

Title:

Taking Hold Of Eternal Life

Odyssey of an Ex-Atheist

“I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.”

(Phil 3:12)

By

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Dedication

To my God-daughter, Malarvathanah (which means "Flower Blossom" in the Indian language), who lives with her husband and daughter in Shah Alam, Malaysia. She has taken the last five letters in her name to adopt the Biblical name of Hanah as her own. She is God's Ephesians 3:20 answer to my prayer for a daughter and has brought into my life the wonderful experience of a daughter's love. Thank You, heavenly Father for this marvelous manifestation of Your boundless love!

Acknowledgments

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I am thankful to God that my friends Ray Shelton and his wife Edith (who is now with the Lord) came so early into my Christian life. Their knowledge of the Bible, expertise in the Greek language, wisdom and many hours we spent in discussion concerning the Bible has been very influential in my walk with Christ. Ray's site online with his outstanding informative writings on various Biblical topics (<http://fromdeathtolife.org/start.html>) are a resource that has proved to be continually helpful to my understanding and growth in my relationship with God.

Also my gratitude to my God-given sister, Sylvia Elaine Lambert, whose sisterly loving-kindness and faithfulness has been a mainstay for me especially since she accepted Christ as her Savior and Lord more than twenty-five years ago. Discussions with her and her husband, Carl, concerning such things as are in this book have been so very helpful and encouraging.

When I finally arrive in heaven I will gladly thank my mother, who departed from this earthly realm forty-five years ago, for her undying motherly loving-care which has been so crucial to my well-being both in this life and the next.

I would also like to acknowledge the many brothers and sisters-in-Christ God has graciously allowed me to cross paths with over the years since 1969, beginning with my own cousin Lee (who is now with the Lord) and his wife Sherry, who together took my hand as we joined hands with the Lord (along with our sister-in-Christ, Dalene) in His work. Without all of these, and the presence of the Lord Himself through His Holy Spirit, none of what is written in this book would have ever come to pass, and this book would not have been written.

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Preface

This book describes my journey of discovery of what is involved in a personal relationship with God, and as coworker walking with Him (John 17:3; 1 Cor. 3: 9). It is also a prophetic warning to the churches of the US and all those who profess to be a Christian to examine their priorities.

After I had returned from a month-long hiking trip into the Sierra mountains of California in the early 1970s, I received a dream from God in which He showed me a set of what were apparently carpenter's tools. I asked God, "*What are these tools for?*" and He answered, "*My Church is in disrepair. I need workers to help Me repair it.*" I began fasting each Sunday for the Church in the US.

"BUILDING FOR ETERNITY"

"For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it?" (Luke 14:28)

Our Lord refers not to a cost we have to count, but to a cost which He has counted. The cost was those thirty years in Nazareth, those three years of popularity, scandal and hatred, the deep unfathomable agony in Gethsemane, and the onslaught at Calvary - the pivot upon which the whole of Time and Eternity turns. Jesus Christ has counted the cost. Men are not going to laugh at Him at last and say - "This man began to build, and was not able to finish."

The conditions of discipleship laid down by Our Lord in vv. 26, 27 and 33 mean that the men and women He is going to use in His mighty building enterprises are those in whom He has done everything. *"If any man come to Me, and hate not . . . he cannot be My disciple."* Our Lord implies that the only men and women He will use in His building enterprises are those who love Him personally, passionately and devotedly beyond any of the closest ties on earth. The conditions are stern, but they are glorious.

All that we build is going to be inspected by God. Is God going to detect in His searching fire that we have built on the foundation of Jesus some enterprise of our own? These are days of tremendous enterprises, days when we are trying to work for God, and therein is the snare. Profoundly speaking, we can never work for God. Jesus takes us over for His enterprises, His building schemes entirely, and no soul has any right to claim where he shall be put.

(“My Utmost For His Highest,” by Oswald Chambers, reading for May 7, p. 128,
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“Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called...”

(1 Tim 6:12)

Sermons We See

I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day;
I'd rather one should walk with me than merely tell the way.
The eye's a better pupil and more willing than the ear,
Fine counsel is confusing, but example's always clear;
And the best of all the preachers are the men who live their creeds,
For to see good put in action is what everybody needs.

I soon can learn to do it if you'll let me see it done;
I can watch your hands in action, but your tongue too fast may run.
And the lecture you deliver may be very wise and true,
But I'd rather get my lessons by observing what you do;
For I might misunderstand you and the high advise you give,
But there's no misunderstanding how you act and how you live.

When I see a deed of kindness, I am eager to be kind.
When a weaker brother stumbles and a strong man stays behind
Just to see if he can help him, then the wish grows strong in me
To become as big and thoughtful as I know that friend to be.
And all travelers can witness that the best of guides today
Is not the one who tells them, but the one who shows the way.

One good man teaches many, men believe what they behold;

One deed of kindness noticed is worth forty that are told.
Who stands with men of honor learns to hold his honor dear,
For right living speaks a language which to every one is clear.
Though an able speaker charms me with his eloquence, I say,
I'd rather see a sermon than to hear one, any day.

Edgar Guest

Chapter One

Your View of Reality

What is your view of reality? What is truly real? Is there more than one reality? John the beloved disciple makes a point of what the true reality is starting in the Chapter One Prologue of his account in the Bible of Jesus' life and ministry and continuing throughout the succeeding chapters of his book.

“For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth.” (John 18:37)

We designate the reality we are familiar with through our five senses as “normal” or “natural,” and God’s actions entering into our reality as “supernatural.” But careful study of the Bible shows that the world we live in is actually ab-normal and un-natural, and the actions of God within our world are actually what is truly normal and natural. Jesus Christ came to reveal true reality, the miracles He performed were God's actions to “normalize” what sin had caused to be abnormal or unnatural (John 18:37). **Death was not part of the world God created and called, “very good.”** God is the source of Life, not death. Sin brought death to God's creation.

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men.... (Rom 5:12)

What God created in the beginning and called “*very good*” is what is truly normal and natural. Consider what Adam and Eve experienced before and after the Fall. After the glory of God’s

presence had departed from them because of their transgression, and God cursed the ground, made garments of skin for them and drove them out of the garden of Eden, what was Adam's and Eve's perspective of the world they were now in? Which did they think was "normal" and "natural" – their pre-Fall Eden experience, or the world after the Fall?

Thus the Scriptures teach us what only science in the past hundred years or so, has discovered; that is, in spite of the original creation, the universe is aging and is heading inexorably toward an ultimate physical death. **That is not the way God originally created the universe; it was good and alive. But something happened. And that was the fall of man that brought death, not just for man but for the universe.** The second law of thermodynamics expresses the law of death for the universe.

Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it.' Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you shall eat of the plants of the field; by the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken, for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." (Gen. 3:17-19).

This act of God was the establishing of the second law of thermodynamics: it affected every aspect of the life of man and ultimately the entire universe. According to this law, "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" under "the bondage of corruption [or 'decay']" (Rom. 8:22, 21). Now there is an universal tendency

from highly organized to disorganization. Never has there been an inherent, natural, undirected, unaided trend toward an increasing organized complexity. The natural tendency now is disorganization and degeneration. Prior to the curse, entropy did not increase and energy was conserved with the decay processes balanced by growth processes. But now decay and the tendency to disorganization predominates. (1)
(Emphasis mine)

When God created man on the sixth day, He “....*created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him.*” (Gen 1:27) As Adam's descendants, we are not born in God's image (Gen. 1:26-27) but in Adam's.

When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth. (Gen 5:3)

When God created Adam, there was no death, but because of Adam's transgression, death now reigns over all God's creation, including us.

Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come. (Rom 5:14)

When Adam was created by God, he had an unsullied relationship with Him till he transgressed and as a result died spiritually (his relationship with God ended and God's presence departed from him) and later died physically. As a result of Adam's sin (though we are not accountable to God for what Adam did) death reigns over each of us and all humans are therefore born spiritually dead, separated from God – alienated from Him – and subject also as a result to physical death.

Later, God's judgment against the world that resulted in the world-wide Flood of Noah's time radically altered the earth to become what we know today as "natural." But it is very far removed from what God had created and called, "*Very good.*"

...the (Flood) changed the structure of the earth's atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere, and biosphere, as formed in the creation week, by a cataclysmic change in the rates and external behavior of those processes. The Curse introduced the universal tendency toward death; the Flood was the visitation of actual death that the world has experienced since the world began. The Biblical Flood was the execution of the Curse and the application of the second law of thermodynamics. The Curse that God placed upon the earth (Gen. 3:17-19) was the establishment of the second law of thermodynamics and the Flood was the execution of that law. The Flood changed the original world that God had created. (2)

So, as was pointed out above, the world that God originally created and called, "*Very good,*" was what God intended as "normal" and was very different from our present world. There was no rainfall before the Flood,

But a mist used to rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground. (Gen 2:6)

God has promised to obliterate the effects of sin and restore His creation to its original pristine state:

And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new."

And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." (Rev 21:5)

It is sad that churches in the US are so short-sighted in their teaching, doing very little to prepare those in their care for the return of Jesus, which will transport them to the glories of the heavenly kingdom. Nor are they warning the world of the calamity to come, while so many are going through the wide gate leading to eternal destruction. How sad it indeed is that so much time is wasted in teaching emphasizing the temporal things of this world, while ignoring or spending less time concerning that which is eternal.

*And the world passes away and disappears, and with it the forbidden cravings (the passionate desires, the lust) of it; **but he who does the will of God and carries out His purposes in his life abides (remains) forever.*** (1 John 2:17 – AMP) (Emphasis mine.)

What is meant to “... *seek first His kingdom and His righteousness...*” ? (Matt. 6:33) I heard one well-known Christian leader tell his flock, “*it means money in your pocket!*” I heard another pastor say, “*Great faith is believing God for a Cadillac rather than a Chevrolet!*”

*“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. **But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven,** where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”* (Matt 6:19-21) (Emphasis mine.)

From 1960-62, I was stationed with the US Army in Munich, Germany. After receiving an overseas discharge, I did some traveling in Europe. Then I decided to travel by French

steamship from La Havre, France to New York. One day while at sea, I stood on the deck looking out on the Atlantic Ocean stretching to the horizon. It was an awesome sight, one I have never forgotten – more impressive to me than the Grand Canyon had been. I thought, I am on a very large ship that appears truly enormous while docked, yet in the middle of this immense ocean I feel like I am in a teacup, or a thimble! Years later, after I became a born-again Christian, I thought again about that experience aboard the liner in the middle of the ocean. As a Christian, that immense ocean seemed to me to have the appearance of eternity. But I also remember noticing the bubbles in the sea that were made by the passage of the ship – coming to the surface and disappearing so quickly. In my memory of that scene, it seemed to me that the ocean was like eternity and just one of those little bubbles represented the whole history of the earth from Adam’s transgression to the return of Christ. In the context of eternity, that period of history as mankind knows it - those thousands of years - appears only for a brief moment, and then disappears forever!

And so the most obvious question also surfaces: In our brief moment of existence on earth this side of eternity, what is truly important? Our permanent residence is in eternity, our residence here is only very temporary. What should our focus be on, what should be our priorities?

*“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness;
And all these things shall be added to you. (Matt 6:33)*

I have some clear memories of when I was very young. I remember standing in my crib in my

parents' room, watching my mother seated at her dresser. I remember her bathing me in a little folding basin beside the kitchen sink. I also remember mother taking me one evening to a nearby church, and sitting with her on a hard wooden pew near the rear. I remember a song being sung.....

*“Jesus loves me! This I know,
For the Bible tells me so.
Little ones to Him belong;
They are weak, but He is strong.*

*Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me!
The Bible tells me so.”*

This song was embedded firmly in my heart for life, and it would periodically surface into my memory during my years as an unbeliever through the first thirty-four years of my life. In 1941, when I was six years old, we moved to a different section of the city, into a newly built, larger house. My parents bought me a bicycle and my mother would have me ride it to a local Baptist church where I would attend Sunday School and sometimes stay for the regular service also.

One morning during Sunday School, there were only two other boys besides me in the class. At one point, the other two began shoving and hitting each other playfully, not paying attention to

the teacher. When that happened, the teacher tried to get their attention by talking to them earnestly about Jesus. But they just ignored him, and continued in their play. When he began talking about Jesus, he did so as if he was talking about someone he personally knew and I became very interested to hear what he was saying. I looked at the two other boys who were not paying the teacher any attention, wishing desperately that they would stop and listen so I could hear what the teacher was saying about Jesus! But they were totally ignoring him and I was too shy to tell them to stop and so also was the teacher who finally gave up and became silent. Even now, when I remember that day, I still can feel the sadness in my heart that I felt as a little boy while I was pedaling my bike back home from church. I had so wanted to hear that man talk about Jesus!

During my high school and college years (1950-57) I participated in a local United Methodist Church church and the Wesley Fellowship at UCLA. It never occurred to me that it was unusual that no mention was made of the “Gospel” during all those years. I participated in all aspects of the church I could, youth fellowship, singing in the choir, playing piano for the choir, pastor's Bible study, summer youth camp, and of course I attended regular church services. The Bible was closed to my understanding, so every time I opened it I would just stare at the words uncomprehendingly. Though the opening verses of the Gospel of John fascinated me especially, I had no idea what they meant, and the pastor never explained them, and only rarely referred to them – or any other scripture that I can remember. Of all those years spent attending the church and Wesley Fellowship, the most memorable event – an event that proved a “crossroads” for me – occurred as the result a very simple, innocently intended, yet incredibly profound question

asked of the director of that fellowship by a young female student one evening after dinner:
When she asked the question I remember saying to myself, “*Yes! That's a really good question!*”

“Can you know God?”

Just as the question is indelibly written on my memory, so is the response. The director, who had the most benign smile of any person I have ever encountered, paused, after looking at the young woman, turned, looked upward toward the ceiling (as if heavenward) and answered....

“You can't really KNOW God!”

I knew immediately where he was headed – into the philosophical dilemma of the finite not being of able to encompass the infinite. But I was already too angry to bother listening to his answer which I knew was useless to me and did not properly answer the question burning inside me. I was acquainted with this young woman (having dated her) and knew her question was intensely practical, not philosophical. The director had previously invited one of the professors at UCLA to one of our meetings to talk about “The Historical Jesus.” Aside from the fact that I was amazed that the professor who had been invited was from the UCLA philosophy department (I was currently a student in his class on “Metaphysics”), what he said that night about “the historical Jesus” was totally forgettable.

But I would never forget the director's answer this night. I became so angry as a result that as I looked around me at the empty chairs in the rear of the room I felt like throwing them about in frustration – but again I was too shy and feared drawing attention to myself. But his answer

would pursue me the rest of my life, profoundly affecting the remainder of my years as an unbeliever, then following me into my experience as a Christian. God later used that question and the director's erroneous answer to focus my life as a Christian on what I was to learn was the most important fact about the kingdom of God.

But at the time, I did not know that the director's answer was erroneous. I thought he should know what he was talking about, and that he answered philosophically because there was no other way to answer that question. I was angry because I felt that if you truly could not know God, then that meant He did not care about you. And if He did not care, then why should I? So by making that decision at that "crossroads" that night, I took what proved to be the wrong road. I found out years later that perhaps I should have questioned the young woman. She might have known the correct answer and was purposely asking that question in order to give the director the opportunity of sharing the truth. Amazingly, he did not know the truth, so ignorantly gave the wrong answer. But I did not know his answer was wrong, and later I decided that if there really was a God, He would have to care about mankind. So I decided in my ignorance that if there was no God who cared, then logically there could not be a God at all. So I embarked on my atheistic years....

After I became a Christian many years later, I learned that Campus Crusade for Christ got its start on the UCLA campus during the time I was a student there. Oh, How I wished I would have crossed paths with them! It would probably have made a very major difference in my life! I also learned that the founding of the Methodist denomination was radically different from its present

apparent state of spiritual stagnation. The Methodist Church was co-founded by George Whitefield (1714-1770) and John Wesley (1703-1791). They were Anglicans who were not allowed to speak in churches since they were not licensed, so as a result began preaching in the streets. Whitefield especially was known for his ability to speak to very large crowds of thousands of people in the open air without the use of sound amplifying devices. He and Wesley traveled throughout the American colonies, and were instrumental in the “Great Awakening,” a wonderful revival that brought many to God throughout the colonies in the eighteenth century. These founders of Methodism were what we would call street preachers.

George Whitefield stated: *"I believe I never was more acceptable to my Master than when I was standing to teach those hearers in the open fields." ... "I now preach to ten times more people than I should, if had been confined to the Churches."*

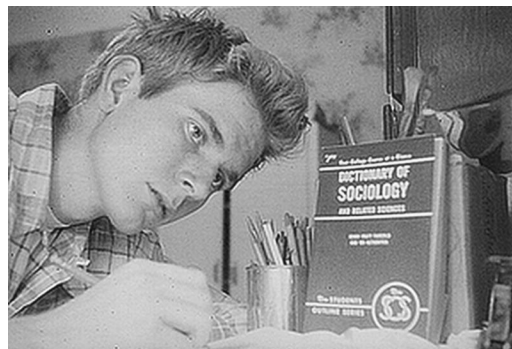
Also from John Wesley: *"I am well assured that I did far more good to my Lincolnshire parishioners by preaching three days on my father's tomb than I did by preaching three years in his pulpit." ... "To this day field preaching is a cross to me, but I know my commission and see no other way of preaching the gospel to every creature".*

Another great Methodist outdoor preacher at this time was Gideon Ouseley (1762-1839). He traveled on horseback and preached several times a day, without dismounting, in streets, fairs and markets throughout Ireland. Methodists were also instrumental in America's second Great Awakening, typified by outdoor “camp meetings.” (4)

Today it seems if you were to attempt to discuss the gospel in any Methodist church the

response would probably be just blank stares of incomprehension! But, as a matter of fact, most denominations appear to be afflicted with varying degrees of a similar malady, Interesting that “open air”street preaching is the means God seems to favor to reach the lost and bring revival. This seems to be in keeping with what we see Jesus doing as told in the various Gospel accounts, in the founding of His Church. It seems that He prefers that “the Church would go where the people are,” rather than people being invited to “go to church.” How unfortunate that men think they know better than God how His Church should function!

As the years passed, I became increasingly cynical, very sarcastic, and enjoyed refuting other people’s opinions (or belief system) through that cynicism, sarcasm and an adroit use of logic. I was a sophist, not believing in any system of truth, or that there was any truth in which to believe – or “good and evil.” It was all a “game” to me – opposing those I met who espoused a particular belief system just for the sake of argument. I did not believe what I was saying anymore than I accepted what anyone else believed. But I very much enjoyed demolishing their belief system, which I was able to do more times than not, leaving them speechless in the process.



There were very few people who cared enough to try to tell me about God. I would either just disregard what they said, or mock them. Unfortunately, none of them had the “dynamite” power of the Holy Spirit in their lives that Jesus told His disciples was necessary to be His witness (Acts 1:8). Interestingly, the few who did try to tell me about God were women.

Those atheistic years after graduation from UCLA included being drafted into the Army (1958 – I took basic training at Fort Ord, California), then while I was stationed at Fort Holabird in Baltimore, Maryland taking training in Army Intelligence, I had a brief romantic involvement in Washington, D. C. with a young Christian woman. Patty tried in her own kind, sweet way to tell me about Jesus, but it did not make an impression on my dense head. At the beginning of 1959, I was transferred to Monterey, California to attend the Army Language School to learn Czech, and there a fellow soldier invited me to church, but his personal life was so weird I was not interested. I had two other romantic encounters while stationed in Munich, Germany (1960-62). They were students at the University of Maryland extension located on the floor below the office where I worked in McGraw Kaserne. A number of students from there died in a terrible airplane crash during their Christmas break in 1960, and I did not know if Sue was dead or alive for two weeks till she returned to school. I cried out angrily and in anguish – *“If there is a God of love, how could He allow such a tragedy?”*

When I sent a letter home to my parents, my mother (the only believer in our family at that point) sent one back, trying in her caring, motherly fashion to tell me about God and His love. I am sure she must have shed some tears for me, but my heart was too hardened to care what she wrote.

When I returned home after being discharged from the Army, my mother remarked to me, “*The cares of the world seem to just roll off you like water off a duck's back!*” I had no answer to that, and a short time later she died. Later, I remembered a dream I had while in the Army. In the dream, I was saying “*Good-bye*” to my mother as she was departing on a train and realized the dream was forecasting her death. Seven years later, when I became born-again, I realized I would see her again in heaven.

In the years following my Army experience my life became increasingly chaotic. I examined various religions, but was not attracted to any of them. None seemed to offer any real tangible hope, or offer understanding about reality. Later, after I had become a Christian, I discovered that only Christianity seemed to offer any real benefits to society, establishing hospitals and schools in the US for example. Years later I remarked to a Hindu physician that the only reason there were hospitals in India was because Christian missionaries from the west had founded them. He had nodded in agreement.

With no concept of “right and wrong,” “good and evil,” “truth,” I made what proved to be foolish decisions. My atheistic outlook was producing quicksand under my feet. At one point, I felt myself literally losing control of my mental stability – my sense of reality totally slipping away, and sometime in 1968, in the privacy of my apartment, curled up on my bed in a fetal position, cried out desperately, “*Help.*” But to whom? There was no one else there – and I was an atheist. Nevertheless I felt a Power reach into my life and heal me so I could adequately function again. With that came the warning in my thoughts, “*This is the second time.*” (A year

earlier I had encountered a less severe experience that had threatened my mental stability.) “*Next time will be destruction.*” Well, there was a “*next time.*” But I was still in a rut. It was amazing that I did not consider seriously what had happened, nor consider trying to seek advice or counsel. But from whom?

I remembered the warning, so when the “*next time*” seemed imminent and visible on the horizon during 1969, I quit my job, hid out in my house and began perusing the books I had in my personal library in a desperate attempt to find a solution to my ruined life.

Finally I came across the book “Peace of Mind,” by Joshua Loth Liebman which I had purchased some time before. I had encountered it in a book rack in a grocery store, and saw at that time that the first half of it might be of interest. The second half was about God but I decided to ignore that and buy the book. Written by a Jewish psychologist, the first half dealt with psychological problems. Reading that helped me so much I became curious enough to read the second half – and discovered this Jewish Rabbi had a worldwide recognized ministry to atheists.

In his book he wrote about the God of the garden of Eden, a God who loved the man and woman He had created, and when they had sinned had given them up to the consequence of their wrong choice but lovingly desired that they would return to Him. Reading this brought some of the pieces of the puzzle of my life together enough to put the possibility of God’s existence back into my life after so many years, and that night I prayed sincerely for the first time in my life, “*If you are really there, God, please come into my life and help set it straight. I’ve made a terrible mess*”

of it.” I was trapped in the prison of the consequences of my wrong choices and knew that I was in a rut headed for certain destruction, of which I had received warning. But I felt that I had touched something - or Someone.

All day long the next day, my mind was flooded with a cascade of memories of things I had done wrong, people I had hurt, unforgiveness..... Sins upon sins upon sins..... Till finally at the end of the day in desperation I cried out, *”I know I have done wrong! What do I do about it?”* Atheists don’t ever get answers to questions that they ask like that, but God answered me. He told me, *“Get acquainted with My Son!”* I knew He must be talking about Jesus! Some time later I learned that this in itself was a direct refutation of what the director of that Wesley Fellowship had said – that *“you can’t know God.”*

The only way I knew how to get acquainted with God’s Son, Jesus, was to read the Bible. My mother had given me a copy of the King James Version Bible on Christmas, 1945, when I was ten years old. I had kept it with me ever since – though unread. Together with two other translations I remembered seeing at a local store and purchased after God spoke to me, I started reading at the beginning of the New Testament and read for eight hours a day – all three books together. For the first time in in my life, God opened the Bible to my understanding like a beautiful flower and the Person of Jesus became so real that I felt at one point I could literally walk around a corner in my house and bump into Him in the flesh! I became “born again” of God’s incorruptible Word.

“For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable,

through the living and enduring word of God.” (1 Peter 1:23)

and became a “new creation” in Christ!

“Therefore if any person is [ingrafted] in Christ (the Messiah) he is a new creation (a new creature altogether); the old [previous moral and spiritual condition] has passed away. Behold, the fresh and new has come!” (2 Cor. 5:17 AMP)

Since this happened on my thirty-fourth birthday, God had given me the most wonderful birthday gift ever!

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

I will be found by you,” declares the LORD.” (Jer. 29:11-14)

(1) “The Problem of Creation,” Ray Shelton <http://fromdeathtolife.org/cphil/create2.html#cflot>

(2) “The Problem of Creation,” Ray Shelton <http://fromdeathtolife.org/cphil/create2.html#cflot>

(4) “Lessons On Street Preaching – A History Of Street Preaching – Post-Reformation Preachers”

<http://www.soulwinning.info/sp/lessons/02.htm>

Chapter Two

"Get acquainted with My Son!"

What a simple statement that seemed at the time, easily understood. But what profound implications and consequences it turned out to have as the years went by. "Becoming acquainted" was the obvious first step in any relationship, but stepping from the world of atheism into God's kingdom was more than just a casual matter of "getting acquainted" with my next-door neighbor. The Bible is right to the point in saying:

*"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from **death to life**." (John 5:24)*

*"For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and **transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son**, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." (Col. 1:13-14)*

Every person has questions that inevitably pop into their minds during the course of their daily lives concerning life itself, and as an atheist I had learned never to expect an answer – because there was no one “out there” who could answer. But now, as a citizen of God's kingdom, I realized that my life had radically changed and there were crucial differences from my former existence. One day, standing at the kitchen sink in my house, washing dishes, one such question arose in my mind and I spoke it out, as I would sometimes do even though no one else was there. Except now there was Someone there with me constantly, and the question I posed received an

immediate answer. I immediately stopped what I was doing and just stood there in wonder. This was a very new experience for me! I realized that from now on, since God was in my life, I could expect answers to my questions! I do not now remember what the question was that popped into my mind, and I do not remember what God's Holy Spirit answered – but I will never forget how blessed I felt that I received an answer! And of course I knew Who it was that answered – and I could expect to be answered from now on!

I had a kitchen cupboard full of wine and hard liquor and beer in the fridge that I had bought while still in atheistic darkness and one day God suddenly said to me, *“You will not be able to hear Me as well, drinking that.”* Surprised, I stood still, thinking about what God had just told me. I realized God was telling me that alcoholic beverages would cause me to be less sensitive to hearing Him speak to me, and I therefore had an important choice to make. So I considered the ramifications of what had been told me. I had done research on wine, with aspirations of becoming a connoisseur, and bottles of wine filled a shelf in my cupboard. Below them was another shelf full of the “hard stuff.” In the fridge was the beer. I decided to start with the bottles of wine, which were conveniently located just above my kitchen sink. First I poured each bottle of wine into the sink drain, then my hard liquor. Lastly, and with a sigh, I reached for the beer. I thought it went so well with the Mexican food I sometimes liked to fix for myself, but nevertheless I poured it down the drain as well. I had developed quite a taste for German beer while stationed with the Army in Germany and remembered one day while at the Oktoberfest in Munich drinking about seven or eight of the big liters. Of course, German beer was much stronger than that in the US, which by comparison seemed almost like water. Years later, when I

was living in Monterey, California I decided to fix myself a Mexican meal and rationalized that there should be nothing wrong with having "just one beer" to go with it. Sigh! That "one beer" laid me on my bed feeling sick and when I opened my eyes I saw bugs crawling on the wall beside me that were not there! That really scared me! How could one beer give me the DTs?!? But I realized it was part of God separating me to Himself and I needed to submit obediently....

God let me know that I had been standing right on the precipice of eternity at the time He confronted me and I turned to Him - if I had not make the right decision, my earthly life would have been ended and I would have been eternally in hell. The fact that God had delivered me from certain death and destruction was apparent to me, so later I asked God what I could do to show Him my gratitude. He at once replied,

"Go and do likewise." (Luke 10:37)

At that time I was not well enough acquainted with the Bible to know that was a direct quotation from what Jesus had told the scribe in the context of the "Parable of the Good Samaritan." But I knew that God had been merciful to me, and now He expected me to "do likewise" to others. At that point He took my hand in His and began opening up doors of involvement in ministry, making me His "fellow worker" in what He was doing.

For we are fellow workmen (joint promoters, laborers together) with and for God...

(1 Cor. 3:9 AMP)

I was concentrating on reading the Bible every day, and God quickly let me know that He desired my study of His Word to be complemented by practical application as part of the learning process. When I came across Matt. 6:33, I stopped and considered very carefully what it said.

"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things (you are daily normally concerned about) shall be added unto you."

I prayed, *"Alright Heavenly Father, I will commit myself to seeking first Your kingdom and righteousness (though at this point I do not understand exactly what that involves) and will just leave in your hands my other concerns. I think that either you are real and can help me get my life together enough that I can get another job or if You're not - then there is no hope for me and I will perish."* I considered that God would be able to help me get my act together enough in about three months and I would then be able to go get another job. I was about to learn my first real lesson - that God has His way of doing things and does not need advice from us how to do them or what length of time needs to be involved. But at the same time I did determine that this would be between God and myself and I would tell no other person that I was out of a job - only that I had invited God into my life to be Savior and Lord. He alone knew about my situation so He alone would be able to help.

But the three months came and went and I continued reading the Bible. When I resigned my job I had about \$2000 in the bank, and was making house payments. Four months passed, then five months and Christmas found me with less than \$100 left in my account. Nevertheless at nights I

was sleeping peacefully. In January I quit answering the phone, knowing it was inquiries from the bank concerning overdue payments on my house. Then God told me to cash in the life insurance policy I had purchased while I had been in the Army ten years before. That gave me some spending money, and I learned later that within a month that insurance company had gone bankrupt. Finally the beginning of March, 1970 (seven months after I had made the Matt.6:33 commitment) God told me to begin looking for a job. I decided to be frank about what was happening in my life with prospective employers and by the end of the month had found employment again as a workmen's compensation underwriter. On the basis of the promise of having a job and owning a car I was able to get a loan from a local finance company to pay off what was owing on the rent on my house. When I did, I was told that the irreversible foreclosure proceedings would have begun in forty-five minutes if I had not paid what was due. So I had the opportunity to witness and tell of God's sovereign provision. To God be the Glory!

God had kept His promise, as stated in Matt. 6:33. I realized that I no longer had to fear the threat of destruction. God had taken me out of the rut in which I had been imprisoned.

He is on the path of life who heeds instruction (Prov. 10:17)

The way of life winds upward for the wise,

That he may turn away from hell below. (Prov. 15:24)

There are those who without proper understanding regard Matt. 6:33 as a means to the end of

satisfying their daily needs. They think Jesus is saying *"If you will seek.....you will get...."* In doing that, they improperly focus on the latter part of the verse rather than on God's commandment to *"Seek first His Kingdom..."* This verse may be divided into two parts: (1) *"Seek first...."* which is a commandment and refers to that which is "eternal," (2) *"...and all these things...."* which is not a commandment, but instead is God's promise to us concerning temporal matters when we commit ourselves to making His kingdom our first priority. Paul the apostle explains this in depth in 2 Cor. 4-5. In 4:18 we are told about the difference between the eternal and the temporal and what we are to focus on.

"So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen.

For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." (2 Cor. 4:18)

"For we walk by faith [we regulate our lives and conduct ourselves by our conviction or belief respecting man's relationship to God and divine things, with trust and holy fervor; thus we walk] not by sight or appearance." (2 Cor 5:7 AMP)

The "eternal" refers to the things of God's kingdom, while the "temporal" refers to this world-system which is a result of Adam's sin. This "world system" was never God's intention. It has no intrinsic value, though God of course desires that we learn proper stewardship even of those things that are doomed to "pass away" if we are to be deemed by Him worthy of handling that which is "eternal."

*“And the world passes away and disappears, and with it the forbidden cravings (the passionate desires, the lust) of it; **but he who does the will of God and carries out His purposes in his life abides (remains) forever.**” (1 John 2:17 AMP)*

*“He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. Therefore if you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous wealth, **who will entrust the true riches to you?** And if you have not been faithful in the use of that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. **You cannot serve God and wealth.**” (Luke 16:10-13)*

We should focus on Jesus

*“...let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. **Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.** (Heb 12:1-2)*

God has “marked out for us” our race:

“For we are God's [own] handiwork (His workmanship), recreated in Christ Jesus, [born anew] that we may do those good works which God predestined (planned beforehand) for us [taking paths which He prepared ahead of time], that we should walk in them [living the good life which He prearranged and made ready for us to live].” (Eph. 2:10 AMP)

He has prepared a truly wonderful and exciting life for us as we enjoy intimacy with Him, and share His loving concern for the lost, having as our priority His will being done on earth as it is in heaven

“Your kingdom come.

Your will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven. “ (Matt. 6:10)

We are instructed to look forward with great expectation to the return of Jesus Christ, His coming kingdom reign on this earth and the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19). The things of this world are only useful for this world as they are temporal and we should not as Christians focus on them. God promises to provide for us as we focus our concern on His eternal Kingdom, but we should not regard Him as a "means" to these daily concerns. He is only a means to that which is eternal (John 14:6).

*"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. **You cannot serve both God and Money.** (Matt 6:24)*

There is so much teaching in churches and on Christian TV programming on the subject of "prosperity." Such teaching is totally misplaced in its focus as there is nothing in Scripture to warrant such emphasis. The focus of such teaching makes God the means to the end of satisfying man's desires rather than God's. When we focus on our own "prosperity" we actually are telling God, *"We do not trust You to keep Your promises to us!"* He has told us that He will provide for our needs as we concentrate on His kingdom purposes which He has revealed to us. We should

determine to understand eternal matters, see everything **from His perspective** rather than our own, and desire that our temporal world be invaded by His Kingdom reality.

*"For My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD.
"For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways
And My thoughts than your thoughts." (Isa. 55:8-9)*

*"....but just as it is written,
'Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and have not entered the heart of man,
all that God has prepared for those who love him.
For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the
depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man
which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we
have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know
the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human
wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But
a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him;
and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual
appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. For who has known the mind of the
lord, that he will instruct Him? **But we have the mind of Christ.**(1 Cor. 2:9-16)*

Here in the US we Christians are so childish and self-centered. In our focus on being prosperous, we are like six year-old children in a toy store looking at all the ways God can bless us. As we look at all these "toys" we say to our heavenly Father, "Daddy, give me this...." Or "Daddy, give me that...." We get caught up with all the temporal things with which God can bless us and even when we consider who He has made us to be through what His Son has accomplished for us, we think of it only in self-centered terms: "I" am this, or "I" am that! It amazes me to see that God's calling of a man as "Pastor" is not good enough now for many, but we must instead achieve the designation as "Doctor." "Doctor Smith" sounds so much more eminent than "Pastor Smith" apparently, the worldly label is somehow more to be desired than the God-given one. So "Men of God" strut around on the world's stage as "Doctors," exalting themselves by a label not given by God. "Doctors" in Christian leadership have become "a dime a dozen." Supposedly the world will think more highly of them? But I doubt very much that God is impressed.

Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things - and the things that are not - to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. (1 Cor. 1:26-30)

Why is it that the word "prosperity" has suddenly become of such supreme importance on the Christian landscape? I am reminded of the book "The Last Temptation of Christ," by Nikos

Kazantzakis, where the author tells of Jesus supposedly experiencing one last “temptation” while He is hanging on the cross. I read the book in the 1970s after I became a Christian out of curiosity and though I of course realized that this fictional account was so very wrong about Jesus Himself, the “last temptation” did seem to actually fit the state of churches in the US. A reviewer of the book stated, *“The 'last temptation' occurs on the cross in which Jesus is given a vision of the life He might have had. He marries, makes love, fathers children, works as a carpenter and lives happily. But He rejects that vision and suddenly raises His head realizing He is still high in the air, nailed to the cross.”* I seem to remember that in this fantasy-sequence of the “temptation” Jesus is supposedly going through, His disciples ask Him at one point, *“What every happened to the Gospel?”* Whether the question was actually posed or inferred in the author's account, I cannot remember, but after reading the book I thought: generally speaking, that imaginary “temptation” seems to describe the actual state of disorientation of most of the churches in the US.

*And if the army bugler doesn't play the right notes, how will the soldiers
know that they are being called to battle? (1 Cor. 14:8-9 TLB)*

Looking at the churches of the US through the lens of what we read in the New Testament, we cannot help but conclude that these churches do NOT have a clear understanding of their calling. It has been made unclear because the waters have been muddied by wrong teaching, opinions, commentary, and societal beliefs to the point that, as I heard one theologian say, *“The brand of Christianity practiced in the churches and the mores of American society are so inter-mixed that it is impossible to tell where the former leaves off and the latter commences.”* Truly,

what Jesus said His coming would be like fully describes the Church in the US:

"For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be." (Matt 24:37-39)

The "rubber meets the road" for Christians in the US not with God's Word but with their rights as American citizens.

"They are not of the world (worldly, belonging to the world), [just] as I am not of the world."
(John 17:16 AMP)

What Jesus prayed here obviously applies to Christians in India, China and other countries where they are viciously persecuted for their faith, but if it applies here in the US it is not because of the lifestyle of the church-going Christians, but because God Himself is being rejected as all vestiges of the covenant the founding fathers made with the God revealed through His Son Jesus Christ are being obliterated by a wayward nation. Unlike Christians in other countries that persecute them, Christians in the US refuse to understand their true calling, starting with false teachers who focus on "prosperity" rather than on true discipleship, on a "golden calf" rather than warning the lost of the consequences of their sin and calling them to repentance, on wanting to participate in the temporal blessings of the land they live in rather than recognizing the "signs of the times" and warning of coming judgment as did John the Baptist.

Blow a trumpet in Zion,

And sound an alarm on My holy mountain!

Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,

For the day of the LORD is coming;

Surely it is near,

A day of darkness and gloom,

A day of clouds and thick darkness.

(Joel 2:1-2)

But why should we Christians care? We plan to be raptured into heaven so why should we be concerned about warning the inhabitants of the land we live in about the coming calamities which will be far worse than those that are already being experienced? We have more important matters to pursue: P-R-O-S-P-E-R-I-T-Y!

His watchmen are blind,

All of them know nothing.

All of them are mute dogs unable to bark,

Dreamers lying down, who love to slumber;

And the dogs are greedy, they are not satisfied.

And they are shepherds who have no understanding;

They have all turned to their own way,

Each one to his unjust gain, to the last one.

"Come," they say, "let us get wine, and let us drink heavily of strong drink;

And tomorrow will be like today, only more so." (Isa 56:9-57:1)

.The “unjust gain” is self-centered interest in “prosperity,” and the “wine” and “strong drink” is false teaching.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. (2 Tim 4:3-4)

The Bible speaks of those in the past who are to serve as our examples, having their spiritual eyes rightly focused, like Moses who was...

...considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward. (Heb 11:26)

*"They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated- the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. These were all commended for their faith, yet **none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us** so that only together with us would they be made perfect. " (Heb 11:37-40)*

Those who want to walk the path to true eternal prosperity need to die to their self-centered (fleshly) interests.

"I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.'Those whom I love, I reprove

and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.” (Rev 3:18-20)

*“...with **humility of mind** regard one another as more important than yourselves” (Phil 2:3)*

*“Paul, a **bond-servant** of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle...” (Rom 1:1)*

*“James, a **bond-servant** of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ...” (James 1:1)*

*“Simon Peter, a **bond-servant** and apostle of Jesus Christ,,,” (2 Peter 1:1)*

*“Jude, a **bond-servant** of Jesus Christ...” (Jude 1)*

*“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His **bond-servants**,*

the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it

*by His angel to His **bond-servant** John...” (Rev 1:1)*

The Lord Jesus is not only eternally the Lamb of God, but we are eternally God's bond-servants - to Him and to each other (Rev. 22:3). We Christians in the U.S. need to change our mentality, leave behind our childishness and *“...in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.”* (Eph. 4:15)

But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.(Rom 6:22)

Therefore,

Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil,

but use it as bond-slaves of God. (1 Peter 2:16)

It is obvious especially from the apostle Paul's life and writings that a bond-slave

is a “**love-slave**” in his relationship with God. The bond with God is one of love. Paul exhibited intense commitment to Christ because of his intense devotion for Him. Slaves have no self-interests and are only concerned with their master's interests. They do not receive remuneration or reward, but their master takes care of all their needs. Being a bond-slave to God is voluntary - based on our love of God and obedience to Him. In our forsaking (dying to) all personal self-interests in our relationship with God, the actual trade-off is that the fullness of God Himself becomes our inheritance (Eph. 4:13; Rom. 8:29). How meager are our own childish self-interests compared with the infinite riches of what God wants to bless us with!

"One thing you lack....come, follow Me." (Mark 10:21)

"One thing thou lackest . . ." The only "good thing" from Jesus Christ's point of view is union with Himself and nothing in between. (1)

And He said to them, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come, eternal life." (Luke 18:29-30)

The state of the churches in the US seems so far off the mark from what the Lord wants them to be. Teaching in them so often seems to focus on the temporal instead of the eternal, in direct violation of Scripture. I wonder how many of those who profess to be Christians are truly unconditionally available to God? Those that are not will certainly be left behind as God moves on with His agenda. I cannot help but wonder how many will be shown to be "*liars*" while professing to be followers of Christ. How many confess Jesus as “Lord” and at the same time

place limitations on their availability to God in their hearts and minds?

*"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, **but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.** Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' (Matt 7:21-23)*

Many Christians sing about their belief that God calls them "friend"

"This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you." (John 15:12-15)

"You are My friends if you do what I command you." First of all, Christ commands us to "love one another, just as I have loved you." He defines what that love is, what is expected of us if we truly love as He does. "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends." We are expected literally to lay down our lives for one another if that is needed.

Furthermore, do we really know what our Master is doing? We know His hand is stretched out to us in blessing, but do we know He is also offering it to us so that we may place our hand in His, walk with Him and join in what He is doing?

For we are fellow workmen (joint promoters, laborers together) with and for God;

(1 Cor 3:9 AMP)

How can we truly know what our Master is doing unless we have our hand in His and are laboring together with Him in what He is doing? If we are sitting at a distance from Him, watching what He is doing – we have no right to say we are His “friends.” Jesus' disciples walked with Him and labored with Him as He was teaching them.

So we should take care that we are not being presumptuous in disdaining the label of "servant" and claiming the title of "friend" instead. Does not being any longer called a "servant" mean that we are no longer to have the mentality of one? After all, the One who we say calls us “friends,” is Himself God's Servant (Matt. 12:18; Acts 3:13). The Bible shows clearly that having the mentality of a servant is prerequisite to being God's friend. Otherwise, why had Jesus washed His disciples' feet just a short time before as an “example” to them (John 13:1-17)?

I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. (John 13:15)

Do those who make the claim so casually of being God's “friend” have experiential knowledge of what it is to be Christ's bond-slave? God is more actually than just our friendly next-door neighbor or used-car salesman! But it seems that only those who decide voluntarily to be God's bond-slaves will actually be standing at His throne in eternity. “*I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day...*” is the first line in Edgar Guest's poem reproduced at the beginning of this

book. If Jesus does indeed call you “*Friend*,” then that fact will be noticeable even to the unbeliever without your having to broadcast it with your mouth, and they will remark on seeing in your behavior that you remind them of Jesus not only in how you talk but what you do, and they will recognize you as “*godly*.”

....they took note that these men had been with Jesus. (Acts 4:13)

....the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

(1 John 2:6)

...the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads....and they will reign forever and ever.

(Rev 22:3-5)

*"You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. "But it is not this way among you, but **whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant**; and **whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all**. "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve..."*

(Mark 10:42-45)

(1)“My Utmost for His Highest,” Oswald Chambers, Sept. 28, p. 272, Copyright 1935,

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Chapter Three

“Walking and Leaping and Praising God!”

When I told my cousin and his wife of my born-again experience, they looked at each other in obvious amazement, wondering I suppose how such a thing could be, but then later invited me to their church, and involved me in the youth ministry there. I was at first reluctant to become involved in a church because of my previous poor experiences with them when I was an unbeliever. And my cousin's church was unfortunately no exception. It was part of the Disciples of Christ denomination, which are liberally social-gospel in their thinking. But they were friendly, and my cousin and his wife provided the transportation. My cousin, who had been raised in that denomination, was also liberal in his thinking, but as he saw me grow in my knowledge of the Bible and bring up things I found in it for discussion, his thinking changed. During one period of time he became sick and was forced to spend a good deal of time in bed - and he decided to read the New Testament for the first time in his life!

The first Sunday I went with them to their church, there was a potluck lunch on the church grounds after the service. My cousin (an elder in the church) was engaged in conversation with another elder, but they were discussing inconsequential things. After a while I could no longer remain silent and suddenly interjected, *"Isn't Jesus wonderful!"* I shall never forget the expression on the other elder's face. He was in the middle of a sentence and simply stopped speaking, his eyes became glazed and fixed on apparently nothing and he just stood there speechless. My cousin understood of course why I had made that remark and what was

happening with the other elder. He tried to re-engage him in conversation, but had no success.

As our involvement there continued in the church's activities, we prayed that the pastor might come to know the truth and be born-again. But he remained adamant in his ways and God preferred to use us to lead members of the congregation into the truth of the born-again experience and into receiving the fullness of God's Holy Spirit. God then led them into other churches where they could be properly fed. I discovered that a recent poll had found that the majority of pastors in the US were not born-again and did not believe the Bible was infallible in what it said. In fact, I was told of a local pastor who had been pastoring for about twenty years but had only recently experienced being born-again. When he described his born-again experience from the pulpit of his church, they insisted he leave. Some of them followed him, and they began a new church. I find it incomprehensible that a majority of those standing behind the pulpits of the churches in the US are not called by God. These are "tares" and "wolves in sheep's clothing!" (Matt. 7:15; 13:25)

I attended one of their summer camps as a counselor and joined another adult teaching a group of teenagers about Jesus. The other teacher was obviously not born-again and "didn't agree" with me in what I said. During one session, the overseer or bishop for that area entered the room and joined the discussion. He told the kids, among other things, that *"The Bible is useful as a tool, but the Church is the final authority."* I was astounded at what he said, and could hardly keep myself from responding. But I held my peace - and later during the "rest time" went to have a talk with him. He was gracious, and we had a good discussion, but that's all it was. I considered

his statement to be in the same category as that earlier statement I had heard to the effect that, *"You can't really know God..."* I wondered how many other church "leaders" I would encounter who did not know God and were not called by Him.

"...but the people who know their God shall prove themselves strong and shall stand firm and do exploits [for God]." (Dan 11:32 AMP)

"And from the days of John the Baptist until the present time, the kingdom of heaven has endured violent assault, and violent men seize it by force [as a precious prize--a share in the heavenly kingdom is sought with most ardent zeal and intense exertion]." (Matt 11:12 AMP)

I had, as I previously stated, asked God in gratitude for what He was doing in my life, *"What can I do, Father?"* He answered me, *"Go and do likewise."* I would come to know the meaning of what God answered me as He involved me in reaching out to others in need as He had done for me. This is perhaps the most important message for God's church today - that we all must walk with an attitude of mercy toward others that is based on receiving God's forgiveness and looking for opportunities to extend that to those also in need of it.

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.... when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son."

(Rom 5:8,10)

During this time also, worshiping God in the privacy of my bedroom and in gratitude for the mercy He had shown me, I spontaneously lifted my hands toward heaven and prayed, *"Heavenly*

Father, I don't know everything about all You have to offer but I want to have whatever You want to give me. I don't know how You can use a fool like me (Ps. 14:1), but I want to be used however you can use me." More than Thirty-seven years later, as I write this, I realize that God has answered this simple prayer according to His promise in Ephesians 3:20-1:

"Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen."

I was burdened for a time with several relationships that had apparently died, including my relationship with a step-sister. One day I was pacing back and forth in my bedroom, really very deeply concerned that there seemed nothing I could do to salvage these failed relationships. Suddenly I felt a hand on one of my shoulders that stopped me and turned me around, while I heard a voice telling me, *"We will change these past failures into future goals!"* Oh, it was so wonderful to have a loving God in my life who could redeem and resurrect what was lost or had died! God put in my mind to make a phone call to one person, and when I did that I found the situation quickly resolved. Another was resolved also in just a couple of weeks, a third in a few more weeks, a fourth in a matter of months and finally there was reconciliation with my step-sister and her family though it took two years.

One day standing in my house I prayed simply, *"Heavenly Father, I give this house to You to use as You want."* I had purchased a three-bedroom, two-bath house in Simi Valley, California.

Within a week I was approached by a young man who asked if he might move in with me. He

told me he was having trouble with his parents. He was quickly followed by others like himself until my house was filled with both believers and unbelievers - permanent and transient.

"With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God."

(Mark 10:27)

"I have strength for all things in Christ Who empowers me [I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him Who infuses inner strength into me;

I am self-sufficient in Christ's sufficiency]."

(Phil 4:13 AMP)

My life was no longer my own, and I was no longer the "lone wolf" I had previously been. I took in troubled young men to live with me - my cousin and his wife took in the girls. Later, several other members of the Assembly of God church we attended joined us in opening up their homes also to needy youths. We were told that the county in which we lived had the fourth worst drug problem among counties in the US. There was also teen prostitution, delinquency, etc., and even several covens of witches in the area.

As an ex-atheist I had a passion for telling anyone who would listen to me that there was a God who loved us and desired that we would turn to Him, repent of our sins (the wrong direction in which we were going) and open our lives to His entrance, putting His new life in us - literally transforming us from spiritual death to life. I stopped people on the sidewalk, spoke to them in parks, picked up hitchhikers in my car, etc. My cousin, his wife, Dalene (a young lady from our

church) and I together began a ministry we called "Teen Hope." We listed our home phone numbers in the local newspaper as "24-hour hot-lines" for youths to call to discuss problems they might have. In addition we went out on the streets Friday nights and Saturdays to talk to any and every one - but especially youths.

One evening, while I was standing outside the local movie theater with my friends from Teen Hope, I thought about a certain previous morning when I was riding to work with my boss and other passengers in his VW van. The man who rode beside us told us how he had overcome a stuttering problem by adopting a "cause" and going out on street corners to preach about it. I thought to myself at the time, *"Far be it from me to ever do any such thing that would mean having to talk to strangers on street corners."* When I was young I had an awful problem with shyness. But now I was standing under a theater marquee waiting for the movie to end and the customers to come out so I could tell them about Jesus! I had to chuckle to myself, *"What a sense of humor You have, Lord,"* I said.

We had decided to search for a church that was truly God-centered, where Spirit-filled Christians praised and worshiped God with understanding and a born-again Spirit-filled pastor called by God was standing behind the pulpit. After a time we found an Assembly of God church very near to us and greatly rejoiced. We opened a coffee house in a section of town that had a high crime rate, and quickly found the local police on our side as they told us the crime rate was dropping because of our ministry there. Our coffee house was on the corner of a small shopping plaza with six shops in it. Next to us was a spiritualist tea-leaf reader, two doors down from her

was a bar and next to that was a massage parlor. Our pastor was amazed as his church filled with youths we met on the street: ex-"druggies" who gave their lives to Jesus. God put in my mouth the words, *"Jesus is coming soon - are you ready?"* which I would shout to people driving into the parking lot, entering or exiting the shops, or even standing on the corner I would shout at the passing motorists. Of course, when there was the opportunity to do so, I would then tell them how they could be "ready."

One night a man drove up in a beat-up pickup truck. As he got out I shouted at him, *"Jesus is coming soon - are you ready?"* He paused, looked at me, and I called out to him, *"How about a cup of coffee or hot chocolate?"* He walked toward me and we entered the coffee-house together. We sat a table and talked until the coffee house closed early in the morning. Then we all went to my cousin's house for breakfast. As we sat there, the man pulled out a loaded 22 cal. snub-nose revolver, unloaded it and handed me the bullets, then told me, *"My wife has left me taking our children. I decided my life was no longer worth living so I was planning on going to the bar near your coffee-house and stick this in the bartender's face like I was holding him up. I know he has a sawed-off shotgun behind the counter and I was hoping he'd use it on me to end my misery."* He did find an "end to his misery" that night as God gave him forgiveness of sins and he found new life in Christ. He was with us quite a while, helping us with our coffee-house ministry.

During this time we sought and received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Some time before, while I had been worshiping God in the privacy of my home, I had spontaneously started speaking words that were unintelligible to me. After a few seconds I stopped, because I had no idea what

was happening. But later, when the pastor of our church was privately teaching us about the baptism in the Holy Spirit, showing in the book of Acts that it was usually accompanied with evidence of speaking in other tongues, I recognized I had been doing that! On a subsequent Friday evening, while attending a gathering of believers, an invitation was given for those who desired to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit, so my cousin, his wife, Dalene and I all responded – and I received a “double dose!” I was like the man Peter and John met at gate called Beautiful who had been born lame, but when he was healed, he was

“...walking and leaping and praising God.” (Acts 3:8)

And so I did - all over the premises of that meeting hall! I had never before felt such ecstatic joy! I'll never forget that weekend. I led six people to Christ, praying the "sinner's prayer" with each one and inviting them to our church where they could be followed up on and discipled. It was so easy! One young man I picked up who was hitchhiking and immediately handed him a "Four Spiritual Laws"(1) booklet and told him to read it. He did so as we were driving. When the time came to drop him off he had finished reading and I asked him if he wanted to pray the "sinner's prayer." He replied, "Yes." We prayed, he got out of the car and left and I sat there in a state of shock admonishing myself because I had not remembered to ask for his name and phone number to follow up on him.

This was an amazing period of my life, as a very young Christian. It was a period of exploration and discovery. One night my cousin remarked to me, *"Christianity has the ethics but the eastern religions have the power."* I replied, *"But Jesus says He has all authority in heaven and on earth."*

(Matt. 28:18) *Why don't we see what He means by that? Why don't we put it to the test?"* My cousin thought about that and agreed. I had been investigating the claims the Bible made, experiencing God's presence and power in my life, reading books on the baptism of the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, and visiting Kathryn Kuhlman's meetings in Los Angeles and reading her books. I had an attitude of honest inquiry concerning the things of God, and used skepticism very judiciously. I never then nor now ever accepted anything anyone had to say without testing it against what knowledge I had - and as I became better acquainted with the Bible and more knowledgeable concerning it I have used it as a "proof text" against what I hear preached and taught (and prophesied) by those in Christian leadership. It alone is my "Rock" on which I stand (Matt. 7:24-27).

"...they (the Bereans) received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true." (Acts 17:11)

I am constantly amazed at Christians who allow themselves to be "sponges" and soak up everything they hear from Christian leaders whom they may admire. *"I don't have time to study the Bible like our teacher does,"* I hear said. I thank God that at the beginning, it was just me, the Bible and God's Holy Spirit. Without proper Bible study it is possible to get "burned" from false teaching.

"Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from

among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert ...“ (Acts 20:28-31)

Not every Christian “leader” is called by God, and even among those who are – none are infallible! One Sunday morning I read some statistics included in a church bulletin that indicated the percentages of those saved through various means and circumstances. I finally found my place at the very bottom, in the lowest percentile. At first I felt relieved that God didn't always use what appeared most efficient, but then realized that He could have led me to wherever He wanted to be saved using whatever circumstances He deemed best for His purposes. I was suddenly very glad it had happened the way it had, realizing it had been God's will for me. Although I greatly respected the teaching and preaching of the men and women He called to do that, I was grateful that I had started only under the tutelage of God's Holy Spirit.

I had subsequently found that, even sitting under the best teachers, I was constantly comparing what was being said to what was actually in the Bible. To me, it was a matter of “separating the wheat from the chaff.” - what was biblically true from what was not. Otherwise, there was danger of getting “burned” from false teaching. I did experience that a few times, and it reinforced my practice of constantly testing what was being said by those in authority. I respected them, and the fact God had called them, but I also respected the fact they were fallible. There were those who would insist that they preached “*the pure Word of God,*” direct from God's very mouth. But my mindset was the same as that of the Bereans – if they had checked up on what the apostle Paul told them, then I would do that with everyone I met! I knew that God

did not want me in anyone's shadow but His!

Another night we went out street-witnessing and stopped first at a bowling alley. I saw a car drive by with two young women in it. Immediately the Holy Spirit burdened me to pray for them. After a brief stop they drove off. A little while later we left there and went to a local MacDonald's. While we were there talking with people and passing out tracts, the same car with the two women I had seen earlier entered the parking lot and began driving around it. I immediately began praying out loud, "*God make them stop,*" repeating that request over and over as my cousin, his wife and Dalene stood by watching. The car continued to circle through the parking lot as I continued to pray out loud for God to stop it. It continued out to the street on the other side of MacDonald's, stopping for traffic (though there was none to speak of) and the driver put on the left-turn signal. As I continued praying, suddenly the car's reverse lights came on, it sped back and then forward into a parking place just a few feet from us, and I could see the driver sitting there with a bewildered look on her face as if she were thinking, "*Now why did I do that?*" Dalene and my cousin's wife went over to talk to them and discovered they were prostitutes. They had a good talk with them, gave them some literature, and presented the Gospel. They didn't give their hearts to Jesus at that time, but we "planted seeds."

A number of us went out witnessing to people in a shopping plaza. There were several youths with us, witnessing to others about the new life they had found in Jesus. Suddenly a man in his late thirties or early forties who was drunk advanced menacingly toward one of these youths. The youth, who had his back turned to the drunk and was fervently involved in his witnessing, was

not aware that he was being menaced by a drunk in an obviously demonic rage. I was just a few feet away and advanced to interpose myself between the drunk and the youth, but the Holy Spirit stopped me and said, "*Watch!*" So I stopped and watched the drunk come within arm's distance of the youth and attempt to reach out at him and attack him. Amazingly, he was totally unable to do so! Some unseen obstacle was restraining him from harming the youth, who was still unaware of what was taking place. One of God's angels was obviously protecting the youth's back, and after striving against the angelic restraint for a few moments the drunk gave up and walked away.

We called ourselves the "God Squad" and had quite a few adventures just cruising around the neighborhood in our cars. One evening we noticed smoke coming from a house and stopped by to check it out. When no one responded to the door bell, we tried opening the front door and found it unlocked. Entering the house, we found there were several inhabitants who were passed out from drinking. The smoke was coming from a couch that was smoldering from a cigarette held by a man laying on it. We roused the inhabitants from their stupor and called the fire department.

Another time we were driving late at night on the nearby freeway returning home from an evangelistic outreach and noticed that a car had stopped on the freeway. There was thankfully very little traffic at this time of night and when we stopped we found that that the driver was leaning on the steering wheel past out from drunkenness. As we got him out of the car, it rolled off the freeway. We took the driver to my home where he got a good night's sleep, then next morning fed him breakfast and took him back to his car where it had rolled off the freeway. He

thanked us and drove off.

Fear is not the only thing we have to deal with as we go out into the streets to witness, but of course it is perhaps the most obvious thing the enemy will put in the thoughts of every believer and we must learn how to overcome it. First, we need to remember that God wants us there, so it is really a simple matter of obedience to Him. But it is also helpful - in fact, necessary - to have God's perspective on whatever situation we are in. This is also a very simple matter of knowing God's Word.

"For God did not give us a spirit of timidity (of cowardice, of craven and cringing and fawning fear), but [He has given us a spirit] of power and of love and of calm and well-balanced mind and discipline and self-control."(2 Tim 1:7 AMP)

"There is no fear in love [dread does not exist], but full-grown (complete, perfect) love turns fear out of doors and expels every trace of terror!"

(1 John 4:18 AMP)

Whatever situation I am in. I simply ask for God's perspective on the matter - or towards the person involved. I know God's perspective concerning witnessing and telling the Gospel to another person, for example, is that of being literally a *"life or death matter."* Knowing that, I can remind myself of it when **fear** or anything else that might interfere with doing what I know God wants me to do, and it will no longer effectively hinder me.

The people in our church had mixed reactions to our street-evangelism ministry. One lady, who thought herself very spiritual and a “prayer warrior,” told me, *"Paul, I will gladly contribute financially to your ministry - but don't ask me to do what you're doing."* (I'm not the one who *"asks,"* though - God is, so her argument was not with me but with God.) One Sunday morning at church I was questioned by a married couple about what God had me involved in and they listened wide-eyed as I told them. When I had finished the man exclaimed, *"We've been Christians thirty years and God has never had us involved in anything like that!"* It was my turn to be amazed, but I kept silent as I thought, *"What were you doing for those thirty years besides warming a pew?"* One evening after a home Bible study session in my cousin's house, I was spontaneously and exuberantly testifying how exciting it was to be involved with the Lord in what He was doing locally when suddenly a young woman interrupted me loudly. *"But what if God sends me to Africa!!!"* While I was staring at her in consternation, wondering what I had said to elicit such a response from her, a young man turned to me and told me with much concern, *"You're scaring the sister!"* Truly, she did have a terrified expression on her face! She was not even looking at me but was staring out a window apparently allowing demons to play with her imagination. But God would never “call” such a person – He looks only for those whose hearts are fervently seeking His will to do it.

Tiredness can be another hindrance. I returned home one Friday evening from a day's work so weary all I wanted to do was just relax, rest, and sit down in a chair and maybe watch TV. But I knew that Friday evenings were reserved for our outreach to the youths of the area, and since I was one of the leaders of our ministry, if I did not show up the others probably would not go out

to witness. So I decided at least to go to my cousin's house where we usually met to discuss and pray about the evening's planned outreach. It was decided that we would attend a football game at the local high school, waiting for the fans to come out after the game was over and talk to them about Jesus. When we arrived and the crowds were converging on the parking lot, I felt led to talk with several young men standing together. Later, the others in our team joined me as the talk continued. It turned out that one of them seemed to be the leader and his interest in what we were saying influenced the others to continue talking with us. The final result was success as they all prayed with us and began attending the weekly Bible study held at my cousin's house, eventually joining in our outreach ministry, witnessing of the new life they had received in Jesus Christ. We learned later from city officials that these young men were members of a gang that had caused much trouble locally and were considered "incorrigible" (i.e. - "bad beyond the possibility of reforming"). As I watched them grow in their knowledge of God's Word and commitment to Jesus, I would reflect about that evening when I had returned home from work so **tired** but with the Lord's help and encouragement had not allowed myself to give in to it. I was thankful to the Lord for His promise in Isa. 40:31:

"But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

There were quite a few times when we would spend almost the whole night talking with and ministering to the youths who would come to our homes, ignoring the fact that the next day we had a full eight hour day of work at our jobs. But the lives we saw changed made it worth while.

Another time we picked up an elderly woman at a rest home to take to a Kathryn Kuhlman meeting. She had cancer of the colon and wanted healing but when we were helping her into a wheelchair she was expressing such bitterness at being left alone there and her relatives not visiting her that I knew in my spirit she would not receive healing. She didn't. Instead my cousin's wife, who stood behind her wheelchair, was healed of severe stomach ulcers.

For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. (Matt 6:14-15)

It is so important for us not to be unforgiving in our heart toward others whether brothers or sisters or unbelievers or we will be put on "hold" in our walk with God until we deal with that situation to God's satisfaction! We may tithe faithfully and give abundant offerings, but if we are unforgiving toward any person the work of God in our life and our service to Him will be hindered. I remind myself where God has brought me from, where He has taken me to and how He has done that. He does not first require that we apologize before He extends His forgiveness to us through His Son. But after we are born-again and have His Holy Spirit resident in us, He does require something of us - and He has a right to do so. He requires that we "*Go and do likewise*" (Luke 10:37) to others. It is so important that we determine to walk in an attitude of forgiveness - whether we feel like it or not. If you feel resentment or bitterness arising in you because of the way another person is acting remember how God had mercy on you and extended His grace to you. If the feeling persists, give it to God and ask His help to deal with what you

feel in your heart and to act in a forgiving manner toward the offending person. WE MUST LEARN TO WALK IN FORGIVENESS!!! That is where the "rubber really meets the road" in Christianity. (Matt. 6:14-15, 7:1-5; 1 John 2:9-11, etc.) A forgiving attitude is requisite to a walk of Love which in turn is requisite to experiencing God's healing power working through us to others as we serve Him where He has placed us. It is a necessary attitude to have if we truly want to be involved in what God is doing in His Church in the end-times and not be left outside as one of the "foolish virgins." (Matt. 25:1-13)

Chapter Four

Love and Forgiveness

As members of the Body of Christ, each of us needs of course to be reading or studying God's Word daily, to receive "our daily bread" (Matt. 6:11) so that our growth in the knowledge of the things of God will not be stunted and we will be properly nourished. But there are also key words that should be taken note of and the passages in which they occur in God's Word studied, especially words that will help us to understand how to walk as followers of Christ – so we will not stand ashamed before Him.

And then I will say to them openly (publicly), "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who act wickedly [disregarding My commands]." (Matt 7:23 AMP)

There are no more important "key words" to study than **love** and **forgive**, and the passages in the Bible in which they occur. If as much time was spent on studying and teaching and preaching what is involved in these words as other important matters, the The Holy Spirit could bring the Body of Christ more readily into the unity for which Jesus prayed (John 17:21).

"...that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me." (John 17:21)

Unfortunately, when important subjects such as "faith" are addressed, "love" and "forgiveness" are often left languishing on the sidelines, and the teaching falls short of what is needed for proper understanding. For example, when the passage in Mark 11:22-24 is taught, not only is the

very important context of what the Lord Jesus states in Matt. 6:33 and John 15:1-17 often ignored, but Mark 11:25 may be also ignored, even though it is perhaps the most essential part of what Jesus is telling His disciples.

"Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions." (Mark 11:25)

The result is that hearers come away from the teaching with a false impression of what faith is and their faith inevitably falls short of the purposes of God and instead is self-centered.

"...if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing." (1 Cor. 13:2)

They remain in their "kindergarten" level of faith till they receive proper teaching or, in their private times of study, hopefully discover what God truly wants them to know. Furthermore, the level of love God desires for His people to live in is misunderstood. In Rom. 12:9, we are told that love should be *"without hypocrisy."* In the Amplified version, 1 Cor. 13:5 is translated,

*"Love (God's love in us) does not insist on its own rights or its own way,
for it is not self-seeking..."*

If we truly obey "the great and foremost commandment" which is

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind," and "you shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Matt. 22:37-39)

then we will not be looking for any sort of reward or blessing or gratitude from men, because

love is its own reward and our attitude should be that of the "unworthy slave" in Luke 17:7-10. For example, if we do an act of loving-kindness toward a fellow human being (believer or unbeliever), are we expecting gratitude from that person? If so, then our love is hypocritical, because it is based on the expectation of a "reward," and it is therefore in disobedience of 1 Cor. 13:5. It is insisting on its own rights and its own way, for it is self-seeking (selfish). Such "love" is not actually love but a source of pride and therefore sham.

“Love (God's love in us) does not insist on its own rights or its own way, for it is not self-seeking; it is not touchy or fretful or resentful; it takes no account of the evil done to it [it pays no attention to a suffered wrong].” (1 Cor 13:5 AMP)

From God's perspective, He has shown that He loves man as completely as Scripture states we should love God, and in fact He loves us literally in the same manner as He says we should love our neighbor. ((Matt. 22:37-39; Luke 10:30-37)

“...but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.” (1 John 2:5-6)

In the context of,

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ...” (2 Cor 5:10)

The reading for March 16th in Oswald Chambers' devotional book “My Utmost For His Highest” states, *“Keep yourself steadily faced by the judgment seat of Christ; walk now in the light of the holiest you know. A wrong temper of mind about another soul will end in the spirit of the devil,*

no matter how saintly you are. One carnal judgment, and the end of it is hell in you. Drag it to the light at once and say - 'My God, I have been guilty there.' If you don't, hardness will come all through. The penalty of sin is confirmation in sin." (1)

God hates sin because it effectively blocks the fullness of relationship He fervently desires to have with mankind whom He so lovingly created in His image and keeps man from the wonderful destiny God has ordained for him individually and corporately.

"...the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Col 1:26-27)

"For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers." (Rom 8:29)

It is impossible to have a proper view of what God has for us unless we forsake our own perspective for God's.

"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew;

for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written:

'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man

The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.'

But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit.

For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.” (1 Cor 2:7-11)

Now, many years later, looking back I can understand more clearly what God was doing in my life in fulfillment of His instruction to me to *"Get acquainted with My Son!"* I understand more and more clearly Paul's heart cry,

"[For my determined purpose is] that I may know Him [that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognizing and understanding the wonders of His Person more strongly and more clearly]..." (Phil 3:10 AMP)

It is truly a wonder to me that in so many churches in the US the teaching and preaching is focused on other things than what Paul writes about in this verse – in fact this whole passage:

*"...and that I may in that same way come to know the power outflowing from His resurrection [which it exerts over believers], and that I may so share His sufferings as to be continually transformed [in spirit into His likeness even] to His death, [in the hope] That if possible I may attain to the [spiritual and moral] resurrection [that lifts me] out from among the dead [even while in the body]. Not that I have now attained [this ideal], or have already been made perfect, but **I press on to lay hold of (grasp) and make my own, that for which Christ Jesus (the Messiah) has laid hold of me and made me His own.** I do not consider, brethren, that I have captured and made it my own [yet]; but one thing I do [it is my one aspiration]: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, **I press on toward the goal** to win the [supreme and heavenly] prize to which God in Christ Jesus is calling us upward. So let those [of*

us] who are spiritually mature and full-grown have this mind and hold these convictions; and if in any respect you have a different attitude of mind, God will make that clear to you also. Only let us hold true to what we have already attained and walk and order our lives by that. Brethren, together follow my example....” (Phil 3:10-17 AMP)

There cannot be the slightest doubt in the reader's mind as to what Paul's heart-felt desire is.

“Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.” (Ps 37:4)

The overwhelming desire of his heart was to **“know Him.”** That was mine, too, as I first began reading the Bible in response to what God had said to me to do, *“Get acquainted with My Son!”* How frustrated I became in the years following as I found nothing in any church in the US reflective of Paul's heart-cry in these verses. My heart continues to be sad for the state of the churches in the US, and I can also only wonder at much of the teaching and preaching I hear there and on Christian TV as I compare it with what is in the Bible.

How far short of Paul's stated goal is the fixation on “prosperity.” Whatever may be taught in the context of “prosperity,” the primary focus is on material wealth – mammon, not spiritual matters. Material wealth is the first thing that comes to mind when the subject of “prosperity” is brought up, which is why it must be put in the context of a more important topic, as Jesus does in Matthew 6:24-34. We live in a country for which that is the focus also, as it turns its back more and more on God. The Bible warns against the “love of money”

For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. (1 Tim 6:10)

Let your character or moral disposition be free from love of money [including greed, avarice, lust, and craving for earthly possessions] and be satisfied with your present [circumstances and with what you have]; for He [God] Himself has said, I will not in any way fail you nor give you up nor leave you without support. [I will] not, [I will] not, [I will] not in any degree leave you helpless nor forsake nor let [you] down (relax My hold on you)! (Heb 13:5 AMP)

But as the US itself falls into greater and greater deception, so do the churches in the US.

Though we think of ourselves as “spiritually-minded,” in reality perhaps God sees us differently:

“You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.” (James 4:4)

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will stand by and be devoted to the one and despise and be against the other. You cannot serve God and mammon (deceitful riches, money, possessions, or whatever is trusted in).”

(Matt 6:24 AMP)

As we so often quote Psalm 37:4, convincing ourselves we “*delight in the Lord,*” all the while we have our eyes more on \$prosperity\$ than we do on Him, basically seeing God in this verse as

a means to the end of “*money in your pockets*” just as we do in Matt. 6:33. So Christians rush off to cosmetic surgeons and into the divorce court just as readily as do unbelievers, while deceiving themselves they are “witnesses for Christ.” (Acts 1:8). How Christians in the US are so short-sighted concerning God and His provision for them! They fix their eyes on such secondary issues as “prosperity” instead of determining to know the One who wants to prosper them beyond anything they can imagine, and in ways they are not aware of!

“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus....” (Heb 12:2)

This is what the LORD says:

"Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength
or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this:
***that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness,
justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD.***

(Jer. 9:23-24)

Do we really understand exactly why Christ died for us? If we think it has anything to do with the things of this world, we are so very sadly mistaken! A Christian sister once told me, “*Jesus became poor so I could become \$rich\$, (2 Cor. 8:9) and He went the way of the cross so I don't have to. I can just go around it!*” Why is everything Jesus said about the need to concentrate on laying up “*treasures in heaven*” ignored? And why is teaching concerning committed discipleship to Christ so scarce?

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where

thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matt 6:19-21)

As the Church, the Bride of Christ, we must learn how to distinguish between that which is temporal and that which is eternal, between that which is only of this earth and that which will carry on into the heavenly realm with eternal consequences. An example of the temporal is the pastor's statement, "*Great faith is believing God for a Cadillac rather than a Chevrolet!*" Can we look into the eyes of our Lord Jesus and make such a statement when we reach heaven? Surely not! The words would wither on our lips! The eternal is illustrated by:

And Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and report to John what you hear and see: the blind receive sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." (Matt 11:4-5)

Again, the difference between that which is eternal and that which is temporal is shown in this way,

Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. (1 Cor 3:11-15)

That which is eternal will pass the fiery test, that which is temporal will not. That is why Jesus tell us to

“...store up for yourselves treasures in heaven...” (Matt 6:20)

Surely this is as much a commandment as any other given by God!

"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Luke 12:32-34)

The reason Jesus died had nothing to do with the enjoyment of the things of this world. We live in a fallen world that needs the redemption Jesus provides to return us to what God originally created and called, *“Good.”*

*“This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God,
and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” (John 17:3)*

Unbelievers can fully enjoy everything in this world and there is no reason why believers cannot use discernment in their enjoyment also. But why do I see in churches a common attitude among believers that is so hard to distinguish from non-believers concerning the things of this world? As believers, we are here on this earth basically for one reason only:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations....” (Matt 28:19)

Otherwise, like the apostle Paul we are...

“...having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better.” (Phil 1:23)

What can this world possibly offer that would tempt us to think otherwise? Surely there is nothing here on this earth we can desire to make us “prosperous” that can compare with heavenly riches! But it seems many churches have no real understanding of our heavenly inheritance.

Instead, we are consumed with passion for what the Bible calls “vanity.” So many who profess belief in Jesus as Lord seem to have the same attitude as those Jesus described as

“...eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark;

and they knew nothing about what would happen

until the flood came and took them all away.” (Matt 24:38-39)

But for those of us who desire to press on toward full maturity,

When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. (1 Cor. 13:11)

(1)Oswald Chambers, “My Utmost For His Highest” © 1935 Dodd, Mead & Co., Inc., p. 76

Chapter Five

Power to be Witnesses

*"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us **in Him**... In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself...**In Him** we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us...**In Him** also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will...you were sealed **in Him** with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance...while making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation **in the knowledge of Him**. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints."* (Eph. 1:3-18)

As our heavenly Father watches over us with His Holy Spirit displaying our childish self-centered interest in our "toys," His heart yearns for us to want to be with Him as Mary wanted to be at the feet of Jesus (Luke 10:39, 42). How can we ever hope to mature, to...

*"...attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, **to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ**. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in*

love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love." (Eph. 4:13-16)

Instead of fervently desiring to grow into maturity, we prefer to play with our "toys," deceiving ourselves into thinking that somehow they are tokens of "maturity." *"Great faith is believing God for a Cadillac instead of a Chevrolet!"* But if the shepherds themselves are wrongly focused in their thinking and what they say, then how can the sheep help but be deceived and wrongly focused in their priorities?

I have to wonder also at the multitudes of Christians, who according to their confession, have God's Holy Spirit in them nevertheless follow after those who have the faith to be used by God to manifest His miracle-working power. They are like the multitudes of those who followed after Jesus, excited by the miracles He performed. But unlike those multitudes of Jesus' day, they have direct access to the Holy Spirit who resides within them. It was, after all, by the power of the Holy Spirit resident within Him that Jesus was able to do His miracles. So why are so many Christians content to just to play "spectator" and not present themselves also by faith to their Creator and thereby never enter into the calling God has for them?

I APPEAL to you therefore, brethren, and beg of you in view of [all] the mercies of God, to make a decisive dedication of your bodies [presenting all your members and faculties] as a living

sacrifice, holy (devoted, consecrated) and well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable (rational, intelligent) service and spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world (this age), [fashioned after and adapted to its external, superficial customs], but be transformed (changed) by the [entire] renewal of your mind [by its new ideals and its new attitude], so that you may prove [for yourselves] what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, even the thing which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His sight for you]. (Rom. 12:1-2 AMP)

But then there are those also who deny that the miracles done during the time of the original apostles two thousand years ago are capable of being done today. There is no proper scriptural basis for such belief, and those who say such things are exhibiting unbelief and have no discernment or understanding of Christ's Body nor God's will for His Church. If there are no apostles in the Body today, nor prophets as some say, then how can God's purpose for the Church be fulfilled as stated in Ephesians 4? For apostles, prophets, evangelists, teachers and pastors are ALL necessary in God's plan to bring His church into what He has purposed for it. God, through what Christ did at the cross, made these “offices” available plus all the gifts of the Spirit, **for the express purpose of bringing His purposes concerning His Church into fulfillment**, and they are ALL just as necessary today as they were after Pentecost two thousand years ago. Any person who considers themselves a member of Christ's Body and does not understand this is short-sighted and unbelieving. **Warning: Be careful of attributing such miracles done in the name of Jesus to Satan!**

“Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be

forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.” (Matt. 12:31-32)

There are those who teach that since Jesus is not here on earth as He was two thousand years ago, blasphemy against God's Holy Spirit is not possible. The Bible shows clearly that Jesus is present on earth in His Body – the Church.

“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” And He said, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, “ (Acts 9:4-6)

Miracles were done two thousand years ago by Jesus and His followers as **signs** of who He is.

“Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” John 20:30-31

They are being done for exactly the same reason today by those who have the faith to present themselves to God for His use. But there are those who also say that Jesus was warning the Pharisees only, so it does not apply today. However it is clear that there are modern-day “Pharisees” in churches who deny the validity of these miracles (even attributing them to Satan) who will be without excuse when they stand before Jesus. They belie the presence of God's Holy Spirit within themselves and are even more guilty than the religious leaders of Jesus' day who attributed His miracles to Satan.

*“But you will receive **power** when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my **witnesses** in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)*

The “Holy Spirit power” referred to here is the word from which we get "dynamite" [dunamis (doo'-nam-is); from NT:1410; force (literally or figuratively); specially, **miraculous power** (usually by implication, a miracle itself)]

It is the “power” by which the followers of Jesus in the days of the original apostles did miracles. If those who say that this **power** that Jesus is telling His disciples about is not available to the Church today to do miracles, then Acts 1:8 is not relevant to the Church today either because without this **power** how can we be “witnesses”? The obvious answer is - *“We cannot!”* So Acts 1:8 is not relevant to the Church today, and neither are other commandments Jesus gave His disciples, such as Matthew 28:18-20 and Mark 16:15-18, according to this deception.

But that is nonsense, because Paul's writings show that this same **power** was available to the Gentile churches:

*“My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's **power**, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on*

*God's **power**.” (1 Cor. 2:4-5)*

and

*“For the kingdom of God does not consist in words but in **power**.” (1 Cor. 4:20-21)*

The word “power” here is from the same Greek word for “power” used by Jesus in Acts 1:8.

Paul the apostle came to the Corinthians demonstrating God's miracle-working **power** and that same **power** was also available to his hearers to use by faith. *“He laid down the doctrine as the Spirit delivered it; and left the Spirit, **by his external operation in signs and miracles**, and his internal influences on the hearts of men, to demonstrate the truth of it, and procure its reception.... Here is the end mentioned for which he preached Christ crucified in this manner: **That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of man, but the power of God** (v. 5) - that they might not be drawn by human motives, nor overcome by mere human arguments, lest it should be said that either rhetoric or logic had made them Christians. But, when nothing but Christ crucified was plainly preached, the success must be founded, not on human wisdom, **but divine evidence and operation**. The gospel was so preached that God might appear and be glorified in all.”* (from Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.) (Emphasis mine.)

All of the miracles Jesus did here on earth were by the power of the Holy Spirit, He did none of them on His own exclusive of the Holy Spirit. That same Holy Spirit power is today available to the Church – which is Christ's Body. The Church cannot operate independently of Christ, who is its Head (Col. 1:18), neither can the Church function without the Holy Spirit.

“...your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.” (1 Cor. 6:19-20)

To deny that the miracle-working power of God is available to the Church today is ludicrous. We might as well deny the God who lives within those who are truly His! (Col. 1:27)

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” (Heb. 13:8)

The devil, our enemy, has really done a work on the Church. Various denominations began as Holy Spirit empowered movements of God on man, but man always seemed to think he knew better and started meddling, "organizing," and then no one even wondered when God's Holy Spirit was no longer part of the proceedings. Such pathos there is in the picture of God left standing at the door, knocking, asking to be allowed entrance!

"I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm- neither hot nor cold -I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." (Rev. 3:15-22)

“Lukewarm” perfectly describes any church which denies the relevancy or availability of the "dynamite" power of God's Holy Spirit. The Church continues to be responsible for reaching the lost as Jesus instructed His disciples so how can any dare to deny the necessity of the power provided by the Holy Spirit? A car owner might as well try to drive a car without fuel for its engine. This seems so far "off the mark" from what Jesus stated was His original intention for His Church. Certainly any attempt at warfare against the devil would prove futile without the help of the Holy Spirit. Those who scoff at the need to have such power and at the need for the gift of “tongues” scoff at the God who gave them just as did the religious leaders against Jesus.

*“And I tell you, you are Peter [Greek, Petros--a large piece of rock], and on this rock [Greek, petra--a huge rock like Gibraltar] **I will build My church**, and the gates of Hades (the powers of the infernal region) shall not overpower it [or be strong to its detriment or hold out against it]. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind (declare to be improper and unlawful) on earth must be what is already bound in heaven; and whatever you loose (declare lawful) on earth must be what is already loosed in heaven.” (Matt 16:18-19 AMP)*

But the various denominations thought they knew better and therefore molded the church into whatever the enemy put into their minds to do. The enemy told these men that the presence and power of God's Holy Spirit was no longer available and they believed that nonsense and as a result much of the church became impotent, and had no power to wage war against the devil who had lied to them, stripping them of the weapons God had given them! Only a bare minority of people still made themselves available to God unreservedly and allowed Him to be in charge of

their lives as they sought His will to do it.

Chapter Six

Wavering Between Opinions

Elijah went before the people and said,

"How long will you waver (and go limping) between two opinions?"

(1 Kings 18:21)

Most Christians in the US suffer from a lack of biblical perspective. They are not properly taught in the churches they attend what the true priorities of the Church, the Body of Christ, are as revealed in the Bible, and they do not take the time or effort to study the Bible, so they are not aware of their error. It may well be said of them also,

"Forgive them, for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34)

However, since they do have God's Word easily available to them despite the wiles of the enemy of their souls, they are truly "without excuse."

The apostle Paul writes in his second letter to the Corinthians (4:18),

"So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary,

but what is unseen is eternal."

Why are we instructed to do this? Why is this our proper focus? Simply because the coming kingdom that will be established on this earth at Christ's return will be eternal, permanent, while

the present world system under "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4) is allowed to exist by God for His purposes (Rom. 8:29) only temporarily (till the return of His Son to judge the earth and establish His eternal kingdom). Therefore, as believers, we look by faith to that which is to come, not at "the things of this world (1 John 3:15)."

Or do we?

During 1976-7 and 1978-81, God opened a door for me to be part of two ministries that ministered to persecuted Christians in the formerly eastern European Communist countries. During the course of these years, I made trips into these countries either as a member of a team of two or more Christians, or by myself alone. We were couriers who traveled into these countries either to visit Christians and gather information concerning them or take in Bibles or other Christian literature, medicine, supplies they could not easily obtain in their countries. During one of my solo trips into Hungary, I was invited to attend a youth service at a church in Budapest, Hungary. To my great delight, it turned out to be a church at which I had attended a youth service several years previously while working with another mission. As I had driven towards Budapest, the Lord had laid a heavy revelation on me concerning "*walking the way of the Cross*" and I had wondered if this teaching He was giving me was intended also to share with believers in Hungary.

I did not have to wonder very long. I was asked to speak, and there were two other speakers before me. The first speaker, a youth, gave a simple message about the Cross and what it meant

to believers. The second speaker, the youth leader (not much more than a youth himself) gave such a profound message based on 1 Peter 4:12-19 that I wondered at it.

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And,

“If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”

So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

Very few teachers in the West, I thought, would be capable of teaching such a passage with the insight that this young man displayed (and if they could - would they?) - and this young man's face bore the joy Peter spoke about. Finally, I was invited to speak, and the message the Lord had given to me expanded and deepened what had gone before. But after I had finished God was not done. A young woman who had been sitting in the rear came forward and asked to be allowed to share her testimony. As she stood before me speaking to the congregation, I could see the glory of the Lord resting on her that Peter had spoken of in 1 Peter 4:14.

*If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed,
for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.*

As she spoke, the youth leader sat beside me and translated what she said. She told us she was married to an unbeliever and had two small boys. She related that her husband would beat her and forbid her to go to church. He would berate her in front of the boys, telling them that their mother was "no good" and encourage them to abuse their mother verbally. The abuse and beatings continued and increased to the point that she thought of running away, but there was nowhere she could go. No one would take her in, being afraid of repercussions against them from the State, which supported the husband since he was an unbeliever.

In the atheistic communist state, if you are a Christian you are automatically at fault - if you are beaten up for being a Christian, you are the guilty party, not the one who beat you up. Teachers at school encouraged the children to beat up on those who were known to be Christian, or have Christian parents. Their parents had no recourse in this - no one in authority to whom they could complain. They had no rights in their society as a "Christian." Neither did this sister who now stood in front of us. She had desperately cried out to the Lord, and He had visibly appeared to her, she said, strengthening her and telling her to continue on in the path of the Cross and that He would use her husband's very abuse of her to turn him and bring him to the Cross.

Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself

and take up his cross daily and follow me.” (Luke 9:23-24)

She told us that she already had seen signs of that happening in her husband's behavior to her, but at the same time did not know when she returned home again that evening whether he would beat her again. As she told all of this to us, she spoke completely without bitterness or resentment, in fact peace and joy filled her face because that evening she had received reassurance from the teaching from God's Word. She asked us to pray for her, and we did that as the evening's service came to a close.

The youth service in Budapest with the unplanned testimony of the young woman had been another of my encounters with the Church under communist persecution that had increased the dilemma I felt I was in concerning differences I saw between it and the Church in the West. The mission for which I worked had an office in Austria of which I was placed in charge, and there I had spent many hours seeking the Lord about these differences, studying Scripture to find the answer. The persecuted Church appeared to me to be a truer representation of the biblical Church as shown in the Book of Acts than that in the West. Furthermore, every pastor who came into the East from the West to visit and minister to the brothers and sisters in communist countries would come away sobered by the experience and their comment seemed always the same: *"We're playing games in the West,"* they would inevitably say. God's presence in the East was very much stronger than in the West, the leading of His Holy Spirit like the fire by night and smoke by day. Jesus seemed to be with His suffering Body in the East in a way that He was not in the West.

Many years later as I write these words I am still keenly aware of those differences. In America it seems "the rubber meets the road" for Christians in the form of the rights we enjoy as American citizens. Our persecuted brothers and sisters in foreign lands are allowed no such rights but are declared to be "parasites" by the government authorities. They are forced by the society in which they live to walk the same road their Lord Jesus walked (Luke 9:23; Phil. 2:5ff; 1 Peter 2:21-23 etc.) An example of the difference is found in the often frothy joy of the Christians in the West which seems so superficial compared with the deep joy of the Christians in the East - a joy which is rooted in their sufferings.

Who do you think knows Jesus better, the Christians in communist China and Muslim countries or the Christians in the US? Who do you think knows more about what it means to "follow Christ"? While their decision to be a Christian can literally mean the difference between life and death, our decision usually just results in "playing games." While we are being "rapture-minded," they are being imprisoned, tortured and even martyred. Personally, I would rather be with them in their worship. While we enjoy the benefits of being American citizens, they enjoy knowing Jesus far more intimately than we ever will this side of heaven.

Near the end of my stay in Austria, a young couple came to live and work temporarily with me from a church in Denver, Colorado. They were exuberant and friendly, had two small children with them, and I enjoyed their company. I will never forget the wife sharing with me the disappointment and even depression she experienced when her friends at her church reacted

negatively as she shared her happiness that God was opening the door for her and her family to come over to Austria to join in the mission work. It was only to be for a brief time, but her friends tried to discourage her from doing it, telling her it was *"dangerous."* She had been so excited about telling them and their reaction was such a disappointment to her. Tearfully, she cried out to God about this and God told her, *"I call so many, but so few respond."* When I heard this, I was shocked and my heart grieved.

And He was saying to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest"

(Luke 10:2-3).

However, the problem is not that "the Lord of the harvest" is reluctant "to send out laborers into His harvest," but that it seems the "laborers" are not responding to God's call. I have never been able to understand the lack of response of most Christians to God's call. *"It's OK, God, to ask me to serve You within the limits of my comfort-zone, my own backyard."* I've heard talk of the *"Can't seem to get around to it..."* mentality among Christians. But what makes me want to fall on my face before God and cry out like Moses did for *"mercy"* is when I hear "Christians" say, *"Don't wanna...."* *"Don't wanna speak in tongues and God won't make me."* Or, *"(Don't wanna be too committed to God) What if He sends me to Africa!"* It's an honor to serve God when, where, or however He wants to use us. He loves us unconditionally, and blesses us *"immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine"* (Eph 3:20), yet most of us seem to find it hard to show Him our love by being obedient to Him (Matt. 22:37-38; John 14:21)

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*"These people honor me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me.
They worship me in vain..." (Matt 15:8-9)*

Only two out of the twelve spies sent into Canaan came back with a good report (Num. 14:6). I have found that is approximately the ratio of laborers who respond unconditionally to God's call.- twenty percent or so of those who call themselves "Christians" prove it by obeying God's call on their lives.

Our response should be immediate, as was Isaiah's (6:8):

...And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

How can we treat our relationship to God so casually when it took the death of Jesus to make it available to us? It's hard enough to understand the lack of response among the "lost" to the clear call of the Gospel. But it's impossible to understand the lack of response by the "saved" to the call of God to service. Apparently as there is a

"way that is narrow that leads to life and few (of those who are lost)

there are who find it" (Matt. 7:14)

there is also a narrow way that leads to intimate relationship with God and partnering with Him in what He is doing (1 Cor. 3:9; 1 John 2:3-6)

"We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, "I know

him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him:

Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did. (1 John 2:3-6)

Few of those who claim to be believers actually respond to God's call. The blessings involved in responding to God's call are so wonderful - including the blessing of a closer walk with Jesus that does not seem possible otherwise. I wonder, how can we call ourselves by the wonderful name of Christ if we do not respond to God's every call? We are part of His Army, and He is our Commander-in-Chief. An example of one who recognized this is the centurion in his dialogue with the Lord Jesus (Matt. 8:9-20). But then there were those Jesus called who made excuses - or later "*fell away*" (John 6:66). God's love for us is unconditional - our response to His every call should also be without condition - or rationalization (Luke 9:57-61).

The pastor of a church in my community died and later I was told by one of the members of the church that God called upon three men to be the new pastor before a fourth one finally responded to His call and accepted the position. How is this possible – that we can call Jesus “Lord” and yet not respond when He calls upon us?

"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? (Luke 6:46)

Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me."

(John 14:23-24)

My world was rocked in January when I spent time interviewing leaders of China's illegal "house church" movement. For five days I prayed, worshiped and shared simple meals with these precious saints - most of whom have spent lonely years in communist prison for preaching the gospel. As I listened to their firsthand accounts of miracles, and of the cruel treatment they received from police guards, I felt like I had encountered New Testament-style faith for the first time. When I returned to the United States I began wondering if what we call Christianity here bears much resemblance to The real thing.

One leader explained to me that she oversees 5,000 churches in a rural area. "Are you a bishop or an apostle?" I asked, trying to understand the terms they use.

"We do not use titles," the woman told me. "We just call each other brother or sister."

The 80 believers I met are responsible for more than 35 million Christians in China. That's quite an impressive number. But no one arrived at our meeting place in a limousine, nor were any of them followed by an entourage of bodyguards and publicists. Most of these people live as fugitives, yet their faces are radiant with joy.

Mr Yu, as I will call him, is like the apostle Paul of China. He has seen people raised from the dead, and once he saw God supernaturally paralyze a government official who

was threatening to stop an open-air evangelistic meeting. But Mr. Yu didn't expect special treatment when he spent time with me and his colleagues in January. He wore a simple, short-sleeved shirt, ate the same fish and rice we did, and he showed up for prayer like everyone else before each meeting. He usually took his seat in the back of the room.

These people wept every time we prayed for China. They were gripped by a sense of spiritual urgency. Many of them are anxious to see the political situation change in their country - not so they can move to the United States, or so they can buy a home, but so they can send missionary teams to closed Muslim nations like Kazakhstan or Uzbekistan.

I felt ashamed when I returned home. The humility of my new Chinese friends exposed my pride. Their childlike faith revealed how much I trust in technology, education and the idols of Western materialism. Their infectious passion to fulfill the Great Commission forced me to see my self-centeredness.

I've had enough of our abnormal, Americanized brand of Christianity. It is as impotent as it is lethal. After spending time with my brothers and sisters in China, I've realized that some of what I see in the church (and even what is reflected in the pages of this magazine) makes God sick.

How desperately we need the Holy Spirit - our Refiner - to strip us of our titles, our

limousines, our front-row seats and our "what's-in-it-for-me" message. We need a return to simple humility! May God forbid that we ever export a man-centered, adulterated gospel to other nations. Let's ask the Refiner to send His fire and burn up our dross so we can experience a China-style revival in our country. What they have is genuine. We've settled for a cheap imitation. (1)

(1)"An Abnormal Gospel" By J. Lee Grady Charisma Magazine - March 2001

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Chapter Seven

“To the Jew First”

After a time, the pastor of the Assembly of God church we now attended recognized what we were involved in with our “Teen Hope” ministry (especially since the church was growing in numbers from the entrance of youths who were coming off the streets). He invited us to speak during an evening service, and each of us took turns. God had brought certain Scriptures to my mind to share (1 Cor. 12:14-20; Eph. 5:15-21; Col. 3:12-17). When I told my cousin, he was not pleased with me, telling me that this church was very healthy and good. I had no quarrel with that and was surprised at his attitude since I had very great respect for the church and the pastor, and was not aware of any problems. It seemed to me the Scriptures would be an encouragement to the church.

When it came my time to share at the evening service, I read the Scriptures and made follow-up comments I felt the Lord had placed on my heart. I was totally unprepared for the response. Not only was the leadership team of our ministry divided – fifty percent for, fifty percent against what I had shared, but so was the church split down the middle in their reaction. The pastor was visibly angry with me and later personally admonished me, telling me that he thought I had no right quoting Scripture to others when my own life exhibited problems. I knew that God certainly had a long way to go in His work in my life, but I could not tell Him He could not use me as He saw fit because of that.

The Scriptures and the comments God had given me had brought to the surface problems of division in this church of which I was totally and blissfully unaware until that evening service had ended. Though the very positive reaction of some was encouraging, the fact that the pastor and others were angry with me was so painful that I cried out to the Lord, *“Please do not use me in such a way again - I can't bear it!”* But later I repented of saying that, knowing I would need to be submissive to His will. I was greatly surprised and saddened to see the pastor, whom I loved and whose preaching I greatly enjoyed, resign from his pastoral duties and leave the ministry (and the area) to manage a toy store in northern California.

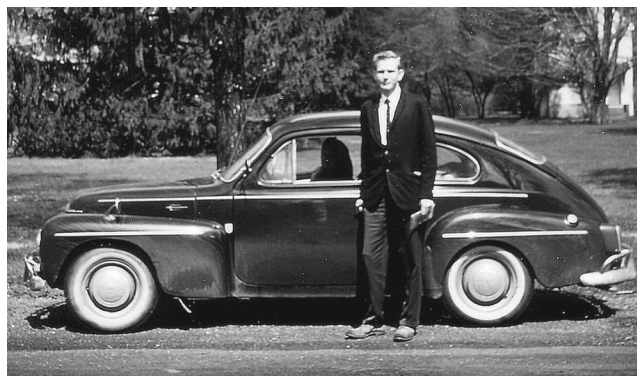
The work God had done in me, turning me from atheism to Him, was of course quite radical and noticed by others, so we had a revival in our area with many giving their hearts to Jesus. I came to realize that my participation in the leadership, though it inspired some controversy, was essential to the continued functioning and usefulness of the ministry God had given us.

Nevertheless, the work the Lord was doing in my life had been so dramatic - and was continuing to be - that it and the work of our ministry was being observed in an area far beyond that of which I was initially aware. I had been thrust into the limelight of notoriety and scrutiny - a position which I had not at all sought of course but was the result of God's work in our lives and our growing commitment to Him and His work.

And there were the unflattering, derogatory, jealous comments that hurt. We were even denounced by one local pastor from his pulpit, who attributed our work to "Satan." I was still very young in my Christian walk and one day while I was driving home from work, my heart

was so burdened with these things, that I suddenly pulled my car over to the curb, parked, turned off the engine, bowed my head and beseeched the Lord. *"God, please make me anonymous - if you can, if you will - use me anonymously - in the background - in some ministry."* God answered that prayer, and that's pretty much where I've been since then - in the background – "anonymous."

Previously I told how God finally let me know it was time to look for a job after months of watching my finances dwindling literally to nothing, and opened a door for me to be employed at the position I was previously (that of a workmen's compensation insurance underwriter) but with a different company. Some time after beginning working there in 1970, God instructed me to put a couple of Christian bumper stickers on the trunk of my '61 Volvo (which had a sloping rear reminiscent of the late 1940s Fords - perfect for prominently displaying such bumper stickers). After spending some useless time responding with *"Who, me?"* procrastination, I complied. Christian bumper stickers had just recently appeared at the local Christian book store, and my car was one of the first to display them locally.



At work, I had been assigned a parking place near the front entrance of the building so the stickers were very noticeable and during the day I received some strange looks and the general mood of the company seemed to be quite somber. In fact, my car's rear also faced the office of the president on the first floor, through whose windows it could easily be seen. The next day, upon arriving at work, I noticed that there were only a handful of employees present. I went into my boss's office and asked him where everyone was. He looked at me intently, as if wondering what planet I lived on. Then he said, *"This company is owned by Jews and most of the employees are Jews. They are not here because today is the start of the Jewish High Holy Days."* I sat there in a state of shock, desperately but silently asking God, *"What have you gotten me into?"* But at the end of the "Jewish High Holy Days" God had me add two more bumper stickers to the rear of my car.

*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation
to everyone who believes, to the Jew first.... (Rom 1:16)*

Needless to say, my time at that company trying to witness for Christ as a very young believer was interesting and challenging. There was a variety of opportunities to witness, but it was a very frustrating time, a very hard "mission field." And there came a time when I was feeling very depressed, feeling that I had failed at what the Lord had given me to do there as a "witness." So one day I asked my boss if I could take a day off to "pray and fast." He agreed, and I stayed home the next day - not knowing till later that it was also a Jewish day of prayer and fasting. But I felt so depressed, that I thought I would have to "look up in order to see bottom." While trying to pray, all I could say was, *"Help!"* But God didn't answer me then, and I returned to work. At

lunch time, in the company's lunch room, God finally answered me. He told me, *"What I gave you to do was not possible for you to do."* Immediately I remembered what Jesus had told His disciples:

"And looking upon them Jesus said to them, 'With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.'" (Matt. 19:26)

I thought, *"PTL! Now I will really see something happen here!"* But as it turned out, my time at the insurance company was drawing to a close, and God would direct me elsewhere. However, a year or so after leaving there I was attending a home Bible study meeting at which a couple of ladies looked at me strangely when I was introduced. After the meeting, they asked if I had worked for a certain insurance company and when I answered, *"Yes,"* they told me they were waitresses at a corner restaurant where the Jewish executives of the insurance company I had worked for would regularly come to eat. They told me that they had heard these men discuss the *"Christian who had Christian bumper stickers on his car who used to work for their company."*

The president of the company was a very humble appearing man, though a millionaire. One day I was seated at my desk looking at a magazine showing the property of the multi-millionaire head of the conglomerate of which this insurance company was part. Then I became aware that the president of the company was standing by my desk, looking over my shoulder. I was completely engrossed in the magazine, which showed that the property of this multi-millionaire was as palatial as anything I had seen in Europe owned by former kings, complete with immense lawns that were well-manicured. My attention was especially held by a sofa in the mansion he

owned which was worth quite a bit more than the house I was buying and living in! Suddenly, the president of the company standing by my side watching me looking at all this great display of wealth spoke to me. He very quietly told me, "*He is a very unhappy man!*" Then, without further comment, he turned from me and walked away. Of course, he knew I was a Christian, so he knew I would be interested in what he had remarked to me.

While working there, I sometimes took my lunch at a nearby small park that was shady and had picnic tables. One day, as I returned to my car, a woman approached me and smilingly told me she had seen the Christian bumper stickers on my car and asked if I would tell her "*about Jesus.*" I told her I'd be glad to, but my lunch hour was ended and asked if she would meet me there the next day. She agreed, but when the next day she did not show up, I knew Satan had done a number on her and so prayed for her. The day after that she did appear, but her demeanor was totally changed. She first paused at the edge of the park, then wandered very erratically throughout it, finally sitting down at my table opposite me. Without looking at me, she began talking - and her talk was as erratic as her walk through the park had been. She had not been talking five minutes when I knew I was in this completely "over my head" and the situation was beyond my human capabilities. Her talking reflected what I could only describe as a "fractured state of mind" - totally disoriented. She existed in a warped state of unreality. While she continued speaking, I tried to think of some Christian help in the area for her, but did not know of any. I was at a total loss of what to do, except to pray and ask for God's guidance. This woman had asked to be told about Jesus, I reminded myself, and somehow I must keep my promise to her. She had the most weird, negative perspective on life I had yet encountered. We

were sitting in this very nice little park that had green grass, shady trees with abundant green leaves, and there was green shrubbery - yet she said she despised the color green. And she went on and on in a non-stop fashion about everything else she hated, telling me that her only hope was that men in spaceships would come rescue her, and the mayor of the city would welcome them. I was not at all surprised when she eventually told me that she had been at one time committed to a California mental institution, had received a number of shock treatments which did not help her. She was eventually discharged as "incurable." The State had also taken her children from her as they had found her "incompetent" to keep them.

There were some days I came to that park at lunch time with my knees literally shaking, as I continued to pray to God about the situation. We would sit opposite each other, and I would share my lunch with her, and she would talk. As I continued praying to God, He began to put words in my mouth to say things that were opposite to what she was expressing about the negative world she lived in. I wouldn't argue with her. I know God has gifted me with a "listening ear" - to listen patiently to people with problems, who need to talk with someone who will listen. But He began giving me words to speak - words in the context of Philippians 4:8, about things that were "true...honorable... right...pure...lovely....of good report....virtuous....worthy of praise..." As these positive words intruded lovingly into her negativism, she would pause more and more to listen and finally I was able to start talking about Jesus, reading portions of Scripture to her from the Gospels. I met with her for a total of two weeks, at the end of which time she told me she had to move upstate out of the Los Angeles area. On the last day, as we sat opposite each other, she looked at me and I saw that her eyes were clear and her demeanor calm. She said to me, "*Paul, I*

feel such peace when I'm with you." God had healed her and given her new life. What He had done for me He had done even more dramatically for her, using me as His instrument. *"Go and do likewise,"* He had told me - and had allowed me the privilege of seeing the wondrous healing power of His love first-hand. God's love is the greatest power in the universe, and He has given us the honor to make it available to others.

God will lead in various ways to deal with demonic influence in people's lives. In 1975-6, when I was attending a seminary in Anaheim, California, I held a part-time job to help pay my expenses. I remember a young man one day at lunch time telling us he had deliberately given himself to Satan because he thought Satan could give him what he wanted in life. I sought God for help in prayer asking how to deal with what I was convinced was a case of demon possession. God replied, *"Love him."* *"But God,"* I said, *"Gotta cast out that demon."* *"Love him,"* God again answered. I was surprised but finally acquiesced. *"Show me how to love him,"* I requested. So I began "loving" this young man and in no time he was following me around like a puppy-dog, getting as much of "God's love" as he could - he became like a shadow to me.

There is a time that demons must be dealt with directly and God will show it. One of the youths we dealt with had a bad addiction to drugs. One day when we were helping him walk off a trip - walking down the street with my cousin holding onto his left arm and another ministry worker holding onto the other arm supporting him, I was walking right behind him, looking at the back of his head while praying in tongues. Suddenly, while his body continued forward, his head spun around 180° on its axis and spit at me and just as quickly returned to its normal forward position.

It happened so fast neither my cousin nor the other worker noticed.

Years later, while I was working with another ministry, a female co-worker was oppressed by a demon of witchcraft which manifested itself largely through her very forceful manipulation of others - especially me. When I knew I was going to meet her - and she was yet perhaps miles away - I would bind the demonic spirit at work in her life so that it would not interfere. When she would appear at these times, she would be the absolute opposite of her usual manipulative self - very meek, even obsequious - asking what she could do to please me. Finally, I was able to have a conversation with her in which she openly discussed this problem with me, and as a loving brother I was able to help her be set free from the demonic influence in her life.

At 4:00 p.m. one day, working in the insurance company at my underwriter's desk, I was suddenly aware of God's awesome presence settling on me. I became so filled with joy that I could hardly keep myself from jumping up, running around the room and shouting, *"HALLELUJAH!!!"* at the top of my voice. I did restrain myself however and, looking around the room, I saw that everyone was normally going about their business. So I gripped the desk and silently rejoiced in God's wondrous presence. Then I heard Him saying to me, *"I want you to resign your job."* I thought to myself, *"How could He say something like that? This can't be God after all."* He had just recently taught me that great lesson that the task He'd given me at this company was impossible for me to accomplish but possible for Him. So I asked myself, *"Why not use a 'fleece' like Gideon did?"* I knew that asking for a pink Cadillac to drive by in the next five minutes as a sign was unrealistic, but said instead, *"God, if my boss calls me into his office*

I'll know it's of you and I'll resign." 5:00 p.m. - quitting time - came, God's presence left me, my boss wasn't even looking in my direction, so I went home. That was near the end of November. When God's presence left at the office, I entered one of the driest spiritual spells I have ever encountered. It lasted all December and my Christmas that year was not particularly happy.

But as I awakened the first working day of the new year, 1972, there was God's presence again to greet me. A big *"?"* hung in the air - I knew the question, needed no prompting, and said immediately, *"Yes, Lord,"* got dressed, had breakfast, drove to the office, went to my boss and told him, *"I resign!"* We had quite a talk, and I was frank with him about what had happened. Finally he said, *"Please give me a month to find a replacement for you."* I knew he really meant, *"Please take a month to come to your senses!"* I felt God's peace about complying with his request, but at the end of the month I nevertheless left the office for the last time.

Chapter Eight

Navajoland

Amazingly, as I sought God the first week after leaving my job, what began to appeal to me was the desire to go camping into the Sierra mountains in California! So I not only prayed earnestly but avidly read books on the subject. Then I began visiting stores and investing in equipment, buying a backpack, sleeping bag (which I still have today), etc. I had it in my mind that I would study up on how to "live off the land" instead of packing a lot of food with me. But I did not know how wrong a choice that would be till I was already on my way. I also bought maps and settled on an area to enter into below Sequoia National Park. My cousin agreed to drive me there.

Before leaving, I visited an old family friend to leave with him a book of my dad's drawings. He told me that I had really come there for his advice and that his word to me was, "*You will perish on the trip.*" He said it very strongly, and it surprised and shocked me. I was sick with a cold and physically weakened by it, and his words - though I knew him as a "family friend" - were straight from the enemy. I knew he was into astrology and Taoism, but I had not expected this demonic attack and had not properly prepared myself by prayer. I was also spiritually weakened by what he said. On the day I planned to leave, I told my cousin of this and together we prayed against the enemy and for God's protection during this trip. My cousin told me that many people were watching me and that I had to go through with what I had planned. My sister later told me this same "family friend" had told our mother many years previously, when I was in the Army overseas and she had not heard from me for some time, that I had "perished." I successfully

returned from this trip of course, and subsequently every Christmas sent this "friend" a Christmas card telling him I was still alive. Many years later I had cause again to visit him. He had been visiting my father at the time he had suffered a heart attack and died and I wanted to express my gratitude for his being with my father at that critical time. I properly prepared myself by prayer and during the visit with him had the opportunity to discuss with him in depth the reality of the God I knew and the Gospel. I have every reason to believe he entered heaven at his demise some years ago.

During March, 1972, I spent three weeks in the Sierra wilderness hiking mostly cross-country and didn't see anyone else. God was with me every step of the way. I was carrying a backpack that weighed fifty-five to sixty pounds and had many opportunities to hurt myself - or even break a leg or suffer some other injury, or even "perish" - climbing over boulders and crossing streams. I was utterly alone except for the presence of God and His angels - and I never even suffered so much as a skinned elbow or shin. I fell many times though - flat on my face - and was exasperated by it - it's not easy to keep your balance with a pack of that weight and size on your back. But I always fell on muddy trails and mostly into snow that did not hurt anything but my pride. The first time I fell a stream of foul language came out of my mouth. I was ashamed, but did not like falling. God told me, *"By the end of this trip you will be praising and thanking me as you fall."* I thought, *"Why can't I just not fall?"* But God was right. I remember that the last time I fell there was praise for Him coming spontaneously out of my mouth as I hit the ground. Sometimes at night sitting by the campfire I would hear the whispering of the angels that accompanied me. They would become silent when I sang psalms praising God.

Out of all my experiences during those three weeks, there is one that I would like especially to share. In the Army I had learned how to use a compass and a map. So when I passed by a large boulder on my way to a lake I saw on the map and heard a still, small voice saying, "*Climb the boulder,*" I replied, "*But I have this compass and map which I know how to use and it would be such a bother to climb that boulder.*" And I continued on as I was going. Oh, how I came to wish I had climbed that boulder as the Holy Spirit had said! I went on - and on - and on - far longer than it should have taken to arrive at that lake. Finally I stopped and made camp. I realized that in order to get my bearings I would have to climb the mountain on the side of which I was camped. A mountain is quite a bit bigger than a boulder but I had no other choice at this point. So I took off my backpack and began climbing up the mountain to its top. Thankfully it was fairly small mountain, not the type that required climbing equipment which I did not have.

Nevertheless, I was very tired and undernourished as I had not brought sufficient food with me, and the climb up the mountain was exceedingly tedious - it felt as if I still had my pack on every step of the way. Near the top of the mountain a single-seater jet flew by level with me and I waved at the pilot but I do not think he saw me. I wished I could have hitched a ride. At the top the view was magnificent. I could see the lake I thought I had been headed for - and the boulder I had been told to climb that would indeed have shown me where the lake was and so I could have corrected my path.

The view from the mountain top was for many miles in each direction - forest forever, it seemed,

with no civilization in sight. It was about an hour before sunset. *"Alright Father,"* I said, *"I failed to hearken to your voice. There is about one hour of daylight left. Instead of returning by the way I came, I am going to descend the other side of this mountain - and You will guide me back to my camp. Your Holy Spirit will tell me when to turn right or left. Whether I reach the camp before nightfall comes is in Your hands. My life is in your hands."* With that said, I began to descend the other side of the mountain. It was so much better running down rather than climbing up, and I became quickly refreshed. As I ran, I turned right or left as I felt the Holy Spirit say. When I came upon a field of wild onions by a clear mountain stream, I could not resist stopping and having a brief repast of beef jerky, wild onions and cold mountain water. Then I continued running. As the sun was setting and the light was diminishing I ran straight into my campsite - not to the left of it nor to the right but directly into it! I was very glad to be back at camp.

At the end of the third week I came to the end of my journey and pitched my tent in a group of deserted campsites. Upon waking the next morning, I saw that God had brought another camper with a VW bus. I talked with them, and when they told me they were going to the Sequoia campground, I asked for a ride. They graciously consented, and I stayed in Sequoia the final

week of my trip. There was one campsite available and I was glad to take it. The following morning I awoke to the sounds of a brown bear tearing a hole in my backpack, which I had lazily neglected to string up into a tree. I didn't feel like arguing with him/her about the matter so I took a walk around camp while the bear enjoyed what he found. He ate all my vitamin pills and I waved to him as he left.

On Sunday, I made a three mile round-trip to the store to get some provisions, including some crackers and grape juice with which to have communion - to celebrate God's bringing me safely through my trip. I took communion on Sunday evening, and learned later that my church back home was having communion at exactly the same time. I spent a week resting and recuperating.

One day, as I was standing in my campsite, I saw a movement in a tree to my left. A blue jay appeared and sat on a branch looking at me, with something held in its beak which it then dropped. It looked at me again and then flew away. I walked over to the foot of the tree and picked up what it had dropped - it was a chocolate fudge brownie! "*Yummy,*" I said as I ate it. "*I wonder where the rest of this is.*" I loved brownies! Then I heard a movement in a tree on the other side of the campsite and looking there I saw a squirrel sitting on a tree branch looking at me. It held something in its mouth which it dropped. After looking at me again, it scampered away. I walked over to the tree and picked up what it had dropped. Another chocolate fudge brownie! "*Thank you Jesus!*" I exclaimed as I happily ate it. I knew this was God's hand reassuring me of His provision. Both of these forest critters were the noisy, scolding bothersome type - normally taking from a campsite rather than giving. Neither of these had made any noise at

me. They had obviously been sent by God. *HALLELUJAH!*

God provided a ride for me all the way back to the Los Angeles area, but not before I was able to stop at a nearby motel first and take about a half dozen consecutive showers to wash all the crud off me and do my laundry at a local laundromat. Sleeping so long on frozen ground had toughened my hide to the point I was actually able to sleep on the concrete sidewalk when several of us took off to Pasadena to witness at the the Rose Bowl Parade the following New Year's.

In the weeks following my return to civilization, I first stayed a while at my cousin's house, then moved in with another family from the church we attended and assisted this brother at his business of installing vinyl tops on cars as I continued to seek God concerning where He wanted me to be and what He wanted me to do. As the years passed, I would hold a series of jobs in between involvement with various ministries in various locations. When I had resigned from my job, and realized that God was taking me out on the mission field, I asked him to please work in some travel with it if possible. I really enjoyed traveling - remembering the traveling I did in the Army years before. I felt almost guilty bothering my heavenly Father with such a trivial request - but He answered it in abundance: in the next fifteen years He moved me (sometimes between various countries) approximately thirty-five times!!! Yes, a definite "Ephesians 3:20 answer" to my little prayer!

When I had first come across Ephesians 3:20-21 in the Bible, I had thought that the translation

used by the King James version of “*exceedingly abundantly*” was an unnecessary exaggeration. Surely just one of those words could have been used to adequately convey the meaning of what God could do in answer to prayer! I knew that if I had used such a phrase in an original composition for a class in college, I could have expected the teacher to have red-penciled it and commented, “irrelevant,” “redundant,” “wordy,” etc. However, these many years later I am convinced that the apostle Paul (with the Holy Spirit's help) hit the proverbial nail right on the head in what he wrote. This verse has become one of my favorites to quote as I praise God for His wonderful answers to prayer far, far beyond our wildest expectations!

“Now to Him Who, by (in consequence of) the [action of His] power that is at work within us, is able to [carry out His purpose and] do superabundantly, far over and above all that we [dare] ask or think [infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, hopes, or dreams]-- To Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever. Amen (so be it).” (Eph. 3:20-21 AMP)

The family with whom I was staying, like so many Christian families, dabbled in the occult. They rationalized by saying, “*Satan got what he knows from God, along with the power he has. He has perverted it, but we can redeem it for our own use.*” I never asked to go with them to their meetings, and I am glad they never invited me. But they would brag to me when they returned about the “auras” they saw over each other's heads. They would share the knowledge they had gained. When Jesus was transfigured before Peter, James and John, and Moses and Elijah joined Him – that was actually a séance, they told me! I loved them and prayed for them. God had given

me a dream some months before in which I saw myself walking through all sorts of filth, but the white robe I was wearing stayed perfectly clean, never becoming stained by the filth. God told that He would keep me clean in His Son's righteousness no matter what situation I found myself in, in which He had placed me. *Praise the Lord!*

However, my concerns for this family because of their occult involvement were justified. It was so sad to hear later that the husband had run off with another woman to Europe, leaving his wife and children behind. Later, their oldest son committed suicide.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. (2 Tim 4:3-5)

My father, though he was so good at mathematics that we nicknamed him “Einstein, Jr.,” had a very weird view of the Bible that was apparently influenced by the occult. Before I was born, he visited a spiritualist medium for consultation. He professed to be a skeptic and a solipsist. His skepticism could be a nuisance, and his solipsism (a philosophic theory that only the self exists, or can be proven to exist) influenced his view of the Bible. After I became born-again, I entered into discussion with him about it, sharing with him the fact of my conversion when God instructed me to do that. A series of discussions ensued that only ended with his death a decade later. I very much enjoyed these discussions, not only because my father also obviously enjoyed talking with me, but also because while growing up I had very little personal relationship with

him. Initially, I was very interested in his solipsistic comments on the Bible and even mailed some of them out to my friends. But the Lord convicted me of this, and I had to repent and apologize.

The first mission field experience involved living and working for six months during 1973 on the Navajo reservation in Arizona. I went there at the invitation of a Bible Church missionary.

Navajoland is a very hard mission field: The Navajo language is said to be the most difficult language in the world (during WWII the Allies used it as a secret code and it was never broken by the enemy). The land is very hard to live on. During the summer the ground is rock-hard, beating a new vehicle to death quickly. It is almost impossible to grow anything unless in a greenhouse because the dry desert wind immediately sucks up any water poured on the ground.

In the winter the hard ground turns to deep slush that quickly bogs down vehicles and requires a winch to get out of. The culture is matriarchal (if a woman leaves her husband's saddle outside of their dwelling that means she divorced him – he takes it and leaves without further ado; a man will always avoid his mother-in-law because she may give him “the evil eye”) and includes "wolf-men" (who prey on widows) and witchdoctors and much other equally demonic superstition. The demonic power involved in this though is very real and can only be countered by believers who know how to do so in the authority of Jesus Christ.

The desert can be beautiful even in its harshness. I used to enjoy arising early in the morning to spend one to two hours in the desert's solitude, alone with God in prayer, singing songs of worship. One day as I was riding in the mission van I saw a solitary vacant Navajo hut, which

they call a “hogan.” Suddenly I felt a quickening by the Holy Spirit reminding me of a something I had said back in my house when I realized God was taking me out on the mission field. I had then felt so grateful to the Lord, realizing what He had done in my life and what He was planning for the future that I declared boldly, *“I will live in a mud hut, if You want me to, Lord!”* I did not feel quite so bold staring at that Navajo mud hut, realizing I had better take care what came out of my mouth! But I knew that if He truly wanted me to live there, I would do it and He would give the grace necessary. It was one of the lessons He taught me about the difference between our “good intentions” and His Holy Spirit leading, and remembered the lesson He had taught me on my cross-country hiking trip when I thought my compass and map-reading skills were sufficient. Being right where the Lord wants us puts us on firm footing – anywhere else can very quickly turn into a “slippery slope!” That includes our “good intentions.” We have a saying that, *“The road to hell is paved with good intentions.”*

....those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (Rom 8:8)

As I observed the Navajos, I was saddened by the tragedy that was so often part of their lives. The legendary hold of "firewater" on Native Americans proved only too true. They seemed to have no resistance to it. There was a bar just outside the reservation limits not far from us - we could see it from our mission house. The mission took the owner to court and finally was able to get him shut down - and also able to witness to him why it was done. He said he was just trying to do some business and make a living, but the enemy lost a worker there nonetheless.

One day a Navajo man stopped by our house with his small daughter. As he sat at our kitchen

table holding his daughter on his lap, I spoke with him while watching him spoon portions of jalapeño pepper out of a jar and eat them. He told me of two times he had narrowly escaped death while drunk. One of the times a truck ran over him while he was passed out on the nearby highway. The Holy Spirit showed me that what was happening in his life was basically similar to what had happened in my life previous to my encounter with God, and so I told the Navajo this and warned him he had better repent also, turn to God and give up drinking or the next time he would perish. But unfortunately he remained unresponsive and later I learned he had gotten drunk and froze to death sleeping in a car.

There was another Navajo who, when he was not drinking, was the nicest person you would want to know. But when he was drinking he would become demon-possessed and it was very dangerous to be near him. He would even gash himself with stones and there were great scars on his arms from that. I remember him attending the AOG church once, sitting on a pew peacefully and attentively listening to the sermon. I would pray for him, desiring of course that he would be delivered but he would not agree to our requests to help him and died in one of his drunken rages. I heard of a young Navajo who was released from jail and went to visit his mother. She refused to let him in out of the cold, and he stayed outside and she found him frozen to death the next morning and calmly phoned the police to take his body away. The AOG missionary and I had to prepare his body for burial. After we had washed it, we held the funeral and tried to ignore the stench.

It was also there I had a near encounter with death. The missionary with whom I was staying had

a half-wild gelding captured for him by one of the Navajos. One day when I was alone at their house I foolishly decided to ride him. First I put on my hiking boots(foolish), then put the blanket and saddle on the horse but didn't take care in cinching the saddle tightly (foolish). Then I climbed on and jammed my boots into the stirrups (very foolish!) and off we went.

The horse quickly found out I did not know how to control him properly and decided he didn't want me on his back so took control and began galloping toward a copse of trees with branches he evidently decided should knock me off. At the last second I decided to jump off him, foolishly forgetting my boots were jammed into the stirrups. The next instant I found myself beneath the horse on my back, the saddle having slid around from the back of the horse onto its belly. My left foot was caught in a stirrup beyond my reach on the other side of the horse and I quickly found that I could not free my right foot which was awkwardly jammed into the other stirrup right above me. It was an obviously impossible (there's that word again!) situation for me to get out of and looking up into the eyes of the horse I saw he was ready to bolt. I glanced also out into the field and saw the many large boulders and prayed the quickest prayer of my life: *"God, please deliver me - either drop my feet from these stirrups or let me die quickly."* (I didn't want be banged against those rocks and wind up a vegetable in the hospital).

It took me less than five seconds to examine the circumstances and pray that prayer, but the very instant the prayer was finished both of my feet dropped simultaneously to the ground!

Immediately the horse bolted and ran with the saddle on its belly, neighing and bellowing, for all the countryside to see. It was interesting that I had just recently had a discussion (I tried to discuss, but quickly found out that all he viewed it as an argument he wanted to "win") with the

missionary at who's house I was staying concerning the Bible Church denomination's belief that miracles performed by the Holy Spirit ended with the end of the "apostolic age." When I informed him what had happened in my near-death encounter with the horse, he insisted on my showing him the exact spot that I had been laying on my back beneath the horse, and he examined it carefully without commenting. I never did find out how the missionaries there reconciled their denominational belief with the dropping of my feet from those stirrups in answer to my prayer of faith, but it was obvious to me that my guardian angel had been there to hold the horse and then in answer to my prayer cause my feet to loosen from the stirrups.

I have had two face-to-face encounters with my guardian angel. The first was in my house while I was living in Simi Valley, California. One afternoon I heard a knock on my door and when I answered it, a man was there who asked me for a glass of water. He appeared to be in his late thirties or early forties. I got him the glass of water, then when he had finished drinking it, returned the glass to me, thanked me and left and I had closed the door – I wondered about the encounter, reopened the door and looked up and down the block. He was nowhere to be seen!

“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.” (Heb 13:2)

The second encounter was about ten years later in a small town in Romania, when I was with a Christian brother in a train station discussing plans for departure. Suddenly there stood before us this very same man who had knocked at the door of my house and asked for the glass of water. He gave us clear instructions what we should do to depart, then just as suddenly left us. More

will be said about Romania (and eastern Europe) later....

This first exposure to the mission field revealed to me the "stretching of faith" that involvement in it brings. After my first week there I wanted to run back to my church and bring them all out there to experience it! The director of the mission had a visit from the representative of a church who made a remark I couldn't comprehend, but I judiciously kept my silence since I was not really part of the mission but a guest. The church he was from evidently contributed financially to help take care of the mission's expenses. He said to the director, *"Our church is meant to experience prosperity but you as a missionary are meant to experience poverty."* I was incredulous, but the director of the mission just smiled benignly and maintained his silence.

I also became acquainted with the mission workers of an Assembly of God mission church a quarter mile up the road from the Bible Church mission. God used me as a "bridge" between the two missions, but the Bible Church workers remained stubborn and withdrawn and I eventually moved in with the AOG mission.

One evening in church the pastor instructed us that we should pray for the US. I obediently got on my knees by one of the wooden pews and began praying. Almost immediately God stopped me. He referred me to the books of Amos, Obadiah and Jonah. As I read them, I found that Amos spoke of God's judgment against the nations, Obadiah of His judgment against the US (when I realized that I literally felt the hair on the back of my neck stand up!) and Jonah of the Church. He also showed me faces of people whose way of dress I did not recognize and

burdened me to pray for them instead. When later God sent me to do mission work into the eastern European communist countries, I realized that these were the people He had shown me.

While I had been at the Bible Church Mission house I saw a copy of the book "L'Abri" by Edith Schaeffer. When I read it I felt led to write a letter to this Christian community in Switzerland. I eventually received a letter back from Dr. Francis Schaeffer, the co-founder and director of L'Abri ("The Shelter"), and God opened the door for me to go next to Switzerland! (One day as I was walking along a road that paralleled Highway 66 which ran through Navajoland, I saw a young man hitch-hiking on the highway. I walked up to greet and witness to him and as I was talking with him he told me he needed lunch money. All I had in my wallet was ten dollars so I asked the Lord how much of it He wanted me to give the young man. The Lord told me to give him six dollars, so that's what I gave him. Within a short time I received the promise of six hundred dollars to pay my way to L'Abri!)

Chapter Nine

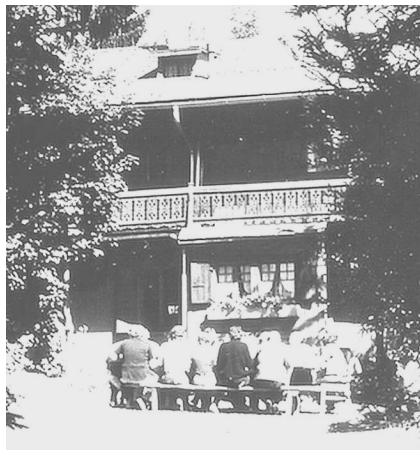
L'Abri

L'Abri (“The Shelter”), located in the tiny village of Huemoz, Switzerland is unusual in a variety of ways. The Schaeffers, a family of Presbyterians from the US, journeyed to Switzerland to begin a ministry by faith. Unlike most other ministries, they do not solicit funds. They began in the 1950s as a ministry to atheists and agnostics (that's one reason that interested me in visiting them - they appeared to be a "factory" for turning atheists into preachers) , though at the time I was there, their visitors were mostly young people. I also wanted to see how they were able to maintain their family unit while accepting so many visitors. I had seen other Christian families have a very hard time maintaining their well-being while taking in and ministering to strangers.

I arrived there near the end of 1973, and had a very memorable experience while riding the bus one day soon after my arrival up the hill to Chesières, another larger village not far up the road from Huemoz. Dr. Francis Schaeffer, founder of L'Abri, was also on the bus, and sat down right by me! Of course, we became engaged in conversation and he asked my background. One of the words I used in reply was “Charismatic” and he answered with a comment that I felt was uncommonly rude of him, indicating that he felt there was satanic influence in my background of being Charismatic. I had traveled thousands of miles with high expectations and this was not a very warm welcome! In fact it was quite hurtful. And as he made his remark he arose from the seat and exited the bus, leaving me feel quite sickened by the unfriendly reception. But I was beginning to realize that God had His own purposes in such situations as these, and my main

desire should be to be where He wanted me to be and I knew He wanted me here at L'Abri! In fact, I later realized that Jesus Himself had been accused of working miracles using demonic power (Matt. 9:34; 12:24), so I was comforted – I was in pretty good company!

I spent a little over a year working at L'Abri as (1) a proctor in the Farel House study hall, (2) assistant to the treasurer, and (3) janitor for the chapel. Hundreds of people (mainly youths, but also older people and pastors) passed through the doors of L'Abri while I was there. It was a hard thing to become intimately acquainted with them and then see them leave. There were chalets where the students lived and took their meals. Each meal was lovingly prepared and mealtime was meant to be a time of true fellowship and discussion. There were lectures too, and the very small village where L'Abri is located is picturesque - the surrounding countryside is spectacularly beautiful. It was a new experience for me to observe the way the Holy Spirit led people there to Jesus. No one could take credit - the person would always just make the final decision by themselves.



One afternoon after lunch I was sharing my testimony with a young woman in one of the chalets.

Behind her, an older woman was listening, and I could see she was becoming more and more agitated. Finally she burst out, *"I have lived my whole life in the church and have never experienced what you are describing!"* I smiled at her. I knew she was not far from having what she was so angry at missing. She went around talking to others about it and sure enough within two days she was celebrating the new life given her by God. I am still in contact with her as I write this many years later, and know she has been a blessing to many others through those years.

At another time, two young girls arrived simultaneously into the community, though not together. I had opportunity to talk at length with each of them. One recognized the truth of the Gospel and accepted Jesus as her Savior and Lord within two weeks and then promptly left as she had received what she had come for. The other I spent many hours with as she played intellectual games asking questions about the Bible. Finally, months after she arrived she came to me one morning very excited, with a light to her eyes and I knew what had happened before she told me. *"Paul,"* she said, *"I have seen so many come here and have their lives changed by God while I've been playing my games. Last night I decided that I would stop asking questions and ask God to give me what He had given all the others."* I was so happy for her, and hugged her in joy. I thanked God for giving me another new sister-in-Christ.

Upon arriving at L'Abri I first stayed outside the community at a hotel in Chesières. Then, being granted entrance into the community itself a week or so later, I was initially assigned to a small, charming chalet called La Nichée (The Nest"). The owner was Sheila Bird (now with the Lord),

whom everyone called "Birdie." It turned out that she was a "spiritual mother" to hundreds around the world, and she became mine as well. She was a truly wise person, and I came to hold her in immense respect and value whatever she said. She insisted we must be related (as my family name is also "Bird") and we remained in touch long after I left L'Abri until she went to be with the Lord some years ago. She had been licensed as a "Psychiatric Social Worker" and so was qualified as a counselor. She told me that the primary qualification for counseling was to have a "listening ear" (the ability to listen patiently to others who need to talk out their problems with someone), and she said that I had that ability myself. I have found that to be true and consider it a gift from God.

The young man with whom I roomed at Birdie's chalet told me a most remarkable story. After he had been born-again he backslid, and when he was in bed fornicating with a young woman he suddenly was convicted of what he was doing by the Holy Spirit. At once he jumped out of bed and onto his knees and cried out to God for forgiveness. The girl, an unbeliever, was of course greatly surprised and taken aback, and asked him what he was doing. When he explained, she became greatly convicted also and he prayed with her as she repented and gave her life to the Lord.

It was winter when I stayed at Birdie's, we were fairly high in the mountains with a spectacular view. But I remember one morning being awakened by my alarm clock and impulsively throwing it out the window. Of course I had to then walk out into the snow in my pajamas and retrieve it. Oh, how I long to be with the Lord in heaven where there is no need for clocks!

As was indicated in my initial meeting with Dr. Schaeffer, L'Abri is not only not Charismatic, it is anti-Charismatic. I found that the longer I remained there, the more quenched and drier my spirit became. Nevertheless, I knew God had brought me there for a season, and I learned much about His ways there. Many Charismatics unfortunately put their brains on a shelf while trusting only in their "feelings" to try to discern how the Holy Spirit is leading them. At L'Abri - a place that by Dr, Schaeffer's own admission may be too "intellectual " - I was able to redeem the brain God had given me. When I was born-again, I came to distrust my thinking capacity as it had obviously led me into much error as an atheist. And after I had become born-again, God had revealed to me the extent to which the process of "rationalization" had dominated my life. It covered me like a gigantic web of chains and I had been bound in the center of it. God had spent some time helping me strip it away. I had been shocked at the extent of it and had come to distrust my ability to use my brain as a result. At L'Abri I learned how to make proper use of it, as God intended. But that was not the only use He had for me there.

One week, a guru from India came to hold a series of meetings in Chesieres. A young girl in L'Abri was known to be romantically involved with one of his apprentices. I recognized that he in fact had a demonic hold on her. One day he appeared at a dinner at one of our chalets where this girl was helping to serve the meal. I was there, and so was another charismatic Christian brother from India. I became increasingly disturbed by the fact that the guru's assistant was easily dealing with the attempts by young Christians there to argue with him. I could see that the demon in him was having no trouble playing with their young minds. Praying silently in the Spirit, I

approached the brother from India who I knew was an expert in the guru's religion and asked him to please deal with this situation. I could see that the young girl was becoming increasingly distraught by the spiritual warfare that was going on and by the demonic activity in the room due to the presence of the guru's assistant. I knew the man with the demon was aware of the power I was generating by praying in the Spirit by the fear I could see in his eyes when he glanced in my direction.

Things suddenly came to a climax when the young girl swooned and fell on a couch. I knew the intensity of the spiritual struggle going on in the room had caught her in the middle until she could no longer stand the pressure and succumbed. Thankfully, God emptied the room quickly as people went for help. Only the guru's assistant and I remained. He looked at me and said, *"She needs a doctor."* I strongly replied to him, *"What she needs is for you to get out of her life and leave her alone!"* He left. I was alone with the girl and immediately went and sat by her on the couch and placed a hand on her forehead and prayed softly in tongues. After a few moments I felt a release and God said to me, *"It is done."* I arose and went to sit elsewhere in the room. When a nurse arrived I told her the girl was ok. She verified that was so by examining her. As it turned out, the demonic power over the girl had been broken, her relationship with the guru's assistant was ended, and the girl was helped to recover by the community. The fact of my praying in tongues was general knowledge in the community and there were those who mocked me, but I held my peace though I wondered how those who deemed themselves "spiritual" or "Christian" could despise a gift from God only made available to His Church through the death of His Son!

I have never experienced such intense community involvement as I encountered at L'Abri. One evening while I was sitting in the chapel during a lecture by Dr. Schaeffer, I decided to see how many of the students there whose first name I could recall. I usually have a very hard time remembering names, but that evening while sitting in my chair I went up and down one row after the other naming all the students except for two. There were more than 100, so I was quite overwhelmed because this witnessed to me of how greatly involved I was with the members of this community, most of whom were transient. But the time came to end the adventure of intense involvement at L'Abri near the end of 1974. Those who live in L'Abri for whatever period of time never forget their stay there and are forever considered part of the international "L'Abri community" and may stay in contact with each other for years.

I left L'Abri with mixed feelings and went with several friends to work at a Christian-owned hotel in nearby Châteaux d'Oex where I was employed as dishwasher. The water that came out of the faucet there was so delicious - almost as good as the spring water I had come across high in the Sierras in California. There was a convention of Southern Baptists there at the same time, and I watched in wonder as the wives walked obediently behind their husbands as I had been previously told ("*6 paces behind...*"). While attending one of the small discussion groups led by a church leader, and looked into his face just a few feet away as he told of the time that his six year-old daughter had prayed and God had answered! His voice was soft and his face bore an expression that reflected the conflict going on within him because of his personal theology being challenged by his little daughter's prayer of faith and its answer. I prayed silently as I looked into his eyes, "*Oh dear God, reveal the truth about your Holy Spirit to him and bring him into the*

fullness of your plans and purposes for him!”

Many months later, after I had returned to southern California, I had opportunity to stop by the Trinity Broadcasting Network headquarters in Santa Ana. While talking with the receptionist in the lobby, my attention was caught by a nearby TV monitor mounted on the wall showing the program presently being broadcasted. The face of the man on the screen was that of the (former) Southern Baptist leader who was now enthusiastically expounding on the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues! I thought, *“What an answer to prayer!!! Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!”*

While at that hotel in Switzerland, I read the book, “Tortured For His Faith” by Haralon Popov. It was a small book but a very intense reading experience. It seemed this man, who was known as :the Billy Graham of Bulgaria, had suffered enough in thirteen years of imprisonment by the communists in Bulgaria for an equivalent of several lifetimes. I couldn't know of course that God was to open the door some years later not only for me to meet this man but to get to know him very well personally and work with him and his family in the mission he had founded after he was freed and came into the West. I lived and worked at the hotel in Chateaux D'Oex for several months with my friends till we earned enough money to return to the US.

Chapter Ten

Eastern Europe

Back in the US, I wound up in Anaheim, CA where in the summer of 1975 the Lord opened the door for me to attend Melodyland School of Theology (MST) in Anaheim, California. It was hard for me there because during these first six years of my Christian walk I was used to very practical involvement – and this was only classroom study.

One evening, while I was attending a class in apologetics, a man wandered into the classroom and sat down in the rear. When the professor asked him what he was doing there, he replied that he was a back-slidden Christian and he supposed God had brought him into the class. The professor blinked and stood not knowing what to do, while a nearby student who - like myself - had been involved in street evangelism, smiled and went to sit by the man to talk with him. The professor dealt only in theory, and while he could well explain the abstract of apologetics - how to prove God existed logically (while admitting his explanation would probably never actually persuade anyone to believe in Christ) - he proved himself totally unable pass the test that God had presented him with that evening. The faculty at MST ran the full spectrum of Christian belief from conservatism to liberalism, and though I knew God wanted me there at least for a time, I cried out to him that I was "spinning my wheels."

Ralph Wilkerson, the pastor of Melodyland Christian Center and founder of Melodyland School of Theology, interviewed each student individually and asked them what they wanted to be

involved in upon leaving the school. When my turn came, I simply replied, "*I want to be a missionary.*" I'll never forget the look of surprise Pastor Wilkerson gave me. Later, while one of the staff of MST was talking with me, he remarked that I had been the only one among all the many students of the school who had indicated they would like to be a missionary. All the other students wanted to be pastors or pastor's wives. He told me I was to be commended.

But God was about to open another door quite unexpectedly. Several years before I had read Brother Andrew's book, "God's Smuggler." The book was an autobiographical account of a Dutchman who began smuggling Bibles into atheistic east European communist countries. I was so moved by reading the book that at one point I stopped and prayed to God that if He wanted me to be part of such a ministry, I was available. I thought that there were parts of my background that would be useful in such service – the fact that my maternal grandfather had emigrated to the US from Czechoslovakia, my family had been part of the Czech community in the southern California area and also my Army experience - having received training in counter-intelligence and also the Czech language. But I did not pursue it further at the time, thinking that if God wanted me in such a ministry, He would call me into it.

One evening I attended a prayer meeting at a student's apartment. While I was talking with a man there, he mentioned to me that he worked with a mission into the eastern European communist countries. As soon as he did that, it was as if a door above me opened, heavenly light shined on me and I was reminded of the prayer I had prayed several years earlier. This certainly appeared to be an "open door." In fact, the ministry that this brother represented, "Eastern European Bible

Mission" (now "New Hope International") was at the time associated with Brother Andrew's "Open Doors" ministry. Of course I became very excited about this, and the brother told me that the director of the mission would in fact be in town the next week and arranged for me to meet with him for lunch at a local restaurant. This I did, and was given an application to fill out and give to the director. In the ensuing weeks God closed the door for me at MST and funds supplied through the church I was attending added to personal savings enabled me to purchase a round-trip ticket to Holland for summer involvement in the mission. The church laid hands on me and prayed over me to properly send me off after God had given me this verse through a brother:

"... for a wide door for effective service has opened to me..." (1 Cor 16:9)

So in the summer of 1976, I flew off to Holland and was met in Amsterdam by a Dutch couple I had met at L'Abri. They drove me to the mission's base at its director's home in southern Holland near the Belgian border. My first mission trip into eastern Europe was into Czechoslovakia, and that was another childhood dream fulfilled. As I stated, my maternal grandfather had been born there, and I had fond ties to the country having been involved in the Czech community in Los Angeles, California while growing up. Even though I was excited to be entering my grandfather's homeland, crossing the border was very depressing. I had heard that my grandfather was an atheist, and never allowed God to be spoken of in his household. My mother was the only one in the family (two sisters and a brother) I knew of who had become a believer (though I was later told one of her sisters also was a believer). How she had become a believer I did not know - but I did know she was in heaven. I wondered what my atheistic grandfather would have thought of this atheistic government that had turned his homeland into a prison camp. Upon approaching the

border we first had to drive across a "no man's land" planted with mines. We knew that if our car broke down or we got a flat tire at this point and got out of the car, we could be shot. A tall barbed wire fence stretched as far as we could see in each direction. Guard towers dotted the landscape. Guards with guns and dogs patrolled along the fence. Driving through the gate we encountered a check station where we and our vehicle were thoroughly examined. But since this trip was meant to gather information only, we had nothing with us except our luggage. Passing the initial inspection point, we drove on.

The first thing I noticed as we drove was a sickeningly oppressive demonic spirit of fear pervading everywhere. It covered the country totally. In subsequent trips with other brothers and sisters, all would remark about observing this same demonic presence. It was obviously the result of the grip Satan had through the secret police on all who lived here. Family members could not trust one another. Children at school were asked simply if their parents prayed at mealtime, saying "grace." If they innocently replied, "Yes," it could mean that the children would be removed and never see their parents again. Children were encouraged to report on their parents and told they would be considered "heroes" if they were able to turn their parents in to authorities, accused of engaging in some Christian activity or talk. But if the children themselves were considered Christians, their schoolmates were encouraged to beat up on them by the teachers. If the parents complained they would be told that they were at fault because of their Christianity.

Later while back in the US, I met a brave ten year old boy from the USSR who had been able to

emigrate to the US with his parents. At one point the KGB had threatened to break his arms if he did not cease his Christian testimony. But he was not cowed by their threats and continued being a witness for Christ, so the government finally “exiled” the family to the US. Of course they were very glad for that!

My heart cried out as we drove on through the Czech countryside because I knew the spirit of this people was normally the opposite of what I was seeing. The Czechs had tried to pattern their freedom-loving country after that of the US but had never had a chance when confronted first by the Nazis and now the Soviets. Their spirit had been completely broken and the looks on all the faces I saw was as if someone had hit them with a sledgehammer. But, as I was to find repeated over and over during the time God would have me involved in traveling into these eastern Europe countries, visiting with the Christians was like passing suddenly from night to day, from death to life.

One of our purposes in visiting our brothers and sisters was to provide them with encouragement. Later, upon leaving the east and returning to the west, sometimes I have wondered who had encouraged whom more. I came to love traveling into the east - not only was God's supernatural presence far more apparent there than in the apathetic religious childishly self-centered western churches, but sharing meals with Christians there would sometimes remind me of the coming wedding feast of the Lamb.

During our trip we were even able to make a visit to Traplice, the town near Brno where my

grandfather had been born. I do not know how long he lived there and was unable to make any local inquiries because of the covert nature of our trip.

As the summer progressed, we made other trips into eastern European communist countries and when the time drew near for my return to the US, I felt in my spirit that perhaps I was not to return just yet. While praying about this I felt led also to pray for an open door to visit L'Abri again instead of taking the flight back to the US. God did open the door to visit L'Abri and blessed my stay there and refreshed me.

Upon returning to Holland, I discussed my situation with the mission directors, and they agreed to allow me to stay on at the mission and to work there to help support myself. Part of my duties was to organize the slides taken of trips into the east for presentation at churches in the US.

When we traveled into the east it was for the purpose of taking Bibles, other Christian literature, medicine or to gather information. In any case our presence in the east was always an encouragement to the believers there. Freedom of religion in the US was a beacon of light to them. As long as that light was burning brightly, they were greatly encouraged. One pastor fervently told us we should never allow our "light" in the US to die as that would cause despair for believers in other parts of the world. So we would always bring warm "greetings" to them from their brothers and sisters in the west. When we did bring supplies to the churches in the east, we would secrete them in the vehicles, and we had vehicles especially built for that purpose. We followed Brother Andrew's example while praying: *"Lord, when you were here on earth, you made blind eyes to see - we pray that you now make these seeing eyes (at the border)*

blind (to what we're carrying)." I would add, "Lord, please don't let them ask me anything that might cause me to compromise this mission by divulging information the enemy could use to harm your people or your plans." God always answered these prayers. I was caught only once at the border - but that happened a few years later.

The maps we were given of the towns we were to visit were always inaccurate, so we would have to depend ultimately on the Holy Spirit's guidance. On one trip into the northeast corner of Romania to a town near the Russian border we arrived late at night. We only had an idea where the house was from the map but not exactly - and it turned out there was an "informer" living right near the house we needed to find. But with the Holy Spirit's help we found the correct house and made contact, and started unloading all the Bibles we were carrying. We had to park down the street from the house, and as we were carrying the sacks of Bibles into the house, God told me each of them was already designated for a particular believer whose name He knew. Actually, though we were making a delivery in Romania, the Bibles were in Russian - for delivery across the border into the USSR. The brother to whom we were making the delivery was ecstatic. He told us the Lord had told him we were coming a couple of months ago. His children remained all asleep as we unloaded the Bibles, but his wife was sitting in the front of the house crying. She knew the danger that they were in and was afraid. As it turned out., I heard later that this brother was arrested. But that moonless night, as we left him and walked down the street toward our now empty van, I turned to look one last time at the brother as he stood in the street watching us depart. When he saw me looking back, he gave one last big leap for joy with both arms outstretched above his head, hands with index fingers pointing upward in the "One-

Way" sign of "Victory in Jesus." I knew as I saw him do that, that all of heaven could hear his silent shout of "HALLELUJAH!!!" I could. That view of him is forever etched in my mind.

Christmas, 1976, the director of the mission and I made a trip into a small village in eastern Hungary to attend a play about the life of Elijah the prophet. Believers - adults and youths - came from far away to pack out the small building where the play was to be presented. They kept watch to make sure that no informers were admitted. The play was three hours long, and the actors, who came from various parts of Hungary, had barely two days together to rehearse. But the play went without a hitch and moved the emotions of the viewers so much that when Elijah cried out, *"I alone am left, and they seek my life, to take it away,"* there was sobbing heard among the audience as many there identified with Elijah's cry. But then when the voice of the Lord was heard to proclaim, *"Yet I have left me seven thousand"* there were cries of rejoicing. The play was meant to encourage the believers of Hungary to take heart - and it succeeded well in doing that.

Later we made another trip to visit the pastor who helped present the play. He pastored several churches in the area. Pastors were in short supply in those countries - each had responsibility for several churches, sometimes quite a distance from each other. Cars were a great luxury - pastors were thankful for a good pair of shoes or better yet a bicycle. This pastor was loved by youths over a great part of Hungary who would travel long distances to join other youths in being ministered to by him. When we visited him some time after the play, he informed us that the State-appointed bishop over him had deposed him from his work as youth pastor. Though we

were sickened by the news, he and his wife remained steadfast in their joyful confidence in the Lord, knowing that the Lord was sovereign and they encouraged us. I will never forget the victorious "One-Way" sign they both flashed to us as we drove away and I saw them for the last time out the rear window of our car. We had come to encourage them and they had instead inspired us with their steadfastness of faith in the face of persecution!

Some time after we returned to Holland, the director sat down with me and told me that my time with the mission had come to an end. So, though I was saddened to hear this news, I started seeking the Lord's will in the matter. It was in my heart to remain in Europe and join some ministry there. One of the ministries I considered was Operation Mobilization (OM) - a radically committed evangelistic and church-building organization. OM states that its role in the body of Christ is *"to motivate, develop and equip people for world evangelization, and to strengthen and help plant churches, especially among the unreached in the Middle East, South and Central Asia and Europe."* The closest national office was located in Brussels, Belgium. I went there and spoke with the staff and was given a tour of the premises. There is no Christian ministry I admire more than O.M. for the fervency of its commitment to the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a "no frills" organization. Its founder George Verwer has written books that are some of the most challenging I have read for those who desire to deepen their commitment to their Lord Jesus. But if you are curious enough to read one, beware – they are not intended for casual reading and only the actual visual appearance of the Lord Jesus Himself calling you will have a greater effect!

While at O.M., I encountered an old friend from Melodyland School of Theology. After greeting

each other and hugging, we sat down and talked. He told me he was working now with “Youth With A Mission” (YWAM) in Amsterdam on the Ark (a small boat that was permanently docked on the bay). He invited me to visit him, then we parted. I was excited to have encountered him, and about the prospect of going to Amsterdam to visit YWAM. I made my way up to Amsterdam as soon as I was able, and wandered around it some. I liked Amsterdam, but it is one of the most sinful cities in the world. It is a "crossroads" for travelers going to various parts of Europe, and many youths come here. Drugs are easy to get, and so is sex. Sin abounds, but it is easy to talk to people about Jesus, and I found opportunities to do so in the public square and on the YWAM Ark. I was really excited about the possibility that God wanted me here and would open a place for me to stay. I had a very good talk with my friend aboard the Ark before returning to the EEBM base.

But upon returning there the Lord put into my mind the possibility of returning to the US through a letter I had received from a brother in the US in response to a letter I had written him asking him to pray with me about the matter. Actually I did not want to return to the US as the desire of my heart at that time was to remain In Europe. So I decided to spend some time in prayer and fasting to determine what God's will in the matter was. That turned out to be one of the most significant decisions of my life, and resulted in one of God's greatest lessons to me. He focused my attention on His Son's attitude as expressed in His prayer in the garden of Gethsemane.

“Yet not as I will, but as You will.” (Matt. 26:39, 42)

I came to realize during the fast that God wanted me to return to the US. In fact, He put joy in

my heart where there had been depression, and actual desire to return to the US. It was further confirmed when the brother at the Ark called me and told me that the vote on whether I should be allowed to join them there had not been favorable. So I made plans to return to the US, specifically to California.

A fellow coworker in EEBM suggested that I could pick up his car for him on the east coast of the US and drive it across the country to his parent's home. This gave me the opportunity to make stops to visit friends (from L'Abri, my sister in Ohio, etc) and to speak in a number of churches about the mission work I had been involved in. It was interesting to see how the Holy Spirit would work in these situations, and just who would respond to my message and inquire about how they could be involved personally. Eventually I arrived at my destination and dropped off my friend's car at his parent's home.

Back in California, I found lodging in an apartment complex filled with alcoholics, lesbians, druggies, etc. Figuring it was a fertile field for evangelism, I moved in. A sister who visited me told me she did not like coming there - it scared her. I told her, *"I feel right at home."* She replied, *"That's 'cause the Lord wants you here, big brother."* A few doors down from where I was on the third floor was a big alcoholic Navajo ex-marine. Soon after I moved in he attached himself to me as my friend. He would try to borrow money from me, and I would tell him, *"I never give money to an alcoholic. I will be glad to go with you to buy you groceries, if you need them."* There was a big grocery store just a short distance away, and he several times took me up on that, but often he would just become angry with me.

One day he came into my apartment and shouted at me, *"All you do is talk about Jesus!"* I smiled at him and replied, *"Thank you for the compliment."* He glared at me and then walked out. We would have very long talks together and while we talked he would draw. I was amazed at his wonderful ability to draw - especially people's faces. He was truly very gifted in this area, and he enjoyed doing it. I called him, "Chief." He seemed to have an iron constitution as his heavy drinking never seemed to affect him.

But after a while I began to start seeing the effects of a struggle going on in his life, and I knew that his rebellion against God was taking its toll. This went on until he became very weak and was taken to the hospital, but they sent him home, he told me, to die. One day when I walked into his apartment and he was laying in his bed, he weakly said to me, *"This is because of my rebellion against God, isn't it."* I told him, *"Jesus speaks of a Stone that whoever falls on it will be broken, and whoever it falls on will be crushed. (Matt. 21:44) But all you have to do is turn to Him and He will heal you."* He did that, God healed him and he went to live with his sister and her family and I never saw him again.

During my stay in these apartments, God involved me in a couple of His healing miracles. While attending MST I had become acquainted with a brother-in-Christ who was diagnosed as having terminal cancer. One day when I was going to visit him in the hospital I asked the Lord to show me when I arrived there if he desired for me to pray for him for healing. When I arrived, both he and his wife were there. While talking with them, I asked him if he wanted me to pray for him to

be healed. He at once sat up on the bed with a big smile and exuberantly said, "YES!" So I prayed for him. When I left the room, his wife followed me out the door. When we were a ways down the hall, she began admonishing me in a very strong voice that I had been wrong to pray for her husband's healing. *"It is his time to go be with the Lord,"* she told me angrily. She added that the pastor of their church had said that her husband's desire to live was as Hezekiah's sin in wanting to live when Isaiah the prophet had informed him that the Lord had said he would die (2 Kings 20:1; Isa. 38:1). She continued to castigate me in this manner for a while, and then turned on her heel and stomped back to her husband's room. I stood there totally shocked in unbelief at what I had heard for a time, then returned to my apartment.

While I was there, despondent and dazed from this unexpected encounter, my next-door neighbor knocked on the door, entered, sat down on a chair and looked pleadingly at me. As I looked back at him, and saw the look of abjection, despair - yet his eyes wanting a solution, I knew from our previous conversations what he was there for without his asking for it. *"You want me to pray for healing for you, don't you,"* I said. *"Yes,"* he answered. I sighed, and walked towards him. If someone had asked me if I had faith the size of a mustard seed in me at that moment, I would not have been able to reply. I was praying for this man only because he wanted me to do that. He had faith rooted in desperation, and believed I was his contact with a God who could heal him. He had told me that his lungs were badly burned from exposure to chemicals at the company for which he worked, that his wife had asked him to move out because she was losing her mind she said as a result of his severe asthmatic-like coughing each night when it appeared he was dying and she just couldn't stand it any more. When walking up the three flights of stairs to his

apartment, he had to stop, gasping for air literally at each step. So here he was, sitting before me as I laid my hands on him and softly prayed a simple prayer for his healing.

After he left, I promptly went to the phone and called a married couple I knew, Spirit-filled friends who I was certain would join me in prayer for my neighbor. I wanted the reassurance of their agreement with me in prayer. And they did, praying exuberantly for this man's healing - their prayer having a healing effect on my wounded spirit also. I didn't tell them what had happened earlier at the hospital. They were both Bible school graduates, and mature Christians - qualified for pastoral service, well-able to comment knowledgeably on what the woman had said, but I didn't feel capable of discussing it at this point. So I thanked them and hung up the phone. The next day my neighbor came bursting into my apartment. *"I ran up the stairs,"* he cried joyfully. *"I'm HEALED!"* But he had a question. *"When can my relationship with my wife be restored?"* he asked. I smiled. *"God can heal physical hurts instantly,"* I replied. *"Relationships are more complex and take longer. You and your wife could be back together within a month,"* I suggested. As it turned out, that was correct. He introduced me to his wife as he packed to leave. But he let me know at that time he believed that the help for his cure came from the doctors' medicine, to impress his wife he was not a religious fanatic, I suppose. I was shocked and sad to hear him say that, because I knew that if he did not give God the glory due Him, he could lose his healing and wind up worse than he began. But I held my peace and continued to pray for him, though I never saw him again or heard from him.

Shortly after praying for my neighbor, I was invited to attend a men's breakfast at the church of

the man with cancer for whom I had recently prayed. There were quite a few men attending, and at one point the man who invited me arose to make an announcement. He told the group that (at this point he mentioned the name of the man with cancer) had been found to have his cancer in remission and was sent home by the doctors. The men all applauded to hear the good news, but I had to wonder why they were doing that if their pastor had indeed held the opinion that the man with cancer was sinning as he apparently said Hezekiah did in wanting to stay alive when God had told him it was his time to die? But their positive reaction to the news appeared genuine, so I was comforted. However, six months later a sister who also was acquainted with the family of the brother I had prayed for came up to me and laughed in my face as she told me that he had died after all - the cancer had returned and claimed his life. I didn't reply. I supposed the brother's wife was as smugly satisfied with the situation as this sister evidently was. Christians can be very hard to figure out, I thought to myself. I can figure out an unbeliever any day of the week, but Christians can be hard to figure out.

Especially Christians in the US are hard to figure out. I found myself longing to be back in Europe, working with a mission that ministered to the brothers and sisters in the eastern European countries. The commitment to Christ there was so much stronger and more genuine than in the US – and God's presence also!

Chapter Eleven

Dancing Around God's Throne

Previously I mentioned the book, "Tortured For His Faith" By Haralon Popov that I had read in the Christian hotel in Châteaux d'Oex, Switzerland. In 1978, I attended a dinner at which Haralon Popov's son, Paul was present. Popov's mission was called "Evangelism to Communist Lands" (ECL). Now, it is named "Door of Hope International: (DOHI). At the dinner a presentation of the mission's work into the eastern European communist countries was made. I had a chance to talk at length with Paul Popov, and was eventually offered a position with the mission, the offices of which were located in Glendale, California. Initially, my work involved microfilming a garage full of records for the mission. Then I was sent up to Vancouver, Canada, where I attended Marineview Chapel. One evening one of the elders approached and informed me that Marineview would like to contribute financially to my missionary involvement. Thus began an involvement with that church that lasted for some time and for which I was very grateful. They informed me that it was their policy to spend one dollar on missions for every dollar they spent locally. For that, God blessed them by bringing so many people through their church doors that they had to establish daughter churches to accommodate them.

It was during this period of time that I paid a last visit to my dad before he died. He had retired to the area of Grant's Pass, Oregon and I made arrangements to take a Greyhound bus to visit him on Easter weekend. Five months after my conversion in July 1969, God had told me to write my dad about my born-again experience and since then we had been in almost constant touch. There

had been many letters exchanged and many involved conversations that had taken place. It was very good to have this communication with my father because while I was growing up we had very little of it - and I remember my sister remarking soon after our mother's death that she had even less than I did. But my dad was a very stubborn man, set in his beliefs - and his beliefs concerning the Bible were very weird indeed. He was a self-professed "Skeptic." I once asked him why he wasn't skeptical of his skepticism but he didn't answer that. Once, before I was born, he insisted that mom accompany him while visiting a spiritual medium to get a "reading." I could tell from mom's diary that she didn't like that, but dad was quite impressed with what the medium told him. That was the extent of his dabbling into the occult, though my parents did have an Ouija board and that was sometimes brought out. I think my mom saw it mainly as a "social interaction" item, in the same category as playing cards.

But that Easter weekend I last saw my father alive proved to be very special indeed. Though my many communications with him had seemed to be not making much progress, he displayed a spirit of gentleness and openness at this time that I found truly touching. Our talks were more communicative, and he shared with me that he had made the rounds of the local pastors and talked with them. I was of course amazed at this and rejoiced. Then he remarked to me that I had never told him the Gospel! I was totally flabbergasted at this as I had tried every which way to communicate it over the years, but he was always so bound up in his weird way of thinking it never got through. However, apparently our prayers had finally worked enough so that he had heard it at last from a local pastor! So I rejoiced instead of arguing with him - because his mind had been closed to the Gospel before as mine had been to the Bible for many years. That

weekend he suggested we attend both an "Easter sunrise" service and then afterwards a regular church service. It was the first time I remember attending church with him since I was a boy. It was a very special event. When the time came for my departure and we were waiting for the arrival of the Greyhound bus, dad became quite emotional and said to me, *"I don't think I'll ever see you again!"* I immediately replied to him, *"Believe in Jesus!"* And he as immediately said, *"Oh I do, I do!!!"* The bus then arrived and we said *"Goodbye."* He was right though, for that was the last I saw of him on this earth. My sister believes strongly that he is in heaven, and so do I.



Upon returning to Glendale I was informed that I would be going overseas to ECL's Austria base to join another American already there - "Jacob." The overseas tour began in 1980 by escorting three female students from Christ For The Nations (CFNI) on a trip into the east. One of them stayed on after the trip was ended to become a worker with ECL, but the other two were so freaked by their subsequent trip into Czechoslovakia that we had to return them to the US.

I made several trips into the East with Jacob - a young man fervent in his dedication to the Lord and remarkably gifted with the ability to pick up languages quickly. On one trip into Romania I had taken with me a little handbook on Romanian phrases that I had purchased in the US. Jacob asked to borrow it, and studied it as we drove. By the time we had reached our destination in Romania, Jacob surprised us by being able to carry on a simple conversation in Romanian with the pastor we visited there. My, how I envied him! I had to struggle so with foreign languages. But Jacob and I got along well and became good friends.

As we traveled along the Romanian countryside, admiring its beauty, and the colorful attractiveness of the houses in the villages we drove through, many times young boys would run out to greet us and wave. Sometimes we would stop briefly, handing them sticks of gum and telling them in Romanian, "*God loves you,*" and "*Jesus loves you.*" The gum was actually a wonderful present for them as it was not available in their stores nor could they probably have afforded it, being so poor under the yoke of Soviet oppression.



For example, a store I had walked into there only had some canned goods on the shelves, no fresh fruit or vegetables at all. Many of the shelves were bare. As I had passed another such store, A man came out, clutching a bag. But then he lost his grip on it, and out spilled some oranges. He grabbed them off the sidewalk as if they were precious gems. Obviously he had purchased them “under the counter” as fresh fruit could not be found on store shelves anywhere in Romania. That is a scene I will never forget, especially as I visit our supermarkets and see the many mounds of fresh vegetables and fruit in the produce department that we so take for granted. Even so many years later, the abundance of food so easily available to us in the US never ceases to amaze me, as I remember the poverty I have encountered in other nations. California itself agriculturally outproduces some nations of the world.

During one trip we had the task of taking in a 16mm motion picture projector and a Moody film into Romania. Our chosen route there took us through Czechoslovakia and Hungary. The projector was too large to hide so we just placed it openly on a seat in the camper by a dining table and prayed over it and the rest of our cargo hidden in the camper's recesses. At the Czech border, the guard climbed into the camper, smiling affably as he looked around, glanced at the projector, and only remarked that we would have some trouble with that at the Hungarian border, then exited the camper and we drove on. Jacob and I thought that remarkable as we knew the Czech border was generally tougher than the Hungarian.

At the latter border, we had no trouble with inspection, and passed easily into Hungary, as we did also into Romania. We had some tense moments making the delivery in Romania, but completed

our mission successfully and began the return trip with the now empty van. At the last inspection point before entering the "free" West, the inspection officer decided we must be indeed be hiding something in our camper and took much time inspecting it. Jacob and I could not help smiling as God had given us grace while we had the cargo, and now when the van was completely empty and there was nothing to find, an inspecting officer was "suspicious." Well, let him be as suspicious as he wants, we thought, for God has brought us through and even if he were to strip the vehicle apart completely he would find nothing. We laughed as we drove off after the thoroughly frustrated officer finally waved us on.

Jacob's time overseas came to an end when his home church in the US financed the trip of his fiancée to Austria to make sure he came back. He finally gave in to her pleadings and returned to the US to become a married man. So I was left alone in Austria as ECL's "one-man office" there. In addition to making trips into the east, I had the responsibility to review applications forwarded to me by the Glendale, California office of those interested in becoming involved in our summer programs. I had living quarters in Spittal an der Drau, a picturesque village in eastern Austria. The church I attended there was pastored by a man who, with his wife, had been a Nazi at the time of Hitler. Now both had given their lives to Christ. I was also able to attend local meetings of the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship and also fellowship with a missionary living a few miles away.

Nevertheless I spent long hours crying out to the Lord about an apathetic church back home in southern California (that shall remain unnamed here out of respect for it and its pastor). Before I

had come to Austria, I had spoken to the home groups within it that were responsible for praying for the countries and Christians here that I was visiting in the east. Close to ten home groups were being supplied information by me, and the only responses I ever got in all the time I was in Austria was from the leader of the home group praying for Russia and an associate pastor (son-in-law of the head pastor, now with the Lord) who had interviewed me before I left. I exchanged some very long letters discussing the situation in depth with the associate pastor who - along with the home group leader - was aware of the problem.

But the long hours spent in agonizing prayer over this unfortunate situation was rewarded when I returned home and saw that this church was beginning to send out missionaries from within its congregation and at the same time committing itself to stay in constant touch with them through prayer and correspondence. So I had cause to rejoice.

Taken from a letter I wrote in 1983:

"...the third chapter of Daniel figures heavily in any talk I give to the churches or Christian groups (in the West) about our persecuted brothers and sisters in the communist countries. Especially when I give illustrations about the courage of Christian youngsters. When they (and their elders) refuse to participate in the God-denying practices of the State, they know exactly what they are doing; they are in effect saying exactly what those three in Daniel 3 said so many hundreds of years ago: 'We will not serve any but the One True Living God....' They refuse to bow the knee before the anti-christ spirit displayed in such ways as making Lenin into a god. For example, there are gigantic statues and pictures of Lenin displayed in exactly the same spirit as

Nebuchadnezzar displayed his statues. There is a sign in the U.S.S.R. which has a picture (silhouette) of Lenin with the caption: 'He lived, he lives, he will live forever.' There are songs sung of him (played to very beautiful spiritual sounding music), the lyrics of which state: 'Lenin lives in the fields, streams, hills, (etc.) - He lives in my heart.' Sickening - but the Christian children know exactly what they are doing when they refuse to bow to the authorities and sing these songs despite the terrible pressures that are put on them. The West has been slow to learn this, but it nonetheless is happening because of what the Holy Spirit is doing."

One day, walking along a street in Spittal, I found myself spontaneously speaking in tongues.

For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries. (1 Cor 14:2)

When I asked the Lord about it, He replied there was a condition of spiritual darkness in this place I was not fully aware of. Then He allowed it to manifest and I was thrust into intense spiritual battle and intercession for many days. Every morning when I arose, the enemy would immediately begin attacking me and I would be plunged into a spiritual wrestling match for an hour or two before he would retreat till the next morning and I could continue to pursue the day's activities. God used these encounters to teach me about spiritual warfare in a very practical manner.

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. (Eph. 6:12-13)

This finally culminated one evening in my tiny attic room when I told the enemy his presence was no longer possible for him there and ordered him to leave for good. At the time I was reading John 15, and the enemy was trying to interfere by placing unclean thoughts in my head so when I came upon verse 7 and read it I became thoroughly fed up with the enemy's machinations and said, *"Lord, your Word says that if I abide in You and Your Words abide in me, I can ask whatever I want and it will be done."* Then I addressed the demonic power that had been harassing me, *"You must leave right now, in Jesus' name,"* I commanded - and pointed to the one small window in the room. God put in my mind the remembrance of the fact that when Elisha had instructed Joash to strike the ground with the arrows, he had struck only three times and Elisha had angrily reprimanded him that he would not now utterly defeat his enemy (2 Kings 13:15-19). So I pumped my left arm seven times toward the window commanding the demonic presence to leave, and I was gratified to sense it doing that, feeling a *"whoosh,"* as it departed for good. I returned to my Bible reading, grateful for the peace I now felt.

The next morning when I awoke I immediately was aware of the divine presence of my heavenly Father in my little room and asked the Holy Spirit what was happening. He brought to my mind John 4:23 -

"But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him,"

and impressed upon me that the Father had come "seeking" me to worship Him. I jumped out of bed and immediately and spontaneously began worshiping God, singing and dancing joyfully around the little attic room. In the days that followed, I discovered that God had juxtaposed my

room with His heavenly throne room. I spent glorious hours dancing, singing, worshipping literally around His throne in company with the four living creatures and angels. God welcomed me into His heavenly presence every morning I awoke - seeking me to worship Him. From that time on, no matter where God locates me, I have found that as I worship Him I am able to experience the same sensation of actually being in His throne room, joining in worship with all the others there.

I came to understand that what was happening was because of not only the spiritual struggle that was going on in the eastern European countries in which I was involved - but also right there in Austria, a very beautiful country but one with profound spiritual darkness (it had after all birthed Adolph Hitler). I was told in fact that prisoners of war had been housed in Spittal's vicinity during World War Two and had been deliberately starved to death. I also learned more during these days not only about the very personal aspects of intercession and spiritual warfare, but its application to localities and nations. At one point, I was able to attend a week-long seminar on spiritual warfare in Sweden.

These were days of intense, gut-wrenching involvement, not the least of which was the prolonged time I spent in agony interceding regarding the horrible apathy of the church in the west - particularly in the US. Oh, the feelings of loneliness, abandonment and isolation I had! But the intercession and warfare never ends, not until Jesus returns.

On one trip I was instructed to make contact with a certain believer about whom it was said that

he was mishandling money and also perhaps collaborating with the police. I talked with several other believers in the area who were acquainted with him, trying to gather more information.

When I finally determined to attempt contacting him, I knew it would be risky as it was known the police were watching him. But I very prayerfully began approaching where I knew he lived.

The first attempt was during the day, and I prayed, *"Lord, if you don't want me to contact him, then please close the door and make it impossible for me to make contact with him."* It was a relatively clear day, as I remember, but as I proceeded along a walkway toward the apartment building where the man and his family lived, it began to snow. It continued to snow harder as I walked on until the snowfall was so thick that I could hardly see my hand in front of my face. At that point I could not see well enough to know if I was going in the right direction nor recognize the apartment building the contact lived in. So I said, *"It may be, Lord, You do not want me to make contact with him at this time."* And I turned back, walking in the direction I'd come.

Immediately the snowfall slowed and eventually ceased and the sun became visible again as I continued back.

I decided to go into a nearby hotel to sit and rest and quietly meditate and pray in the lobby. As I was there, praying in the Spirit, I looked around and noticed suddenly that a Christian gospel song was being broadcast in English over the hotel speaker system. At least that was what I was hearing. I knew this was not possible as the music was controlled by the State, and they would do no such thing. I had a wild moment of considering getting up and asking the receptionist at the desk if she heard it, but thought the better of it - noticing that everyone in the room was

continuing to go about what they were doing oblivious to what I was hearing. I realized that God meant it for me, only I was hearing that song - to reassure me that He was with me and encourage me that He had sovereign control over the situation.

That night I decided to try again to make contact. This time I made it to his apartment door, but as I raised my hand to knock I heard men's voices arguing from inside and the Holy Spirit warned me, saying, "*Police!*" I didn't knock, but instead immediately departed and decided to try no further to make contact.

Several years later, while living in the Monterey area of California, I was informed that a Romanian family was scheduled to minister in a local church. Upon arrival at the church, I found that this was the family with which I had unsuccessfully tried to make contact that I told of above. I introduced myself to them after the service, and we had a wonderfully joyous time of fellowship. I shared with them about my attempt to make contact with them in Romania and they readily agreed that I had done correctly in my final decision not to do so. I was so touched by the Lord's goodness in this, especially because of the misunderstanding and accusations due to rumors spread by the enemy among Christians. The Lord showed me that all judgment in the matter was to be left to Him - and that His mercy triumphs over judgment (James 2:13).

At the same time as I had tried to make the contact above in Romania, I spoke with a dear brother who described privately to me how he had been led prayerfully by the Holy Spirit to talk to strangers in parks and other public places about their need for salvation - leaving confidently

to God whether any of these people were informers or secret police. He understood the consequences clearly - that he could at any moment be arrested and taken away, possibly never seeing his family again. But at that time he told me that with God's help he had been successful in leading several individuals to the Lord, and they had joined his church. As I left him I had to wonder at the imaginary "fears" that kept us Christians in the West from sharing the gospel and the very real fears that our brothers and sisters in the east dealt with. I praised God for this brother, and felt honored to be able to help him in whatever way I could.

We were told that circumstances were getting better for Christians in Romania, but I wondered privately about that and was suspicious of the increasing "freedom" granted by the authorities. These suspicions were later confirmed when it was seen that "freedom" was being allowed to increase for the Christians so that some of the "fish" would surface and they could be more easily caught. There were widespread arrests and general harassment. Shortly after the arrests began, I made a long trip into several countries, finding that in Romania the Christians were moving quickly to consolidate their forces in order to repair the damage that was being done by the authorities and continue their underground operations successfully. My heart was very much stirred upon seeing their enthusiasm and commitment remain undiminished. But then - what else would we expect from our courageous brothers and sisters?

Another time I needed to arrange the transport of some Christian literature and teaching cassettes into Hungary. I could not find any other mission to help in this, so it became necessary for me to take the supplies in personally. A teaching session was scheduled in Budapest with teachers,

former Hungarians - now US Citizens, coming from the US to participate. It was not a large load, and I felt the only option open to me was to attempt to hide it in the car and take it across the border. My previous trip into Hungary had been very easy, with no real searching of the car being done. This time though I was warned that things were tightening at the border and several vehicles had been confiscated. But I knew that in any case the trip had to be made and the teaching material delivered by a set date. So I figured and, putting the materials under the back seat of the car, off I went.

Oh how I wished I had someone there in Spittal I could come into a "unity of mind and heart" with concerning these things. But I had searched fruitlessly for prayer-partners to join me concerning work into the East. In any case though, I knew that God was sovereign in each and every situation. At the Hungarian border I could see that each vehicle was being scrupulously checked and that I would surely be caught unless the Lord intervened. I even considered briefly the possibility of turning the car around and driving back, but discarded that almost as soon as I thought of it - I would just draw attention to myself. When my turn came, the literature and cassettes were discovered and confiscated. I was told by the inspecting officer that since they had been hidden they were considered contraband - if they had been openly displayed they would have passed notice. I knew this was a lie (the commanding officer of the post later told me that Bibles were considered to be the same as pornographic literature, and it was illegal to bring them into the country). So I replied to the inspecting officer that I would be glad to display them openly if he would give me official papers verifying that. He just looked at me and said nothing. I was eventually taken inside a building where the confiscated material was being examined

closely. The officer I was directed to had me sit down and then put one of the cassettes into a cassette player and turned up the volume for the office to hear. The cassette started with a song, *"Just A Closer Walk With Thee,"* sung beautifully in English by an unidentified woman singer. As I sat and listened (the officer continuing to look through other materials laid on his desk) I could hardly keep the tears of joy from streaming down my face. It was as if the Lord Himself was there reassuring me with the promise inherent in the song. The officer amazingly allowed the song to play almost to its end (he had wanted to see what was on the tape) before turning it off. I was then given a blank sheet of paper and a pencil and told I needed to write down the names and addresses of the people I intended to contact in Hungary. I didn't have to worry about deciding not to do that as the Lord made my mind mercifully blank about that information and ten or fifteen minutes later I was led back for interrogation. The officer who led me there did not look surprised that the paper was blank.

But the commanding officer he took me to and told me to be seated before was not at all pleased. Through an interpreter he gruffly told me, *"As a Christian you must tell me the truth."* I was very well-prepared for that statement as I had spent much personal time in prayerful Bible study concerning the subject of what exactly as Christians we must tell the enemy - especially when we know that they intend to use the information they learn to harm God's people and try to thwart His plans. I replied simply, *"As a Christian, the only truth I am required to tell you is the truth of the Gospel. Do you want me to do that?"* When this was translated (amazingly, the translator was smiling!) the officer angrily replied, *"No!"* and did not ask me any more questions. I was allowed to keep the vehicle and even continue on my trip to Budapest. As I drove away I

thought how incredible this unfortunate incident had turned out - the vehicle could have easily been confiscated and I could have been refused admittance to Hungary. So I sang praises to God as I drove on, though at the same time keeping a watch out to see if I would be followed. I wasn't.

Of course the people I was scheduled to meet in Budapest were very disappointed that I was unable to deliver the material they needed to do the teaching. As a matter of fact, upon reaching my hotel I found the enemy had dumped a feeling of depression on me "big time." I knew I needed to find a worship service going on in some nearby church to combat this demonic attack of depression, since I could not exactly hold an impromptu worship service in my hotel room - being on a covert mission. So I started walking, asking the Lord to guide my steps as He had during my trip down the mountain in the Sierras back in California. Within half an hour I found myself in a church joining in a Hungarian worship service. I could not of course understand the language they were singing in, but that was not necessary as the attack of depression dissolved and disappeared within minutes.

When my stay in Hungary came to an end, I returned to the border crossing I had been interrogated at, but crossed without incident. However, just a very short distance down the road in Austria the car I was driving came to an abrupt halt. I had been hearing sounds in it for some time that had me concerned, but when I would ask others riding with me, they would say they could hear nothing. When I had started out initially from Spittal toward Budapest during my current trip I had noticed the sounds and had deliberately stopped the car by the roadside and

asked the Lord if I should proceed. He had indicated I should trust Him and throughout my stay in Hungary I had experienced no trouble with the car. Now when I was back safely in Austria again, suddenly the car could not be driven. When I pressed down the accelerator, the engine roared but the car remained stopped. So I got out of the car and looked under it. Sure enough, the drive shaft was resting on the ground. The problem I had been hearing all this time concerned a faulty u-joint that had to be replaced. My car was stopped right by the entrance to a stately looking small mansion, which was the only abode nearby.

While I was wondering what to do about my dilemma, a man walked out from the house I was parked in front of. When I told him what the problem was, he immediately volunteered to give me a tow. When I gratefully assented, he backed out his shiny late model Mercedes, we hooked up my car to his and he towed me about fifteen miles into town to the Mercedes agency where he arranged to have the mission's car I was driving repaired. After I thanked him, he drove away.

"Thank you, Lord," I said, "For handling that so well."

One of my last trips into the East before returning to the US involved a week-long teaching seminar at a farm in Czechoslovakia. The pastor at whose farm we were meeting declared the Scripture God had given him for the week was, *"O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD."* (Jer. 22:29) It was an incredible week, culminating in a Sunday worship service with an "underground church" meeting at a farmhouse. They had to change their location every week to keep hidden from informers. The farmhouse was packed with people jammed into rooms and up stairs. I was given the opportunity to preach, and while I did a man sitting right in front of me

stared with obvious fascination to my right and I wondered what he was seeing. At the end of the service he came up to me and said, "*Did you know there was an angel standing next to you?*" – Wow! I was sort of jealous that I was not able also to see the angel guarding me, but later came to realize that this must have been the “man” to whom I had given a glass of water ten years ago. But I was very glad to hear the news, and comforted by his presence.

A visiting teacher from Sweden felt so awed by the experience he was having that he removed his shoes, being impressed that he was on "*holy ground.*" We were told that Christians all over the country had been praying for this week of teaching for three months – twenty-four hours per day before it took place. There was such intense, vibrant enthusiastically worshipful joy during the entire week. I was very glad to see that "revival" had come to the homeland of my maternal heritage. Unfortunately, I later was told that the pastor was apparently arrested due to the fumbling efforts of another mission. This was particularly unsettling news as we felt impressed by the Spirit not to pay a return visit.

During the winter I made a very lengthy trip into the East alone, being thankful God kept me safe despite one close call in my car on an icy road when my car spun out of control before an oncoming bus. I was thankful for God's angels watching over me and the careful driving of the bus driver. Upon returning to Austria I picked up a German friend, then drove all the way to Denmark. I had previously traveled to Sweden several times to visit another mission office, once to attend a seminar given by on "Spiritual Warfare," another time to attend an ECL meeting. But this time we traveled to Copenhagen, Denmark to attend an International meeting of the Full

Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship (FGBFI).

The real highlight of the trip for my friend and me was meeting a young woman from Poland in a walk by the sea, witnessing to her about Christ and telling her about a young man also from Poland who was a featured speaker at the FGBFI meetings, and inviting her to come. She became so excited that she told a taxi driver also, he went and got his family, they all came to the meetings, met the man from Poland and in the process got saved! There I also met a brother-in-Christ who told me of his many missionary adventures into various parts of the world. I decided to resign from ECL and go with this brother to Finland where we had hoped the Lord would open a door for us to minister.

But I later learned from the Lord that I had been hasty in doing this and in fact the "door" we had hoped would open in Finland remained closed (due in part it seemed to a surprising lack of vision and trust in the Lord on the part of some of the Christians there). However, I remember the hospitality of the Finns, some of their strange ways, and particularly a very wild ride well over 100 mph in a Volvo on a narrow two-lane country road to keep a dinner date with an attractive blond. I remember being in the rear seat and crawling down behind the driver's seat during the ride, while calling mightily on the name of the Lord. We did make it there without mishap, had a nice dinner, and then conversed at some length in the parking lot afterwards. I was frustrated because it was all in Finnish, which of course I could not understand, and I was asking the Lord why could not He give me an interpretation as if they were speaking in "tongues" when the blond lady turned to me and told me in English that I was to speak in tongues and she would

give the interpretation. I was flabbergasted at that, but began speaking in tongues and she did commence to give an interpretation - in FINNISH!!! I resolved never again to try to tell the Lord what He should be doing.

We returned to Sweden, from where I phoned Paul Popov and told him of my decision to resign. He received it with surprise, but acquiesced, and I drove to Austria to make final plans for returning to the US. Later I would have to apologize to Paul after the Lord reproached me. God had not told me to resign and so what I did was not in His perfect will.

Nevertheless, the door had closed on my further involvement in ministry into the eastern European communist countries, although lessons I had learned would greatly influence my Christian walk and I would continue to be burdened for Christians in countries of intense persecution.

Chapter Twelve

The Way of the Cross

I have decided to follow Jesus

I have decided to follow Jesus

I have decided to follow Jesus

No turning back, no turning back.

The world behind me, the Cross before me

The world behind me, the Cross before me

The world behind me, the Cross before me

No turning back, no turning back.

Tho' none go with me, still I will follow

Tho' none go with me, still I will follow

Tho' none go with me, still I will follow

No turning back, no turning back.

Will you decide now to follow Jesus?

Will you decide now to follow Jesus?

Will you decide now to follow Jesus?

No turning back, no turning back.

(Composer unknown/Folk melody from India)

“But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

(Gal 6:14)

I previously pointed out what appeared to me is the radical difference between churches here in the West and those in countries where Christians are intensely persecuted because of their witness and violence is committed against them. Here in the US, Christians try to adapt their Christianity to their “comfort zones,” attempting to be part of society rather than witness against it and warn of God's coming judgment. We would rather concentrate on enjoying the temporal benefits of the richest, most successful country in the history of the world than submit ourselves in complete obedience to the eternal purposes of God's will. We pick and choose those verses in the Bible that in our estimation most greatly benefit us personally in the society in which we live. In fact, I have heard many say, *“How wonderful it is to be an “American citizen!”* How different this is from the circumstances our brothers and sisters live in who suffer violent persecution and who realize that choosing to live for Christ means alienation from the society in which they live and from its temporal benefits.

Interestingly, I have never heard any Christian in the US say, *“How wonderful it is to be a citizen of God's heavenly kingdom!”* Or. *“How wonderful it is to be a citizen of the New Jerusalem!”*

*“All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, **they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one.***

Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them....

Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire. (Heb. 11:13-16; 12:28-29)

*“Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and **He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us...**” (2 Cor. 5:18-20)*

We are constantly talking about “our position in Christ.” Yet we only talk about it as “six year olds in a toy store,” or in the erroneous thinking that the US is the “promised land” and God means for us to possess it! How foolish! How short-sighted! In the Old Testament, God told man.

“Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it” (Gen 1:28)

In the New Testament, Jesus told His disciples,

*"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. **Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* (Matt 28:18-20)

Again we must ask ourselves: *"What is our priority while we are here on earth?"* Did Christ die for us so that we might better enjoy the benefits of being an American? I once heard a Christian man say about his car as we were driving in it with him, *"This car is a witness of the Lord's blessing."* Perhaps it was to him. But the Bible does not tell us that we are to boast in the blessings we receive from Him, **but to boast that we know Him.**

Some boast in chariots and some in horses,

But we will boast in the name of the LORD, our God. (Ps. 20:7)

and

In God we have boasted all day long,

And we will give thanks to Your name forever. (Ps. 44:8)

It seems the main trouble we Christians in the US are having is refusing to die to our own self-centered interests, and instead to acknowledge God's purpose for our lives and to cooperate with Him in the accomplishment of His purpose.

God's purpose for us all is stated in Romans 8:29 (Note Genesis 1:26-27):

*“For those God foreknew he also predestined to be **conformed to the likeness of his Son**, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.”*

In order for God’s purpose to be realized in each of us, there must first be the death of all desires that are not glorifying to God – all our “worldly desires” (Titus 2:12), those of the “flesh,” or “self.”

God’s Word tells us that each of us, because of Adam’s sin, is born **spiritually dead**, separated from God (Rom. 5:14-18; 1 Cor.15:21-22). The Word further informs us that our old self was crucified with Christ so that our sinful body might be destroyed, that we might no longer be enslaved to sin (Rom. 6:6). Since the Bible goes into quite a bit of detail about the fact that God has united us with Christ in His death, we must understand the reason for this and the necessity to cooperate willingly in what God has done and what He is doing:

*“...for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die;
but if by the Spirit you are **putting to death** the deeds of the body, you will live.”*

(Rom 8:13)

*“Now those who belong to Christ Jesus
have **crucified the flesh** with its passions and desires.” (Gal 5:24)*

As F. J. Huegel in his book, “Bone of His Bone,” states:

“Have you taken your place with Christ in His death? By an act of faith you must lay hold of that death as your death; you must place Christ’s Cross between yourself and

'the body of sin.' You must learn to refuse on the basis of your crucifixion the life of nature, the so-called 'flesh life.' You must take your stand with Christ on Calvary ground and each time the 'self-life' would assert itself, say: 'In Christ I died. In His name I refuse.' This done, the Holy Spirit will bear witness to your faith and set you free, and keep you free." (1)

So in the apostle Paul's letter to the Romans we are informed that,

"....our old self was crucified with Him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin." (Rom. 6:6)

Paul further instructs us

"....in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and...be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth." (Eph 4:22-24)

*"But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh,
to gratify its desires."* (Rom 13:14)

Daily we should pray God's Word as help, for example:

"By Your mercies, God, I want to present my body a living and holy sacrifice, made acceptable to You through the finished work of Your Son, for this is my reasonable service of worship. I

want not to be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of my mind by Your Holy Spirit to prove what Your will is, that which is good, acceptable and perfect in Your sight.”

(Based on Rom. 12:1-2)

And also we can pray with Paul:

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

Jesus told His hearers,

"If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?" (Luke 9:23-25)

It is God's intention that His Son be manifested through each of us, individually and corporately as Christ's Body. But only death to any desires that are not rooted in **knowing God and wanting to please Him, doing His will** instead of ours (Matt. 6:33) will allow that to happen. He tells us that we must **deny** ourselves (if, as has been shown above, we are born spiritually dead and God has united us with Christ's death on the cross - why should it be so hard for us to understand that we need to "deny" that which is **dead?**), take our cross (not our "mother-in-law," but the symbol of that by which we died), and follow Christ – who is the Source of resurrection life, and who

can only be manifested through us by our **yielding ourselves to what God has done**, acknowledging ourselves **dead to sin** and yielding ourselves to God's Holy Spirit residing within us who can make real in and through us what God has done in and through His Son.

*For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; **for he who has died is freed from sin**. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. **Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.** (Rom 6:5-11)*

If we submit ourselves to the desires of our flesh (which has been crucified and is dead), then the result is to continue to be under the sentence of the condemnation to death that the flesh is. This is hostility (enmity) towards God, and cannot of course please Him. But if God's Holy Spirit dwells in us, then Christ is in us, and though our bodies are dead because of sin, our spirits are alive because of righteousness in Christ, and He who raised Christ from the dead will also give us life. Therefore, if we live according to the desires of our flesh we will die, but if by the Spirit **we put to death the deeds of our body** we will live. (Read Rom. 8:5-15)

We must

*“....continue to work out (our) salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in (us) to will and to act **according to His good purpose.**” (Phil 2:12-13)*

Jesus cannot be seen in us nor can He work through us, unless we deny (die to) that which is dead and yield ourselves to that which is alive. We must yield ourselves to the purpose for which God has redeemed us, and sanctified us. This is truly the purpose of “salvation” – if we define it any other way, we are wrong, continuing in sin.

*“We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, **so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed** in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, **so that his life may be revealed** in our mortal body.” (2 Cor. 4:10-12)*

Our most fervent desire always should be that Jesus Himself would be manifested in each of us and the fragrance of His life would be imparted to those around us. (2 Cor. 2:14-16) This can only come about through our **intimate personal knowledge of Him**, participating in His death, and putting our hand in His to join with Him in the work He is doing, so that we can truthfully say with Paul the apostle,

*“**I know** Whom I have believed....” (2 Tim. 1:12)*

When we insist on focusing on such subjects as “prosperity” we are either ignoring or not understanding God's will for us. The lives of Jesus and His apostles should be the examples by which we determine to live our own lives, as we

“...fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame...” (Heb 12:2)

We should also take up our cross obediently and follow in His footsteps.

“...he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.” (Matt 10:38)

and

“Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.” (Luke 14:27)

Our brothers and sisters who are subjected to violent persecution because of their witness for Christ can easily say,

*“But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, **so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.** For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, **so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body.** So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.” (2 Cor 4:7-12)*

“But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life.” (2 Cor 2:14-16)

Let us not disgrace or shame or dishonor our Lord by putting our focus selfishly on that which is not worthy of Him.. Instead of being “six year olds” in a toy store, let us not shrink back from taking up our cross in obedience to His command, having our eyes fixed on that which is eternal, not temporal.

“But the just shall live by faith [My righteous servant shall live by his conviction respecting man's relationship to God and divine things, and holy fervor born of faith and conjoined with it]; and if he draws back and shrinks in fear, My soul has no delight or pleasure in him.

But our way is not that of those who draw back to eternal misery (perdition) and are utterly destroyed, but we are of those who believe [who cleave to and trust in and rely on God through Jesus Christ, the Messiah] and by faith preserve the soul.” (Heb 10:38-39 AMP)

If we feel that we are not experiencing the “prosperity” in our life that we think we should, it is probably because we are jealous of others who appear to be prospering. If that is so, and we should be ruthlessly honest with ourselves concerning this matter, then we need to deal with this the same way we do with unforgiveness: confess it and give it to God. Actually, if we would just obey God and truly “*Seek first His kingdom...*” and be content with our needs being met, then our flesh would not rear its ugly head and bother us as much as it does. But especially here in the US, it seems we have a childish, self-centered desire to have more than we need and God owes it to us!

A woman in church told us, “*I want a jet plane such as Kenneth Copeland and Jesse Duplantis*

have.” I replied, “Well, but do you have a ministry like they do for which a jet plane would be useful?” “What does that matter?” she replied. She felt that just being a child of God entitled her to having a jet plane – or any other “toy” her heart desired! (Ps. 37:4) That is the way it is with so many believers in the US who feel they are “entitled” to whatever they want and if “Big Daddy” government cannot or will not give it to them, God surely must!

"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." John 17:21

If you are going through a solitary way, read John 17, it will explain exactly why you are where you are - Jesus has prayed that you may be one with the Father as He is. Are you helping God to answer that prayer, or have you some other end for your life? **Since you became a disciple you cannot be as independent as you used to be.**

The purpose of God is not to answer our prayers, but by our prayers we come to discern the mind of God, and this is revealed in John 17. There is one prayer God must answer, and that is the prayer of Jesus - *"that they may be one, even as We are One."* Are we as close to Jesus Christ as that?

God is not concerned about our plans; He does not say - Do you want to go through this bereavement; this upset? **He allows these things for His own purpose.** The things we are going through are either making us sweeter, better, nobler men and women; or they are making us more captious and fault-finding, more insistent upon our own way. The things that happen either make us fiends, or they make us saints; it depends entirely upon the relationship we are in to God. If we say - *"Thy will be done,"* we get the consolation

of John 17, the consolation of knowing that our Father is working according to His own wisdom. When we understand what God is after we will not get mean and cynical. Jesus has prayed nothing less for us than absolute oneness with Himself as He was one with the Father. Some of us are far off it, and yet God will not leave us alone until we *are* one with Him, because Jesus has prayed that we may be. (Emphasis Mine)(2)

*Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines,
though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food,
though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls,
yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior.*

*The Sovereign LORD is my strength; He makes my feet like the feet of a deer,
He enables me to go on the heights. (Hab 3:17-19)*

The apostle Paul put it this way:

“I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.” (Phil 4:11-13)

Ali, a shopkeeper in Iran, was given a disk of the JESUS film by a Christian brother. After watching the film, Ali realized there was much difference between Jesus and the Islamic prophets. He got a New Testament and started reading it enthusiastically. Through reading and watching the JESUS film, he came to know about Jesus and gave

his life to Him.

Ali later joined a house church and grew in his faith. He began to share the gospel with friends and family, and some of them also came to follow Jesus. Other family members were not happy with Ali's choice and began to make his life difficult. Ali's wife left him, taking his children. Yet, Ali's faith never wavered.

An Islamic leader in the city told Ali's relatives, *“Now that you have not reached any conclusion through opposing Ali's Christian faith, it is best if you start showing love to him and maybe this is the way you might be able to draw him back to Islam.”* His relatives did their best to love Ali, but nothing could break Ali away from knowing Christ and living in His power.

Finally at a family gathering, one relative told Ali they would accept him as a Christian and that they respected his Christian faith. *“But we have a question to ask you. What has caused you to be so firm in your Christian faith despite all the opposition you have faced?”*

Ali sensed his chance. By accepting the suffering and persecution, he had earned the opportunity to talk to his family about his Lord. He began to share:

“Whatever man does in this world is for four purposes. The first purpose is to gain

money. People do anything they can to gain more money. You all know that since I have become a Christian not only have I not received any money, but according to the command of the Word of God, I have to give my tithe to the church too.

“The second purpose in everyone's life is to reach a high position and be well known. You know that since I have become a Christian, from the world's point of view, I have not gained any position and I have even lost many of my relatives and friends. I have been rejected by many people who I used to be in touch with before my Christian faith. Therefore, I did not become a Christian to gain a position or more friends and to be well known.

“The third purpose of everyone's life is to get married. Once someone falls in love...they do anything to get the attention of that person, even compromise their beliefs. When I became a Christian, my wife and children left me, but I remained faithful to them hoping that one day they would come back to me.

“The fourth purpose of everyone's life is to have a good job. You all know that since I became a Christian, no one came to my shop to buy things from me because everyone considered me an unclean person. As a result, I lost my job. I have had many financial difficulties. So you can see, I did not become a Christian in order to get a high paid job. I even lost the job I had.

“Neither money, nor position, nor wife, nor job have been the main reasons I have become a Christian. Go and search to see what has been the main reason for my Christian faith, that I have willing to sacrifice so many things in my life in order to gain.”

Ali's relatives answered him, *“We see that none of those reasons have been your motive to become a Christian. So what has been the main motive?”*

Ali opened his Bible to Romans 8:35-39 and began to read,

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Then He told his family:

“The love of God has been the highest motive of my life in following Jesus. I am willing to sacrifice anything I have in my life for this great love. Before I came to know the Lord, I had everything from the world's point of view, but in reality I had nothing. But since I have become a Christian, I don't have anything from this world, but I thank God that I

have gained the most precious treasure in my life, which is my love for Jesus and knowing Him in my life.”

Ali's wife and children returned to him and all of them have given their lives to Jesus. Today their house is used for cell church meetings with other Muslim converts. In this more than 99% Muslim nation, they are witnessing for Christ. By sharing in Christ's suffering, even at the hands of his own family, Ali tasted the power of the resurrection, power so great it opened the eyes and hearts of his Muslim relatives. (3)

*...the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk
in the same manner as He walked. (1 John 2:6)*

Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ. (1 Cor. 11:1)

Looking at the Body of Christ, how many do you see whose lifestyle is a direct reminder to you of Jesus in the Gospels and Paul in Acts? Why is it the exception rather than the norm?

I must needs go home by the way of the cross,
There's no other way but this;
I shall ne'er get sight of the gates of light,
If the way of the cross I miss.

The way of the cross leads home,
The way of the cross leads home,
It is sweet to know as I onward go,
The way of the cross leads home.

I must needs go on in the blood sprinkled way,

The path that the Savior trod,
If I ever climb to the heights sublime,
Where the soul is at home with God.

The way of the cross leads home,
The way of the cross leads home,
It is sweet to know as I onward go,
The way of the cross leads home.

Then I bid farewell to the way of the world,

To walk in it never more;

For the Lord says, "Come," and I seek my home,

Where He waits at the open door.

The way of the cross leads home,
The way of the cross leads home,
It is sweet to know as I onward go,

The way of the cross leads home.

(Words: Jessie Pounds, 1906. Music: Charles Gabriel)

(1)“Bone of His Bone,: F.J. Huegel, pp. 45-6, Zondervan Publishing House, 1940

(2) “My Utmost For His Highest,” by Oswald Chambers, reading for May 22, p. 143,

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(3)“Power To Love In Iran,” Voice of the Martyrs Newsletter, April 2007, pp. 6-8

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Chapter Thirteen

“I Will Be Your Friend!”

Arriving back in the US at the beginning of 1982, I found ample opportunity to speak to churches on the west coast. Initially though I spent six weeks in Vancouver, B.C., Canada with the church, Marineview Chapel, that had contributed so much to my support in Austria. As a matter of fact previously during the time of the Olympics in Moscow they had also indicated to me they would be willing to support me financially if I decided to go there to evangelize. They stipulated that they would contribute fifty percent if I raised the remaining fifty percent. When I later told them I was unable to raise the remaining fifty percent they responded that they would be glad to pay that, but as it turned out President Carter decided the US would not participate in the Olympics. What an incredible church Marineview was proving to be! Would that more churches had the spirit for missions they did!

During my six-week stay at Marineview I visited their "Home Cell Groups," giving talks and showing ECL's film "Let My People Go!" (I had been very much involved in the making of this film, starring of course the mission's founder Haralon Popov and having as its guest narrator Efrem Zimbalist, Jr.) The results, as everything the good Lord does, were well beyond my expectations. I spoke between fifteen to twenty times in the church community. A number of people there developed a burden for the Suffering Church in the East; one dear sister especially taking it upon herself to try to move heaven and earth on behalf of some Russian Christians known as the "Embassy Seven" because they had sought refuge in the US Embassy in Moscow.

The result of her efforts was that Marineview's elders officially wrote Christians in their government urging them to pass a resolution officially inviting the "Seven" to Canada as an alternative to the USA. The church stated it would be glad to support the "Seven" for a year after they arrived. Copies of this letter were sent to the various applicable agencies including the Kremlin in Moscow. Fifty thousand signatures were also gathered on petitions for this cause. A number of Christians in the various "Cell Groups" of the church dedicated themselves to being "Prayer and Action Groups," with one of the brothers I contacted agreeing to function as official "Coordinator." He was to monitor permanently the groups and channel information from ECL to them.

As I spoke at the various "Home Cell Groups" of Marineview and showed the film, there would be interesting responses. After one presentation, a young woman arose and asked if the Christians in the East ever expressed anger against God because of their suffering. That question greatly surprised me, but after a few moments consideration I had to reply, "No." Thinking there might be something personal involved in her question, I suggested we discuss it further after the meeting was over. She assented, and later she explained to me that she had been engaged to marry, and she and her fiancée were agreed on a vision to be missionaries together in Africa. However her fiancée had suddenly run off with another woman and she had been left desolate, finally turning her anger upon God and blaming Him. She was a very attractive woman, and while talking to me did not express bitterness or hardheartedness, but she was obviously suffering from extreme feelings of rejection and felt God had also rejected her. I subsequently spent quite a bit of time counseling with her, consulting others at Marineview who also met with

her and eventually we saw her delivered from her condition, healed and restored to her proper position in God's love.

Another interesting encounter occurred while attending a women's group in the church. One of the ladies shared that she had perplexing encounters with a woman who would come to her home but would sit and talk about non-essentials for a period of time and then leave. This woman seemed depressed and would always leave seeming never satisfied with their conversation. The Lord gave me insight into this situation as I listened and I told the this sister that the woman was being demonically hindered from talking about what she wanted to share. I told her that the next time the woman came over to her house and began talking that this sister should address the demon directly, whispering softly so the woman herself could not hear, and bind the demon and instruct it to cease hindering the woman from saying what she wanted to say.

The following week when the womens group again met I attended also and heard this woman excitedly share the Lord's victory in this matter. She told us that woman had again visited her, had talked for a while as before till the sister remembered what I told her and then bound the demon as I suggested. The woman immediately reacted in surprise and happily began talking about some serious things she had wanted to share but said she had been unable to before. So she had been freed and her need was met when she was able to share what she wanted and the sister was then able to help her. My heart was of course gladdened when I heard this, and I thanked the Lord for giving insight

Finally my time at Marineview came to an end and I left there with very mixed feelings. What a joy to be part of such a church whose members were so committed to be involved in the furthering of God's work. I wondered about all the churches I had been part of over the years during my travels and pondered the unanswerable question: *"Why is a church like Marineview so much the exception and not the rule among churches?"* Furthermore, *"Why can't there be a church in the US that I can be part of as I was with Marineview in Canada?"* It had been so easy to be part of things there - there were not any of the restrictive requirements there that could be found in so many other churches. Discussion was easy, especially facilitated by the many "Cell Groups." And everyone seemed so open to the things of God - no matter what their position or function (or lack of it) within the church. Especially incredible was having been singled out for support on the mission field - for which I never even had thought of asking. It made me think of the complicated way so many mission boards work - and God's very simple call to service as expressed in the opening verses of Isa. 6. But then of course, God is well able to see into the motivations of our heart. (Hebr. 4:12-13), for which of course mission board questionnaires are a very poor substitute.

I made a number of stops along the coast on my way back to southern California. One stop was at my cousin's home in Eugene, Oregon. I was invited to speak at a businessmen's breakfast meeting there. They told me I would be allowed five minutes. I asked God to give me the ability to speak very fast and be intelligible while saying what He wanted said. He answered, and the words flowed out of my mouth like bullets from a machine gun. My cousin, who was in attendance, later told me he could understand every word I spoke.

In Monterey, California I stayed with a Christian brother with whom I had become acquainted when he was a well-known Christian radio DJ in Orange County. I had written him a letter in response to something he had said over the radio and later we had found ourselves sharing a house near Disneyland. We became good friends. Now he was married. His wife said something incredible to me later when the Lord moved me to Monterey. She thanked me for talking with her. When I asked why, she explained to me that her own father, who was at that time living just a few miles away, had never acknowledged her presence during her lifetime, had never even spoken to her. She thanked me for being an older man who spoke to her and thus helped (unconsciously) to bring some healing into her life. I marveled at this. She was a dear sister, a very humble, precious soul with whom I enjoyed talking. I had told my friend that he had made an excellent choice of a wife. Another of life's unfathomable mysteries faced me: *"Why would a man act in such a manner to his own daughter."* But then I remembered that my own sister had once expressed the fact of a similar lack of relationship with our father.

During my stay at my friend's house in Monterey (which I consider one of the most beautiful meetings of land and sea in the world) I perused the "Churches" section of the Yellow Pages and called several churches. The local Calvary Chapel was being pastored by an old friend I had known while at Melodyland School of Theology, and he invited me to talk there at a Sunday service.

The pastor of the First Church of God in Pacific Grove invited me to his office for a talk when I

phoned his church and we quickly became very good friends. I found that he and his wife were very wonderful examples of God's love and we have remained friends over the years, though we moved apart, we have remained in touch. I truly thank God for Pastor Don and his wife. He and his family will be part of this testimony again further on. He also invited me to speak at an evening service of his church.

Arriving in the Los Angeles area, I tried to find employment that would help me develop an income which would support my return to the mission field. I was never able to do that, but I had some interesting adventures trying. Initially I became involved with an multi-level business that has been very successful for others, but it was not for me. I even tried to do some door-to-door selling. That led into an interesting involvement in the lives of a young unmarried couple who were living together. They were a very attractive couple, and friendly, with two small children. The young woman was only nineteen and seemed sad when I talked with her.

One day I called on them and found her alone with the children so I had an opportunity to talk with her privately. She told me of plans she had to visit her parents in Oregon. Her relationship with the father of her children was running into problems. In talking with her I discovered she had a basic belief in God and greatly desired to get married, but she felt quite sure that her man would not be interested in talk about God. Nevertheless when he arrived I purposely sat him down and had a talk with him, reading relevant Scripture to him, including the Ephesians 5 passage concerning the relationship between husbands and wives. As I talked with him, he in turn expressed doubt that his wife would be interested in this. Oh, really! She was in the kitchen,

so I called her in to where we were sitting in their living room, and I prayed with them both as they invited Jesus to be their Savior and Lord. After we were done praying, when they discovered that I was ordained, they asked me to marry them! As it turned out, though, when the groom's mother heard that her son had decided to get married she insisted the marriage take place in the family church with their pastor officiating. I was glad to be invited to be their "guest of honor."

At the reception afterwards, I met the groom's mother. She turned out to be a lovely Spirit-filled Christian lady who very happily informed me that she had for years been trying to do what God used me for in her son's life. *"He was too stubborn to listen to his own mother,"* she said. *"But I'm very glad he listened to you!"* These many years later, I still have the photographs I took at their wedding. If you look at them, you will see that the groom is a handsome African-American, the bride is a beautiful Mexican, and me? Well, I am Caucasian. How wonderfully God brings each of us into His world-wide family!



I also tried to generate income by working for the Pasadena, California office of "Snelling & Snelling" - an employment agency. Two months after I started there, all the personnel were called into the manager's office and told that an employee had absconded with the company funds and that the branch had to declare bankruptcy - so all of us were therefore out of a job. One day during my time there, I had remarked to the atheistic head of the branch that I sure would like to talk to him about God sometime. He was a very nice guy actually, and as it was 5:00 pm quitting time and we were walking out to the parking lot, he suggested we talk about it right there and then. And we did. We talked and talked - while the sun went down and the moon arose, we stood there and talked. Finally, at about 8:00 pm we bid each other "*good-bye*" and parted. I figured that whatever reason I thought I was there for, from God's perspective I was there to witness about His Son.

The day that we were told that this branch was no longer able to operate and we were out of work, a woman coworker and I wandered out the front door and crossed the street to a restaurant to sit and talk. We were the only two there from Snelling, so we sat together at a table together, ordered something and started talking. When I asked her if she had a relationship with Jesus, she said "*Yes.*" As we continued talking, she began telling me about her husband who was a veteran of the Vietnamese war. She told me that he suffered horribly from nightmares and that he was completely changed from the man she had married before he went to fight in the war. We sat there and talked for about two hours as she shared with me that she felt herself at her wit's end trying to cope with this man "she did not know." She did not know how to help him. I asked if there was a woman's prayer group at the church, and when she said there was, I suggested she

become part of it and ask the Lord to bring her into close partnership with one or more of those ladies for prayer concerning her husband's condition and how she could deal with it.

Furthermore, I told her, it would provide her with much-needed fellowship. Opening my Bible (which I always tried to have handy), I also showed her various Scriptures that she could use to claim God's healing intervention in this situation, and wisdom in relating to her husband. Finally, when it seemed no more could be said and we both must be on our way, we departed from the restaurant. As she turned to go in one direction and I to go in the other, she made a parting remark to me that just amazed me. She said, "*Paul, it was worth losing my job to have this talk with you.*" I never saw her again as we went our separate ways, but I have never forgotten her parting remark. And I never cease to be amazed that God could use even me to bring His loving help into someone's life.

Interestingly, when I later had cause to visit the building where Snelling had been located on the third floor, I found that a Christian ministry previously located on a lower floor now also occupied the third floor where we had been. Obviously, God had known that would happen even before I came to work there.

And then there was "B." Of the women I have known who have been raped, she is the only one who has been raped more than once. Apparently she has been raped three times. She was sexually abused by her father, and having epilepsy, she had periodic grand mal seizures. When she came to us we cast several demons out of her. But then the "brother" who was her mentor

attacked her, stabbing her with an envelope opener. She is quite attractive and full of the love of Jesus. I have enjoyed being a friend to her, and having her as my friend. Once, she had to be confined to a mental facility for her own safety. I visited her there, and the only photo I have of her was taken there of both of us. B. is a very precious sister, and I very much look forward to seeing her perfectly healed and whole in her transformed body in heaven.

It is hard to write about the period following my return from Austria, primarily because of the failure of my marriage so soon afterwards. The mission had sent over a brother to spend Christmas 1980, with me in Spittal as I was alone there, and he had surprised me by praying for a wife for me. When I did in fact get married in 1983 after my return to the US, it seemed to my new wife and me that it was of the Lord to do so. But apparently we were deceived. The Lord had told me that my wife and I should spend our honeymoon praying and fasting. But that seemed very strange and I was too smitten by the beauty of my bride to pay much attention to the strange "request" of that still small voice. Much like I had not paid attention to that "suggestion" I had received to climb the boulder in the Sierras to get my bearings. In both cases the consequences were hard. But in the case of my marriage the subsequent "mountain" was not climbable, and later when we did have a week of prayer and fasting, God wrote three times on the "blackboard" of my mind,

*“Even though I walk
through the valley of the shadow of death...” Psalm 23:4*

The "death" we encountered involved our marriage relationship. When my wife left me, driving

away in her car, and I returned to our apartment, Jesus was there - not visibly - but His presence was very strong. He told me, *"I will be your Friend,"* and impressed Luke 22:31-32 on me.

"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you,

Simon, that your faith may not fail.

And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

It was the desire of my wife's heart to divorce me, as she told me, quoting Psalm 37:4. And she did. The marriage was so short - the period of recovery so long. That Christmas I spent alone, very depressed, desiring the Lord to take my life. As I prayed, I found it in my heart to travel north, wanting to travel into the wilderness of the Sierras again, but as 1984 began God instead led me to the Monterey area and laid it on my heart to contact my friend Pastor Don - who at once was so insistent that I come to stay at his home that I could not refuse. Thus began the period of recovery the Lord had planned. The Lord had told me He would be my "Friend," and He meant that He would be that personally, but so would members of His Body. Ah, what redeeming grace! What wondrous mercy! The unsurpassed beauty of God's holy forgiveness!

The position of night manager at a motor inn in Carmel Highlands was eventually made available to me and also a day job at Macy's Department Store in Monterey, where I learned to make "Mrs. Field's Cookies"! In fact I started off also working days at Tickle Pink where I had a radio/cassette player hooked to my belt so I could listen to Christian teaching on the radio or cassettes. The hours spent doing this helped speed the healing that I needed. I spent three years praying for the reconciliation I knew Jesus desired (Matt. 5:23-24) but when I thought the

opportunity was presented to me, I received a "restraining order" from my ex-wife instead. Rejection again that I had to deal with instead of acceptance. When I sought God about this, He reminded me of the rejection He had suffered (John 1:10-11). I decided it was indeed God's will to follow the advice of the friend at whose home we had been married who told me that I had done all I could do and should just leave my ex-wife in God's hands and go on with my life.

During November, 1983 (before I left to go north to Monterey) the pastor of the church I was attending called for a three-day fast. I decided to participate, and it turned out to be a very difficult fast for me, finishing *"by sheer guts and will-power; repulsing (not easily) thoughts such as: 'Nothing is happening, nothing has happened in the past, nothing is going to happen, etc. I might as well stop the fast early.....I had received nothing from the Lord during the fast itself It so happened that the Lord had me read Ezekiel 5-9 on the following morning, ThanksgivingWhile reading those five chapters I received a strong vision from the Lord that left me quite shaken. It was shown to me that even now the Lord's hand has been extended in judgment and that it will not be withdrawn until it has accomplished its purpose. Of course, judgment begins first with the household of God (1 Peter 4:17). But the Lord's hand is also stretched against the heathen, and He will strongly use the Church of Jesus Christ as an instrument of His judgment. Ten years ago when I was praying one evening for the USA in an Assembly of God church working with missionaries to the Navajos in Arizona, the Lord impressed on me that His perspective towards the US was reflected in three consecutive books of the Bible: Amos, Obadiah and Jonah. His judgment against the nations is stated in Amos - and He assured me that the USA was not exempt or could not expect any sloppy 'favoritism' (had He not had to deal severely with*

His chosen nation Israel?). Obadiah shows His feeling toward the US, that it is 'arrogant' and 'lofty' in its heart and would therefore have to be brought down (verses 3& 4). But He would first send His 'Jonahs.' I have since been asking Him when the time will be. I am impressed that the time is now and the Lord has revealed that He will begin with a certain city. The stench of this city reaches as a particular noxious odor to the Lord's nostrils. His ears have heard the cries and groans of many concerning it. The stench of it is many times worse than Sodom's was (note 2 Peter 2:6; Jude 7). His hand was previously against it in warning, but there was no repentance and even many in the Church did not believe the words spoken by those He chose and sent to follow up. So the second state of that city is now worse than the first, and the arrogance has become intolerable to God. Therefore, He will send His Jonah.....However, even though there will be those who will hear and repent, the city as a whole will not, but will react rebelliously.....The manifestation of God's judgment against the sin in that city will become a 'sign and a wonder' to the whole world.....like the fire and brimstone that fell on Sodom and Gomorrah....I suppose there are some who would react with an attitude of 'Go get 'em, Lord!' when they hear such words, but at the end of this very graphic vision of God's judgment I was shaken, my body was wracked with sobs, and I felt led in the depths of my heart and spirit to cry out and intercede for those souls who are in the horrible darkness of that city. In any case, He will accomplish it. This is one of the most difficult letters I have ever typed.....it seems terribly presumptuous and personally I feel like setting it aside....if it is of the Lord then He will fulfill it.....But I must be obedient...."

Chapter Fourteen

Another Visitation from Jesus

In Monterey, I initially lived with Pastor Don's family. It was a very crowded situation as I was put in with the children, and one of them in fact had to give up their bunk bed for me. It was an inconvenience of course, but the house was so full of God's love that it was more than bearable - it was an honor and privilege to be part of the family even temporarily. For a few weeks I worked helping a subcontractor laying the foundations for a house. Then when I was needed no more there, I found a job as taxi driver in Ft. Ord where I had taken my Army basic training in 1958. I daily had to rent a cab to use, but found that I could not make enough beyond the rental of the cab to justify the long hours spent driving there, so I quit.

Then the position at the motor inn opened, and a nicely furnished apartment was made available for me to live in as night manager. Later, I applied for and was given employment by Macy's, where I was assigned to work in Mrs. Field's Cookies store. The apartment at the motor inn had previously been occupied by two Mormon missionaries, and when I first entered it I became aware that it was spiritually unclean so asked Pastor Don to help me pray to expel the obviously demonic presence, which he did.

Thus cleansed, my new living quarters became a place into where God's Holy Spirit could be invited, and we did. I remembered that at the time I lived in my house in Simi Valley, there was a Mormon elder living next door to me. He was a very pleasant man, with an attractive family.

As the reputation of Teen Hope (our evangelistic organization) grew, the Mormons tried to convince us to become one of them. The elder next door made an appointment to speak with me one day after I returned from work. I asked my cousin and his wife to pray for me while he visited. He arrived with a younger coworker, and they began speaking with me, but God gave me wisdom to refute their claims. While the elder was speaking and I was looking at him, suddenly his visage completely changed. I saw peering at me an obviously ugly demonic face with two horns sticking out of the forehead . It was only a momentary look as it changed back to his normal countenance as quickly as it had appeared. I blinked my eyes and wondered if I was "seeing things" perhaps because I was tired from a days work but then decided that was not the case. I had to conclude that God had allowed me a look into what was behind Mormonism.

One of the things God did in my apartment was of a highly personal nature. After my mother died in 1962, my father put in a small suitcase what he wanted to keep as mementos of their relationship: photos, slides, diaries, letters, etc. Then he gave the suitcase to one of mom's younger sisters to store. In 1980, my dad died while I was on a trip into Bulgaria. In 1985, upon revisiting my aunt to whom my dad had given the suitcase, she reminded me of it, brought it out, we opened it, briefly examined the contents and I took the suitcase with me when I left.

Later, back at the apartment, I carefully went over what was in the suitcase. Interestingly enough, this came in the context of seeking God concerning the conviction that I was not enjoying fellowship with Him as I had on the mission field. God's answer to me was that He wanted me to spend increasingly more time in prayer with Him - use my free afternoons

basically to do this, pursuing involvement in prayer as His Spirit led me. As I stated above, it was in this context that I felt an urgent desire to delve into the contents of the suitcase - especially with a curiosity to read my mother's diaries. I had questions hiding in my heart for many years concerning my parents' relationship: So I began to read my mother's diaries in the hope they would shed some light. I had no idea, of course that God would very heavily use these diaries, and that He also would work His will for me through them.

The diaries were for the years from 1925 through 1934. They began when mom was sixteen years old. In 1926 she met dad, in 1927 they were married - and they progressed on through the end of 1934 when she found that she was pregnant with me. There was included a number of letters between them when mom traveled back east in 1927, just before their marriage. Reading this material was like going on a journey back in time. Incredibly, it was as if I were there with mom as she was going through all these experiences she was writing about. I was coming to see her in a completely new way that I had never seen her before. Here was a young woman very much filled with an exuberance for life, enjoying it - determined to enjoy and experience it fully. I saw the relationship between her and dad grow and blossom wonderfully, wondrously as friendship grew deeper and professions of love came. I could only describe their love relationship as having a "holy boldness" about it.

And I was gratified to read where mom referred to God, praying for strength, being assured that *"God made me for (him) and (him) for me! May nothing ever break our love!"* At another point when dad pessimistically wrote to her while she was back east, that he felt she would never

return and he would never see her again because that's the way life is - mom responded that God meant for them to be together, so there was no point in worrying. Dad's writing, I recognized, reflected the chaotic world of the unbeliever I was only too familiar with as a former atheist, while mom's writing showed the confidence in the sovereignty of God in every circumstance a believer in God has. While I was reading this, I realized that a lot of "garbage" was being lifted from me that I had no idea was even there, and that I was seeing my parents in a new and healthier light.

When I had returned to the U.S. from being stationed in Germany with the Army during the spring of 1962, I was met by my mother and my sister in New York. We drove across the US in my 1961 Volvo. At that time I was an atheist - I had no love in me, in fact I did not know how to love. I was deluded that my mother was trying to dominate me. Unfortunately, I was incapable of being sensitive to the fact that my mother obviously was not well physically. She had rheumatic fever when she was very young, which at that time was diagnosed as "growing pains" but left her with holes in her heart.

While we were driving across the country I noticed that she had trouble climbing stairs with her weakening heart, having to pause to catch her breath at almost every step. But I was too self-centered to be compassionate and within a couple of months after we arrived back home in Los Angeles, she was dead of a massive cerebral hemorrhage. Even though neither my dad or my sister (19 at the time) accused me to my face, a family "friend" was bold enough to write me, *"You killed your mother."* At that time I didn't realize it, but years later after I was born-again I

remembered a dream I had in 1960 while in Germany of my mother departing on a train and waving “Good-bye” to me. It was actually a very peaceful, even pastoral scene and I was the only family member present. She stood on the rear end of the passenger train waving to me. Now, after her death, I could see that this dream had clearly forecast my mother's death and had undoubtedly prepared me subconsciously it. God's hand was even then at work. Three days after mom's death, I was sound asleep in my bed at night, and suddenly there was this clear intervening thought in my mind, *"It's one o'clock, and she's here to say, 'Good-bye.'"*

Immediately I was wide awake and saw mom's glowing figure at the foot of my bed. As I reached to turn on the light by my bed, I knew she'd be gone when I switched the light on. I did - but it was too late. After I turned the light on, I looked again at the foot of the bed, but she was gone. Then I looked at the clock – it was 1:00 a.m. After my conversion, I realized this, like the dream, had been from God, and it was only as I was reading my mom's diaries that the revelation of why she had appeared to me after her death hit me: God's forgiveness was already at work - mom was appearing to me in the context of God's forgiveness, also forgiving me.

But years later as I was discussing this with my sister and her family, I received a further revelation: while appearing to me as an extension of God's forgiveness already at work in my life (including also that dream I had in 1960 forecasting my mother's death) mom in effect was also "passing the baton" to me. She had successfully "run the race" and I was designated to continue on after her. In 1969, I was the first of the remaining family members to be born-again, and soon after began witnessing to my dad and my sister and her family, and praying for them. When Mom was writing her diaries, she had no way of knowing that God would one day use them to

free her then un-born son from bondage he did not know he had.

As I sat there reading my mom's diary, I began sobbing uncontrollably, cathartically releasing a flood of pent-up emotions that had been inside me for many years. I felt waves of purging flow over me as I cried for joy at the healing I knew my heavenly Father was working in me, cleansing me of the garbage that had accumulated over the years. And I celebrated as I looked forward to seeing my mother again in heaven at my death or at Jesus' return and telling her how much I loved her. I asked God, *"Please send an angel now to tell my mom I love her."*

Then also among the effects in the suitcase I discovered a tape recording my mom had made back in 1961 and had sent me while I was stationed overseas with the Army in Munich, Germany. I had the tape transferred to a cassette and discovered my mother's crystal clear voice (which I had not heard in twenty-five years) telling me about a book she was reading. Oh, how I so wanted to talk with her! It was as if she were in the next room....



Of course I was also involved with my friend Pastor Don's church. But one day he gave me quite a shock when he phoned me and told me that he had received an invitation to become pastor at a church of his denomination in San Jose. He asked if I would help him pray and seek an answer from the Lord concerning it. I told him I would be glad to do that. As I prayed about the situation the Lord gave me a Scripture that seemed to confirm his moving in that direction. I shared it with him, he also received confirmation from another believer, and so Pastor Don finally told his congregation. They were greatly shocked and dismayed as he and his wife were beloved there, but the decision had been made and he and his family departed for their new location.

Before they left, however, he called me into the office one day and informed me that in considering who might be interim pastor till a new pastor was chosen, my name had been placed before the church board. I was greatly surprised, and replied I did not think I was qualified because of the fact I had recently been divorced. (In fact, my wife and I had spent our honeymoon in Monterey and I had introduced her to him and his wife.) But Pastor Don reassured me that he thought I had done what God had required in the situation and was qualified for the position of interim pastor. So I acquiesced and when my name was given to the congregation and the time came to vote (I absented myself during it), all the members of the church voted for me except a young man who had coveted the position for himself had and placed his own name for consideration and had therefore voted for himself. So I became Interim Pastor and was in that position for three months until the church found another pastor to replace Don.

The only stipulation made to me was done by the chairman of the board who, taking me aside,

told me that I *"...should not teach about tongues."* I was surprised at his request, but since I was only interim and it was my intention to try to maintain stability within the church during the transition process, I agreed. God verified this by impressing me with Eph. 4:3, *"...being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."*

But the young man who had desired to be pastor brought up the issue himself. He decided to let everyone in the church know that he did not approve of "speaking in tongues." But I knew it was God's will that I be the interim pastor and everyday I would walk around the church - and throughout it also - praying, and then spend some time at the altar on my knees. The Word Jesus had given me (at the time my wife had left) had come to pass,

".....strengthen (establish) your brothers." (Luke 22:31-32)

I knew that to the extent a person or church did not accept God's gifts, they did not accept the Giver either.

The three months I was interim pastor was a wonderful learning experience for me - I received loving support from the congregation, and I did my best with God's help to fulfill the role God had put me in there.

One Sunday, while I was giving the sermon I had prepared, I was surprised at seeing the Lord Jesus enter the doors to the sanctuary. The entrance doors were at the rear of the sanctuary and I was facing them while delivering my sermon so I saw Him clearly but the congregation had their

backs turned to the entrance as they sat facing me so no one else was aware of His presence. Jesus was clothed in what appeared to be what He might have worn as He walked the earth two thousand years ago - "Galilean clothing." His hair was brown and reached down to His shoulders. He had a thin beard and mustache. What was most notable to me was His eyes. "Searching, looking" are the words that come to my mind most readily concerning them - especially in the context of Hebrews 4:12-13. They were large and penetrating - as if nothing could be hidden from them. But there seemed also to be a question posed in them.

Jesus did not so much as even glance at me but looked first to His left at the congregants sitting there in the pews and then to His right at those sitting there. He was not smiling, but seemed to have the appearance of severe concern. He paused only very briefly, then abruptly turned and exited through the doors. I was impressed by the Holy Spirit that He desired that the congregation would follow Him out onto the streets "where the sinners are." I wondered greatly at this visit but felt impressed also not to share this experience with the congregation.

The congregation reviewed various applicants for the position of pastor and finally settled on a young couple recently out of Bible school but with some experience in a church in the mid-west. I had given up my day job at Tickle Pink Inn to become Interim Pastor, and when that came to an end I found day-time employment with Macy's.

In September 1988, my job at the motor inn came to an end, and I resigned from Macys. Immediately a possibility of being involved in inner-city ministry in Chicago appeared to open

up, so I packed my car and started back there.

Over the ensuing years I would remember the visit of Jesus to the church while I was preaching as described above and meditate on its significance and meaning. Of course, any visit by Jesus would be significant, that goes without saying. But what truly was meant by it? As I had been very much involved in street-evangelism, that is what I basically interpreted it to mean as the Holy Spirit verified. And of course since Jesus knew I would easily see it that way, that is what He wanted it to mean to me. But did He mean it just for that church, or for His Church at large? Since this church had members that were part of His Body, of course His appearance had local significance specifically to that church. But I knew that I was only part of this church temporarily, and since I had been the only one to see Him, I later realized that His appearance had more than just local significance. Now, as I write this many years later I know that His appearance had definite significance and meaning for all churches in the US.

Wherever He entered villages, or cities, or countryside, they were laying the sick in the market places, and imploring Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak; and as many as touched it were being cured. (Mark 6:56)

“For massive worldwide revival.... it must be taken out of the four walls of the Church and launched into the marketplace....Any gospel that doesn't work in the marketplace, doesn't work. Jesus invaded every realm of society. He went where people gathered. They became His focus, and He became theirs....Where does life take you? Go there in the anointing and watch the

impossibilities bow to the name of Jesus....Because many fear excess, mediocrity is embraced as balance....The Great Awakening was not quenched because of its extremists. It was quenched because of the condemnation of its opponents...Divisions occur whenever the intellect is enthroned as the measure of spirituality – not because spiritual gifts are exercised, as many charge....Excellence comes from viewing things from (God's) perspective. In pursuing this virtue, we do all to the glory of God, with all our might.” (Emphasis mine)(1)

Near the end of the nineteenth century there was a revival in Russia led by the Holy Spirit that brought the rich and poor, the peasants and the elite together in a common bond. The Orthodox leadership rejected it, quenching the Holy Spirit and causing a vacuum into which Communism then moved. Later in Europe, again Christian leadership resisted and quenched the reviving movement of the Holy Spirit, and this time Nazism moved into the vacuum.

As Charles Spurgeon testified: "No sort of defense is needed for preaching out of doors, but it would need very potent arguments to prove that a man had done his duty who has never preached beyond the walls of his meeting-house. A defense is required for services within buildings rather than for worship outside of them."

Again, we remember Jesus “standing at the door” humbly knocking (Rev. 3:20), yet in judgment.

*Listen! My beloved! Behold, He is coming, Climbing on the mountains, Leaping on the hills!
My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Behold, He is standing behind our wall,
He is looking through the windows, He is peering through the lattice.*

My beloved responded and said to me, "Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, And come along.

For behold, the winter is past, The rain is over and gone.

*The flowers have already appeared in the land; The time has arrived for pruning the vines,
And the voice of the turtledove has been heard in our land. The fig tree has ripened its figs,
And the vines in blossom have given forth their fragrance. Arise, my darling, my beautiful one,*

And come along!

O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, In the secret place of the steep pathway,

Let me see your form, Let me hear your voice; For your voice is sweet,

And your form is lovely."

Catch the foxes for us, The little foxes that are ruining the vineyards,

While our vineyards are in blossom.

My beloved is mine, and I am his; He pastures his flock among the lilies.

Until the cool of the day when the shadows flee away, Turn, my beloved, and be like a gazelle

Or a young stag on the mountains of Bether. (Song 2:8-17)

The Song of Solomon is commonly thought to apply only to husbands and wives, but I agree with those who insist that it is more essentially meant to apply to the relationship between the Lord Jesus and His Bride, the Church. Here, the Beloved is looking through our windows as we stand behind the walls of our man-made traditions/denominational thinking/fears/unbeliefs/etc., encouraging His Bride to join Him, "climbing on the mountains and leaping on the hills," though she is too reluctant to do that. We would rather God join our pathetically inadequate substitute for His Church – to become "domesticated" according to our standards of proper behavior. We

see that as a much more comfortable situation and the momentary breakthroughs by God's Holy Spirit experienced by some churches are only small tastes given by a God who is more used to “climbing and leaping” than sitting with us in the comfortable pews of our traditional ways of doing things. God wants us to “*Arise, and come along*” with Him. After having been one of those few who have accepted His invitation and experienced the delights of “climbing and leaping” with Him, I find sitting in most church pews quite dull and boring by comparison.

I believe that our Lord is saying to His Church that if we want to know His will concerning us, we should begin by studying His relationship with His disciples as shown in the Gospels, and how He trained them to participate in ministry. Jesus' own life is our supreme example. Then there are those He sent out – first the twelve disciples (Matt. 10), then the seventy (Luke 10), and then Acts. I doubt very much that the Holy Spirit intended the latter book just to become a subject for sermons within the four walls of a building. The “twelve disciples” of Matthew 10 and the “seventy” of Luke 10 seem to be deemed not relevant for the present day as they are rarely preached or taught about, yet they are excellent examples of true discipleship training . They are part of God's Word and therefore meant for a purpose by Him and should be included in Bible studies as they obviously are meant by our Lord to show how He desires His Body to function. He never desired that we would just sit in pews in a building.

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.(2 Tim 3:16-17)

From God's perspective, Bible study without practical application is of no use. . As I look at the Church today, the closest true realization I see of what Jesus desired when He stated, *I will build My church, and the gates of Hades (the powers of the infernal region) shall not overpower it [or be strong to its detriment or hold out against it]* (Matt 16:18-19 AMP), are those very few churches and ministries that operate in the fullness of God-ordained Holy Spirit power, impacting the lives of the lost in the same way that the Church did at its founding. But there appears to be more interest in other things than what God wants concerning His Church.

He was also saying to them, "You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition." (Mark 7:9-10)

However, that will not interfere with the accomplishment of God's plans – but it may determine who of us He uses and who He does not....

*So call to mind the lessons you received and heard; continually lay them to heart and obey them, and repent. In case you will not rouse yourselves and **keep awake and watch**, I will come upon you like a thief, and you will not know or suspect at what hour I will come.*

(Rev 3:3 AMP)

(1) "When Heaven Invades Earth," by Bill Johnson, pp. 170, 172, 173, 179, 180

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Chapter Fifteen

New Agers and Seniors

The trip to Chicago seemed to witness that I was going in the right direction. On the way I made contact with four cousins I had not seen since the 1960s, getting to share my faith in Christ very strongly. In Ohio, while visiting my sister and her husband, the "family friend" who years before had written me a letter accusing me of "murdering" my mother dropped in for a visit with her husband. She gave her heart to Christ after much discussion, and her husband rededicated his life also. But Chicago was a different story. Immediately upon arrival there I began to cope with the feeling, "*What am I doing here?*" Doors closed right and left. Nothing worked out. There seemed to be mounting alienation between me and the brother and his wife who had invited me to come to Chicago and with whom I was then living. I went on a fast to discern God's will, and after two days it became apparent that I had sinned in leaving my jobs in the Monterey area - it was in the San Francisco area that God wanted me, not Chicago. So I received a "spanking" from the Lord and once more packed up my car and returned, thoroughly chastened and "with my tail between my legs," to the Monterey Area in California.

The possibility of a good job offer was one of the things that drew me back to Monterey, and some friends (who taught Russian at nearby Defense Language Institute) allowed me to stay with them while I checked that out. Unfortunately, the job offer did not materialize and soon I had to move out, but another couple invited me to move in with them. They were an African-American family I had befriended while working at Mrs. Field's Cookies in Macy's, the wife being a co-

worker and a Christian sister. During the three weeks I was there I became part of the family's life, and their problems. Near the end of the stay I had a good opportunity to have a talk with the husband, who was very nice, and led him to Christ. At one point I asked the wife, *"Do any of your friends ever make any comments about the 'Whitey' that is staying in your house?"* She laughed and replied, *"Yes, there are some who have made some remarks."* But then she told me about the racist white man who lived next door to them. They lived at Ft. Ord as the husband was stationed there with the Army, and often when I returned at night after looking for a job, I had to dodge cruising Military Police cars. I knew it would be only a matter of time before I would have to move again, and after finding a job - I did. I finally wound up in a luxurious studio apartment that was somewhat beyond my means, but I saw God's hand in it.

The first job that opened up to me was with a local bookstore located in an outdoor shopping mall in Carmel. This bookstore turned out to be the local headquarters for the dissemination of New Age literature, in addition to stocking all other types of books. While there I got quite an education concerning the New Age. I've never had any secular job that necessitated the degree of spiritual warfare that this one did. I was in a constant state of prayer, especially when stocking books in the New Age section that dealt with witchcraft, etc. I would plead the blood of Jesus over them and pray that God would actually make the book "distasteful" to whomever bought it and use it to bring them to an end of themselves and to the cross of Jesus Christ.

In fact, God as a result of prayer made available the opportunity to have a two-hour talk with the woman who was in charge of the bookstore's New Age "Whole-Life Center." Her thinking was

of course very New Age/occult, but our discussion was totally controlled by God's love and was about Him. I remarked in a letter I wrote to a Christian brother, *"It's probably the first such intensive discussion I've had where my flesh did not manifest or interfere in any way."* There were (and still are) New Age spiritualist events sponsored by the bookstore's owners taking place periodically both in the bookstore and on the mall grounds.

On Saturday mornings, there was in the bookstore luncheon patio a radio broadcast from nine to eleven a.m. It primarily involved a woman medium who claimed to be in touch with "extra-terrestrials" who psychically spoke through her. The "dead" also spoke through her, as did "Mary, the mother of Jesus", the day before Easter - and "Jesus" also. Of course, these are lying demonic spirits. The "Extra Terrestrials (ETs)" and the "Ascended Masters," as the New Agers call them, promise them a coming age of peace and harmony as they seek to become "gods."

At the time I was there I kept local Christians informed of these and other New Age activities going on so they could knowledgeably pray against the "principalities.....powers.....rulers of the darkness of this world.....spiritual wickedness in high places. (Eph 6:12) We also had a weekly Bible study that met at a local restaurant.

One day a co-worker at the bookstore admonished me about using the word, *"guilty."* "Oh," I innocently replied. *"You're saying I'm 'guilty' for having used the word, 'guilty,'"* She looked at me silently for a few moments, then turned and left. The Carmel area was also a likely place to bump into celebrities. I once served coffee to Doris Day at Mrs. Field's Cookies, said *"Good*

Morning," to Shirley Temple (Black) at Tickle Pink, spoke with Joan Fontaine over the phone at Thunderbird and greeted Julia Childs there, encountered Clint "make-my-day" Eastwood and Sandra Locke at a local restaurant, and David Hasselhoff at Tickle Pink. But then, previously I had been interviewed for a job by DeForest Kelley (Dr. Leonard "Bones" McCoy of "Star Trek"), and in the summer of 1956 I worked on the set of the movie "Giant" in Warner Brothers and there encountered Elizabeth Taylor, Rock Hudson, James Dean, Mercedes McCambridge. While in UCLA I made a film co-starring Will Hutchins, who later had his own TV series "Sugarfoot" and made some movies. - And when I worked with ECL making the film "Let My People Go!" I spent time and ate meals with Efrem Zimbalist, Jr. No big deal.

I knew that being in the enemy's camp was only a temporary thing , but it still saddened me the day I received the expected "two weeks notice," My supervisor took me aside and gently informed me I was *"being freed to serve the Lord."* I thought of replying that *"He freed me to do that many years ago"* but did not. While I was employed at the bookstore, as I commented in a letter to a friend, *"my prayer-life was profoundly deepened and my perspective of God's love for the lost radically altered."*

Soon after leaving there though I found employment as a "front desk clerk" at a nearby senior retirement center. At the end of three month's probation, I was given such an unexpectedly adverse evaluation report by my supervisor that I felt I had no recourse but to resign. I mentioned that fact to one of the residents who, during casual conversation, asked how things were going for me. The next thing I knew, a significant number of the residents were creating such an uproar

in reaction to this news that I was forced to withdraw my resignation and reach a mutually satisfactory accord with my supervisor. The loving concern that was shown me by the residents during this period quite overwhelmed me and I never really recovered from the wonderful shock of it during the rest of my stay.

I found that I was involved in a "love affair" with the residents there that just grew and grew. I had many good opportunities to witness there, and the highlight of my stay was undoubtedly the evening one of the residents (who attended a local Unity church) approached the front desk and asked me, "*What does it mean to be born again?*" Never one to shirk such an opportunity, I gave a brief explanation, then asked her if she would like to be born-again. She replied, "*Yes,*" and I prayed with her as she opened her heart to Jesus Christ. After the prayer, she remarked to me about the peace she felt, and I observed the change in her being as she reflected the presence of the new life that was now within her.

I also rejoiced later at the fact that though she had been going to the Unity church she did not succumb to other residents' subsequent invitations to accompany them there. I had explained to her that God had become man in Jesus Christ as opposed to the Unity church concept of man becoming god, and encouraged her to attend a church that taught the Biblical truths correctly. She later moved to southern California and I never saw her again.

As time passed there, my supervisor and I gained respect for each other, and she shared with me that I "*should beware of women supervisors.*" I was incredulous as she went on to explain her

reasoning, but respected what she had to say because of her ability and commitment to her job. (I later had cause to remember her warning when a subsequent woman supervisor there had me fired.) Since there were many elderly residents, death was a frequent occurrence. Much earlier in my Christian walk I had to deal with crossing paths with people whom I greatly enjoyed knowing, then seeing the relationship end till we "meet again in heaven!" Now it was a situation of knowing people briefly but intimately and seeing them "pass on" into eternity - how many I tried to witness to and prayed for that passed on and I had to leave their eternal fate in God's hands. There was a little Jewish woman from the Czech Republic who had lost all her family as far as she knew in concentration camps. She declared she was an intellectual atheist. She had wonderful writing ability and we had some long discussions. I felt happy and successful when I was able to make her smile once. She passed on into eternity.

I admired Jewish man's collection of home-made string ties. He made me a present of one. Then he died. There were quite a few Christians there also, including a couple of retired pastors. There was a man who was very despondent because of the recent death of his wife. A precious Christian lady I knew very well took special pains to try to be a friend to him. One day he walked into the front door and I said to him, "Hello, Mr. H-----." He turned and greeted me. Then he walked up to the fourth floor and used a stepping stool to jump off a balcony to his death. When I had to inform the Christian sister who was trying to befriend him of this, she had a heart attack and died two days later.

In this job as in others I again had a feeling of standing "on the edge of eternity," and I was

desperately trying to catch others who were falling away to be lost forever, while bidding a loving "till we meet again" to those whom I expected to see again in heaven.

I learned some new lessons from the Lord here, mainly of course dealing with the fact of death. The retirement center was purchased by a major hotel management enterprise not long after I became employed, and they put the residents through quite a bit of suffering because of the extensive renovations they insisted on doing to the building. The end result looked nicer but the original comfortable "homey" atmosphere disappeared and was replaced by something less inviting but more efficient. I learned in subtle ways that my Christian witness was known even to my new employer's corporate headquarters in a large eastern city. Visiting executives several times made "friendly" remarks as they passed the front desk that let me know they knew I was a..... Christian.

The enemy was stirring things up. Sightings of "ghostly" visitors in various places such as the elevators were becoming more frequently reported to me. I began to pray harder in the Spirit and against the enemy and his works. He obviously did not like that. My supervisors had changed several times since I had been there. All of them were women. The latest one I thought I had built up a friendly relationship with. She seemed to be interested in being a Christian - up to a point. Then one day she asked me if I would accompany her to a local fair with her daughter and son-in-law. It wasn't a "date" she explained. I told her that the day and time she named was already committed - every week at that time I joined my pastor for a session of prayer at our church. She gave me an odd look and walked away. Things seemed to go downhill from then and

I was eventually fired by her on trumped-up charges. The enemy thought he had won - but actually, God indicated that it was time for me to move on to the San Francisco area. As a matter of fact, there were a number of things that happened at that time where I could say to the enemy: *"But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good...."* (Gen. 50:20) as one of the residents of Park Lane reminded me.

As I stated above, each Saturday I would join my pastor for prayer for our church, the church where I had previously been interim pastor. The present pastor had replaced the one who had been invited by the church while I was interim pastor. I felt that this present pastor and his wife were an answer to my prayers that I had daily prayed while I was interim pastor. They were Spirit-filled and did their best to help breathe God's Holy Spirit-Life into the church, but after I had left for the San Francisco area I was deeply saddened to receive news from my pastor-friend that he had decided to resign from being pastor of the church, and in fact had shaken the dust off his shoes against it, declaring it to be "dead." (Rev. 3:1) I remembered the time Jesus visited the church while I was preaching my Sunday morning sermon (as I shared above) and knew that He certainly had the right to judge His church.

Years later, after I shared the vision of Jesus I had experienced with some other Christians, I received the following message from one of them: "I enjoyed reading this part of the vision of Jesus, yet I got a slightly different meaning from it. I believe as Jesus looked to the right and then to the left, didn't smile, and didn't look at you, then exited...sounds to me like He was disappointed by those in attendance that they were not listening to your preaching, which was

unacceptable to Him, and He didn't look your way because He did not condemn you. Yet Jesus was upset with those in attendance, and made a quick exit because they were not "listening to His Word".... that's what my own interpretation is; Jesus is unhappy with what is transpiring in our churches these days. So many are there to warm the seats, and so very few truly come to hear the word, and worship the Lord.”

This, in part, is what I answered: “What you said caught me entirely by surprise.... your words have brought to the surface of my memory things concerning that church that I struggled with as interim pastor. I remember that two of the sermons I preached there near the end of my tenure were entitled "Ichabod - The Glory Has Departed." I talked about the glory Adam and Eve had when they were created, and how it departed from them after they disobeyed. Then of course I talked about Israel and Jesus and lastly I talked about how the glory can depart from a church.”

During that time at the retirement center I had also one evening become acquainted with a very attractive young woman who lived in an apartment complex across the street. Her life-story, which she shared with me, was so incredibly complex in its labyrinthine convolutions that it reminded me of a 1940s *film noir* mystery, and it became impossible to tell where fact ended and fiction began. I became convinced she was unable to do so herself and spent many hours off-duty talking with her, trying desperately to be a friend and help her in whatever way I could. She told me that when she was very young, about six years old, her father had brought in a woman to live in the house as his mistress where she and her little brother and mother lived. Her mother, who was very religious, could not stand the shock and eventually died tragically. My friend became

deeply emotionally scarred by this and hated her father till his death. Later she married a police officer who she found afterwards was part of a corrupt contingent that dealt illegally in drugs and payoffs. She had tried to remove herself from this situation but told me that this corruption extended to high-level governmental authority. I had reason to believe her about this when I discovered my phone being tapped and mail I tried to send on her behalf that became "lost."

She was paranoid because of death threats she had received from her ex-husband as a result of her attempt to disclose what she had discovered to authorities. She had no family to turn to (her relatives having spurned her, she told me). I helped her as much as I could but became convinced she needed the help of a Spirit-filled Christian psychiatrist I personally knew who lived in the Monterey area. She agreed to see him and he graciously offered to treat her with no charge, but after a few visits to his office he let me know very strongly that he could do nothing for her as there were demons in her life and she did not agree to being delivered from them. For the first time since I had known him I saw him extremely frustrated, and he finally had to admit defeat. I continued to try to be a friend to this young woman, who claimed to be my sister-in-Christ, but our relationship came abruptly to an end one morning when we missed a proposed breakfast connection with each other at a local restaurant because she thought mistakenly we had agreed to meet at another nearby. She left me one final message on my phone answering machine. Goodbye, my dear A---. My heart breaks for you and I will continue to pray for you.

For some time I had been in contact with S O S M i n i s t r i e s and was receiving their monthly newsletters. SOS is engaged in street evangelism in the San Francisco area, mainly San

Francisco itself and across the bay in Berkeley (or "Bezerkeley" and "The Zoo," as it's not-so-fondly called). It is led by Larry Rosenbaum (a Messianic Jew), who has been involved in street evangelism in San Francisco(SF) for several decades. The members of SOS live together in a two-story house in Oakland. They have outreaches each Friday evening and Saturday afternoon and are often joined by other churches and ministries - or just any Christian who desires to participate in street-preaching and/or handing out tracts and witnessing one-on-one and counseling. Christian singing groups are particularly welcome as their music attracts passers-by.

When I was fired from my job at the retirement center at the end of 1990, I began asking God where He wanted me next. It seemed that it was time to go to the San Francisco area, so I decided to "knock" on that door and leave it up to the Lord whether it would "open" or not. I drove up to SF on a weekend to participate in an outreach and talk with Larry. One of the members of the SOS household had prepared sandwiches for the homeless people, so I joined him at his invitation as he drove around the city visiting the homeless in various locations, handing out sandwiches and telling them about the love of Jesus. Driving around SF was quite a change for me as previous to the Lord's bringing me there I had encountered such a noxious spiritual stench emanating from the city I could hardly stand it when I did have to drive through it. Now, because the Lord wanted me engaging in ministry in the area, His grace made me impervious to the stench that had bothered me so much before.

I had a good talk with Larry about the possibility of moving into the SOS house and stayed over night to participate in the Saturday afternoon outreach. This gave me a good opportunity to

introduce myself to the other team members. So I slept over Saturday and prepared to go to church Sunday. But I woke to a rude shock Sunday morning when I found my car stolen. Oakland's "Welcoming Committee," I thought, but knew again that *"what the enemy had intended for evil, God intended for good."* As it turned out, God opened the "door" to the SOS house as I was admitted by a vote of its members, and a brother from the church in Pacific Grove helped me move my stuff from Monterey to Oakland. After the move, the police informed me they had found my car, and it had been towed to a junkyard. I went to examine it, saw that it had not only been stripped (of tires, etc), but also vandalized to the point that I decided I would have to "junk" it - which I did. It saddened me to the point of tears that anyone would needlessly do such damage to a car, but I realized that the enemy was not glad to have me in the area - and let me know it.

However, I knew God was sovereign in every situation and the enemy would have to get permission from Him to get at me - certainly there was nothing the enemy could do to me that would catch God by surprise. So as it turned out, I really didn't need the car in Oakland. It would have been a convenience and useful to SOS, but it wasn't essential to have. The bus line ran just a few blocks from the SOS house, and I learned in time that there were opportunities to witness to its riders about Jesus just through conversations with other Christians I would encounter. Also, riding it gave me extra time for reading (especially the Bible), meditating and praying.

But the enemy wasn't through harassing me. While I was looking for employment in the Oakland area, it was suggested I apply for unemployment benefits. When the state granted my request, my

former employer appealed on the basis I had been terminated for "insubordination." After re-interviewing me and examining the material supplied from my personnel file at the retirement center, the State turned the appeal down with the ruling: *"...Information on file indicates that the claimant's action resulted from an isolated mistake or good-faith error in judgment rather than a deliberate disregard of your best interests. It must therefore be considered that the discharge was for reasons other than misconduct in connection with the work."* (When I read this I rejoiced. God is undertaking for me, I thought. Whoever wrote that ruling must have had God-given insight into the situation.)

But the hotel management concern (the name of which I prefer not to mention here because I do not wish to be confronted by their vindictive legal action again) was given the option to appeal this ruling, and it did, and a hearing was scheduled in Oakland before a judge. The management concern's lawyers would prosecute the case. Their contention was *"that the claimant was discharged for good cause...for insubordination. The claimant willfully displayed inappropriate behavior. He was aware of his unprofessional conduct from prior warnings and counseling sessions. He intentionally continued his unbecoming conduct even after a final warning...."* So even though I was pleasantly surprised and gratified by the State's ruling given above (I felt it expressed exactly what indeed was the case), I was flabbergasted by what the lawyer wrote and could not relate to it in the least. I subsequently contacted Christians to pray about the situation and informed residents of the retirement center and asked their advice about the upcoming hearing. The enemy's plans were foiled however, and the corporate lawyers decided to drop their appeal. The unemployment benefits were begun, but not for long as I found a job doing

telemarketing for an AT&T aggregator in San Francisco. So I breathed a sigh of relief that the ordeal had at last ended.

And I was able to settle into the regimen of the SOS household. In addition to their weekly outreaches, each summer SOS had a week of daily concentrated training and outreach. The intent of it was to train those interested in the street evangelism through lectures and practical exposure to witnessing on the streets. A church would make its facilities available for sleeping purposes (sleeping bags on the floor). The participants (who came both from local areas and other parts of the US) would be divided into teams with leaders and daily taken out onto the streets. So it was both training and evangelistic outreach.

After some time working the phones for the aggregator in SF, I found a better job working as a courier of a medical lab - visiting doctors' offices, picking up specimens, delivering supplies, etc. I did that for the rest of the seven years I remained in Oakland.

In 1993, I somehow came to the decision it would be good to revisit the site of the trip I had made into the Sierras twenty years before. It never occurred to me that I was not in shape to be doing such a thing (of course, I hadn't been "in shape" in 1972 either - but my body was not "over the hill" as it was now). In any case, I just felt such an excitement of adventure that I went right ahead and purchased hiking boots, tent etc. and rented a backpack. There had been news accounts of attacks by cougars on humans close to civilization so I also purchased a snub-nosed .357 caliber revolver and took a week's course on firearms at a local shooting range. I made

arrangements for a week's vacation and when the time came, off I went. I had purchased maps of the area I wanted to go into, so I rented a car and drove first to one likely spot, then re-considered that and drove to another spot. There I parked, and began my hike into the wilderness.



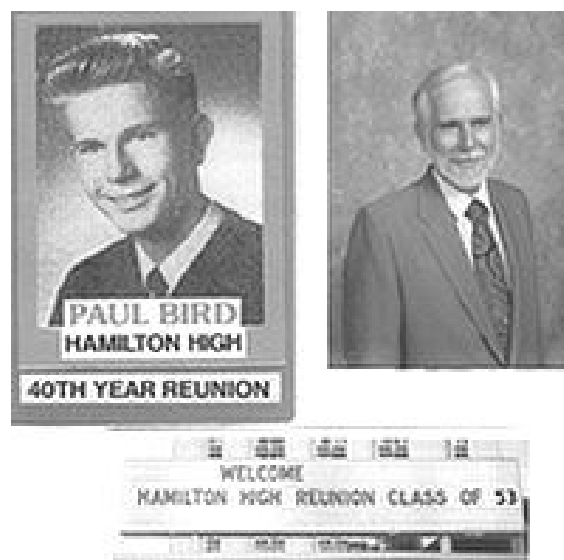
It seemed that in the intervening twenty years there were no more roads than there had been when I'd made my initial adventure. I finally did make it to the lake that I had trouble getting to before, but it was so changed that I didn't recognize it - and so passed it by. It was named "Frog Lake," and that name had been appropriate before as it had been full of those little critters. In fact, I'd tried spearing a few of them to eat. It hadn't been worth the effort, but now there was no life visible in the lake at all - it was just desolate and uninviting. I hiked on to another lake and settled there. There were some other campers on a small peninsula, so I went off to another side of the lake. Somehow that night I became terribly disoriented and lost, and spent the whole night wandering around in search of my camp. When I stumbled across the other campers again, I called out to them for the loan of a flashlight, then when they gave me one I went off in search of my camp. I spent the whole night searching for my camp, the flashlight batteries finally giving

out. At one point I even fell into a pit, but was not hurt - praise the Lord!

When it became daylight and I finally found my camp, I sank down in gratitude on the ground in my sleeping bag and slept fitfully. After a few hours, one of the other campers came to talk with me. When I returned the flashlight, they told me that I had actually gone off in the opposite direction from my camp the night before. I was amazed at that and considered how fortunate I had been - again due to God's merciful protection in spite of my foolishness - that I had not only not perished, but - despite stumbling over boulders and falling into the pit - I had not been harmed during my night's wandering.

As I sat talking with the other campers, I considered my situation, and came to the conclusion I could not possibly make it back to where my car was parked in time to report for my job. In fact, my physical condition was weakening to the point where there was a question whether I would be able to hike back at all. Since the other campers had packed in and were expecting the pack horses to be brought back soon, I asked if they would request help for me when they returned to the pack station. They consulted among themselves and decided that two of them would hike back to the station on foot - thus freeing two horses, one for me to ride back on. When we finally reached the station after quite a long ride (including a narrow stretch by a drop of several hundred feet), one of the campers insisted on giving me a ride back to my car, still some twenty miles away. My heavenly Father had protected and provided for me again, in spite of my foolishness. Praise His wondrous name!

During the 1980s, I reflected at times on all the people I'd known the first thirty-four years of my life before I became a Christian, and how I would have liked to have been able to be a witness to them for Jesus. I thought, wouldn't it be neat if God would take me back to sometime in my childhood, knowing what I know now about the reality of a relationship with Jesus Christ, so I could actually witness to all those people I knew (including of course my family). But God had another way of answering my prayer. He opened the door for me to attend the 40th reunion of my graduating high school class in October, 1993. There I did get the opportunity to share my faith, but there were a few surprises also. One was renewing a relationship with a school-chum I used to play with in grammar school. It turned out that he is a messianic Jew and told me about about his walk with Jesus. His testimony electrified me!



While there I also met old acquaintances I knew while attending the local Methodist church in high school and college and received an invitation from one to visit them. I did this, and found

that though the whole family attends the Methodist Church (has done so faithfully for decades), and sings in the church choir as we did back during High school days, their view of reality is an odd mixture of science and religion - the Bible to this family is full of "myths and legends!" In fact she had been at the Wesley Fellowship meeting at UCLA the evening that infamous answer, "You can't know God," had been given – though when I brought it up to her she defended the answer, and even told me, "Jesus' disciples were just ignorant fishermen – what do they know?!?" At another later general reunion of all the alumni at my old high school, I met a woman I had known through school starting back at the second or third grade! I had a very enjoyable time with her and her family, but when I tried to talk about Jesus with her, she cut me off sharply by telling me, "I was baptized in the Catholic church as a baby." Sorry, but that does not gain you admittance to God's heaven - only a born-again belief on Jesus, God's Son, does!

"But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment; and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen." (Matt 22:11-14)

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Eph 2:8-10)

Chapter Sixteen

“I Weep Over This City.....”

In the spring of 1995, God took me on an amazing walk of faith - perhaps the hardest I have yet encountered. One day, I realized memories were suddenly flooding in on me concerning Patty, the young woman I had known in Washington, D.C. back in 1958 when I was stationed with the Army at Ft. Holabird in Baltimore, Maryland. The memories involved the feelings I had upon receiving her letter breaking off our relationship after I moved to California and was stationed at the Army Language School (later the Defense Language Institute) in Monterey. I had no idea why all of a sudden totally "out of the blue" these feelings suddenly overwhelmed me, as if they were fresh from the receipt of her letter back in 1958. I had no contact with her at all during these years, so had no idea whether she was dead or alive or what her situation was.

As I sought the Lord for understanding, it came to my mind that she had been one of the those whom I had asked the Lord to "cross my path" with in order to apologize for spurning what she had tried so lovingly and humbly to tell me about the reality of God and Jesus Christ. In any case, it seemed that the Lord was pointing me in the direction of making contact with her again, so I began prayerfully making plans. As I did so, I claimed Rev. 3:7 and asked the Lord to either "close" or "open" doors according to His will as I walked forward in faith in the direction He had indicated. The first thing I did was to inquire about flights to D.C., and then to apply for a week's vacation in May. Not very much time to find someone I had not seen or had contact with for 37 years, but if God wanted it done - it would be done. Daily I prayed as I drove on my job, and my mind went off in many directions, wondering what situation Patty would be in when I found her,

speculating concerning the possibilities. Differentiating between this and the Lord's voice was not easy as I was so emotionally involved in the possibility of seeing her again after so long a time.

Finally the time came for me to fly to D.C., which I did, arriving on a weekend. After getting settled into a local inexpensive hotel, I immediately began my search. Initially I rented a car, and with a list of the churches of the denomination I remembered my friend had been a member of, began visiting them, hoping to recognize the one I attended at her invitation in '58, thinking perhaps I could gain some information about her whereabouts. It turned out to be fruitless, and when I did finally find her, she told me that her church had disbanded many years before, and the building where it had been located was now an office building. I also had a list of phone numbers of people with her maiden name that I was phoning in hopes of finding a relative that could help me locate her. But she told me later that there were no relatives in D.C. itself - only in surrounding states - so that proved fruitless as well. I did research at the library, and found the address of her parent's home where she had lived when I had known her. When I mentioned her parents' names to the current owners, they told me they knew nothing of their whereabouts.

On Tuesday of my vacation, I decided prayerfully I might try the option of hiring a private detective to help. Looking in the Yellow Pages and making some phone calls, I decided to focus on one particular agency. Upon making contact with the owner on Wednesday, he decided to take my case personally after hearing it, and taking in hand the information I had developed at the library, he began to compare it with information he had on a computer CD. One of the names he

developed this way turned out to be Patty's aunt, and phoning her house we found she was not at home so left a message. While the detective agency owner and I conversed, she returned the call. The detective answered the phone and then handed it to me. I found that the aunt was a very friendly lady, and when I explained that I wanted to find her niece to apologize to her and why, she gave me Patty's phone number and address in South Carolina. We then called the phone number given us, and a man answered the phone. It turned out to be Patty's husband. I explained to him that I wanted to make contact with his wife and why. He took my name and the phone number of the hotel at which I was staying and told me she would call me that evening, which she indeed did. Patty promptly invited me to be her "house guest" for the remainder of the week at her home. After hanging up the phone, and consulting the Yellow Pages, I found an airline that could provide me with a round-trip flight to the city in which my friend lived. Then, breathing a sigh of relief and rejoicing that the Lord had again done the "impossible," I phoned my sister in Ohio (who all this time had been providing welcome encouragement) and simply said, "Bingo!"

I arrived somewhat the worse for wear, Patty greeted me at the airport, and we immediately began becoming re-acquainted. We talked and talked, she showed me around town and we played miniature golf. The "Jesus March" took place locally at that time as well as nationally and we followed the marchers in her car till they ended at a local high school sports field. But I understood that though the Lord was honoring my request to have the opportunity to apologize to her (which she graciously accepted), He had me there for His reasons as well. I had observed, while talking with her husband over the phone, that he was not saved. So she did not have the spiritual leadership he needed to provide her, nor the "covering" that would bring. She told me

that her parents had both died soon after our relationship had dissolved in '59, and her church had ceased to exist soon after that. She had never attended a church since then, which greatly surprised me as she had been avidly involved in her church when I had known her previously. So she had been missing that "covering" as well. Further, in seeking healing for a very sick friend she had become involved in the occult world of Edgar Cayce. I urged her to find a church that would provide proper fellowship and spiritual help to her (and suggested joining a woman's prayer group).

Upon returning back to Oakland I wrote her some letters expressing what I felt was the mind of the Lord concerning the above subjects, plus sending her a copy of Johanna Michaelson's book, "The Beautiful Side of Evil." The latter dealt with the author's experiences in the occult, and I pointed Patty toward what the book had to say in warning about Cayce. I also wrote a letter to her husband, telling him of his need to be born again and make Jesus Christ his Lord, and to provide proper spiritual leadership for his wife. I remarked to Patty in parting how interesting it was that so many years ago I was the one who needed to be ministered to, and now the roles seemed reversed. But God also brought something else to my attention of which I had not been previously aware. He showed me that He had me involved three times previously in marital situations where the wife was a believer and the husband was either unsaved or back-slidden. In the two cases where he was unsaved, I saw him become born-again. In one of those situations, he became radically involved in God's kingdom. In the other case, I personally prayed with the husband as he invited Christ into his life. The back-slidden husband I saw recommit himself to his marriage, and begin to submit himself to God's leading. I was amazed when God showed me

these things he had used me in that I had not at the time been aware of, and I glorified Him. Eleven years later I learned that Patty had gone to be with the Lord sometime during the intervening years, so I rejoiced that the Lord had given me the opportunity to visit her and also that I would again see her in heaven!

After returning to the west coast, the Lord one day spoke to me about Washington, D.C. As He had given me a vision in 1983 regarding San Francisco (a vision that left me crying out for its inhabitants), so God also gave me one in 1995 for Washington, D.C. "*I weep over this city as I wept over Jerusalem.*" He told me. I felt the Lord's pain and sadness concerning this city, and wept also.

*And when he drew near and saw the city he wept over it, saying, "**Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace!** But now they are hid from your eyes. For the days shall come upon you, when your enemies will cast up a bank about you and surround you, and hem you in on every side, and dash you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave one stone upon another in you; **because you did not know the time of your visitation.**"*

(Luke 19:41-44)

I wondered at the fact that Jesus was looking at the capital city of the US in the same way as He had Jerusalem – the most important city in the world! He was placing equal significance on both! I thought about Israel's history – God had called that nation into existence to be a witness to Him before the other nations of the world, but they had failed doing that by turning to other “gods,” for which He had judged them. It is historical fact that a covenant with God was made during the

founding of America. Subsequently, God has greatly blessed the US. In fact, there is no other explanation for the benefits we have enjoyed and the fact the US has become the most blessed nation in the history of the world – even becoming also a “second home” for Jews as millions settled here , as well as in other nations of the world during their dispersion.

In 1892, the US Supreme Court ruled, “*This is a Christian nation,*” and regularly referred to the Bible and cited it as the source for their decisions. A century later, the US Supreme Court reversed itself, declaring “*a wall of separation between church and state*” now existed where there had been none before. In 1962, prayer in public schools was banned. As it had at first recognized the covenantal relationship the US had with God, the Court now deliberately and without precedent turned its back on that covenant and rejected God's role in the governance of our nation – just as Israel had turned its back on God , and rejected Jesus.

Jesus had prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem by an invading army. Jerusalem was later destroyed by an invading Roman army. So let us consider how this might apply to Washington, D.C It is common knowledge that the US will probably suffer a nuclear attack – the question seems not to be “if,” but when. Many hundreds of prophesies, dreams and visions have been claimed concerning not only nuclear attack, but also invasion by other nations. I also have received what I consider dreams both of nuclear attack and foreign invasion against the US.

"And even now the axe of God's judgment is poised to chop down every unproductive tree.

They will be chopped and burned. (Matt 3:10 TLB)

We have heard a report from the LORD, And an envoy has been sent among the nations saying,

“Arise and let us go against her for battle”--

"Behold, I will make you small among the nations; You are greatly despised.

The arrogance of your heart has deceived you, You who live in the clefts of the rock,

In the loftiness of your dwelling place, Who say in your heart,

' Who will bring me down to earth?'

“Though you build high like the eagle, Though you set your nest among the stars,

From there I will bring you down," declares the LORD. (Obad. 1-4)

Furthermore, the US appears to be receiving warning signs of coming judgment in the form of various “natural” disasters that have increased far beyond what is considered normal in number and intensity. We have a president who is poor at communicating with his public and is sending mixed signals with his decision-making. He confesses to a belief in Christ, and like the many others in the US who also profess such belief, his decisions often show lack of knowledge of Scriptural truth - probably influenced by bad advice by others who have good intentions but also lack true knowledge of Scripture. While we know that our God is sovereign over the affairs of mankind, we also know that His sovereign decisions concerning us take into consideration our own free-will decisions. An excellent example of this is the relationship Moses had with God and the record of dialogues between them recorded in the Torah.

There are two extremely worrisome problems concerning some of President Bush's decisions. Both of them reflect deceptions obviously brought on by Satan, “*the father of lies* (John. 8:44).”

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. (Eph 6:12-13)

One is the deception the president apparently accepts which states that God abolished His covenant with Israel in the first century, rejecting them in favor of His Church, so the re-establishment of the nation of Israel is believed to be of no prophetic significance. This is called Replacement Theology, and it is obviously wrong to anyone who truly knows the God of the Bible, who does not break His covenants – *God is not a man, that He should lie. (Num. 23:19)*

"I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." (Gen 17:7-8)

If God broke His promises, of what use would our “faith” be? But that is nonsense. There is no need for discussion concerning God's faithfulness. President Bush – in an incredibly irresponsible act - insisted that Israel embark on a “land for peace” program with their enemies as a condition of the US underwriting a \$5 billion loan for them from the World Bank. The US has recorded an unusual number and intensity of “natural disasters” occurring in our nation every time that our president does or says something that goes against Israel's best interests. Hurricane

Katrina happened right after Israel's forced evacuation from Gaza. Though these “natural disasters” do appear to be judgmental warnings from God, I am wondering if President Bush's unwise decisions regarding Israel are not also setting the stage for the appearance of the Antichrist.

The other deception involves the president's misconceptions concerning Islam. In a speech at a White House dinner given to honor Ramadan, the Muslim religious holiday, President Bush stated,

. . . this season commemorates the revelation of God's word in the holy Koran to the prophet Muhammad.

We see in Islam a religion that traces its origins back to God's call on Abraham . . .

Islam has declared both Jews and Christians their mortal enemies. President Bush's belief that Allah is another name for the God of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God revealed by Jesus Christ, His Son, is a major deception, and in fact blasphemous. It is amazing that a Muslim leader has not strongly corrected our president for his error. But I heard the imam of a local mosque here in a town in the US state on a TV interview that “*We serve the same God as the Christians.*” If I had been there, I would have immediately asked him, “*We Christians worship the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of Israel – is that the God you worship?*” Any true believer in Jesus Christ who knows his God, knows Allah is NOT whom he or she worships. But President Bush attends a Methodist church. Remember the experience I said I had attending a Methodist church and the Methodist leader who said, “*You can't really know God.*” Pray that President Bush's eyes are opened to the truth!

“I know (perceive, have knowledge of, and am acquainted with) Him Whom I have believed (adhered to and trusted in and relied on).” (2 Tim 1:12 AMP)

We need to pray for President Bush not only because he is president, but because he is apparently our brother-in-Christ. He has awesome responsibilities at a very crucial point in history. Turning our back on God is, according to the Bible, cause enough for God's judgment. But there are the additional sins of pressuring Israel to give up land to its enemies, the murder of millions of unborn babies, tolerance of various forms of sexual perversion, etc. All this places the US among the most wicked nations of the earth.

As I look at our flag, I remember how impressed by it I had been as a child during World War Two, when brave men were fighting to preserve freedom against evil men like Adolf Hitler. And when I had later submitted to the draft and served in the US Army, I had done so knowing many others had given their lives for the preservation of what our flag stood for and I would also if necessary. But as I look now on our flag, it seems to be drooping in shame and disgrace , weeping as the US is polluted, defiled and corrupted by the wrong decisions and actions of foolish men and women. I believe that as happened twenty-five hundred years ago in Babylon, a hand is now writing on the walls of our governmental buildings, *“Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin - God has numbered the days of your nation and brought it to an end, you have been weighed in His balances and found wanting, your nation is divided and given to others.”* (Dan. 5:25-28)

Those who claim 2 Chronicles 7:14 must understand that the method God will use to *“heal (our) land”* will be to judge sin. It is only through His judgment of sin and repentance of those

committing sin that a nation can be ultimately healed. We must remember, Jesus died for the inhabitants of all nations of the world, not for the nations themselves. God is more interested in the eternal destiny of the **people** of America (and of the world) than He is in America's survival as a nation. Nations are only important to God as they facilitate His purposes concerning His kingdom and His people, and they rise or fall accordingly.

*All nations before Him are as nothing;
and they are counted to Him less than nothing, and vanity. (Isa. 40:17)*

Though we should be praying for the leaders of the country we live in while on the earth as well as its inhabitants, our first priority is to be Ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20)

*“Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us;
we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”*

In addition to praying according to our understanding of 2 Chronicles 7:14, we should also be out on the streets appealing to the lost, warning them of the need to repent, and of the coming judgment.

Instead of being “prosperity-minded,” which our Savior never told us to be, we should work to reach out to the lost with the gospel, knowing the timing of our Lord's call to us in God's hands:

But our homeland is in heaven where our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, is; and we are looking forward to his return from there. When he comes back, he will take these dying bodies of ours and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same mighty power

that he will use to conquer all else everywhere. (Phil 3:20-1 TLB)

The moment the rapture occurs, and we find ourselves in heaven, we will instantly forget all about our earthly responsibilities in the indescribable joy of being with God in heaven!

As a member of the SOS team, I became immersed in the regimen of evangelization of San Francisco as that was the main burden of the house that I shared with the other members of SOS. The "City," as San Francisco was referred to by its inhabitants, had diverse areas in it that we would take turns visiting. There was the annual Chinatown parade, and we would spend most of that day and evening preaching and handing out tracts to the crowds of spectators attending that colorful event. There was also an annual "Gay Pride Parade," but we would usually prefer not to attend that as it was a very volatile situation, instead choosing periodically to visit the Castro Street area where the militant homosexuals lived. There we did not openly preach as we did at other sites because of the hostility of the "Gays" to the Gospel. Rather we more quietly passed out tracts to passers-by on the sidewalks and spoke individually to whomever we could. I found that if I visited that area alone, the intense spiritual noxiousness of the Castro district became quickly overwhelming to me, so I restricted my time there to when we went as a team. We would also visit the section where the strip clubs were located, and that was initially of some concern to me because I had many years previously gone there as an unbeliever in my college days and knew that because of my prior involvement with the "Playboy" world of scantily clad women I might have problems witnessing. But I found that God provided sufficient grace, and being covered by prayer and being a member of a "team," I could talk with the women outside the

clubs easily and not be negatively affected by their state of undress.

During the day on Saturday, we would often meet on the City's main street near a tram "turnaround," near local stores and the subway where there were always crowds of people and there we would preach, hand out tracts, etc. Sometimes we would go over to Union Square a few blocks away where there were benches for people to sit on and set up a stage there for a visiting group to sing while we did our witnessing. Then there was Polk Street, where the runaway kids congregated - just young teenagers, selling their bodies for drugs and food. It was heart-rending to see them play "hop-scotch" on the sidewalk in front of the local shops as if they were kids in front of their parents homes. But try to talk to them about Jesus and give them tracts and they would react demonically, spitting on us and burning our tracts. A local PBS TV station had done a story about one of the boys that had come there some years before from Walnut Creek, a picturesque town across the bay. His parents had a very nice house in a good section of town. He spent some time being part of the life on Polk Street. before he finally returned to his parents' house. The garbage man, making his rounds soon after, found the boy had hanged himself from a tree in the parkway in front of the house.

Of course there was also the infamous Haight-Ashbury district with its attempts at recapturing the 1960s lifestyle. But the pathos here was as touching as Polk Street. Then there was the "Mission District," a section of the City so tough the police did not like going into it as it was ruled by gangs and killings were frequent. One evening when we went there, I began talking with a pimp and one of his girls. He suddenly stuck his face close to mine and in a very ugly manner

told me, *"I have a piece in my pocket with a bullet with your name on it."* I had not the slightest doubt that he was telling me the truth, but since I had settled in my heart many years before the priority of the Gospel, I just said to myself with a certain excitement of anticipation that arose in me in such situations, *"I might be with the Lord in the next five minutes,"* and continued to talk to him about Jesus and his need to be saved with a smile on my face. When he saw that I was not intimidated by what he had said, his expression changed and he conversed with me for some time before finally leaving. Later, thinking this over, I realized that the actual joy I had felt in response to his threat to shoot me was supernaturally from the Holy Spirit and was God's promise of the divine joy I would feel at the time I might actually experience martyrdom.

San Francisco is a very hard place in which to evangelize. I would not recommend it for those who have not had much experience in street-witnessing except for the very excellent training that the SOS annual summer outreach provides. It is a very "hard-nosed" city and has had a number of warnings from God through visitations by God's people and the earthquakes the City has suffered. The set of mind is a very good example of what Jesus said in Matt. 24:37-39:

"For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be."

It is not an easy thing to stand for hours trying to communicate with the many people that pass by with little visible results. But there are those who do respond, and they are certainly worth the

effort. I remember the homosexual who remained for hours one afternoon and evening with us, weeping very real tears of frustration because he felt he was so bound by his sin that he could not possibly succeed in being freed from it. But as we spoke to him of God's power to deliver even from what appeared to be the worst of bondages, and he saw and received the ministry that we were involved in that evening, he finally let God do the work that was necessary in his life and left us with joy in his heart. But of course, intense follow-up is necessary in such cases and we had subsequently to work with him to make sure that he was able to leave his sinful surroundings and become part of a church body that would help him continue successfully in his new-found life with Jesus. There seems to be no sin that places its prisoner in worse bondage than sexual sin. The demonic hold is such that it is exceedingly hard to be delivered from, taking much effort at prayer, fasting and discipleship to do so. Spirit-filled fellowship can be a key element in deliverance, but of course necessitates a proper attitude of love and transparency be displayed.

But I must say that I found San Francisco to be the hardest of all the places I have been in (in the "free" world) to evangelize. The spiritual struggle is exceedingly intense there. The homosexuals involved in the administration of the city are very influential, and their flag flies above city hall. The enemy is well-entrenched in San Francisco, and it is my conclusion that individuals will continue to be brought into the "Ark" of salvation as long as God keeps the door open, but the City itself will never repent and will instead perish. When God finally brought me there in 1992, I asked Him to verify the vision He had given me in 1983 by confirmation through visions also given by Him to others, and He did that.

In September, 1995 the opportunity to exchange living quarters with another brother presented itself and he and his wife took my place in the SOS household while I moved into the apartment his family had formerly occupied - the "Shiloh Hilton," an apartment building filled mostly with Christians who attended the nearby Shiloh Christian Fellowship Church. I was glad to move out of the SOS house, nevertheless from time to time I joined the SOS members in their street ministry. In 1997, I flew to Ohio to attend the wedding of my nephew, Donnie, who had been born-again the previous Thanksgiving following an intense spiritual struggle. At a church service after the wedding (they asked me to take the photos, which God really blessed - they turned out so well!), I contemplated God's wonderful answer to prayer. On my right was my sister, Sylvia, whose salvation I had prayed for twelve years till she gave her heart to the Lord in 1981. Toward the end of that time, after her first husband had died, I had prayed for a godly man to come into her life and help lead her to God. Carl, the answer to that prayer and my sister's husband, was sitting to her right. I had also prayed that they find a good church home, and the one whose service we were attending was the answer to that prayer. They have enthusiastically attended it for some years now. And of course, I had been praying for my sister's three children, and my nephew, Donny, sitting to my left (who had given his heart to Jesus the previous Thanksgiving) was an answer to that prayer that is still ongoing for his brother and sister. The woman he had just married - Gloria, a godly woman - was a member of my sister's church.

Of course God answers prayer in Oakland as well. As I daily took the bus to work, I had opportunities to share my faith in addition to leaving tracts on the bus. One morning, I met a Chinese lady I had not seen in many months. She recognized me and sat down next to me. To my

surprise, she began sharing that she was attending a Chinese church, and added that it was good to meditate on Jesus Christ, for *"He is the only way!"* she said. My eyes got wide as I told her, *"But I remember so many months ago I tried to tell you about that, but you told me you had rejected God and had decided to become an atheist."* (She had told me that very loudly and heatedly, as a matter of fact.) *"I know,"* she humbly replied, *"I was wrong!"* I told her, *"I prayed for you."* Just that one bit of testimony, though it does not stand alone, is certainly nevertheless by itself worth the eight years I lived in Oakland. Oakland is not a place I would choose to live in, there is very much turmoil, tragedy and racial tension, but God (those two little words have come to be very meaningful in my life) is doing a very good work there.

The daytime job I had found in 1992 (working as a courier of a medical lab) that succeeded my position in telemarketing was running into problems. There was a co-worker who was causing most everyone trouble, especially me, but over the many months we were both there I saw God change that situation in response to prayer to where we became quite friendly. There was another very attractive Jewish atheist (oxymoron!) co-worker with whom I talked quite often about God. She came back one time from a week's vacation and told me she had been down to the Los Angeles area with other Jewish atheist friends celebrating Passover! I couldn't keep myself from bursting out in laughter at the contradictions apparent in that statement, and she smiled too. I listened as she tried to explain their thinking behind doing that, then told her the historical source for the Passover was the Bible, and God had ordained it. Of course, the Jews only exist as a people because God separated them out unto Himself. Anyway, she allowed me to give her a Bible, for which I rejoiced.

But the company itself was proving to have the worst management problems I had ever encountered, changing hands several times during the few years I was there. It became apparent that this was also reflected at the various clinics. The problem became so troublesome that it was soon apparent to me that God's hand of judgment was on the company and I began stating that to other employees. Then a letter by the company president was released to the employees concerning that fact that the company was being charged with defrauding the Welfare Department by the US Government. I wrote a letter to the company president which stated in part, *"As a courier.....for the last four and one-half years, I have done my best to serve our clients' needs. Your memorandum.....saddened, distressed and disgusted me. It is obvious there are persons in management who have engaged in illegal activities and should apparently be in prison, but remain free because of the payment of a \$5.2 million bribe.....the management seems characterized by foolish decisions.....One can only wonder whether the management was thinking of their 'professional image' when they engaged in the illegal activities described in your.....memorandum.....It reminds me of the story of 'The Emperor's New Clothes.'* management may think themselves qualified to hold their couriers accountable, yet obviously cannot provide a good example through their own actions. It's a case of 'Do what I say, not what I do.' Who holds management accountable? Obviously, the state and federal governments. Which is also sadly laughable. A case of the pot calling the kettle black." In a few days I received this reply from the company president: *"Thank you for your recent letter. As a recent hire as President and CEO, I too am bothered by the past business practices.....I can assure you that we have implemented a corporate compliance program which monitors all business activities. This*

will ensure that current and future activities will be conducted in a proper manner....."

Unfortunately, whatever "program" was "implemented" was a case of "too little too late" and it also became apparent to me that this company would go bankrupt and out of business, and again I told other employees this would be the case and it proved true.

So the company changed hands in 1998 and I was among those kept on by the new employers. I worked there for several months before it became apparent to me that the situation was getting very burdensome for me. I very much needed a vacation to rest and recuperate, but was not allowed to have one. As a matter of fact, my vacation leave was at its maximum and unless I took it I would lose it. So in the summer of 1999 I examined the possibility of an early retirement under Social Security benefits (I was sixty-four years old). I had received an invitation to rent a room in the house of a sister-in-Christ in Madisonville, Kentucky, so I prayerfully "knocked" on these doors and the Lord orchestrated the (1) resignation from my job, (2) successful application for retirement SS benefits and (3) move to Kentucky within a very short time.

A new chapter in my life had begun with a major change from the classification of "employed" to "retired." Also a very well appreciated change from hectic big-city life to small town. Ah, peace and quiet - a place where I could sleep without the earplugs I had grown accustomed to using every night in Oakland. I arrived in Madisonville the end of August and stayed there till June of the following year. During that time I became part of a local small but vibrant and lovingly involved church. I especially appreciated the weekly home Bible studies nearby (both the church and the Bible studies were within a five-ten minute walk of where I lived). We were once also

surprised by a visit from the a local newspaper and an impromptu interview concerning the "10 Commandments" sign posted on our front lawn for passers-by to see. During my stay there, we found that another of the residents of our house presented particular problems that - because of their demonic nature - are better kept private. Nevertheless, the situation involved with this person became such that first she, then I, had to move out of the house.

But since my nephew and his wife in West Virginia had apparently been praying for the Lord to bring me to their area, that is where I next wound up. However, while that was developing, so was the possibility of a trip overseas sponsored by the mission I had worked for twenty years ago. When I shared the details of the proposed trip with my friends on the Internet , two of them surprised me by contributing equal amounts of money independent of one another! So as I made plans to move from Madisonville, Kentucky to Huntington, West Virginia - I also had to make plans to make a major month-long trip into eastern Europe involving traveling in ten countries! "Retirement" was turning out to be more involved than I had thought!

In all the moving that I had done over the years, this was the first time that a move and a simultaneously planned mission trip had nothing to do with each other. Though additional stress was involved because of that fact, and the enemy tried his best of course to upset our plans, both the move and the trip were accomplished. My sister and her husband drove me to the airport. So in July , 2000, I flew to London, England where I was met first by a DOHI coworker and then the director of the mission. We stayed at the local mission branch, picking up another passenger. Then we made the channel crossing from Dover to Calais, France on a hovercraft. We visited

another mission branch in France to pick up supplies and pack our van and took off, making stops in Belgium and Germany at other mission branches.

Then we traveled through Poland to Ukraine, where our first stop was in Lvov. Here we met with Pastor Misha of New Life Prison Fellowship, who is one of the hardest working, most dedicated ministers I have seen anywhere. He first took us to an orphanage, where services were held. During this, I was seated, and a little boy came up to me and held onto me, and I put my arm around his shoulders in response. Nothing was said and after a while he walked away. Next we visited a boy's prison, where many of the boys had received prison sentences for merely stealing food in order to survive. Life on the streets, especially in a poor country, is very hard.

After the boys prison, we visited a prison hospital. The latter was like nightmarish experience, unimaginably depressing and repulsive in appearance. That it was considered a "hospital" for patients with serious cases of cancer, tuberculosis, etc., was beyond belief. Inmates were crowded seven to a cell, almost no ventilation and open latrines near the entrance to each cell. The smell was of course not pleasant. We visited quite a number of these cells, where the Gospel was preached and prayers were said with the prisoners. It was a taste of hell on earth, made all the more depressing because of the knowledge there was a real hell even worse.....

Pastor Misha also showed us the Youth Ministry Center being renovated for use by street children, and a sports field given by local government authorities. We gave him sports equipment we had picked up from the DOHI warehouse in France and brought in to be used to reach out to

interested youths living on the streets, and also funds to help his ministries.

In historic Kiev I ate “Chicken Kiev” at a local restaurant and also visited a MacDonald's (where the food quality was much better than in the US – it would have had to be really awful to be worse quality!). We visited rehabilitation centers for children with cerebral palsy, a pastor who has a ministry to youths, and a general purpose outreach center. In Enakievo, we stayed at a daycare center for street children, which had a soup kitchen that fed them daily. Children are delightful wherever they are found, but it is so sad to see them and their families in such incredible poverty! We contributed funds as we had to the others we had visited elsewhere.

Having visited Kiev was exciting, but now we headed to Odessa where we spent several days mainly sight-seeing. I felt I had achieved another goal in life when I had walked up the famous “Odessa steps,” stood at the top and looked out at the Black Sea. There were some things I saw in the open air markets I wished I had room in my suitcase to buy. But we were not in Odessa to play tourist, though it was wonderful to see where a large building that had formerly been used as communist headquarters was now advertising Christian activities!

Nevertheless, the enemy kept us occupied with such misadventures that when we were finally able to pass out of Ukraine, through a presumptuous little country called by the unlikely name of Transdnistria (it reminded me of the movie “The Mouse That Roared”), and finally into Moldavia we knew that it had only been made possible by the divine guidance of God's Holy Spirit! At one point in our journey, we found that someone had placed long branches with vicious

looking three-inch thorns across the road that we were only able to avoid because we were not driving too fast! As we stopped to move them out of the way, we were glad that a local police officer was accompanying us, otherwise who knows what danger might have befallen us from someone hidden nearby!

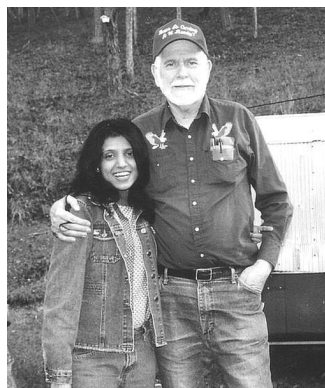
But finally we arrived in Kishinev, Moldavia where we dropped off some material at a printer's office for the printing of the Romanian Open Bible, then into Romania where we stopped at Hope Farm – a shelter for homeless youth. After that, we headed for an orphanage in Otelu Rosu. Even though we were only there for a very short time, it seemed that I met every one of the one hundred fifty children personally, taking many photos as I had throughout the trip.

Then we crossed through Hungary, Austria and into Germany. I requested to be dropped off in Luxembourg, from where I caught the train to Paris. On a previous stay in Paris (when I was stationed with the US Army in Munich, Germany 1960-62) my expensive 16mm motion picture camera had been stolen. This time, a pickpocket got my wallet! From Paris, I flew back to the US, where my sister and her husband met me and put me up (or put up with me) for a time before I moved into Huntington, West Virginia.

One of the most amazing things that has transpired after I was born-again in 1969, was God crossing my path with young women who it turned out seemed to need an older man (a "father image") to talk with. One of them was the wife of a friend with whom I had stayed in Monterey, California, that I told about previously who had thanked me for talking with her - as her own

father (who lived nearby) would not. That surprised me, but when a young woman suddenly started talking with me after a Bible study about problems with her own father, I realized God was having me involved in something new. As she talked, I realized how the enemy could intervene in these situations and so claimed the blood of Jesus, asking God to have sovereign control in order that whatever He wanted to accomplish would not be interfered with either by my flesh or the enemy's wiles. Over the subsequent years, these meetings were kept holy before the Lord as I talked with the women with whom God would cross my path.

It was only natural that I would come to desire having a daughter of my own. One day, sitting in a fast-food restaurant in Berkeley, I noticed some young women sitting nearby eating and simply remarked, *"Lord, I sure would like a daughter,"* leaving the particulars in His capable hands. Several years later, in 2001 - after I had moved to West Virginia, I began receiving emails from a young woman who lived in Malaysia who had seen my posting in Christian Pen Pals. She decided she wanted me to be the father for whom she had desperately cried out to God. Our relationship has blossomed into such a close bond as we have come to love each other very deeply. She traveled from Malaysia to visit me for three months starting October, 2003.



In January, 2004, I traveled with her to Malaysia to visit three months with her family. I again visited Hanah and her family in Malaysia during the first four months of 2005.

Chapter Seventeen

Hanah

What can I say about Hanah? What words would there be in either profusion or summary, or even a poem, that could adequately express my feelings about her presence in my life? The love of a daughter for her “papa” has become such a wondrous experience in my life, exceeded in importance only by the encounter with God that I described previously. Near the beginning of 1943, my mother and father had come into my room unexpectedly (I was seven years old), and my mother told me she was going to have a baby. Then she asked me, “*What would you like – a brother or a sister?*” I looked at her for a moment, then at dad. I was amazed by the question, and that my parents would care what I thought - that they thought I had a choice concerning the matter. But I considered: having a brother would be neat, but somehow it seemed to me that having a little sister would be even “neater!” So I told my mom, “*A sister!*” My parents gave me one last look – my dad's look was inscrutable - then without further talk left the room. In July my mother gave birth to a baby girl. I indeed had a sister!



To this day, I have no idea why my mother asked me that question. Maybe when I see her again in heaven I will remember to ask her. But for now it remains for me a mystery. Even though there was a time or two while we were growing up that I wondered if it were possible to trade my little sister Sylvia in for a brother, at this point I can tell everyone honestly – I have a very wonderful sister whom I love very much, and I am glad my request was granted!

I am also so very glad that the God I have come to know better during the years described in this book is sincerely concerned in an extraordinarily loving way for my welfare and every aspect of my life, as He also is for countless millions of other members of His family who look to Him as their own personal, “*Abba, Father!*” (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 6:4) Many years ago, as before recounted, I asked God a favor that I immediately felt guilty about bothering Him with. When I knew He wanted to take me out on the mission field, I requested, “*Could You please included some travel?*”

Fifteen years later I counted up all the times He had moved me – sometimes from one country to another. He had answered my simple little request in His own Ephesians 3:20 way - “*exceedingly abundantly beyond my imagination!*” During the same period of time, I had read the little book, “*God's Smuggler*” by Brother Andrew and had volunteered myself for similar ministry in a brief sentence – and that had also been answered in an Ephesians 3:20 manner.

And now Hanah had come into my life in answer to a very brief request I had made, “*I sure would like a daughter,*” was all I had said. All the promises that I had come across in the Bible

since I had started reading it so many years before were as infinitely beyond coming to an end of as was God's own love.

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. (Eph 2:10)

What a wealth of true treasure is in this verse! “*Workmanship*” is from the Greek “*poiema*” from which comes our word, “*poem.*” Since the first day that I began reading my Bible so many years ago I have been discovering the “*works which God prepared beforehand*” as I walk in faith, my hand in His. What an adventure it has been discovering what God “*prepared beforehand*” for me here to “*walk in*” - and yet it must be only a taste of what eternity will bring!

Here is my God-daughter Hanah's testimony in her own words::

I am Hanah Malar from West Malaysia. It is amazingly wonderful to share with you of how the Lord has touched my life. This testimony is for the Glory of God and is because of our risen Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God. Praise be to the Lord alone. Amen! I am a Malaysian Indian, and was born into a Hindu family. When my mother conceived me, she intended to abort me yet the Lord remembered me and saved me even while I was in mother's womb.

My mother passed away in 1979 when I was thirteen years of age. Though I had sisters and brothers, I was left alone most of the time as my father was a very busy medical officer. During this painful time I prayed one night not knowing about the true God, yet I cried for God's answer upon my life. One night, out of depression, I prayed to the

unknown God and pleaded that He would answer my prayer. Amazingly, that very night, I had a dream and I saw a Cross shining brightly on my face and I heard the voice of the Lord Jesus telling me that He is the answer to my prayer. Being very young and innocent, I wondered who this Jesus was all about, but I had this faith in me that He would be the Savior of my soul. During that time, there was no one to guide me in God's Word and I did not have the opportunity to attend a church.

From my youth I have loved to run. I love sports so much that I would imagine myself being a champion running a race. During my school days, I was never a runner though I would qualify during trials. I was not given the opportunity to run a race because my father, who was a medical doctor insisted that because I had a weak heart I should not run. To make matters more complicated, when I was sixteen years of age I was hospitalized and diagnosed as a heart patient as the doctor told me I had the heart of a forty-year-old woman. It was thus so evident to me I had a weak heart that my desire of being an athlete ended there. So, I thought I could only admire other athletes and never be one.

Some years later I was working as a secretary in Proton, a giant Malaysian corporation which holds sports activities yearly with its subsidiary companies. The contingents from all the twenty companies would join together to have a sports week in various places according to their sports events. I used to admire some of my friends who participated in the mini-marathon (five kilometers). I desired so much to join them, but then again I was reluctant because I had a weak heart.

I was a secretary in the public relations department and was directly under a manager and two deputy managers. My work load was too much. I can still remember the times when I was at my office late past midnight and still had not finished all the work which had been assigned to me. That was really tiring as I had to be at work again at 8:00 a.m. the next day.

While I was at Proton, I had a heart problem again and was sent for a medical test. The specialist confirmed that I had a weak heart and I needed much rest and as little stress as possible. Being only twenty-four years old, I felt my life was so dull and restricted. I wanted to break away from this situation and change my condition. I was tired of being called a weak-hearted person.

Even Proton had a record in the Human Resources department that there was this particular secretary in the Public Relations department who had a weak heart. What was worse was that all the other secretaries in the various twenty-four departments of Proton came to know that I had a weak heart.! That was really sad.

In Proton, secretaries are expected to be ten steps ahead of their superiors at all times and should be able to provide facts and figures at anytime needed. We needed to be very alert and energetic. I noticed that other secretaries had been talking ill about me and even condemned me that I am not fit to be a secretary at this busy Public Relations department which dealt so much with all the dealers from over the world.

Once, when I returned to my office after a medical check up, my manager was concerned about me. But an assistant manager sarcastically said to me that they predicted I would

die soon! That really hurt me. They had a very low opinion of me. I really wanted to change what they were saying about me. When I walked around in my company, some people would give me a sympathetic look. I hated that. I am not weak and I am not going to die young. No....Never. I needed a change.

Then came the announcement for the next “Company Run,” which was called the HICOM Games. It was a popular game in Proton and all the subsidiary companies joined this event. I desired in my heart to participate for the five kilometers race and wanted to represent my department and company. I was training on my own during the weekends and noticed that I was not that bad or slow and I realized the more I ran the better I felt in my heart. I could feel proper blood circulation passing through my heart and I enjoyed feeling healthy in my heart. Glory to God! The selection form came on my desk and I wrote my name on it. To my surprise the whole company knew that I filled in my name for the selection run! Oh....that was really a very sensitive time I had.

There was this particular assistant manager who came to me and told me that I should not participate in that selection because it will be an embarrassment for the Public Relations department as it was so obvious that I would not win the race. I told her that I would participate and I had the liberty to do so. No one could stop me. The company's potential runners complained to the Proton In-House-Clinic that I was trying to run the race and requested a physician by the name of Dr. Chellepan check on my medical history and, if required, to stop me from running the race in the fear that I might die!

Dr. Chellapan, being an athlete and a champion of the HICOM games under road races in

the Men's category for Proton, came to my office one day. He was such a kind and understanding man. He understood my passion for running the race and he called me to his office and encouraged me very much. But he told me that I needed to run a test run with him first as he wanted to observe how I responded to the run. After the run that evening, the good result was, that he told me my speed and my breathing techniques were good. That was really a booster for me and his statement really gave me the confidence I needed. So I qualified for the selection. I was the only participant who was tested before the company selection!

On the selection day, I saw many other runners of my company who would participate in the HICOM games. I was afraid though because they looked so strong and big. As I was standing there, the onlookers from my company made some hurting remarks...*"Hey, that girl is a heart patient, what is she doing here at the selection"* - and they even laughed at me so much. They told me not to disturb the other runners. What an insult!

But none of their statements hindered my passion for running the race, though I was really weak in my knees. No moral support at all except for Dr. Chellapan. He looked at me, patted my shoulders and said, *"Just run! You can do it!"* Yes, it is true I can do it, I thought to myself and just called on the name of Jesus.

"On your mark, Get Set.....Go!" The gun shot....and all the runners ran and I ran too. But I realized that the other runners overtook me and were right ahead of me. They were running a 5000 meter race like a 100 meter race. I was thinking to myself, *"Hey, you have another 4900 meters to go. Reserve your energy...come on!"* But I maintained my

speed.

As I continued to run, I was becoming stronger and I noticed that all the other runners were becoming weaker. And I was running constantly, determined to overtake all the other runners who were in front of me one by one until I reached the first runner who had been earlier so far ahead of me. I ran and paced with her for a while and I realized she was tired. Then I told myself, I am going to overtake her now and I sped up so far away from her that I could not see her from behind and I continued my race until to the end smoothly running very strongly. No one was ahead of me but I was the only runner on the road! Where were all the others?

As I came to the finish line....there was silence...no one could believe their eyes that I came in first. Well, I could not believe it myself! But, after a while, the whole company started to clap so much and Dr. Chellapan was so happy and told me, *"I know you could do it, I am proud of You!"* Yes, I did it. Yes, yes, yes, praise the Lord! God was with me, within me! Amen!

I was selected for the HICOM games. I ran the first HICOM games with all the other seasoned runners of my Company and from the subsidiary companies. There were some runners who were in the other companies who were under the Malaysian State level. To my surprise in that HICOM race I managed to overtake the best Malaysian State runner. That was really amazing. I never imagined even in my wildest dreams that I could overtake that Malaysian State runner. She was formerly the HICOM Champion. But, Praise God, this is a miracle for me. How did I ever manage to be the Champion? It is

God who had given me such strength. Glory to His Holy Name. I became the Champion for the HICOM games that year. That was the beginning of my life to be known as an athlete and a HICOM Champion under the woman's category.

Everything changed in my office. Gone were the days the staff members would call me *"The Weak Heart."* Now they had a new name for me: *"The Iron Woman, The Track Queen of Proton."* Everybody began to love me so much. I become the most famous secretary in Proton and all the other managers would praise me to my manager. All the people who had been talking nonsense about me before, admired me so much as if I were a celebrity.

Even the head of Proton would acknowledge me when I passed that his office and would call me by my name and would congratulate and encourage me so much and told me that I brought fame to Proton as my timing during my runs were far better than all the other runners. I continued to run for HICOM games for every year and was a champion all through that time. I was selected for Malaysian open runs and international runs too. Ever since then, I have run many road races in Malaysia and have been listed among the "Top Ten" in the Country. I majored in 10 kilometers and 26 kilometers races.

Finally, my childhood dream had been fulfilled: I am an athlete!

Today, as I sit and ponder about my life as an athlete, I have every reason to give glory to God alone for He has been there with me during my trials and pain. When I cried, He was there with me, when I was lonely and afraid, He cared for my fears. He understood the desires of my heart and fulfilled them. He walked with me, holding me and uplifting me

in my spirit. He chose to lift me up knowing that I was weak and without Him I would surely perish. He chose to love me first and showed to me that He is strong and mighty. He was strong in me during my weakness and transformed me into a very determined bold woman who is able to endure every arrow that flies her way. I never experience that weak heart anymore, for He lives in my heart and He is strong. Praise the Lord!



I now run a race for the Lord Jesus Christ. All praise and honor to Him who is mighty and powerful. What a wonder miracle-working GOD we have. AMEN!

At the age of twenty-one, I married and the next year I gave birth to my daughter and again I almost died on my delivery bed yet the Lord remembered me again and saved my life. Praise God, I was under the care of specialists and I survived! God's grace and mercy was upon me then, though I did not really have a close relationship with the Lord during that time.

My father passed away within two months after the birth of my daughter. After about two years, I felt very dry in my spirit. I knew there were things which I was doing which were very displeasing to the Lord. I had another dream of the Lord Jesus and saw Him in His passion nailed to the cross for my sins and I heard His voice telling me, *"Daughter after all that I have done for you, why haven't you trusted in me"?*

That dream has really brought me back to my senses and I realized how wrong I had been in my attitude. Yet I hold on onto this hope which has carried me on to this very day. I have seen many troubles and attacks of the enemy, yet I am standing strong for the Lord is strong in me. My faith in the Lord has grown day by day as I worship Him in the prayer room of my home and at church. Another amazing wonder the Lord has done for me is to use me as His vessel for His Kingdom.

By His wonderful grace, the Lord took me to India in May 2002, and made me to be a blessing to a pastor who is ministering in a very remote poor village in southern India. God by His mercy, blessed me with some finances to help this pastor in building a church in the village. By His grace the church building was completed on July 11, 2003. Many souls are being won for Christ in that village through the guidance of this pastor. God's word is so very true in my life. I still remember, I once received a prophecy that the Lord would take me to places where few have gone and I have pondered much on that prophecy yet God is very faithful in accomplishing His will upon my life.

Over the years, I have longed so much for a father's love. I know I have a Father in heaven who loves and cares for me. Some time ago, I had a very painful time emotionally

and one night I cried to the Lord so much for His hands to hold me and really longed for an earthly father. I so wished for a father in this world who would represent God's love to me. It is a miracle and an answered prayer when I came in contact with my "Papa Paul" who I came to know later also prayed for a daughter some years ago. I have this assurance that God has brought us together and has built this holy relationship as a father and daughter. I am so blessed by this gift of a "papa" God has given me apart from Himself my Father God in heaven. God by His faithful wings took me to visit my Godfather in West Virginia, USA, on October 19, 2003. My Godfather is such a blessing to me in my life. I know it is God's will that I should have this love of a father in the flesh, which is representing God's very love to me. All glory to His Name alone. Amen

Hanah has been attending a local church, and seminars held by visiting teachers. Her relationship with Jesus has greatly deepened, with the help of books that I left her to read, and the Lord has given her many songs to sing in worship to Him, as she accompanies herself on her guitar. I communicate with her almost daily via text messaging on our cell phones. We have also communicated using instant messaging on our computers. A few years ago, God told Hanah to write a psalm daily for a year. At the year's end she had well over three hundred psalms! One day, as we talked with each other over the Internet, we agreed to write a poem together. First Hanah would write a line, then I would. Here is the result:

The wind blows and brings a breeze of love to my ears

It drives away my fears

As I open my heart to listen...

There I heard this voice saying
“My heart is always open to your praying.”
What a joy it is when He says
“The prayers of the righteous are effective and powerful.”
His love clears my heart of all things sorrowful
And His grace grants every peace that I need
While His Word to me I heed
Submitting everything into His holy hands
Gladly submitting to His demands
For I know He sees what I can't see
He sees His Son...what I can be!

Hanah's husband, Anand, has been very gracious to me. We have become quite good friends and I have enjoyed having many talks with him. He is an avid watcher of world news on the television (and a great fan of President Bush!) and so I have also had opportunity to discuss in depth with him world events, also the situation involving the importance of Israel and other countries in the context of biblical prophecy.

Through Hanah I also became acquainted with Arul Kumar, the pastor whom Hanah visited during her trip to India, which she told about in her testimony above. Arul also has a wonderful testimony. He was born into a Hindu Brahmin family, and his father was a Hindu priest. He wrote me,

In this time, a Christian believer came to me and shared about the love of God. Even though I was not interested he gave me a Bible. I began to read it and was touched by Exodus 20:3 – 6, *“You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.”*

These words made me realize that there is only one God, who is Jesus Christ. He died for my sins. I found the love and acceptance from God. I received Jesus as my personal Savior. During that time I met a team of Youth With A Mission (YWAM) in Bombay. Through them, I heard about the Discipleship Training School (DTS), which is a school to train Christians to grow mature in there in Christ. God opened the door for me to go to the DTS/Madras in January 1996.

Next I went to the School of Evangelism and Pioneering (SOEP) in Siliguri, west Bengal in January, 1997. This school teaches how to share the gospel message with others and aims to form teams of committed believers to go to unreached people groups around the world. The school director encouraged me to share my faith in Jesus from my heart, to save the lost. God gave me a good opportunity to share his word in many unreached states like Maharashtra, Bihar, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. In July 1998, I came to Chennai. The Lord placed me in a village called

Padappai. Now I am reaching with His word here and around Padappai. Presently I am doing ministry in a Village called Venpakkam.

As Hanah calls me her “Papa,” so now does Arul, and I call him, “Son.” He is doing a marvelous work for the Lord in India, though he faces much opposition and the first church he raised up was destroyed by vandalism. He has since built another and continues the good work God has called him to do there.

In the latter part of 2001, I became acquainted with a very dear sister named Eunice who lived in Vancouver, B.C., Canada. She had read my testimony posted on my site online, was deeply touched by something I had written that she told me spoke convictingly to her. We instantly became good friends, speaking daily with each other via instant messaging on the Internet, and sometimes on the phone. I loved her musical-sounding “proper” British voice, though like my good friend “Birdie” whom I had known at L'Abri years earlier in Switzerland (now with the Lord), Eunice had a very keen sense of humor. She was a woman with a great deal of wisdom and a heart for the Lord. I enjoyed her immensely, and when I introduced her later to my God-daughter, Hanah they also became instant good friends – in fact, Hanah began almost immediately to call Eunice “Mummy.”

But one day Eunice phoned me and told me that she had discovered a lump on her neck. We discussed it and agreed she should check it out with her doctor. Unfortunately, it proved cancerous. When she called me with that news, she sounded very depressed because the pastor of her Anglican church had told her in effect that she should prepare herself for death. That church

leadership would respond with a confession of “death” rather than “life” (cursing instead of blessing) shocked me. So to help her, I opened my Bible and began to share scriptures with her that promised God's healing instead. Soon she felt better in her spirit, and sometime later asked if I would please come to Vancouver to be with her while she took chemotherapy. Of course I said would. I made plans to leave immediately, and at the end of June, 2002 found myself on a Greyhound bus headed for British Columbia from where I lived in West Virginia.

Eunice was even more delightful in person, if that was possible, and I enjoyed being with her despite the seriousness of her condition and her treatments. I had brought a couple of little booklets full of healing scriptures with me that I had bought for her at my church and we would daily read and claim them. People who knew her from various parts of the world, including her native England and Africa, seemed to be in one accord, stating that they felt God has said He would heal her, and I strongly felt that also. However, I could see that Eunice was under a terrible strain apart from her illness. It had to do with family matters, the details of which I cannot repeat here because of their extremely personal nature. On the evening of the ninth of July, I bid her good-night, hugged her, and left her apartment to drive to the home of her friends where I was staying.

The following morning I received a phone call from one of Eunice's friends saying that Eunice had suffered a stroke and had been taken to the emergency ward of a nearby hospital. When I got there it was obvious it was a major stroke. Eunice was not able to speak and looked nothing like her normal self. Later that day when I talked to Hanah via instant messaging on the Net, I had to tell her that her “Mummy” had suffered a stroke. It was July 11 in Malaysia – Hanah's birthday. “*Not a nice birthday present,*” I thought. Eunice was later moved to the main part of the hospital,

and I stayed with her daily for the remainder of the month, but her condition was so serious (the cancer, doctors told us, had also spread to her lungs) that some of her friends had difficulty recognizing her apart from her normal ebullient self.

I stayed with Eunice till the end of July when my bus was due to return me to my home and whispered to her, *“I need to go, Eunice.”* She nodded her head. Later, back in West Virginia, I received a message that she had passed into the Lord's presence on August 3, 2002. We will rejoice to see you again in heaven, our dearly beloved sister, and “Mummy.”



Chapter Eighteen

FROM DEATH TO LIFE

THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

Author: Ray Shelton

From an examination of the Biblical doctrine of sin and death, it becomes clear that man needs to be saved because man is spiritually dead. Man is separated and alienated from God. He does not know God, and because he does not know the true God, he turns to false gods - that which is not God - and makes these into his gods (Gal. 4:8). Man's basic sin is idolatry - trust in a false god, and he sins (chooses these false gods) because he is spiritually dead - separated from the true God ("because of which [death] all sinned," Rom. 5:12d). This separation is not the result of a man's own personal sins. He received this spiritual death, along with physical death, from Adam, from his first parents. The historical origin of sin is the fall of Adam - the sin of the first man. Adam's sin brought death, and this death has been spread throughout the whole human race, to all Adam's descendants (Rom. 5:12). This is why man needs to be saved. He is dead spiritually and dying physically. He needs life - he needs to be made alive - to be raised from the dead. This spiritual death inherited from Adam is the personal, contemporary origin of each man's sin. This is what the last phrase of Rom. 5:12 says; "because of which [death] all sinned." And if he receives life, if he is made alive to God, man will then be saved from sin. By removing the cause

of sin - spiritual death - by giving him spiritual life, God delivers man from sin. For just as sin flows from death, so righteousness - trust in the true God - flows from life. Salvation is primarily from death and then secondarily from sin. And since God's wrath - God's opposition to sin - is caused by sin (Rom. 1:18), the removal of sin brings with it also the removal of wrath. Salvation is then also from wrath.

This is exactly what God accomplished through the death and resurrection of Jesus, His Son. God in the person of His Son entered into our death so that He might deliver us from death by raising Jesus from the dead. His resurrection is our resurrection, and we are made alive with Him and in Him. Thus taking away the cause of our sin, He saves us from sin. Jesus died for our sins - literally - to take them away, not just the guilt of sin but sin itself. For, being made alive to God with Christ, we now in faith trust in the true God. This faith in God is the opposite of sin, which is trust in a false god. We have turned from our false gods to serve and trust the true God that we now know. This faith is righteousness (Rom. 4:3, 5), and it comes from knowing personally the true God through His Son, Jesus Christ. To know Him is life (John 17:3), and to know Him is to trust Him. For He is love and love begets trust. The death of Christ for us not only demonstrates God's love for us but is also the means by which that love is made known to us. By Jesus entering into our death through His death on the cross, God could remove that death in the resurrection of Jesus. Now in the resurrection of Jesus the barrier of death is removed. We see God revealed as never before. We know Him now, having been made alive to God in the resurrection of Jesus. To be alive spiritually is to know God (John 17:3). And being made alive to God in Jesus is to know the love of God. Thus the death of Jesus is more than a demonstration of love - it is the means by which that love could remove the barrier of death, and thus make us

alive to God Himself, revealing Himself to us. The trust that this love invokes is righteousness; it relates us rightly to God. Thus by taking away death, God takes away sin. Being made alive, we are set right with God through faith. We are justified - set right - through the faith that resulted from the **righteousness of God**; that is, the act of God by which He sets us right with Himself. God sets us right with Himself by making us alive to Himself. And the faith flowing from that life is that right relationship to Him. It is faith in the risen Christ through Whom we are made alive to God that is righteousness (Rom. 10:9-10). Justification is not a legal act but the real act of God whereby He puts us into a right personal relationship - sets us right - with Himself. He did this by making us alive to God in Christ. This is no legal fiction but reality - we **are** alive to God in Christ. And being made alive, we believe; we trust the God we now know, having been made alive to Him. This faith is righteousness; it relates us rightly to God (it is the opposite of the sin of idolatry - trust in a false god). This righteousness of faith is no legal fiction. To be alive to God is to trust Him. And this is the reality that the salvation of God has produced. God is not concerned about legal formalities and technicalities. He is concerned about the reality of making us alive to Himself, and the faith that trusts Him and His love.

It is at this point that the Biblical doctrine of salvation opposes the misunderstanding and distortion of the law - legalism. The law of God was God's covenant with Israel and legalism is a misunderstanding and distortion of that law. Legalism – basically, an idolatry of the law - leads to and involves a misunderstanding of sin and death. Legalism misunderstands sin as only law-breaking, as falling short of the universal standard of the law. And death is misunderstood as always the penalty of sin. And the wrath of God is misunderstood as only the punishment of sin. The immediate personal origin of sin has been misunderstood to be an inherited sinful nature,

making sin intrinsic to human nature and implying a denial of human freedom and responsibility. This legalistic conception of sin and death leads to a misunderstanding of the need for salvation and the nature of salvation. According to this legalistic view, man needs salvation because he is a guilty sinner. He is guilty not only because of his own sins, transgressions of the law, but because of the sin of Adam whose sinful nature he has inherited. Whether he has had the guilt of Adam's sin imputed to him or is guilty because he somehow sinned in Adam, man is guilty. Upon him rests the load of racial guilt as well as the guilt from his own personal sins. He needs to be saved because he is guilty. Salvation is accordingly conceived of as a removal of that guilt. According to legalistic theology, justice requires that the penalty be paid before the guilt can be removed. It cannot be forgiven freely but can be only taken away by paying of the penalty which alone can satisfy justice. Because of the enormity of the guilt - it is against an infinite moral being - finite man himself can never pay the penalty and go free. His sin demands an eternal punishment, and being finite man cannot meet the infinite demands of justice. If man is to be saved at all, he must be saved by another, by one who is a man like himself but without sin. But also one who is God who alone can meet the infinite demands of justice. Where is such a one to be found? Only God can provide that one, and God has provided the perfect sacrifice to pay the penalty of sin by sending His Son to become man. His death is the perfect sacrifice to satisfy the demands of justice. It can remove the guilt by paying the penalty of sin. In His death He endured the eternal punishment due to man's sin.

According to this legalistic theology, it is not enough just to be declared not guilty, man must be also have a righteousness which merits eternal life. He must not only have no guilt, no demerits, but he must also have a positive righteousness, merits placed to his account. Since man cannot

earn this righteousness himself because of his sinful nature (he is not able not to sin and not able to do righteousness - good works which merit eternal life as a reward), someone must earn this for him. According to this legalistic point of view, salvation is not only a vicarious satisfaction of the demands of justice and the law, but it is also vicarious law-keeping. Christ's life of active obedience under the law provides that righteousness - Christ earns for us eternal life by His active obedience before His death on the cross. By His passive obedience of His death on the cross, He paid the penalty of our sins. Therefore, the one who receives in faith Christ's work for him is declared not guilty, and Christ's righteousness or merits of Christ is imputed to his account. The believer is justified, declared righteous, because Christ has satisfied the demands of justice and fulfilled the law for us. The believer is legally entitled to eternal life if he receives it from Christ who earned it for him. Thus salvation is understood legalistically. It is a legal transaction - a fire insurance policy that another paid for and given freely to anyone if they will take it.

This is a consistent and logical explanation of salvation and man's need of salvation. There is only one difficulty with it - it is not true. Yes, Christ died for man to take away his sin. The fact of Christ - who He is and what He did - is true, but the explanation is all wrong; it is legalistic. Salvation is **not** by works, even though another -- even God -- performs them. God is not the kind of God that the legalist thinks He is. He is not a God of justice but a God of love. The righteousness of God has been misunderstood as justice. According to the Scriptures (Ps. 31:1; 71:2; 143:1-2; 98:2; Isa. 46:13; 51:5; 56:1), the **righteousness of God** is the act of the love of God by which God sets us right with Himself and saves us. God sets us right with Himself by making us alive to Himself. And the faith flowing from that life is that right relationship to Him.

It is faith in the risen Christ through Whom we are made alive to God that is righteousness (Rom. 10:9-10).

Justification is not a legal act but is the real act of God whereby He puts us into a right relationship - sets us right - with Himself. He did this by making us alive to God in Christ (Rom. 4:25; 5:18). This is no legal fiction but a reality - we **are** alive to God in Christ. The problem solved by Christ's death was not in God but in man. God did not have to be reconciled and His justice satisfied before man could be saved. On the contrary, it is man who needs to be reconciled to God; it is man who needs to be changed. Man is dead and he needs to be made alive. The problem is in man - he is dead and he needs life. Man does not need a lawyer; he needs someone to raise him from the dead. And only God can do that, and He has done it through His Son's death and resurrection. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself (II Cor. 5:19) - not reconciling God to the world. And God in reconciling us to Himself through Christ has made us alive to Himself by His resurrected life (Rom. 5:10). And since man sins because he is dead (Rom. 5:12d), by making him alive God saves him from sin to righteousness. He saves him not just from the guilt of sin but from sin itself. And He saves him not from just breaking the law but from trusting in a false god. God saves man to trust in God Himself - the only real righteousness, the righteousness of faith (Rom. 4:5, 13). Legal righteousness (merits) is not enough. For the real law wants faith, trust in and love of God - "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind." And since death is the barrier that hinders this, God has removed this barrier and hindrance by the death and resurrection of His Son. He entered into our death so that we could enter into His life - by being made alive to God with Christ through His resurrection. And being made alive with Him we can now trust, love, and worship Him. This is

true righteousness. So then, just as sin flows out of death, so righteousness flows out of life - out of Jesus Christ who is the Life. Life is not some thing; it is a person - Jesus Christ - and to have Him and know Him and the true God through Him is to have Life (John 17:3; I John 5:11-12). And to know Him and His love is to trust Him. Love begets trust. And to walk in this love by faith is the Christian life.

Legalism makes a problem of the Christian life, because it puts the Christian under law, separating him from God. It leads him to trust in the law and in himself and in his works (trust in the flesh) rather than in the Spirit of God. The result is defeat and despair of the man under law as described in Romans 7. Chapter 7 of Romans is not the normal Christian life, but a abnormal or subnormal Christian life, under law. This is the practical effect of the legalistic theory of Christ's death - by putting the Christian under law, the Christian becomes a slave of sin. Sin uses the law as an occasion to become active (Rom. 7:8, 11). Legalism does not work. Where is the victory of Christ's resurrection in the struggle of Romans 7? Only as we are delivered from under the law - we died to the law in Christ's death (Rom. 7:4) - and as we are set free from law of sin and of death by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:2), do we experience the resurrection victory of Christ over sin and death. The Christian life is not Spirit-empowered law-keeping, but Spirit-filled law-fulfilling by love (Rom. 8:4; 13:10); it is a joyful walk filled with the Spirit, trusting Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. And if we trust and love God, is any law necessary to make us to do so? The law is for them who do not love and trust God - though it will not save them - it cannot make them alive; it cannot produce righteousness (Gal. 3:21). For if the law could make them alive, as legalism tries to tell us, then Christ died in vain (Gal. 2:21). Salvation is not by the works of the law - in any way, shape or form. Salvation is by

the grace of God - God's love in action to make us alive to God in Christ through faith, through trust in Him who loves us and gave Himself for us (Eph. 2:4-6). The Christian life begins by grace through faith; this is the past tense of salvation. "For by grace you have been saved through faith" (Eph. 2:8). The Christian life, which is the present tense of salvation, is also by grace through faith. "As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him" (Col. 2:6 NAS).

(Adapted from "FROM DEATH TO LIFE -THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF SALVATION," Ray Shelton <http://fromdeathtolife.org/d2lsyn.html>)

Chapter Nineteen

Wrong Teaching in the Church

“Even though Paul's opposition to the Judaizers in the early church effectively stopped the entrance into Christianity of the Jewish legalism (see the Letter to the Galatians), this did not stop another form of the legalism from creeping into Christian thought and practice some 200 years later. In this later form of legalism the rationalism of the Greek philosophers had been wedded to the legal philosophy of the Romans developed by such earlier writers as Cicero (1st century B.C.). This rationalistic legalism crept into Christian theology by way of a 3rd century lawyer and Christian apologist, Tertullian, and since the time of Augustine (5th century) has formed the basis of most Roman Catholic and Protestant theology.” (1)

“Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings...” (Heb 13:9)

Among wrong teachings encountered in churches that confuse our perspective and therefore interfere with our walk of faith is that of those who in their biblical doctrine “absolutize” the law.

The **first distortion** of the law is the **absolutizing** of the law. This consists of making the law into ultimate reality. This may be done either by making the law stand by itself apart from and above God or by identifying God with the law.

- a. In the former, God is seen only as a Lawgiver and Judge who gives and enforces the law that exists apart from Himself but who is ultimately subject to it. The law therefore is something eternal which rules the whole universe by commands and prohibitions; it is the primal and bedrock foundation of the moral universe. This form of absolutizing the law may be found in some forms of Judaism and in some Greek and Roman philosophy (Stoics).
- b. According to the latter form, the law is the eternal and essential nature of God ("God is a God of law" or "God is law" or "the law is the essential nature of God"). The mind and will of God expresses this ultimate nature of God. Before the law was given and written down, it existed in the mind and nature of God. God, accordingly, is defined as an infinite, moral, rational being. This form of absolutizing the law is found in some Christian theologies.
- c. In both these forms of absolutizing the law, the law is ultimate and supreme. Individually and personally, absolutizing the law means that the law is made into one's ultimate criterion of decision; it becomes the object of trust and ultimate confidence (Rom. 2:17). Thus to absolutize the law is to make it into God. Legalism is, therefore, basically an idolatry of the law. (2)

I am convinced this issue is very important to understand. A legalistic perspective of God inevitably hinders the believer's faith-walk. I will never submit myself to such false teaching because it is not based on the Bible but on man's fallacious reasoning. When man thinks that the Bible needs to be explained because God is not clear in what He says in His Word, one of the

ways he does it is by use of legal jargon, classifying it erroneously as “doctrine,” thereby placing it on equal footing with the Bible itself. It sounds “right,” but so can any other of the lies of the enemy. Let us consider one example:

Isaiah 14:12ff and Ezekiel 28:11ff are passages that have been interpreted (rightly or wrongly) to refer directly to Satan and his rebellion against God. If they do not refer directly to Satan (as they seem not to), they certainly do indirectly as Satan seems to have been not only among those angels who sinned (2 Peter 2:4; 1 John 3:8) but to have been their leader (Rev. 12:3,4, 9). Satan appears to have been the first sinner, as Jesus refers to him as the "father" of those who are unable or unwilling to receive the truth He speaks. (John 8:44) So Satan rebelled against God, and now incites it in others, as he did with Adam (Gen. 3).

But here we run into the first real problem of wrong teaching by those who do not let the Bible speak for itself, but impose upon it their own belief-system (in this case, legalistic). In order to demonstrate this, I will refer to one well-known contemporary work in particular, which reflects the wrong teaching I want to discuss. I had the privilege of visiting the author and his wife in their home in the 1970s before they went to be with the Lord, and greatly enjoyed their hospitality. I respect him as a true brother-in-Christ, but what he has written here does not appear to be supported by the Bible. *"To the world at large and to many believers, Calvary appears as a defeat. In spite of our professed faith, many of us are hounded with the sneaking suspicion that Satan was, after all, the victor there. An examination of the forensic aspects (legal phases) of the conflict between Christ and Satan proves conclusively the triumph of the Crucified. The legal*

aspect of that victory is the theme of this chapter." (3)

The problem with this statement is that any *"examination of the forensic aspects (legal phases) of the conflict between Christ and Satan"* is irrelevant - a total waste of time. Why? Because it is meaningless from God's perspective - the Bible itself states nothing concerning any *"forensic aspects"* of Calvary, it gives over no space whatsoever to that consideration. Is it recorded in Acts that the disciples went about declaring that God had won a *"great legal victory over the enemy"*? Of course not. Instead, they declared, *"God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact."* (Acts 2:32). From God's perspective, the death and resurrection of His Son were of primary importance, not any *"legal victory."* Why? To answer that, let us continue our examination of what this author writes.

"In order to understand what happened at Calvary, one must first comprehend what took place legally in the fall in Eden." Unfortunately, again we are getting off entirely on the wrong foot here, but let us continue for the sake of discussion, primarily because what is written reflects wrong thinking in the church that has been going on for many hundreds of years - thinking that falls into the context of the *"tradition of men"* the apostle Paul warned about in Col 2:8: *"See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ."*

(I have placed my **emphasized** comments below where I deemed appropriate:)

*"Man was originally made for authority (No, he was made for **relationship**, from which **"authority"** derives. Matt. 22:36-39; John 13:20, 34, 14:16-17, 20-21, 23, 15:4-5, 7, 9-10,*

17:3, 21, 23, 26; 1 John 2:6). *He was created and fashioned for dominion. When he came from the hand of God he was given rulership of the earth, the kingship of its life, and the control and mastery of its resources.....The entire universe is governed by law (by God, actually - Hebr. 1:3; Col 1:17).* **Redemption from beginning to end is based upon a system of divine jurisprudence. It has a legal foundation. (The Bible says nothing about 'divine jurisprudence' or about any 'legal foundation' - but it has much to say about God's wondrous love - John 3:16) God's grant of authority and dominion over the earth to man was a bona fide gift. This authority and dominion became legally his. What he did with it was his own responsibility. (Actually, 'Dominionship' biblically involves stewardship and accountability to God. Matt. 25:14-30 - God never gives up His own sovereign control over His creation.)** *If, so to speak, he 'fumbled the ball' and lost it, God could not lawfully step in and repossess it for him. Without doubt, Omnipotence had the power to void Satan's conquest of Adam and his heritage, but this would have violated His own moral principles of government. If God had gone over man's head and forcibly repossessed the title to the earth from Satan, that would have been without due process of law."* **(It is really very hard for me to believe that any 'Bible scholar' would be capable of such sloppy thinking as this. But as I said, this is representative of thinking that has been expressed for hundreds of years. We know that Adam did 'fumble the ball' - though it would be more accurate to say "he believed a lie" instead. The author's statement, "If God had gone over man's head and forcibly repossessed the title to the earth from Satan, that would have been without due process of law" boggles my mind. What in the Bible is there that gave the author the impression that God ever would even consider placing any of His creatures over Himself in authority? To the contrary, note Gen. 3:4ff;**

11:4ff; Isa. 14:13-15; Eze. 28:17.

But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death. For He has put all things in subjection under His feet. But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. And when all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, that God may be all in all. (1 Cor. 15:23-28)

In any case, God is still God and the Bible clearly shows He is sovereign in all that He does. He is omnipotent - what He does is on the basis of His own free choice, his own 'good pleasure' [Isa. 46:10; Phil. 2:13; Col. 1:19] - NOT because of any 'moral principles of government' or 'due process of law. Is the Law greater than the Law-giver? Definitely NOT! If it were, it would be god instead of God!)

"When Adam chose to obey Satan, he became Satan's slave.....As a slave of Satan, Adam lost all of his legal rights, not only to his person but also to his domain. This gave Satan legal authority to rule over man and the earth. If Satan's dominion was to be revoked, a way had to be found to redeem fallen man and recover his lost authority without violating universal principles of justice. Since Satan was now the legitimate possessor of Adam and the legal ruler of the earth, God had no moral right, under His code of justice, to arbitrarily annul it....."

(What nonsense! None of this can be found anywhere in the Bible! What 'rights' does a

creature have before God who is a rebel against Him, and does not trust and obey Him?

Neither Satan nor Adam had any “rights,” Biblically-speaking, other than those which God freely chose to give them. Satan only has 'authority to rule over man and earth' because God has freely chosen for His own purposes to allow him that 'rule' temporarily.)

"Thus a member of Adam's race had to be found who could qualify to enter suit in universal court and wrest Adam's lost heritage and dominion from Satan....." **(Actually the real problem, biblically speaking - from God's perspective, was not some fictional legal battle but the fact that man had sinned and had spiritually died - that was the problem that needed a solution. Man was spiritually dead and therefore needed LIFE - something no 'legal' victory could provide him. But man could not save himself, could not make himself alive - he needed a Savior.)**

"Jesus came as an authentic member of the human race. Since He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and virgin born, Satan had no legal claim upon Him. In order to establish a legal basis for authority over Him, it remained for Satan to attempt to induce some moral flaw or imperfection in His character or conduct....." **(Why is the author ignoring what the Bible says and substituting his own theology? God told Adam, ".....in the day that.....you shall surely die." Adam put his trust in a source other than God and died as a result. It was not a matter of "inducing some moral flaw or imperfection" but trying to tempt Jesus successfully, as had been done with Adam. Why all this legal jargon?)**

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" (Matt 4:8-10)

"In the wilderness, Satan offered Jesus a shortcut to world dominion if He would fall down and worship him - just once. Satan alleged that authority over all the kingdoms of the world had been delivered unto him and that he gave it to whomsoever he chose. Jesus did not challenge his claim, for He knew Satan's legal basis for it." (3)

This particular temptation of Jesus probably symbolizes more than any other that which lies at the heart of the challenge facing man - what or who is his god? *"For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt 16:26)* But this author, and others like him, completely misses the focus of this temptation. Has Satan, the "father of lies," suddenly started telling the truth? But whether Satan did or did not have any "legal basis" for his claim to "authority over the kingdoms of the world" was irrelevant. The fact Jesus did not "challenge his claim" had nothing to do with the question of whether Satan had any "legal basis" for it. As a matter of fact, Satan's claim was at God's discretion (or "pleasure") only, as discussed above. Jesus answered Satan according to the true focus of the temptation: "Go, Satan! For it is written, "YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY." (Matt 4:10). The issue here was NOT if Satan had a claim to "the kingdoms of the world," but IDOLATRY. The offer of the earthly kingdoms to Jesus was a ploy by Satan to entice Jesus, the "last Adam," to worship him instead of God. It seems that whenever I hear this verse taught, the belief that this verse shows Satan's ownership of the earth is emphasized – and that is all! Not only is this wrong theology, but it entirely ignores the principal declaration – the assumption by the creature (Satan) that *the Creator should*

fall on His face in worship to him!!! How relevantly this verse speaks to the world's situation today. In so many ways man is in effect telling God that he is better qualified to be "god" than God is! *"Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man...."* (but then of course along came the additional lie by "scientists" which said that man had his ancestry in lesser creatures from which he "evolved") *and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures."* (Rom 1:22-23) How foolish, indeed, the world is in its thinking – what folly it engages in as it races headlong into destruction in its rebellion against God and the truth He speaks. *"For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen."* (Rom 1:25)

I stated above that the concept that Satan is owner of the earth is wrong theology. There are those who say he possesses the "title-deed" to the earth, giving him ownership. There is nothing in the Bible to support this. Satan may indeed be the "ruler of the world" (John 14:30), but only at God's discretion and for His sovereign purposes - God is the sole owner (Ps. 24:1, 50:10, and many other verses throughout the Bible – including such parables of Jesus as Matt. 21:33-41). Whoever "rules" (man or Satan) does so only with God's permission and for His purposes (Job 1:6-12; Luke 22:31). Actually, Satan is a usurper, pretender - he has no more legal right to the "kingdoms of the world" than he had to God's throne (Isa. 14:13)! When Satan tempted Him with the "kingdoms of the world," Jesus knew they were His to rule by divine right (Rev. 11:15; Phil. 2:10), not Satan's. Satan's "rule" was only temporary, with God's permission, for His purpose. Those who think that God has not been clear enough in His Word, and must therefore bring clarification through their legalistic theological explanations concerning what they consider

God's Word is lacking, actually assume their reasoning has not only more relevancy but more authority in understanding the situation under discussion than God does!

“Legalism is a temptation and an obstacle to the walk in the Spirit by faith. As good and right as the law is (Rom. 7:10), this law is not man's highest good, and observing the Ten Commandments is not man's righteousness. God Himself is man's highest good, and trust in and love for God is his righteousness. This love fulfills the law (Rom. 13:8-10), which a legalistic living by the law does not do. Man's basic problem is not "Are you keeping the law?" but "Which god are you trusting?" Is it the true God or is it a false one? This is not just the problem of the non-Christian and the unbeliever but also the problem of the Christian. Many psychological problems that Christians have are the result of a divided loyalty. They are trying to hang onto the true God and a false god at the same time. This double-mindedness, this divided faith (James 1:7-8) makes a Christian psychologically and morally unstable and hinders his walk with the Lord....

The Holy Spirit is the rule of life in the new dispensation of life (II Cor. 3:17-18). Since the Spirit gives life (II Cor. 3:6), the dispensation of life is the dispensation of the Spirit (II Cor. 3:8), the Era of the Spirit. Since the Christian has passed from death to life, he has passed from the rule of the law to the rule of the Spirit. The law as the rule of Christian life has no place in the Era of the Spirit. And if the law has no place in the Era of the Spirit, legalism as an idolatry and misunderstanding of the law has no place in the Era of the Spirit either.” (4)

Man's basic problem is the fact that every person born into this world is spiritually dead – separated from God, because of Adam's transgression. Each child therefore needs the Life only Jesus can give it (John 14:6). The Life Jesus gives also brings everything that is needed to restore man's relationship with God.

But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption... (1 Cor. 1:30-31)

*“...for it is God who is at work in you, **both to will and to work for His good pleasure.**”*

(Phil. 2:13)

*“I do not seek or consult My own will [I have no desire to do what is pleasing to Myself, My own aim, My own purpose] **but only the will and pleasure of the Father Who sent Me.**”*

(John 5:30 AMP)

So should all those of us who call Jesus “*Lord*” seek to do only **HIS** will and pleasure.

(1) "Legalism," Ray Shelton, <http://fromdeathtolife.org/legalism.html>

(2) “The Essential Characteristics of Legalism - Four Distortions of the Law,” Ray Shelton
<http://fromdeathtolife.org/legalism.html>

(3) “Destined For The Throne,” Paul E. Billheimer, Chapter 5, Christian Literature Crusade

(4) “The Christian Life and Legalism,” Ray Shelton,
<http://fromdeathtolife.org/mog/mog8.html#mocl>

Chapter Twenty

Knowing God's Will

"Thy words were found and I ate them, and Thy words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; for I have been called by Thy name, O LORD God of hosts." (Jer. 15:16)

"...it is as plain to me as anything, that the first thing the child of God has to do morning by morning is, to obtain food for his inner man. As the outward man is not fit for work for any length of time except we take food, and as this is one of the first things we do in the morning, so it should be with the inner man. We should take food for that, as everyone must allow. Now what is the food for the inner man? Not prayer, but the Word of God; and here again, not the simple reading of the Word of God, so that it only passes through our minds, just as water runs through a pipe, but considering what we read, pondering over it, and applying it to our hearts. We may therefore profitably meditate, with God's blessing, though we are ever so weak spiritually; nay, the weaker we are, the more we need meditation for the strengthening of our inner man. By the blessing of God I ascribe to this mode the help and strength which I have had from God to pass in peace through deeper trials, in various ways, than I had ever had before...How different, when the soul is refreshed and made happy early in the morning, from what it was when, without spiritual preparation, the service, the trials, and the temptations of the day come upon one!"

(From the Autobiography of George Muller, the Life of Trust)

Knowing God's will is of paramount importance. This is true regardless of what man believes. We are creatures living in a universe and on an earth created by God. However man may strive to ignore, deny, or rebel against that fact, that truth stands firm. It is of utmost importance that we know the will of the Creator. Nothing precedes or supersedes this in importance. **Everything that is truly important needs to be viewed in the context of knowing God's will.**

It is further obvious that the Bible is the only book man has that purports to reveal what God's will is. It states in no uncertain terms that it is the Word of God.

"...the Bible is not a book of philosophy, although it is philosophical. Do not go to the Bible for a scientific treatise. However, there is no discrepancy between (what is truly scientific fact) and the Bible. The Bible is not a book of history, but is found to be accurate when recording history. The Bible was given to man from God, revealing Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and God the Son, the only Savior. He is the center and the circumference. It is Christ from Genesis to Revelation." (1)

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God..." (2 Tim. 3:16)

"But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." (2 Peter 1:16-21)

"If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things I

write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." (Paul, the apostle - 1 Cor. 14:37)

"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life;

it is these that testify about Me." (John 5:39)

As we read God's Word given to us through men moved upon by God's Holy Spirit, it becomes obvious that we must have the Holy Spirit's help to understand God's Word.

"But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you....But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is Mine and make it known to you." (John 14:26; 16:13-15)

God created us with free will, but unfortunately we have used that to rebel against our Creator, choosing not to recognize His sovereign rule in our daily lives. Evolution is an example of this. It is a theory proposed by Charles Darwin, who commented in a letter to a friend that there would be "no place for God" in his philosophical system of thought. He wrote his "Origin of the Species" hoping that those who followed would be able to find evidence for his observations in the fossil record. They have not, so they purposely construct and fabricate elaborate hoaxes and frauds, engage in lies and deceits, deliberately disregarding evidence that would prove otherwise.

They, like Darwin, do not want God in the equation, as they know that the existence of a Creator is the only alternative to their chosen belief. But they do not want to accept the accountability to God that accompanies the acknowledgment of His existence.

Unfortunately, many believers have also allowed themselves to be deceived by this, not recognizing evolution for what it truly is: a ploy of the enemy.

"For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths."

(2 Tim. 4:3-4)

It has been my personal observation, as I have talked with Christians who believe that evolution is true, that as they come to believe in evolution they come to disbelieve proportionately the veracity of the Bible. This finding has also been stated by Henry M. Morris, Ph.D., president of the Institute for Creation Research: *"If evolution can explain the origin and development of the universe and its inhabitants, then there is no need for any kind of personal God at all."* (2) And there is no need for a Savior! But, according to the Bible, death was not present in God's creation before Adam sinned. From Genesis 1:1 to 3:6, nothing died.

The foremost consideration with which we are faced is: What is our attitude towards the Bible?

Do we believe the Bible is God's Word? Of course, the reliability of the Bible as the Word of

God does not depend on our belief or lack of belief. The latter merely reflects whether or not we will eternally participate in God's blessings - the most important of which is our personal relationship with Him which gives us the gift of Life.

But if we do accept the Bible as God's Word, we can use it as a guide to understand what God's will is. For example, we see that **it is God's will that the Gospel be obeyed.**

For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now "If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Peter 4:17-18)

But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says,

"Lord, who has believed our report?" (Rom. 10:16)

"...since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thess. 1:6-8)

Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:14-15)

It is also God's will that His Church engages in spiritual warfare.

“...upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.”

(Matt 16:18-19)

God established His Church on this earth essentially and primarily to deal with spiritual matters. That is our calling and our priority. There are obviously other matters that are temporal that we as members of Christ's Body are aware also are needful, but even as we attend to such matters we should be always be aware of the spiritual dimension involved. This is because the Church is the only agency God has on earth representing Him and specifically designated by Him to tend to spiritual matters of eternal significance – that is, matters having to do with His kingdom. We must always have the proper perspective if we are to fully realize the will of God in this matter – that is, we must always have His perspective. To help me get His perspective in a particular matter, I simply ask God to allow me to view it as He does. At the start of the day I also always pray this prayer that is based on Romans 12:1-2:

“By Your mercies, Lord, I want to present my body a living sacrifice, made holy and acceptable by the finished work of Your Son, Jesus Christ, for this is my reasonable service of worship.

I want to not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of my mind by Your Holy Spirit to prove what Your will is, that which good, acceptable and perfect in Your sight!”

Let me give an example of seeing the eternal side of a temporal need: A well-known Christian

organization sent me some information by mail concerning the problem of pornographic material being placed on magazine racks in retail stores. They suggested that when I came across such magazines I should speak to the store manager, requesting that they be removed as children might have access to them. I wrote a reply to this organization, stating that we could accomplish that and that would be good, but what about the spiritual state of the store manager to whom we spoke? He might indeed agree with us and remove the offensive material, but he himself might be lost and on his way to hell. So we accomplished the resolution of the “temporal need,” but there was a more important eternal need that perhaps we ignored. The latter **eternal need** is the reason God established the Church – the only agency on earth qualified to handle such matters.

In dealing with spiritual matters we must also always understand that there is spiritual opposition involved. There is an enemy that opposes us, and we must deal with him and his evil forces. He is the enemy that Jesus mentioned in establishing His Church: “*the gates of Hades.*”

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. (Eph 6:12)

This verse tells us that we are not fighting against visible human opponents but against unseen demonic powers under the rulership of Satan, who has temporary rulership of this earth due to Adam's transgression. Jesus actually defeated Satan at the Cross, but God wants us to apply that victory in claiming for God's kingdom that which the enemy has temporarily in his possession, but has no real right to. God wants us to learn how to “*Fight the good fight of faith*” (1 Tim

6:12) as part of learning to “*walk by faith, not by sight.*” (2 Cor. 5:7)

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. (2 Cor. 10:3-5)

God has provided us a weapon and armor for this fight.

Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. (Eph. 6:13-18)

Essentially, it is good to focus on the fact that in putting on this armor and taking up the sword, we are actually to “*put on the Lord Jesus Christ...*” (Rom 13:14)

First, have “*the belt of truth buckled around your waist.*” Jesus tells us, “*I am the...truth...*” (John 14:6). Second, we have “*the breastplate of righteousness in place.*” “*...by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us...righteousness.*” (1 Cor 1:30) Third, we have our “*...feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.*” Jesus tells us, “*Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you...*” (John 14:27) and “*Let the peace of Christ rule in your*

hearts...” (Col 3:15) Fourth, we are to “*take up the shield of faith.*” “*The LORD is...my shield.*” (Ps 28:7) Fifth, we “*Take the helmet of salvation...*” “*you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.*” (Matt 1:21) (“Jesus” - from the Hebrew “Joshua” meaning literally “Yahweh [is] salvation”) Sixth, we take “*...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*” “*And the Word (Christ) became flesh...*” (John 1:14 AMP) Lastly, “*...pray in the Spirit on all occasions...*” Those who are familiar with “praying in the Spirit” know that it is a formidable weapon for uncovering and neutralizing the works of the enemy. It should also be used when fasting.

It is also God's will that the gospel be preached.

“And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations”And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation." (Mark 13:10, 16:15)

"For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel. For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me." (1 Cor. 9:16-17)

It is also God's will that we “*seek first His kingdom and righteousness.*”(Matt. 6:33).

“We argue in exactly the opposite way, even the most spiritually-minded of us - “But I *must* live; I *must* make so much money; I *must* be clothed; I *must* be fed.” The great concern of our lives is not the kingdom of God, but how we are to fit ourselves to live. Jesus reverses the order: Get rightly related to God first, maintain that as the great care of

your life, and never put the concern of your care on the other things.... *"Take no thought for your life. . . ."*...Jesus taught that a disciple has to make his relationship to God the dominating concentration of his life, and to be carefully careless about every thing else in comparison to that. Jesus is saying - "Don't make the ruling factor of your life what you shall eat and what you shall drink, but be concentrated absolutely on God"Jesus is saying that the great care of the life is to put the relationship to God first, and everything else second. (3)

In fact, as we read the Bible, we have the opportunity of coming to understand exactly what our heavenly Father's will is for us. We do not have to sit around wondering what it is, or wander around in a confused manner.

Our heavenly Father's greatest desire is that we should KNOW HIM:

It is possible to know that fact of God's existence by observing His creation.

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. (Ps. 19:1-2)

"...since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities, His eternal power and divine

nature, have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made,

so that men are without excuse. " (Rom. 1:19-20)

But God determined that man – His highest creation (Gen. 1:27) – would be able to know Him personally:

*"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son,
that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life"....
"Now this is eternal life: that they may KNOW YOU, the only true God,
and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." (John 3:16; 17:3)*

"KNOW"..... signifies "to be taking in knowledge, to come to know, recognize, understand," or "to understand completely,"....In the New Testament ("know") frequently indicates a relation between the person "knowing" and the object known; in this respect, what is "known" is of value or importance to the one who knows, and hence the establishment of the relationship. The same idea of appreciation as well as "knowledge" underlies several statements concerning the "knowledge" of God and His truth on the part of believers, e. g. 17:3; 1 John 2:3-13,14; 4:6,8, 16; 5:20; such "knowledge" is obtained, not by mere intellectual activity, but by operation of the Holy Spirit consequent upon acceptance of Christ. Nor is such "knowledge" marked by finality; see e. g. 2 Pet. 3:18; Hos. 6:3.

"KNOW....Essentially....means: (1) to know by observing and reflecting (thinking), and (2) to know by experiencing...."To know" God is to have an intimate experiential knowledge of Him. So Pharaoh denies that he knows Jehovah (Exod. 5:2) or that he recognizes His authority over him. Positively "to know" God is paralleled to fear Him (1

Kings 8:43), to serve (1 Chr. 28:9), and to trust (Isa. 43:10). (3)

"...I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of KNOWING CHRIST JESUS my Lord....That I may KNOW HIM...." (Phil. 3:8,10)

"Thus says the LORD, 'Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, THAT HE UNDERSTANDS AND KNOWS ME, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,' declares the LORD." (Jer 9:23-25)

"UNDERSTAND....to be prudent, act wisely, give attention to, ponder, prosper."...The basic meaning...seems to be "to look at, to give attention to," as illustrated in this parallelism: "That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand..." (Isa. 41:20). From this develops the connotation of insight, intellectual comprehension....As here, it is frequently used along with and in parallelism to the Hebrew, "to know" (primarily experientially). (4)

We Christians are so ready to declare the blessings we deem God has given us, but the one and only reason Christ died for us was that we might have eternal life, and Jesus defined that as **knowing God**. When we boast of the good things God has given us and done for us, we most greatly honor Him by boasting of His having given us the opportunity to KNOW HIM. The most

damning condemnation given by the Lord is:

"...I NEVER KNEW YOU, depart from Me..." (Matt. 7:23)

To understand God's will in this matter more clearly, it would be good to review Genesis 1:27 and Romans 8:28-9:

"So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them...."

For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers."

"IMAGE.....The word is used....of the relations between God the Father, Christ, and man, (a) of man as he was created as being a visible representation of God, (1 Cor. 11:7), a being corresponding to the original; the condition of man as a fallen creature has not entirely effaced the "image"; he is still suitable to bear responsibility, he still has Godlike qualities, such as love of goodness and beauty, none of which are found in a mere animal; in the Fall man ceased to be a perfect vehicle for the representation of God; God's grace in Christ will yet accomplish more than what Adam lost; (b) of regenerate persons, in being moral representations of what God is, (Col. 3:10); cf. Eph. 4:24; (c) of believers, in their glorified state, not merely as resembling Christ but representing Him, (Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:49); here the perfection is the work of divine grace; believers are yet to represent, not something like Him, but what He is in Himself, both in His spiritual body and in His moral character. (Lightfoot). (4)

It is obviously God's purpose in Romans 8:28 that we be

"...conformed to the image of His Son..." (Rom. 8:29)

He has initiated this process, but we are called upon to work together with Him in it:

"you must be even more careful to do the good things that result from being saved, obeying God with deep reverence, shrinking back from all that might displease him. For God is at work within you, helping you want to obey him, and then helping you do what he wants."

(Phil 2:12-13 - TLB)

"But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts." (Rom. 13:14)

The Scriptures not only speak of Jesus Christ (John 5:39), of the need for believing on Him for salvation (Acts 4:12), they also call the believer to Christ-likeness, looking forward to:

"...when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe..." (2 Thess. 1:10)

There are two other Scripture passages that must also be given careful study in consideration of the subject of knowing God's will. One is Romans 12:1-2:

"I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be

conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

The apostle Paul here urges us by God's mercies (through His provision by His Son) to present ourselves willingly to God's use (instead of to conformance with the world system), being transformed in the use of our mind by the indwelling work of God's Holy Spirit, that we might PROVE "what the will of God is..."['...that you may prove...'] The word used here....is commonly applied to metals, to the operation of testing, or trying them by the severity of fire....., etc....The sense is, that such a renewed mind is essential to a successful inquiry after the will of God. Having a disposition to obey him, the mind will be prepared to understand His precepts." (5)

"This is the will of God, even your sanctification." 1 Thessalonians 4:3

The Death Side. In sanctification God has to deal with us on the death side as well as on the life side. Many of us spend so much time in the place of death that we get sepulchral. There is always a battle royal before sanctification, always something that tugs with resentment against the demands of Jesus Christ. Immediately the Spirit of God begins to show us what sanctification means, the struggle begins. *"If any man come to Me and hate not . . . his own life, he cannot be My disciple."*

The Spirit of God in the process of sanctification will strip me until I am nothing but "myself," that is the place of death. Am I willing to be "myself," and nothing more - no friends, no father, no brother, no self-interest - simply ready for death? That is the condition of sanctification. No wonder Jesus said: *"I came not to send peace, but a*

sword." This is where the battle comes, and where so many of us faint. We refuse to be identified with the death of Jesus on this point. "But it is so stern," we say; "He cannot wish me to do that." Our Lord is stern; and He does wish us to do that.

Am I willing to reduce myself simply to "me," determinedly to strip myself of all my friends think of me, of all I think of myself, and to hand that simple naked self over to God? Immediately I am, He will sanctify me wholly, and my life will be free from earnestness in connection with every thing but God.

When I pray - "Lord, show me what sanctification means for me," He will show me. It means being made one with Jesus. Sanctification is not something Jesus Christ puts into me: it is *Himself* in me. (1 Cor. 1:30.) (6)

The second passage to which I would like to refer is a very direct illustration of Rom. 12:1-2.

"Then Jesus went with His disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and He said to them, 'Sit here while I go over there and pray.' He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and He began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then He said to them, 'My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with Me.' Going a little farther, He fell with His face to the ground and prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from Me. Yet not as I will, but as You will.' Then He returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. 'Could you not keep watch with Me for one hour?' He asked Peter. 'Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.' He went away a second time and prayed, 'My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it,

may Your will be done.' When He came back, He again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. So He left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing. Then He returned to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners."

(Matt. 26:36-45)

Here we have the dramatic contrast between the Lord Jesus Christ presenting Himself to the use and purposes of the Father, deferring to His Father's will, and the sleeping disciples who were admonished to "*keep watch*" but did not. Jesus was literally presenting His body "*a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God,*" while His disciples succumbed to the weakness of their flesh. The main lesson for us here is that of determining to do God's will rather than our own.

In the ensuing years since God confronted me as while I was an atheist, I have learned through hard yet adventurous and often exciting experiences that the Lord has taken me through, quite a bit about knowing God's will. Failure has certainly been part of the learning experience. I have just one last observation to make that might be helpful to others wanting to attune themselves to God's leading: Those who have walked in a wilderness know they must carry with them items to help them so they won't get lost - a compass and a map come quickly to mind. In learning to use the compass and map, they understand that they must learn to line up significant objects on the landscape in order to be certain they are going in the right direction. It is essentially the same in traversing the spiritual landscape following the leading of God's Holy Spirit. We know God speaks primarily through His (1) Word, but He is also sovereign and in control of

(2) circumstances and (3) people who counsel us. In this area though we must take particular

care - for there are Christians, and yes even Christian "leaders," who are not truly sensitive to what God's will is in the matter; and God is under no obligation to explain to one person what He is doing in another's life, unless that person is their spouse. Also we are to expect the (4) peace of God to rule, to act as an umpire, to arbitrate, decide, in our hearts (Col. 3:15). Also, we know that our Lord has told us that He "*opens, and no man shuts; shuts, and no man opens*" (Rev. 3:7). So, we can pray to Him specifically that He will (5) open "doors" He wants opened and shut those that He wants shut. As we do all this our intent is to line up various things on the spiritual landscape (e.g.- what God tells us through His Word - verses that He may especially impress on us by His Holy Spirit as relevant to that which we are seeking Him about; His sovereign control over circumstances; His peace ruling in our hearts, etc) to assure that we are going in the direction our heavenly Father has directed us.

He is, after all, our God.

"Stop fooling yourselves. If you count yourself above average in intelligence, as judged by this world's standards, you had better put all this aside and be a fool rather than let it hold you back from the true wisdom from above. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness to God. As it says in the book of Job, God uses man's own brilliance to trap him; he stumbles over his own 'wisdom' and falls. And again, in the book of Psalms, we are told that the Lord knows full well how the human mind reasons, and how foolish and futile it is." (1 Cor. 2:18-20 - Living Bible paraphrase)

- (1) "The Christian Life New Testament," Porter Barrington, p. XX, Thomas Nelson Publ., 1978
- (2) "The Twilight of Evolution," Henry M. Morris, Preface, published by Baker Book House, 1963.
- (3) "My Utmost For His Highest," by Oswald Chambers, reading for May 21, p. 142, © 1935 by Dodd, Mead & Company, Inc
- (4) from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright (C) 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers
- (5) From Barnes' Notes
- (6) "My Utmost For His Highest," by Oswald Chambers, reading for July 22, p. 204, © 1935 by Dodd, Mead & Company, Inc.

Chapter Twenty-One

Heaven – God's Reality

In the opening chapter, I made reference to Adam in order to demonstrate that the world he was placed into at his creation was what God intended to be “natural,” in contrast to the fallen world we experience from birth, and call “natural.” In this chapter I will, with God's help, attempt to explore more of what God has created, called “*Good*,” and reveals thereby what He considers to be “natural” in His unsullied creation, and so I will be referring here to several experiences of other brothers-in-Christ who, like the apostle Paul, were “*caught up*” into God's heavenly realm.

*"It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to **visions and revelations of the Lord**: I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago--whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows--such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows--how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." (2 Cor. 12:1-4)*

What Paul was not permitted to write about apparently can now be written and spoken about since such witness is not available unless God brings the person into paradise and/or His throne room and does not restrict or prohibit him to share what he has seen or heard back on earth.

The founder of a well-known and very effective ministry (who wishes, like the apostle Paul, to remain unnamed) has spoken and written about being “caught up” in paradise and having met and spoken with various persons there, including of course Jesus Himself. What is of immediate relevant interest here is an encounter he was allowed with Adam, who told him that he was appearing to him in the state he was before Eve was created. This brother-in-Christ observed that Adam was covered very heavily with God-given glory, and that he was almost overcome by the manifest sense of God's holy presence which radiated in a bright shining light from Adam's body reminiscent of what Peter, James and John saw on the Jesus, Moses and Elijah transfigured before them.

And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. (Matt 17:2-3)

As has been noted before, God's plan is to restore believers back to the original state that existed before Adam and Eve's transgression in the garden of Eden, back to the glory they wore before they sinned and

....sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. (Gen 3:7)

God's intent to restore us back to the original unsullied relationship Adam and Eve enjoyed with their Creator before they fell is what is truly “normal and natural,” which God created and called, “*Good*,” not the fallen, sin-cursed world we live in now. God has provided the solution through what His Son accomplished at the cross and by His resurrection and glorification.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been

*called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also **glorified**.*

(Rom 8:28-30)

*But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from **glory to glory**, just as from the Lord, the Spirit...*

(2 Cor. 3:18)

[For I always pray to] the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, that He may grant you a spirit of wisdom and revelation [of insight into mysteries and secrets]

*in the [deep and intimate] **knowledge of Him**,*

By having the eyes of your heart flooded with light, so that you can know and understand the hope to which He has called you, and how rich is His glorious inheritance

in the saints (His set-apart ones), (Eph 1:17-18 AMP)

*However, **we possess this precious treasure** ["Christ in us" - Col. 1:27] in [frail, human] vessels of earth, that the grandeur and exceeding greatness of the power may be shown to be from God and not from ourselves....*

Therefore we do not become discouraged (utterly spiritless, exhausted, and wearied out through fear). Though our outer man is [progressively] decaying and wasting away, yet our inner self is being [progressively] renewed day after day.

*For our light, momentary affliction (this slight distress of the passing hour) is ever more and more abundantly preparing and producing and achieving for us **an everlasting weight of glory** [beyond all measure, excessively surpassing all comparisons and all calculations, a vast and transcendent glory and blessedness never to cease!],*

*Since we consider and look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen;
for the things that are visible are temporal (brief and fleeting),
but the things that are invisible are deathless and everlasting.*

(2 Cor 4:7, 16-18 AMP)

Let us whose hearts burn with the desire He has placed within us to know Him, daily pray and seek all He has made available to us in Christ (Eph. 1:3),

*[That you may really come] to know [practically, through experience for yourselves] the love of Christ, which far surpasses mere knowledge [without experience];
that you may be filled [through all your being] unto all the **fullness of God** [may have the richest measure of the divine Presence, and become a body wholly filled and flooded with God Himself]! (Eph 3:19 AMP)*

So that the world, looking upon the Church, will see and recognize the Father's love as it was revealed in His Son, Jesus Christ.

“He who has seen Me has seen the Father.” (John 14:9)

God intends that He would be as visible to the world through Christ's Body, the Church, as He was through His Son.

Another brother-in-Christ describes in his book being transported to heaven after actually dying in a terrible auto accident. The sights and sounds he describes experiencing in heaven as a result are definitely otherworldly and excite the imagination of the reader perhaps more than any other book I have read about this type of experience:.

“Heaven's light and texture defy earthly eyes or explanation. Warm, radiant light engulfed me. As I looked around, I could hardly grasp the vivid, dazzling colors. Every hue and tone surpassed anything I had ever seen...I wasn't conscious of anything I had left behind and felt no regrets about leaving family or possessions. It was as if God had removed anything negative or worrisome from my consciousness...Everything I saw glowed with intense brightness...I was amazed that the luster and intensity continually increased...each time I stepped forward, the splendor increased...the light engulfed me, and I had the sense I was being ushered into the presence of God...it seemed as if I were part of the music...the melodies of praise filled the atmosphere. The nonstop intensity and endless variety overwhelmed me...My heart filled with the deepest joy I've ever experienced...The celestial tunes surpassed any I had ever heard. I couldn't calculate the number of songs – perhaps thousands – offered up simultaneously, and yet there was no chaos, because I had the capacity to hear each one and discern the lyrics and melody...I saw colors I would never have believed existed. I've never, ever felt more alive than I did then. I was home; I was where I belonged. I wanted to be there more than I had ever wanted to be

anywhere on earth...All worries, anxieties and concerns vanished. I had no needs, and I felt perfect.” (1)

Those who have been granted such visits to heaven have recorded truly marvelous things. But one observation that caught my attention was that everyone in heaven served each other as “team players.” (2)

The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and His servants will serve Him.

(Rev 22:3)

As it is in heaven, so – according to God's plans – it shall be also on a renewed earth.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. (Matt 6:10)

*Has not the LORD Almighty determined that the people's labor is only fuel for the fire,
that the nations exhaust themselves for nothing?*

*For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the **glory of the LORD**,
as the waters cover the sea. (Hab 2:12-14)*

*You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace;
the mountains and hills will burst into song before you,
and all the trees of the field will clap their hands.
instead of the thornbush will grow the pine tree,
and instead of briars the myrtle will grow.*

*This will be for the Lord's renown, for an everlasting sign,
which will not be destroyed. (Isa 55:12-13)*

I had been preparing a sermon on the love of God. For a week I had read and thought about the subject. On Sunday morning I went over my...notes; and then...I decided to walk to church....Upon opening the front door of our house...I walked out into a world I had never seen before. The familiar things were there as usual, but they were all...clothed in a radiance and beauty beyond description. The grass was definitely greener than I had ever seen it before. I glanced at the trees...their beauty was beyond measure. I became part of the whole, embracing it; and it embraced me...(I) was experiencing an ecstatic joy that came from something other than visual beauty. Suddenly I knew what it was. It was love! The whole world was a vast system of love!...Love...was at the heart of everything...

A white house which I had...thought of as...ordinary in appearance now seemed amazingly beautiful. The trees lining the street were...an integral part of this system of love permeating the entire universe. I recall feeling love for the trees...a warm, affectionate feeling, as if we belonged to each other....Eucalyptus seeds lay,,in great profusion, and I felt...they were the loveliest things I had every seen. I loved them in their beauty, for they were a part of this universe of love. Two strangers approached me and I felt a sudden surge of affection for them. I greeted them warmly, and their obvious surprise did not matter...The rest of the way...was filled with beauty and love, and when I

greeted several people standing at the entrance to the church I felt something which can only be described as overwhelming love, and warmth, and affection. We were all one, and **there was no barrier between us**. They were just parts of God's glorious, wonderful, joyous, loving universe, and they were beautiful...

I was seeing people and things the way they really are, not clouded by hate, and guilt and anxiety and fear....We were all forgiven, loved, united, and in love. It was not brotherhood; that is much too feeble a word. It was Oneness, in which we were “in” God, and God in us. I did not feel sadness as the feeling gradually diminished, because I sensed **I had been given a glimpse into reality beyond what we humans call “normal.”**

Love is at the heart of the universe. It pulsates in every atom and molecule. It throbs in every tree. It is alive in every human, in the dust of the earth, in the heart of God. God is love, Heaven is love, and we were all made to love, to live in love with God and man. (3)
(Emphasis mine.)

There is a basic similarity between the experience above and that of those I cited who wrote about what they experienced in heaven. That is because, as Scripture shows, God intends to bring His heavenly realm quite literally onto earth as it was when He created everything including Adam and Eve at the beginning. The reason of course that now, in this world we call “normal and natural,” every atom and molecule does NOT appear to “pulsate with love” is because of the presence of sin. One day, thirty-five years ago, I also had an experience identical to Osborne's,

though not of the same duration.

There will be nothing in heaven of those things which here on earth have served to divide the Body of Christ. No denominationalism. During the early 1970s, I made a trip back east first to visit my sister and her family in Ohio, then visited my father in St. Petersburg Beach, Florida. While staying with my father, I attended a nearby Baptist church. I noticed they had a youth program and since I had been involved in youth ministry, I contacted the pastor after a Sunday morning service to speak with him. Before there was any possibility of a discussion, he asked me, *“Who baptized you?”* It turned out that since I had not been baptized in a recognized Baptist church by a Baptized pastor I was not welcome to participate in their Baptist programs. I felt abashed as I left that church *“with my tail between my legs.”* There will be none of that nonsense in heaven – nothing of man's thinking he knows better than God, none of man's *“tradition”* to interfere with what is God has ordained, or made available as a gift.

There will also be no more *“copyrighting”* of what God gives you or me. As members of Christ's Body, I will not be able to say to you that what God gave me is mine and not yours, and you cannot use it! Can one *“hand”* say to the other, *“What has been given to me is mine, it was not given to you so you cannot use it”*? I suppose there are legal justifications for copyrighting here on earth, but there seems so much that man does with good intentions that effectively interferes with what God has said or done rather than facilitating it. Again, we are like six year-olds with our *“toys.”* What was given to me is mine and you cannot have it or use it! How pathetic! What nonsense! What is of more importance than proclaiming God's truth and giving Him the glory

rather than selfishly claiming it for ourselves?

We take communion together but then act as if we were not all members of one Body. We had better understand what is meant by

*“...make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. **Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus...**”*

(Phil 2:2-5) (Emphasis mine)

That is the way it most certainly will be in heaven – why cannot we determine to practice being “love-slaves” to each other here now?

*“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us **so that the world may believe that you have sent me**. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. **May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.** (John 17:20-23)*

I understand that John Wesley (founder of Methodism along with his younger brother, Charles) had a dream that He was standing at the gate of Hell. He knocked at the gate and wanted to question who were inside. "Are there Catholics?" He asked. "Yes," it was answered, "very many." "Are there Anglicans?" He asked again. "Yes," it was answered, "very many." "What

about Presbyterians?" "Yes, also them, very many." "But are there Methodists?" "Yes, yes, very many." Especially being terrified at the last answer Wesley hurried to the gate of Heaven, where he made the same questions, though in the different order. "Are there Methodists?" He asked hurriedly. "No," it was answered. "Are there Presbyterians?" "No." "Are there Anglicans?" "No." "Are there Catholics?" "No." "Well, who are there then?" Wesley asked terrified and in wonder. He heard the answer: "We do not know any such names which you asked. Here only the name of Christ is known and confessed. We are here a great multitude from all generations, nations and languages, and we have made our clothes white in the blood of the Lamb."

For if we searchingly examined ourselves [detecting our shortcomings and recognizing our own condition], we should not be judged and penalty decreed [by the divine judgment].

But when we [fall short and] are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined and chastened, so that we may not [finally] be condemned [to eternal punishment along] with the world.

(1 Cor 11:31-32 AMP)

If we truly examined ourselves (2 Cor. 13:5) in the light of God's Word, we would see clearly the need to let go all self-interests, deny them, die to them while submitting ourselves to God's work in us (Phil. 2:12-13) daily, focusing on Jesus (Hebr. 12: 2), and His life in us.

For we must all appear and be revealed as we are before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive [his pay] according to what he has done in the body, whether good or evil [considering what his purpose and motive have been, and what he has achieved, been busy with, and given himself and his attention to accomplishing]. (2 Cor 5:10 AMP)

For no other foundation can any one lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any one builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw - each man's work will become manifest; for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work which any man has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. (1 Cor 3:11-15)

Jesus also had quite a bit to say about the reality of hell, and there are those who have experienced that and returned to tell about it just as there are those who have experienced heaven as stated above.

But as for the cowards and the ignoble and the contemptible and the cravenly lacking in courage and the cowardly submissive, and as for the unbelieving and faithless, and as for the depraved and defiled with abominations, and as for murderers and the lewd and adulterous and the practicers of magic arts and the idolaters (those who give supreme devotion to anyone or anything other than God) and all liars (those who knowingly convey untruth by word or deed)--
[all of these shall have] their part in the lake that blazes with fire and brimstone.

This is the second death. (Rev 21:8 AMP)

It is indeed so sad that there are those who do not avail themselves of the opportunity that a loving heavenly Father makes available, that is, to “take hold of eternal life.”

*Fight the good fight of faith; **take hold of the eternal life to which you were called,** (1 Tim 6:12)*

It is, after all, that for which God's Son was called upon to give up His life for on our behalf:

*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have **eternal life**.* (John 3:16)

Jesus left no doubt as to what exactly “eternal life” is:

***And this is eternal life:** [it means] to know (to perceive, recognize, **become acquainted with,** and understand) **You, the only true and real God,** and [likewise] to know **Him, Jesus** [as the] **Christ (the Anointed one, the Messiah), Whom You have sent.** (John 17:3 AMP)*

But I have to wonder why Christians (and so many of those in Christian leadership) prefer to focus on other less worthy things than the wondrous gift God has afforded us so freely – yet at such a dear cost to His Son! They wind up so short of God's best for them!

Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?

Therefore tell her to help me."

*And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. **But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part,** which will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:38-42)*

There is need of one heart to attend upon the word, not divided and hurried to and fro, as Martha's was at this time. The one thing needful is certainly meant of that which Mary made her choice - sitting at Christ's feet, to hear His word. She was troubled about many things, when she should have applied herself to one; godliness unites the heart, which the world had divided. The many things she was troubled about were needless, while the one thing she neglected was needful. Martha's care and work were good in their proper season and place; but now she had something else to do, which was unspeakably more needful, and therefore should be done first, and most minded. She expected Christ to have blamed Mary for not doing as she did, but He blamed her for not doing as Mary did; and we are sure the judgment of Christ is according to truth. The day will come when Martha will wish she had set where Mary did.....

Serious godliness is a needful thing, it is the one thing needful; for nothing without this will do us any real good in this world, and nothing but this will go with us into another world....Sooner or later, Mary's choice will be justified, and all those who make that choice, and abide by it. But this was not all; He applauded her for her wisdom: She hath chosen the good part; for she chose to be with Christ, to take her part with Him; she chose the better business, and the better happiness, and took a better way of honouring Christ and of pleasing Him, by receiving His word into her heart, than Martha did by providing for His entertainment in her house (Emphasis mine) (4)

Whenever else we set our focus on something other than Jesus Himself we “miss the mark” God

has set for us. Why do we substitute our own agenda for God's plan for us?

*Yes, furthermore, I count everything as loss compared to the possession of the priceless privilege (the overwhelming preciousness, the surpassing worth, and supreme advantage) of **knowing Christ Jesus my Lord and of progressively becoming more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him** [of perceiving and recognizing and understanding Him more fully and clearly]. For His sake I have lost everything and consider it all to be mere rubbish (refuse, dregs), **in order that I may win (gain) Christ** (the Anointed one),*

And that I may [actually] be found and known as in Him, not having any [self-achieved] righteousness that can be called my own, based on my obedience to the Law's demands (ritualistic uprightness and supposed right standing with God thus acquired), but possessing that [genuine righteousness] which comes through faith in Christ (the Anointed one), the [truly] right standing with God, which comes from God by [saving] faith.

*[For my determined purpose is] **that I may know Him [that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognizing and understanding the wonders of His Person more strongly and more clearly], and that I may in that same way come to know the power outflowing from His resurrection [which it exerts over believers], and that I may so share His sufferings as to be continually transformed [in spirit into His likeness even] to His death, [in the hope]***

That if possible I may attain to the [spiritual and moral] resurrection [that lifts me] out

*from among the dead [even while in the body]. Not that I have now attained [this ideal], or have already been made perfect, but **I press on to lay hold of (grasp) and make my own, that for which Christ Jesus (the Messiah) has laid hold of me and made me His own.***

*I do not consider, brethren, that I have captured and made it my own [yet]; but one thing I do [it is my one aspiration]: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, **I press on toward the goal to win the [supreme and heavenly] prize to which God in Christ Jesus is calling us upward.*** (Phil 3:8-14 AMP)

We should be careful to consider only those subjects as Christians which can be addressed in the context of the above verses – otherwise what we are doing will be as “*wood, hay, straw*” (1 Cor. 3:10-15). And we should be careful especially that whatever subjects we consider in our teaching and preaching which are of a temporal nature should only be talked about while

Looking away [from all that will distract] to Jesus, Who is the Leader and the Source of our faith [giving the first incentive for our belief] and is also its Finisher [bringing it to maturity and perfection]. (Heb 12:2 AMP)

Our personal relationship with God is of utmost importance and we should be very careful to examine our hearts to see that our affections are always solely on Him in all we do and say, otherwise we may be found by Him to be idolatrous.

And whatever you do [no matter what it is] in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus and in [dependence upon] His Person (Col 3:17 AMP)

We know that God's love for us is immeasurably beyond the description of mere words, both as demonstrated through Jesus as told in the Bible, and in our daily lives as He cares for us as the great Shepherd of our souls (Ps. 23). But what of the love Jesus had for the “beloved disciple,” John?

*One of His disciples, **whom Jesus loved [whom He esteemed and delighted in]**, was reclining [next to Him] **on Jesus' bosom.** (John 13:23 AMP)*

That appears to me to be a desirable position to be in, even knowing how much God loves each of us. Why is it that I hear almost nothing mentioned about it? Why do so many members of the Body of Christ seem not to care about dedicating themselves to the development of the personal relationship with their God that has been given them, instead focusing on other things that cannot be compared in value to this wondrous gift?

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels... (2 Cor 4:7)

...Christ in you, the hope of glory. (Col 1:27)

Do you not know that your body is the temple (the very sanctuary) of the Holy Spirit Who lives within you, Whom you have received [as a Gift] from God? You are not your own, You were bought with a price [purchased with a preciousness and paid for, made His own].

So then, honor God and bring glory to Him in your body. (1 Cor 6:19-20 AMP)

Previously, I told of the excellent gift of a daughter that God has given me in answer to prayer. In my God-daughter Hanah's testimony reproduced in Chapter seventeen, she wrote, “ *I so wished for a father in this world who would represent God's love to me.*” That has been such a blessing to me also, as I have experienced God's love for Hanah in my own love for her, and she sometimes remarks that as I talk to her on the phone or through our computers on the Internet, that she has recognized God speaking to her in what I am saying to her. I rejoice when she tells me that, because of course I often pray that God will speak through me to her in answer to her desire for that.

But in addition, I have become aware that Hanah has brought a daughter's love that has added a dimension of life for me that was not previously present. In doing that, it reminded me of what God had done when He had entered my life so many years before. He had literally given me Life, raising me from spiritual death to spiritual Life in establishing an eternal relationship with me based on His love for me. Hanah came into my life, insisting on loving and being loved with a daughter's love that reminded me of the great love that God had for me. In Romans 8:38-9, the apostle Paul writes of the love of God from which nothing can separate us, and in 1 Corinthians 13:7-8 (AMP), God's love

bears up under anything and everything that comes, is ever ready to believe the best of every person, its hopes are fadeless under all circumstances, and it endures everything [without weakening]. Love never fails [never fades out or becomes obsolete or comes to an end].

Think of how much God must indeed hate any sin that would interfere with or hinder His

relationship with those He bought with the price of His Son's own life! Dear brothers and sisters, anything that turns our eyes from looking wholeheartedly on Him should be shunned. It may appear to be “right,” but is not if our heart is not set on Him (His interests and purposes - “*Not my will but Your's be done!*”) at all times.

“Heavenly Father, as a partner together with You in Your labor I want to cooperate with You fully as I know You cause all things to work together for good according to Your plans for me because I love You and am called by You according to Your purpose - for You foreknew me and predestined me to be molded into the image of Your Son, the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.” (Based on Rom. 8:28-9)

Our heavenly Father loves His Son so much He wants many like Him – whose only desire is to please Him!

“I always do those things that please Him.” (John 8:29)

"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which

leads to life, and there are few who find it. (Matt 7:13-14)

And someone said to Him, "Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?" And He said to them, "Strive to enter by the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and

knock on the door, saying, 'Lord, open up to us!' then He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know where you are from.' Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets'; and He will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you are from; depart from Me, all you evildoers.' There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth..."

(Luke 13:23-28)

"Become acquainted with My Son!" God had told me many years before, freely making available the key to entering into relationship with Him!

*"This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God,
and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. (John 17:3)*

Therefore, take hold of the eternal life that has been made freely available to you, and spend your precious time on earth focusing on your relationship with your God – not on other less important matters! He is holding His hand out to you – do not only view His out-stretched hand as a source of blessings, remaining forever childishly self-centered. Take His hand and walk with Him, joining Him in what He is doing, In this way, you will mature in your relationship with God, not only knowing Him better and more intimately, but also becoming more like Him.

*...do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price:
therefore glorify God in your body. (1 Cor 6:19-20)*

*(You) have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer (you) who live,
but Christ who lives in (you) (Gal 2:20)*

*Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but **understand what the will of the Lord is.** (Eph 5:15-17)*

"I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the barbarians." Romans 1:14

Paul was overwhelmed with the sense of his indebtedness to Jesus Christ, and he spent himself to express it. The great inspiration in Paul's life was his view of Jesus Christ as his spiritual creditor. Do I feel that sense of indebtedness to Christ in regard to every unsaved soul? The spiritual honor of my life as a saint is to fulfill my debt to Christ in relation to them. Every bit of my life that is of value I owe to the Redemption of Jesus Christ; am I doing anything to enable Him to bring His Redemption into actual manifestation in other lives? I can only do it as the Spirit of God works in me this sense of indebtedness.

I am not to be a superior person amongst men, but a bond-slave of the Lord Jesus. *"Ye are not your own."* Paul sold himself to Jesus Christ. He says - I am a debtor to everyone on the face of the earth because of the Gospel of Jesus; I am free to be an absolute slave only. That is the characteristic of the life when once this point of spiritual honor is realized. Quit praying about yourself and be spent for others as the bond-slave of Jesus. That is the meaning of being made broken bread and poured out wine in reality. (5)

"Go and do likewise." (Luke 10:37)

“My Spirit, says the Lord, is calling in this hour. Who are those that will hear? Who are those that will give ear to the counsel of God? Who are those that will bring themselves before Me? Who are those that will humble themselves before Me? Who are those that will lay themselves prostrate in worship and praise before Me?

Those are they who have made a decision to be sold out; those are they who have made a decision before Me to consecrate their hearts and their lives; those are they that hear the voice of My Spirit; those are they that love Me; those are they that have abandoned this world and all the earthly pleasures to follow Me.

I desire to lead you out and on to a new glory and faith. I desire to guide you and to lead you into a new demonstration of My Spirit and My power. Will you come follow Me, you that love Me, you that consecrated your lives before Me? Will you step into this new dimension of My glory; will you behold My salvation, will you behold those things that the prophets of old and the apostles of old longed to experience and to see into, for this is the hour that I desire to do a new thing among my people.

Men shall not be able to run nor shall they be able to hide from My glory, says the Lord, for My knowledge shall fill the earth. Yes, even My knowledge and My glory shall cover this earth as never before. There will be those that will harden their hearts against Me and say I don't want anything to do with this, and they shall run and hide and give

themselves over to a reprobate mind. Oh, don't be like them, says the Lord. It is they that shall bring the wrath of God upon themselves. My grace and My mercy, yea, even My glory and My truth, are available in this hour and I'm calling unto My people to come follow Me.

Step into the splendor and into the glory and into the majesty, into this thing that I desire to do in the earth, for it shall be the greatest revelation of My power, it shall be the greatest revelation of My glory that this world has ever experienced.

IT SHALL BE THE POWER AND THE MAJESTY THAT USHERS IN JESUS, SAYS THE LORD!" (6)

(1) "90 Minutes In Heaven," by Don Piper, pp. 25-33 © 2004 by Don Piper, Published by Fleming H. Revell

(2) "Heaven – Close Encounters of the God Kind," by Jesse Duplantis, p. 112,
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(3) "The Art of Understanding Yourself," by Cecil Osborne, pp, 227-8,

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(4) From Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition,
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(5) "My Utmost For His Highest," by Oswald Chambers, reading for July 15, p. 197
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(6) "Supernatural Horizons – From Glory to Glory," by Charles and Frances Hunter, pp. 229-30

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