!

John the Baptist, God's specially chosen herald of “The Christ,” talked about his need to decrease that Jesus might increase. He also spoke about not being fit to tie His shoelaces. Contrary to modern belief, it is still that same spirit that prepares the “Way of the Lord” – HUMILITY! Over and over again.

Psalms 139:23&24: “Search me Oh God and know my heart; try me and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.”

Psalms 19:13&14: “Keep back your servant from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless and I shall be innocent of a great transgression! Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight Oh Lord my strength and my Redeemer.”

Amen and Amen! ☩

Dumpster-diving Christianity



by T. A. McMahon

MY best friend-in-the Lord, Dave Hunt, who is now in heaven delighting in the presence of the Lord, loved to repeat this poem, which I quote in part:

“Who would leave the noonday bright to grope ’mid shadows dim?

And who would leave the fountainhead to drink the muddy stream

Where men have mixed what God has said with every dreamer’s dream?”

In today’s lingo, this would be akin to dumpster diving. Many of the poor and homeless are driven to dumpster diving – in other words, scrounging through rubbish bins next to grocery stores hoping to find salvageable discarded food in order to help them survive. Amazingly, that method is the same for many Christians, although the circumstances, spiritually speaking, are as far apart as heaven is from earth.

beyond finite man’s ability to pay off. Only Jesus, who is both infinite God and perfect sinless Man, could and did pay the eternal penalty for our sins. Putting our faith in Jesus is our recognition of His immeasurable sacrifice and involves believing and receiving what He accomplished for us.

It requires a full commitment of the heart to Him. When that takes place, we are reborn spiritually, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and have immediate access to all that God has provided for our “abundant life” in Christ!

Why, then, are many Christians today acting like spiritual paupers – even to the point of spiritual dumpster-diving? These are certainly the days prophesied by the Apostle Paul, when those who call themselves Christians “will not endure sound doctrine (2 Timothy 4:3).”

The primary cause is that they do not truly believe in the sufficiency of God’s Word. Some give nodding agreement to it, but much of what they actually do amounts to mere lip service.

Does the Bible claim to be sufficient?

Regarding God’s Word being sufficient, let us be Bereans (Acts 17:10&11)! Does the Bible claim to be sufficient? Absolutely! God “has given us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who has called us to glory and virtue (2 Peter 1:3).”

Although there are many others, that one verse is loaded with information confirming the sufficiency of God’s Word. It says “all things!” It says He has “given us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of Him...”

The context is all those things that pertain to life and godliness and that ultimately have eternal value, as well as blessing us in our temporal lives. However, that doesn’t include one’s ordinary earthly attributes, such as mechanical skills, medical proficiency, intelligence, athletic abilities, artistic talent, and so forth – all of which have temporal value and none of which are gained “through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord (1:2).”

Nevertheless, our knowledge of Him instructs us as to how to apply our attributes through godliness.

Second Timothy 3:16&17 is also foundational for confirming the sufficiency of Scripture: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect (that is, complete), thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

What does God tell us?

Let’s begin with “All scripture is given by inspiration of God.” What does that tell us? Simply that the Bible is God’s communication to mankind. Other than God using men, His prophets, who transcribed what He communicated to them, no additional contributions were added to it.

Paul explains, “But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:11&12).”

We’re told that, “It is written, that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God (Luke 4:4).”

Let’s go over that again. “Man shall... live by... every word of God.” But what if God left some things out for us as pertaining to life and godliness – things necessary for us to have a life filled with the fruit of the Spirit and pleasing to Him?

What about having human beings fill in the blanks? That would mean looking to finite, sin-infected, self-serving mankind to complete the task that our infinite, omniscient, and perfectly good and holy God overlooked!

Seriously? Of course not.

Yet, we’re seeing Christians seeking out “experts on how life should be lived,” looking to those who supposedly have the solutions to all of humanity’s problems of living. We’re told that these “counsellors” have supplied what God didn’t address at the time the Scriptures were given.

You know, “People were different back then. It’s a cultural-difference thing. Besides, humanity’s wisdom has increased throughout the millennia, right?” Problems abound for those who promote and believe that, not the least of which is that the “new wisdom” is contrary to all that God had written.

Additionally, there’s more than a slight

problem with those who are the source of this latter-day wisdom. They would be the founders of psychological counselling, in other words psychotherapy: Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and a host of their disciples right up to our present time.

They are all antichrist in the sense that the founders’ lives and their teachings have diametrically opposed God’s Word. Turning to them is in direct disregard of Psalm 1:1: “Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful.”

The entire field of psychotherapy is reflected in that one verse.

Consider just a few of psychotherapy’s antichrist characteristics: psychological counselling is basically atheistic. It neither recognises God nor does it recognise sin. No sin means no need for a Saviour. No God, no Saviour, leaves man by himself to fix his own mess, which is what psychological counselling is all about.

“Self” becomes one’s saviour. It’s a “God replacement.”

Psychotherapy’s cornerstone principle is that humanity is inherently good, and when personal problems arise, they can be resolved through therapy under the guidance of a psychologist or psychiatrist. The umpteen therapies are subjective, contradictory, ineffectual, and often greatly destructive. They have no scientific basis.

Psychotherapy, with its bizarre therapeutic practices notwithstanding, is simply talk, which is meaningless at the very least. Even when it’s not directly antichrist talk, it’s still a dumpster.

You would think that Bible-believing Christians should be able to recognise the anti-biblical concepts and steer clear of them. They should be... but that’s clearly not happening.

A major reason for this is there is a more devious and highly seductive dumpster that has waylaid Christians. Although there is no field of psychotherapy recognised as Christian, that hasn’t slowed down the acceptance of the myth of “Christian psychology,” which has grown exponentially since the 1970s, and its “muddy stream” has turned into a torrential landslide.

Christian psychologists have flooded the church with unbiblical self-love and self-esteem teachings, which one of its leading practitioners revealed as the source of the new “self doctrines.” He wrote, “It was humanistic psychologists Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow who first made us aware of the need of self-love, self-esteem.”

It’s a rare church that does not refer its members to professional counsellors, whether secular or “Christian,” for mental, emotional, and behavioural problems.

That may seem reasonable to some, but the question should be asked, “Which of those psychotherapeutic issues would not be sin-related?” Tragically, many church leaders who claim to believe in the sufficiency of Scripture are among the chief advocates in such referrals.

As the days draw ever nearer to the return of Jesus, the End-Times apostasy increases. As that takes place, Christianity is being refashioned, subtly for the most part, to conform to the false religion of the Antichrist. Remember, he is called “Antichrist,” as in “anti-Christian,” meaning a false Christian leader (not Hindu, Islamic, or Buddhist!).

Discernment is critical

Therefore, discernment in regard to our recognising what is true to the Scriptures – and what isn’t – is critical. We need to take to heart the words of Jesus, who characterised the deception that would take place just prior to His return: “Take heed that no man deceives you (Matthew 24:4).”

Jesus again indicates a lack of discernment among Christians in Luke 18:8: “...when the Son of man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?” There’s little doubt that the prophesied abandonment of “sound doctrine (2 Timothy 4:3) and Paul’s warning to the Ephesian elders, is happening right before our eyes.

“For I know this, that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears (Acts

Dumpster-diving Christianity

20:29-31)."

Jude exhorts us to earnestly contend for "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints (Jude 3)." "Contending" for the faith, however, can't take place for those who are ignorant of the teachings of Scripture.

Being somewhat familiar with what the Bible teaches doesn't cut it! If they can't recognise what is truly biblical in contrast to what seems to be, but is not, they are ripe for deception.

I've chosen to focus on psychological counselling because it appeals to those Christians who want help for themselves or for others, which makes them highly susceptible to being misled. And as the apostasy creates more problems for Christians, increasing numbers of churches and their leaders are turning away from the sufficiency of God's Word and looking elsewhere for solutions.

Recent examples include such high-profile pastors as Greg Laurie and Rick Warren, both of whom have had to deal with tragic suicides – the former, a counselling pastor at his church, and the latter, a family member.

Only a handful raising red flags

That is heartbreaking. Yet the response by both was an exhortation to the church to cease its abandonment of guidance from the mental health community! Abandonment? As I mentioned, since the 1970s the leaven of so-called mental health teachings and practices began to work its way throughout the church, with only a handful raising biblical red flags.

An alarming example of the rejection of the sufficiency of God's Word is a well-known counselling programme called Celebrate Recovery. It was birthed at Rick Warren's Saddleback Church in 1991 and has grown ever since, with participants numbering 7 million and involving 35 000 churches.

One such church that has turned to Celebrate Recovery recently is Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa, CA, under the leadership of Brian Brodersen.

This is a classic case of dumpster-diving. How so? Although Celebrate Recovery (CR) claims to have a biblical base in the Beatitudes, the programme is infused with teachings and practices derived from Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and its 12-Steps methodology.

The creator of CR, the late John Baker, drew upon his personal experiences of rehabilitation through AA and attempted to mix the teachings of AA founders Bill Wilson and Bob Smith with the Bible. The entire programme is based upon an amalgam of erroneous science, e.g., that alcoholism is a disease, that Bill Wilson's spiritism, through which he was given the 12 Steps, through the belief that a participant is always "recovering," never fully recovered, with AA's model of compulsory meetings, and much more.

Counselling programmes are not the only examples of Christian dumpster-diving – they are merely the most obvious. Many Christians, whether professing or even true believers, follow after popular yet clearly heretical preachers or ministries, all the while isolating certain aspects that appeal to them, such as with Joel Osteen ("Yeah, I know... but he's so positive!") or Benny Hinn ("God must be healing through him").

Many women are drawn to Joyce Meyer ("She's so biblically knowledgeable!") or Beth Moore ("I want continual conversations with Jesus like she has").

Christian media, such as TBN or God TV, among others, attracts thousands worldwide to a melting pot of doctrinal errors mingled with bits of truth. Christian music often leads to such thinking as, "I know Bethel Church has serious doctrinal problems, but I just love the music of Jesus Culture!"

What then of the spiritual dumpster of Roman Catholicism? "Sure, we don't have the same gospel, but we need to close ranks with them to fight against abortion!"

We're told to take the same circle-the-

wagons-approach regarding political conservatism: "How else are we going to restore 'Christian America?'"


Regrettably, the chief rationale for all forms of Christian dumpster-diving is "The end justifies the means."

Twice in the Book of Proverbs we are warned: "There is a way which seems right to a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25)."

When a person separates himself from the truth of the Word

Death always involves separation. Physical death, when the soul and spirit separates from the body, or spiritual death, when a person separates himself from the truth of God's Word.

Spiritual dumpster-diving, as I've pointed out, seems reasonable to many. But it is ultimately a rejection of the sufficiency of what God has communicated to mankind. It is based upon the false belief that God's truth can be generated by finite and sinful humanity, e.g., "All truth is God's truth."

Scripture makes it clear that this cannot happen: "O, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgements, and His ways past finding out! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been His counsellor? Or who has first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed to him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen (Romans 11:33-36)." 



by J. Lee Grady

WE can learn an important lesson from the East African Revival, which transformed a region 80 years ago.

The people of Uganda call it *Balokole*. In the Luganda language it means "the saved ones," but the word became synonymous with the East African Revival—one of the most significant Christian movements in modern history.

This revival had humble beginnings in September, 1929, just before America's Great Depression. Historians trace it to a prayer meeting on Namirembe Hill in Kampala, Uganda, where a missionary to Rwanda, Joe Church, prayed and read the Bible for two days with his friend Simeoni Nsibambi. They felt God had showed them that the African church was powerless because of a lack of personal holiness.

It is impossible to explain exactly what happened after this prayer meeting or how the resulting spiritual fervor spread. When God comes, unusual things happen. Within weeks after the Rev. Church returned to Gahini, Rwanda, Christians gathered to pray and confess their sins openly. A heavy spirit of conviction fell on the people. Whenever they repented for their sins and failures they would weep uncontrollably, ask others to forgive them and pledge to make restitution.

The weeping spread to farmlands and open fields. Unbelievers who visited these gatherings were converted after they witnessed the sincerity of the Christians. Repentance went deep. Husbands publicly apologised for adultery and farmers repented for stealing cows from each other. Eventually, as the revival spread from Rwanda to Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania

and Burundi, even the centuries-old tradition of polygamy (which was still common among professing Christians) was unraveled in some areas.

Balokole changed African Christianity forever. In a 1986 article for Christian History, Michael Harper writes of the revival: "Its effects have been more lasting than almost any other revival in history, so that today there is hardly a single Protestant leader in East Africa who has not been touched by it in some way."

I spent time recently ministering in Uganda and Kenya – and everywhere I went I met people who still talk about the East African Revival – 80 years after it began. It breathed resurrection power into dead, traditional churches and triggered aggressive church-planting movements that affected a variety of denominations.

Whether sermons were delivered from pulpits or under trees, six important themes were emphasised in those days:

- 1) the blood of Jesus;**
- 2) the name of Jesus;**
- 3) the cross of Jesus;**
- 4) the Word of God;**
- 5) the testimony of the saints; and**
- 6) the anointing of the Holy Spirit.**

Leaders also stressed the message of 1 John 6&7: "If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His son cleanses us from all sin."

As was true in other spiritual awakenings in history (such as the

Asbury Revival in Kentucky in 1970), people stood in front of each other and admitted their sins, no matter how embarrassing. The honesty cut deep into human pride and dealt a fatal blow against entrenched sin and religious hypocrisy.


After hearing more details about the East African Revival while I was in Uganda, I was convinced that this type of movement is the only thing that will pull the world out of its current despair.

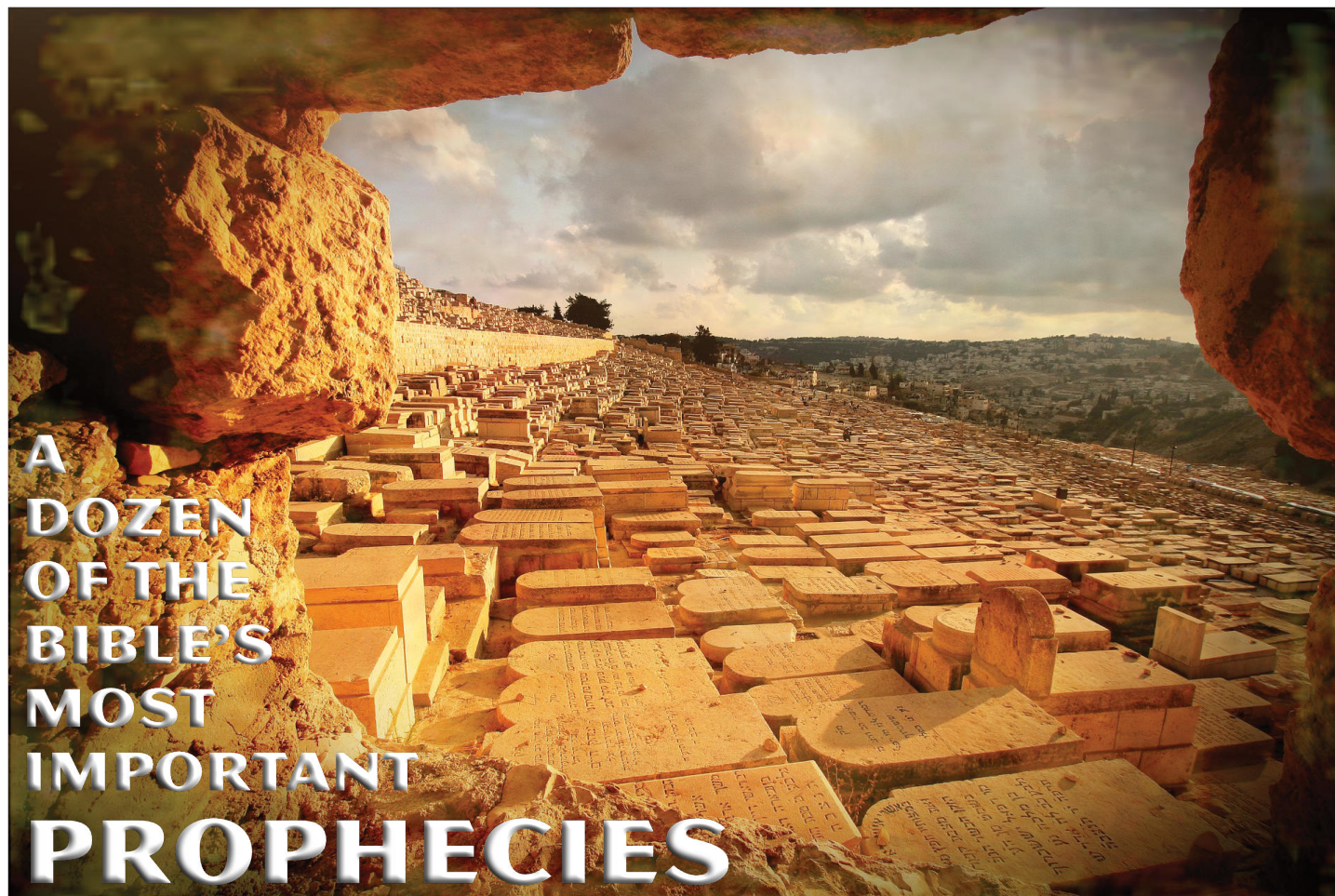
We must have a spiritual awakening, or we die. Political engineering, economic policies, government bailouts and stimulus packages will not save us. No politician, Democrat or Republican, will reverse our course toward destruction.

Our only hope is that a backslidden church – a church that is as smug, blind and lukewarm as the Laodiceans – will "be zealous and repent (see Revelation 3:19)."

What encourages me is that God, not man, initiated all the spiritual awakenings of the past –including the First Great Awakening, which gave America its historic Christian identity. Yes, we play our feeble part by praying, and we must storm heaven. Yes, awakenings come in response to our weak attempts to repent, and we must passionately seek a fresh baptism of holiness.

But we cannot manufacture revivals. Pentecostal fire comes from heaven alone. It is a sovereign blessing from a God who loves us and desires to rescue us from ourselves. We have generated a lot of our own sound and fury in the past 30 years, but much of what we have created is a shameful substitute for revival. We must become desperate for the real thing.

Today the church is mired in the shallow waters of self-centred, carnal Christianity. May God mercifully send us our own version of *Balokole*. May gut-wrenching repentance and public confession of sin interrupt our trendy worship services. May this holy fire spread until the people around us see genuine Christians living the message we preach. 



A DOZEN OF THE BIBLE'S MOST IMPORTANT PROPHECIES

by Dr David R. Reagan, [Lamb & Lion Ministries](#)

I WRESTLED long and hard over the title of this article. I originally planned to call it “The 12 Most Important Bible Prophecies.” But that would be highly debatable. There are just so many very important Bible prophecies. So, I finally settled on a title that suggested a dozen of the most important, but not necessarily the most important.

My selection of the prophecies to feature, as you will see, was guided by their relevance to the Messiah. And this decision was driven by the statement in Revelation 19:10 that “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” I have not listed the prophecies in the order of their importance. Rather, they are listed in chronological order as they relate to the life of Jesus.

1 The Promise of a Messiah

Genesis 3:15 – “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise Him on the heel.”

This is the Bible’s very first Messianic prophecy. These words were spoken by God to Satan after he had tempted

Adam and Eve to sin against Him. It is a remarkable statement of God’s unfathomable grace.

Despite their rebellion, God reveals that He will provide a way of reconciliation with Him through the seed of woman, referring, of course, to a Messiah who would be born of a virgin.

He states that Satan will “bruise” the Messiah “on the heel” (a non-lethal wound represented by the Cross – non-lethal in the sense that it was overcome through the Resurrection.) But He further states that the Messiah will “bruise” Satan “on the head” (the lethal wound at the Messiah’s Second Coming when Satan will be bound and ultimately cast into the Lake of Fire at the end of the Messiah’s millennial reign).

2 The Lineage of the Messiah

Genesis 12:1-3 – “Now the Lord said to Abram, ‘Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father’s house, to the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.’”

In this prophecy, God reveals the

lineage of the Messiah. He will come from the descendants of Abraham, which would become the Jewish people.

Further, the Messiah will prove to be a blessing to all the world, and not just the Jewish people through whom He will be revealed. And because the Messiah will be of Jewish ancestry, God will honour the Jewish people by making them a great nation and protecting them throughout the ages to come, blessing those who bless them and cursing those who curse them.

3 Birth & Nature of the Messiah

Micah 5:2 – “But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.”

This prophecy was written 700 years before the birth of Jesus, yet it precisely identifies the town where the Messiah would be born. And when I say precisely, I mean just that. Notice that it does not just say Bethlehem, but Bethlehem Ephrathah.

You see, there were two Bethlehems in Judah at the time of the Messiah’s birth. One was in the north near the Sea of Galilee. The other was located near Jerusalem in the region of Ephrathah.

Further, and often overlooked, is the fact that this prophecy proclaims that the Messiah will be an eternal being, indicating that He will be God in the flesh.

4 The Timing of the Messiah’s Coming

Daniel 9:24-26 – “Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place. So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.”

This is the famous “70 Weeks of Years” prophecy of Daniel. Basically, what it is saying is that during a period of 70 weeks of years, or 490 years, God is going to accomplish six purposes among the Jewish people. At the end of 69 of those weeks, or 483 years, the Messiah will come and “be cut off,” followed by the destruction of the city of Jerusalem.

Scholars disagree as to the starting point of the countdown of these years. That’s because there were several decrees issued concerning the rebuilding of Jerusalem. They also disagree as to the ending point because some use regular solar years and others use lunar years of 360 days. But regardless of the starting point and the years used, the end of the 49 weeks of years leading up to the revelation of the Messiah all fall within the lifetime of Jesus.

So, this is a prophecy that clearly revealed the season of the First Coming. And since the six goals for the Jewish people have not yet been accomplished, we know that there is a gap in the prophecy and that the last seven years are yet to be fulfilled and will be fulfilled during the seven year period of the Great Tribulation.

5 The Nature of the Messiah’s Ministry

Isaiah 61:1&2a – “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has

anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners; to proclaim the favourable year of the Lord...”

This is a prophecy about the nature of the Messiah’s ministry at His First Coming. He would bring “good news” or the Gospel to those afflicted with sin and in need of reconciliation with God, the Father. That good news will provide liberation from the bondage of sin and provide hope and joy to the brokenhearted.

6 The Suffering of the Messiah

Isaiah 53:3-5,7,9 – “He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief... Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried... He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed... He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter... His grave was assigned with wicked men, yet He was with a rich man in His death, because He had done no violence, nor was there any deceit in His mouth.”

Because this prophecy so clearly and precisely describes the suffering that Jesus experienced right before His crucifixion, Jews will not allow it to be read in their synagogues. It is the passage that Philip the Evangelist used to convert the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-39).

7 The Messiah’s Death

Psalms 22:16 – “They pierced My hands and My feet...”

The first 21 verses of this psalm describe the crucifixion of the Messiah and the terrible physical, mental and spiritual suffering He would endure on the Cross. David wrote this psalm 1 000 years before the birth of Jesus. At that time, there was only one way of executing someone under Jewish law, and that was by stoning.

A thousand years later, that was still the case, but at the time of Jesus, the nation of Israel was under Roman rule, and the Jews no longer had the power of execution. They were required to get Roman permission, and the Romans executed by means of crucifixion.

This has to be one of the most incredible prophecies in all the Word of God. Further the prophecy implies the resurrection between verses 21 and 22. That’s because in verse 21 the Messiah is crying out to God the Father for deliverance, and in the next three verses, He is praising His Father for His deliverance.

The rest of the psalm (verses 25-31) presents prophecies about the Lord’s millennial reign.

8 The Messiah’s Resurrection

Luke 9:21-22 – “He (Jesus) answered them (the disciples), and instructed them not to tell this to anyone, saying, ‘The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.’”

This prophecy of Jesus about His death and resurrection was presented to His disciples several times and is also recorded in two of the other Gospels (Matthew 16:21 and Mark 8:31). The prophesied resurrection of the Messiah is also mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures in Psalm 16:10 where David wrote: “You (God) will not allow Your Holy One (the Messiah) to undergo decay.”

9 The Messiah’s Church

Matthew 16:18 – “I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.”

In this statement, Jesus prophesies the establishment of His Church upon Peter’s confession that He (Jesus) is “the Messiah, the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:16).” This prophecy was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost following Jesus’ crucifixion, burial and resurrection when Peter preached the first Gospel sermon and 3 000 people responded.

The prophecy has continued to be fulfilled over the past 2 000 years as Jesus has sustained the Church through constant harassment and persecution.

10 The Messiah’s Appearance for His Church

1 Thessalonians 4:16&17 – “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds

to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.”

These comforting words are taken from the New Testament’s most explicit passage about the Rapture of the Church – specifically, the day when Jesus will appear in the heavens and take all Church Age saints out of the world, both the living and the dead. Other passages make it clear this will happen before the Great Tribulation begins.

11 The Messiah’s Second Coming and Reign

Zechariah 14:1-9 – “Behold, a day is coming... I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city. Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle. In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south... And in that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter. And the Lord will be king over all the earth; in that day the Lord will be the only one, and His name the only one.”

The vast majority of Christians in the world today attend churches that teach the Amillennial viewpoint about the end times – a view that says Jesus will never return to this earth to reign over all the nations in the world. Instead, He will just appear in the heavens and take all believers back to Heaven with Him.

But this passage specifically prophesies that the Messiah will return to the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem and will become King over all the earth. The book of Revelation says the same thing in chapter 20 and states six times that the reign will last a thousand years.

12 The Messiah’s Eternal Reign

Revelation 21:1-4 – “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away... And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her

husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed

away.’”
Believers will live eternally in new bodies in a new Jerusalem located on a new earth. The curse will be abolished. All pain, suffering and death will cease to exist. And God the Father and His Son, the Messiah Jesus, will come to earth and live in our presence. Hallelujah!✠

22 Self-Examination Questions

These are 22 questions the members of the Holy Club, to which John Wesley belonged, asked themselves each day as a part of their daily devotions.

- 1. Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I really am?
- 2. Am I honest in all my acts and words, or do I exaggerate?
- 3. Do I confidentially pass on to another what was told to me in confidence?
- 4. Can I be trusted?
- 5. Am I a slave to dress, friends, work or habits?
- 6. Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying?
- 7. Did the Bible live in me today?
- 8. Do I give it time to speak to me every day?
- 9. Am I enjoying prayer?
- 10. When did I last speak to someone else about my faith?
- 11. Do I pray about the money I spend?
- 12. Do I get to bed on time and get up on time?
- 13. Do I disobey God in anything?
- 14. Do I insist upon doing something about which my conscience is uneasy?
- 15. Am I defeated in any part of my life?
- 16. Am I jealous, impure, critical, irritable, touchy or distrustful?
- 17. How do I spend my spare time?
- 18. Am I proud?
- 19. Do I thank God that I am not as other people, especially as the Pharisee who despised the publican?
- 20. Is there anyone whom I fear, dislike, disown, criticise, hold a resentment toward or disregard?
- 21. Do I grumble or complain constantly?
- 22. Is Christ real to me?



I have laboured in vain

by David Wilkerson

WOULD it shock you to know that Jesus experienced the feeling of having accomplished little?

In Isaiah 49:4 we read these words: “Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain.” Note that these are not the words of Isaiah, who was called by God at a mature age. No, they are Christ’s own words, spoken by One called from the womb; “from the body of my mother... the Lord formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, (and to gather Israel) (49:1, 5).”

When I came upon this passage, one that I’d read many times before, my heart was in wonder. I could hardly believe what I was reading.

Jesus’ words here about labouring in vain were a response to the Father who had just declared, “Thou art my servant in whom I will be glorified (49:3).” We read Jesus’ surprising response in the next verse: “I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought (49:4).”

After reading this, I stood to my feet in my study and said, “How wonderful. I can hardly believe that Christ was this vulnerable, confessing to the Father that he was experiencing what we humans face. In his humanity, he tasted the same discouragement, the same despondency, the same woundedness. He was having the same thoughts I’ve had about my own life:

“This isn’t what I perceived was promised. I wasted my strength. It has all been in vain.”

Reading those words made me love Jesus all the more. I realised Hebrews 4:15 is not just a cliché: our Saviour truly is touched with the feelings of our infirmities, and was tempted in all ways as we are, yet without sin. He’d known this very same temptation from Satan, hearing the same accusing voice: “Your mission is not accomplished. Your life has been a failure. You’ve got nothing to show for all your labours.”

Christ came into the world to fulfil the will of God by reviving Israel. And he did just as he was commanded. But Israel rejected him: “He came unto his own, and his own received him not (John 1:11).”

Why would Jesus, or any man or woman of God, speak such despairing words as these: “I have laboured in vain?” How could the Son of God make such a statement? And why have generations of faithful believers been reduced to such despondent words? It is all the result of measuring little results against high expectations.

You may think, “This message sounds like it applies just to ministers, or to those called to do some great work for God. I can see it being meant for missionaries or the Bible prophets. But what does it have to do with me?” The truth is, we’re all called to one grand, common purpose, and to one ministry: that is, to be like Jesus. We are called to grow in his likeness, to be changed into his express image.✠

The marks of the presence of the Holy Spirit

by J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)

“If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him (Romans 8:9).”

Beware of supposing that a man may have the Spirit when there is no outward evidence of His presence in the soul. It is a dangerous and unscriptural delusion to think so. We must never lose sight of the broad principles laid down for us in Scripture: “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth (1 John 1:6).” “In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God (3:10).”

There are people who boast of having a saving interest in Christ, and say they are pardoned and forgiven, while at the same time they live in wilful sin and open breach of God’s commandments. The true believer in Christ is “dead to sin.” Every person who has a real hope in Christ “purifies himself, even as He is pure (1 John 3:3).”

I charge my readers to remember that the effects, which the Spirit produces, are the only trustworthy evidences of His presence. To talk of the Holy Spirit dwelling in you and yet being unseen in your life, is wild work indeed. It confounds the first principles of the Gospel – it confounds light and darkness – nature and grace – conversion and unconversion – faith and unbelief – the children of God and the children of the devil.

There is only one safe position in this matter. There is only one safe answer to the question, “How shall we decide who have the Spirit?” We must take our stand on the old principle laid down by our Lord Jesus Christ, “By their fruits you will know them (Matthew 7:20).”

Where the Spirit is there will be fruit – he who has no fruit of the Spirit has not the Spirit. A work of the Spirit unfelt, unseen, inoperative, is a great delusion. Where the Spirit really is He will be felt, seen, and known.

Just as you know the compass-needle to be magnetised by its turning to the north – just as you know there is life in a tree by its sap, buds, leaves and fruits – just as you know there is a steersman on board a ship by its keeping a steady regular course – just so you may know the Spirit to be in a man’s heart by the influence He exercises over his thoughts, affections, opinions, habits, and life.

Five Specific Marks

But what are the specific fruits by which the presence of the Spirit in the heart may be known? I find no difficulty in answering that question. The Holy Spirit always works after a certain definite pattern.

Just as the bee always forms the cells of its comb in one regular hexagonal shape, so does the Spirit of God work on the heart of man with one uniform result. His work is the work of a master. The world may see no beauty in it – it is foolishness to the natural man. But “he who is spiritual judges all things (1 Corinthians 2:15).”

A well-instructed Christian knows well the fruits of the Spirit of God. Let me briefly set them before you in order. They are all clear and unmistakable, “plain to him who understands, and right to those who find knowledge (Proverbs 8:9).”

(1) Where the Holy Spirit is, there will always be **deep conviction of sin, and true repentance for it.**

It is His special office to convince of sin (John 16:8). He shows the exceeding holiness of God. He teaches the exceeding corruption and infirmity of our nature. He strips us of our blind self-righteousness. He opens our eyes to our awful guilt, folly and danger. He fills the heart with sorrow, contrition, and abhorrence for sin, as the abominable thing which God hates.

(2) Where the Holy Spirit is, there will always be **lively faith in Jesus Christ, as the only Saviour.**

It is His special office to testify of Christ, to take of the things of Christ and show them to man (John 16:15). He leads the soul which feels its sin to Jesus and the atonement made by His blood. He shows the soul that Christ has suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. He points out to the sin-sick soul that we have only to receive Christ, believe in Christ, commit ourselves to Christ, and pardon, peace, and life eternal, are at once our own.

He makes us see a beautiful fitness in Christ’s finished work of redemption to meet our spiritual necessities. He makes us willing to disclaim all merit of our

own and to venture all on Jesus, looking to nothing, resting on nothing, trusting in nothing but Christ – Christ “delivered for our offences, and... raised again for our justification (Romans 4:25).”

(3) Where the Holy Spirit is, there will always be **holiness of life and conversation.**

He is the Spirit of holiness (Romans 1:4). He is the sanctifying Spirit. He takes away the hard, carnal, worldly heart of man, and puts in its place a tender, conscientious, spiritual heart, delighting in the Word of God.

He makes a man turn his face towards God, desire above all things to please Him, and turn his back on the fashion of this world, and no longer make that fashion his god. He sows in a man’s heart the blessed seeds of “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance,” and causes these seeds to spring up and bear pleasant fruit (Galatians 5:22&23).

(4) Where the Holy Spirit is, there will always be **the habit of earnest private prayer.**

He is the Spirit of grace and supplication (Zechariah 12:10). He works in the heart as the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry “Abba, Father.” He makes a man feel that he must cry to God, and speak to God – feebly, falteringly, weakly, it may be – but cry he must about his soul. He makes it as natural to a man to pray as it is to an infant to breathe; with this one difference – that the infant breathes without an effort, and the new-born soul prays with much conflict and strife.

(5) Finally, where the Holy Spirit is, there will always be **love and reverence for God’s Word.**

He makes the new-born soul desire the sincere milk of the Word, just as the infant desires its natural food. He makes it “delight in the law of the Lord (1 Peter 2:2; Psalm 1:2).” He shows man a fullness, and depth, and wisdom, and sufficiency, in the Holy Scripture, which is utterly hid from a natural man’s eyes. He draws him to the Word with an irresistible force, as the light and lantern, and manna, and sword, which are essential to a safe journey through this world.

I place these five grand marks of the Spirit’s presence before my readers, and

confidently claim attention to them. I believe they will bear inspection. Repentance toward God – faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ – holiness of heart and life – habits of real private prayer – love and reverence toward God’s Word – these are the real proofs of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in a man’s soul. Where He is, these marks will be seen. Where He is not, these marks will be lacking.

If You Have Not the Spirit...

I desire to wind up all I have been saying by a few words of direct personal application.

Let me, in the first place, give an earnest invitation to all who feel that they have not the Spirit. That invitation is short and simple. Go and cry to God this day in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and pray for the Holy Spirit to be poured down on your soul.

There is every possible encouragement to do this. There is warrant of Scripture for doing it.

“Turn you at My reproof: behold I will pour out My Spirit unto you. I will make known My words unto you (Proverbs 1:23).”

“If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him (Luke 11:13)?”

There is warrant in the experience of thousands for doing it. Thousands will rise at the last day, and testify that when they prayed they were heard, and when they sought grace, they found it. Above all, there is warrant in the person and character of our Lord Jesus Christ. He waits to be gracious. He invites sinners to come to Him. He rejects none who come.

“But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name (John 1:12).”

Go then to Jesus, as a needy, wanting, humble, contrite sinner, and you shall not go in vain. Cry to Him mightily about your soul, and you shall not cry to no purpose. Confess to Him your need, and guilt, and fear, and danger, and He will not despise you. Ask, and you shall receive. Seek, and you shall find. Knock and it shall be opened to you. I testify to the chief of sinners this day, that there is

enough in Christ, and to spare, for your soul. Come, come – come, this very day. Come to Christ.

If You Have the Spirit...

Let me, in the next place, give a parting word of exhortation to all readers who have received the Spirit of Christ – to the penitent, the believing, the holy, the praying, the lovers of the Word of God. That exhortation shall consist of three simple things.

For one thing, **be thankful for the Spirit.** For another thing, **be filled with the Spirit.** Seek to be more and more under His blessed influence. Strive to have every thought, and word, and action, and habit, brought under obedience to the leadings of the Holy Spirit.

Do not grieve Him by inconsistencies and conformity to the world. Quench Him not by trifling with little infirmities and small besetting sins. Seek rather to have Him ruling and reigning more completely over you every week that you live.

Pray that you may yearly grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. This is the way to do good to the world. An eminent Christian is a lighthouse – seen far and wide by others, and doing good to myriads, whom he never knows. This is the way to enjoy much inward comfort in this world, to have bright assurance in death, to leave broad evidences behind us, and at last to receive a great crown.

Finally, **pray daily for a great outpouring of the Spirit on the church and on the world.** This is the grand need of the day – it is the thing that we need far more than money, machinery, and men. The “company of preachers” in Christendom is far greater than it was in the days of Paul; but the actual spiritual work done in the earth, in proportion to the means used, is undoubtedly far less.

We need more of the presence of the Holy Spirit – more in the pulpit, and more in the congregation – more in the pastoral visit, and more in the school. Where He is, there will be life, health, growth, and fruitfulness. Where He is not – all will be dead, tame, formal, sleepy, and cold. Then let everyone who desires to see an increase of pure and undefiled religion, pray daily for more of the presence of the Holy Spirit in every branch of the visible church of Christ. ☞



Prayer

by Leonard Ravenhill (1907-1994)

THERE is nothing more transfiguring than prayer. People often ask, “Why do you insist on prayer so much?” The answer is very simple – because Jesus did.

You could change the title of the Gospel according to St Luke to the Gospel of Prayer. It is the prayer life of Jesus. The other evangelists say that Jesus was in the Jordan and the Spirit descended on Him as a dove – Luke says it was **while He was praying** that the Spirit descended on Him. The other evangelists say that Jesus chose 12 disciples – Luke says it was after He spent **a night in prayer** that He chose 12 disciples. The other evangelists say that Jesus died on a cross – Luke says that even when He was dying **Jesus was praying** for those who persecuted Him. The other evangelists say Jesus went on a mount and He was transfigured – Luke says it was **while He was praying** that He was transfigured.

There is nothing more transfiguring than prayer.

The Scriptures say that the disciples went to bed, but Jesus went **to pray** – as was His custom. It was His custom to pray. Now Jesus was the Son of God – He was definitely anointed for His ministry. If Jesus needed all that time in prayer, don’t you and I need time in prayer? If Jesus needed it in every crisis, don’t you and I need it in every crisis?

The story goes that a group of tourists visiting a picturesque village saw an old man sitting by a fence. In a rather patronising way, one of the visitors asked, “Were any great men born in this village?” Without looking up the old man replied, “No, only babies.” The greatest men were once babies. The greatest saints were once toddlers in the things of the Spirit.

Charles H. Spurgeon was converted at the age of 16 and began preaching in

London at the age of 19. When he was 27, they built him a tabernacle seating 6 000 which he packed twice on Sundays – that’s 12 000 – and once on Thursday nights. How? He waited on God. He got alone with God. He studied... and he prayed.

Desperate Prayer

God makes all His best people in loneliness. Do you know what the secret of praying is? **Praying in secret.** “*But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, and when you have shut your door (Matthew 6:6)...*” You cannot show off when the door is shut and nobody is there. You cannot display your gifts. You can impress others, but you cannot impress God.

First Samuel 1:1-15 gives an account of the yearly trip Elkanah and his wife, Hannah, made to Shiloh to worship and sacrifice to the Lord. During this time, Hannah had been distressed that she was not able to bear a son for her husband. This passage of Scripture gives quite a descriptive account of her time in prayer concerning the barrenness of her womb. It says that Hannah wept. More than this, she wept until she was sore. She poured out her soul before the Lord. Her heart was grieving; she was bitter of soul, provoked, and of a sorrowful spirit.

Now that is a pretty good list of afflictions – sorrow, hardship, and everything else that came upon this woman. But the key to the whole situation is that she was a **praying woman**. In verse 20 it says that she reaped her reward. “*And it came about in due time, after Hannah had conceived, that she gave birth to a son; and she named him Samuel, saying ‘Because I have asked him of the Lord.’*”

Now I say very often – and people don’t like it – that God doesn’t answer prayer. He answers **desperate** prayer! Your

prayer life denotes how much you depend on your own ability, and how much you really believe in your heart when you sing, “Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling.”

The more self-confidence you have, the less you pray. The less self-confidence you have, the more you **have** to pray.

What does the Scripture say? It says that God takes the lowly, the things that are not. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:28 that God takes the things that are not to bring to nothing the things that are, so that no flesh should glory in His presence.

We need a bunch of “are nots” today.

The Language of the Poor

Prayer is the language of the poor. Over and over again, David, the King of Israel, says, “*Incline Thine ear, O Lord, and answer me; for I am afflicted and needy (Psalm 86:1).*” And do you remember that one of the greatest psalms he wrote says, “*This poor man cried and the Lord heard him (Psalm 34:6)...*”

The Apostle Paul overwhelms me with his spirituality, his pedigree, his colossal intellect. Yet he says that he is very conscious that when he is weak, he is strong. He was always trying to prove to himself and to others that he was a nobody.

True prayer is a two-way communication. I speak to God and God speaks to me. I don’t know how the Spirit makes communication – or why God needs me to pray – but that is how God works.

“Get Up and Pray!”

One day I was at a conference with Dr. V. Raymond Edman of Wheaton College, one of the greatest Christian educators in this country. He told us of an experience he had while he was in Ecuador as a missionary. He had not been there long before he was sick and

dying. He was so near death that they had already dug his grave. He had great beads of sweat on his brow and there was a death rattle in his throat. But suddenly he sat straight up in bed and said to his wife, “Bring me my clothes!” Nobody knew what had happened.

Many years later he was retelling the story in Boston. Afterward, a little old lady with a small, dog-eared, beaten-up book, approached him and asked, “What day did you say you were dying? What time was it in Ecuador? What time would it be in Boston?” When he answered her, her wrinkled face lit up. Pointing to her book, she said, “There it is, you see? At 2 a.m. God said to get up and pray – the devil’s trying to kill Raymond Edman in Ecuador.”

And she got up and prayed.

Duncan Campbell told the story of hearing a farmer in his field who was praying. He was praying about Greece. Afterward, he asked him why he was praying. The man said, “I don’t know. I had a burden in the spirit and God said, ‘You pray; there is someone in Greece that is in a bad situation.’ I prayed until I got a release.”

Two or three years later the farmer was in a meeting listening to a missionary. The man described a time when he was working in Greece. He had been in serious trouble. The time? Two or three years ago. The men compared notes and discovered that it was the very same day that God had burdened a farmer, on a little island off the coast of Scotland, to pray for a man in Greece whose name he didn’t even know.

It may seem the Lord gives you strange things. I don’t care. If the Lord tells you something, carry on with what the Lord tells you.

Who Shall Ascend to the Hill of the Lord?

There is another experience Duncan Campbell told about when he was working in Scotland.

“I couldn’t preach,” he said. “I couldn’t get through to God. The heavens were solid. It was as though there was a 10-foot ceiling of steel.” So he quit trying to preach. He asked a young man to pray. The boy stood up and said, “What is the use of praying if we are not right with God?” He quoted the 24th Psalm, “*Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord...?*”

You cannot approach God unless your hands are clean, which means your relationships with others are clean **and** your heart is clean. “*Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord... He who has clean hands and a pure heart (Psalm 24:3&4)...*”

After the boy recited Psalm 24 he began to pray. He prayed 10, 15, 20 minutes. Then he suddenly said, “Excuse me, Lord, while I resist the devil.” He turned around and began to tell the devil where to go and how to get there. He fought for all he was worth.

You talk about having on the armour of God and resisting the devil! When he finished resisting the devil, he finished his prayer. He prayed for 45 minutes! When he finished praying it was just as though God had pulled a little switch in heaven. The Spirit of God came down on that church, that community, on the dance hall at the other end of town, and the tavern on this end of town. Revival was born in that prayer!

At the end of Malachi it says, “*...And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly (that is the word I like, suddenly) come to His temple (3:1)...*”

Remember what it says about the shepherds? They were watching their flocks by night when **suddenly** there was the sound of the heavenly host. Do you remember a bunch of men that had been waiting in the upper room? **Suddenly** the Holy Spirit came on them in that room.

There is a date in history that I love very much. It was Wednesday, August 13, 1737. A little group of people in Moravia were waiting in a prayer meeting. At 11:00 **suddenly** the Holy Spirit came. Do you know what happened? The prayer meeting that began at 11:00 lasted 100 years!

That’s right. That prayer room was not empty for a century! It is the longest prayer among men and women that I know of. Even children six and seven years old travailed in prayer for countries the names of which they couldn’t even spell.

Why We Don’t Have Revival

In an old town in Ireland they will show you with reverence a place where four young men met night after night praying for revival. In Wales, there is a

place in the hills where three or four young men only 18 or 19 years old met and prayed night after night. They would not let God go; they would not take no for an answer. As far as humanly possible they prayed a revival into birth. If you are thinking of revival at your church without any inconvenience, forget it. Revival costs a lot.

I can give you one simple reason why we don’t have revival. Because we are content to live without it. We are not seeking God – we are seeking miracles, we are seeking big crusades, we are seeking blessings. In Numbers 11, Moses said to God, “You’re asking me to carry a burden I can’t handle. Do something or kill me!”

Do you love people enough to say, “God, send revival or kill me”? Do you think it is time we changed Patrick Henry’s prayer from, “Give me liberty or give me death,” to “Give me revival or let me die”?

In the 30th chapter of Genesis, Rachel goes to Jacob and throws herself down in despair. She says, “*Give me children or else I die.*” Are you willing to throw yourself down before God to seek the spiritual birth of spiritual children in our country?

People say, “I am filled with the Holy Spirit.” If the coming of the Spirit did not revolutionise your prayer life, you had better check on it. I am not so sure you got what God wanted you to get.

We have said that prayer changes things. No! Prayer does not change things. Prayer changes **people** and **they** change things. We all want Gabriel to do the job. God says do it yourself – with My sufficiency and My strength.

We need to get like this woman, Hannah. What did she do? She wept, she was grieved, she said she had a complaint, she fasted – and she prayed.

Jesus, the anointed of God, made prayer His custom. Paul, with his background and intellect, depended on prayer because he said he was weak. David, the king, called himself a poor man and cried to the Lord. Hannah prayed for a son and gave birth to a prophet. The prayers of a handful of young men sparked revival.

There is nothing more transfiguring than prayer. ☞

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by Ruth Paxson (1889-1949)

LOOKING out over the ocean I once saw distinctly both ends of a rainbow coming up out of the water, as it were, and forming an unbroken arch. Through this beautiful symbol the Holy Spirit interpreted to me the relationship faith has to grace in salvation as revealed in Ephesians 2:8 – “By grace you are saved through faith.”

The arch of salvation is all grace from the Godward side and all faith from the manward. God's grace is always perfect. But how imperfect is man's faith! Grace has provided in Christ all that is needed for a life of habitual spirituality.

But to make such salvation experiential, faith must appropriate the provision. Grace provides; faith possesses. Faith makes experiential what grace made potential to every believer.

God tells us that without faith it is impossible to please Him. Some of Christ's severest rebukes were to unbelief in His disciples. To have His presence, His words, His works fail to inspire faith grieved the Lord Jesus exceedingly.

You remember when He was in the ship and the storm arose and they cried out in fear. What a word of rebuke He spoke. Even though the tempest raged and the

waves dashed high and He was asleep, yet He was there. Why should they fear? Fear and faith are incompatible.

“And He said to them, ‘Why are you fearful, O you of little faith? Then He arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm (Matthew 8:26).’”

At another time Peter was walking on the water at the Lord's command. The wind became boisterous and Peter began to sink. But why should he doubt? Had not the Lord on the sea said, *“Come,”* and did not the power of His protection accompany the command? Doubt and faith are irreconcilable. If we have doubt we haven't faith; if we have faith we haven't doubt.

“And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said to him, O you of little faith, why did you doubt (Matthew 14:31)?”

The disciples had crossed the lake after witnessing Christ feed the multitudes with a few loaves and fishes. They were greatly concerned because they had forgotten to take bread. Why should that cause worry? Had they not just seen Him feed more than four thousand people with seven loaves and a few fishes with seven baskets full left over? Would He not be equal to furnishing an evening meal for twelve people if need be? Worry

and faith cannot dwell together.

“But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, ‘O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread? Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up? Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up (Matthew 16:8-10)?’”

Oh! how we crowd Him out of our lives by that triumvirate of evil – fear, doubt and worry! Failing health, financial losses, overwhelming burdens, tempests of affliction and adversity come upon us and we become insensible to His presence, doubt His Word and forget His works.

Some of Christ's sweetest words of commendation were called forth by faith, and strange to say they were spoken to those who knew Him the least. The centurion, whose servant lay sick, appealed to Christ to heal him. Christ promised to go to him. But the centurion answered, *“Lord... speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed (Matthew 8:8).”* Oh! the joy such faith brought to Jesus' heart and the sweet commendation to His lips, *“I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel (verse 10).”*

There is no record in God's Word and no instance in human experience where grace and love have failed to respond to faith and trust. God would be untrue to His nature, which is love, if He failed once to respond to real faith.

To some of you such faith may seem impossible. But faith is the simplest thing in the world. Faith is just looking unto Jesus Christ and taking Him at His word.

Why isn't it easy then to have faith? It is because we look at the difficulties instead of Christ, and the more we look at them the bigger they become. They shut Christ out of our vision. Faith in itself has no power whatsoever to save or to keep us, but it links us to Christ who has the power. Let us now consider two ways in which faith operates.

Faith Is Rooted in God's Great Facts

Walking along a wooded path in the mountains of Switzerland I saw an interesting tree. On a steep slope was a tall pine tree with a huge boulder lodged right underneath it, lifting the main trunk several feet from the ground. The tree was fairly sitting on top of the rock, yet it shot straight upward fifty feet.

How could such a position be maintained? The secret was not hidden from our view. The roots of the tree had spread themselves over that rock and had gone down, deep, deep into the earth around, so that even the boulder lodged at its very heart could not overturn or overwhelm it.

What a lesson it spoke! Afflictions, adversities, sufferings, sorrows, temptations, trials, doubts, disappointments roll in upon us. How can we go on in peace, patience and victory with such things in our life? Are they not enough to overwhelm us? No, not if faith spreads itself out over them and sends its roots down into the rich soil of God's great, eternal facts.

What are some of these facts? I can mention only a few, but I hope you will search God's Word and find many more of them for yourself.

God is love. *“He who does not love does not know God; for God is love (1 John 4:8).”* This is one of the greatest of God's eternal facts for us to root our faith in. It may seem as though God had forgotten or that His hand of chastening were too

heavy upon you. It may seem as though He had closed His eyes or deafened His ear. It may even seem as though He were altogether indifferent to the burden you carry and the heartache you endure. But, friends, it isn't so, for God is love and the love of God shines as the brightness of the sun, whether you are warmed and refreshed by its rays or not.

God's grace is sufficient. *“And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you: for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me (2 Corinthians 12:9).”*

God never promised that we would not have temptations and trials, but He did promise that with every temptation there would be a way of escape, and that with every trial there would be strength to endure. When our weakness is most pressing His strength is most perfect.

Christ is able to save to the uttermost

Perhaps some of you have said, “I cannot live a yielded life” – you thought of your non-Christian home, of your social circle with its gaiety and worldliness, of your business life with its temptations to dishonesty and graft, and you said, “I can't live a yielded life in such surroundings.” Yes, you can if you let the roots of faith reach into the soil of this eternal fact, “Christ is able to save to the uttermost (see Hebrews 7:25).” He has both the power to cleanse from sin and to keep from sinning.

Think of the boulders that rolled in upon the life of the Apostle Paul: stripes, stonings, shipwreck, perils, and persecutions of all kinds. But his faith spread itself over all these testings and trials and rooted itself in the eternal facts of God's love, grace and power, thus

O LORD, You Are...

my Light and my Salvation (Psa. 27:1)

my Strength and Song (Isa. 12:2)

my Hope and my Trust (Psa. 71:5)

my Help and my Deliverer (Psa. 70:5)

my Rock and my Fortress (Psa. 31:3)

my Stronghold and my Refuge (2 Sam. 22:3)

my Hiding Place and my Shield (Psa. 119:114)

my Defence and my God of mercy (Psa.

enabling him to grow up to magnificent spiritual stature. What the glorified Christ did for Paul He stands ready to do for you and me.

Faith Reckons on God's Faithfulness

Our faith may falter but His faithfulness never will. Peter failed Christ, but Christ's faithfulness to Peter remained unshaken. The heavenly Father cannot forget His promises nor can He deny Himself by failing to keep them. *“If we do not believe, yet He remains faithful: He cannot deny Himself (2 Timothy 2:13).”*

We may be ready to give up in defeat to the enemy, to lay down our task in sheer discouragement or even to take our hand from the plough and turn back altogether. But Christ is not dismayed or discouraged. He will not give up in despair. He acknowledges no victory on the devil's part. He has assumed responsibility for us and He remains faithful.

“Faithful is He who calls you, who also will do it (1 Thessalonians 5:24).”

In Switzerland I watched two girls cross a glacier. The path was not marked out; there were great gaping holes in the ice; they were not properly shod with spiked shoes. Yet they tripped along unafraid and in safety, because they were roped to one who knew how to avoid the dangers and surmount the difficulties of that icy path and they reckoned on the faithfulness of their guide.

Our pilgrim journey is beset with dangers and difficulties, but we need have no fear for we, too, are roped to a Guide, who is especially appointed by our Father to lead us safely the entire way. ☞

59:17)

my Strength and my Redeemer (Psa. 19:14)

my Glory and the One who lifts up my head (Psa. 3:3)

my exceeding Joy and the Help of my countenance (Psa. 43:4-5)

my King and my God (Psa. 84:3)

my Shepherd (Psa. 23:1), my Peace (Judg. 6:24) and my Provider (Gen. 22:14)

Three Faithful Wounds

by A. W. Tozer

“FAITHFUL are the wounds of a friend,” says the Holy Spirit in Proverbs 27:6. And lest we imagine that the preacher is the one who does the wounding, I want to quote Job 5:17&18: “Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects; Therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty. For He bruises, but He binds up; He wounds, but His hands make whole.”

You see, the one who does the wounding here is not the servant, but the Master Himself. So with that in our minds I want to talk to you about three faithful wounds of a friend.

In order to get launched into my message let me introduce a little lady who has been dead for about 600 years. She once lived and loved and prayed and sang in the city of Norwich, England. This little woman hadn't much light and she hadn't any way to get much light, but the beautiful thing about her was that, with what little biblical light she had, she walked with God so wonderfully close that she became as fragrant as a flower.

And long before Reformation times she was in spirit an evangelical. She lived and died and has now been with her Lord nearly 600 years, but she has left behind her a fragrance of Christ.

England was a better place because this little lady lived. She wrote only one book, a very tiny book that you could slip into your side pocket or your purse, but it's so flavourful, so divine, so heavenly that it has made a distinct contribution to the great spiritual literature of the world. The lady to

whom I refer is the one called the Lady Julian.

Before she blossomed out into this radiant, glorious life which made her famous as a great Christian all over her part of the world, she prayed a prayer and God answered. It is this prayer with which I am. The essence of her prayer was this:

“O God, please give me three wounds; the wound of **contrition** and the wound of **compassion** and the wound of **longing after God**.” Then she added this little postscript which I think is one of the most beautiful things I have ever read: “This I ask without condition.”

She wasn't dicker with God. She wanted three things and they were all for God's glory: “I ask this without condition, Father; do what I ask and then send me the bill. Anything that it costs will be all right with me.”

All great Christians have been wounded souls. It is strange what a wound will do to a man. Here's a soldier who goes out to the battlefield. He is full of jokes and strength and self-assurance; then one day a piece of shrapnel tears through him and he falls, a whimpering, beaten,

defeated man.

Suddenly his whole world collapses around him and this man, instead of being the great, strong, broad-chested fellow that he thought he was, suddenly becomes a whimpering boy again. And such have ever been known, I am told, to cry for their mothers when they lie bleeding and suffering on the field of battle. There is nothing like a wound to take the self-assurance out of us, to reduce us to childhood again and make us small and helpless in our own sight.

Many of the Old Testament characters were wounded men, stricken of God and afflicted indeed as their Lord was after them. Take Jacob, for instance. Twice God afflicted him; twice he met God and each time it came as a wound, and one time it came actually as a physical wound and he limped on his thigh for the rest of his life.

And the man Elijah – was he not more than a theologian, more than a doctrinarian? He was a man who had been stricken; he had been struck with the sword of God and was no longer simply one of Adam's race standing up in his own self-assurance; he was a man

who had had an encounter with God, who had been confronted by God and had been defeated and broken down before Him.

And when Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up, you know what it did to him. Or take the man Ezekiel, how he went down before his God and became a little child again. And there were many others.

Now the wounded man is a defeated man, I say; the strong, robust and self-confident Adam-man ceases to fight back any longer; he lays down his sword and surrenders and the wound finishes him.

Let's talk about these three wounds in their order.

Contrition

The first is the wound of contrition. Now I've heard for the last 30 years that repentance is a change of mind, and I believe it, of course, as far as it goes. But that's just what's the matter with us. We have reduced repentance to a change of mind.

It is a mental act, indeed, but I point out that repentance is not likely to do us much good until it ceases to be a change of mind only and becomes a wound within our spirit. No man has truly repented until his sin has wounded him near to death, until the wound has broken him and defeated him and taken all the fight and self-assurance out of him and he sees himself as the one who nailed his Saviour on the tree.

I don't know about you, but the only way I can keep right with God is to keep contrite, to keep a sense of contrition upon my spirit. Now there's a lot of cheap and easy getting rid of sin and getting your repentance disposed of. But the great Christians, in and out of the Bible, have been those who were wounded with a sense of contrition so that they never quite got over the thought and the feeling that they personally had crucified Jesus.

The great Bishop Ussher each week used to go down by the riverbank and there all Saturday afternoon kneel by a log and bewail his sins before his God. Perhaps that was the secret of his greatness.

Let us beware of vain and overhasty repentance, and particularly let us beware of no repentance at all. We are a sinful race, a sinful people, and until the knowledge has hit hard, until it has

wounded us, until it has got through and past the little department of our theology, it has done us no good.

A man can believe in total depravity and never have any sense of it for himself. Lots of us believe in total depravity who have never been wounded with the knowledge that we've sinned. Repentance is a wound I pray we may all feel.

Compassion

And then there's the wound of compassion. Now compassion is an emotional identification, and Christ had that in full perfection. The man who has this wound of compassion is a man who suffers along with other people.

Jesus Christ our Lord can never suffer to save us anymore. This He did, once for all, when He gave Himself without spot through the Holy Spirit to the Father on Calvary's cross. He cannot suffer to save us but He still must suffer to win us. He does not call His people to redemptive suffering. That's impossible; it could not be. Redemption is a finished work.

But He does call His people to feel along with Him and to feel along with those who rejoice and those who suffer. He calls His people to be to Him the kind of an earthly body in which He can weep again and suffer again and love again.

For our Lord has two bodies. One is the body He took to the tree on Calvary; that was the body in which He suffered to redeem us. But He has a body on earth now, composed of those who have been baptised into it by the Holy Spirit. In that body He would now suffer to win men. Paul said he was glad that he could suffer for the Colossians and fill up the measure of the afflictions of Christ in his body for the Church's sake.

Now, my brethren, I don't know whether I can make it clear or not. I know that things like this have to be felt rather than understood, but the wounded man is never a seeker after happiness. There is an ignoble pursuit of irresponsible happiness among us.

Over the last years, as I have observed the human scene and have watched God's professed people live and die, I have seen that most of us would rather be happy than to feel the wounds of other people's sorrows. I do not believe that it

is the will of God that we should seek to be happy, but rather that we should seek to be holy and useful.

The holy man will be the useful man and he's likely to be a happy man too; but if he seeks happiness and forgets holiness and usefulness, he's a carnal man. I, for one, want no part in carnal religious joy. There are times when it's sinful to be happy.

When Jesus our Lord was sweating it out there in the garden or hanging on the tree, He could not be happy. He was the “man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief (Isaiah 53:3).”

And the great saints of the past, who conquered and captured parts of the world for Jesus, when they were in travail were not happy. The woman, said Jesus, who is giving birth is not happy at the time of her travail, but as soon as the child is delivered she becomes happy because a man is born into the world. You and I are, in a sense, to be mothers in Israel, those through whom the Lord can suffer and grieve and love and pity again to bring children to birth.

Longing after God

Thirdly, there's the wound of longing after God. This little woman wanted to long after God with a longing that became a pain in her heart. She wanted to be lovesick. She prayed in effect, “O God, that I might want Thee so badly that it becomes a wound in my heart that I can't get over.”

Today, accepting Christ becomes terminal. That is the end. And all evangelism leads toward one thing – getting increased numbers of people to accept Christ, and there we put a full stop. My criticism of most of our Bible conferences is that we spend our time counting again the treasures that we have in Christ – but we never arrive at the place where any of that which is in Christ gets into us.

He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ, but you can no more buy food with the money still in the bank than you can live on the treasures that are in Christ unless they're also experientially in you.

So many of us say, “All right, I'll attend another conference,” or “I'll take a course,” or “I'll buy a book.” My friends, what we need is not more instruction; we've been instructed to death. But, oh,

Three Faithful Wounds

what weak creatures we are! What joyless people we are!

Note the paradoxes: to be happily forgiven and yet to be wounded and to remember the grief; to enjoy the peace of the finished work of Christ and yet suffer to win others; to find God and yet be always pursuing Him.

When Moses saw the glory of God he begged that he might see more. When God revealed to him that he had found grace, he wanted more grace. Remember this: The man that has the most of God is the man who is seeking the most ardently for more of God.

There was a man who talked about “a restless thirst, a sacred, infinite desire,” and that is what I want for my own heart.

Among the plastic saints of our times Jesus has to do all the dying and all we want is to hear another sermon about His dying; Jesus does all the sorrowing and we want to be happy.

But, my brethren, if we were what we



Lady Julian of Norwich

ought to be, we would seek to know in experience the meaning of the words, “Except a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone: but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit (John 12:24).”

I have been greatly and deeply concerned that you and I do something more than listen, that we dare to go to God like the Lady Julian and dare to ask Him to give us a faithful, fatherly wound – maybe three of them, if you please: to wound us with a sense of our own sinful

unworthiness that we’ll never quite get over; to wound us with the sufferings of the world and the sorrows of the Church; and then to wound us with the longing after God, a thirst, a sacred thirst and longing that will carry us on toward perfection.

We don’t need to have our doctrine straightened out; we’re as orthodox as the Pharisees of old. But this longing for God that brings spiritual torrents and whirlwinds of seeking and self-denial – this is almost gone from our midst.

I believe that God wants us to long for Him with the longing that will become lovesickness, that will become a wound to our spirits, to keep us always moving toward Him, always finding and always seeking, always having and always desiring. So the earth becomes less and less valuable and heaven gets closer as we move into God and up into Christ.

Dare we bow our hearts now and say, “Father, I’ve been an irresponsible, childish kind of Christian – more concerned with being happy than with being holy. O God, give me three wounds. Wound me with a sense of my own sinfulness. Wound me with compassion for the world, and wound me with love of You that will keep me always pursuing and always exploring and always seeking and always finding.”

If you dare to pray that prayer sincerely and mean it before God, it could mean a turning point in your life. It could mean a door of victory opened to you.

May God grant that it be so. 🙏

God’s word like a fire

FOR 33 years the Moravian missionaries of Labrador in Canada had toiled on amid such discouragements that they had begun seriously to consider the abandonment of their principal station at Hopedale. But one day in 1804, as a missionary was preaching from the text, “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10),” the words took powerful hold of a wretched abandoned woman, so sunk in every vice that she was despised and shunned even by her degraded countrymen.

She was filled with the deepest anguish on account of her sins, and spent the night in the huts occupied by the dogs, as though unworthy to associate with human beings.

The great word of the preacher, however, proved an aroma of life to her soul. She entered into sweet peace and immediately began to praise the Saviour in the most exultant strains for what He had done for her.

She became as a live coal in her village, from which the whole community was set on fire. Old and young were brought under powerful conviction. “In every hut the sound of singing and praying was audible, and the churches could not contain the numbers who flocked to hear the message of salvation.”

Those converted were moved at once to become missionaries to their lost countrymen, and so the work spread throughout the land.

This was Labrador’s Pentecost: it was kindled by a single text.

“Is not My word like a fire? says the Lord (Jeremiah 23:29).” 🙏

WATCH & PRAY

by Elizabeth Kendal

SUDAN: CHURCH ATTACKED; PASTOR JAILED

On Palm Sunday, April 10, three Islamic extremists attacked a church in Hajj Abd Allah, a town on the Blue Nile 250 km south-east of Khartoum in Gezira State. The believers were praying inside the church when the Muslims struck, destroying property and beating Pastor Estefanos/Stephanou and three women. All four required medical treatment.

Middle East Concern (MEC) reports (April 22): “A police officer among the extremists has also filed a court case against Pastor Estefanos for disturbing public order and a general noise complaint. Pastor Estefanos was detained but later released on bail.”

Morning Star News reports that on April 25, “Judge Awad Ibrahim Kury, a Muslim, found Pastor Stephanou Adil Kujo and (the lead attacker) Ibrahim Kodi guilty of disturbing the peace under Article 69 of Sudan’s 1991 penal code and sentenced them to one month in jail beginning April 25.” The Christians’ attorney, Shanabo Awad, said the pastor’s sentence is unfair and will be appealed. Please pray.

NIGERIA: PALM SUNDAY MASSACRE

On Palm Sunday, April 10 a huge contingent of armed Fulani Muslims stormed 10 unsuspecting, mixed but predominantly Christian, ethnic Berom communities in Plateau State’s historically peaceful Kanam Local Government Area (LGA). According to a report in Nigeria’s Daily Trust (April 13), the attackers arrived at around 11 a.m., on at least 70 motorcycles – each of which carried a driver and at least one shooter.

Not only were the terrorists armed with sophisticated weapons, but they displayed sophisticated planning, in that they blocked entry/exit points and destroyed telecommunications masts before unleashing their killing spree which continued unhindered until around 3 p.m. The killings were not entirely indiscriminate, for the terrorists only targeted men, leaving women and children alive, albeit traumatised and vulnerable. Most men were shot dead as they attempted to flee; others were killed in their homes.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (April 13) puts the toll at more than 142 dead, 156 injured and 70 abducted.

On Monday, April 11, 106 victims were given a mass burial. Nigerian media reports that more than 5 000 residents have been displaced, although “ethnically cleansed” might be a more accurate description. Please pray.

BELIEVERS JAILED AS DARKNESS LOOMS IN IRAN

On April 16 two Christian women – both Persian converts and house church leaders – commenced serving two-year prison terms. Sakineh (Mehri) Behjati and Fariba Dalir are charged with acting against national security by establishing and leading Christian house churches.

On April 9 three Christian men – all Persian converts – were sentenced to five year’s jail. Ahmad, Morteza and Ayoub are charged with engaging in propaganda and teaching deviant beliefs, even though the men had done nothing but attend a Christian house church for prayer and worship. They will appeal.

Meanwhile a bill currently before parliament would put Iran’s internet infrastructure and internet gateways under the control of the country’s security agencies and armed forces, crippling the ability of Christians to communicate about faith, or get Christian resources in and persecution news out. Please pray.

INDIA: PASTORS ON DEATH LIST IN SOUTH CHHATTISGARH

In January a public notice appeared in Chhattisgarh’s south-western Bijapur District demanding locals worship tribal gods and resist Christianity. The notice included a list of 22 “pastors” who it warned should stop pastoring and propagating Christianity or action would be taken against them.

On March 17 Maoist/Naxalite militants executed Pastor Yalam Shankar (58). A senior pastor and former village chief, Pastor Shankar’s name was second on the list. The region is predominantly populated by the animistic Gond tribe, the largest tribe in India. To win the Gond vote, the Hindu nationalist BJP presents Christianity as an existential threat and the anti-conversion

BJP as the solution. It is possible the Gond are using their Maoist/Naxalite contacts to eliminate Christian “pastors” suspected of “propagating Christianity.” There are still 21 pastors on that list. Please pray.

MORE CHRISTIANS KIDNAPPED AND KILLED IN KADUNA, NIGERIA

At 12:30 a.m. on Thursday March 17, Fulani militants attacked the predominantly Christian village of Agunu Dutse in Kachia Local Government Area in Kaduna’s south-west.

One resident was wounded and at least 46 adults and nine children were abducted. On Sunday evening March, 20 Fulani militants attacked four predominantly Christian villages in Kaura in Kaduna’s south-east. In a rampage that lasted several hours, the Fulani killed 34 people and torched over 200 houses, 32 shops, three vehicles and 17 motorcycles.

In both the Kachia and Kaura attacks, the Fulani arrived in large numbers, were highly organised and armed with sophisticated weapons. Boko Haram is doubtless involved. As Kaduna Christian leader, Reverend John Hayab, asks, “When will the killings of innocent people in Kaduna stop?” Please pray.

WATERSHED DAYS IN UKRAINE

Amidst obscene levels of death and destruction, Russia-Ukraine negotiations continue apace. Russia is demanding: (1) that Crimea be recognised as part of Russia, (2) that the Russian-speaking separatist regions of Donetsk and Luhansk be recognised as independent republics, and (3) that Ukraine amend its constitution to enshrine neutrality. Should this happen, then President Zelensky’s government would remain in place and Ukraine would retain its independence.

Having already given up on NATO membership, Kyiv says it is ready to negotiate on territory. Reasons why it is imperative that a ceasefire be brokered soon include the threats posed by: (1) nuclear weapons, (2) unsecured pathogens, and (3) an influx of pro-Russian and anti-Russian Muslim mercenaries, including battle-hardened Islamic jihadis. Please pray.



A Prayer For Revival

by J. C. Ryle

O GOD and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, pour down the Holy Spirit upon our country. Revive Your work among us. Increase true religion in the land, and especially in our own church.

Touch the hearts of the careless, the thoughtless and the unbelieving. Show them their sin, their guilt and their danger. Stir them up to think and grant them repentance.

May millions this year be converted. May millions seek Christ, believe and be saved. Arouse the hearts of all true Christians.

Fill them with true zeal for Your glory and for the spread of the Gospel. May they be more holy, more charitable and more diligent in trying to do good. May they pray much and often.

Pour down the Holy Spirit upon me. Let me not be deceived about the state of my own soul. Create in me a new heart. Show me what I am. Show me what You are. Show me Christ. Teach me to pray.

Lead me on. Build me up. Stablish me. Strengthen me. Perfect me. Increase my faith and hope and love. Grant that I may grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Pour down the Holy Spirit upon all congregations. May there be more life, earnestness and fervour in all our religious assemblies. Pour down the Holy Spirit upon all ranks and classes – upon the rich and upon the poor, upon the old and upon the young.

May there be more thinking, praying, Bible reading, holy living and diligence in the use of means of grace. May we feel more deeply the value of our own souls and care more for the souls of others.

Gracious Lord God, deal not with us according to our sins.

We confess with shame that we are a sinful, proud, ungrateful nation. But spare us according to Your mercy. Pour down Your Holy Spirit on us. Revive Your work and make us a nation fearing God and working righteousness.

We ask all for Jesus Christ's sake. 