

# Prepare<sub>the</sub>Way

*Preparing the Bride of Christ for the return of Christ*

Issue No. 115  
R16,00 (inc. VAT)

Peter Pollock

**Counterfeit  
Christianity**

**7 Marks of  
true repentance**

31-Day prayer guide

**Praying for  
revival**

Leonard Ravenhill

**A man  
sent from  
God**

Jim Cymbala

**The destruction  
that division brings**

ISSN 1814-7550



9 17 71814 7550 04 00115



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**COVER:** "The wilderness and the dry land will be glad. The desert will rejoice and blossom like a rose (Isaiah 35:1)."

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# Division brings destruction

by Jim Cymbala

*“And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, ‘He has Beelzebul,’ and, ‘By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons.’ So He called them to Himself and said to them in parables: ‘How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but has an end (Mark 3:22-26).”*

**JESUS’ opponents saw that He had power over evil spirits but they would not attribute His authority as from God, so they said the most hideous and blasphemous thing. They argued that Jesus had power over evil spirits because He was in league with Beelzebul.**

Jesus responded, in effect, “Men, think about what you are saying. You are saying I am on the side of Beelzebul, and yet I am casting Beelzebul’s evil spirits out of people. Do you think Satan is that ignorant?”

Jesus then laid down a crucial principle that we all must remember. Any house divided against itself cannot stand. In all division there is an inherent weakness that will tear away at the fabric and at the substance of the entity, and eventually if not checked it will destroy it.

I do not care if it is a church, if it is a nation, if it is a basketball team, if it is a political party – nothing divided against itself can stay vibrant and strong. It automatically begins to weaken and in the end it will come tumbling down, according to Jesus.

This truth is so little understood in the body of Christ.

When I first went into the ministry I was shocked by the evil of the party spirit. I was taken aback that ministers would rejoice in the scandal and the problems that other churches would have. And if another church was blessed, they would downplay the blessing of the other church if it was not their own group.

So you have the body of Christ supposedly believing in the Bible where Jesus prayed, “Father... that they may be one just as We are one (John 17:22),” and yet instead of praying for one another and rooting for one another, we are competing against each other.

God will never bless that!



In the New Testament the sign of a division within the body of Christ was a sign of carnality. “For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says, ‘I am of Paul,’ and another, ‘I am of Apollos,’ are you not carnal (1 Corinthians 3:3&4)?

In Galatians 5, Paul listed along with murder, wrath, adultery and fornication, that one of the works of the flesh is a party spirit. Would you not say this is one of the great sins that we do not repent of and that we do not talk of?

We are all part of one family – the family of God! When your church is blessed, I am blessed. When your church hurts, I hurt because we are on the same team. But this is not something the body of Christ excels in. We have forgotten what Jesus taught in our text: “If a house is divided against itself, that house **cannot** stand.”

The Holy Spirit is like a dove and any division in the body of Christ grieves Him and He withdraws His influences. If you have division in your church you will get nowhere until the division is dealt with. No kingdom divided against itself can stand.

The kingdom of darkness understands this principle, the sports world does, the corporate world does – but not the church. We have division and strife all the time, and it is tolerated. Then we wonder why there is a lack of conviction of sin, why there is a lack of anointing on the preacher’s sermons, why the church is not moving ahead.

A first spiritual principle the Lord gives us for church work is that anything divided against itself cannot stand. That is why the Bible says to mark those who cause divisions among you, and after warning them to have nothing to do with them (Romans 16:17; Titus 3:10).

What church practices this? We put up with all kinds of nonsense. If those promoting division have money and they

tithe, most pastors look the other way. But we are to mark those who cause divisions among us (Romans 16:17) and we are to endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3). Our silence regarding this sin allows destruction in the body of Christ.

At the church I pastor, we hire staff members not by skill first, but by spirit – do they love God, are they filled with the Holy Spirit, can they minister and pray with others? This is a unity issue, because if you get a troublemaker, even if he or she is skillful, that one can pull down the whole house.


I tell anyone who is hired on our staff two things. First of all, we do not allow any “moods.” If you come here in a bad mood, we will ask you to go home. Or you can tell the people around you, and they will have a prayer time until God lifts you up. But we will not allow bad moods because we have people we need to minister to, and we must be ready and in a good mood.

We are doing the Lord’s work and representing Him. Doesn’t He deserve this?

Secondly, if we ever find out that you have talked about another staff member when that person was not present, it could be grounds for dismissal; there will be no warning. We are fighting the devil and trying to make inroads into the lives of people who are going through so much.

If you are going to break trust and cause division among us, you will not be able to work here. If I have a problem with you, I am not going to tell another staff member, I am going to come to you. And if you have a problem with me, come to me, and if I offended you, I will apologise.

But we will never permit a staff member to talk about another one behind his/her back.

This is only right. Does not the Lord deserve that kind of integrity in the way we work? Why grieve the Spirit with gossip, backbiting and division? 



# Counterfeit Christianity

by Peter Pollock

**“GOD does not dwell in temples. Nor is He worshipped with men’s hands, as though he needed anything. He gives all life, breath and all things,” preached Paul to the men of Athens. “Seek Him, grope for Him, find Him; though He is not far from each of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being,” declared God’s apostle!**

The Christian walk is real; it is experiential and it bears fruit! Lives do change and we will “find Him” if we seek him with all our hearts. God does reveal Himself to us. Many years ago I was involved with the World XI cricket series in England. I was a passenger in a light plane piloted by former England cricket captain Ted Dexter which crashed in a Yorkshire field.

Also aboard was West Indian wicket-keeper Deryck Murray and we were flying from Leeds to Southport. Though I had flown with Dexter a couple of times before, there was a distinct sense of foreboding about this trip. Although I would probably have claimed to be a Christian, I was not much of a praying man but silently and very fervently that day as the engine started stuttering and the propellers stopped propelling, I cried out to God.

Long story short, we survived the crash, Ted Dexter became something of a hero but for the next 12 years I became a total neurotic on airplanes. Sweaty forehead and palms was living evidence of my fear and trepidation every time I travelled by plane – and that was four or five times a month for sport and business. What a nightmare!

Then I met Jesus! One night at the bottom end of the garden I gave my life to Him. No warm feelings or bells ringing but I sobbed and I cried like a baby. As I wiped away the tears, what came back to me was that plane crash of some 12 years before. Had God answered a prayer?

A week later I boarded an early morning business flight. I was preparing to buckle up and tense up for the take-off, when I realised that something amazing had happened to me. No more fear and neurosis. It had lifted completely. It was gone!

A week later I was on another flight, and I sat there meditating on my new life and what had happened to me I wondered about that crash. What was its significance? And it hit me like a thunderbolt!

There in 1970 I was in England wallowing in the glory of the World XI. Suddenly I am in a light plane facing death. What is the first thing I do? Cry out to God! Silently? Indeed! Fervently? For sure!

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## *A profound moment*

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God answers a prayer. God reveals Himself to me, because not too many people survive air crashes. I then forget about Him for 12 neurotic years of air travel. Finally, that evening down at the bottom end of the garden, the penny finally drops. A profound moment but in reality I had done something oh, so simple.

You see, all my life I had known about Jesus, but that night I changed knowing “about Him” to actually “knowing Him.” And that is the crunch! It’s relational and experiential; it truly changes lives and bears fruit. My life would never be

the same!

But ever since then there has been this burning question, the burden on my heart: How come, Lord, so many people sit week after week in the church, untouched and unchanged? How come there are so many so-called believers who honestly wonder if they really know Jesus?

Many, even leaders, confess they really battle to put Jesus number one in their lives. Others admit that they battle to believe. They want to believe, know they should believe, but can’t seem to get themselves over those nagging and bothersome doubt that just will not go away.

If we look at the parable of the soils, it is scary to note that only one of the soils truly bears fruit. Another is blatantly resistant, but two of the soils either fade or wither because they have no root or are sabotaged and choked by the cares, riches and pleasures of this life, producing nothing but onlookers and bystanders. Yes, 50 percent of them!

Jesus told us straight about the 10 Virgins, half of whom were foolish and missed out. That’s Jesus telling us direct and unambiguously – half of the so-called visible church is not going to make it. Half of them going to hell – believe it!

Recently I was blessed to hear an American preacher on TV reminding his congregation that 50 percent is the figure Jesus has put on this “counterfeit community,” the counterfeit church of goats, not sheep, the Synagogue of Satan, those who say they are believers but are not.

And it’s mind-boggling that the great divider of the world, the cause of so much strife and contention, is the Gospel, the

divine revelation of Jesus Christ. So simple and straight-forward yet mind-blowing and so divisive.

Waiting to preach at a Baptist church many years ago, I suddenly became aware of the three crosses adorning the wall behind the pulpit. That is the answer, the “writing on the wall!”

Yes, those three crosses. The one in the middle obviously symbolises/represents Jesus. The other two are you and me.

We all know, as we read Luke 23:32-43 that two criminals died alongside Jesus. They were both sinners, like the whole lot of us. Thanks to Adam and Eve and their “fall” in the Garden of Eden, we are all born sinners. It’s a spiritual condition, and there are no exceptions!

Nobody is good, said Jesus. The one criminal mocked, scorned and rejected and most emphatically said “No!” It’s important to note that even indifference, apathy or passivity is rejection of the Christ. If you are lukewarm, Jesus says that He will “spit you out of His mouth.”

If you are not with Him, you are against Him – another profound challenge. The Gospel has always been evidence that *demand*s a verdict. In other words, if you do not say “yes” to Jesus, you have automatically said “no.”

The other criminal said “Yes,” but it is interesting to note that there was something of a process involved.

First, he spoke about the “fear” of God. It was something that amazed him about his fellow criminal’s blasphemous and insulting remarks. “Don’t you even fear God?” he shouted as he reprimanded his foul mouth.

Secondly, he recognised his own wretchedness and unworthiness. “You and I are getting what we deserve” – he categorically stated. Jesus had done nothing wrong.

Then he called out “Lord, Remember me.” Most translations fail to recognise that there is a major difference between merely calling Him “Jesus,” rather than Lord!

“Lord,” to me signifies a far deeper understanding and appreciation of His “Christ” status. Few call Him Lord!

It’s only by the power of the Holy Spirit that we truly call Him “Lord.” That criminal knew who he was dealing with, believed and was saved. He “feared God,” recognised his “unworthiness,” “believed” and was “saved” – the process to salvation and regeneration.

That’s why we have to preach the gospel

of sin and repentance, because humans have such a problem coming to grips with their own wretchedness and the doctrine of the depravity of man. The inherent goodness of man is something we far prefer, but it comes straight from the pit of hell.

The Bible tells us that Jesus knew that there was nothing good in man! And the self-righteousness of the Pharisees was something that Jesus strongly and regularly condemned in language that left no doubt. Conviction of sin is the only doorway to repentance.

The criminals didn’t qualify for heaven. They were not good, because nobody is good – as Jesus told the rich young ruler.

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### *Two sinners, two decisions*

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Two sinners/criminals with two decisions – accept or reject. Black and white with, no gray areas. It can’t get any simpler! Life is a decision-making process. Education is preparation and equipping for that process. Everything revolves around the decisions we make. God has ordained it so.

And there is no bigger decision than accepting or rejecting Jesus! John 3:16 tells us that if we don’t believe we perish – meaning we go to hell. John 3:18 reminds us that unbelief ensures that we remain condemned and John 3:36 further confirms that the wrath of God remains upon us.

We all know that God exists, says Romans: “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.”

We have no excuses, even those who think themselves so wise. What gives an atheist any status? The fact that God exists! If God didn’t, exist it would not be a big deal to not believe.

But God’s existence is NOT the key or the issue. That is a given! What IS important is your acceptance and my acceptance of that truth.

Easters come and go as we annually celebrate the greatest weekend in the history of mankind. But lives are not affected one iota unless there is the personal involvement of a decision of the heart and will.

A famous Springbok rugby player, giving testimony at his Alma Mater, shocked his young audience by telling them that he had spent most of his Christian life 18 inches away from God. “That’s the distance between my head and my heart,”

he explained. “You see I had always known *about* Jesus. You need to KNOW HIM, not just KNOW ABOUT HIM.” Profoundly true.

“There are many sciences that can be learnt by the head but the science of Christ crucified can only be learnt by the heart,” wrote Charles Spurgeon. The famous preacher writes further: “You can talk like Christians. Study Christian biographies. Tell long yarns about Christian experiences. You can pick up the puritanical twang and even not be detected. You are a member of a church... baptized... taking the Lords Supper... Become a deacon or an elder... passing the sacramental Cup around and just about all the things a Christian can be – except that you are without a Christ heart! It is amazing how near a man can go to being a Christian and yet be shut out of heaven.”

It is “counterfeit” Christianity, a community in deception.

A.W. Tozer wrote that “Christianity” is a religious word game. Oswald Chambers had this to say: “Conversion is not regeneration. Intellectual acceptance is conversion. You convert to a religion. You convert to a way of thinking. Making vows and promises is not salvation. You need to come and receive forgiveness for your sins and then give up your independent right to yourself.” Absolutely spot on!

On the day of Pentecost Peter preached about Jesus. The crowd came under conviction and asked “What must we do?” Peter gave the only spiritually acceptable response: “Repent and be baptised in the name of Jesus.”

Romans 10:9 states: “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead you will be saved. For with the heart one believes to righteousness and with the mouth confession is made to salvation.”

Go to Jerusalem tomorrow and ask a studied Jew whether Jesus was there, and he will answer yes. You can even ask him about His miracles and he will probably also answer, yes. Ask a studied Moslem the same questions and you will get the same affirmatives. You may even stop an atheist student who will confirm about Jesus and His exploits.

You see, nobody denies that Jesus came or what He did. But very few call Him Lord!

God does not live in temples built by man’s hands. Only in Jesus do we live and move and have our being. ☞

# Fire from heaven

by Del Fehsenfeld, Jr.

**I**T had been an exhausting day. The hot sun beat down on the parched earth. The crowd sat under the cloudless sky for what seemed like an eternity – silent spectators in this playoff between Baal and Jehovah. Jehovah's side was hopelessly outnumbered – the odds, 850 to 1 in favour of Baal.

Silently, they watched and waited and wondered as the prophets of Baal tried first one tactic and then another to persuade the god of lightning and fire to prove himself and send fire from heaven. They pled; they appealed. Unsuccessful, they began to cry out more earnestly, to cajole, to demand that Baal heed them and send fire.

**Still no answer. Still no fire.**

Undaunted, they persisted in leaping on the altar and cutting themselves until the blood flowed – desperate, vain attempts to prove their sincerity to Baal and to see some evidence, any evidence, of spiritual reality. But there was no sign of fire from heaven – not even a spark.

In fact, there had been no movement of any kind in the heavens for more than three years – no fire, no rain, no voice, no reality. Weary with the exercise in futility, desire turned to disappointment and finally defeat.

At this point in 1 Kings 18, we cannot help noticing some striking similarities to the church in our day. The great problem in the contemporary church is that, despite its size and activity, there is no real expression of the glory of God's presence.

By and large, we are not lacking activity, fervour, or attempts to obtain spiritual power. To the contrary, our church calendars are bulging with services, retreats, conferences, and programmes. We are making lots of noise. We are busy, earnest, and perhaps sincere, but still there is deafening silence in the heavens.

**There is no fire.**

It is not that we are not trying. We are. But apparently, all of our programmes, promotions, meetings, buses, budgets, baptisms, committees, and conventions have failed to produce the one thing we need most desperately – fire from heaven.

While the spiritual leaders and activists are busily trying to produce sparks, the average church member sits back with

the rest of the world, waiting, watching, wondering where the fire is.

Into the arena steps a solitary figure. He has been a fugitive from the king, whose wrath he had incurred three years earlier. One would expect him to cower in the presence of the offended monarch. After all, he stands to lose his life. But no, he is secure, assured, and bold.

Now he is calling to the people to listen. They gather around him sceptically. This man has always been something of an oddity – a real contrast to other religious leaders of his day. He has always been a minority voice.

His message cuts across the grain of what is traditional and palatable. His challenge to get off the fence and take a public stand for Baal or Jehovah makes the average person uncomfortable – they would rather not commit themselves.

Now he directs their attention to the altar of Jehovah. Unused for many years, it is in a state of disrepair. One by one, he selects 12 large stones and constructs an altar. He prepares the sacrifice and places it on the altar.

Then he catches them off guard. Turning to the crowd, he directs them to fill four barrels with water and pour it on the sacrifice.

What? Has he lost his mind? Anyone knows wet wood will not burn!

Even more importantly, doesn't this strange man know that it hasn't rained for over three years? Nevertheless, they follow his orders.

Then a short, simple prayer, and... fire!

No matches. No petrol. No magic tricks. No gyrations. No pretending. Just fire. Real fire. Fire that licks up the water and utterly consumes the sacrifice, the wood, the stones – even the dust on the ground.

**Fire from heaven. The fire of God.**

I do not know of any greater need in the church today than for the fire of God to fall. When we refer to the fire of God, we are talking about the manifest presence and glory of God. We are talking about the supernatural power of God.

We are talking about services that are more than just nice meetings with nice music and nice preaching. We are talking about results that cannot be explained in terms of human effort. We are talking about that which man cannot programme,

manipulate, plan or make happen.

We are talking about something more than the ordinary operation of the Holy Spirit in the lives of His people. We are talking about the extraordinary outpouring of His Spirit that reveals His glory in our lives and in His church.

When the fire falls, we see God for who He really is. Both the Old and New Testaments reveal God to be a God of fire.

At Mount Sinai, where the law was given, God revealed Himself with lightnings and thunderings and voices. Then, in the last book of the Bible, the Apostle John was given a glimpse into the throne room of heaven. Out of that throne "came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder (Revelation 4:5)."

When the fire falls, God takes over His church. When God shows up, people are more comfortable on their faces than in their pews. When the fire falls, it consumes everything that is unholy, earthly, and temporal.

The fire of God purifies, purges, melts, and devours, "for our God is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29)." God is like a refiner's fire (Malachai 3:2) that brings impurities to the surface and exposes and consumes them.

When the fire falls, sin is judged and dealt with thoroughly and uncompromisingly – not just the obvious sins of the flesh, but subtle, secret sins of the spirit as well. Masks of respectability are pulled off, pretences stripped away, and the souls of men laid bare before the gaze of an all-seeing, all-knowing God.

When the fire falls, there is deep conviction and grief over sin. The intense searchlight of God's holiness makes things once thought acceptable suddenly become abhorrent. Indifference is turned to mourning. A casual attitude toward sin is replaced by brokenness and genuine repentance.

When the fire falls, the efforts and works of believers are tested. Much of what appeared to be spiritual activity is exposed to be nothing more than fleshly effort that is consumed as wood, hay, and stubble.

When the fire falls, our traditional methods and programmes are yielded to His lordship, and the Holy Spirit begins to preside over the workings and operation of His church.

When the fire falls, there is power. There is life. There is purity. There is spontaneity. There is reality.

Where is the fire of God today? Where is the evidence of His presence and power? Where is the sense of awe, of wonder, of fear in His presence?

Where are the tears of brokenness and contrition? Where are lost people falling on their faces, overcome by the reality of God's presence in the midst of His people?

In many cases, we do not have the fire of God because **we do not think we need it**. We are content to live without His glory.

For the most part our nation, churches, homes, and lives are devoid of the glory and power of God. When asked to state our needs, we speak of needing bigger buildings, more money, more volunteers, better staff, or more equipment.

Why can't we see that our real need is for God Himself?

We sinned against God, and He withdrew His manifest presence from us, but our eyes have grown accustomed to the darkness. We are used to functioning in our own effort. Hardly anyone questions the authenticity of the results.

We have become blind to our true spiritual condition and need. Like the Laodicean church, we think we are "rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing (Revelation 3:17)."

I hear Christian leaders today speak of how Christianity is flourishing. Others insist we are in the throes of revival.

If that is the case, then why is every form of moral impurity rampant in our evangelical, Bible-preaching churches? Why is the divorce rate as high in the church as it is in the world?

Why do the vast majority of Christians never introduce anyone to Christ? Why do people want a part-time, convenient, weekend Christian experience that costs them nothing? Why do pastors have to twist people's arms to get them to serve the Lord?

Why are church splits so common? Why are so many professing Christians barren, empty, hurting, and in spiritual bondage? Why is the world so utterly disinterested in what we have to offer?

As long as we think we are doing right, we will never cry out to God to send fire from heaven.

I believe another reason we do not have the fire is that we really **do not want it**. Oh, we say we do, but what too many of us really want is the kind of fire that draws attention to our church, packs our auditorium, increases our offerings, and solves all our problems.

We do not want the fire that consumes, destroys, exposes, burns, and hurts. We are afraid of what might happen if God appeared on the scene. We want a tidy religious experience that we can control.

Furthermore, we do not want the kind of **preaching that precedes revival**. I have

found that many people want nothing but encouragement and love from the pulpit. They do not want the truth!

Preaching on sin, repentance, holiness, brokenness, or confession is considered negative. "You are putting people on a guilt trip. You will damage their self-esteem."

I wish we were half as concerned about people having a proper view of God as we are about people having a proper view of themselves! Deceived by the world, our egocentric theology has become more concerned about self-image than about God's image.

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### *We don't think it can happen*

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We do not have the fire of God because we **do not believe it can happen today**. In order to justify our impotence, we have dispensationalised away most of God's Word. "That is Old Testament!" "God does not work that way today."

A serious study of the history of revival reveals that every revival is, in a sense, a repetition of what took place on the Day of Pentecost. The Spirit is poured out on His people in an extraordinary way, and the manifest presence and power of God are released.

But in our concern to avoid the excesses and abuses of certain movements, we have altogether denied the possibility of a supernatural outpouring of the Holy Spirit. We do not pray for miracles because we do not really believe that God does miracles in this century!

Finally, we do not have the fire of God because **we are not willing to pay the price to get it**. We want an instantaneous, costless, painless revival. We want all the positive results and benefits of revival at little or no cost.

We want gain without pain. We want the joy of new life without going through the travail of labour pains. We want healing without surgery. We want joy without mourning.

We want to enter into the power of the resurrection without first suffering the agony of the Cross. We want our schedules and programmes and institutions to stay intact. We want minimum disruption of our plans or interference with our traditions.

Revival involves a process – a process of ploughing up the hardened, uncultivated ground of our hearts, then planting the seed, and ultimately reaping a harvest. The ploughing is painful, but it cannot be circumvented, and it takes time.

Yes, time is an unavoidable part of the

price. Weekend mini-revivals may be easier to fit into our schedules, but they are unlikely to result in genuine revival.

Elijah had been in a process of preparation and purification for three-and-a-half years before God sent the fire. And the people of Israel had suffered the consequences of their sin for the same period of time before they got desperate enough for God to send the fire.

We are too busy to listen to God. God meets with those who wait for Him (Isaiah 64:4), but we want Him to send the fire on our timetable. And He had better be through by noon!

God simply will not fit into our plans, our schedules, or our timetables. He is God! He must be given the freedom to operate as He wills, on His schedule.

If God is going to send the fire, we must be willing, if necessary, to discard our man-made traditions, methods, and programmes to make room for Him. Anything that has become more essential to us than His presence is part of the price He will require.

Certainly there will be no fire until the sacrifice has been offered. For the Israelites it meant placing their water supply on the altar. God did not need water, but when He had their supply, He had them. That is what He wanted all along.

I do not know what sacrifice God may require of you or your church. He may ask you to surrender your reputation. He may ask you to bear criticism, misunderstanding, and rejection from those whose opinions matter most to you.

He may ask you to quit your job. He may ask you to put your life savings or retirement fund on the altar.

Ultimately, what God really wants is the whole of our lives. When God has us on the altar, then and only then will He send fire from heaven and reveal His power to a watching world.

Do you long, as I do, to see the fire of God fall on your life, in your church, and in our nation? How badly do you want to see the glory of God descend? What price are you willing to pay to get it? Are you willing to sacrifice that which is most precious to you? Are you discontent to go on living without it? If so, join me in crying out to the God of Elijah, the God of fire:

*Revive us again  
Fill each heart with Thy love;  
May each soul be rekindled  
With fire from above.  
Hallelujah, Thine the glory!  
Hallelujah, Amen!  
Hallelujah, Thine the glory!  
Revive us again. ☩*



# The Exchanged Life

by *J. Hudson Taylor*

*J. Hudson Taylor (1832-1905) was founder of The China Inland Mission (present-day Overseas Missionary Fellowship). This article is from a letter written to his sister in Britain in 1869.*

**T**HE last month or more has been the happiest of my life. Perhaps I shall make myself more clear if I go back a little. My mind has been greatly exercised for six or eight months past, feeling the need personally, and for our mission, of more holiness, life, power in our souls.

But personal need stood first and was the greatest. I felt the ingratitude, the danger, the sin of not living nearer to God. I prayed, agonized, fasted, strove, made resolutions, read the Word more diligently, sought more time for quietness and meditation, but all was without effect.

Every day, almost every hour, the consciousness of sin oppressed me. I knew that if I could only abide in Christ all would be well, but I could not. I began the day

with prayer, determined not to take my eye from Him for a moment; but pressure of duties, sometimes very trying, constant interruptions apt to be so wearing, often caused me to forget Him.

Then one's nerves get so fretted in this climate (in China) that temptations to irritability, hard thoughts and sometimes unkind words are all the more difficult to control. Every day brought its register of sin and failure, of lack of power. To will was indeed present with me, but how to perform I found not.

Then came the question, "Is there no rescue? Must it be thus to the end – constant conflict and instead of victory, too often defeat?" How, too, could I preach with sincerity that to those who receive Jesus, "to them gave He power to become the sons of God (that is, be Godlike)" when it was not so in my own experience (John 1:12)?

Instead of growing stronger, I seemed to be getting weaker and to have less power against sin, and no wonder, for faith and

even hope were getting very low. I hated myself; I hated my sin; and yet I gained no strength against it.

I felt I was a child of God: His Spirit in my heart would cry, in spite of all, "Abba, Father (Romans 8:15&16)" – but to rise to my privileges as a child, I was utterly powerless.

I thought that holiness, practical holiness was to be gradually attained by a diligent use of the means of grace. I felt that there was nothing I so much desired in this world, nothing I so much needed.

But so far from in any measure attaining it, the more I pursued and strove after it, the more it eluded my grasp; till hope itself almost died out, and I began to think that, perhaps to make heaven the sweeter, God would not give it down here.

I do not think I was striving to attain it in my own strength. I knew I was powerless. I told the Lord so, and asked Him to give me help and strength; and sometimes I almost believed He would keep and up-

hold me. But on looking back in the evening, alas! There was nothing but sin and failure to confess and mourn before God.

I would not give you the impression that this was the daily experience of all those long weary months. It was a too-frequent state of soul; that toward which I was tending, and which almost ended in despair. And yet never did Christ seem more precious – a Saviour who could and would save such a sinner!

## A sad lack of power

And sometimes there were seasons not only of peace but of joy in the Lord. But they were short-lived, and at best there was a sad lack of power. Oh, how good the Lord was in bringing this conflict to an end!

All the time I felt assured that there was in Christ all I needed, but the practical question was how to get it out. He was rich, truly, but I was poor; He strong, but I weak. I knew full well that there was in the root, the stem, abundant fatness; but how to get it into my puny little branch was the question. As gradually the light was dawning on me, I saw that faith was the only prerequisite, was the hand to lay hold on His fullness and make it my own. But I had not this faith. I strove for it, but it would not come; tried to exercise it, but in vain.

Seeing more and more the wondrous supply of grace laid up in Jesus, the fullness of our precious Saviour – my helplessness and guilt seemed to increase. Sins committed appeared but as trifles compared with the sin of unbelief which was their cause, which could not or would not take God at His word, but rather made Him a liar! Unbelief was, I felt, the damning sin of the world, yet I indulged in it. I prayed for faith, but it came not. What was I to do?

When my agony of soul was at its height, a sentence in a letter from dear McCarthy was used to remove the scales from my eyes, and the Spirit of God revealed the truth of our oneness with Jesus as I had never known it before. McCarthy, who had been much exercised by the same sense of failure, but saw the light before I did, wrote: “But how to get faith strengthened? Not by striving after faith, but by resting on the Faithful One.”

As I read I saw it all! “If we are faithless, He remains faithful (2 Timothy 2:13).” I looked to Jesus and saw (and when I saw, oh how joy flowed!) that He has said, “I will never leave you (Hebrews 13:5).”

“Ah, there is rest!” I thought. “I have striven in vain to rest in Him. I’ll strive no more. For has He not promised to abide with me, never to leave me, never to fail me?” And He never will!

But this was not all He showed me. As I thought of the Vine and the branches, what light the blessed Spirit poured directly into my soul! How great seemed my mistake in having wished to get the sap, the fullness *out* of Him. I saw not only that Jesus would never leave me, but that I was a member “of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones (Ephesians 5:30).”

The vine now I see is not the root merely, but all – root, stem, branches, twigs, leaves, flowers, fruit: and Jesus is not only that: He is soil and sunshine, air and showers, and ten thousand times more than we have ever dreamed, wished for, or needed (read John 15:1).

Oh, the joy of seeing this truth! I do pray that the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened; that you may know and enjoy the riches freely given us in Christ (Ephesians 1:18).

## It is a wonderful thing

Oh, it is a wonderful thing to be really one with a risen and exalted Saviour; to be a member of Christ! Think what it involves. Can Christ be rich and I poor? Can your right hand be rich and the left poor? Or your head be well fed while your body starves?


Again, think of its bearing on prayer. Could a bank clerk say to a customer, “It was only your hand wrote that cheque, not you,” or “I cannot pay this sum to your hand, but only to yourself”?

No more can your prayers, or mine, be discredited if offered in the Name of Jesus

# Charles Spurgeon on prayer

**HOW I delight to listen to a brother who talks to God simply and from his heart; and I must confess I have no small liking to those rare, old-fashioned prayers, which are now quite out of date. For the most part we are getting too fine and respectable nowadays; too genteel to allow of prayers such as once made the walls to ring and ring again. O for a revival of these glorious, violent prayers, which flew like hot shot against the battlements of heaven (Matthew 11:12)!**

O for more moving of the posts of the door in vehemence, more thundering at the gates of mercy! I would sooner attend a prayer meeting where there were groans and cries all over the place, and cries and shouts of “Hallelujah!” than be in our polite assemblies where everything is dull as death and decorous as the whitewashed sepulcher!

O for more of the prayer of God, the body, soul, and spirit working together, the whole man being aroused and startled up to the highest pitch of intensity – to wrestle with the Most High (Genesis 32:24-28)! 

(that is, not in our own name, or for the sake of Jesus merely, but on the ground that we are His, His members) so long as we keep within the extent of Christ’s credit – a tolerably wide limit!


If we ask anything unscriptural or not in accordance with the will of God, Christ Himself could not do that; but “If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us: and... we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him (1 John 5:14&15).”

The sweetest part, if one may speak of one part being sweeter than another, is the rest which full identification with Christ brings. I am no longer anxious about anything, as I realise this; for He, I know, is able to carry out His will, and His will is mine.

It makes no matter where He places me, or how. That is rather for Him to consider than for me; for in the easiest positions He must give me His grace, and in the most difficult, His grace is sufficient. It little matters to my servant whether I send him to buy a few cheap things, or the most expensive article. In either case he looks to me for the money, and brings me his purchases.

So if God places me in great perplexity, must He not give me much guidance? In positions of great difficulty – much grace, in circumstances of great pressure and trial, much strength.

There is no need to fear that His resources will be unequal to the emergency!

And His resources are mine, for He is mine, and is with me and dwells in me. All this springs from the believer’s oneness with Christ, and since Christ has thus dwelt in my heart by faith, how happy I have been! 



# There was a man sent from God...

by Leonard Ravenhill

**T**HE sealed heavens had opened! At last, the centuries-old wailing – “*Oh, that You would rend the Heavens*” – had been heard and answered in an unusual way. Four crawling centuries of spiritual midnight had ended by the shattering presence of a man more incandescent than Halley’s Comet...

The people who had been to the Temple that day and seen the high priest in his garments of glory and of beauty would find it difficult to accept this bearded eccentric of chronic austerity and unrefined tone as a prophet sent from God. But Jesus said of this unusual, unpredictable, uncompromising man: “Among those born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist (Matthew 11:11).”

The secret of this amazing man is easy to discover. He had a single eye to God’s glory, a single purpose to do God’s will, and a single message to hail and introduce the Christ, the anointed of God, as the world’s Redeemer.

John’s message was righteousness. He was troubled that God’s laws were broken, His Sabbath defiled, His house made desolate. John’s attack was not against an effect but against a cause – sin. He said sin would ruin men as individuals, destroy communities, and that it would shatter nations, adding that righteousness exalts a nation.

He was a success by any measure of standard, as a prophet. Socially he reached all classes, all were sick of unrighteousness, injustice and oppression. Like flames on a burning building at midnight, this desert-bred prophet attracted the soldiers, foreign legions, the people, and the publicans.

He spoke a language they had not heard, but they understood it. He spoke the

truth, a thing lost in that day and in this day also.

“Now the axe is laid to the root of the trees: therefore every tree which does not bring forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire (Matthew 3:10).” John had no easy believism. He did not offer a smiling penitent “pie in the sky, nor a mansion over the hilltop and a crown of glory, plus a free ticket to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, and a perpetual reward of rulership over five cities” all for a two-minute apology to God, plus a baptismal ritual.

There is much talk today of the gifts of the Spirit, and they are beautiful when genuine; less talk of the fruit of the Spirit; still less emphasis of “bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance (Matthew 3:8).”

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## Too much for too little

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Many a modern evangelist, usually a cheerful fellow, offering free pardons for mighty offences against a Holy, Righteous God, offers too much for too little.

Now some people may charge us with demanding works for salvation. Well, if repentance preaching is offering works, lay the charge at John the Baptist’s feet, lay it on Jesus (Luke 5:32), lay it against Peter for his Pentecost sermon.

There are as many types of preaching as there are types of preachers. Some preaching is edifying but not convicting. Some is directed to the emotions, some to the intellect. That of Jesus, and John the Baptist and Peter attacked the conscience as well as the will. These three had one thing in common, the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Before His ministry, Jesus was anointed

of the Spirit and declared it, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach (Luke 4:18).”

Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit, and then lifted his voice and preached to the people (see Acts 2). It was said of John the Baptist what was not said of any other man that ever lived: “He was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother’s womb (Luke 1:15).”

Our present-day effete evangelism with its emphasis on happiness would have shocked John the Baptist. We try to induce happiness on a heart diseased with sin. We offer bandages to folk who need radical spiritual surgery for the cancer of carnality in the breast.

We preach to produce peace in the heart. John the Baptist preached to produce panic!

The undisturbed prophet disturbed everyone else. Look at this picture: Spirit-anointed John the Baptist, preparing the way of the Lord, scorched all hearts as he preached a Word quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.

Heathen soldiers heard John the Baptist and found that their breastplates of shining armour could not keep the arrows, fire-tipped with God’s judgement, from entering their hearts. The afflicted soldiers cried, “What shall we do (Luke 3:14)?”

Having severed their bloodline to Abraham as invalid for either mercy or forgiveness, the people cried to John the Baptist, “What shall we do (Luke 3:10)?” The covetous, conscienceless publicans withered under John the Baptist’s soul attack, and they, too, cried, “*What shall we do* (Luke 3:12)?”

The men who preach our revivals are evangelists, not revivalists. Revival shatters the *status quo*. We can no more have

a Spirit-born revival without a moral and spiritual upheaval, than we can have an earthquake without destruction.

With all our knowhow and technical advances in agriculture, men still do not gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles. Neither do we get Holy Spirit revivals “over the air” or by staging mass crusades. Babies are only born after travail (Isaiah 66:8). Revivals are birthed by spiritual giants, not slick talkers and golfing evangelists.

Let history teach a few lessons right now.

When a woman said to George Whitefield, “Sir, I have listened to you preach five times in three days and each time I have been wetted with your tears,” she was revealing that the great soul winner had himself wept for lost men in the secret place.

Remember, will you, that in a day without mass communications, the only way to reach a meeting was on foot, or by carriage which few could afford, or on a horse. Yet when the population of Boston, Massachusetts, was only 12 000, Whitefield drew 14 000 a night to hear him. No tarred roads, no restaurants, no motels, buses were not known, trains were not there.

Yet, such was the magnetism of a Spirit-filled man that the crowds listened and were moved of the Lord.

The plain but unusual preacher, John Smith, followed on the heels of Wesley. He says, “I am looking for deeper baptisms of the Holy Spirit.” He urges another minister, “Get deeper baptisms,” and adds, “If we were always filled with the Holy Spirit before we got to the house of God, we should see signs and wonders.”

Tears for the lost were the daily exercise of these revivalists. The mighty Jeremiah said, “If you will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and my eyes shall weep sore, and run down with tears (Jeremiah 13:17).”

The Prince of all preachers wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41). Arthur Fawcett says, “...the prophet is a manifestation of God’s activity.” History demonstrates this opinion.

An experience of God that costs nothing is worth nothing, and it does nothing.

I am convinced that the reason we do not have earthshaking revivals like old times is that we are content to live without them! Or, aware from the histories of these saints, that, while evangelism can be started and finished at the whim of men, revival can only be at the greatest cost, tears, travail, and the mercy of a

Sovereign God.

I am sure that we are ineffective preaching before men because we are impotent in pleading in prayer before God.

Tell me, with all the enthusiasm you have, about the shattering, soul-gripping preaching of Finney. I will reply with, “Yes, but remember that he had Nash and Clary holding him up in prayer 24 hours a day, like Aaron and Hur held up the hands of Moses.” While Finney pled with men in public, Nash and Clary pled with the Lord in secret. Result: Revival!

Let no Christian’s heart fail him because it seems that the enemy has come in like a flood, that the voice of the prophet is not heard in the land. God has His men hidden. They will come forth without price tags, with nothing to sell, nothing to promote but His message, nothing to organise, nothing to propagate but “holiness unto the Lord.”

John the Baptist came at a critical hour in the history of Israel. The parched souls sought him in the heat-laden desert. Remember again the stirring and, I think, stinging words of Professor Harold Kuhn of Asbury Seminary, “Christianity was not served to the world on a silver platter; it was born into a sophisticated world with a totalitarian power over it.”

## Icicles on the pulpits, and snowmen in them

England, dead under the teaching of Deism and thickly foul with corrupt politics, hardly offered loving arms of embrace to the Oxford scholar, Wesley. Injustice, unequal taxation, vice, drinking, etc., were all at a premium at Wesley’s entree. To the nation dead in politics and with icicles on the pulpits and snowmen in them, Wesley brought the torch of Spirit-anointed preaching – and the nation melted before him.

The cultists and purveyors of false doctrines, with millions to spend on scattering their false doctrines worldwide, offer us greater challenges than Wesley or Finney had, but not greater than our God is able to deal with. Our present evangelism offers men a change of destiny – Biblical regeneration offers men a new Spirit-born personality, then destiny.

Revival is the Lord’s doing and is marvelous in our eyes. Wet-eyed, heartbroken revivalists produce wet-eyed, heartbroken sinners at the feet of a Holy God. “True revival,” said dear Dr Tozer, “changes the moral climate of a community.”

I say again, the cost of getting near to the

heart of God, hearing the voice of God, and doing the will of God, is great. God cannot be hurried. The back side of the desert, lonely, poor, uninviting, quiet, is the place where the bush burns, where the voice is heard, where the vision is given, where the marriage to His will takes place.

From the school of prayer, from the desert place, men fired in the furnace of revelation and coveting only strength to do His perfect will, emerge to upset nations and deliver the people.

## Never overcrowded

The school of the prophets is never overcrowded. There is no known curriculum. God shapes the man to suit the hour. One simple factor is obvious in them all, they are all lonely men, private men, passionate men, powerful men, persecuted men.

They know that they have to bleed to bless.


At the moment, we are a broken nation, broken financially, morally, and spiritually. If we were half as spiritual as we think we are, we would be going to the house of the Lord in sackcloth with a handful of ashes to anoint our unworthy heads. But we still play church. We still delight in shallow preaching and offer shallower praying. Our sackcloth and ashes would be less conspicuous than Isaiah “walking naked and barefoot” (as a slave) for three years as a sign.

Jeremiah mourned the sin of the people. His castigations of their iniquity cost him a spell in the stocks, the inside of a prison, and the misery of sleeping at the bottom of a muddy well. He knew better than to say, “peace, peace,” when there was no peace. He alone knew the pending judgements of God. He sat alone because of the wrath of God (Jeremiah 15:17).

Oh, for men who will wait upon the Lord, hear His voice, get a baptism of His power and an authority to deliver His message to a sick church and a dying world.

We have laboured in the flesh too long. We have interpreted success by material gain – bigger buildings for our churches, bigger crowds for our hearers, bigger offerings as proofs of His favour.

We have had weak preachers too long – God give us giants!

We have had promoters too many, Lord send us revivalists. We have played evangelism with a hundred gimmicks; Lord give us, in this dark hour of human history, some John the Baptists to burn and shine, some Knox to say, “Give me Scotland, or England, or America, or I die.” 

# Seven marks of true repentance

by Richard Owen Roberts

**T**HE most powerful portion on repentance in the whole Bible is 2 Corinthians, chapter 7. Paul is writing to the Corinthians a second letter, and he is referring here to a letter he had previously written and sent. All those who love First Corinthians have an awareness of how stern and how confrontational was that first letter. He took them to task for their lack of unity; for their elevation of the academic and the intellectual; for their abuses of the Lord's table; for their tolerance for immorality; for their lack of understanding concerning the gifts of the Spirit and their misuse of these spiritual gifts.

After he sent the letter, he might have wished he could get the letter back. The critical thing in Paul's mind, however, was not that they love him. The critical thing was, when they got the letter, would they read it, and if they read it, would they repent? That's the critical thing today. Not merely that we are fully repentant, but that we carry the truth to others so that we will begin to see a wave of repentance sweep across our lands.

As you read 2 Corinthians 7, you see that Paul is speaking of very urgent issues here. Note 2 Corinthians 7:8&9:

*"Though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle has made you sorry though it were but for a season. But now, I rejoice, not that you were made sorry..."*

Nor does the preacher go away from a meeting full of joy because people have wept, full of joy because the sword of the Spirit has created such agony in their hearts that they are extremely uncomfortable and full of pain. No, that's not what they rejoice about. Along with the Apostle Paul, they rejoice that although the pain comes, the healing follows, and the great work of grace comes.

Paul reminds us in verse 10 that there is a godly sorrow that works repentance to salvation not to be repented of, but that there is a sorrow of the world that works death. I am convinced that multitudes in our churches know only the sorrow of the world and that leads to death. They know only a repentance still to be repented of.

What an awful thing to have in your life a repentance that is so worthless that it has not only left you with the initial sins, but the repentance itself is so faulty it must be repented of. That's where countless numbers of professed Christians are.

## Marks of Repentance from 2 Corinthians 7:11

*"For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter."*

Whenever a person is truly repentant, he or she can analyse with great ease and come to a decision of certainty that their repentance is genuine. Whenever someone has been entertaining a myth of repentance, supposing that myth to be true, and he comes to verse 11, he will find the absolute marks of repentance.

Some of us have the tendency to think that if there are seven things called for and we are right on five of them, all is well. But I wouldn't want to run that risk. It is not all right if you find five of the seven. All seven marks must be in place. If they are, I will know that my repentance is not to be repented of. And if we find that we have two or three or even six, then get busy with repentance to the point where all seven are yours.

When ministering with others, do not be content when they fall short of these seven marks. Part of the vast damage being done in our world today is done because we are in such haste about everything. We are so determined to get people convicted and converted all in the same moment.

We don't believe in the principle of one ploughing and another planting and another cultivating and eventually the harvest comes. We want the harvest the moment we sow the seed. It's time we get biblical and let God do His work in His own way, so that when finally there is a harvest, it is not a harvest of tares, but a genuine harvest of the wheat of God.

Let us see for ourselves what godly sorrow that has led to repentance produces.

### First Mark: Earnestness.

Godly sorrow produces great care: carefulness; earnestness. How earnest are you about repentance? Many people think



that when a few items that pop into their heads as being wrong in their lives are dealt with, repentance is in place. There's nothing earnest about that casual approach. When you call others to repentance, how earnest are you in the call, and how careful are you to see that they go about repentance earnestly with immense care.

Any number of times over a period of years, I would meet men who would say to me, "Did you ever meet Bertha Smith?"

"No, I never met her. Tell me about her."

"Well, Bertha Smith came here. Let me tell you what happened..."

Let me first tell you who Bertha Smith was. She was a woman who was involved in the great revival in China, and when she was forced out of China she began travelling around telling the story of the great revival in China – but more than that, confronting pastors.

She would get in the face of a pastor, and she would say to him, "I want you to get serious; I want you to get earnest and careful about repentance. I want you to get a large pad and two or three pens, and you slip away into a private chamber, and you get down on your face before God. You say, 'O God, show me my sins.' And don't you dare leave until God is finished."

Some men have told me that they thought that was a word from the Lord – but they thought that it was silly to take a whole handful of pens. They would take a piece of paper and a pen, and they would say, "O God, go to work and show me my sins."

Many a man has told me that pen after pen was used up, and pad after pad, as they wrote what God showed them.

How careful have you been about repentance, how thorough? How much time have you spent alone before God? Don't be in a rush. You'd do well to get into your private chamber and spend hours and hours in quiet before God. Let the work that God has begun get down to the serious business of earnestness in repentance, and you need to encourage others in the same way.

**Mark Two: Clearing of Yourself, or**



### *Vindication of Yourself.*

What wondrous work this godly sorrow has produced in a vindication of yourself, a clearing of yourself. There are some of us who think we have come to repentance, and then someone charges us later with a sin. We don't know whether it is just or unjust, or if it's the devil himself that charges us with the sin. We may be thrown into confusion.

When one has vindicated himself, when he has cleared himself, he is no longer chargeable, not by man, not by Satan, not even by God Himself. They have become so absolutely, totally earnest about sin that they have vindicated themselves.

They cannot be charged with sin because every single sin has been put on Christ, and He has stamped, "Paid in full." They are vindicated.

We have people in our churches who are a very long way from vindicated. Some pastors are holding themselves in, but they're coping with deacons, and coping with women and coping with young people, and their heart is saying, "They're not vindicated of sin."

Yet rather than create an upset, rather than trouble anybody, they have been willing to let it pass. Oh, it is urgently necessary that we call people to vindicate themselves in thorough repentance!

### *Mark Three: Indignation.*

When one has come to genuine repentance, there is powerful indignation in him or her.

If you take some people aside, and you say to them, "I know you are guilty of this specific sin." They get very indignant.

Is that what Paul is commending – those who get angry at others when confronted with sin? No! He is talking about an internal indignation against sin, so that when you fall into sin you immediately rise in indignation, in loathing, and you say, "I despise that sin; I will not live even for three minutes with that sin on my conscience. I'm bringing that sin to God right now. I'm going to be cleansed of it immediately. I will not allow it. I hate it. I despise it. It arouses me to tremendous indignation."

Is that what happens to you when you sin –

immense indignation? I fear for many of us. We can look placidly at a sin and say, "Well, I probably shouldn't have done that, but it doesn't really matter." Doesn't matter? How can we speak that way when a mark of repentance is an indignation against sin?

### *Mark Four: Fear.*

Fear is indeed a mark of genuine repentance. Oh, what fear this godly sorrow has produced in you! Fear of what? Fear of going to hell? There is no doubt many would be benefited if we had a greater fear of hell.

I don't think that's the heart of the fear commended here. Rather it is fear lest the God who gave Himself for me be grieved; fear lest some sin in me sadden His heart; fear lest someone who has heard my witness should stumble over some sin in my heart. Do you live in godly fear – fear lest your testimony be destroyed by sin?

Would to God that Moses had spent his whole life fearing God. Instead, when he came close to the end of his life, he robbed God of His glory in a demonstration of anger, and he was forced to die on the mountain and was prevented from finishing his life's work.

I often think, "I'm not ready to die." Oh, I'm ready to die in one sense, but I'm not ready to die because I haven't finished the work God gave me to do.

I say to myself with frequency, "What if some sin should be tolerated in your life that would keep you from finishing your life's work?" That's not fear of hell. That's fear of letting my Saviour down. That's fear of disappointing my King. Are you in the grip of that holy fear?

### *Mark Five: Vehement desire.*

Paul's fifth point is a longing, a fervency. Oh, how I long to be holy! When I was a boy, in the church there was an archway over the pulpit, and on the archway was printed these words, "Yesterday, today and forever, Jesus Christ the same."

Those words burned their way into a young boy's heart, and somehow in the midst of all that was transpiring there, I caught the sense of the beauty of holiness, and it dawned on me that there is no beauty in all the earth like the beauty of holiness. I said, "O God, that somehow I might become a holy man of God!"

And time after time after time through the years, I have had a fresh sense of the beauty of holiness. There comes an immensity of longing and desire to be holy even as my Father in Heaven is holy.

An old Gypsy Evangelist travelled America years ago, singing everywhere he went:

"Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me; all His wonderful passion and purity. O Thou Spirit Divine, all my nature refine, till the beauty of Jesus be seen in me."

Behold, what fervency! Are you in the grip of that fervency, yearning and desire for holiness?

### *Mark Six: Zeal.*

I listen to some preachers and I wonder, do they ever get warmed up about anything? How can they be so placid? We live in incredible days where zeal is considered a sin. If a zealous person comes into the average church, the congregation agrees, "Don't worry; we'll pull them down to our level before long," and within a week or two, they've brought the average convert down to their stagnant place.

Zeal! Behold what zeal! How long ought the zeal to last? No telling how long any of us will last, but even on our death bed there ought to be visible zeal.

What kind of zeal marks your repentance and your church?

### *Mark Seven: Revenge, Avenging of Wrong.*

When one has come to genuine repentance, there is an effort of utmost seriousness in avenging wrong. To avenge wrong means you make wrong right. You go back through your life and you, before God say, Lord, what is there in my past life that I need to avenge, to set right?

To avenge wrong is to make restitution, to go back and to right the wrong. All around the world there are businessmen in communities who say, "Don't tell me about Christ. I don't believe in Christ. I don't believe in your church members. I don't even believe in the pastor," because multitudes of professed Christians have never avenged wrong.

Is there some sin in your life that must be revenged?

It may be you have something you need to deal with right now, but I want to be honest in saying to you, a conviction I have already expressed – that the real work of God is done over a period of time. We must live in the spirit of repentance unceasingly.

*"O God, we surely owe You a great debt of gratitude that You've been so kind, and so patient in all Your dealings with us and our people. Help us to become as serious about You as You are about us, and as careful about repentance as Christ was careful to die in our place at the right moment, and as You, Father, were careful to raise our Lord Christ from the dead at precisely the right moment. Do not let any of us escape the truth of repentance, to the eternal glory of King Jesus. Amen." 🐟*



# Praying for Revival

## (A Daily Prayer Guide)

*“If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land (2 Chronicles 7:14).”*

**T**HERE is a growing urgency about revival. Desperate conditions frequently precede intense times of seeking the Lord. Difficulty and uncertainty often become a birthing centre for a deep and lasting movement of God’s Spirit.

The following prayer guide has been written with the realisation that all revivals are birthed in intercessory prayer. The prayer points prescribed in this guide focus on the corporate need of God’s people. We encourage you, as you pray, to make them personal. And, as a result, may you experience a fresh walk of revival in your own life and family.

### If My people

#### ...humble themselves...

**Day 1** – Pray that we as Christians will bow our knees before the Lord at the beginning of each day, so that we may

receive His grace daily to live as we should (James. 4:6-10).

**Day 2** – Pray that those who have a personal relationship with the Lord will walk in the spirit of humility, as Jesus walked, and live with a daily recognition that pride leads to destruction and that humility precedes honour (Micah 6:8; Proverbs 18:12).

**Day 3** – Pray that believers will comprehend the value of humility: that God hears the cry of the humble and delivers them, that it is better to be among the lowly than to share the wealth of the proud, and that God’s presence accompanies those who are of a contrite and humble spirit (Proverbs 16:19; Isaiah 57:15).

**Day 4** – Pray that each person in Christian homes (particularly husbands and wives) will be humble in spirit, in order that their prayers may be answered (1 Peter 3:8-15).

**Day 5** – Pray that younger Christians will be clothed with humility, respecting their elders, praying about all that concerns them, and trusting God to exalt them at the proper time (1 Peter 5:5-10).

**Day 6** – Pray that Christians would

remember, with gratefulness, what they have been saved from, and that times of crises would become tangible reminders of “what we deserve” apart from the mercy of God (1 Peter 3:13-17; Titus 3:1-9; Psalm 40:1-3; 68:19-20; 103:1-5).

**Day 7** – Pray that God’s people would assume responsibility for the moral and spiritual erosion which has permeated not only our nation but also our world (Ezra 9:6; Psalm 51:16&17).

### ...Pray...

**Day 8** – Pray that God’s people would unite behind praying for all who are in authority, that we may lead quiet and peaceful lives in godliness and reverence (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

**Day 9** – Pray that Christians will seek God first each day privately, before getting physically involved in His work for the day (Matthew 6:6-8, 33; Psalm 32:6).

**Day 10** – Pray that urgency and fervency would characterise the prayers of God’s people (Isaiah 64:9).

**Day 11** – Pray that Christians’ first response will be to pray when they become anxious about a situation, circumstance,

or relationship (Matthew 6:25-33; Philip-  
pians 4:6&7; Jeremiah 33:3).

**Day 12** – Pray that God would raise up  
an army of prayer warriors who would be  
willing to persevere in prayer and wage a  
long war on their knees (Luke 18:1-8).

**Day 13** – Pray that God would give pastors  
wisdom as they call their congregations to  
intercession and lead them to an under-  
standing of the times (Ephesians 4:11-13;  
Isaiah 56:1-7; Jeremiah 23:1-4).

**Day 14** – Pray for the spirit of prayer to  
spread like a wildfire across our land and  
world until every church becomes a house  
of prayer, saturated with seasons and ex-  
tended times of turning to the Lord (Phi-  
lippians 4:6-7; Luke 18:1; Matthew 21:13).

### ...Seek My Face...

**Day 15** – Pray that adult Christians will  
set a pattern of seeking the Lord for all  
things, so that younger generations may  
find their strength and hope in the Lord,  
especially in times of crisis (Psalm 27; 91;  
Acts 17:26&27).

**Day 16** – Pray that God would increase  
our belief in His ability to supernaturally  
intervene and do the impossible, especially  
in times of crisis. Pray that we would forgo  
fleshly appetites of food, entertainment,  
and pleasure to seek the face of God  
(Isaiah 58:6-12; Hebrews 11:6; Mark 9:23;  
James 5:16-18).

**Day 17** – Pray that God's people and our  
national leaders would not trust in mili-  
tary strength, financial might and strate-  
gies, or governmental influence to solve  
our difficulties. Pray that the Scriptures  
would guide all decision-making (Zecha-  
riah 4:6; Isaiah 48:17; Jeremiah 9:23-24;  
Psalm 147:10-11; Proverbs 21:30&31).

**Day 18** – Pray that God's people would  
not be self-sufficient, thinking "we can  
handle this." May we see our dire need  
of help from God and others (John 15:5;  
2 Corinthians 3:5; Nehemiah 6:16b; Jer-  
emiah 2:31&32).

**Day 19** – Pray that God's people would  
lay down their petty differences, per-  
sonal agendas, and divisive attitudes,  
and genuinely unite behind the need for  
an outpouring of God's Spirit in revival  
(Psalm 133:1&3; Ephesians 4:1-6).

**Day 20** – Pray that Christians will seek  
the face of God versus the hand of God.  
That our chief concern would be His ap-  
proval versus His blessing. That we would  
place our affections and our desires on  
pleasing Him (Psalm 27:8; Revelation  
4:11; Colossians 3:2).

**Day 21** – Pray that a healthy fear of God

would permeate the hearts and minds  
of God's people. And ask God to deliver  
us from a fear of man which ensnares us  
(Proverbs 1:7; 9:10; 29:25).

### ...Turn from Their Wicked Ways...

**Day 22** – Pray that Christians will daily  
meditate on the Word of God, so that they  
may be kept pure, not sin against God, and  
allow the God of heaven to conform them  
to the image of Christ (Psalm 119:9-11; 1  
Peter 1:13-2:3; Romans 8:29; Philippians  
1:6; Hebrews 12:4-13; 2 Corinthians 7:1).

**Day 23** – Pray that Christians understand  
their responsibility to live blameless be-  
fore a lost, watching world (Philippians  
2:14-16).

**Day 24** – Pray for God's people to hon-  
estly acknowledge their sins quickly, seek  
God's forgiveness, and expose all sin  
appropriately (Romans 2:1&2; Galatians  
6:1).

**Day 25** – Pray that believers will become  
accountable to godly people who will  
lovingly ask the tough questions regard-  
ing areas of our lives where we might  
be vulnerable to return to "wicked ways  
(James 5:16)."

**Day 26** – Pray that God's people would  
grieve over their own sin and how it affects  
a holy God (Nehemiah 9; 2 Chronicles  
7:14).

**Day 27** – Pray that genuine repentance  
would characterise the response of God's

people to sin and that the Lordship of  
Jesus Christ would rule their daily living  
(2 Corinthians 7:9&10; Matthew 7:21).

**Day 28** – Pray for a contrite and broken  
spirit among believers as they become  
aware of sin in their lives and in their  
churches (Isaiah 57:15).


### ...I Will Hear from Heaven...

**Day 29** – Praise God that His hand is not  
short that it cannot save nor His ear heavy  
that it cannot hear. Claim the promise  
that the Lord draws near to all those who  
call upon Him in truth (Isaiah 59:1; Psalm  
145:18).

### ...Will Forgive Their Sin...

**Day 30** – Thank the Lord for His promise  
to extend mercy to those who "confess and  
forsake their sin" and that He is faithful  
and just to forgive sin and to cleanse us  
from all unrighteousness (Proverbs 28:13;  
1 John 1:9).

### ...And Will Heal Their Land

**Day 31** – Praise the Lord that He promises  
to heal the backslidden and to bind up  
the wounds of the torn and bruised and  
to restore the years the locusts have eaten  
(Jeremiah 3:22; Hosea 6:1; Joel 1:4).   
*Taken from a brochure by Life Action Ministries.*



## To Glorify The Lord


by Herbert Carson

**WE** pray for revival. We pray that God would revive His people. "Oh, that You  
would come again and quicken us. Will You not revive us again that Your  
people might rejoice in You? Oh, that You would rend the heavens and come down."

How often we cry like that. For what are we praying? For some exciting experience? For  
some means of getting empty pews filled? God deliver us from that kind of thinking.

What we are praying for is that the Holy Spirit might so come upon the church that  
in a new way we might say, "Jesus is Lord," and that He might come upon us with such  
power, and that our testimony may be so joyful that we might go out into the world,  
and men and women who tonight are lost in the darkness of sin might by God's grace be  
so brought to saving faith in Christ, that they may join us in this same glad testimony:  
Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father!

Oh, that the Spirit of truth, the Holy Spirit of God, the Spirit of Scripture, the Spirit  
who has borne testimony in the Saviour – may this Holy Spirit fill our hearts.

"Oh, fill our hearts, that we may know more of Christ, and knowing more of Him  
may love Him, and loving Him may rejoice in Him, and rejoicing in Him may have as  
our great desire to serve Him with all our hearts!" 



# The two appearings and the discipline of grace

by Charles H. Spurgeon

*“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works (Titus 2:11-14).”*

**T**HE people of God stand between two appearances. The Apostle Paul tells us that “the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men (verse 11),” and then he says, “looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ (verse 13).” We live in an age which is an interval between two appearings of the Lord from heaven.

We date from the birth of the Virgin’s Son, we begin with Anno Domini, “in the year of the Lord.” All the rest of time is before Christ, and is marked off from the Christian era.

Bethlehem’s manger is our beginning. The chief landmark in all time to us is the wondrous life of Him who is the Light of the world. We look to the appearing of the grace of God in the form of the lowly One of Nazareth, for our trust is there.

We confide in Him who was made flesh and dwelt among us, so that men beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. The dense darkness of the heathen ages begins to be broken when we reach the first appearing, and the dawn of a glorious day begins.

Brethren, we look forward to a second

appearing. Our outlook for the close of this present era is another appearing – an appearing of glory rather than of grace. After our Master rose from the brow of Olivet His disciples remained for a while in mute astonishment, but soon an angelic messenger reminded them of prophecy and promise by saying, “You men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into heaven (Acts 1:11).” We believe that our Lord in the fullness of time will descend from heaven with a shout, with the trumpet of the archangel, and the voice of God

*“The Lord shall come!*

*The earth shall quake;*

*The mountains to their centre shake;*

*And withering from the vault of night,*

*The stars shall pale their feeble light.”*

This is the terminus of the present age. We look from Anno Domini, in which He came the first time, to that greater Anno Domini, or year of our Lord, in which He shall come a second time, in all the splendour of His power, to reign in righteousness, and break the evil powers as with a rod of iron.

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## Behind us trust, before us hope

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See, then, where we are – we are compassed about, behind and before, with the appearings of our Lord.

Behind us is our trust; before us is our hope.

Behind us is the Son of God in humiliation; before us is the great God our Saviour in His glory. To use an ecclesiastical term, we stand between two Epiphanies, the first is the manifestation of the Son of God in human flesh in dishonour and weakness, the second

is the manifestation of the same Son of God in all His power and glory.

In what a position, then, do the saints stand! They have an era all to themselves which begins and ends with the Lord’s appearing.

Our position is further described in the text as being “in this present world,” or age. We are living in the age which lies between the two blazing beacons of the divine appearings, and we are called to hasten from one to the other. We have everything to hope for in the last appearing, as we have everything to trust to in the first appearing, and we have now to wait with patient hope throughout that weary interval which intervenes.

Paul calls it “this present world.” This marks its fleeting nature. It is present, but it is scarcely future, for the Lord may come so soon, and thus end it all. It is present now, but it will not be present long. It is but a little time, and He that will come shall come, and will not tarry.

Now it is this “present world,” oh, how present it is! How sadly it surrounds us! Yet by faith we count these present things to be unsubstantial as a dream, and we look to the things which are not seen, and not present, as being real and eternal. We pass through this world as men on pilgrimage.

We traverse an enemy’s country. Going from one manifestation to another, we are as birds migrating on the wing from one region to another, there is no rest for us by the way.

We are to keep ourselves as loose as we can from this country through which we make our pilgrim way, for we are strangers and foreigners, and here we have no continuing city. We hurry through this Vanity Fair, before us lies the Celestial City and the Coming of the Lord who is the King thereof. As voyagers

cross the Atlantic, and so pass from shore to shore, so we do speed over the waves of this ever-changing world to the glory land of the bright appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Already I have given to you, in this description of our position, the very best argument for a holy life.

If it is so, my brethren, you are not of the world even as Jesus is not of the world. If this is so – that before you blazes the supernatural splendour of the Second Advent, and behind you burns the everlasting light of the Redeemer's first appearing – what manner of people ought you to be?

If, indeed, you are but journeying through this present world, do not allow your hearts to be defiled with its sins, learn not the manner of speech of these aliens through whose country you are passing. Is it not written, "The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations (Numbers 23:9)?" "Come out from among them, and be separate... touch not the unclean thing (2 Corinthians 6:17)," for the Lord has said, "I... will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters (6:18)."

They that lived before the coming of Christ had responsibilities upon them, but not such as those which rest upon you who have seen the face of God in Jesus Christ, and who expect to see that face again.

You live in light which renders their brightest knowledge a comparative darkness, walk as children of light. You stand between two mornings, between which there is no evening. The glory of the Lord has risen upon you once in the incarnation and atonement of your Lord, that light is shining more and more, and soon there will come the perfect day, which shall be ushered in by the Second Advent.

The sun shall no more go down, but it shall unveil itself, and shed an indescribable splendour upon all hearts that look for it.

"Put on the armour of light (Romans 13:12)." What a grand expression! Helmet of light, breastplate of light, shoes of light – everything of light: what a knight must he be who is clad, not in steel, but in light, light which shall flash confusion on his foes.

There ought to be a holy light about you, O believer in Jesus, for there is the appearing of grace behind you, and the appearing of glory before you. Two manifestations of God shine upon you.

Like a wall of fire the Lord's appearings are round about you – there ought to be a special glory of holiness in the midst. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your

good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven (Matthew 5:16)." That is the position of the righteous according to the text, and it furnishes a loud call to holiness.

I call your attention to the instruction which is given to us by the grace of God which has appeared unto all men. "The grace of God... has appeared to all men, *teaching* us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." The grace of God has come to be a schoolmaster to us, to teach us, to train us, to prepare us for a more developed state.

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## Grace is preparing us for glory

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Christ has manifested in His own person that wonderful grace of God which is to deal with us as with sons, to educate us unto holiness, and so to the full possession of our heavenly heritage.

The manifestation of *grace* is preparing us for the manifestation of *glory*.

What the law could not do, grace is doing. This grace of God entering into us shows us what was evil even more clearly than the commandment does. As soon as we come under the conscious enjoyment of the free grace of God, we find it to be a holy rule, a fatherly government, a heavenly training.

We find, not self-indulgence, much less licentiousness – but on the contrary, the grace of God both restrains and constrains us; it makes us free to holiness, and delivers us from the law of sin and death by "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:2)."

Let grace have such an effect upon your life and character that all may say, "See what grace can do. See how the grace of God produces holiness in believers!"

All along I wish to be driving at the point which the apostle is aiming at, that we are to be holy – holy because grace exercises a purifying discipline. The discipline of grace, according to the apostle, has three results – denying, living, looking.

The first is "denying." What have we to deny? First, we have to deny "ungodliness." We next deny "worldly lusts," that is, the lusts of the present world or age.

This present age is full of evil lusts as that in which Paul wrote concerning the Cretins. The lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life are yet with us. Not only do we leave these lusts, but we deny them.

We have an abhorrence of those things wherein we formerly placed our delight. To the worldling we say, "These things may

belong to you, but as for us, we cannot own them, sin shall no more have dominion over us. We are not of the world, and therefore its ways and fashions are none of ours."

The period in which we live shall have no paramount influence over us, for our truest life is with Christ in eternity; our conversation is in heaven. The grace of God has made us deny the prevailing philosophies, glories, maxims, and fashions of this present world.

But then, brethren, you cannot be complete with a merely negative religion, you must have something positive, and so the next word is "living" – that "we should *live* soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

Observe, brethren, that the Holy Spirit expects us to live *in* this present world, and therefore we are not to exclude ourselves from it. Society is the place in which Christianity is to exhibit the graces of Christ.


If the grace of God is in you, that grace is meant to be displayed, not in a select and secluded retreat, but in this present world. You are to shine in the darkness like a light.

Once more, there is "looking," as well as living. One work of the grace of God is to cause us to be "looking for that blessed hope of the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

What is that "blessed hope?" Why, first, that when He comes we shall rise from the dead, if we have fallen asleep; and that, if we are alive and remain, we shall be changed at His appearing. Our hope is that we shall be approved of Him, and shall hear Him say, "Well done... good and faithful servant (Matthew 25:21)."

This hope is not of debt, but of grace – though our Lord will give us a reward, it will not be according to the law of works. We expect to be like Jesus when we shall see Him as He is. When Jesus shines forth as the sun, "then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of our Father (Matthew 13:43)."

Our gain by godliness lies in the glorious future, and yet to faith it is so near that at this moment I almost hear the chariot of the Coming One. The Lord comes, and in the Coming of the Lord lies the great hope of the believer, his great stimulus to overcome evil, his main incentive to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord.

Oh, to be found blameless in the day of the manifestation of our Lord. God grant us this! Do you not see, brethren, how the discipline of the doctrine of grace runs towards the separating of us from sin, and the making us to live unto God? 



# Stewards of God's grace

by **George D. Watson (1848-1923)**

*“But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. And above all things have fervent love for one another, for ‘love will cover a multitude of sins.’ Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.*

*“As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen (1 Peter 4:7-11)”*

**A**LL the operations of grace are wonderful to us, especially in view of the stubbornness of our nature, but it is still more surprising that in addition to saving us, God should arrange to take us into partnership with Himself, and commit to our hands His best treasures, that we might be stewards of His manifold graces, and share with Him the doing of good.

It is the highest glory of our nature that we can be knit to the living God by union with Jesus, and so partake of His character as to be possessed with His thoughts and plans in such a way that we make them our own.

That we are stewards of God's gifts is taught from the earliest pages of Scripture. Jesus was constantly teaching that His followers were to be stewards of His goods. The Apostle Peter has a significant passage in which he mentions four prominent things in which we are to exercise our stewardship: prayer, divine love, hospitality and the oracles of God (1 Peter 4:7-11).

There are two words in the Greek Testa-

ment translated steward, or stewards. One is *epitropos*, which is used twice and signifies one to whom treasure is committed for safekeeping as money in a bank. The other word is *oikonomos*, which is used 12 times, and signifies the proper management of a household or a family. The word is composed of *oikos*, which means a house, and *nomos*, which means a rule or a law.

This is the word that Peter uses. He teaches that in God's family or spiritual house, He has appointed us who have received the Holy Spirit as elder children or superior servants, to properly administer food, raiment and oversight in all the affairs pertaining to the family.

Especially we are to handle the family treasures for the welfare of the little children or the sick or weak ones and not to satisfy or please ourselves. Hence the Holy Spirit lives in us that He may through us administer the treasure of Christ to others and make each of us true missionaries.

## Stewards of Prayer

*“And be sober unto prayer (verse 7).”*

Prayer has been ordained of God as a real spiritual force in creation. It is a sacred trust committed to us to be used in accomplishing vast results in the world, which never would be brought about but by our prayers. The Scriptures teach us that it is by prayer we take hold on God and move Him to do many things which He would not do except on the condition of believing and prevailing prayer.

It is by prayer we reach the condition of saving faith, and subsequently of sanctifying power. Then it is by prayer we become agents of the Holy Spirit for the welfare of others – for healing the sick, for the saving

of souls, for the protection of other people, for the opening of fields of usefulness, for providing temporal means, and for every good thing in this life and the life to come.

Prayer is the tie that connects us with the will of God, and the condition by which we enter into partnership with all His perfections and His plans. Nothing will serve to open up the interior of our own souls like true prayer, and nothing will bring to us such correct and beautiful views of God as earnest prayer.

True prayer always brings the deepest rest in the heart life, while at the same time it is the greatest worker and most energetic force in the moral world.

The promises of God form a lever by which all things are lifted. The atonement of Jesus is the fulcrum upon which the lever rests, and prayer is the weight which we put on the upper end of the lever, by which we press down and lift the multiplied loads, both of a temporal and spiritual nature.

God waits to be gracious, but He is waiting for us to pray, for us to prevail with Him, and He honours us by holding His infinite wealth and grace for us to command. He says in His Word, “You who remind the Lord, take no rest for yourselves; And give Him no rest until He establishes (Isaiah 62:6&7).”

God has planned to accomplish things according to the prayer of His people. Think of what God would do if His followers would take time to pray, to pray through, to select subjects for prayer, to search out scriptural reasons for prayer. What revivals would come, what missionary work would be done. Have you

thought that we must give an account for the power of prayer entrusted to us?

### Stewards of Divine Love

*“Above all things being fervent in your love among yourselves; for love covers a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8).”*

The word “fervent” signifies to boil, to have warm, burning love for each other. There are two words for love. One signifies natural affection, but the original word here signifies divine love, which is planted in us by the new birth and then purified from sinful elements in the heart and made strong by the grace of sanctification.

This passion from the heart of God is imparted to us not only for our salvation, but as a sacred trust for us to pour out upon others. Our souls are the channels for the outpouring of the very feelings of God, His kindness and His sweetness to others.

The religion of Jesus is the only one in all this world that is a religion of love. All other religions are systems of fear, of cruelty, ignorance and superstition and all the fallen religions of professed Christianity are only systems of forms, sacraments, politics and greed for money and earthly power, but not for real love.

The pure religion of Christ is founded in love and spread by love and is the proper fulfilment of all divine law because it is love. Nothing surprises other people like a display of pure, unselfish, divine love by those who are possessed with it. God works through us according to the measure of His love in us. This treasure is put at our disposal, and we are to give an account of how we use the love of God which He has given us.

### Stewards of Hospitality

*“Using hospitality one to another without murmuring... ministering it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God (verses 9&10).”*

This word “hospitality” not only includes entertaining God’s servants, but to be keenly alive to feeding the hungry, clothing the needy, caring for the sick, looking after orphans, the giving of money and all earthly goods for the help of others.

Thousands of Christians are wishing they had more money that they might give something to others, when the fact is very few of them give the small amounts which they could give. The Bible tells us there is only one special grace which a man needs in order to be a steward, and that is faithfulness, perfect fidelity, and Jesus says faithfulness is proved by little things.

He who is faithful in that which is least will be faithful in that which is much. God is watching us to see if we are faithful in little things.

### Stewards of the Word of God

Another treasure put in our hands as stewards of grace is that of the inspired Scriptures. In connection with being good stewards, the apostle tells us if any man speak, let him speak according to the oracles of God, that is, to regard our speech as giving forth the inspired Word which God has given us (verse 11).

What a sacred honour to hear God speaking in us by the still small voice of the Holy Spirit, and then for us to pronounce His words out loud for others to hear. This is the thought in our speaking as the oracles of God.

This earth contains no greater treasure than the Word of God, for it is the fountain of all good law and government, the source of all true morals and heart life, the standard of holiness, the fountain of culture, wisdom, salvation for nations or individuals, the light for all youth, the solace in trouble and old age.


Nations have risen or fallen according as they were good stewards of the Bible. God entrusted His Word for fifteen hundred years to the one nation of Israel, and had they been true to that Word, they would have forever been the benefactors, the ministers of the human race. This same

truth applies to churches, to congregations, to individuals. The Word of God is really divine salt and the only preserver from corruption.

David said, *“Your Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against You (Psalm 119:11).”* This Word is to be saturated in our very nature, pervade our thoughts, warm our affections, guide our business, mould our conversation, and be the rock on which we stand.

Many years ago I was thinking one day while on a sick bed, what good I could accomplish if I had the millions that some have. The Holy Spirit spoke in my heart saying, *“I have given you My Word and insight into the Holy Bible, as great in the spiritual world as the rich man’s millions are in the material world, and what I ask is that you be a steward of giving out My Word, expounding it, preaching it, praying it, writing it, for My Word is gold which will last when all earthly wealth is destroyed.”*

Do we appreciate that God entrusts us with His Word and that we are to handle it, not deceitfully or selfishly or in a merely intellectual way, but as a divine treasure, handed down to us from heaven?

These are some of the main treasures which God has entrusted to our hearts and head and hands, and if we are faithful as stewards in the using of this wealth, great will be our reward when Jesus comes. 

## God's grace is sufficient

**T**HERE may be a situation you foresee and you dread it. You feel it will overwhelm you. How will you ever go through it? Maybe a similar but lesser situation has nearly slain you before. Now as another approaches, your heart shrinks from it. **“O Lord, spare me! Spare me from it!”** you cry.

In a quiet, tender voice comes His answer: *“My grace is sufficient for you (2 Corinthians 12:9).”*


God will not spare you the experience because His love would lead you a step higher into the “exceeding riches” of His grace, and a step deeper into His encompassing love. How else can He reveal to you, so that you know not by the hearing of the ear but by personal experience, the sufficiency of His grace and the fullness of His love for you?

God may allow the waves to be furious. Their beatings may cause deep pain. But they will not dash you under as long as you draw upon His grace. He may allow the path to be terribly rugged, taxing you to the limit, but you will not faint if you draw upon His grace.

Submit yourself totally to God and to His will. God gives His grace to the humble (1 Peter 5:5). By the Holy Spirit, claiming Christ’s victory at Calvary over the world, the flesh and the devil, put to death every thought or feeling or desire that would arise against God.

*“You are dead (Colossians 3:3)!”* You must tell the old man who would fear or rebel or refuse God’s will. Insist upon it: *“You are dead; you shall not have dominion over me!”* Come with that word repeatedly when thoughts and feelings of the flesh arise. Echo our Saviour’s purpose – *“Not My will, but Yours be done (Luke 22:42).”*

Then look to God to pour in of His grace. He will carry you through in a way that will make you bow in humble adoration for the love, power and grace He manifests in your life.

*“Together we will glorify My name,”* is His whispered word of comfort and assurance. *“I love and I praise You!”* will be your grateful word of victory in the battle, as strong in His grace you stand. 



# WHAT CHILD IS THIS?

by Wendy Wippel

**I**T'S the Christmas season, and amid the baking and the bustling and the bows, it's easy to lose sight of what the fuss is all about – a baby. As the old carol asks, “What child is this?”

There's a lot riding on your answer. Because that baby is the central figure of human history. Human history, in fact, is divided into two eras (BC and AD) by His existence.

•He never travelled more than 100 miles from home, but His followers permeated

every country in the world with His story.

•He never wrote a book, but more have been written about Him than anyone else in history, by far.

•The first book about Him, the Bible, has been translated into more than 500 languages, and portions of it into more than 3000 languages. The first runner-up, believe it or not, is *Pinocchio*. Only 260.

•He had only 12 disciples, but billions of people discuss His teachings every day. According to one Harvard professor (not a Christian), the Sermon on the Mount

alone represents the “most luminous, most quoted, most analysed, most contested, most influential moral and religious discourse in all of human history.” The professor adds, “This may sound like an overstatement, but it is not.”

•He was homeless during His public life, but most of the world's most beautiful buildings were built in His honour (Notre Dame, Westminster Abbey, Hagia Sophia, Chartres, St. John's Cathedral, and so on.)

•He died as a criminal, but today thousands of names of cities and countries memorialise His life. (San Salvador, for example, which means Holy Saviour.)

•He never married, but more wedding vows have asked His blessing than any other.

•He never had children, but there's a really good chance you're named after one of his family or his friends.

•Untold numbers of people throughout history have willingly gone to their deaths rather than renounce His name.

It begs the question, “What Child IS This?”

Author Ralph Waldo Emerson (an atheist) observed that the name of Jesus was not so much written as ploughed into the history of the world. And author H.G. Wells (also an atheist) said this:

“An historian like myself finds the picture centring irresistibly around the life and character of this most significant man... The historian's test of an individual's greatness is... did he start men to thinking along fresh lines with a vigour that persisted after him? By this test Jesus stands first.”

Jesus is recognised by sceptic and saint alike as the turning point of history. What child IS this?

We've had 2 000 years to speculate: A really moral man? A great philosopher? A champion of social justice? A pacifist? A mythical figure? A revolutionary? A fruitcake? An example for all of us to follow?

Those really aren't the right questions, though. The real question is “Who does He say He is?” And Jesus, tellingly, said none of the above. Jesus said that He came to “seek and save that which was lost (Luke 19:10).” Jesus said that He came to “give his life as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28).” In fact, He said that He came specifically for one moment in time, His crucifixion (John 12:27). And Jesus said that He came to be the make-or-break issue in your life and mine: “For judgement I

have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind (John 9:39).”

What child is this? We all have to answer that question for ourselves. And eternity rides on our answer. Why? Because God created humans to be with Him. But you probably know what happened next – Adam and Even disobeyed the one rule that God established, and humanity became tainted with sin. And as descendants of Adam and Eve, we inherited that condition.

We are all SIN positive.

The problem is that sin can't survive in the presence of the holiness of God. But that same God still loves us and wants us to be with Him. So Jesus came to seek and save that which was lost. We are what was lost.

Some Christmas carols call Jesus another name: Emmanuel. It means “God with us.” And Jesus, God in the form of a man, came to earth to make a bridge. A bridge described in a lot of different places in the Bible:

“To all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God (John 1:12).”

“He who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgement, but has passed from death into life (John 5:24).”

“For God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten son, so that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16).”

Maybe you're thinking, “That's great for you, but it's just not my thing.” Or, “I have my own faith.” Or, “We all worship the same God.”

### SOME AMAZING STATEMENTS

Then what child is this? One that made some pretty amazing statements:

“I am the way, the truth, the life. No man comes to the father but through me (John 14:6).”

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me (Matthew 28:18).”

Nobody else said things like this. Not Mohammed. Not Confucius. Not Buddha. Not Joseph Smith. Nobody.

People these days say that makes Christianity exclusive. Except that Jesus also said that whosoever believes in Him can have eternal life. *Whosoever.*

So what child is this? You can call Him a liar. You can call Him a lunatic. Or you can call him Lord. “Undecided” isn't really an option. He didn't mean for it to be.

Jesus was crucified because He claimed to be the Messiah, a Messiah described in Isaiah as “wounded for our transgressions,” whose chastisement made peace

for us with God. Jesus said that He came to give us life as a ransom for many. Nobody else said that. Not Mohammed. Not Confucius. Not Buddha. Not Joseph Smith. Nobody.

That's what sets Jesus apart. Only He laid down His life for your sins and mine. And when He died on that cross (a fact documented in Roman records) it would have certainly seemed that was the last history would hear of Him.

But the cross that He died on is now the world's most common symbol, engraved on tombstones, mounted in and on churches, scattered on hillsides and hung around a whole lot of necks.

So what child is this? That's the question. And the answer, as G. K Chesterton observed: “Since Jesus died on the cross it has never been quite enough to say that ‘God is in His heaven and all is right with the world,’ since, according to the Bible, ‘God left His heavens to set it right.’”

God, in the form of Jesus, left heaven to seek and save that which was lost, meaning you and me. When He died on the cross, God was saying that He loves you. He Himself came to earth to give His life as your ransom. It was the God of all the universe, whispering into your ears, “I do.” And that God, who still loves you, stands at the altar, waiting for your answer. He'll wait. He has all eternity to do so. Do you? ☪

# Will you help us be a blessing?



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

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

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

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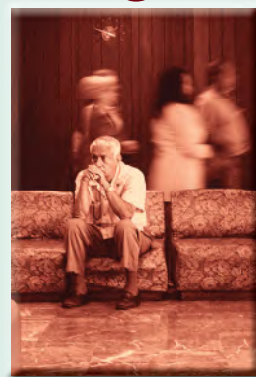
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# Accountable one to another

by *Lalith Mendis*

**TWO common responses to sin are (1) hiding from it and its consequences (that is, behaving as if all is in order) and (2) accusation of the other. A third response is less easy to understand – and that is euphemism in the face of sin, to downgrade it and excuse it. This often happens when the culprit is someone close to you whom you feel you ought to defend.**

Those who gloss over the sins of others would easily excuse themselves, too. In fact, “broad-minded” people leave a wide margin for their own sins and unbiblical attitudes.

How should a Biblical community, a Christian fellowship, heal sin in her members? The Scripture places great value in mutual fellowship of one another as the Lord’s way of building up His people.

We need to be both optimistic and realistic. We must see with faith and with hope for the better because Christ transforms, while critically and honestly facing up to the sin of the member of the Biblical community, be it my father, mother, brother, sister or wife.

To do this it is mandatory to comprehend the importance of a community, which is a friendship group who exercises “lovingkindness, judgement and righteousness (Jeremiah 9:24).”

Love that does not correct is not Biblical love.

Why are we silent and accommodating toward the sins of those who love us? The answer is that we are in need of the culprit’s love. When I am needy of love, I do not correct. I fear to “upset” the person or people.

To a pastor this may be his flock; to a parent it will be the children; to members of a family it will be the others in the family. Can we be sanctified enough, Scripture-based enough to exercise the righteousness of Christ in all our relationships?

We are called to be disciplers to one another. Iron must sharpen iron. That is what friendship means (Proverbs 27:17). We are never to be a “yes” person or community, never flatterers. Never the “you scratch my back; I scratch yours” mentality.

I must have a clear vision and comprehension of the image of God which God hopes to restore in me. There is so much jargon on being accepted and such pampering on rejection that there is hardly ever any Biblical discipline in churches today.

The “rejected” person claims that such is his case and takes no responsibility for many sins. When I reduce God’s standard for me, I am prone to compromise with others.

Our Christian discipleship is governed and fashioned by the Holy Spirit, the Word of God and Christian fellowship. Many believers desire fellowship for carnal happiness. Christian fellowship is a sacred institution ordained by Christ for His people’s correction and improvement. Sword-edge per-

sonalities are not easy to bear, but are much needed.

## *Intimate Fellowship*

Then we move on to those believers who are “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth (2 Timothy 3:7).” Such are, in fact, not learning. They easily unlearn. They are looking-in-the-mirror type (James 1:23&24). They look at many mirrors – sermons, conferences, books, cassettes, videos, but remain the same. What should be the pastor’s strategy with people who are not being made by God’s word?

The strength of John Wesley’s work lay in his class meetings and bands, where Biblical life was persistently urged in the believer. Wesley rightly understood the need for the small group. Are present-day cell groups providing the correcting, sanctifying, iron-sharpens-iron community?

John Wesley wrote about some earnest Christians, “These, therefore wanted some means of closer union; they wanted to pour out their hearts without reserve, particularly with regard to the sin which did still easily beset them, and the temptations which were most apt to prevail over them. And they were the more desirous of this when they observed it was the express advice of an inspired writer: ‘Confess your faults one to another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed (James 5:16).’

“In compliance with their desire, I divided them into smaller companies, putting the married or single men, and married or single women together.

“It can scarce be conceived what advantages have been reaped from this little prudential regulation. Many now happily experienced that Christian fellowship of which they had not so much as an idea before. They began to

‘bear one another’s burdens (Galatians 6:2),’ and naturally to ‘care’ for each other (Philippians 2:20). As they had daily a more intimate acquaintance with one another, so they had a more endeared affection for each other. And ‘speaking the truth in love,’ they grew up ‘into Him in all things, who is the Head, even Christ’ (Ephesians 4:15).’

“Without this intimate form of community, believers were not, in fact, bearing one another’s burdens; encouraging and exhorting one another; really coming to know each other; speaking the truth in love.”

Does the global drive for church growth miss out on the New Testament teaching and experience of the sanctification of the believer, about which Wesley, Booth and Pentecostal pioneers were much concerned?

The Lord Jesus shepherded 120 within three and a half years of ministry. The little flock and a little pastor is the Biblical community. In it the pastor needs to check whether his people are growing in the word of God, which is our foundation and plumbline.

Is there any purpose in people who do not learn Christ (Ephesians 4:20) continuing in the flock? Does not a little leaven leaven the whole lump (1 Corinthians 5:6)? Is this why Paul said to excommunicate that brother who is a fornicator, slanderer, etc (1 Corinthians 5:11,13)? Is any and are all free to come to church meetings on their own terms?

Wesley had the practice of pruning and weeding the membership in his societies. From one society he expelled 64 people, for such matters as cursing, habitual Sabbath breaking, drunkenness, selling liquor, quarrelling, wife beating, habitual lying, evil speaking, idleness, and “lightness and carelessness.”

Thanks to  
Elizabeth Kendal

# WATCH & PRAY



## SUDAN: REIGN OF TERROR

Sudan's ruling National Congress Party (NCP) is the successor party to the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated National Islamic Front (NIF). It was as a Brigadier and head of the NIF's military arm that Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir first seized power in a military coup in 1989. The NCP is Islamist and Arab nationalist. Resistance is fierce because, while the capital, Khartoum, is dominated by Islamist Arab supremacists, Sudan's periphery is populated by non-Arabs, many of whom are also not Muslim. They face political marginalisation, crippling discrimination and some of the most violent racial and religious persecution of our era.

Populations that resist the NCP-led Government of Sudan (GoS) agenda are punished with aerial bombardment followed by highly destructive scorched earth warfare along with mass rape and mass slaughter at the hands of GoS-backed *janjaweed* (Arab for "devils on horseback").

The GoS maintains a humanitarian embargo on all rebel-held areas. By preventing food and medical aid from reaching war-ravaged communities, the GoS ensures Darfur and the

resource-rich regions of South Kordofan (which includes the mostly Christian, rebel-held Nuba Mountains) and Blue Nile remain permanently on the brink of famine.

## NIGERIA: CHAOS IN KADUNA

Pandemonium erupted in a market in Kasuwan Magani in the Kajuru Local Government Area of Kaduna on 18 October after a Muslim cried 'thief' to deliberately trigger a riot. The cry quickly changed to "Allahu Akbar" as Muslims attacked homes and businesses belonging to Christians (mostly ethnic Igbo); one church was also torched. A total of 55 people were confirmed dead, many burned beyond recognition. A later skirmish claimed another 27 lives.

On October 19 the revered tribal leader of a majority-Christian area in southern Kaduna came to visit the site of the violence only to be kidnapped; his security detachment was killed. Despite ransom being paid, Raphael Maiwada Galadima, a Catholic, was executed; his body was found on October 26.

The violence has sent ethnic-religious tensions soaring. The Nigerian Air Force has deployed combat helicopters, surveillance aircraft and a detachment of Special Forces to the area to restore order. While commercial activities are slowly resuming, most Igbo

businesses remain closed.

Pray for Nigeria; may the Lord intervene to save this country from civil war.

## VIETNAM: IMPRISONED PASTOR'S HEALTH DETERIORATES

Protestant pastor Nguyen Trung Ton (46) was arrested in July, 2017 for his pro-democracy and religious liberty advocacy. At that time, Ton was carrying severe leg injuries acquired during a vicious beating in February, 2017. On April 5, 2018 Ton and five other members of the Brotherhood for Democracy group were tried in a Hanoi Court and charged with "carrying out activities aimed at overthrowing the People's administration." Ton was sentenced to 12 years in prison.

The February, 2017 beating left Ton with a torn ligament and crushed leg muscles. Confined to prison and without medical care, Ton's legs have never healed. On October 23 Ton's wife, Nguyen Thi Lanh, told Radio Free Asia that her husband's health is deteriorating. "Prison authorities have not allowed me to send him any medication, and now he can't walk and is very ill," she said. Pray that

God will intervene for Pastor Nguyen Trung Ton.

## ASSYRIAN CRISIS IN IRAQ AND SYRIA

Assyrians are Christians and the indigenous nation of Mesopotamia (Syria-Iraq). While jihadist activity remains a problem, the threat posed by Kurdish nationalism is growing. The Assyrian remnant in northern Iraq's Nineveh Plains is struggling to rebuild amidst gross insecurity, systematic discrimination, political marginalisation and land seizures.

Meanwhile, the Assyrian remnant in north-east Syria's Hasakah Province is struggling to retain its autonomy and culture as Kurdish authorities move to control the education sector. In both Iraq and Syria, Assyrian educators, writers and political figures who resist or criticise the Kurdish authorities are beaten, arrested and intimidated into silence. Kurdish nationalists aim to drive Assyrians from their ancestral lands so Kurds might colonise and eventually annex these lands into a future Kurdish state. Please pray for the Assyrian nation (Isaiah 19:23-25).

## Manna for mahala!

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

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# Courage

by Judith MacNutt

**WE** all need courage. When the Holy Spirit comes into your life, He will ask things of you that will make you totally uncomfortable.

If you are not uncomfortable, it might mean you're in trouble, because you might be trying to do life in your own strength.

The dictionary's definition of a hero is: "A person who is admired for great or brave acts, or nobility of character."

When I think of a person of distinguished courage, admired for brave deeds and noble qualities, I think of Jesus. Jesus is our model for courage. Jesus was fully human and fully divine – that's the miracle of the incarnation.

You are fully human with the divine in you! You have the presence of the Holy Spirit; it is Jesus within you who gives you His courage.

Jesus will ask you to pray for someone and everything in you might be responding, "I can't do that," but you will lay hands on that person. He will ask you to speak a word, and you might be thinking, "Lord, I don't know what to say." But then you do speak. This takes courage!

What the Lord is trying to do with you is stretch you, enlarge you, heal you, transform you, and let you experience new truth so you can walk into a new freedom

in Christ.

We can have courage in the midst of difficult times, because God is in our suffering. Sin and sickness are always going to be present because we live in a fallen world.

God *uses* suffering, but He doesn't *send* suffering to teach us a lesson. This truth is very important to remember.

In times of suffering the Holy Spirit is incredibly active. He gives us courage, love, faith and community. When we feel we can't handle any more, the community of the faithful goes through difficulties with us.

There are three important things to remember about suffering:

**1.** You are not alone! God did not send this to you. There is hope – there is an end to it!

I always say to myself, "This too shall pass; even if I go to heaven, it's going to pass!" When the disciples were overwhelmed with sorrow, Jesus said to them, Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am (John 14:1-3).

That is one of the greatest promises in scripture.

**2.** Then He goes on to say, I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever – the Spirit of truth (John 14:16).

It is very important to understand that the person of the Holy Spirit is your friend. He cares very deeply about you. He's in this journey with you. Jesus said, Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you (John 16:7). When He returned to the Father, He told the apostles and disciples to wait for the coming of the Spirit, and they did. They waited, and then came the rush of mighty wind, and tongues of fire settled on every one of them, and they were filled with the Holy Spirit of the living God.

**3.** Likewise, when God tells me to wait, I wait.

When we are guided by our own strength, or ministering out of our own strength, we get into trouble. Waiting takes courage! Daily invite the Holy Spirit to totally fill you, guide you, and lead you into all truth. He will bring deep healing and transformation. He will bring comfort in suffering. He will bring power for ministry and courage for spiritual battle.