

Prepare the Way

Preparing the Bride of Christ for the return of Christ

Issue No. 102
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**Forgiveness &
freedom from
bitterness**

Peter Pollock

**The
Great
I Am**

Aleksandr
Solzhenitsyn

**We have
forgotten
God**

**Tragedy of
a powerless
church**

**Top Bible prophecy
stories of 2016**





Contents
Issue No. 102

- 3 Wells of salvation
- 4 The great I am
- 6 Shafts of light 30
- 7 In prayer
- 8 Tragedy of a powerless church
- 9 Blessed are the merciful
- 10 God has a word for this hour
- 11 My resolve
- 12 The role of faith in revival
- 15 Private prayer
- 16 Forgiveness & freedom
- 17 The surrendered will
- 18 We have forgotten God
- 20 Top Bible prophecy stories
- 22 God answered a ridiculous prayer
- 23 Watch & Pray
- 24 Nothing but leaves

COVER: "For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another (1 John 3:11)."

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Wells of salvation

by Archibald Alexander

“WITH joy,” says Isaiah, “shall you draw water out of the wells of salvation.” Pure water is often employed by the sacred writers as the emblem of grace. The figure is used in several different senses.

Water represents purity; and the washing with water, the purification of the soul. “In that day,” says Zechariah, “shall a fountain be opened for sin and uncleanness.” “Wash – and be clean,” says Isaiah; and in the New Testament, we read of “the washing of regeneration,” of being “born of water,” and of having our “bodies washed with pure water.” The ordinance of baptism implies, among other things, this – as was said by Ananias to Paul, “Arise, and be baptised, and wash away your sins.”

But as water is necessary to the comfort of life, yes, to its very existence, we find it often used as an emblem of life and refreshment. “Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters.” “On the last, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, ‘If any man thirsts, let him come unto me and drink.’”

And Christ said to the Samaritan woman whom he met at Jacob’s well, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says, give me to drink, you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water.”

And again, “Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” And in the book of Revelation we have one of the sweetest,

richest texts on this subject: “The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come.’ And let him that hears say, ‘Come.’ And let him who is thirsty come. And whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

Another use of certain waters among men is for healing diseases. Medicinal springs are sought after and resorted to all over the world; but I do not find that, except in case of miraculous healing, any mention is made of water as medicinal in the Bible. The pool of Bethesda was famous, in the time of our Saviour, for the healing virtue of its waters; but this, we are told, was owing to a miraculous cause: “An angel descended into the pool, at certain seasons, and troubled the water; and whoever first, after the troubling of the water, stepped in, was made whole of whatever disease he had.”

So, also, we read in the Old Testament, that Naaman the Syrian, by the direction of Elisha, was healed of an incurable leprosy by dipping himself seven times in the river Jordan. And the blind man whom our Saviour healed by placing clay on his eyes, was directed to go and wash in the pool of Siloam; and “he went, and washed, and came seeing.”

What a rush

If there should be a miraculous fountain opened in some part of the world, which had the virtue of curing all sorts of bodily diseases, what an amazing rush would there be to reach it by the rich and the poor. The ways leading to it would be constantly crowded with pilgrims seeking a cure of their various diseases. The sick


and decrepit, as when our Lord was on earth, would be borne by their friends and bathed in the fountain of life.

The superstitious heathen travel hundreds and thousands of miles to visit some fountain supposed to possess a healing virtue; and in some Catholic countries, sacred wells are visited at certain seasons by a poor deluded people, who expect healing from waters which possess no healing quality, but what imagination gives them.

But when it is announced that a well of salvation is opened for the healing of the maladies of the soul, very little interest is felt by most in the glad tidings. Men are not sensible of their spiritual diseases, and therefore do not seek a cure. Yes, they are under such a terrible delusion, that they are unwilling to be healed: they fondly cherish their mortal maladies, and are often offended when urged to come to the wells of salvation to be healed.

A few, however, are thirsting for salvation, and they rejoice to hear that a fountain is actually springing up in this wilderness, to which they are freely invited. Such come with joy to the wells of salvation. And oh, how sweet are the repeated draughts of the water of life which they drink in!

Others are deeply affected with the conviction of their moral defilement. They ardently desire cleansing. To all such we bring glad tidings, when we announce that “a fountain is opened for sin and uncleanness.”

Do you ask where? In the gospel – in Christ, who is the centre and substance of the gospel. 



The Great I Am

by Peter Pollock

I AM... The Lord Your God! I Am God... I don't tolerate idols in any shape or form. I Am jealous! I Am a consuming fire and I punish disobedience!

My Christian background is Presbyterian, and I have never had any problem with the fact that God is sovereign and awesome. Through a dramatic “born again” experience after 40 years wandering in a sort of religious wilderness, my spirit and senses were certainly sharpened in terms of understanding that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.

But it is only of late – and I mean the last decade or so – that I have really come to grips with just how truly awesome is God! It was much the same as when I started off charismatically, some 35 years ago, believing in a Jesus that has been pretty much shaped by modern preaching and humanism, to being introduced, in a somewhat slower maturing process, to a much more real and profound Son of God.

Perhaps a turning point was one night at the airport in Perth as I was reading the Bible in the business-class lounge just before my return flight to South Africa. What hit me, in one fell swoop, was simply this: If God is the awesome God of the Bible, and He is; if Jesus is the awesome Son of God of the Bible, and He is; and if the Bible is the awesome Word of God, and it is, we are all playing games!

We are not playing games intentionally, but when we truly come to grips with His profound awesomeness we begin to realise

just how much we have undermined His Greatness. Yes, playing games because it is a serious matter of life and death we are dealing with and there is no room for dancing around issues and treading on those proverbial eggshells.

God is a jealous God and a consuming fire! And we need to tell the world so.

“Be careful not to forget the covenant of your God that He made with you; do not make yourselves an idol in the form of anything the Lord your God has forbidden. For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God (Deuteronomy 4:23&24).”

“Do not worship any other god for the Lord, whose name is jealous, is a jealous God (Exodus 34:14).”

“The Lord your God, who is among you, is a jealous God and His anger will burn against you (Deuteronomy 6:15).”

“I the Lord your God am a jealous God punishing... but showing love to those who love Me and keep My commandments (Exodus 20:5).”

Yes, God is both jealous and protective, and just how reassuring is that?

Joshua said: “He is a Holy God; He is a jealous God (Joshua 24:19).” David said: “Will your jealousy burn forever (Psalm 79:5)?” and Paul said: “I am jealous for you with a Godly jealousy (Hebrews 12:28).”

Therefore since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe for our God is a consuming fire!

Maybe you are not quite sure what “jealous” means? The dictionary defines it as:

fiercely protective; resentful of rivalry in love or affection; intolerant of disloyalty.

Yes, God is a jealous God! A consuming fire fiercely possessive and protective of His own. He does not tolerate rivals and His Grace is what keeps us acceptable and blessed in Jesus Christ. He does not love what we are but we are “acceptable” to Him because we are covered by the blood of Jesus. God’s wrath and judgement is upon all that does not come under the protection and authority of His Son. He has ordained it that way.

God will not share you with anyone! How incredible is that? How utterly awesome is that? And add further that He is immutable, meaning that He does not change; does not have to change because He does not make mistakes. Unshakeable! Indelible! Ineradicable! That’s God!

And as we go down the final straight prior to the return of Jesus, it’s time to move into the inner sanctum of understanding and revelation in terms of just how mightily awesome He is. Awesome beyond our understanding!

Jeremiah the prophet had this to say: “I (by My Spirit) will give them single-mindedness... So that they will always fear Me. I never stop doing good for them... I inspire them to fear me... so that they will never turn away.”

The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. It is an absolute biblical truth! And it was consequently a core message from the prophets. God raises prophets to point out sin, evil and godlessness and direct the path back to God.

The Holy Spirit does likewise, in that it convicts us of sin, righteousness and judgement and always provides the only solution – Jesus Christ! But fools and unbelievers despise discipline, respect and obedience. Just look around at the consequences.

Romans 11:22 talks about the kindness and the sternness of God which means that he is a God of love and justice. When kindness is ignored, God is seen as a tyrant and when sternness is ignored He becomes a doting father. But He is absolutely neither of those and yet, He is also both of those, and all at the same time. It's the same as saying that we need to fear God and yet at the same time not be afraid of Him!

No grace, no fear

A.W. Tozer writes: "Nobody can know the true grace of God who has not known the fear of God. The doctrine of love and grace affects the carnal heart NOT AT ALL! If anything, it merely confirms us in our arrogance and self-righteousness because it appeals to the ego.

"The effort of liberal and borderline moderates to woo men to God by presenting the soft option is an unqualified evil because it ignores the reason for our alienation – SIN!" writes Tozer.

God hates sin. God is in the business of justice and consequently the judicial system is a bastion, a vital key and a litmus test of any society. God has set into our system biblical principles, and they work. They govern outcomes and consequences, whether we want to believe it or not.

God set the rules and they govern life's game. And it is very unwise, stupid and yes, an absolute no-brainer, not to recognise and connect to this divine truth. He is the same yesterday, today and forever and let us not dare forget that he has wiped out the world twice, the first pre-history and the second the deluge involving Noah and all the animals.

2 Peter 2:4-9 reminds us that if "God did not spare the angels but sent them to hell... Did not spare the ancient world but protected Noah... Condemned Sodom and Gomorrah... Then, the Lord knows how to rescue godly men... And hold the unrighteous for the Day of Judgement, while continuing their punishment."

Sin reaps consequences. God is God of both Old and New Testaments, meaning that law and grace cannot be glibly separated. God is a disciplinarian, out of love,

and is a God of retribution.

God created everything, wondrous beyond the understanding and comprehension of our tiny finite minds. Job, the most successful man on earth at his time, when confronted by God, was asked what he knew. He responded that he knew nothing and asked forgiveness for even thinking that he could sit down and "analyse" God.

We need all to come to grips with that truth, for in the light of an awesome God we actually do know nothing.

As high as the heavens are above the earth, His ways are above ours. He is awesome. He is beyond compare!

And out of us should flow admiration, fascination, adulation and adoration. It should flow like rivers of streaming water because it is about Him, not us. God blows our minds, or should do. He is magnificent. He is terrific. He is tremendous. He knows everything beforehand.

He is timeless, and He wants to commune and have fellowship with us, each and everyone together and at the same time.

Go and read psalm 139. Read it slowly and absorb every word. It is mind-boggling. Each one of us is different. We have our own distinct fingerprints and DNA, we are not robots and we have all been given our own will to decide even about Him.

God also planned to save us all through His Son Jesus and that's just a start – obviously a huge start – of thousands of reasons for God to be held in absolute awe.

A true revelation of this truth produces one outcome – a yearning for Him with all heart, soul, mind and strength. The fear of God engenders a healthy positive reverence that obviously comes out of the acknowledgement of all God stands for and what He has done.

We respect people for their achievements and reputation. We idolise and even canonise them as humans yet none can even "tie his bootlaces."

Respect earns love or the desire to emulate or not to let down. I loved my father, listened to him, obeyed him, respected him and wanted to please him. I never battled with accepting him as a higher authority, deserving to be respected and obeyed. But God is so much greater and deserving of worship and adoration!

Our earthly relationships, particularly good ones like what I experienced with my dad, are only a microcosm, so minute by

comparison, to what it should be with our Heavenly Father. Do our doctrines have room for such intimacy? Sadly, I don't think so. God's Word clearly tells us what He stands for. And what is not acceptable.

God's mind is clearly revealed in the Bible and I am talking about the clear-cut, black-and-white issues, not the controversial issues that may well fall into so-called "grey" areas where we debate whether Paul, or any of the disciples, was speaking for God or in their personal capacities. Paul did remind us from time to time that it might well be his opinion.

On sexual sin, God is explicit. Why? So there is no confusion! We ought to love God so much that we want to obey. "If you love me you do as I say," said Jesus.

The "fear of God" should also include a clear understanding that sin and disobedience is punished. If we look around in the natural, any good organisation has rules and these parameters provide safety and security.

An army's strength relies on its rules and line of command. Without discipline and obedience armies collapse and so do any other conglomerations of people.

Hebrews 12:10&11: "Our father disciplined us for a little while as they thought best, but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in His holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time but painful. Later on however it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it."

Arrogant forthrightness

Satan knows full well the power and truth of this injunction and he is busy eroding it, sometimes with subtle innuendos but mostly these days with arrogant forthrightness. Break down respect and discipline in the families and nations, in the guise of freedom and liberation, and you will end up with anarchy and rebellion and worldwide chaos.

King Solomon, the richest wisest man ever, looks back at his life in the Book of Ecclesiastes. Those 12 chapters clearly indicate a very full life in which he had the wealth to do everything he pleased. Fame and success he experienced in huge doses but found that it was all "meaningless, a chasing after the wind."

Finally he sums up: "Now all has been heard, here is the conclusion of the matter. Fear God and keep His commandments for this is the whole duty of man." Amen and Amen! 🐟

Shafts of Light 30

by Helen Gardiner

“That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height – to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:17-19).”

AT the start of yet another new year, we consider God’s priorities in this time in which we live.

Top of the list is, as always, love. Us being perfected in the more excellent way of love. His love for us; our love for Him; His and our love for others – especially the brethren.

Love, perfected love, is the very essence of Christianity.

If we don’t have it (love), we can even give our bodies to be burned (that is, we can be martyrs for Him) and it will profit us nothing (1 Corinthians 13:3).

If we have the fullness of love (that is if we comprehend the width, the length, depth and height of His love) we can be filled with all the fullness of God.

I want that. He also desires that for us.

It all begins with us knowing in our hearts that we are particularly loved by Him. Not in a general kind of way (citing the well-known John 3:16). It has to be more than that.

In more recent years there have been movements in the Church which have sought to reveal the father heart of God and the Bridegroom nature of Jesus. I

believe these movements have been important and have played their part and continue to play their part in revealing to us: Jesus loves me this I know. And it is not just because the Bible tells me so. I can feel His love for me in my heart.

Years ago, the singer-songwriter Don Francisco sung a song which said: “Love is not a feeling but an act of your will.” I don’t agree. God’s love is a feeling *and* an act of your will.

Can't give what you haven't got

The truth is that you will never be able to love others, unless you know that your are loved. You cannot give what you have not received.

Our response to God’s love is to love Him in return, and to look to Him to help us to love others with His kind of love. It can take a while for the feelings to come, and there is a process we can go through.

Let’s consider 2 Peter 1:5-7: “But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control; to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.”

You can start with acts of brotherly kindness. If you do, the love feeling will come. Notice love is the pinnacle; it is the more excellent way of Paul’s 1 Corinthians 13.

I consider 1 Corinthians 13 the greatest

instructive teaching of the epistles. It is a poetic piece, which has made it known outside the church even, which is a good thing.

Read 1 Corinthians 13 right now.

Note verse 6: Love “does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth.”

Too often today in the church there are two camps: the love camp and the righteousness camp. We have to be encapsulating both simultaneously. That is God’s will. It will help us if we understand that sanctification is a process, so we can love people while they are in process. Just as we have to be loved by God and people while we are in process.

I have yet to meet someone portraying the perfected love of Jesus. We are still far off the fullness, most of us.

If we have fear, we are not perfected in love. 1 John 4:18 tells us: “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.”

The book of 1 John has quite a lot to say about loving the brethren. It is this love which Jesus talks about when He gives the extra commandment. We find this commandment in John 15:12&13: “This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.”

I have a wonderful little book which helps me every now and again to see how my heart is doing. It is called *Prayers That*

Avail Much by Germaine Copeland. The prayer called “To Walk In Love” personalises 1 Corinthians 13 and other Scriptures. It reads like this:

“Father, in Jesus’ name, I thank You that the love of God has been poured forth into my heart by the Holy Spirit Who has been given to me. I keep and treasure Your Word. The love of and for You, Father, has been perfected and completed in me, and perfect love casts out all fear.

“Father, I am Your child, and I commit to walk in the God kind of love. I endure long, am patient, and kind. I am never envious and never boil over with jealousy. I am not boastful or vainglorious, and I do not display myself haughtily. I am not rude and unmannerly and I do not act unbecomingly.

“I do not insist on my own rights or my own way for I am not self-seeking, touchy, fretful or resentful. I take no account of an evil done to me and pay no attention to a

suffered wrong. I do not rejoice at injustice and unrighteousness, but I rejoice when right and truth prevail.

“I bear up under anything and everything that comes. I am ever ready to believe the best of others. My hopes are fadeless under all circumstances. I endure everything without weakening because my love never fails.


“Father, I bless and pray for those who persecute me – who are cruel in their attitude toward me. I bless them and do not curse them. Therefore, my love abounds yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgement. I approve things that are excellent. I am sincere and without offence till the day of Christ. I am filled with the fruits of righteousness.

“Everywhere I go I commit to plant seeds of love. I thank you, Father, for preparing hearts ahead of time to receive this love. I know that these seeds will produce Your love in the hearts to whom they are given.

“Father, I thank You that as I flow in Your love and wisdom, people are being blessed by my life and ministry. Father, You make me to find favour, compassion and loving kindness with others.

“I am rooted deep in love and founded securely on love knowing that You are on my side, and nothing is able to separate me from Your love, Father, which is in Christ Jesus my Lord. Thank you, Father, in Jesus precious name. Amen.”

The late famous theologian Karl Barth was once asked what he considered was the greatest revelation God had ever given him in the course of his life which was nearing an end. His reply was simply: “Jesus loves me – this I know.”

Do You know in your heart that you are loved? Are you therefore able to share that love with others. Pursue the Lord in this year that you may come to know His love in your heart, and, so be filled with all the fullness of God. Hallelujah! 



In Prayer...

O Lord, in prayer I launch far out into the eternal world, and on that broad ocean my soul triumphs over all evils on the shores of mortality. Time, with its fleeting amusements and cruel disappointments, never appears so inconsiderate as then.

In prayer I see myself as nothing; I find my heart going after You with intensity, and long with vehement thirst to live to You. Blessed be the strong gales of the Spirit that speed me on my way to the New Jerusalem.

In prayer all things here below vanish, and nothing seems important but holiness of heart and the salvation of others.

In prayer all my worldly cares, fears, anxieties disappear, and are of as little significance as a puff of wind.

In prayer my soul inwardly exults with lively thoughts at what You are doing for Your church, and I long that You

should get Yourself a great name from sinners returning to Zion.

In prayer I am lifted above the frowns and flatteries of life, and taste heavenly joys; entering into the eternal world I can give myself to You with all my heart, to be Yours for ever.

In prayer I can place all my concerns in Your hands, to be entirely at Your disposal, having no will or interest of my own.

In prayer I can intercede for my friends, ministers, sinners, the church, Your kingdom to come, with greatest freedom, ardent hopes, as a son to his father, as a lover to the beloved.

Help me to be all prayer and never to cease praying.

From an old Puritan prayer. 

TRAGEDY OF A POWERLESS CHURCH

by Samuel Chadwick

THE Church of God is the creation of the Holy Spirit. It is a community of believers who owe their religious life from first to last to the Spirit. Apart from Him there can be neither Christian nor Church.

Christianity is not institutional but experimental. It is not by an ordained class, neither is it in ordinances and sacraments. It is not a fellowship of common interest in culture, virtue or service.

Membership is by spiritual birth. The roll of membership is kept in heaven. Christ is the Door. He knows those who are His, and they know Him. The Church Roll and the Lamb's Book of Life are seldom identical. "No man can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' but in the Holy Spirit," and confession of the Lordship of Jesus Christ is the first condition of membership in His Church.

The command to tarry in the city until there came the enduement of power from on high proves that the one essential equipment of the Church is the gift of the Holy Spirit. Nothing else avails for the real work of the Church.

The Holy Spirit is no more needed to run bazaars, social clubs, institutions and picnics than He is to run a circus. It is not for power to run these things that we need to tarry. Religious services and organised institutions do not constitute a Christian church, and these may flourish without the gift of Pentecostal fire.

The work of the Spirit in the Church is set forth in the promises of Jesus on the eve of His departure, and demonstrated in the Acts of the Apostles. The Gospels tell of "all that Jesus began to do and to teach, until the day in which He was received up (Acts 1:1&2)," and the Acts of

the Apostles tell of all that He continued to do and to teach after the day in which He was received up.

The Holy Spirit is the active, administrative Agent of the glorified Son. He is the *Paraclete*, the Deputy, the acting Representative of the Ascended Christ. His mission is to glorify Christ by perpetuating His character, establishing His Kingdom and accomplishing His redeeming purpose in the world.

The Church is the Body of Christ, and the Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. He fills the Body, directs its movements, controls its members, inspires its wisdom, supplies its strength. He guides into the truth, sanctifies its agents, and empowers for witnessing.

DOOMED TO FAILURE

The Holy Spirit has never abdicated His authority nor relegated His power. Neither Pope nor Parliament, neither Conference nor Council is supreme in the Church of Christ.

The church that is man-managed instead of God-governed is doomed to failure.

A ministry that is college-trained but not Spirit-filled works no miracles. The church that multiplies committees and neglects prayer may be fussy, noisy, enterprising, but it labours in vain and spends its strength for nought.

It is possible to excel in mechanics and fail in dynamics. There is a superabundance of machinery. What is lacking is power. To run an organisation needs no God. Man can supply the energy and enterprise for things human.

The real work of a church depends upon the power of the Spirit.

The presence of the Spirit is vital and

central to the work of the Church. Nothing else avails. Apart from Him wisdom becomes folly, and strength weakness. The Church is called to be a "spiritual house" and a holy priesthood. Only spiritual people can be its "living stones," and only the Spirit-filled its priests.

Scholarship is blind to spiritual truth till He reveals. Worship is idolatry till He inspires. Preaching is powerless if it be not a demonstration of His power. Prayer is vain unless He energises. Human resources of learning and organisation, wealth and enthusiasm, reform and philanthropy, are worse than useless if there is no Holy Spirit in them.

The Church always fails at the point of self-confidence. When the Church is run on the same lines as a circus, there may be crowds, but there is no Shekinah! That is why prayer is the test of faith and the secret of power. The Spirit of God travails in the prayer life of the soul.

The carnal can argue, but it is the Spirit



that convicts. Education can civilise, but it is being born of the Spirit that saves. The energy of the flesh can run bazaars, organise amusements, and raise millions, but it is the presence of the Holy Spirit that makes a Temple of the Living God.

The root trouble of the present distress is that the Church has more faith in the world and the flesh than in the Holy Spirit. Things will get no better till we get back to His realised presence and power. The breath of the four winds would turn death into life and dry bones into mighty army, but it only comes by prayer.

The Acts of the Apostles gives us an account of one church destitute of the Holy Spirit. The picture corresponds in many particulars with that of the church in the apocalypse that had lost its Christ. The church in Laodicea was rich and respectable, prosperous and influential, complacent and content, but was blind to the tragedy on the doorstep.

Their worship was faultless in form and passionless in spirit. There was no heresy in their creed, but there was no fire in their souls. The Spirit of Christ was outside. Where Christ is dishonoured there can be no Pentecost.

The church at Ephesus had the advantage of a distinguished and brilliant preacher. He was a man of great scholarship, who had won distinction at a great university. No preacher can have too much learning,

and the Bible gives due recognition to the fact that Apollos was “a learned man.” In addition to the wisdom of the schools, “he was mighty in the Scriptures...”

It seems hardly credible that such a minister should lack the very things essential for the work of the Christian ministry. He had neither Gospel nor power. In his preaching there was no Cross, no resurrection, no Pentecost. He preached Jesus, but he did not know Christ crucified. Peter the fisherman was worth a thousand of him.

HE HAD NO GOSPEL

Eloquent, learned, sculptural, impassioned, faithful and courageous, Apollos had no Gospel. Carefully trained, well instructed, a courageous learner, and an effective teacher, he had no vision. Skilled in definition, powerful in debate, earnest in advocacy, he had no power. The colleges had given him of their best, but they left him ignorant of things vital and destitute of the Holy Spirit.

To Paul’s keen eye there was something wanting... The people under the preaching of Apollos were upright in life, devout in spirit, faithful in service, and yet without the Holy Spirit.

Their religion was a strict, external observance, not an Indwelling Presence. They lived by rule, not by illumination. God saves from within; they disciplined them-

selves from without. Religion to them was a joyless burden, for they carried their God on their backs instead of in their hearts.

Pentecost transforms the preacher. The commonest bush ablaze with the presence of God becomes a miracle of glory. To the Church, Pentecost brought light, power, joy.

No one needed to ask if they had received the Holy Spirit. Fire is self-evident. So is power! Even demons know the difference between the power of inspiration and the correctness of instruction. The only power that is adequate for Christian life and Christian work is the power of the Holy Spirit.

The resources of the Church are in “the supply of the Spirit.” The Holy Spirit is more than the Minister of Consolation. The Holy Spirit is Christ without the limitations of the flesh and the material world. He has resources of power greater than those Christ could use, and He makes possible greater works than His...

It is for the Church to explore the resources of the Spirit. The resources of the world are futile. In the fullness of the Spirit there is abundance of wisdom, resources and power, but a man-managed, world-annexing, pretending church can never save the world or fulfil the mission of Christ.

Suppose we try Pentecost! 

❧ Blessed are the merciful ❧

by Warren Wiersbe

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy (Matthew 5:7).”

CERTAINLY it doesn’t mean that we earn mercy because we extend mercy. Such an idea is foreign to Word of God.

By its very definition, mercy cannot be earned any more than grace can be earned. The Beatitude is saying: “When you experience mercy, and share mercy, then your heart is in such a condition that you can receive more mercy to share with others...”

Jesus is not asking us to be merciful occasionally; He is asking us to be constant channels of mercy. “Give, and it shall be given unto you (Luke 6:38).” By extending mercy, we open our hearts to receive mercy; and having received, we can share again and again.

The Christian is surrounded by mercy. When he looks back, he can say, “Surely goodness, and mercy have followed me all the days of my life (Psalm 23:6).” When he looks ahead, he remembers the words of Jude 21 – “Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

As he begins each new day, he can say; “It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness (Lamentations 3:22&23).”

God responds to us on the basis of the heart. “With the merciful you will show yourself merciful. With the perfect man, you

will show yourself perfect. With the pure, you will show yourself pure. With the crooked you will show yourself shrewd (Psalm 18:25&26).”


When we begin to cultivate one of the spiritual graces, God always provides more. When we show mercy, He gives mercy; and thus, we have more mercy to show.

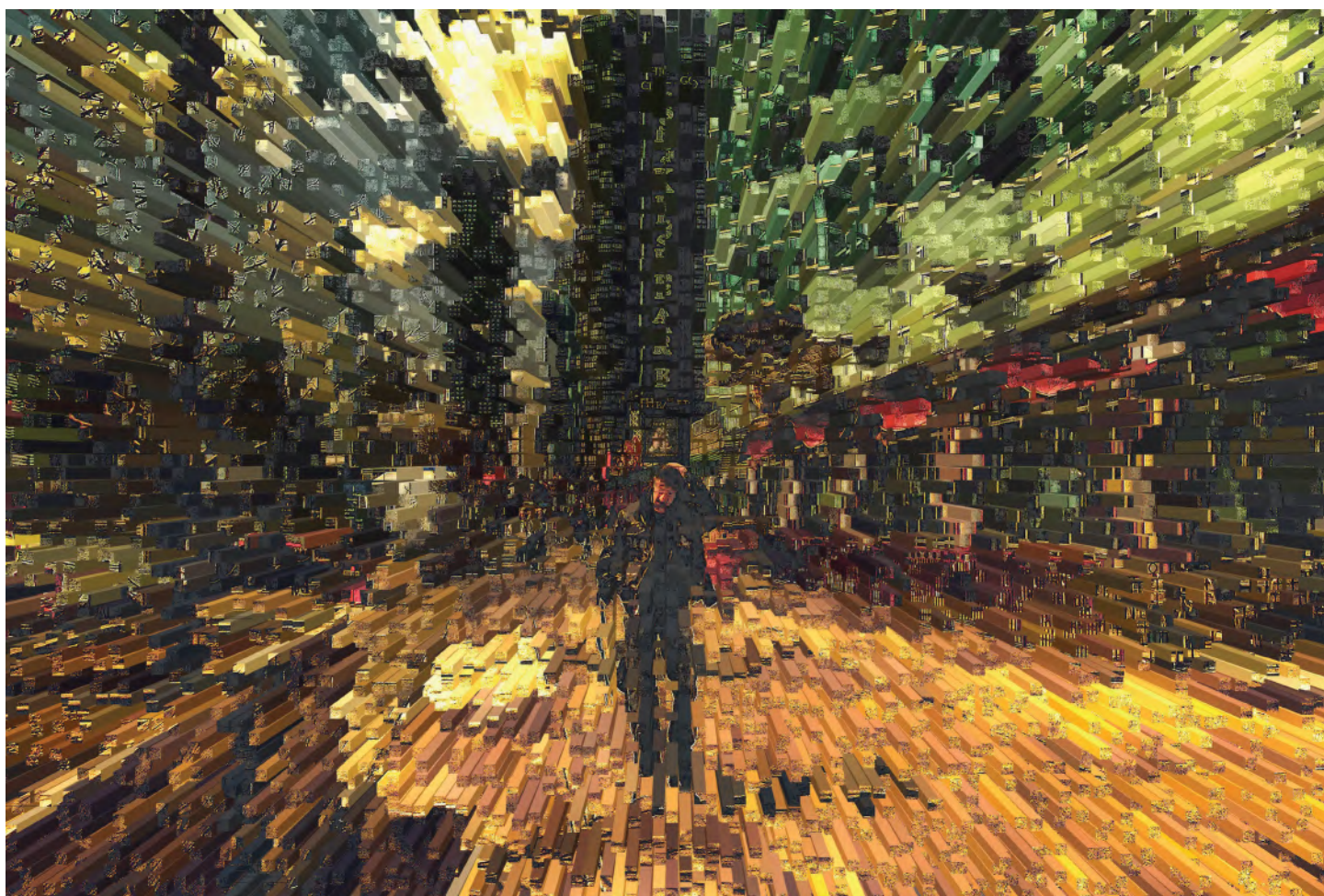
When a Christian shows mercy, he experiences liberation. He is set free from grudges that drain the strength and unsettle the mind...

The most miserable prison in the world is the prison we make for ourselves when we refuse to show mercy. Our thoughts become shackled, our emotions are chained, the will is almost paralysed.

But when we show mercy, all of these bonds are broken, and we enter into a joyful liberty that frees us to share God’s love with others. This blessing of freedom is one way that we receive mercy as we show mercy. It is a blessed by-product of obeying God.

How thrilling to go through life sharing God’s mercy and not having to judge people to see if they are “worthy” of what we have to offer. We stop looking at the externals and begin to see people through the merciful eyes of Christ.

Every Christian we meet is a person in whom Jesus lives; every lost soul we meet is a person for whom Jesus died. In both cases, we have candidates for God’s mercy. 



God has a word for this hour

THIS is a tremendous hour in human history. There are ominous movements in the world. But I am constrained to ask, Has the Lord no plan for this hour? Has the church no message? Is there no word from the Lord concerning the spiritual recovery of this hour?

If not, then this is the first time in history that a major crisis has arisen under a silent heaven.

Before God destroyed the earth with a flood, He put His message of warning in the mouth of Noah. When God judged Egypt, He sent Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh with a divine pronouncement on their lips. God raised up Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah in times of crisis in Israel and Judah. They had God's word for the hour in which they lived (Hebrews 11:7; Exodus chapters 5-14; 1 Kings. 17:1).

And God has a word for this hour!

A Call to Repentance!

People are awakening to the fact that we are living in a solemn hour, and that our greatest need is a revival that will bring us to God. There is a swelling tide of intercession to God – pleading for God's intervening mercies and for a new Pentecost upon the churches.

What was true of Israel of old is true of us today. Whenever declension of spiritual power is felt, the root cause is sin in the church. Whittled down a little closer, the root cause of conditions in the world is the sin of individual Christians. This is a time for flaming messages, inspired of the Holy Spirit, preached fearlessly by men who do not fear the consequences – calling men everywhere to repentance!

Unconfessed Sins

In God's programme for this hour, repentance must begin with Christians, who must turn in penitence from their worldliness, prayerlessness, indifference, and the dangerous sloth and sleep. They must repent of their carnal strivings for position and place, and of their deadly church quarrels and denominational jealousy. The unrepented, unconfessed sins of God's people have chilled the atmosphere of the church until people are driven away.

It is high time for the pulpit to thunder and burn with the power and fire of the ancient prophets and apostles of our Lord! It is high time for God's people to awake from their Laodicean slumber, and strip themselves from their love of the world and love of self, and from the deceit, sham and hypocrisy of

their shallow professions – and to turn to the Lord with all their heart, with fasting and tears, and with contrition and confession and restitution.

Where is the church "terrible as an army with banners (Song of Songs 6:4)?" Where are the Lord's people whose prayers, like John Knox's are the terror of evil rulers like Bloody Mary, Queen of Scots? Where is the Gospel being preached with such unction and power from God that the enemies of God say, "Those who have turned the world upside down have now come here (Acts 17:6)?"

Why are not these things true of us today? Because of the failure of God's people, because sin is tolerated in their lives and hugged to their bosoms.

It is not perhaps great, blatant sin. It may be only a multitude of little chiseling sins which have cooled off our love for Christ and our passion for lost souls, and dulled our spiritual ears so we cannot hear the voice of the Lord, and dimmed our spiritual sight so we have lost the vision of a world ripe for harvest, and palsied our hands and made us unfit for His service – leaving us carping and critical Christians (Song of Songs 2:15; Ecclesiastes 10:1; 1 Corinthians 5:6; Galatians 5:9).

“By their fruits you shall know them (Matthew 7:20).”

In the Song of Songs, which contains wonderful church truth in figurative language, the Heavenly Husbandman says: “Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes (Song of songs 2:15).”

If we are to see a great harvest, we must take out the little foxes. They seem innocent and harmless but they kill the fruit. The little sins and compromises with the world, the flesh and the devil – these kill our usefulness. They must be taken out of our vineyard of the Lord.

Let us confess and forsake all. We will be amazed to find how greatly we need a spiritual housecleaning if we will let God search us and the Spirit probe us to rock-bottom (Psalm 139:23-24; 1 Chronicles 28:9).

Some of us will find we have not put God first in our lives but rather we have given place to personal ambition, carnal comforts, and have yielded to the demands of friends and relatives and made God second.

Some of us have sinned directly towards God by rebelling against His known will and stopping our ears to His call to lay down our lives in His service.

Then there are the gross sins of the uncrucified self-life – self-will, self-pleasing, self-glorifying, self-seeking, self-pity, self-confidence, selfish affections, desires, motives, choices – all of which grieve the Spirit and unfit us to answer the call of the Lord to His people in this hour.

Some of us readily get angry, pouty, irritable. There is among us an unforgiving spirit, jealousy and envy (James 3:14-18). With others there are secret and presumptuous sins – but they are not hidden from God (Psalm 19:12&13). There are also the deadly sins of gossip, backbiting, tale-bearing (James 3:2-13; 2 Corinthians 12:20). All of these God hates (Proverbs 6:16-19). They close His door of blessing and hinder His answer to our prayers for our home, our community, our nation and the world.

“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear... Your hands are defiled... your tongue has muttered perverseness. None calls for justice, nor any pleads for truth (Isaiah 59:1-4).”

We need God! We tremendously need a revival of the supernatural. Nothing but a great visitation of the grace of God can in any way redeem these present perilous hours. Impending disasters warn us. God’s Word warns us. The Holy Spirit warns us. “It is time for

You, Lord, to work: for they have made void Your law (Psalm 119:126).” “Revive Your work in the midst of the years (Habakkuk 3:2).”

I believe this is God’s hour for the Spirit’s outpouring. But God’s great present purposes in grace are dependent upon the whole-souled response of us – His people.

Therefore it is of vast importance to us whose hearts have been stirred about a visitation of God – that we leave no stone unturned in ourselves, meeting conditions for revival in our own heart, in our church, our community, our nation and the world.

There is, in almost every divinely sent message of judgement, the promise of salvation and deliverance if men and women will humble themselves and seek the face of God in repentance and in faith.

Think of the salvation of Nineveh, that wicked heathen city of ancient times. God’s prophet Jonah was sent with the message of doom, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown (Jonah 3:4).” No mercy was promised. But the king and the people must have reasoned like this, “If God had no gracious thought toward us, He would not have sent us this warning.” So they repented in sackcloth and ashes and with fasting cried mightily to God, and God was moved to mercy and revoked His edict of judgement (Jonah 3).”

If the God of all mercies would do so much for heathen Nineveh, when she repented, will He not do as much for His own people, if we repent and turn from our worldliness and selfishness to seek the Lord till He come and rain righteousness upon us (Hoseah 10:12)?”

Plus God

The annals of sacred history are filled with accounts of God’s undefeatable minorities. To the worldly-wise they appear foolish, weak, contemptible. But – plus God, they have become mighty, invincible, unquenchable and triumphant! They have

time and again altered the course of history, and changed the face of nations. Without strength, they have wrought prodigious works. Without influence, they have transformed their generation.

Of such was the Apostle Paul, Luther, Wesley. Thank God their tribe has not perished in these – our times.

What would happen today if Christians would cease to trifle and go all-out for God? What if we would obey the Lord and fast and pray day and night, that He might bring about justice (Luke 18:7&8)? What if we would get right with God, and with each other?

Without doubt, this would bring a visitation of God.

I pray you do something today about the evils and dangers all about us. It is a time for fasting and tears and prayer unceasing. Begin today! If you will, we shall have one of the greatest visitations of all time!

Revival is new obedience to God

“If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments, and perform them, then I will give you rain in its season, the land shall yield its produce, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. Your threshing shall last till the time of vintage, and the vintage shall last till the time of sowing; you shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely.

“I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none will make you afraid; I will rid the land of evil beasts, and the sword will not go through your land. You will chase your enemies, and they shall fall by the sword before you. Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight; your enemies shall fall by the sword before you (Leviticus 26:3-8).”

With grateful thanks to Herald of His Coming

MY RESOLVE...

I am living in the era of the world’s crisis.

I am living in the era of the church’s crisis.

I must face these solemn facts, and plan to make my life produce the largest possible fruitage for my Heavenly Father through lip and life.

Therefore, with His enabling...

I will, with unquestioning faith, give more time to the definite perusal of the Word of God.

I will give more time to prayer, with fasting – for God’s intervention in the affairs of men and nations, and for the Holy Spirit’s outpouring and God’s blessing upon His work and workers.

I will give more time to personal work for the salvation of lost souls.

I will give more liberally to God’s work and with more definite knowledge of where and how my gifts are being used.

I will stand, by God’s grace, with unquestioning confidence in the whole Word of God, and with the unsheathed Sword of the Spirit, contend for the faith once for all delivered against all deceivers in school, church and nation. 

The role of faith in revival

by Richard Owen Roberts

THANK God for all who are burdened and prayerful about revival. But that alone is not sufficient. We live in a time when reformation also is absolutely mandatory. There are millions and millions of people who belong to evangelical churches in the Western world who sincerely believe themselves to be Christians who have nothing but wasted faith. Tragically, no one has ever enabled them to understand the difference between faith and mental assent.

There are two passages that I want to draw to your attention: 2 Peter 1:1-11 and Hebrews 11. I will only skim over the first passage, but I draw your attention to the incredibly urgent matters in this passage of the source, the appearance and the conduct of saving faith for further consideration in your own private study and prayer life.

“Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Saviour, Jesus Christ (verse 1). What is the source of saving faith? Faith is “received” – it is given to you. Part of the tragedy of the hour is that people are trying to muster up faith. They hope they have inherited it from a grandparent or a parent. They think that perhaps by exposure to people of faith that faith is theirs. Faith is a gift of God, just as repentance is (Acts 11:18; 2 Timothy 2:25).

My second observation from this verse is the appearance of saving faith. What does it look like? It is “a faith as the same kind as ours.” Peter had saving faith. It took a long time to develop. He made a lot of tragic errors along the way, but it is crystal clear that he got it.

Paul and Stephen had saving faith. Every individual named in Hebrews 11 had saving faith and multitudes through the centuries had it. All saving faith looks alike. If you wonder whether you’ve got the real thing, compare it with what Paul and Peter had, and discern whether or not you have the real thing.

Verses 2-7: “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord: seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious

and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply (No. 1) moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, (No. 2) knowledge; and in your knowledge, (add No. 3) self-control, and in your self-control, (add No. 4) perseverance, and in your perseverance, (add No. 5) godliness, and in your godliness, (No. 6, add) brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, (No. 7) Christian love.”

Faith that has not been added to by these seven qualities is not saving faith. It is wasted faith. You may be one of those who say we are saved by faith alone. Consider the revelation of truth that Peter had. Look at verse 8: “For if these qualities are yours and are increasing...” Notice that it is not enough to have them; they have to be added one by one, in the sequential order here. You don’t add Christian love when you are in the grip of hypocrisy. You have to have moral earnestness before you can have true perseverance. If these qualities are not yours, and they are not on the increase, you are in a lot more trouble than you ever guessed.

Returning to verse 8 we read that these qualities... “render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities is (No. 1) blind or (No.2) short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.”

Two reasons...

Think about this! If you do not have these qualities and if these qualities are not on the increase, there are two possible reasons why. Number one: you are blind. That is a serious statement. In 1 John there is a powerful passage about blindness and our Lord Jesus Christ made it crystal clear that the blind man is a man who does not know the Lord.

You can have what you call faith but if these qualities are not yours and are not on the increase, you are blind. You have been deceived. You have been taken in by some false teacher. He may pose as an evangelical; he may give an altar call after every service. But saving faith is always busy adding qualities, and those qualities are ever increasing.

The alternative to being blind is being short-sighted. You have forgotten the

reason for your former deliverance from sin. Christ does not save anyone to deliver them from hell. Christ saves us in order to enable us to bring Him glory and to impact our world and to advance His kingdom.

If you think you received faith and you think the faith you received is the same as the apostles received, but you have not been adding these qualities and they are not on the increase, then you miss the point of the grace God has shown to you. You cannot live at the entry level of Christianity. We all have to start somewhere but it cannot end there. It has to go beyond that.

Let us go back and reflect upon the qualities of saving faith:

Quality No. 1. The translation I quoted from uses the expression “moral excellence.” The translations vary. Some translations say virtue; some refer to holiness. The very heart of it is the concept of moral earnestness. There is something so urgent, so vital, so real that it puts you in an altogether different class than the Pharisees and the scribes and the lawyers of the New Testament. It separates you dramatically from the world around you, because there is a moral earnestness that grips you. Much of the church knows nothing about moral earnestness. They are much more earnest about everything under the sun than Christ and His kingdom.

Quality No. 2. When he speaks about “knowledge,” it is not just about Bible knowledge. It is discernment, so that you know what to do with what the Holy Spirit teaches you. In seasons of revival, there is desperate need for discernment as to what matters.

Many movements in recent years focused on physical phenomena which draw attention away from Christ. It is absurd to be burdened for revival and yet not be seeking discernment so that you will be able to keep the focus on Christ, because revival is very fragile. In a true revival, it is all eyes on Christ. All the devil has to do to destroy true revival is to get the eyes off of Christ on to something which in itself may be legitimate, but it is of minor consequence. So to moral excellence, add discernment.

Quality No. 3. Add “self-control.” There is a high percentage of the church that does not know anything about self-control. The many divorces in this day are a clear indication of a lack of self-control. I am not sure how you could call anybody godly who lacks self-control.

Quality No. 4. Not only are we to add self-control but “perseverance.” Over and over I’ve observed people who have come under the



burden of revival and then a few months later, they are under some other burden. We have a phenomenal lack of perseverance in our day.

Quality No. 5. And to perseverance, add true “godliness.”

Well, you get the picture. Every one of us ought to be burdening ourselves with this passage. The bulk of Christians know nothing about this kind of thing. You need to seriously start preaching and teaching what the Word of God says about faith.

Let me simply finish this passage by commenting on verses 10&11: “Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.”

I think a lot of folk feel that if they can somehow manage to just slip in to the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, that is about enough. Peter is saying that if these qualities are in you and are on the increase, you are going to receive an abundant entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

On to Hebrews 11, where I want to draw your attention to five of the things that are part-and-parcel of true saving faith. And in the hopes that some of you might remember these truths, I want to lay them out in a simple pattern. Might we let each letter in the word “faith” stand for a part of Hebrews 11:

The letter “F” – facts in focus.

The letter “A” – active obedience.

The letter “I” – intimacy with God.

The letter “T” – tenacious valour.

The letter “H” – hope.

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1). In keeping with those words, read these words from Romans 8:5-8: “For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”

Two mindsets...

A high percentage of all those who think they have saving faith still have the mindset of the world. But true saving faith always brings a person into the mindset of the Spirit, and verse one of Hebrews 11 makes this clear. When you have saving faith, the things that you hope for are given substance, and the things that are unseen are brought into the realm of absolute certainty and assurance.

The consequence is that the things that are unseen, the things that are of a heavenly nature, the things of the Spirit, the things that are eternal – become much more dominant than the things of the flesh, the things of this earth, the things that you can taste and touch and see.

But multitudes who think they have faith know nothing of that mindset of the Spirit. A reformation is desperately needed, a time when we return to true biblical teaching and preaching.

People regularly tell me, “You cannot preach doctrine. Doctrine is divisive.” Of course it is divisive. It separates sheep from goats!

Some of you pastors have worn yourself out trying to shepherd goats. It is an impossible, an exasperating, and an exhausting task. You cannot make the dead alive by discipleship. In the mindset of the Spirit, faith always brings the unseen and the eternal into such focus that they are much more dominant than the seen and the felt.

You quickly observe this when you get

into a group where you are among those who profess to be Christians. Many a time after a Sunday morning sermon I’ve been invited to the pastor’s house for lunch, and I have found it absolutely impossible to maintain a conversation that focuses on Christ and His kingdom. There is the mind-set of the world. Multitudes of congregations, when the final “Amen” has been pronounced, are immediately conversing about yesterday’s football game, about some television programme, etc. The sermon is entirely gone.

The mindset of the flesh is death (Romans 8:6).

F – Faith always brings facts into focus. Those with faith know that that which is eternal is vastly more consequential than that which is temporal. And that which cannot be seen and can only be hoped for is vastly more consequential than anything in this life. So we need to return to the Word and the Spirit of God. We need to be absolutely sure that we have the facts in focus.

A – active obedience. We have clear statements and commands in this passage. Look at Hebrews 11:6: “...without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.” Some of the translations insert the word “diligently.” We treat seeking God as something once done, forever accomplished. But no! The life of faith is the life of perpetually seeking the face of God. Here is an absolute command to seek God with all your heart.

We are dealing with incredible numbers of people who do not seek the face of God, and no one has loved them sufficiently to make it clear that a mandatory aspect of faith is active obedience. Our Lord said, “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say (Luke 6:46)?” “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments (John 14:15).”

Think of what is said of Noah in Hebrews 11:7: “By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.” For one 120 years he went alone and endured the taunts and the curses of his fellows. But he pleased the Lord in what he did.

I know that when Abraham was commanded by God to take the son of promise, and was ordered to prepare to sacrifice him, he did so in faith with conviction that if necessary God would raise that

The role of faith in revival

Continued...

son from the dead in order to fulfil His promise.

You go through Hebrews 11 and it is more than obvious that faith is not mental assent. What if Noah had listened to God in His command to build the ark and said, "Now, Lord, that is a remarkable concept. I can hardly envision this thing. I want to assure you that I am going to think about what You have said." That is the response of multitudes in terms of hearing the Word of God preached.

There are pastors who have hardly ever heard anybody say anything more exceptional than, "O pastor, that was interesting. I never thought about that." When people step up to me after a service and say that, I grieve inwardly.

Whatever the Lord says to you, do it! And do not delay! Saving faith is active obedience

Our Lord gave us a small but an immensely consequential story about a person in whom there dwelt a demon and the demon was cast out. The place was "swept and garnished" – made ready for the next occupant, but it stood empty. The demon passing by saw that it was still unoccupied and he gathered some of his pals and the last state was worse than the first (Luke 11:24-26).

We must practice active obedience. But you cannot obey the Lord when you are obeying the commands of your own lust. You cannot practice active obedience if you have not denounced yourself and your own ways and desires.

I – intimacy with God. Hebrews 11 brings this matter of intimacy with God into focus in verse five: "By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death; and he was not found because God took him up; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God."

Enoch was 65 years of age when his son Methuselah was born, and then it is clear that he walked with God in this intimacy for 300 years. Faith brings one into intimacy with God, so the things that God sees we see, so the things that God feels we feel, so the things that God is committed to, we are committed to.

I do not want to deceive people; I do not want to pretend that faith is mental assent. Faith is active not passive; faith always

brings those who have it into intimacy with God.

T – tenacious valour. Read these words, starting at verse 32: "And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, in order that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground."

How dare you say that...

Every one of these is demonstrating tenacious valour. Countless times people have stepped up to me and said, "How did you dare say that?" and I say, "How do you dare remain silent?" This issue of "political correctness" simply shows what cowards we are.

I am often reminded of a song we used to sing as children, "Dare to be a Daniel; dare to stand alone; dare to have a purpose firm; and dare to make it known." Not a single person made it into Hebrews 11 who was a coward. Go and read the verses again. It is truly marvellous to observe the tenacious valour that they demonstrated.

Take Gideon for example. What an example of tenacity! What is tenacity? You lay hold of a matter and you will not let it go. If it means imprisonment you hang on. If it means death you hang on. If it means living in a cave or a hole or in a tent, you hang on.

Courage – that is being tenacious!

I believe we would see revival very soon if the church got serious about the subject of faith. I pause to ask you, do these qualities show up in your life?

H – Hope. Verses 39&40, in a magnificent way, bring this into our vision: "And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what

was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they should not be made perfect."

Oh what a message is recorded in those words! This is amazing when you think about it. Think about Samson. His name is mentioned here. In the end, he had that faith that was pleasing to God. When he laid hold of those pillars and asked for one more return of strength, God met him and enabled him to bring that building down. We are not talking about perfection here, but we are talking about moral earnestness; we are talking about perseverance.

All of these individuals listed got the testimony that they pleased God. Some of us who think we are "super saints" do not have that testimony. We have no evidence that we are pleasing to God.

Some do not even please themselves. They do not have any sense of the pleasure of God upon them. But every one of these in Hebrews 11, without exception, had this testimony that they pleased God.

But they did not get "the promise." Now they got promises. In the passage there are references to promises in the plural and there is reference to "the promise" singular. It is more than amply clear that Christ Himself is "the promise" and they did not get Christ.

God had provided something better for, as us we read in the final verse. Would you not agree that a great High Priest who lives forever is far greater than a high priest who dies and has to be replaced? Would you not agree that the law of God written on your heart is better than the phylactery around your arm? God has provided something better for us! But the tragedy is we live as if we had received less than the heroes of Hebrews 11 received.

You have received vastly more than any of these saints whose names appear in this record, and thus you are vastly more responsible for what you got (Luke 12:48). Our great hope is that in fulfilling our responsibility in terms of what we received, the Lord will hearken and will say, "Before I come that final time, I am going to come again among My people and make them ready for My final return."

Without faith it is impossible to please Him. We can pray all we like, but if our prayers are not prayers of faith, there is no consequence. The role of faith in revival, its urgency and its consequence, I cannot sufficiently emphasise, but at least I can draw it to your attention and ask that you give the Word of the Lord the kind of consideration and response it deserves. ☩



by Arthur W. Pink

“But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly (Matthew 6:6).”

PPRIVATE prayer is the test of our sincerity, the index to our spirituality, the principle means of growing in grace. Alas, how remiss we have been, how sadly we have failed to discharge this duty. Is it not high time that some of us heeded that word, “Consider your ways (Haggai 1:5&7).”

Shall this year witness a repetition of the sad failures of the past? Can we go on robbing God of His due, and our souls of the blessedness of communion with Him? The secret place of the Most High is one of vision, peace and joy. The closet is where strength is renewed, faith is quickened, graces are revived.

It is not always the cares or pleasures of this world which are the hindering cause – some allow the discharge of public duties to prevent the performance of private ones. Beware, my reader, of being so busy in running from one meeting to another – that personal dealings with God in secret are crowded out.

Some are so busily engaged in reading and preparing sermons that private communion with God is prevented. Private prayer is the one thing, above all others, which Satan seeks to prevent – for he knows full well that if he can succeed at this point, the Christian will fail at every other.

The most eminent saints, in Old and New Testament times, applied themselves to private prayer. “And Abraham planted a grove in Beersheba, and called there on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God (Genesis 21:33).” “And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide (Genesis 24:63)” – the Hebrew word for “meditate” also signifies to pray, and is elsewhere rendered “commune” and “pray.”

So, too, Jacob, Moses, Samuel, David, Elijah,

Hezekiah, were men whose private devotions are recorded in Scripture. Concerning Daniel, we read, “He kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God (Daniel 6:10).” As busy as he must have been, he did not allow public duties to crowd out private devotions.

Christ Himself, when upon earth, exercised Himself greatly in private prayer. Ponder such passages as Matthew 14:23, Mark 1:35, 6:46, Luke 5:16, where it will be found that He retired “into a mountain,” “into a solitary place,” “into the wilderness” that He might be alone with God, free from disturbance and distraction.

The genuine Christian makes conscience of his prayer life, knows that God sees and hears him in secret, and cultivates communion with Him in the closet.

The diligence with which we perform our private devotions, is the criterion of our sincerity.

The Father’s Blessings

It is striking to note that God has often granted the freest communications of Himself to those who were before Him in secret. It was so with Moses on the mount, when the Lord gave him the Law – and again when He gave him the pattern for the tabernacle.

It was while Daniel was engaged in private prayer, that God sent His angel to reveal to him the secrets of His counsel concerning the restoration of Jerusalem and the duration thereof even unto the Messiah (Daniel 9:3&21-27); as it was also during a season when he was alone before the Throne of Grace that God assured him he was “a man greatly beloved (10:11&19).”

It is in the secret prayer closet, that God usually bestows His sweetest and choicest blessings. Cornelius was highly commended and graciously rewarded, upon the account of his private prayer (Acts 10:1-4). Peter was granted that wondrous vision concerning the

Gentiles while praying alone (Acts 10:9-13).

Scripture records much to illustrate and demonstrate the great prevalence of private prayer. Oh the wonders which followed secret wrestling with God, the grand mercies which have been obtained, the judgements which have been diverted, the deliverances which have been secured!

When Isaac was all alone entreating with God for a good wife, he met Rebekah (Genesis 24:63&64). While Hezekiah was weeping and praying in private, God sent the Prophet Isaiah to assure him that He would add 15 years to his life (Isaiah 38:5). When Jonah was shut up in the fish’s belly, he was delivered in answer to his supplication (Jonah 2:1-10).

Oh, the power of private prayer: it has resulted in the dead being raised to life (1 Kings 17:18-22; 2 Kings. 4:32-35). May the Holy Spirit graciously use these considerations to stir us up.

Begin Each Day with God

“My voice You shall hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer to You, and will look up (Psalm 5:3).” Let this be our resolve, and so long as we are spared, our practice, throughout the year we have just entered.

It is both our wisdom and our duty to thus begin each day with God. “Should not a people seek their God (Isaiah 8:19).” When He says to us “Seek My face,” should not our hearts answer as to One we love, “Your face, Lord, I will seek (Psalm 27:8)?”

But suppose our hearts have grown cold, and we have wickedly strayed from Him? Well, when He says “Return you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings,” should we not readily reply, “Behold, we come to You, for You are the Lord our God (Jeremiah 3:22)!”

O my reader, is there not much that we need to say to the Lord our God, the One whom we serve? How many and important are the concerns which lie between us and Him. We are constantly dependent upon Him – all our expectation is from Him.

Is not all our happiness for time and eternity bound up in His favour? Have we not need to seek His approval – to seek Him with all our hearts? Are we not conscious that we have deeply offended the Lord our God by our numerous and grievous sins, and have contracted defilement thereby?

Should we not confess our folly, and seek forgiveness and cleansing by the blood of Christ? Have we not received innumerable bounties and blessings from Him – must we not acknowledge the same, and return thanks and praise?

Yes, prayer is the very least we can offer unto God. ☞



Forgiveness and freedom from bitterness

MANY Christians have difficulty in forgiving others who have sinned against them. They may even feel justified in being bitter against others when they seemingly have purposely been harmed by them.

However, the Bible insists that our prayer life will be void of power when our relationship with our fellow Christians is marred because of an unforgiving spirit within us.

In his book, *Prevailing Prayer*, D.L. Moody writes that most Christians lack power in prayer because they have allowed the root of bitterness to spring up in their hearts. "It may not be easy," he writes, "to live in sweet fellowship with all those with whom we come in contact; but that is what the grace of God is given to us for."

Moody continues on this subject by saying: "The Lord's Prayer is a test of sonship; if we can pray it all from the heart we have good reason to think that we have been born of God.

"No man can call God Father except by the Spirit. Though this prayer has been such a blessing to the world, I believe it has been a great snare; many stumble

over it into perdition. They do not weigh its meaning, nor take its facts right into their hearts.

"I completely disagree with the idea of universal sonship – that all men are the sons of God. The Bible teaches very plainly that we are *adopted* into the family of God.

"If all were sons, God would not need to adopt any. We are all God's by creation; but when people teach that any man can say, 'Our Father which art in heaven,' whether he is born of God or not, I think that is contrary to Scripture. 'As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.'

A very good sign

"Sonship in the family is the privilege of the believer. 'In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil,' says the Apostle. If we are doing the will of God, that is a very good sign that we are born of God. If we have no desire to do that will, how can we call God Our Father?

"Another thing. We cannot really pray for God's kingdom to come until we are

in it. If we should pray for the coming of God's kingdom while we are rebelling against Him, we are only seeking for our own condemnation. No unrenewed man really wants God's will to be done on the earth.

"You might write over the door of every unsaved man's house, and over his place of business, 'God's will is not done here.' If the nations were to really believe this prayer, all their armies could be discharged. But men do not want God's will done on earth as it is in heaven; that is the trouble.

"Now let us come to the part I want to dwell upon: 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.' This is the only part of the prayer that Christ explained. 'For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.'

"Notice that when you go into the door of God's kingdom, you go in through the door of forgiveness. I never knew of a man getting a blessing in his soul, if he was not willing to forgive others.

“If we are unwilling to forgive others, God *cannot* forgive us. I do not know how language could be more plain than it is in these words of our Lord. I firmly believe a great many prayers are not answered because we are not willing to forgive someone.

“Let your mind go back over the past, and through the circle of your acquaintance; are there any against whom you are harbouring hard feelings? Is there any root of bitterness springing up against someone who has perhaps injured you?

“It may be that for months or years you have been nursing this unforgiving spirit; how can you ask God to forgive you? If I am not willing to forgive those who may have committed some single offence against me, what a mean contemptible thing it would be for me to ask God to forgive the ten thousand sins of which I have been guilty!

“But Christ goes still further. He says: ‘If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has anything against you; leave your gift before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.’

“It may be that you are saying; ‘I do not know that I have anything against anyone.’ Has anyone anything against you? Is there someone who thinks you have done them wrong? Perhaps you have not; but it may be they think you have.

Get it settled

“I will tell you what I would do before I go to sleep tonight; I would go and see them, and have the question settled. You will find that you will be greatly blessed in the very act.

“Supposing you are in the right and they are in the wrong; you may win your brother or sister. May God root out of all our hearts this unforgiving spirit.

“A gentleman came to me some time ago, and wanted me to talk to his wife about her soul. That woman seemed as anxious as any person I ever met, and I thought it would not take long to lead her into the light; but it seemed that the longer I talked with her, the more her darkness increased.

“I went to see her again the next day, and found her in still greater darkness of soul. I thought there must be something in the way that I had not discovered, and I asked her to repeat with me the Lord’s Prayer.

“I thought if she could say this prayer from the heart, the Lord would meet with

her and bring peace. I began to repeat it sentence after sentence, and she repeated it after me until I came to this petition: ‘Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.’

“There she stopped.

“I repeated it the second time, and waited for her to say it after me; she said she could not do it. ‘What is the trouble?’ She replied, ‘There is one woman I never will forgive.’ ‘Oh,’ I said, ‘I have got at your difficulty; it is no use my going on to pray, for your prayers will not go higher than my head. God says He will not forgive you unless you forgive others. If you do not forgive this woman, God will never forgive you. That is the decree of heaven.’

“She said, ‘Do you mean to say that I cannot be forgiven until I have forgiven her?’ ‘No, I do not say it, the Lord says it, and that is far better authority.’ Said she, ‘Then I will never be forgiven.’

“I left the house without having made any impression on her. A few years after, I heard that this woman was in an asylum for the insane. I believe this spirit of unforgiveness drove her mad.

“If there is someone who has anything against you, go at once, and be reconciled. If you have anything against any one, write them a letter, telling them that you forgive them, and so have this thing off your conscience.

“I remember being in the inquiry room some years ago; I was in one corner of

the room, talking to a young lady. There seemed to be something in the way, but I could not find out what it was. At last I said, ‘Is there someone you do not forgive?’ She looked up at me, and said ‘What made you ask that? Has anyone told you about me?’

“‘No,’ I said, ‘but I thought perhaps that might be the case, as you have not received forgiveness yourself.’ ‘Well,’ she said, pointing to another corner of the room, where there was a young lady sitting, ‘I have had trouble with that young lady; we have not spoken to each other for a long time.’

“‘Oh,’ I said, ‘it is all plain to me now – you cannot be forgiven until you are willing to forgive her.’

“It was a great struggle. But then you know, the greater the cross the greater the blessing. It is human to err, but it is Christ-like to forgive and be forgiven. At last this young lady said; ‘I will go and forgive her.’

“Strange to say, the same conflict was going on in the mind of the lady in the other part of the room. They both came to their right mind about the same time. They met each other in the middle of the floor. The one tried to say that she forgave the other, but they could not finish; so they rushed into each other’s arms.

“Then the four of us – the two seekers and the two workers – got down on our knees together, and we had a grand meeting. These two went away rejoicing.” ☩



The Surrendered Will

by R. A. Torrey

“The Holy Spirit... given to those who obey (Acts 5:32).”

THE surrendered will and life is the great secret of receiving the Holy Spirit. All turns upon this. We may deal with individual sins, and we may cry to God for the filling of the Holy Spirit, but unless there is total surrender to God at the centre of our being, unless we yield ourselves to God, nothing is likely to come of it.

Oh, how many have longed and prayed and agonised that the Holy Spirit might come upon them, but He came not. There was no yielding of self to God.

Then they have yielded themselves to God. They have bowed their faces and said: “O God, I yield, I give myself up utterly to You. I place myself unreservedly at Your disposal. I hold nothing back, and I hold back from nothing that You ask me to do.”

As they have bowed, the Holy Spirit has fallen upon them. ☩



Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

We have forgotten God

by Dr David R. Reagan

“Can a virgin forget her ornaments

Or a bride her attire?

Yet My people have forgotten Me

Days without number (Jeremiah 2:32).”

ALEKSANDR Solzhenitsyn spoke like an Old Testament prophet when he warned America and all the Western world that it was imperilled because it had forgotten God. It proved to be a message that people did not want to hear. Accordingly, Solzhenitsyn died as a prophet without honour.

Solzhenitsyn was a Russian novelist, historian and short story writer who was born in 1918. He was an outspoken critic of the Soviet Union and Communism, and he helped raise global awareness of the inhumanity of the Soviet regime.

Solzhenitsyn grew up in poverty. His father was killed in a hunting accident shortly after his wife’s pregnancy was confirmed. Solzhenitsyn’s mother never remarried. She was an educated woman, and she encouraged her son’s literary and scientific education. She also raised him in the Russian Orthodox faith.

During World War 2, Solzhenitsyn served as an officer in the Red Army. He began to develop growing doubts about the moral foundation of the Soviet government when he witnessed repeated war crimes by the Soviet army against German civilians. Elderly people were tortured and looted, and young girls were gang-raped to death.

In February of 1945, while serving in East Prussia, Solzhenitsyn was arrested for writing derogatory comments in personal letters about Stalin and his conduct of the war. He was charged with “anti-Soviet

propaganda” and was sentenced to an eight-year term in a labour camp.

During the next eight years, he was transferred from one forced-labour camp to another throughout what he labelled “The Gulag Archipelago.” This gave him firsthand observations within the Soviet system for political prisoners.

In March, 1953, after his prison sentence ended, Solzhenitsyn was forced into internal exile in north-eastern Kazakhstan. He was diagnosed with a cancerous tumour and almost died before the tumour went into remission. It was this experience that served as the basis for his novel, *Cancer Ward*, which was published in 1968.

A return to faith

Solzhenitsyn’s terrible experiences in the Gulag convinced him to completely abandon Marxism, and he began to return gradually to his early Christian faith.

In 1956, Nikita Khrushchev delivered his famous “secret speech” in which he denounced Stalin as a brutal leader.

This speech launched a period of “de-Stalinisation” that included a thaw in the censorship of literature. As a result, Solzhenitsyn was freed from exile.

In 1962, at age 44, his short story, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, was published in *Novy Mir* magazine with the personal approval of Khrushchev.

The story was subsequently published in book form. It became an immediate bestseller in both the Soviet Union and the West. It was the only book by Solzhenitsyn to be published in his native country, because after Khrushchev was ousted from power two years later, the censors

once again clamped down on anti-Soviet writings. His next two novels, *In The First Circle* and *Cancer Ward*, and a play, *The Prisoner and the Camp Hooker*, were all published abroad in 1968.

In 1970, Solzhenitsyn was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. Solzhenitsyn’s most famous book, and his tour de force, was *The Gulag Archipelago*, written between 1958 and 1967 and published in France (in Russian) in 1973. It was a three-volume, seven-part exposé of the Soviet forced-labour prison system.

The book quickly became one of the most influential publications of the 20th Century. It has since sold over 30 million copies in 35 languages. The book was not published in the Soviet Union but was vehemently attacked by the government-controlled press. In the West it was hailed as a masterpiece. George F. Kennan, the influential U.S. diplomat, called the book “the most powerful single indictment of a political regime ever to be levied in modern times.”

The publication of this book was the last straw for the Soviet government. In September, 1974 Solzhenitsyn was arrested and deported. In the process, he was stripped of his Soviet citizenship, becoming a stateless person. In 1975, Stanford University invited him to move there where he lived on campus.

Solzhenitsyn’s first public speech in the United States was delivered in June, 1978. The occasion was the commencement ceremony at Harvard University, where he was granted an honorary degree.

He arrived on campus as a hero; he departed as a pariah.

The Harvard intelligentsia was outraged over his presentation, and some actually booed him! The *New York Times* declared him to be a “dangerous zealot.” The *Washington Post* wrote him off as a man who did not understand Western society.

Critics denounced him as a “Tsarist reactionary, an Orthodox Christian ayatollah, a hater of democracy and a Russian ultranationalist.” None of which were true.

As one of his biographers, Daniel J. H. Mahoney, has put it: “Solzhenitsyn wasn’t just dismissed; he was demonised.”

What in the world had Solzhenitsyn done to provoke such outrage? The answer is simple. He spoke prophetically, and he spoke the truth. And his audience did not want to hear it. So, what did he say?

He began his speech by proclaiming that the Western world, including the United States, had lost its courage in confronting evil. He declared that our foreign policies were based on “weakness and cowardice.” And then he observed: “Should one point

out that from ancient times, declining courage has been considered the beginning of the end?”

Next, he attacked American democracy for its exercise of liberty without self-restraint and for its obsession with solving all problems through its legal system. His words sound like they were spoken yesterday instead of almost 40 years ago:

“The defence of individual rights has reached such extremes as to make society as a whole defenceless against certain individuals... It is time in the West to defend not so much human rights as human obligations.

“Destructive and irresponsible freedom has been granted boundless space. Society appears to have little defence against the abyss of human decadence, such as the misuse of liberty for moral violence against young people, with motion pictures full of pornography, violence and horror.”

Solzhenitsyn’s next target was the press. He criticised it for its lack of “moral responsibility.” He declared the press to be the greatest power within the Western countries.

He characterised the press as being full of “hastiness and superficiality,” and he argued that the press has a herd mentality which gives birth “to strong mass prejudices” and “blindness.”

He then shifted his focus to the moral degradation of American society. He pointed to “TV stupor,” “intolerable music,” and “the overall decadence of art.” He decried the lack of “great statesmen.”

He then posed the crucial question: “How did the West decline from its triumphal march to its present sickness?”

He answered this question by pointing to what he called “anthropocentricity” – the elevation of Man over God, to the extent that “man is seen as the centre of everything that exists.”

In other words, at this point in his speech, Solzhenitsyn began to attack Humanism, the godless philosophy that has become the religion of the Western world.

He proceeded to point out that Humanism always leads to Materialism and Materialism produces “moral poverty.” He made the point powerfully:

“All the glorified technological achievements of progress, including the conquest of outer space, do not redeem the 20th Century moral poverty.”

This observation brought Solzhenitsyn to his concluding and defining statement:

“On the way from the Renaissance to our days, we have enriched our experience, but we have lost the concept of a Supreme Complete Entity which used to restrain

our passions and our irresponsibility. We have placed too much hope in political and social reforms, only to find out that we were being deprived of our most precious possession: our spiritual life. This is the real crisis.”

It was a breathtaking, challenging and stunning presentation. It is no wonder that the negative response to it was so strong. The wonder is that he was not lynched on the spot!

Yet, 33 years later, in 2011, the *Harvard Magazine* published the speech in full and introduced it with these words that must have outraged Harvard professors:

“Given the suffering Solzhenitsyn had endured in the Soviet Union, many in the audience expected that the writer’s address would be a stern rebuke to Communist totalitarianism, combined with a paean to Western liberty and democracy. The audience was in for a rude surprise.

“*The Exhausted West*, delivered in Russian with English translation, chastised the arrogance and smugness of Western materialist culture and exposed the adverse effects of some of those achievements that Western democracies had long prided themselves upon...

“Solzhenitsyn’s brilliant, iconoclastic speech ranks among the most thoughtful, articulate and challenging addresses ever delivered at a Harvard commencement.”

In like manner, Michael Novak, resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, has described Solzhenitsyn’s Harvard speech “as the most important religious document of our time.”

Why it has happened

But Solzhenitsyn had an even more powerful and insightful speech he was yet to deliver. It came five years later in May, 1983 when he received the Templeton Prize.

Upon receiving the award at age 65, Solzhenitsyn delivered an address titled, *Godlessness: The First Step Toward the Gulag*.

He began with a reminiscence from his childhood:

“More than half a century ago, while I was still a child, I recall hearing a number of older people offer the following explanation for the great disasters that had befallen Russia: Men have forgotten God; that’s why all this has happened.”

Then, picking up steam, Solzhenitsyn began to emphasise his point over and over:

“Since then I have spent well-nigh 50 years working on the history of the Russian revolution. In the process I have read hundreds of books, collected hundreds of personal testimonies, and have already contributed eight volumes of my own toward the effort to clear away the rubble

left by that upheaval.

“But if I were asked today to formulate as concisely as possible the main cause of the ruinous revolution that swallowed up some 60 million people, I could not put it more accurately than to repeat: Men have forgotten God; that’s why all this has happened.”

As if he wanted to make certain that his audience was getting the point, he repeated it again:

“What emerges here is a process of universal significance. And if I were called upon to identify briefly the principle trait of the entire 20th Century, here too, I would be unable to find anything more precise and pithy to repeat once again: Men have forgotten God.”

He then proceeded to warn that the Western World “is experiencing a drying up of religious consciousness.” He said this was happening because “the meaning of life in the West has ceased to be seen as anything more than the ‘pursuit of happiness...’”


Another problem he identified was the refusal of people to realise the evil that is in the individual human heart and the consequent unwillingness to declare anything as good or evil. The result, he declared, is that the West “is ineluctably slipping toward the abyss.”

Solzhenitsyn emphasised that we must come to the realisation “that human salvation can be found neither in the profusion of material goods nor in merely making money.” Rather, the aim should be “the quest of worthy spiritual growth.” He then asserted that Mankind’s hope can be found only by redirecting our consciousness “in repentance to the Creator of all; without this, no exit will be illumined, and we shall seek it in vain.”

Putting the same thought in different words, Solzhenitsyn concluded his remarks by urging his listeners to engage in “a determined quest for the warm hand of God, which we have so rashly and self-confidently spurned.”

In 1990 Solzhenitsyn’s Soviet citizenship was restored, and in 1994 he and his wife returned to Russia. He died in 2008 of heart failure at the age of 89.

The Bible says that a prophet never finds honour in his own country (Mark 6:4). Nor did Solzhenitsyn in his or in his adopted country. His native country expelled him, and America shut its ears to his fervent warnings and his pleas to return to God. We are now suffering the consequences.

“*You have forgotten the God of your salvation And have not remembered the Rock of your refuge (Isaiah 17:10).*” 



Top Bible prophecy stories of 2016

by Jan Markell

AT the end of each year I like to review how Bible prophecy played out during the year. Seeing dark news items from a prophetic perspective causes the darkness to be more bearable.

These Tribulation stage-setting events aren't in any particular order. But we must keep our eyes on Israel, God's timepiece. The minute-hand is Jerusalem and the second-hand is the Temple Mount. They have all been prominent in the news.

1) Zechariah 12:3 became a blunt reality on December 23.

This was the day the U.N. Security Council voted unanimously to come against Israel. America abstained which is essentially voting with the other members. She symbolically became the world's burdensome stone. This was initiated and instigated by the President of the United States which means terrible repercussions are coming to this land. So Israel is to return to 1967 "Auschwitz" borders. The holy city of Jerusalem becomes "occupied

territory." And Israel is further isolated and alienated as predicted.

2) The great falling away didn't stop falling in 2016.

Many evangelical churches became nothing more than advocates for open borders and multiculturalism. The social gospel made such giant inroads and salvation issues became unrecognizable. Emergent/Postmodernism raged. Other churches fell into lukewarmness. Hardly any would deal with the issues of the day or the Lord's return.

3) The longing for a "man with a plan" was never so prominent.

Even CNN's Home page begged for a man who could restore order. It asks in smaller print, "Is there a leader who can stop the chaos and heal America?"

4) 2 Timothy 3 character was on overdrive in 2016.

Various presidential candidates were consumed with pride and self-aggrandisement. Values seemed to tank this past year. National industries featured same-sex ads with no shame. It seemed like everyone

was drowning in the lake of me-myself-I.

5) Israel's re-convened Sanhedrin took the momentous step of nominating a High Priest for the Temple – for the first time since its destruction in 70 A.D.

The Tribulation Temple is in the works, even though the United Nations just declared this area off-limits to the Jews!

6) Israel struck Damascus in early December, targeting some weapons.

This is a precursor to what is predicted in Isaiah 17:1.

7) God continues to intervene for His sovereign nation of Israel.

In November, he sent a pillar of a cloud of dust and rain to push back ISIS on Israel's border. "He who keeps Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps (Psalm 121)." The cloud of dust and rain stayed right at the border and did not cross into Israel.

8) There was stage-setting for the Tribulation's natural disasters, which will be far worse than anything the world has known thus far.

Publications called many events "record

setting,” “unprecedented,” and “of biblical proportion.” The Bible calls them “birth pangs.”

9) **The war on cash intensified.**

A few nations are banning cash and this will eventually lead to “Mark of the Beast” accounting. Technology was introduced that enables the total payment of goods and services using only an embedded chip.

10) **Gog-Magog players are getting ready.**

Russia is the new power player in the Mideast, thanks to America’s absence. So is Iran. Turkey is in chaos and looking to Russia for support. These are the three primary players in Ezekiel 38-39, although other nations participate.

11) **Europe is in a meltdown – setting the unstable stage for the arrival of the Antichrist out of Europe.**

Its godless culture welcomes all things dark and occultic. Their refugee policy has thrown the continent into chaos. It will welcome a “Mr. Fix-It” to calm the storm. On June 1 they had a literal Satanic ceremony as they dedicated the Gotthard Base Tunnel in Switzerland. European leaders cheered this.

12) **The season of mocking the Lord’s return intensified.**

Even the Christian website *Christian Today* scorned the Lord’s return and said

a “zombie apocalypse” was more likely.

13) **The predicted rise of evil continues as foretold in 2 Timothy 3:13.**

A new term was introduced in late 2016: “Spirit Cooking.” It is too dark to write about but you can Google the information. We don’t recommend it for sensitive people.

14) **The run-up to the lawlessness in the Tribulation has begun.**

There was post-election rioting with the promise of much more to come – all a blatant rejection of Donald J. Trump. Barack Obama was the most lawless president in U.S. history. He even told illegals they could vote with no consequences. Now the Left is making daily comments about assassinating Donald Trump.

15) **The gay agenda has turned blatant.**

Many major corporations promoted this with their national advertising. The “days of Noah” have returned as predicted by Jesus. The transgender agenda also flourished. In both cases Target led the way with promotion.

16) **The predicted rise in the persecution of Christians and Jews intensified.**

At the same time, some pastors were forced to turn over sermons for inspection in America and Christian businesses

were hammered for trying to stand for righteousness. Yet Islam is protected and no condemnation can be given.

17) **For most of these to play out required the prophesied rise in strong delusion (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12).**

Those who take delight in mocking and rejecting Him, He will condemn, confuse their thinking, and cause them to believe fables. And they do! Remember, there are many who claim that global warming is a greater danger than radical Islam! Today it would seem the Mad Hatter is in charge.

18) **Technology giants came against righteousness once again.**

From Facebook to YouTube to Google to Twitter, their progressive agenda rejected a conservative and Christian message. The Christian film *I Am Not Ashamed* had their YouTube trailer taken down one year in advance, marginalising ticket sales.

Things are not falling apart – they are falling into place. Can you hear the hoof beats of the four horsemen of the apocalypse in the distance?

I won’t be silent about the signs of the times. If Jesus chastised the Pharisees for not knowing the signs of His first coming, why would we not be expected to be aware of today’s apocalyptic signs?

Rise up, wake up and look up! ☞

Will you help us be a blessing?

DID you know that for less than the cost of a cup of coffee you can send the life-giving message found in *Prepare the Way* to church leaders in African countries, as well as overseas missionaries, prisoners and those in hospitals and hospices?

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How God answered Francis Chan's 'ridiculous' prayer for a son-in-law

by Mark Ellis

MANY Christian parents have prayed for their children to meet and marry another Christian – preferably a faith-filled, sold-out follower of Jesus.

But when noted author and preacher Francis Chan was impressed by a young man involved with his ministry, he lifted up a bold, audacious matchmaking prayer and God answered in a way that confounded Francis himself.

“Earlier this year in February I prayed and I asked God for something that was just ridiculous,” said Francis Chan.

Francis had begun to notice a young man involved with his ministries named Justin Clark and became impressed by the insights gained in the younger man’s devotional life. “I would come home and say, ‘Honey, this guy, the way he talks about the Word and the way he talks about his prayer life, I’ve never met anyone like him.’”

“You have a little crush going here,” his wife Lisa said, lightheartedly.

“I do, I love this guy,” he replied.

A short time later during his quiet time with the Lord, Francis took his interest in Justin to another level. “Lord,” he prayed, “you answer everything and you’re so good to me and I’m just going to ask, can you make him my son-in-law?”

“He doesn’t even know my



Francis hugging Rachel (Photo: Rachel Blackwell Photography)

daughter, but make him fall in love with my daughter and make my daughter fall in love with him.”

After he lifted up the prayer in February, weeks and months went by, nothing happened, and Francis began to forget about the prayer.

Five months later, Francis woke up and said to the Lord, “God, I’m so used to you answering things and I feel distant from you. I’ve never prayed this before but I’m sorry, I feel insecure this morning.”

“I feel like a neglected housewife,” he continued. “I know you love me and I know it’s not about feelings but I’m just going to ask, can you show me some love this morning?”

An hour later Justin ap-

proached him and said, “Can I ask your daughter out?”

“What? Yes, yes... do you have enough money? Please, please, please...”

Justin and Rachel began dating in July and several months later, he proposed to her on a bluff overlooking the ocean in San Francisco. “He took me on a small hike and told me that he loved me for the very first time,” Rachel noted on the couple’s wedding blog.

As they continued walking, she noticed rose petals on the forest floor, but she wasn’t sure if they were for someone else. “We kept following the petals and Justin led me to believe they were someone else’s, but eventually I heard music and realised it was one of my favorite songs.”

The trail opened up to a clearing on the bluff, with a spectacular view of the ocean as a backdrop. Justin got down on one knee and asked Rachel to marry him.

She said, “Duh... yes!”

Then Francis and the rest of their family emerged from hiding places to surprise her. Nearby, Justin had placed a

few of Rachel’s favorite things, including Chinese food, and a live dwarf rabbit he rented. “Needless to say, he put a ring on it!” Rachel exclaimed.

Rachel and Justin’s wedding took place December 3 in Redwood City, California.

“When I walked my daughter up the aisle I was bawling,” Francis recounted. “I haven’t cried that much in years.”

“When we got to the altar I was ready to hand her off and we hugged up there, just holding each other for probably a minute. It was so uncomfortable and everybody was thinking, Is he going to let go or is she going to let go?”

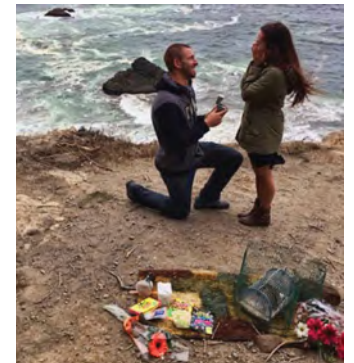
As they held each other, Francis thought, “God you’re so great. I remember how she rebelled against you and now you brought her back. I remember her as a kid jumping in my lap. I remember all of this and now I get to pick who she marries and you answer like that?”

The last few months have been a sweet season with God, Francis said. “Sometimes I don’t get it. I feel overwhelmed. I feel like an only child and think there’s no way you (God) listen to everyone like this...”

“I love you I love you I love you. I adore you I adore you,” Francis gushed, his heart overflowing with gratitude for the remarkable way God answered his “ridiculous” prayer. 🐟



Walking up the aisle (Photo: Rachel Blackwell Photography)



Justin proposing to Rachel

Thanks to
Elizabeth Kendal

WATCH & PRAY

TERROR THREAT IN EGYPT

On Sunday, December 11 an Islamic terrorist blew himself up among Christians celebrating Advent in Cairo's St Peter and St Paul church. Specifically targeting the women and children, he killed 24, making it the most deadly attack on Christians in recent years. A further 49 were wounded.

With Islamic State (IS)-inspired Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated militants escalating their activity, the terror threat in Egypt must be regarded as extreme. Similarly, the terror threat is extreme in Syria (from IS and "rebels"); Pakistan (from IS and Pakistani Taliban); and Nigeria (from Boko Haram). It is high in Kenya (from al-Shabaab), Indonesia and Europe. *Pray* that the Lord will shield and protect his people (Psalm 17:8-9) and bring the way of the wicked to ruin (Psalm 146:9).

PERSECUTION IN CHINA SET TO ESCALATE IN 2017

Anticipating that economic downturn will result in escalating social and political unrest, the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has been reviving ideology, bolstering its power and consolidating its control over every element of society.

Confident it can commit extreme human rights abuses with impunity, the CCP will doubtless move to persecute the Church into submission nationwide. Numerous Christian leaders are already in

prison, mostly on bogus corruption charges. There is still no word on the whereabouts of Christian human rights lawyers Zhang Kai (re-arrested on August 31) and Jiang Tianyong (abducted on November 21).

Meanwhile, Hong Kong residents Mr and Mrs Lin Haixin were arrested in late November for running an unregistered Christian rehabilitation ministry in Guangdong. Their whereabouts are unknown. Please pray for China and its Church.

CHURCH BLEEDS UNDER FULANI JIHAD IN NIGERIA

Security is failing in Kaduna, a volatile Sharia state which straddles Nigeria's ethno-religious "fault-line." On the evening of November 13 last year, Fulani Muslims besieged and attacked five villages in Kauru Local Government Area in predominantly Christian Southern Kaduna. Armed with guns, knives, machetes and explosives, the Fulani killed 45 mostly women, children and elderly Christian residents while wounding dozens more and displacing thousands. Numerous vehicles and over 120 houses (including eight house-churches) were torched.

Frustrated by the endless carnage, Christian leaders have reiterated the call for more security, including the establishment of a military base in Southern Kaduna. The organised ethno-religious cleansing taking place must be seen in the context of clas-

sic Islamic jihad. With whole Christian communities erased, the Church is bleeding. Please pray for Nigeria and for its Church.

KHARTOUM'S JIHAD TO ELIMINATE OPPO- SITION IN SUDAN

The Islamist and Arabist Government of Sudan (GoS) is waging a jihad of ethnic and religious genocide as it seeks to eliminate all opposition to its Islamist and Arabist policies. The African Christians of the Nuba Mountains are preparing for another season of aerial bombardment and genocidal jihad. In the cities, Christian schools and churches operated and attended by Nuba and other "southerners" are facing increased pressure.

Five churches in Khartoum have been slated for demolition, while the trial of the Reverends Hassan and Kuwa (both Nuba), Darfuri convert Abdelmunim Abdelmoula and Czech aid worker Petr Jasek has resumed. For investigating and reporting persecution and supporting the

persecuted church, the men stand accused of serious national security offences. Please pray for Sudan and its Church.

PASTOR ARRESTED IN TURKEY

Reverend Andrew Brunson, the American Protestant pastor of the Dirilis (Resurrection) Church in Izmir, Turkey and his wife Norine were arrested on October 7, because they were deemed a threat to national security. Norine was subsequently released, but Brunson was transferred to the Harmandanli Detention Centre where he is being held incommunicado (Norine is pictured below overlooking the centre).

The Brunsons, who have three children studying in the US, have lived in Turkey for the past 23 years. Andrew Brunson's situation is dire.



Prepare the Way Days:

February 5, June 4, November 5

These are the dates for this year's *Prepare the Way* days at 9.15 a.m. at Mount Zion Church Merrivale (near Howick). Peter Pollock will be preaching at each meeting – and you're invited to stay for lunch, too!



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Nothing but leaves

by **W. C. Moore**

“Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry. And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. In response Jesus said to it, ‘Let no one eat fruit from you ever again.’ And His disciples heard it... Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots (Mark 11:12-14, 20)”

“He also spoke this parable: ‘A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, ‘Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground (Luke 13:6&7).’”

“I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings (Jeremiah 17:10).”

WHAT is the “fruit” of my life? Of yours? What fruit – what results – follow my influence, my words, my deeds? What are the consequences that follow my work, my activities, my counselling, my exhortations? What is the overall effect of my life on the lives of those I contact?

Are they drawn closer to God?

Are they more determined than ever to “Do all to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31)?”

Are they alerted and stirred to “Be ready” for the coming of the Lord (Matthew 24:44)?”

Are they induced to pay all their debts? Are they inspired to love their neighbours as themselves? To do to others as they would wish others to do to them, were the situation reversed (Matthew 22:36-40; 7:12)?

Are they warned to love their enemies and pray for (not against) them (Matthew 5:44)?

Are they shocked into the realisation of the fact that unless they forgive each and every one who has trespassed against them – that God will not forgive their trespasses (Matthew 6:12, 14&15; Mark 11:25&26)?

Are those I contact brought – by my influence, by my words, by my attitudes, by my manners, by my deeds and by my very appearance – to be aroused and jolted into the realisation that soon each and every one of us must give an account to God of what we have done – even of every idle word (Romans 14:10-12; 2 Corinthians 5:9-11; Matthew 12:36)?

Do the people who are associated with me know that I believe in a literal Hell, and that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Luke 12:4&5; Matthew 5:22-24, 27-30; Mark 9:42-48; Hebrews 10:31)?

Do sinners sense from my words and

from the love of God flowing out of my own life – that God loves them, that “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16),” that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died on the Cross for their sins, and that their part is to repent, and believe the Gospel (Mark 1:14-15)?

Are sinners awakened by my teaching to realise that, while God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9), and that God manifested His love to us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly (Romans 5:6-8) – yet, if anyone rejects His mercy, God’s Word says, “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God (Psalm 9:17)?”

And also Jesus said to His disciples, “Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptised shall be saved; but he who does not believe shall be damned (Mark 16:15&16).”

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, and the Church is subject to Him (Ephesians 5:23&24). He says, “By their fruits you shall know them (Matthew 7:20).” And, “The tree is known by his fruit (Matthew 12:33).” 