

Prepare *the* Way

Issue No. 127

PREPARING THE BRIDE OF CHRIST FOR THE RETURN OF CHRIST

Peter Pollock:

Sin is serious

Let God search your heart

Holy cow!

The red heifer and the rebuilding of the temple

Prayer that shook the world

The miracle of a baby's first breath



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Prayer that shook the world

by Michael Edds

A SMALL group of people in 1898 met on Saturday evenings from 9 to 10 to pray. They met at the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago to cry out for an awakening.

Within a short time, the group grew to 300 passionate intercessors. A few members remained to agonise and intercede into the early hours of the Sabbath morning.

R.A. Torrey (pictured above) joined this small group to pray for a worldwide revival. During that intense intercession, Torrey asked God to send him around the world. Within a week of the close of the prayer meeting, two strangers approached Torrey and asked him to come to Melbourne, Australia to preach.

These two men had left Australia months before in search of a man that they believed God would use to bring revival to their nation. Upon meeting Torrey, they felt they had found God's man.

The result of that Chicago prayer meeting was an invitation for Torrey to come to Australia. Torrey arrived in Australia in 1902. Some 15 000 people tried to pack themselves into a building that could only seat 8 000 - and 8 000 conversions took place in that one meeting!

For six months, Torrey and Charles M. Alexander travelled from town to town preaching. Revival swept the nation. Torrey believed that the key to the awakening was prayer.

A lady in Melbourne read his book on Prayer. She was so moved by his teaching on the subject, that she organised her friends into prayer circles. The groups grew to 1 700 bands meeting regularly to pray for revival.

This move of God spread into Britain, Ireland and into other countries. By 1904, 30 000 of God's people were enrolled in daily prayer groups. Their prayer was "Revive thy work, Oh Lord." These prayers resulted in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in 1905 in Wales, Britain, America, in India and China.

Wales was rocked by a mighty awakening. London experienced a five-month long revival. A mighty choir of 4 000 made Londoners wonder what music must be like in Heaven!

It is estimated that Torrey and Alexander led more than 100 000 souls into the Kingdom of God. All this had its beginning in Chicago with a small group of people praying, "Revive thy work, Oh Lord!" May God raise up such prayer warriors in our day who will daily cry out, "Revive thy work, oh Lord!"



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Expecting and preparing

by Don MacIntyre

THE Bible talks about 10 virgins. Five were wise, five were foolish. The wise were prepared for the coming of the bridegroom. They were not slothful, nor did they treat lightly his soon return. They were diligent and worked, preparing enough oil for their lamps and as much extra as they were able to put aside.

The five foolish were not so. They knew he was coming. They had oil in their lamps but they did not want to do the extra labour required to have lots and lots of oil. They were happy with what they had and did not think it necessary to go so far as their five wise sisters.

But the groom tarried! The five foolish had not counted on that. Their lamps went out. True, they came suddenly to their senses, and became sober and quite earnest about their lack, but their last-minute efforts to get what they needed were too little, too late. While they were out, the long-awaited one returned unexpectedly, like "a thief in the night" and closed the door behind him. Only the five prepared virgins were kept. The unprepared were locked out...

Listen to the words of Peter and see how his words vibrate with preparation. *"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless*

we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless (2 Peter 3:9-14)."

Does that not ring with exhortation to prepare, diligently prepare, that we may be found in peace, without spot, and blameless?

Are you getting prepared for this greatest of all events? Have you been seeking God daily for Him to prepare you, purify you, cleanse you from every spot, every blameful thing, to fill you with His Spirit and cause His own fruit to blossom in your life? Are you putting off the things of this very temporary world and taking hold of the things of heaven, eternal things?

If your soul is being prepared to go to heaven, if that is where your heart is, then the things of Christ will increasingly become more important to you, gaining more and more of your attention, more of your time, more of your energy, and more of your efforts and thoughts. Whereas the things of this world, the allurements, entertainments, and earthly distractions will be fading and seem unimportant, even trivial.

Those are the signs of a people being prepared. Their prayer life will be gaining in intensity. The time alone with Jesus their Saviour will be time cherished, time longed for, time jealously guarded. God's Book will have replaced other books.

Time spent in study will be refreshing, strengthening, and leading them on to greater knowledge of Christ and deeper understanding of their own needs. The Bible will be alive. It will seem to permeate their mind, teaching them and encouraging them and changing them each day, preparing them.

There is no mistaking the prepared ones. Their hearts are full of God. They are just as full of yearning for God to

pour out His Holy Spirit upon this world to bring in the harvest of souls. Their prayers are full of names of loved ones, acquaintances, fellow workers and neighbours who still do not know God. They call for mercy upon these names, that the God of heaven would prepare them too for His great kingdom.

God is preparing His bride, the church of God, for her marriage!

Let us each be honest with ourselves and carefully, prayerfully, search our present life. We may have had an experience with God at one time in the past, but let us not look backward. Let us look at today, right now, as you read this. Do you feel the hand of God upon you as the lump of clay feels the hand of the Potter shaping, working, changing, moulding you into someone very different from what you used to be, someone more and more like Christ?

Do you feel closer to Him each day? Are the things of God – prayer, His Book and service to humanity – becoming more important to you? Do the things of this world fade more each day? Be honest. Search and see.

If you should find that in all sincerity you do not feel like someone being prepared, do not despair, for God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance and life and faith. Start there where God starts. Start at repentance.

Repent of any laziness on your part. Repent of your lack of urgency about your soul and heaven. Make straight paths for your feet. Ask God in all the earnestness you can, to purify you and prepare you, to expose to you by His Word your faults, your lacks, your errors. Most of all ask Him to cleanse you of them and make you more like Christ every day.

Get your heart clean. Ask Him to make you a fitting vessel for His temple, a home prepared for His Spirit. Keep at it. Take time, make time and be diligent about it as Paul was. He said, *"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:14)."* He pressed onward, *"looking for that blessed hope, and glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works (Titus 2:13&14)."*

To Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we could hope or ask or think (Ephesians 3:20), I commend you and yours. Amen.

This is us: John & Helen Gardiner, Peter Pollock, Garth Shillaw

E-mail: info@prepare.co.za

Phone & Whatsapp:

082 499 3174

Website: www.prepare.co.za

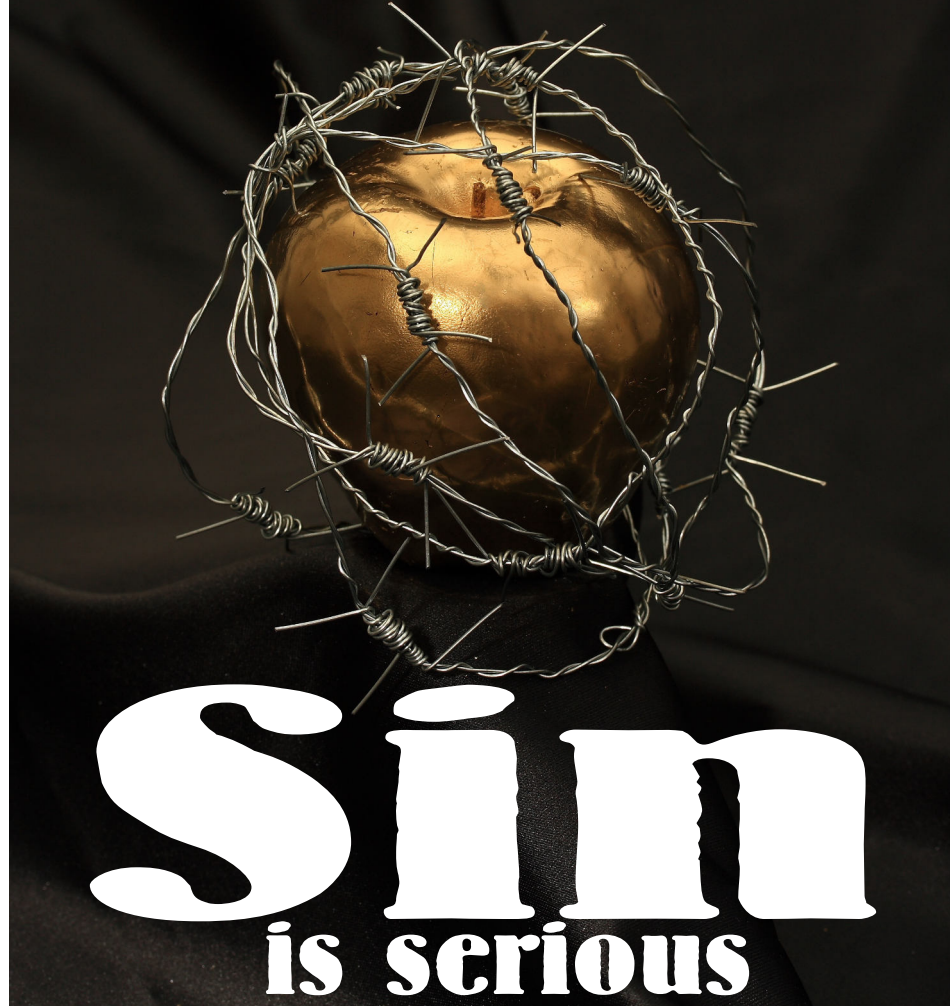
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by Peter Pollock

SHALL we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not, says Paul! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? That's the start of Romans Chapter 6. Midway through the chapter Paul tells us "not to let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts." And Paul winds up by reminding us that the "wages of sin is death" and we have been "set free" to become "slaves of righteousness."

Sadly, a couple of sentences that take a lifetime to even begin to understand!

I always thought I was a Christian – a typical nominal South African Christian, claiming a Presbyterian "CV" that included a grandfather who was the moderator of the organization. I never ever had a problem believing in God, accepting the Church and declaring that Jesus Christ is Lord.

I never got "born again," or was even told it was necessary – and that despite regular attendance at church and Sunday school. Forty years I spent in that "church" wilderness until one Sunday night sitting in front of the television I found myself drawn in by a Christian discussion program involving the late Stephen Grenfell, a well-known

Jesus Christ is alive and that the Gospel is for real!

In the light of that "revelation" the camera turned its focus on Grenfell. And as I looked at him sitting in his chair, he just got uglier and uglier.

One moment I was looking at him, but suddenly he was not there anymore. Instead, I saw myself sitting in his place. I saw myself for all my ugliness! I saw myself vividly as a pig sitting in the gutter, in all the muck and mire, and from down there having the audacity to look upwards and condemn Jesus Christ who I knew in that instant was for real.

It shook me to my very core! My whole life came before me. It's a bit of a shaker when worldly-wise you are well-known, respected and have been pretty successful. There in that TV lounge if anyone had been sitting on either side of me, they would not have seen a thing or heard a word. But for me, by the power of the Holy Spirit, I was faced by the greatest of all lifetime truths. I realised that foolishly I was trying to gain the world, something that I would never do, but tragically I was in the process of losing my soul. I was going to hell!

He had convicted me

The Holy Spirit had pointed out my ugly godlessness. The Holy Spirit had convicted me on sin, righteousness and judgement and had glorified Jesus.

I had come under conviction about my wretchedness and my sin. Yes, not the world's sin and evil but mine! And I was never ever to be the same again. I repented and made a commitment that night down at the bottom end of the garden but it took me some time to "own up" and confess to anybody.

At that time my wife had been reading a book on "inner healing." One evening I noticed the book lying open on the double-bed, a particular page glaring at me. I checked that Inez was not spying then sneaked a look.

Staring at me on that page were 60 words describing "sin." As I scanned the list, for the first time in my life I scored 100 percent in an examination. I was all of those words!

A week before my "experience," my "epiphany" in front of the TV set, I would have denied the lot. But now under the light and scrutiny of the Holy Spirit, I could not deny it. I was all those things. I panicked!

I went to the phone and contacted May Hauser, one of our good friends who was also a counsellor at the Church of the Good Shepherd. I read out the list and then said to her: "May, if I have to be without all these words to be a Christian I can never do it!"

There was a silence. Then May responded: "Peter, have you given your life to Jesus?" "Yes." "Praise God," she said, and then gave me the greatest piece of advice ever: "Peter, don't worry about those 60 words! You just keep your eyes on Jesus"

What hit me was that all those words were "inside" words. Words like hate, resentment, pride, lust, jealousy...

That's the real me! Not the me that I have presented to the world. I realised that only Jesus can come into your life and take those "words" out.

I thought I was a forgiving sort of guy. But how good was my forgiveness? Until the next argument!

For the first time I started to understand the words of Amazing Grace by John Newton, that slave-trading wretch who finally came to grips with his wretchedness and the true ugliness of sin.

God's grace is only amazing to those who have discovered or unearthed their own wretchedness and godlessness, and that why it is the Holy Spirit's job to do just that. Nobody even begins to know what sin is until becoming "born again." It is a spiritual revelation!

Evidence that I have been "delivered" from sin is that I know the real nature of sin in me and I am disgusted with myself. It certainly does knock out self-righteousness.

Paul, writing in the book of Romans laments "wretched man that I am." Not wretched man that I was but wretched man that I am, even as I am penning this profound letter.

The love of God working in me causes me to hate anything that is not in keeping with God's holiness. Walking in the light is like a moth drawn and attracted away from darkness to light.

Satan underplays sin! His clever, diabolical ploy is to soft-soap sin and hide the three great truths: 1. God hates sin. 2. Sin reaps consequences. 3. Sin is the sole cause of alienation from God.

Jesus said: The World hates Me! I expose sin! What the world does is evil!

It is sin! Light exposes sin, and is its brightest in the darkness!

"The world cannot hate you but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil," said Jesus (John 7:7). "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. If I had not come and spoken to them they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin." All said by Jesus in John 15:18-22. God hates sin!

"God is a just judge and God is angry with the wicked every day (Psalm 7:11)." The Lord is known by the judgement He executes – Psalm 9:16. Whoever commits sin is a slave to sin – John 8:34. And God, most absolutely, is not a doting father – read 2 Peter 2:4-10.

God detests it

The bottom line, without debate or questioning, is that God unreservedly hates, abhors and utterly detests sin!

In the Bible the word "hatred" underlines God's strong aversion to and rejection of evil. And it reaps a veritable whirlwind!

Biblically, sin is spiritual lawlessness. It is going against God, it's rebellion, it's anarchy, it's disrespect, it's indiscipline and it's disobedience.

Not being reconciled to the fact of sin, not recognising it and refusing to deal with it, produces all the disasters in life, writes Oswald Chambers. With fingers in our ears, we don't want to hear.

Why does God hate sin so much? Sin (rebellion) caused Satan to rebel, it caused a split amongst the angels. Lucifer, full of pride, thought he knew better than God – with drastic consequences. Sin thus established the King of Darkness, the fallout after the attempted coup by the fallen angels and demons.

And this bad spiritual influence continues to plague and waylay us day and night. Sin caused the fall of man. At the "fall" Adam and Eve lost touch with God and were banished. Losing dominion of nature and losing control – as envy and conflict disrupted people, families and nations – sin had thus given Satan control of man.

God had put man in charge of the world, so whoever controls man controls the world. Turn on your TV set and watch the news, and it's pretty obvious who is in charge!

"The whole world is under control of the evil one (1 John 5:19)."

Sin caused the Great Flood, wiping out the world. Noah and family were salvaged, but sin persisted. And even though God obviously does love His creations, He hates sin even more.

Set in the system that God built are biblical principles and they are stringently applied. God is the same yesterday, today and forever and He is an immutable God who applies love, justice, mercy and judgement all at the same time.

Sin finally saw God have to "sacrifice" His beloved Son, Jesus. Just how powerful is sin, that only Jesus' death could atone for it. Imagine how much the Father agonised as He put Jesus through the pain and agony of Gethsemane and Calvary.

The full fury of satanic hate, venom and fury was unleashed upon Him because of sin.

"We have to recognise that sin is a fact of life, not just a shortcoming. Sin is blatant mutiny against God. If sin rules in me, God's life in me will be killed. Nothing is more fundamental than that," writes Oswald Chambers.

God set the rules, and they govern life. His Word is the law, a mirror revealing very clearly God's mind on sin and lawlessness. It's pretty much black and white, with no gray areas.

As far as sexual sin is concerned, God is explicit so that there can be no confusion. Sin reaps enormous consequences and is an ever-present monster that continues to challenge the sanctification process in our lives.

The great modern church lie that love and cheap grace covers all and excuses all sin is an abomination of deception.

"The efforts of liberals and moderates to woo men with the soft option is an unqualified evil. It ignores the reason for our alienation, Sin," writes A.W. Tozer. Forgive us our trespasses! Lead us not into temptation! Deliver us from evil!

We must humble ourselves, turn from our wicked ways and look the monster of sin straight in the face. It's so much more serious than we want to believe!



by Erwin Lutzer

C.S. Lewis wrote, “I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.”

But what happens when there is an eclipse of the sun? The moon comes between the earth and the sun; the light of the sun is hidden, the moon is seen, but the sun is not. This does not mean that the sun no longer shines; it simply means that its light is blocked; sometimes the earth (or parts of it) is almost totally dark; at other times there are glimmers of light, enough to navigate but not enough to read a book or even to tread confidently.

Even semi-darkness makes us unsure of our step or unsure of our direction.

Today the moon of radical secularism has obscured the light of God; God is still God, but the world no longer sees Him as such. Equally devastating, we are invited to accept false gods who can neither give us light, or give us answers to life's most basic questions.

As a result, we are floundering as individuals, as families, and as a nation. And, when God is not welcome in our culture, we find people live randomly,

not knowing their ultimate purpose, but waking up each day with faint hope, eking out whatever pleasure they can find as they pass through their lives in a meaningless quest for significance.

God Himself explains the reason for this eclipse, “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or His ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear (Isaiah 59:1-3).”

We must grieve

And when God hides His face, the people willingly wander in darkness, fearing the light: “People loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil (John 3:19).”

We must grieve for this generation. They seek hope and meaning in all the wrong places: “The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble (Proverbs 4:19).”

In the darkness, you can’t tell the difference between an ordinary brick and a piece of gold; you can’t tell whether you are holding a diamond or bit of iron ore. When God hides His face from us, we are left without a rudder, without a map, and without a

purpose. And the consequences are devastating.

With the God of the Bible abandoned, we have no choice but to look to ourselves for guidance and meaning. So, we are tempted to choose gods that are much more to our liking. We choose gods we can control; gods that will not judge us but affirm us; gods who do not demand repentance. Such a god does not create us; we create him/her/them. God becomes a figment of our imagination, fashioned according to whatever we want Him to be.

Yes, God is becoming just like us, affirming, inclusive, and culturally progressive. The Economist is one of the most influential periodicals in the world, and each year they come out with a special volume titled: “The Year Ahead.” Looking into 2022, they highlighted an article titled: “Nearer My God to Me – why God is becoming More Liberal,” by Catherine Nixey, a British correspondent.

Specifically, referring to God as portrayed in the Old Testament, she writes “Smite used to be so simple. God smote and the people trembled, and they sometimes died. He smote the rebellious Israelites, and tens of

thousands died. And the Philistines, they got haemorrhoids.

“The Sodomites suffered a particularly striking smiting. In Genesis, the men of Sodom are exceedingly wicked sinners before the Lord. So God rained brimstone and fire upon Sodom.”

Her point is clear: In our day there is no such thing as a God who would smite anyone. And she says what is sadly true: that few in Britain “celebrate a smitey Almighty.” Which, of course, means that few people in Britain actually believe in the God of the Bible – especially a God who judges sinners.

Nixey goes on to say that Methodists in Britain voted “after prayerful consideration” to allow same-sex marriages. She points out that this step is in contrast to the book of Leviticus, so this is proof that God is becoming “more liberal” more accepting, more inclusive.

So, this writer warns that as God is remade according to modern sensibilities, God’s Word, which clearly states, “‘You shall not lie with a man as with a woman. It is an abomination,’ may (soon) be used to justify same sex blessings in the Church of England. And traditionalists,” she warns, “should brace themselves for even more change.” Yes, more change is to be expected.

Numerous other deities

God is indeed eclipsed, and in His place we have substituted numerous other deities. People today are into spirituality; they pick and choose what they believe about God in a virtual buffet of religious options. And as each individual passes through the buffet, they might choose something very different than their friends, and almost certainly their spiritual menu will be quite different than that of their parents. A god suitable for who they are and who they want to become.

Spirituality is religion without God; it is self-acceptance without confronting sin; it is self-redemption without the need for Christ. It is words without meaning and experience without substance. And it is the pretence of religion without having to believe anything significant. In short, it is atheism without the stigma and self-exaltation hidden behind platitudes.

Where does this leave us?

1. Without God as Creator, we can abandon the created order of reality and mould it into whatever we wish. Men can be women, women can be fathers, and children can be taught in the earliest years to question their gender. Genital mutilation is called gender affirmation. And with the devaluation of human life (having evolved through the animal world), the right to die soon becomes the duty to die.

2. Without God as the standard for truth, truth becomes “truthiness” which means, I have my truth and you have yours. Even when the Constitution is read, it is not to be viewed objectively; rather it is a “living document” interpreted according to my circumstances and racial history. Its meaning depends on what I want to see in it. I remain in charge of whatever I want the document to say.

3. Without God as lawgiver, pre-born infants can be wantonly killed, and those who try to counsel children about the dangers of transgender surgery can be prosecuted. Criminals can be defended, and victims left to fend for themselves. Paedophilia can be normalised. Evil can be called good and good can be called evil.

4. Without God as Redeemer, there is no one to forgive our sins. As Nietzsche said regarding God, “We have killed Him... who will wipe this blood off us?”

This list, could of course, be expanded. But clearly the eclipse of God creates a darkness that has no boundaries, that can prevent no evil, and that can justify perversities of every sort. In the place of ordered liberty, there is the ruthless quest for power; deceit becomes common place and evil grows exponentially.

I am often asked if I think that God will someday judge America. But America is already being judged; in fact, proof of this is our moral depravity. Three times we read in Romans 1 that God “gave them up” a reference to people who rejoice in unnatural and perverse sexual activity. But please note, He gave them up to this depravity; this means God’s judgement has led to our depravity. In other words, God “gave them up” to do what we see every day on the news.

Where does this leave us as believers?

We have the privilege of shedding light in the growing darkness. Significantly, in John’s vision of Jesus, our Lord is seen walking among the seven lampstands which represent the seven churches.

If our light flickers, if we find that the winds of culture have blown out our lampstand, we have nothing to say to this generation. Without a sure word from God, we will simply give the culture whatever it wants. We will accept the eclipse for what it is and hide in our small corner doing the best to manage the darkness.

One to despair, the other hopelessness

I am reminded of the words of Woody Allen, “Mankind faces a crossroads. One path leads to despair and (the other) to utter hopelessness... Let us pray we have the wisdom to choose correctly.”

We are at the crossroads: Will we face the future with optimism because of our faith in fallen humanity or will we be optimistic because we believe in God and that history will unfold according to His plan? Our churches, and we as individuals, must seriously evaluate our lives and ministries.

This is not a time for the trumpet to give an uncertain sound; it is not a time for our lights to dim and grow weary in well-doing. It is a time to renew our faith in a sovereign God who has brought us to this moment to represent Him at a time when nations rage, but “He who sits in the heavens laughs (Psalm 2:4).”

We do not have to dominate the culture in order to be faithful to God. We must be both bold and loving; we must be courageous and sensitive; we must grieve without rancour. We must cling to the gospel, sharing the redemption of Christ with as many as will hear; we must point men and women to the Light of the World and be willing to suffer the consequences of our identification with the One who died that we might have life.

This is a tall order, but this is the task to which we have been called. Let us remember that the sun is still shining behind the eclipse. “Restore us, O Lord God of hosts! Let Your face shine, that we may be saved (Psalm 80:19).”

Faithful is He who calls you, Who also will do it. ☞



Make me a man after Thine own heart

by Oswald J. Smith (1889-1986)

ON November 8, 1927, my 38th birthday, I prayed this prayer: “Lord, make me a man after Thine own heart.” Work faded out of sight; things that before seemed important disappeared; everything in which I was interested took a secondary place, and my own inner life before God was all that mattered, all that was really worthwhile. And as I paced back and forth in my room that day I prayed, and prayed in the Spirit: “Lord, make me a man after Thine own heart.”

I saw as I had never seen before that the big thing was not the work I was doing, the books I was writing, the sermons I was preaching, the crowds that gathered nor the success achieved; but rather the life I was living, the thoughts I was thinking, heart holiness, practical righteousness; in a word: my transformation, by the Holy Spirit, into Christlikeness.

There came to me with new and deeper meaning than ever before the words: “Oh, for a closer walk with God!” My heart went out in a cry of anguish for such an experience. “That I might know Him (Philippians 3:10).” Thus prayed the great apostle.

“Christ in you,” he said again (Colossians 1:27).” And then, “Christ lives in me (Galatians 2:20).” Yes, “Noah walked with God,” “Enoch walked with God (Genesis 6:9; 5:24).” Could not I? Am not I more precious to God than my work, my possessions? God wanted me, not merely my service.

*Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, ALL for Thee.*

After that He led me out in prayer, a prayer that would make me a man after His own heart and these were the petitions: “Lord, here are my hands; I consecrate them to Thee. May they never touch anything that Thou wouldst not have them touch, or do anything that would dishonour Thee. Here are my feet; I dedicate them to Thee. May they never go where Thou wouldst not be seen. Lord, here are my eyes; may they never look upon anything that would grieve the Holy Spirit. May my ears never listen to anything dishonouring to Thy name. May my mouth never be opened to speak a word that I would not want Thee to hear. May my mind never retain a thought nor an imagination that would dim the sense of Thy presence. May my heart know no love, and cherish no feeling that is not of Thee. Amen!”

*Lord, I give my all to Thee,
Friends and time and earthly store,
Soul and body, Thine to be,
Wholly Thine forever more.*

And as I prayed there came to me these words: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God (Romans 12:1&2).”

Then this: “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God.... For sin shall not have dominion over you (Romans 6:12-14).”

Putting God First

God, I saw, demanded my undivided attention. Everything else must take a second place. Friends and loved ones, home, money, work, all – even though legitimate – must give way to Christ! Day and night my undivided attention must be given to Him. God first! Such must be my attitude toward Him. Only then would He be able to bless and use me. Only thus could I satisfy His heart

of love.

In my relationship to God I saw that no other and nothing else must come between. That just as a husband comes first in the affections of his wife, and vice versa, so God must come first in my heart. And just as no marriage can ever be a happy marriage where either husband or wife withhold their undivided attention from each other, so my fellowship with God could only be complete when He had my undivided attention.

All for Jesus, all for Jesus!

All my being’s ransomed powers;

All my thoughts, and words, and doings,

All my days and all my hours.

What He asked of me that day He asks of all alike. Can it be that we would deny Him His right? Is there anything in this world worthy of that attention He claims? Why, then, do we withhold what He asks? Is true joy to be found outside of God? Can we be happy with “things”? Do “things” satisfy?

“A man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth (Luke 12:15).”

God Has Made Us for Himself

God longs for our fellowship and communion. To walk with Him moment-by-moment, right here in the midst of a wicked and perverse generation, in a world that has no use for a separated, Holy Ghost life, a world whose god is Satan; to live as pilgrims and strangers in a world that crucified our Lord – that is His design and purpose for us.

God wants us to be 100 percent for Him. So the question arises: Are we out and out for Jesus Christ? Are we wholly

God’s? Not 90 percent, mark you, but 100 percent. Completely given over to God.

So, then, to be a man after God’s own heart means to put God first; to walk with Him every moment; to do nothing that would displease Him and to allow nothing that would grieve Him; to live a life of practical righteousness and holiness before Him; to give Him our undivided attention, and to love Him supremely!

For it is in this way that we become Christlike; and that is God’s highest ambition for us – that we should be like His Son, transformed into the same image. Only those who spend much time in His presence will ever become like Him. Only those who give Him their undivided attention will really come to know Him.

To get *His* best we must give *our* best. To become men and women after His own heart, we must let Him have our undivided attention.

To win, we must surrender. To live we must die. To receive, we must give!

Oh, the sweetness of such a life, the joy of His fellowship! There is nothing like it on earth. All the success in the world cannot compensate for it. He is “the Lily of the Valley,” “the Bright and Morning Star,” “the Rose of Sharon,” “the Chiefest among Ten Thousand,” “the One Altogether lovely.”

Friends can never mean so much. Even loved ones disappoint. Money brings its burdens, and fame its bitterness. But He, He satisfies! God is never a disappointment. To walk with Him is the sweetest thing on earth. To know that all is well, that there is nothing between, that no black cloud of sin hides His face That is heaven, indeed. ☩

The prayer of St Francis of Assisi

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace;

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

And where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek

To be consoled as to console,

To be understood as to understand,

To be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,

It is pardoning that we are pardoned,

And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.



Holy cow?

by Tim Moore

PROPHETIC circles are abuzz about the significance of the red heifer mentioned in Numbers 19. The excitement centres on the fact that five solid red heifers were bred in America and flown to Israel in late 2022. They will be examined when they are two years and a day old. If one of them is found to be suitable, it would be sacrificed. Rabbinical tradition (think Tevye from Fiddler on the Roof) holds that once a red heifer is killed and its ashes collected, the priesthood can be restored, and the third temple can be built. Since cows are very much a part of the created order, it is appropriate to consider this as a natural “sign.”

A MOOOVING EXPERIENCE

Many Christians who have visited Israel know that the Temple Institute has been planning and preparing to

rebuild the temple for some time. It already has various implements that will be used in a rebuilt temple. You can see the beautiful menorah crafted for that purpose in Quarter Square in the Old City of Jerusalem – funded by a Ukrainian Jew and estimated to be worth millions of dollars.

In Numbers 19, the Lord told Moses and Aaron to sacrifice an unblemished red heifer (a young female cow that has never been pregnant, yoked, or milked) as an ordinance of purification. Zealous Jews who long for the temple to be rebuilt want to fulfil the “lasting ordinance” of the red heifer in the Old Testament – which initially involves a humble cow.

Some of them are motivated by sincere religious zeal, while others merely want to reclaim the location that is central to Jewish identity and national pride – much like the zealots of Jesus’ time.

The prophetic buzz focuses on the

hope that these red heifers might be a sign that Israel is on the cusp of rebuilding its temple.

THE TEMPLE, THE TEMPLE, THE TEMPLE

Christians recognise that the temple will in fact be rebuilt – after the Jews sign a peace treaty with the Antichrist. That temple will become the centre of Jewish national and religious identity for 3½ years, even though their initial impetus will not be to worship Jesus as the Messiah. Jews who believe in Jesus right now will be raptured, while others will place their faith in Him during the Tribulation. We know that 144 000 Jewish witnesses – or evangelists – will proclaim the Gospel during that horrific period.

Some Christians eagerly support the goal of rebuilding the temple. For instance, the farmer who bred the five red heifers in Texas is a Christian motivated to help the Jewish people

prepare to rebuild their temple as prophesied.

Still, we long for and worship a Person, not a place.

With that in mind, perhaps we can gain perspective on the third temple if we consider the first two. King David was inspired to build God a temple to replace the tent where the Ark of the Covenant dwelled.

Nathan initially affirmed that inclination, but then returned with a word from God. The Lord asked rhetorically, “...did I speak a word with one of the tribes of Israel, which I commanded to shepherd My people Israel, saying, ‘Why have you not built Me a house of cedar (2 Samuel 7:7, repeated in 1 Chronicles 17:6)?’”

His clear insinuation was that He had not demanded a temple of wood and stone, but rather hearts that were fully devoted to Him. Samuel established this same truth when he said, “Has the Lord as much delight in burnt sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams (1 Samuel 15:22).”

Still, God did honour David’s desire to build for Him a temple – although He did not allow David himself to build it. Solomon built the first temple.

Later, God took offense when the exiles who returned from Babylon neglected the building of the second temple – not because He lacked for a dwelling, but because their attitude reflected hearts that were far from Him.

The second temple was eventually completed and later made larger and grander by the great builder, Herod. In terms of official endorsement, however, Jesus did not heap praise on the structure of the temple itself or endorse Herod’s work.

Instead, He honoured its intended purpose as a “house of prayer (Matthew 21:13).” Recalling the full text of Isaiah’s prophecy, Jesus cited God’s promise: “Even [foreigners] I will bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; for My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples (Isaiah 56:7).”

So, regarding the temple, God’s official

“Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, ‘This is the statute of the law which the Lord has commanded, saying, “Speak to the sons of Israel that they bring you an unblemished red heifer in which there is no defect and on which a yoke has never been mounted (Numbers 19:1&2).””

endorsement or gracious acceptance depends entirely on the motive of the people doing the building and the sacrificing. If they seek to please and serve the Lord, then their inclination to worship God will be honoured as David’s was – and the Holy Spirit will draw them to believing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The same could be inferred about the role of a red heifer. Anyone who thinks that a building or a cow will be sufficient to appease our holy God apart from the Gospel is as deceived as those who cried out, “the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord” in Jeremiah’s day (Jeremiah 7:4).

THE GOD OF TALKING DONKEYS & RED COWS

God has incorporated humble animals to fulfil His purpose throughout human history. He made garments of skin to cover Adam and Eve’s nakedness (Genesis 3:21), opened the mouth of a donkey carrying a pagan prophet (Numbers 22:27-30), appointed a great fish and a lowly worm to teach Jonah eternal lessons (Jonah 1:17 and 4:7), and granted the foal of a donkey the honour of bearing Jesus into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:2-6).

He will return to earth mounted on a white horse (Revelation 20:11). And soon, a cow will once again play a mysterious role in the protocols ordained by God. In the end, we know that a red heifer will be sacrificed and the third temple will be built. In the fulness of time, those pre-seen historic events will give way to a time of Great Tribulation for the Jewish people.

Only when they have come to the end

of themselves will they cry out, Baruch Haba B’shem Adonai—“Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the Lord!”

Then Jesus Christ will return to earth in glory and power, ascend the mountain of the Lord, and reign from the throne of David.

AND THE LAMB & LION

While preparations for the third temple may be underway, I believe it will not actually be constructed until after the Church is removed from the world at the Rapture and the Antichrist is revealed.

And, although the red heifer is significant for what it portends, the third temple will not secure forgiveness of sins through a reconstituted sacrificial system. As Hebrews 10:4 recognises, “...it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.”

But we know that God’s prophetic Word will be fulfilled, and that in the end the Jews will look upon the perfect Sacrifice and weep over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn (Zechariah 12:10). There is no question that God works in ways far beyond our comprehension and that He inspires individual Christians to serve Him faithfully.

Some will support Jewish efforts to fulfil the prophecies outlined in Scripture. That was true a century ago when Christian Zionists avidly supported the Jewish effort to return to the Promised Land and re-establish a home and a nation.

Christians do not believe Israel represents a separate means of salvation apart from our Jewish Messiah, but we take seriously God’s admonition to bless His chosen people. So, while I am fascinated by all the prophetic events that are swirling around us today and converging as never before – including news of a red heifer – I am not fixated on any of them individually.

Instead, I am watching and waiting – and listening for “a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God,” knowing that soon and very soon our Blessed Hope is coming for His Bride. That joy-filled expectation leads to my appreciation for the Lamb and the Lion – two metaphorical references to our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. ☞

The miraculous nature of a baby's first breath

by Randy J. Guliuzza

WE know that the Lord Jesus will reign throughout eternity and “that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:10&11).” Jesus will rule over “...a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away (Revelation 21:1)...”

It is significant that the Lord Jesus is not ruling over a creation that has been patched up and restored to some prior condition, but over a new heaven and earth. We at the Institute for Creation Research (ICR) spends a great deal of energy showing how science confirms the Genesis 1-11 account of the original creation and the worldwide flood.

We convincingly show that these records are true history, and that material outside the Bible are not needed to interpret them correctly. But our focus on the original creation does not mean that ICR isn't eagerly anticipating the Lord Jesus returning to reign over His new creation.

A testimony to Christ's power

In fact, what science has revealed about the birth of a human baby is a wonderful testimony of Christ's power, His constant providential care for us, and is a very insightful illustration of a new creation and a new birth. Let's take a look.

Dr Christiaan Barnard performed the first heart transplant in 1967. Until that time, if someone's heart was taken out, they died. Amazingly, not only was a man's heart removed, but a non-beating donor heart put in, restarted, and he lived. Years of design efforts and testing resulted in a sophisticated invention that circulated blood and functioned as patients' lungs to bring them oxygen – the all-important “heart-lung” machine.

No doubt in the same hospital in 1967 was a brand-new mother. Her baby had just made a similar transition of survival on an exceedingly better “lung machine,” but no reporters covered it. Although Dr Barnard's heart-lung machine was a great feat of human engineering, the far-surpassing engineering connecting mother and baby has never been explained by natural processes.

Childbirth is so common it is easy to overlook the fact that a baby thrives in a total water world for nine months – a world that is utterly impossible for any person to live in immediately after their very first breath.

This means that just like being born again spiritually, after any new birth, there is no going back (John 3:1-18).

The unborn baby in the womb possesses blood vessels with a different arrangement and structure. In an adult human heart, the bottom two chambers, the ventricles, do most of the higher-pressure pumping, pushing the blood through one-way valves away from the heart through arteries. The upper two, the atria (plural of “atrium”), receive blood under low pressure from veins and rapidly preload the ventricles by pushing blood into them, also through one-way valves.

The heart is also divided into left and right halves, separated by a solid wall of tissue called a septum. There are two circuits for blood flow from the heart: one to the lungs and back, and one to the body and back.

The right heart starts blood on its circuit to the lungs, where less-oxygenated blood picks up a new load of oxygen. The left heart pumps freshly oxygenated blood at normal blood pressures (much higher than the right side) to the rest of the body.

In adults, oxygen-rich blood travels away from the heart through arteries under high pressure, and oxygen-poor blood flows toward the heart through veins under low pressure. Clearly, the



heart and lungs are completely co-dependent in accomplishing the purpose of getting oxygen to all places in the body.

For a baby in the womb, almost everything about those vital functions is just the opposite for one important reason: the baby develops fully functional lungs that are yet inactive for oxygen exchange. Consequently, in order for a baby to survive, three major structural differences must exist that enable life in his temporary home.

A remarkable organ!

First, the baby must have a substitute lung – a pretty tall order for even brilliant biomedical engineers. The placenta, a remarkable organ, has a brief existence but fulfils myriad vital functions – including serving as the foetal lung and kidney.

Second, the circuit to the lungs must be bypassed, so vessels must change to allow this temporary detour.

Third, blood vessels connect the placenta to the baby, tapping into normal vessels that lead to and from the heart. The umbilical cord meets the need for a placental-foetal connection, with one large-diameter vein and two smaller arteries. Inside the baby, these continue as the umbilical vein and umbilical arteries.

The umbilical vein carries oxygen-rich blood toward the heart. At a spot next to the liver, it connects to a large vein carrying less-oxygenated blood back to the heart. Interestingly, the two combined streams of blood do not tend to mix. It just happens that when they reach the right atrium, the more oxygenated blood stream is adjacent to a temporary opening in the septum, where it passes through to the left

atrium because the blood pressure in the right side of baby's heart is higher than the left side– the opposite of the post-birth situation.

The right heart still pumps blood to the lungs, but because the lungs have not yet expanded, the resistance to blood flow is very high and, therefore, the pressure is high. Some blood does make it to the right ventricle (about 10 percent) and flows through the lungs, which is the right amount to meet metabolic needs but not for oxygen-carrying purpose – which does not yet exist.

The temporary opening has a piece of septum tissue over it that is located in the left atrium. Thus, it acts like a “trap door” valve so that high pressure on the right side can push it open with each beat.

In adults, it would make no sense for the artery carrying oxygen-poor blood to the lungs to connect by a big blood vessel to the artery carrying oxygen-rich blood (the aorta) to the body. But the baby does have this big connecting vessel in order to bypass the lungs and send oxygen-rich blood from the placenta to the body.

Most of this blood travels to the part of the body with the highest oxygen demands—the growing brain. So, baby is content in the womb with temporary umbilical arteries and veins, a temporary opening in the septum, the temporary pulmonary artery-aorta shunt vessel, high pressure in the lungs and right side of the heart, and low pressure on the left side.

With the onset of labour, culminating in delivery, that world is set to radically change. However, crucial mechanisms are built into the temporary structures that enable a safe transition out of the womb.

The umbilical cord responds to changes that occur at birth based on: blood-oxygen levels, stretching, the presence of adrenaline, and trauma. Obviously, during delivery and the severing of the cord, all of these are present.

When the cord is clamped after birth, the strong muscles surrounding the vessels react with a rapid and powerful constriction of the arteries and vein. This stops blood flow to and from the placenta, which has two effects. It greatly reduces the risk of either baby or mom losing a lot of blood and also causes an immediate drop in the amount of oxygen baby is getting.

An irresistible urge to take a strong breath

Very sensitive sensors – inside certain blood vessels measuring carbon dioxide content, and also on the skin detecting temperature drops – stimulate the nervous system's breathing centre. Under normal circumstances, increased carbon dioxide blood levels coupled with decreased body temperature after exiting the birth canal trigger an irresistible urge for baby to take a strong breath and inflate his lungs for the first time.

The lungs have been prepared for this event by special cells producing a compound called surfactant. This substance makes it easy for non-inflated lung tissues to expand for the first time. Otherwise, forces required to open the lungs would be too high for almost all newborns to accomplish.

Once inflated, pressures necessary to pump blood through the lungs quickly drop 90 percent from their intra-womb high values. Thus, pressure in the right side of the heart immediately drops well below the pressure in the left side. The “trap door” valve (actually two flaps of skin that neatly fold and interlock when pushed together) covering the septum's temporary opening in the left atrium is pressed closed by the increased pressure on the left. Cells begin to grow over the edges of the valve, fusing it to the septum.

Less than a minute after birth, signals from baby's nervous system cause strong sphincter muscles to close off the umbilical vein where it attaches near the liver and also close off the temporary

pulmonary artery-aorta shunt.

That large vessel permanently closes over the next one to two days. The baby's body has started changes that will continue through adulthood. During the next year, those internal umbilical arteries and vein transform from blood vessels into stabilising ligaments.

So, in the one critical minute after delivery, the baby's body has initiated actual structural changes enabling it to survive in its radically different environment with all temporary vessels, shunts, and openings functionally closed in the first 30 minutes.

The reality of foetal to newborn circulatory changes is this: structures indispensable for life in the womb are incompatible with life out of it, and at birth all structures are rapidly reversed, resulting in the opposite effect on survival. In either case, if the offspring dies, evolution ends.

In *On the Origin of Species*, Charles Darwin wrote, “If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down.”

Consider it broken!

Consider the theory of Evolution broken... if not a catastrophic failure. Why? Given that a transplanted heart living inside someone is truly an incredible achievement – at what level of accomplishment is getting a whole person to live inside another person? Absolutely incredible –which the Lord Jesus Christ is!

Unless a person is wilfully blind to the natural signs all around us – including a baby's first breath – “His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature” can be clearly seen (Romans 1:20). It is obvious that He creates, He directs, He provides, He cares. Indeed, everything He does is beautiful beyond description... and He's coming again!

Dr Guliuzza is the President of the Institute for Creation Research. He is a registered Professional Engineer and served in the U.S. Air Force as a Flight Surgeon and Chief of Aerospace Medicine. He has earned degrees from Moody Bible Institute, Harvard University, and the University of Minnesota. More information on the Institute for Creation Research can be found at icr.org.



by Jonathan Goforth (*Revivalist & missionary in Manchuria and China, 1888-1935*).

UPON returning to China in the fall of 1901, after having recuperated from the harrowing effects of the Boxer Rebellion, I began to experience a growing dissatisfaction with the results of my missionary work.

In the early pioneering years I had buoyed myself with the assurance that a seed-time must always precede a harvest, and had, therefore, been content to persist in the apparently futile struggle. But now 13 years had passed and the harvest seemed further away than ever. I felt sure there was something larger ahead of me, if I only had the vision to see what it was, and the faith to grasp it.

Restless and discontented, I was led to a more intensive study of the Scriptures. Every passage that had any bearing upon the price of, or the road to the endowment of power, became life and breath to me. There were a number of books on revival in my library. These I read over and over. So much did it become a burden on my mind that my wife began to fear that my mind would not stand it.

Of great inspiration to me were the reports of the Welsh Revival of 1904-1905, for they made me to know that

revivals were not a thing of the past. Late in the fall of 1905 a pamphlet containing selections from Charles G. Finney's *Autobiography* and *Revival Lectures* were sent to me by a friend in India. It was the final something that set me on fire!

On the front page there was a statement to the effect that a farmer might just as well pray for a temporal harvest without fulfilling the laws of nature, as for Christians to expect a great ingathering of souls by simply asking for it, and without bothering to fulfil the laws governing the spiritual harvest.

"If Finney is right," I vowed, "then I am going to find out what those laws are, and obey them no matter what it costs!" Later a brother missionary loaned me the full *Autobiography of Finney*. It is impossible to estimate all that book meant to me.

Now I began to see stirrings in the hearts of the people, so much so that a native evangelist said in an awed whisper, "Why, the people are being moved on just as they were by Peter's sermon at Pentecost."

At one meeting as I spoke on "He bore our sins in His own body on the tree," conviction seemed to be written on every face and when I called for decisions, the whole audience stood up as a man crying, "We want to follow

this Jesus Who died for us."

About this time our Foreign Mission Secretary asked me to visit the revival in Korea. Witnessing the Lord at work in the Korean revival was of incalculable significance in my life because it showed me at first-hand the boundless possibilities of the revival method. Korea made me feel, as it did many others, that Revival was God's plan for setting the world aflame.

The missionaries in Korea were just ordinary people. I did not notice any outstanding people among them. It was in prayer that they were different. Never have I been so conscious of the Divine Presence as I was in these Korean prayer meetings. Those missionaries seemed to carry us right up in prayer to the Throne of God. One indeed had the feeling they were communing face to face with God.

What impressed me was the practical nature of the revival. It was no wild gust of "religious enthusiasm" dying with the wind upon whose wings it had been borne. There were the usual outward manifestations that accompany such miraculous outpourings of spiritual power. But beyond that there were tens of thousands of Korean men and women whose lives had been completely transformed by the divine power.

Every one seemed almost pathetically eager to spread the "Glad Tidings."

Even little boys would run up to people on the street and plead with them to accept Christ as their Saviour.

Everywhere I saw an evident devotion for the Holy Word. Everyone seemed to carry a Bible. And permeating it all was that marvellous spirit of prayer.

On my return to China, I was asked by the missionaries of Kikunsgan to tell them the story of the Korean Revival. On Sunday evening as I drew to a close my account of the Spirit's outpouring on the churches of Korea, it seemed the stillness of death pervaded the assembly. The suppressed sobs became audible here and there. In a little while missionaries were rising to their feet and in tears were confessing their faults one to another.

Make this matter absolutely right

In the autumn of 1906, I was preparing to set out to see what could be done about reviving the outstations. There was a matter, however, between a brother missionary and myself that had to be made right. I honestly felt that I was right. Nevertheless, I felt it would please the Lord for me to go and make this matter absolutely straight. But I argued with the Lord, saying it was the other missionary's fault, not mine, and that it was up to him to come to me, not for me to go to him.

But the pressure continued until I cried out to the Lord saying, "He came to my study and in tears confessed his fault. Does that not settle the matter?"

"You hypocrite!" I seemed to hear Him say, "You know you are not loving each other as brethren, as I have commanded you to do."

Still I would not yield.

Then came the final word from the Lord, "If you do not straighten this thing out before you go on that trip, you may expect to fail, for I cannot go with you." That humbled me. I did not want to go on that difficult trip without His help.

The night before I was to start on the trip I had to lead a prayer meeting for the Chinese Christians. All the way to the church the pressure continued: "Go and straighten this thing out, so that I may go with you to the outstations."

Still I would not yield. I started the meeting. It was all right while they sang, and during the reading of the Scripture.

But as soon as I opened my mouth in prayer I became confused, for all the time the Spirit kept saying: "You hypocrite! Why don't you straighten this thing out?" I became still more troubled while delivering a short talk on prayer. Finally, when halfway through my talk, the burden became utterly intolerable and I yielded.

"Lord," I promised in my heart, "as soon as this meeting is over, I'll go and make the matter right."

Instantly something in the audience seemed to snap. In a moment the whole atmosphere changed. Upon the meeting being thrown open for prayer, one after another rose to their feet to pray, only to break down, weeping. For almost 20 years we missionaries had longed to see a tear of repentance roll down a Chinese cheek.

It was late at night when the meeting closed. As soon as I could I hastened over to the house of my brother-missionary... the difficulty was settled, and because I was led of the Spirit and obeyed the Lord, the blessings on my tour of the outstations far exceeded anything I had dared to hope for.

At each station the Spirit of judgement was made manifest. Wrongs were righted and crooked things were made straight. At one station, I was only able to spend one night but that night the whole audience broke down before the Lord...

Often during the meetings, great waves of prayer would sweep the congregation. Someone would cry, "Pray for my outstation, we are so cold and dead." Or another would ask prayer for their unsaved loved ones and plead with the people to join them in prayer. Instantly scores all over the audience would respond.

It seemed nothing could resist such importunity. A number of influential Chinese leaders had opposed the meetings and declared they would not attend them. Special intercession was offered upon their behalf, and some of the most broken confessions during these meetings came from them.

We cannot emphasise too strongly our conviction that all hindrances to revival in the Church are due to sin! The appalling fact is that every sin found without the Church is found also within the Church, although perhaps to a lesser degree.

It is sin in individual Church members, whether at home or on the foreign field, which grieves and quenches the Holy Spirit! I imagine that we would lose much of our self-righteousness if we were to find that pride, jealousy, envy, greed, bad temper, backbiting, gossip, talebearing, and all their kindred are just as heinous in God's sight as the so-called grosser sins. All sin in the believer, of whatever kind, mars the redemptive work of Christ. The filth and blood-guiltiness of the churches can only be swept away by the Spirit of Judgement, and the Spirit of Burning.

Confession of sin

In view of the prominence that is given to confession of sin in this article, perhaps I ought to make plain my own views on the subject. We have a strong feeling that sins committed before conversion are under the blood of God's Son and never should be confessed. To do so is to bring dishonour upon Christ's Calvary sacrifice.

We believe that as regards secret sin, that is sin which is only known to the individual soul and God, to confess it at the private altar is, as a rule, sufficient to ensure pardon and cleansing. Yet there are times when secret acknowledgment of secret sin is not sufficient and public confession is the only way to secure relief...

As to sin against an individual, the Scriptures are quite plain. "Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift (Matthew 5:22&24)."

It is vain for us to pray while conscious that we have injured another. Let us first make amends to the injured one before we dare approach God at either private or public altar.

I am confident revival would break out in most churches if this was done. Then again, as regards public sins, experience has shown us that those can only be swept away by public confession. True, this amounts to crucifixion; but by our wilful disobedience, we have put the Lord of Glory to open shame, and it is the price we must be willing to pay if we are to see revival sweeping through our churches. ☞

THE ONE SEED

BACK in 1921, a missionary couple named David and Svea Flood went with their two-year-old son from Sweden to the heart of Africa – to what was then called the Belgian Congo. They met up with another young Scandinavian couple, the Ericksons, and the four of them sought God for direction. In those days of much tenderness and devotion and sacrifice, they felt led of the Lord to set out from the main mission station and take the Gospel to a remote area.

This was a huge step of faith. At the village of N'dolera they were rebuffed by the chief, who would not let them enter his town for fear of alienating the local gods. The two couples opted to go half a mile up the slope and build their own mud huts.

No breakthrough

They prayed for a spiritual breakthrough, but there was none. The only contact with the villagers was a young boy, who was allowed to sell them chickens and eggs twice a week. Svea Flood – a tiny woman – decided that if this was the only African she could talk to, she would try to lead the boy to Jesus. And in fact, she succeeded.

But there were no other encouragements. Meanwhile, malaria continued to strike one member of the little band after another. In time the Ericksons decided they had had enough suffering and left to return to the central mission station. David and Svea Flood remained near N'dolera to go on alone.

Then, of all things, Svea found herself pregnant in the middle of the primitive wilderness. When the time came for her to give birth, the village chief softened enough to allow a midwife to help her. A little girl was born, whom they named Aina.

The delivery, however, was exhausting,



College in Minneapolis. There she met and married a young man named Dewey Hurst.

Years passed. The Hursts enjoyed a fruitful ministry. Aggie gave birth first to a daughter, then a son. In time her husband became president of a Christian college in the Seattle area, and Aggie was intrigued to find so much Scandinavian heritage there.

One day a Swedish religious magazine appeared in her mailbox. She had no idea who had sent it, and of course she couldn't read the words. But as she turned the pages, all of a sudden a photo stopped her cold.

There in a primitive setting was a grave with a white cross – and on the cross were the words “Svea Flood.”

Aggie jumped in her car and went straight to a college faculty member who, she knew, could translate the article. “What does this say?” she demanded.

The instructor summarised the story: It was about missionaries who had come to N'dolera long ago... the birth of a white baby... the death of the young mother... the one little African boy who had been led to Christ... and how, after the whites had all left, the boy had grown up and finally persuaded the chief to let him build a school in the village.

The article said that gradually he won all his students to Christ... the children led their parents to Christ... even the chief had become a Christian. Today there were 600 Christian believers in that one village...

All because of the sacrifice of David and Svea Flood.

For the Hursts' 25th wedding anniversary, the college presented them with the gift of a vacation to Sweden. There Aggie sought to find her real father. An old man now, David Flood had remarried, fathered four more

children, and generally dissipated his life with alcohol. He had recently suffered a stroke.

Still bitter, he had one rule in his family: “Never mention the name of God – because God took everything from me.”

After an emotional reunion with her half brothers and half sister, Aggie brought up the subject of seeing her father. The others hesitated. “You can talk to him,” they replied, “even though he's very ill now. But you need to know that whenever he hears the name of God, he flies into a rage.”

Aggie was not to be deterred. She walked into the squalid apartment, with liquor bottles everywhere, and approached the 73-year-old man lying in a rumpled bed.

“Papa?” she said tentatively.

He turned and began to cry. “Aina,” he said, “I never meant to give you away.”

“It's all right, Papa,” she replied, taking him gently in her arms. “God took care of me.”

The man instantly stiffened. The tears stopped.

“God forgot all of us. Our lives have been like this because of Him.” He turned his face back to the wall.

Aggie stroked his face and then continued, undaunted.

“Papa, I've got a little story to tell you, and it's a true one. You didn't go to Africa in vain. Mama didn't die in vain. The little boy you won to the Lord grew up to win that whole village to Jesus Christ. The one seed you planted just kept growing and growing. Today there are 600 African people serving the Lord because you were faithful to the call of God in your life.

“Papa, Jesus loves you. He has never hated you.”

The old man turned back to look into his daughter's eyes. His body relaxed.



He began to talk. And by the end of the afternoon, he had come back to the God he had resented for so many decades.

Over the next few days, father and daughter enjoyed warm moments together. Aggie and her husband soon had to return to America – and within a few weeks, David Flood had gone into eternity.

The Gospel's spread

A few years later, the Hursts were attending a high-level evangelism conference in London, England, where a report was given from the nation of Zaire (the former Belgian Congo). The superintendent of the national church, representing some 110 000 baptised believers, spoke eloquently of the Gospel's spread in his nation. Aggie could not help going to ask him afterward if he had ever heard of David and Svea Flood.

“Yes, madam,” the man replied in French, his words then being translated into English. “It was Svea Flood who led me to Jesus Christ. I was the boy who brought food to your parents before you were born. In fact, to this day your mother's grave and her memory are

honoured by all of us.”

He embraced her in a long, sobbing hug. Then he continued, “You must come to Africa to see, because your mother is the most famous person in our history.”

In time that is exactly what Aggie Hurst and her husband did. They were welcomed by cheering throngs of villagers. She even met the man who had been hired by her father many years before to carry her back down the mountain in a hammock-cradle.

The most dramatic moment, of course, was when the pastor escorted Aggie to see her mother's white cross for herself. She knelt in the soil to pray and give thanks. Later that day, in the church, the pastor read from John 12:24, “I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.” He then followed with Psalm 126:5, “Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy.”



Let God search your heart

by E.D. Hettinger

THERE is one great truth that we must acknowledge and not neglect in order to experience in all reality a life of obedience to the Word of God, a life controlled by the Holy Spirit, a life of prayer and faith, a life of soul-winning, and the revival that is so desperately needed. This truth we must acknowledge is: “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me (Psalm 66:18).”

The Lord is greatly concerned about the inner part of men. He also knows the outer part. He knows all! This is why He tells us in the Book of Matthew: “...For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks (12:34)... For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies (15:19)... This people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honour Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me (15:8)...”

What is meant by regarding iniquity in

my heart? It is to look on the iniquity with approval instead of disapproval. It is to know there is something wrong in one's life and to neglect or reject doing anything about it. “To him who knows to do good, and does not do it, to him it is sin (James 4:17).”

Besetting and Secret Sins

In Hebrews 12:1 we read, “Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily besets (attacks) us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.”

The besetting sin is the area of our weakness. It is the sin that beats, defeats, defiles and eventually brings about disgrace. It is a sin that we ignore, but is known to God. We must be aware of the fact that Satan is always studying the child of God and will quickly enter by way of that weakness.

Therefore, I must strive to know if such a weakness exists in my life, as a child of God. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked:

who can know it (Jeremiah 17:9)?”

“Who can know it?” The Lord knows our weakness, the sin that is believed to be covered. We read, “O Lord, You have searched me, and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thoughts afar off (Psalm 139:1&2).”

He knows our thought life. “Thus says the Lord... I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them (Ezekiel 11:5).”

God knows all our secret sins. “For now You number my steps: do You not watch over my sin (Job 14:16)?” We may be able to cover our secret sin from the church, the family, the prayer meeting – but never from God who hates sin.

“Search Me, O God!”

The psalmist prayed: “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting (Psalm 139:23&24).”

Dear ones, how we need to get alone with God and allow Him to search our hearts in regard to the iniquity that may be in them! God knows you and me. He can search us when we allow Him to reveal the area that needs cleansing. We must remember, “he who covers his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy (Proverbs 28:13).”

Many years ago a group of men of my congregation gave of themselves to pray for revival and the salvation of souls. One day while they were praying, one of the men rose from his knees and halted the prayers of the others.

Essentially this is what he said: “Men, I cannot continue praying with you because I have a besetting sin in my life which is known by no one but God.” He named his besetting sin and then confessed it to the Lord, after which he rejoined the men in prayer. There was joy in the circle that night!

The following day, which was the Lord's Day, who should be present in the morning service but his son, for whose salvation he had been praying. When the invitation was given, who should come walking down the aisle but his son!

When the besetting sin was confessed, forgiven and cleansed by the blood of the Lamb, the father's prayer for the salvation of his son was answered. Truly, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me (Psalm 66:18).”

Iniquity in the Heart Divides

As we read in God's Word, “Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear, but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear (Isaiah 59:1&2).”

Sin in a Christian's life prevents him from abiding in the Lord Jesus Christ. “I am the vine, you are the branches: He who abides in Me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without Me you can do nothing (John 15:5).”

Iniquity divides from power, from fruit, from prayer, from faith, from love, from abiding in the Spirit, and from the will of God. It all culminates in “Not

Christ, but I” instead of “Not I, but Christ.”

Iniquity in the Heart Dulls

Iniquity dulls the ears. The writer to the Hebrews desired to impart the deep truths that are so needful for a Christian to mature in the Lord. “Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing you are dull of hearing (Hebrews 5:11).”

The Word of God teaches the result of the dullness of the ear: “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual, but as to carnal, even as to babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto you were not able to bear it, neither yet now are you able. For you are still carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are you not carnal, and walk as men (1 Corinthians 3:1-3)?”

The Word reveals the result of sin's dulling the ears. We become insensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit, the result being that Christians remain babes in Christ. Iniquity of the heart not only dulls the ears of man, it darkens the eyes of man's understanding. It deprives the heart of man's love. It diverts the feet of the believer's walk. It poisons the tongue of man's talk. It deprives one of the fellowship of God.

Iniquity in My Heart Dulls God's Ears

“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the

Lord will not hear me (Psalm 66:18).”

“Therefore will I also deal in fury: My eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in My ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them (Ezekiel 8:18).”

“But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear (Isaiah 59:2).”


The harbouring of sin in the heart will effectively prevent us from sharing with our Lord Jesus Christ. He will not endorse sin by answering prayer when sin is in the heart.

The Cure

What is the cure for iniquity in the heart?

First consider it: “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting (Psalm 139:23&24).” “Make me to know my transgression and my sin (Job 13:23).”

Second, confess it: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).” The confession of sin brings us back into fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ.

How about the iniquity in your heart? I pray you will be honest before God, so that you can be honest before others. Let us seriously, in His presence, search our hearts before a Holy God. Then... “whatsoever He says to you, do it (John 2:5)!” 

Secrets of Bible study in 5 sentences

by J. Wilbur Chapman

Study it through.

Never begin a day without mastering a verse.

Pray it in.

Never leave your Bible until the passage you have studied is a part of your very being.

Put it down.

The thought God gives you, put it in the margin of your Bible or your notebook.

Work it out.

Live the truth you get through all the hours of the day.

Pass it out.

Seek to tell somebody what you have learned.



PERFECT PEACE

by Samuel L. Brengle (1860-1936)

"You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You: because he trusts in You (Isaiah 26:3)."

A WONDERFUL promise that is, and it ought to be the aim of every one of us to make it our experience. The way to do this is simple: it is to keep our minds stayed on our Lord. But while it is simple, I confess it is no easy matter for most people to do it. They would rather think about business, about pleasure, about the news of the day, about politics, education, music, or about the work of the Lord, than about the Lord Himself.

Now business and other things must take some of our thought, and we must pay attention to the work of the Lord if we love Him and the souls for whom He died. But just as the maiden in all her work and pleasure thinks of her lover, and just as the young bride filled with new cares is in her heart communing with her husband, though he may be far from her, so we should in everything think of and commune with Jesus, and let our hearts fully trust His wisdom, love and power, and then we

shall be kept in "perfect peace."

Just think of it! "All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid" in Him, and we, in our ignorance and foolishness, are "complete in Him (Colossians 2:3; 2:10)." We may not understand, but He understands. We may not know, but He knows. We may be perplexed, but He is not perplexed. Then we ought to trust Him if we are His, and we shall be kept in "perfect peace."

Ten thousand times I have been at my wits' end, but, oh! how it comforted me to know that Jesus saw the end from the beginning and was making all things work together for my good because I loved and trusted Him! Jesus is never at His wits' end, and when we are most puzzled and confounded by our foolishness and short-sightedness, Jesus, in the fullness of His love and with all the infinity of His wisdom and power, is working out the desires of our hearts, if they be holy desires, for He says, "He will fulfil the desire of those who fear Him (Psalm 145:19)."

Jesus not only has wisdom and love, but He assures us that all power in heaven and earth is His (Matthew 28:18), so that the counsels of His

wisdom and the tender desire of His love cannot fail for lack of power to fulfil them. He can turn the hearts of kings, and make them do His will, and His faithful love will lead Him to do it, if we but trust Him. Nothing is more surprising to the children of God who trust Him and watch His ways, than the marvellous and unexpected deliverances He works out for them, and the kind of people He uses to fulfil His will.

Keep on Rejoicing

Our hearts long to see the glory of the Lord and the prosperity of Zion, and we pray to God and wonder how the desire of our hearts is to be obtained, but we trust and look unto God, and He sets to work with the most unlikely people and in the most unheard of way, to answer our prayers and reward our patient faith. And so in all the little vexatious trials and delays of our everyday, plodding life, if we trust and keep on rejoicing right through all that bothers us, we will find God at work for us, for He says He is a "present help in trouble" – all trouble – and so He is to all who keep their minds stayed on Him.

Only a short period has elapsed since the Lord has been allowing me to pass

through a series of the most troublesome little times, just calculated to annoy me to the uttermost. But while waiting on Him in prayer, He showed me that if I had more confidence in Him in my difficulties, I would keep on rejoicing, and so get blessings out of my trials, as Samson got honey out of the carcass of the lion he slew – and so I proved it to be. Bless His holy name! I did rejoice, and one trial after the other vanished away, and only the sweetness of my Lord's presence and blessing remained, and my heart has been kept in perfect peace since.

Peace vs Indifference

Does not God do all this to humble us, and make us see that our character before Him is of more consequence than our service to Him, to teach us to walk by faith and not by sight, and to encourage us to trust and be at peace?

Now, let no honest soul whose faith is small, nor any of those big busybodies, who seem to think that if they did not worry and fret and rush about and make a great noise the universe would come to a standstill and go to ruin, suppose for an instant that there is any likeness whatever between "perfect peace" and perfect indifference.

Indifference is a child of sloth. Peace is the offspring of a faith that is ceaseless in its activity – an activity that is the most perfect, and the mightiest of which man is capable, for through it, poor unarmed men have "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again (Hebrews 11:33-35)."

To exercise this mighty faith which brings "perfect peace," we must receive the Holy Spirit into our hearts, and recognise Him, not as an influence or an attribute of God, but as God Himself. He is a Person, and He will make us know Jesus, and understand His mind and will, and realise His constant presence, if we trust Him. Jesus is ever present with us, and, if we long for Him, it will so please Him that He will always help us to stay our minds

on Him.


It will require some effort on our part, however; for the world, business, the weakness of the flesh, the infirmities of our minds, the careless example of the people about us, and the devil with all his wiles, will so seek to turn our thoughts from our Lord and make us forget Him, that, maybe, not more than once or twice in 24 hours shall our thoughts and affections turn to Him, and then only by a strong and prolonged effort, and even in times of prayer we may not really find God.

Keep Focusing on Jesus

Let us then cultivate the habit of communing with Jesus. When our thoughts wander from Him, let us turn them back again, but let us do this quietly and patiently, for any

impatience, even with ourselves, is dangerous, disturbing our inward peace, drowning the still small voice of the Spirit, and hindering the grace of God from mastering us and subduing our hearts.

But if, in all meekness and lowliness of heart, we allow the Holy Spirit to dwell in us, and are obedient to His voice, He will keep our hearts in a holy calm in the midst of ten thousand cares and weaknesses and troubles.

"Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep (garrison) your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6&7)." 



Real Love

by R. A. Torrey (1856-1928)

WHAT is love? Love is the consuming, absorbing desire for and delight in another's highest good. Real love is entirely unselfish. It loses sight utterly of self-interest and sets itself to seeking the interest of the person loved. This was God's attitude toward the world. He loved the world, really loved it.

He looked down on this world, the whole mass of men living at any time on it and that should live on it in all times to come, and He loved them all. His whole being went out in infinite yearning to benefit and bless the world. Any cost to Himself would be disregarded if it would bless the world to pay the cost.

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:10)." 

Faith acts on the Word of God

by George Müller (1805-1898)

WHAT is faith? In the simplest manner in which I am able to express it, I answer: Faith is the assurance that the thing which God has said in His Word is true, and that God will act according to what He has said in His Word.

This assurance, this reliance on God's Word, this confidence – is faith. No impressions are to be taken in connection with faith. Impressions have neither one thing nor the other to do with faith. Faith has to do with the Word of God. It is no impressions, strong or weak, which will make any difference. We have to do with the written Word, and not ourselves or our impressions.

Probabilities are not to be taken into account. Many people are willing to believe regarding those things that seem probable to them. Faith has nothing to do with probabilities. The province of faith begins where probabilities cease, and sight and sense fail.

A great many of God's children are cast down and lament their want of faith. They say that they have no impressions, no feeling, they see no probability that the thing they wish will come to pass.

Appearances are not to be taken into account. The question is – whether God has spoken it in His Word.

And, now, beloved Christian friends, you are in great need to ask yourselves whether you are in the habit of thus confiding, in your innermost soul, in what God has said in His Word, and whether you are in earnest in seeking to find whether the thing you want is in accordance with what He has said in His Word.

Trials – the food of faith

God delights to increase the faith of His children. Our faith, which is feeble at first, is developed and strengthened more and more by use. We ought, instead of wanting no trials before victory, no exercise for patience, to be



willing to take them from God's hand as a means.

I say – and say it deliberately – trials, obstacles, difficulties, and sometimes defeats are the very food of faith. I get letters from many of God's dear children who say: "Dear Brother Müller, I'm writing this because I am so weak and feeble in faith."

Just so surely as we ask to have our faith strengthened, we must feel a willingness to take from God's hand the means for strengthening it. We must allow Him to educate us through trials and bereavements and troubles. It is through trials that faith is exercised and developed more and more.

God affectionately permits difficulties, that He may develop unceasingly that which He is willing to do for us, and to this end we should not shrink. If He gives us sorrow and hindrances and losses and afflictions, we should take them out of His hands as evidences of His love and care for us in developing more and more that faith which He is seeking to strengthen in us.

We come then to the conclusion that God is a loving Being, and we are satisfied with Him, and say: "It is my Father, let Him do as He pleases."

When I first began to allow God to deal with me, relying on Him, taking Him at His Word, I rested on the

simple promises I found in the sixth chapter of Matthew. Read Matthew 6:25-34 carefully.

I believed the Word. I rested on it and practiced it. I took God at His Word!

In the last half century of labour I have been able with the simplicity of a child, to rely upon God. I have had my trials, but I have laid hold upon God, and so it has come to pass that I have been sustained.

It is not simply permission, but a positive command that He gives, to cast the burdens upon Him. Oh, let us do it!

My beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, "*Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain you* (Psalm 55:22)." Day by day I do it. This morning 60 matters in connection with the church of which I am pastor, I brought before the Lord, and thus it is, day by day I do it, and

year by year; 10 years, 30 years, 40 years.

Stay Your Soul on God

Do not expect to obtain full faith at once. Such things as jumping into a full exercise of faith, I reject. The little faith I have I did not obtain at once. Letters come to me full of questions from those who seek to have their faith strengthened.

Stay your soul on the Word of God, and you will have an increase of your faith.

Some say, "I shall never have the gift of faith that Mr Müller has." This is a mistake – it is a great error – there is not a particle of truth in it. My faith is the same kind of faith that all of God's children have had. It is the same kind that Simon Peter had, and all Christians may obtain the like faith.

My faith is their faith, though there may be more of it because my faith has been more developed by exercise than theirs; but their faith is precisely the faith I exercise, only, with regard to degree, mine may be more strongly exercised.

Now, my beloved brothers and sisters, begin in a little way. But first quietly and carefully examine and see whether what you are trusting for is something in accordance with His promises and His written Word. 🐟



By Elizabeth Kendal

CHRISTIAN APOLOGISTS JAILED IN INDONESIA

In August, 2021 Muhammad Kece – former Muslim scholar, now Christian apologist – was arrested in West Java and charged with blasphemy over his YouTube channel. He was subsequently sentenced to 10 years in jail (reduced to six years on appeal). On November 6, 2022 a young Christian YouTuber named Rudi Simamora was arrested in Medan, North Sumatra, and charged with blasphemy for his YouTube channel.

He was sentence on February 23 to one year in jail. On December 6, 2022 police arrested Gratia Pello and charged him with blasphemy for his YouTube channel. Pello (40) – a Coptic Orthodox theologian and apologist with an extensive knowledge of Biblical theology, Eastern Christianity, Arabic language and Islam – taught at Nusantara Bible School in Malang, East Java. Nothing has been heard of Pello since his arrest. Please pray.

PAKISTAN: GOVERNMENT TIGHTENS BLASPHEMY LAW

In Pakistan, the penalty for insulting/blaspheming Islam or its "prophet" Muhammad is a mandatory sentence of death or life in prison. It is no secret that the infamous law – which heightens Islamic zeal and fuels sectarian tension – is routinely used by Muslims to settle scores, make material gains and persecute religious minorities.

On January 17 Pakistan's National Assembly voted unanimously to pass the Criminal Laws (Amendment) Bill, which increases the penalty for insulting Mohammed's companions, wives, and family members from three years to 10 years imprisonment, along with a fine 1 million rupees. The Bill also makes blasphemy a non-bailable offence. Deputy Speaker of the house, Zahid Akram Durrani, called the legislation "historic" as he congratulated the lawmakers for carrying out what many

saw as their religious duty. Human rights advocates rightly fear that this will further fuel sectarian tensions, Islamic intolerance and religious persecution. Please pray.

NIGERIA: TOTAL INSECURITY; ENDLESS TERROR

On Christmas morning, Muslim Fulani militants descended on Angwan Aku village in Kajuru Local Government Area (LGA), in predominantly Christian southern Kaduna State. They rode in on motorbikes, shooting indiscriminately. One Christian was killed and 53 were abducted. Similar attacks in southern Kaduna's Kaura and Kagoro LGAs on December 18 and 23 left a total of 43 Christians dead.

At around 3 a.m. on Sunday, January 15, gunmen attacked the parish residence of Father Isaac Achi, of the Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, in Kaffin Koro LGA, Niger State. Failing to gain entrance, the gunmen set fire to the home. Father Achi died in the flames while another resident, Father Collins Omeh escaped with a bullet in his shoulder.

On the same day terrorists attacked New Life for All Church in Kankara LGA, Katsina State, kidnapping 25 worshippers, and leaving the pastor with non-fatal bullet wounds. Before dawn on Friday, January 20, Fulani gunmen invaded the predominantly Christian community of Abagena, in Benue State, in a raid that left 12 Christians dead. At around 3 a.m. on January 22, Fulani gunmen attacked the predominantly Christian community of Gambar Sabon Layi, Tafawa Balewa LGA, Bauchi State, killing five Christians and abducting another. Please pray for the Church in Nigeria.

MALI: AL-QAEDA MOVES TO ENCIRCLE THE CAPITAL

On January 17 Long War Journal published a report detailing a massive increase in jihadist activity in central

and southern Mali. Terror raids on January 2, 8, 10 and 15 by the al-Qaeda affiliate Group for Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM), left 27 people dead (mostly Malian soldiers and gendarmes) and many more wounded. Please pray.

D.R. CONGO: ISLAMIC STATE CLAIMS CHURCH MASSACRE

On January 15 believers gathered at a Protestant church in Kasindi in Democratic Republic of Congo's north-eastern North Kivu Province, to worship and conduct a series of baptisms. However, during the service a bomb exploded sending burning shrapnel ripping through the congregation. At least 14 worshippers were killed and around 70 were wounded, many seriously.

Islamic State Democratic Republic of Congo (IS-DRC) claimed responsibility for planting the explosive in the church. Morning Star News reports: "Church elder Paluka Kivugha said two men entered the church building and left a bag, which contained an IED (Improvised Explosive Device) that soon detonated." Please pray.

EGYPT: TWO COURT BATTLES NEED PRAYER

Abandoned inside a Coptic church as a newborn five years ago, Shenouda had been placed in the care of a devout childless Christian couple. Four years later, in February, 2022, Egyptian authorities seized Shenouda, placed him in an orphanage and registered him as a Muslim, because adoption is banned in Islam. Egypt's National Council for Human Rights has joined the family's legal defence team. This case is about: (1) adoption, and (2) the legal rights of Egypt's Christians. Meanwhile, the courts have failed Christian grandmother Suad Thabet (74) by allowing the Muslims who stripped and brutalised her to walk free, acquitted of all charges. Heaping injustice upon injustice, these Muslims are now pursuing Mrs Thabet for financial compensation. Please pray.



I Am the LORD

“I am the LORD, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another (Isaiah 42:8).

“For I am the LORD, I speak, and the word which I speak will come to pass (Ezekiel 12:25).”

“For I am the LORD who heals you (Exodus 15:26).”

“Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am the LORD your God. And you shall keep My statutes, and perform them: I am the LORD who sanctifies you (Leviticus 20:7&8).”

“Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me (Jeremiah 32:27)?”

“But I am the LORD your God, who divided the sea whose waves roared – the LORD of hosts is His name (Isaiah 51:15).”

“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt; open your mouth wide, and I will fill it (Psalm 81:10).”

“Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, and He who formed you from the womb: ‘I am the LORD, who makes all things, who stretches out the heavens all alone, who spreads abroad the earth by Myself (Isaiah. 44:24).’”

“I, even I, am the LORD, and besides Me there is no Saviour (Isaiah 43:11).”

“Indeed before the day was, I am He; and there is no one who can deliver out of My hand; I work, and who will reverse it (Isaiah 43:13).”

“Now see that I, even I, am He, and there is no God besides Me (Deuteronomy 32:39).”

“I am the LORD, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King (Isaiah 43:15).”

“Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: ‘I am the First and I am the Last; besides Me there is no God (Isaiah 44:6).’”

“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand (Isaiah 41:10).”

“For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens, who is God, who formed the earth and made it, who has established it, who did not create it in vain, who formed it to be inhabited: ‘I am the LORD, and there is no other (Isaiah 45:18).’”

“I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless (Genesis 17:1).”

“I, even I, am He who comforts you (Isaiah 51:12).”

“‘But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgement, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,’ says the LORD (Jeremiah 9:24).”

“Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth (Psalm 46:10)!”

“For I am the LORD, I do not change (Malachi 3:6).”